

Mindfulness with Breathing (Ānāpānasati), Part 8 of 8

TRANSLATOR'S COMMENTS

Given by Santikaro Bhikkhu

At Suan Mokkh in October 1986

In the late 80s and early 90s, until his health deteriorated too much, Ajahn Buddhadasa 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,

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

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

*The following is a transcription generously made by a Dhamma volunteer. If you noticed possible improvements to the text and would like to contribute, please kindly contact the volunteer and the Buddhadasa Indapañño Archives in Bangkok
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Good morning! Today I'd like to follow up on what Ajahn Buddhadasa has been saying over the last nine days (1-9 October 1986). I would like to re-emphasize certain points that tend to be forgotten by Western meditators. So I will go through and pick out some of the things that I learned in talking to people. These things are often misunderstood or forgotten. So I'll try to make them clear enough that you won't forget. In doing so, I'll talk about two basic areas. The first will be some of the fundamental points of the theory. I'll spend some time on that. And then the rest of this talk will discuss the basics of the practice itself, especially the first step.

Now what Ajahn Buddhadasa has been talking about and most of all of what I will say today is for your future reference. All these sixteen steps that has been discussed; we don't expect you to be practicing them now. For everybody here, you're practicing step one and don't delude yourself into thinking you're doing anything other than that. We're all practicing step one. The talking about steps two, three, four, five and so on is for your future reference, meaning once you have become very expert at step one, then you go on to step two and I'll be talking more about this later.

Before getting into these basic points that I think need to be reemphasized, I'd like to make a few observations about modern Western meditators. These are generalizations which will apply, more or less, to each of us. I'm not trying to tell you what is happening inside your own mind, but I would like to point out something that seems to be very common among the people who come to retreats at Suan Mokkh. I think that many of these points are things you've discovered for yourself over the last ten days. And so my talking about them maybe just serve to clarify them a bit. As Western meditators who come from modern Western society, we are under a certain set of disadvantages in practicing meditation. We come from a society and culture that is quite a bit different from the society in which the Buddha lived, even much different than the

society in which Ajahn Buddhādāsa grew up and even the society in which Ajahn Bodhi spent his childhood. We're coming from quite a different cultural background, and it seems that this cultural background puts us under a number of disadvantages. This doesn't mean we're not able to meditate but it seems to me useful to be aware of these disadvantages and see the influence they have on our meditation practice. One of these is that our lifestyle tends to be very complex. Things are very complicated. There is all kinds of fancy technology. The patterns of life are fast and anxious and very complicated. This is one disadvantage.

Another is our culture tends to be very cerebral, very much in the head and often lost contact with nature. Even the nature of our own bodies, we have been able to hide it, drug it, perfume it, clothe it and do all kind of things which have enabled us to live very much in our own heads and imaginations with our Sony Walkman and things like this, our air conditioning, and are very much out of touch with nature. Also, we come from a culture that has reached great heights of material comfort and wealth. So materially, our life is often very easy. We have lots of comfort. The struggles to survive are not very immediate. We don't do this struggling ourselves. We leave it to poor people in places like Africa, Hong Kong, and South America. Also, we have developed such a fast-paced culture where it is very easy to become addicted to excitement. This is a very easy trap we can fall into where we only need some kind of sensory excitement, something exciting to watch, something exciting to listen to, something exciting to smell, to eat even to think about. Many of us spend our whole life running from one exciting thing to another. All these various disadvantages can be summarized in the fact that our culture no longer teaches self-control. Instead, it teaches indulgence. And so we have much less ability to deal with hardship or difficulties, minor ache and pain. On top of that, we often have very little patience. We can't sit still. We can't continue doing something for a long period of time. We always demand an immediate payoff. There must be some very quick reward for us to keep going. And the last thing would be that we are coming from a culture now that is very specialized. Everyone has a specialty and very few of us now have the right, the wide range of knowledge and skills that used to be required of any adult human being. Fifty years ago, any adult had to know how to do so many different things, whether a male or a female. There're so many different chores that needed to be accomplished. Now we hire other people to do all those things and we specialize in one specific thing.

