

## Mindfulness with Breathing (Ānāpānasati), Part 6 of 8

### ĀNĀPĀNASATI : TETRADS IV

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*In the late 80s and early 90s, until his health deteriorated too much, Ajahn Buddhādāsa gave regular lectures during the monthly international retreats held at Suan Mokkh and then Suan Mokkh International Dharma Hermitage. Usually, Ajahn spoke in Thai and Santikaro Bhikkhu interpreted into English live. All Ajahn's teachings are now available on:*

[www.suanmokkh.org](http://www.suanmokkh.org),

<https://soundcloud.com/buddhadasa> and

<https://www.youtube.com/@buddhadasabhikkhu7829>.

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Today we will have the opportunity to speak about the fourth tetrad or the last group of four steps within the practice of *ānāpānasati*. This fourth tetrad is particularly concerned with Dhamma or Thammasa (ธรรมชา) which means truth – the truth of nature. So this tetrad is known as *dhammānupassana* – the contemplation of Dhamma. If we recall the first tetrad, the first four steps of the practice were a study of the breathing and the body, we studied the physical aspects of life until they were well understood and then in the end, based in this knowledge, there was the ability to calm the *kāyasāṅkhāra* – the body conditioner. So in step one we learned what we needed to learn in order to calm the breathing. Through the calming of the breathing, there arose various pleasant feelings or *vedanās*. And in the second tetrad, we studied these *vedanās* – these feelings that arise out of the calming of the breathing. In this way, the second tetrad follows out of the first. By studying and experimenting with these feelings, we develop enough control to calm the *cittasāṅkhāra* – the mind conditioners which are those very feelings. At this point it's not possible to deal directly with the *citta*. So we're not talking about controlling the *citta* directly or controlling the mind directly or even knowing the mind directly. Rather, we're dealing with these symptoms or conditions of the mind which we call the '*cittasāṅkhāra*' and then learning how to calm this *cittasāṅkhāra* – these feelings – so that they no longer have control over the mind. In doing so, this brings us to the third tetrad which specifically work with the *citta*, and it's known as *cittānupassana* – the contemplation of mind which we discussed yesterday. In this tetrad, we study, develop, train and practice various ways of controlling the *citta*. This is to really expand on one's knowledge of life and one's ability to be master of life. And in this way, the mind becomes a very sharp tool and is prepared to do the last part of the practice or the fourth tetrad of *dhammānupassana* – contemplation of truth. So through these first three tetrads, the

mind has been developed and trained and now has enough control. We have enough control over the mind so that it is within our power. The mind is within our influence and now the mind can be used in order to do this last part of the practice of studying truth, studying the reality of nature, seeing things as they really are. As this is where we come to for today's talk – the contemplation of Dhamma.

So when we come to the fourth tetrad, the mind has been well trained. The mind is now within our control and under our power. This means that it is prepared to work. It has been trained in such a way that it is most fit for work. As we discussed yesterday, in those three characteristics of concentration, there is the characteristic of *kammaniyo* or activeness. The mind is very active and agile. It's ready to work. This is the kind of activeness and preparedness that is not stiff or rigid, but it is very supple, flexible, gentle. In this state, the mind is very sensitive. It has the kind of the sensitivity that is very subtle in detail, very refined and also extremely quick that it is able to pick up things very quickly. So this mind that is very active, flexible and sensitive is now ready to do the duty of the fourth tetrad. And the essential duty of the fourth tetrad is in considering, examining and contemplating impermanence.