Just as a little joke, I'd like to summarize all these disadvantages in the one big disadvantage of TV. The blame isn't put on TV but the way we use television can be linked to all these other disadvantages. I'm not saying that all of us are inevitably trapped within these disadvantages, but they do have a profound influence on us and have conditioned our lives in very strong ways. If we compare some of these disadvantages to the life of the Thai peasant of 20 years ago, who almost never saw TV, had a very simple lifestyle. It wasn't very wealthy but there's enough food to eat, enough clothing, things moved fairly slowly and people were very much in touch with nature. I bring this point up because sometimes I find it a bit embarrassing that here, I am with a university degree. I've read all kinds of books. I've traveled all over the world. I could claim various things as accomplishments but when it comes to just sitting quietly and watching the breath, I know Thai farmers who can barely read newspaper, who can watch their breath much more easily than I. This seems to be the way things are. Because of these disadvantages, many people now in the West seem to be appreciating the value of meditation. And so I'm bringing these up because meditation will help us to deal with some of these drawbacks of our culture and of our conditioning so that we can get control over things again. At times the points that I've

mentioned seem to be obstacles or distractions from meditation, but meditation is probably the best way to come to terms with these things.

What I have said so far will be linked now to some of the basic underlying points of the theory of *ānāpānasati* which I would like to remind you of. The first is that the practice of *ānāpānasati* will develop what is called the ‘four foundations of mindfulness’ – the foundation of mindfulness that is contemplation of the body – the *kāya*, the foundation of mindfulness which is contemplation of the *vedanā* – the feelings, contemplation of the *citta* – mind, and contemplation of the Dhamma or truth. These are the four foundations of mindfulness. In order to fully understand life, we must establish mindfulness on these four foundations and then develop the understanding and knowledge of these four things. The practice of *ānāpānasati* deals with all four of these foundations in a very complete and efficient way. Therefore, mindfulness of breathing is a meditation practice which can allow us to develop wisdom about all the things which we need to understand in human life. As well as the four foundations of mindfulness, mindfulness of breathing also will train what Ajahn Buddhādāsa calls ‘the four comrades in Dhamma.’ These are four mental skills or mental abilities which are absolutely necessary in dealing with the experience of life. Ajahn Buddhādāsa mentioned these yesterday and pointed out their value. Today I will just remind you that mindfulness of breathing will train, develop and preserve the mental abilities of mindfulness – *sati*, wisdom in action – *sampajañña*, wisdom – *pañña* and *samādhi* – concentration.

The next point I would like to make is to point out a distinction which we often confuse. When we talk about mindfulness of breathing, we also talk about a natural evolution of the mind or of human life. This natural evolution is not the same thing as our meditation practice. These 16 steps of *ānāpānasati* are based in 16 different objects. We take these 16 objects as our focus of the study. But these 16 objects in themselves arise naturally out of the natural development of the mind. The mind must follow a certain path of progress in evolution from whatever state it is in normally up to the state that is called ‘enlightenment.’ For all beings, this path is basically the same. So that is a natural evolution which needs to happen. Mindfulness of breathing is not that evolution itself. Rather, mindfulness of breathing is the study and nurturing of that evolution. As that evolution takes place on its own or begins to take place, we use mindfulness of breathing to study it and understand it. And also, through the understanding of that natural evolution, we can use mindfulness of breathing to nurture, support and kind of nudge that evolution forward. So these are closely related but separate. People often confuse the two and so I often hear people talking about “oh, I had rapture, or I had *pīti*, I had contentment, I must be on step five.” This is a common confusion. That feeling of contentment will be arising all the time, coming and going all the time. That’s part of the natural process that is taking place. But step five of the practice of mindfulness of breathing will only start to work with that feeling of contentment or *pīti* when the time comes, which is after the first four steps have been fully completed. So even while we are practicing step one, there will be these feelings of contentment and happiness. We may even begin to be aware of impermanence in step one. But we’re still on step one. We’re not on step five or six or eight or thirteen. So there’s the difference between what is happening naturally and what we are specifically practicing in this meditation practice.

So to summarize this, on the natural side, there are these 16 objects which happen, the 16 things which happen naturally. And then on the practice side, what we actually practice is the contemplation of those 16 things. So please be clear about this. It will make it easier for you to understand what you need to be doing.

One last point about this natural evolution is that it's an evolution of the mind from cruder states of happiness to finer, more subtle states of happiness; that when we begin meditating, our interest is in rather crude kind of happiness, in sensual happiness. As we begin to come across more subtle and sublime levels of joy and happiness, and as the meditation practice continues, we become aware of even higher levels of happiness. Once we become aware of a higher level of happiness, a more subtle level of happiness, then it's quite easy to let go of the coarse levels of happiness. So in this practice, there is this natural progress of the mind being attached to a course level of happiness. Then through meditation beginning to be aware of a higher level of happiness, the mind lets go of the lower level and attaches to the higher level until it becomes aware of an even higher level of happiness, and then let's go of the lower level to go up to this new higher level. And this can go on and on up until the point when the mind finally learns that the best happiness is to not attach to any kind of happiness.

The next point to make is that this practice of mindfulness of breathing should be done one step at a time, one by one. We don't jump around from step to step. It's not like "well, today I will do all 16 steps" or "this week I'll do the first four, next week the next four, then I go back later" or we don't look through our nose and decide which step interests us today. We take them one by one. This is because that that evolution of the mind that I've talked about is natural progression and the practice of mindfulness of breathing is based on that natural progression. And to make the most of this and to understand that natural development, it's best to follow *ānāpānasati* as it has been taught, which is do step one first. After you're completely expert in step one, after you've learned everything you can learn from step one, after you know it fully and there's no problem whatsoever, then go on to step two. And then practice step two until you're an expert in step two and have learned everything you can from it, then go on to step three — not a little at step one, a little at step two, a little at step three, a little at step four, and then go back to step one for a while, and then a little more step two. This is very inefficient and will tend to get very confused and will make very slow progress. We all have this tendency, it seems because of some of the points I mentioned earlier: our lack of patience, or maybe because we have an urge to compete with ourselves or with others, whatever. We're never satisfied with where we are. We always want to get somewhere else. So it will do us well to control that urge. So practice these steps one at a time and follow them, stick with each step until you become an expert at that step. Related to this is that each sitting is new. Each time you sit down to practice, begin with step one. Now for all of us, at this point that's nothing difficult because we're all practicing step one anyway. But imagine that after a few weeks or, whatever, a few months, we become expert at step one. Then every time you sit down, you still begin with step one. And then practice it a while until it's clear in the mind "OK I'm still an expert at step one," then go on to step two. And then work on step two for days, weeks, however long it takes. When step two is perfected, then one can go on to step three but always you begin at step one. Do it. You begin each sitting with step one. Practice it until there is the certainty that we are experts at this step one. Then go on to step two and review it until we're certain again that we are experts at step two. And then from there we can go on to step three. So each sitting begins with step one and goes through each step but this is for later when you're legitimately working on steps two and three. But for now, it's quite simple — just work at step one.

Another important point about this practice is that this is the practice a practice of non-attachment. The Buddha taught the Middle Way and the practice of mindfulness of breathing is nothing but the Middle Way. To do it properly, it must be a practice of non-attachment, not detachment where you're pushing things away but non-attachment when there is no egoistic

identification. So be very careful about sitting down with ‘I am meditating, I am meditating, I am meditating’ or ‘my breathing, my breathing my breathing, my happy feelings’ and things like these. Learn to let go of these attached feelings or ideas of ‘I’ and ‘mine.’ Learn to just stay balanced in the practice. Drop this egoistic identification. The Middle Way is also a practice of correctness, of being correct and right in the way one lives. And this can also be developed in mindfulness of breathing while practicing this. It’s a way of life that is correct. By ‘correct’ we mean that no harm is done to either ourselves or to others. So, as we establish ourselves in this practice of mindfulness of breathing, we also establish ourselves in the Middle Way, in correctness, in a way of living that is balanced. We’re not getting caught up in this extreme or that extreme, in any of the dualities or things like these.