The fundamental principle that we must hold to in contemplating impermanence is that we contemplate impermanence internally. We contemplate impermanence within the mind. This is very important. If we see impermanence internally, then it will be quite easy to see impermanence in external objects. But to just see impermanence in external objects, it's unlikely to lead to a profound understanding of impermanence. So in *ānāpānasati* we study impermanence internally within the body and mind. The way we do this is we go back to the very beginning of the practice. We take up the breathing that we began with and we contemplate the breathing until we see the impermanence, the constant change, the constant flow and flux of that breathing. When the normal breathing is seen as impermanence, then we take the next object of the longness of the breathing. We see that the longness is also impermanent. It's always changing by getting longer or getting shorter. It's not permanent in anyway. And then the shortness of the breath, we contemplate that until we see that it too is impermanent. And then the influence of the different kinds of breath upon the body, all these influences are in themselves impermanent. So we must contemplate that. And then the calming of the breathing, this is contemplated to see that it is impermanent. We take these, one at a time, and contemplate each one until they are seen to be impermanent. And then there are the feelings of *pīti* and *sukha* – contentment and happiness – these are also impermanent. And we study them until we see that though they may arise and be quite strong, after a while, they pass away or change – that they are not stable and permanent. And then the influence of these upon the mind must be contemplated and studied. And then finally, the calming of these feelings, this too must be observed and scrutinized and examined until we penetrate through the impermanence of the calming of the *cittasāṅkhāra* – the feelings.

And then in step nine, we review step nine and see that all the different mind states are impermanent which is logically hard to miss. We have to deal with all these different kinds of mind states that there must be a change from this one to that one and from that one to another. All of these mind states are changing. None of them are permanent. And then the step ten – gladdening the mind – no matter how successful we become in gladdening the mind, that gladdening, that making the mind joyful and happy will always be impermanent. Then in step eleven – concentrating the mind – we may think we have come to a very stable and steady level of concentration but it is still impermanent. That's very deep, and no matter what level of

concentration we come to, it will be changing. Within itself, there is a constant change. And then lastly, the liberating of the mind, it's only temporary liberation. So this is also impermanent.

When we contemplate impermanence, we go through each of the various steps of *ānāpānasati* which we have practiced so far. Now we redo each of those steps but instead of viewing them in the way we originally did, now they are examined as impermanence. We contemplate and examine each of these twelve objects until the each object is seen to be constantly changing and in eternal state of flux. So this is the meaning of contemplating impermanence. We can summarize it by saying it is contemplating *saṅkhāra*. It is contemplating all the conditioned things which have been arising and passing away throughout the practice of *ānāpānasati*. This is what we do in step thirteen –we contemplate the impermanence of the *saṅkhāra*.

When impermanence or *aniccā* is contemplated within all these various things which we just summarized, then there will be also the realization that all these things are *dukkha*, that they have within them the condition or state of unsatisfactoriness. In contemplating and seeing that all these impermanence changing things – they're unstable, which they cannot be dependent on, there is no way that we can find any lasting satisfaction in any of these things. For this reason, they are ugly and inependable, unependable and hateful. So from seeing impermanence, then we come to see the *dukkha* – the unsatisfactoriness – of all those *saṅkhāra*. From seeing the change and unsatisfactoriness – the impermanence and *dukkha* of all these *saṅkhāra* – then our realization goes even further and deeper to seeing that all of these things are not 'self,' they are not 'soul,' that because of this change which is beyond our control, because of this unsatisfactoriness. If they were really 'us' or 'I' or 'mine,' we could control them and they would be satisfying the way we want them to be. They wouldn't change like that. So in this way, we begin to realize that all these things are not 'self,' that in them we cannot find any 'self.'

The understanding of 'not self' then follows from the realization of *aniccā* and *dukkha*. And then this realization of 'not self' or *anattā* deepens into the penetration to the truth of *suññatā* – voidness – that all things are void of any 'self,' of any 'soul,' of any 'I' or 'mine,' that all things whatsoever are empty and void of any meaning of the word 'self.' In them you can find nothing that is an 'I' or that could be claimed to be 'mine.' In seeing *suññatā*, voidness, like this, then this in turn deepens into the realization of *tathatā* – thusness or suchness – that all these things are just the way they are, they're not different in any way, they have this quality of being thus, the state of being thus. So this is the realization of *tathatā* or suchness. From realizing suchness, then there is the realization of *idappaccayatā*, which is the law of causality – the natural law of cause and effect – that all these things are interrelated and interdependent to the law of cause and effect. They arise through causes and pass away through causes. And in doing so, also has the effect upon other things. So the fullest to really see impermanence in this step thirteen of *ānāpānasati*, one has to have such a profound realization of impermanence that it includes *dukkha* – unsatisfactoriness, *anattā* – 'non-soul', *suññatā* – voidness, *tathatā* – suchness, and *idappaccayatā* – the law of cause and effect. When all these are seen, then impermanence is truly seen on the deepest and most profound level. This is to see the impermanence, *dukkha*, *anattā*, *suññatā*, *tathatā* and *idappaccayatā* of all *saṅkhāra*, of all condition things.