Now for most of us, attachment is a long-established habit and if we could drop it – like that, we would all be enlightened – like that. But for most of us, we have to work on letting go of our attachments. So we can see mindfulness of breathing as a way of letting go of attachments. Right now, we have a lot of crude, coarse attachments. We begin to let go of them. Mainly we can let go of our agitation, our impatience, and our attachment to the body, to pain and ache, little and petty annoyances. We can begin to let go of these coarse attachments and then we will find ourselves attaching to more subtle things such as those happy feelings that we’ve talked about. And we can learn to let go of those and then we find ourselves attaching to the higher states of mind that we begin to be aware of – the more clear and bright states of awareness. And then we learn to let go of those and begin to have insight into truth. And we attach to those insights but finally eventually we learn to let go of even those things. So we can see mindfulness of breathing as a systematic way to help the mind to let go of coarser attachments. And then let go of the less coarse attachments, and then the more subtle one until finally there is no attachment at all.

The last background point that I would like to make is that patience is a very necessary spiritual tool. Many of us are used to judging ourselves and measuring ourselves against various standards. Some of us might be quite competitive and judge ourselves according to others. Other of us just ourselves according to various ideals we have. Many people when they hear about these 16 steps of mindfulness of breathing begin to judge themselves according to these 16 steps. And they figured that they must be a better person if they’re practicing four than if they’re practicing step one. So everybody wants to practice step four and then five and then six. I think that that kind of thinking won’t do you much good. Don’t measure your progress according to these 16 steps. Measure progress according to the development of spiritual qualities, spiritual qualities like mindfulness, spiritual qualities like energy, understanding, wisdom, caring, friendliness, faith, balance. This kind of qualities will be growing in the meditation practice even if you’re still working on step one. Even if you work at it for the rest of your life, these spiritual qualities will grow and that’s what matters. Getting to step 16 isn’t so important. In fact, step one can be enough. The thing about enlightenment is that it’s unconditioned. So you never know when it’s gonna happen. It might even happen during step one. So you don’t have to be in a hurry to get on to step two or three or whatever. Step one might be enough if you just do it right, do it with patience, with wisdom, with balance, with clarity. So really develop patience and you’ll find that the more you can develop patience using the practice of mindfulness of breathing or any meditation practice, that patience will really benefit you in living a life that is clear, clean, and happy. So be very patient. Learn to sit still. Learn to just keep plugging away at step one and then do step one properly. And don’t be in a hurry. With patience the mind will get somewhere. As long as there is impatience to get on to the next step you can be almost certain that you’re

learning almost nothing, so not almost nothing but you're learning much less than if there was not that impatience getting in the way.

These are some background points that are worth remembering. Mindfulness of breathing trains the four Dhamma comrades and perfect the four foundations of mindfulness. The practice of mindfulness of breathing is a way of studying and nurturing and supporting a natural development of the mind. And this natural development in the practice is somewhat separate and we need to be aware of that difference. The steps of mindfulness of breathing must be practiced one at a time. In doing so, mindfulness of breathing is the practice of the Middle Way. It is a practice of non-attachment. Last of all, patience is a very important spiritual quality which will help the practice to develop and will bring us great peace in our lives.

Now I'd like to use the remaining time to talk about some basic points about the actual practice, about what we actually need to be doing. And I'm gonna start at the very beginning. First, we have a few preparatory arrangements to make – basically finding a suitable place to meditate. Find the best place that is reasonable. But if the best place you can find is a 5-hour drive from your house, then it may not be so good. So find a place which is reasonable, accessible and that will allow you to practice regularly daily. Everybody ought to have one place in their home that is suitable for meditation. You also might find a place in a nearby park or church or some quiet place that would be useful to go to sometimes when you are able. You might even find a place at work that is suitable for meditation. Or when you're traveling, wherever you go, keep an eye open for good places to meditate. Keep this in mind. So we need to find a suitable place to meditate, not perfect but good enough and then we make the most of what we can find.

We need to have a good time to meditate. Often the early morning is a very good time before the day starts, before we get involved in all kinds of busy things. It can also be good to meditate in the evening, especially if we've had a busy day of work or travel or play or whatever. It will help us to wind down and get it under control again, but we don't have to lock into certain times. It can be useful to have a set time daily to meditate but we can also practice mindfulness of breathing at other times during the day. So be alert to suitable times for practice.

And the third thing that needs to be prepared is our physical health – being in reasonably good health. We don't have to be Olympic athletes but being in reasonably good health will make the practice easier. This can involve things like giving up smoking or smoking less. It will be much easier to breathe gently and relax, practicing yoga or Tai chi or some useful form of exercise that keeps the body in good shape or doing physical labor of some sort. All this kind of things that keep the body in good health and then eating properly, sleeping properly, living a balanced lifestyle so that the body is in good shape are very important or very useful for mindfulness of breathing, especially at the beginning. Once we are experienced, we can continue meditating no matter how sick the body is. But when we're beginning, it's much easier if the body is in good shape. The same goes for mental health. If you've got really strong neuroses or psychoses, these can get in the way of meditation practice. If you can use the meditation practice to come to terms with certain mental illnesses that we all tend to have, that's fine, or you may seek some other kind of help as well. So find appropriate places, appropriate times and maintain good health. These will provide a good context for meditation practice.

Next, we'll talk about posture. I've seen in magazines that cater to people that meditate all kinds of expensive carpets and mats and pillows and cushions and chairs that you can do all kinds of things with and those may be of use. But in meditating, the simpler the better. If we can learn to

just sit on the ground, whatever kind of ground, that's the best. The Buddha would just go somewhere, scrape up a couple of leaves, lay across a cloth across it. Instead, he wasn't lugging around pillows and in burlap bags and all kinds of stuff like that. Appeal of these instruments can be useful but do your best to keep things simple. Or if you've begun with a big pile of cushions this big, then work on lowering it a little bit to make things simple because in the end, the best kind of posture for meditation is a very simple cross-legged posture like this, where your rear end is firm upon the ground, not way high up in the air. And then if you can, after that learn to sit in a half lotus. That's even more stable. And then best of all, if your clothes don't get in the way, learn to sit in a full lotus because then the underside of your caps are firm across on the ground. And it's very easy to sit up straight so that the spinal cord is straight, so all the vertebrae sit on top of each other very snugly. And when you learn to sit like this, then it's very stable, very relaxing and the breathing can flow very smoothly. The blood and the various kinds of energy within the body, it all can flow smoothly. Though it may take a few years for some of our bodies to adapt to a full lotus, that's OK. You don't have to force it but it's really worth developing a good meditation posture. It may not come immediately but after a while with patience and effort, we can learn to sit in a full Lotus. And if you're interested in really developing deep levels of concentration, you have to have a posture like a full Lotus. Otherwise, you'll fall over when the mind becomes one-pointed and then you probably won't be one-pointed anymore when your head hits the floor. So it's worth developing a good posture, a simple position for the hands. Keep the back straight. Be comfortable and relax.

So now we've got our place, our times and we've got our posture. So we're sitting in a reasonable quiet place. There's enough air movement so we don't asphyxiate ourselves. The thing to do is to begin by establishing mindfulness – establishing sati. And the way Ajahn Buddhadasa suggested to do that is to do what is called 'following' or 'chasing' the breath. So now I'm going to just describe a series of things you can do and it's my understanding that this is about the simplest way to do it and it's most appropriate for the majority of people. You may find, especially if you have previous meditation experience, that there are slight variations that will work better for you, that's OK. But I'm going to give one series of things as a recommendation and then you can experiment with them if you need to. But it may not be necessary to experiment at all.