Remember that there are three meanings to this word, '*saṅkhāra*' – the things which are conditioned, the things that condition other things or the conditions themselves, and then after the process of conditioning. So all the *saṅkhāra*, all the products of conditioning, all the conditions which are the cause of conditioning and all the processes of conditioning themselves,

all this *saṅkhāra* is *aniccā* – impermanent. And this impermanence must be seen on a very deep and profound level which we have just described.

There's a fact which we must discuss about the contemplation of impermanence. To just see impermanence by itself is no big deal because this is happened all over the world and the teaching of impermanence is nothing extraordinary. The Buddha was by no means the first person to teach impermanence. It was taught all over India and in other places as well. So to see impermanence in an incomplete way that does not include *dukkha* and *anattā* is not very profound and it is not sufficient to solve our problems. In fact, the Buddha, in the scripture, mentioned that there was a religious teacher of his time – that was about 2,600 years ago – named Araga, as far as the Buddha knew his name. And this Araga, the Buddha said, was live in some far away city. He didn't specify exactly where. He said that this teacher taught that all flows. The Buddha said that this Araga taught impermanence. This was his central teaching – the teaching of impermanence. He taught it in detail. However, Araga did not teach impermanence on a profound enough level that included *dukkha* and *anattā*. For this reason, Araga's teaching was incomplete and was not successful in the process of spiritual liberation. It was still incomplete. This is an interesting point and anybody who's familiar with Greek philosophy will know that at the same time of the Buddha there was a Greek philosopher named Heraclitus. Heraclitus's central teaching was everything flows, everything flows. This was what he based his philosophy upon and what the fragments that are remaining of Heraclitus's teaching are all emphasizing impermanence. So there's a good chance that the Araga who the Buddha talked about was Heraclitus and anybody who wants to look into this can check in any history of Greek philosophy and you'll come across Heraclitus and what he taught. There you'll find that Heraclitus only spoke of impermanence and did not go into *dukkha* and *anattā*. In fact, there are many teachings especially in the modern world, much of science is basically teaching impermanence. But it's often just on a material level and is unfortunately not profound enough to include the realization of unsatisfactoriness and 'not self' and then voidness, suchness or thusness and the law of cause and effect – *idappaccayatā*.

This teaching of *aniccā* in itself is quite well-known in and outside of India before, during and after the Buddha's time. And to just see impermanence which is in itself quite useful is still not sufficient. It must be apprehended and understood in a more profound way which will also penetrate through the truth on satisfactoriness and *anattā* – 'not self.' The result of realizing impermanence or *aniccānupassi*, the result of this is that attachment begins to dissolve. To see impermanence, the attachment or clinging or *upādāna* begins to break up and dissolve. This is because in seeing impermanence of things on the profound level that we have described, not on just the superficial level of Heraclitus but in seeing it on the most profound level, then the penalty, punishment and suffering that is inherent in all attachment and clinging will be seen. And in seeing that punishment and penalty, then attachment begins to dissolve. So this dissolving and breaking up, falling apart and fading away of attachment, this dissolving is the result of truly seeing impermanence. The natural result, the inevitable result of realizing impermanence is that attachment will begin to dissolve. This happens by itself.

Now in step fourteen of *ānāpānasati* – step thirteen was the contemplation of impermanence – step fourteen is then to contemplate, to examine that process of dissolving. It's already begun to happen through step thirteen. So the object to step fourteen is to take that dissolving of attachment, which is begun automatically and naturally, to take that as the meditation object, to understand it and see it fully and clearly. This is called '*virāganupassi*' – contemplation of

*virāga. Rāga* – you heard about yesterday and often is translated, lust or passion. But these are just other words for attachment and ‘vi’ means to ‘knock’ or ‘without.’ So the meaning of *virāga* in this case is the fading away, the breaking up of attachment. So in step fourteen, this fading away of attachment is contemplated.

There’s a traditional metaphor for describing this is that the mind is like a cloth that is stained with many different colors. These many different colors are our attachment but those stains slowly will fade away. If we leave the cloth in the sun, the sun will bleach the stains away and the cloth will slowly become whiter and whiter. So this fading away of those stains is a good description of the fading away of attachment except in this case it’s the sun, it’s the light of seeing things as they truly are as impermanence, *dukkha* and *anattā*. This light is not a physical but a spiritual light which causes the fading away of the attachments. And as the attachments are fading away in that natural process, then this is studied and contemplated. This fading away of attachment is taken as the object of step fourteen of the practice of mindfulness of breathing.

The results of this fading away of attachment, we can call ‘balance,’ ‘equilibrium’ or ‘non-attachment.’ As attachment fades away, then the mind is in a state of being undisturbed. It is balanced and centered and in this way, it is not being pulled in this direction or that direction by the attachments. This is the result of the fading away of attachment. This can be seen quite clearly in the following examples. For example, things which we used to love, we used to have a greedy possessive love for, we no longer love those things; things that we used to be afraid of, we are no longer afraid of; objects of our hatred, we no longer hate; or things that we used to worry about, that we were worried about, torn up about, these things no longer worry us; or objects of envy, jealousy, fear, possessiveness, greed stupidity, all these various kinds of attachments no longer have hold over the mind. So the mind is no longer responding to conditioned things in an attached way. So we can see this quite clearly that the things we used to attach to in various ways, whether in an angry way or a fearful way or a jealous way or a greedy way or whatever, there is no longer this attachment. So the mind is free, is balanced and clear. It is undisturbed, unmolested, unbothered by all those attachments. So then we can say that the mind is in a state of non-attachment.

Notice we don’t use the word ‘detachment.’ Many people use the word ‘detachment’ but this is often misunderstood and we prefer the word ‘non-attachment.’ Detachment is often another kind of attachment. We see those of us who understand attachment to be positive, as a clinging. People think, “oh, then what I have to do is detach, I have to push things away, I have to get rid of things.” This is just another kind of attachment. We can call it a negative kind of attachment. Detachment is not the solution to a problem. Detachment is as a big problem as attachment. It’s the same problem. So what we’re talking about is non-attachment. When the mind is centered and balanced, calmed and undisturbed because it is neither clinging to things in the way of trying to get or become something and it is not trying to push things away or trying to not become. So non-attachment is freedom from both of these kinds of attachment – the positive and the negative of attaching and detaching – and instead there is non-attachment. This is the result of the fading away of attachment. From the fading away of attachment which is contemplated in step fourteen, then there comes about the state of non-attachment which brings us to step fifteen.

Once again there is that natural process which is happening all along where as attachment fades away, it has to come to an end. Things that fade away and dissolve naturally come to an end. They have their cessation and extinction. This is a natural process in the practice of *ānāpānasati*, then we need to also note and examine that part of the process. So step fifteen is when the mind

takes as its object of concentration in meditation and contemplation that ending of attachment, the cessation of attachment. This is called ‘*nirodhanupassi*, – the contemplation of cessation. Cessation occurs naturally and in mindfulness of breathing, we will examine that cessation so that it is fully understood.

We can examine the cessation of attachment in a variety of ways. We can see the cessation of attaching to things as ‘I,’ that ego identification with body, mind, thought, feeling and whatever as ‘I.’ We can see these ceasing. We can see the end of these attachments. We can see the end of selfishness. Selfishness is a kind of attachment. So we can see cessation in the cessation of selfishness. Or there are the attachments of the defilement which we call the ‘defilements’ – greed, anger, delusion. And so we can see cessation in the cessation of the defilements. This is also seeing the cessation of attachment. And then lastly, we can see the cessation of *dukkha*. *Dukkha* is an inevitable result, is the necessary result of attachment. And so in seeing the cessation of attachment, we can also see the cessation of *dukkha*. So these are various ways of seeing cessation, the cessation of attachment. Contemplating cessation in this way is the object and meaning of step fifteen of mindfulness of breathing.

Now we come to the cessation of *dukkha* which is what the practice of Dhamma is all about. So let’s examine the difference ways in which *dukkha* ceases so that this can be contemplated, and so that one’s final liberation will be seen clearly. There are four ways of seeing cessation of *dukkha*.

First, there is the cessation of being frightened by birth, aging, illness and death. For the ordinary sentient being, birth, aging, illness and death are objects which we attach to. We attach to these processes and they lead to great fear. But in the cessation of *dukkha*, this frightening aspect of birth, aging, illness and death disappears. There’s no more attachment to these. So they are no longer terrifying.

The second aspect of the cessation of *dukkha* is that the various symptoms or conditions of *dukkha* also cease. These are situations such as sorrow, grief, lamentation, despair, sadness, pain, frustration, depression. These various symptoms of *dukkha* will also cease or be extinguished.

The third aspect of *dukkha* that must be contemplated is the cessation of all liking, disliking and wanting. This is because meeting up with things we don’t like is *dukkha*. Being separated from the things we like or love is *dukkha*. And not getting what we want is *dukkha*. These three aspects of *dukkha* also cease. The *dukkha* that comes from meeting up with things we don’t like ceases because there is no more disliking. The *dukkha* that arises from being separated from that which we like or love, this also ceases because there’s no longer that kind of attachment. And the wanting, the attached wanting which also leads to *dukkha* ceases.

Then lastly the fourth aspect in which the *dukkha* ceases is the cessation of the five aggregates of clinging. There are five groups of things that we attach to – the body group, the feeling group, the perception group, the mental activity or thinking group, and the consciousness group. These are five groups of things that the mind habitually attaches to as ‘I,’ habitual discrimination and identification with these things as ‘I.’ This inevitably causes *dukkha*. But when these attachments, when the five groups of attachment cease, then *dukkha* ceases in these four aspects. So these are four aspects with which we need to contemplate the cessation of *dukkha* because the cessation of *dukkha* is the goal of the entire practice, is what we’ve been working for all this time. So this is the final breaking through of the whatever.

With all this cessation of attachment has come about the state of non-attachment, so the mind is in the state of attachment and it begins to experience the non-attachment. It drinks, tastes, bathe in this non-attachment. Non-attachment or *nirodha* is a synonym for *Nibbāna*. So with the cessation of all attachment and all *dukkha*, there is the experiencing, the tasting, the bathing in *Nibbāna* – the coolness – when there is no more attachment. So through the cessation of all attachment has come about the state of voidness from attachment, there's no attachment, the state of voidness which is non-attachment or *Nibbāna*.

So with this cessation of attachment, it naturally brings us to the sixteenth and final step of *ānāpānasati*. This is called '*patinissagganupassi*.' '*Patinissagga*' means to throw back, to toss back. This is kind of an amusing thing to think about because in the last step there will be the end of attachment and we pretty much said that that was what we've been working for. But then there's this one last step – step sixteen of the throwing back of all the things that we have attached to. Now that attachment has ended and then there is the tossing back of those objects of attachment. These are given up, relinquished. This is the sixteenth step of *ānāpānasati*. There's a very useful metaphor we have for describing this. This should make you understand quite easily what this sixteenth step is about. We can see that throughout our lives, we have been thieves. Throughout our lives, we've been stealing things constantly. We've been attaching to things and claiming them to be 'I' or 'mine.' Our whole lives have been a process of theft, constant theft, constant attaching to 'this is I,' and 'that is mine.' But in reality, none of these things are 'I' or 'mine.' We don't own any of that. And so in step fifteen, with the end of attachment or excuse me, when attachment ends which we contemplated in step fifteen, then there is the full realization that none of these are 'I' and none of them are 'mine.' And then we realize that we've been a thief all along, that we've been stealing all these things. So now in repentant for all these....(43.38), we throw all those things back to their rightful owner. We no longer claim that anything is 'I' or 'mine.' Instead we admit 'oh, it's not me, it's not mine.' We toss everything back to nature because nature is the rightful owner of all these things. This is the meaning of throwing back or *patinissagga*.

There's another metaphor which we can use. Because of our foolishness throughout our life, we've been picking up very heavy objects like these rocks and we've been putting them up on our shoulders and lugging them around with us. Throughout our life, we've been picking up these heavy burdens and carrying them around. This is only because of our foolishness. But one day we realize how stupid it is to carry all these heavy loads around, how much they make us tired and worn out and all the problems that they cause. So once we realize how stupid it is to carry these burdens around, then we just go 'Oh!' and we toss them away. And then there's no more burden, there's no more heaviness. And then everything is light and all those problems have disappear. This is another way of describing that we've been picking up all these burdens by attaching to things. Everything that we attach to as 'I' or 'mine' becomes a burden for the mind, becomes some heavy objects that we carry around with us. Wherever we go, our procession, whether physical or mental, are weighing down the mind. So the mind is cluttered with all these heavy objects. This is nothing but foolishness until one day we realize how stupid it is and then we just toss away all those burdens. And then the mind is light, free of all those heavy objects and all the problems caused by those heavy attachments. This is another metaphor we can use to describe what happens in the final step of *ānāpānasati*.

So these are ways of describing step sixteen which we can summarize as the throwing away of the burdens of life. Step sixteen – we get rid of, we toss away, we throw away all the burdens of

life. Because of attachment, we've been piling up all these heavyweights upon us. So we can see this as being buried under the world. We're caught and trapped underneath the world because of all these attachments, because of all these burdens. Because of its heavyweight, it's always pushing and pushing us down. But once we throw away all those burdens, there's no more weight to hold us down, to keep us trapped beneath the world. So we float up and then instead of being caught under the world, we are above the world. This is the meaning of being free. Any of you who are interested in freedom, this is the true meaning of freedom. If you're interested in well-being, this is the true meaning of well-being – to be above the world instead of caught up within it and underneath it.

There are two important Pāli words which describe this and you would do well to remember them. The first is '*lokiya*' which means being caught under the world, and '*lokuttara*' which means to be above the world. So know the difference between *lokiya* and *lokuttara*, and then you will understand the true meaning of peace, of liberation, of well-being. And so we recommend that you make this the object of your practice from now on. This is what you need to be practicing for – to be above the world rather than caught up and trapped within it.

So for those of you who like the word 'emancipation,' this is the meaning of emancipation. This is the way to spiritual survival. The way to survive spiritually, to be emancipated is through the complete and successful practice of the sixteen steps of *ānāpānasati*. We've described all sixteen of them and today we've shown you that they end in the emancipation of the mind from all attachments, from all *dukkha*, from all burdens, so that the mind is above the world. This is the meaning of emancipation. Or you prefer to call it 'liberation,' that's just as well or we can call it 'release' or 'letting go.' This is what happens to the full and perfected practice of mindfulness of breathing. It results in the mind, in the letting go of all things and then bring the mind from all the things which have attached to it so there is nothing clinging to the mind and the mind is clinging to nothing. Everything has been given back to its rightful owner, to nature. This is the meaning of emancipation, liberation, deliverance, salvation, letting go, release, freedom. Whichever of these words you prefer, understand it and its meaning. If you understand this meaning, then you will now have the tool to bring about your goal, whether your goal is emancipation, liberation, salvation, deliverance, release, freedom or whatever. We have now described to you the way to bring that about. This ends the discussion of the sixteen steps of *ānāpānasati* and we would like to finish today's meeting at this time.

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