So we sit. We begin to follow the breathing. The breathing begins at the tip of the nose and comes into the body and then goes out, comes in and out. When we talk about following the breathing, it's mindfulness, *sati*, this chases the breath in, follows it out, chases it in, chases it out, follows it in, follows it out. Now some of us when we begin breathing, our breaths are very short. We're only breathing with our chest. So then in this case, *sati* will only come in a certain amount and then it goes back out but just have a very simple movement of in and out, in and out with *sati*, following the breath. Some of us, as we begin to be aware of the breathing, will notice that actually there's a lot happening at once and in some ways it may seem quite complex. That's OK. But this following of the breathing, keep it simple. Don't sort of do a following that tries to cover every movement in each breath. Just have a general sweeping movement of in and out. Even though the diaphragm is doing this, the abdomen is doing that, the lungs are doing this and that nose is doing whatever it's doing, don't try and follow all of those or jumping around. Just establish a very smooth and easy flow of in and out.

At the beginning, there are a few things that will help us in keeping the mind on the breath. One is to gaze at the tip of your nose. While we're practicing, our attention doesn't have to be on the

eyes. Don't intentionally put our attention to the eyes. But because we don't have complete control over the mind at this point, the mind will often go to the eyes and start looking at things. If we develop the habit of having the eyes gaze at the tip of the nose, then every time the mind goes to see what the eyes are doing, then it sees the nose. And then remember what it's supposed to be doing. This can be very useful. Even if you close your eyes, you can still have the eyeballs generally gazing towards the tip of the nose. This is an aid to establishing mindfulness on the breathing.

Another aid is when you begin breath loudly. Breath loud enough so you'll hear your breath. Then not only you have your eyes, but your ears are helping to be mindful of the breath. This breathing loudly is very useful at the beginning of each sitting. As the breath becomes calm, you will naturally drop this loud breathing. But when you begin or any period of time where you find it very difficult to establish mindfulness, you can breathe loudly.

Another technique is to count. You can see what we're doing is we're really ganging up on the on the breath. We're using all these different ways to direct attention to the breath. So there's the eyes, the ears and now we can bring in the intellect – the counting. So each in-breath is one, two, three, four. You can count that way, or you can count one, two, three, one, two, three, one, two, three, or if there's longer breath, one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten. You can count in these various ways and that will help to establish mindfulness. Once mindfulness is already established, you may find the counting unnecessary, and you can drop it. But at the beginning especially, it can be very useful.

So we start off by establishing mindfulness, by training *sati* – chasing the breath in and out. Sitting and doing this for hours, chasing it in and out, in and out. Once it's become possible to follow the breath fairly well, the mind is still wandering but not too often and it doesn't go off somewhere for too long a period of time. Once there is fairly decent following of the breath, then we can begin to be interested in long and short breathing. This is something that I've been somewhat confused about for a long time, but I finally figured out. And since my translation earlier was a bit unclear, I'll repeat the difference between long and short breathing.

Most people breathe only with their chest. If you watch your breathing, you'll find that the chest is moving a lot and the abdomen isn't moving very much. This kind of breathing is short breathing. When we just breathe with our chest, we don't have very much capacity to bring in air. So if you're only breathing with your chest, that's short breathing. We can learn, and I guess many yogis teach this, to breathe with the abdomen. And for the practice of mindfulness of breathing, it is to breathe long. It is necessary to breathe with the abdomen. So what I'm gonna say now has only to do with abdominal breathing, not chest breathing. If you're breathing with your chest only, then it's only short breathing and you won't even be able to do step one. But even if we're only used to breathing with our chest, it's not that difficult to learn to breathe with the abdomen. Now, when we breathe with the abdomen, as we take in air, the diaphragm drops. As the diaphragm drops, the abdomen, the tummy begins to expand. And then after expanse, we breath out and the abdomen comes in a bit. This is abdominal breathing, but it is still short if there is only the movement of the abdomen coming out and in, out with the in-breath and in with the out-breath. We say that is short breathing. Now, if you've been breathing like this for a while and you learn to extend it to when the abdomen comes out and then you take even more air, what you'll find is there will be a limit for the abdomen to come out. This is when the lower lungs are full and the diaphragm has come down as much as possible. So the abdomen has expanded as much as possible. If we want to take in more air, it has to be taken in the upper chest. So as the

upper chest takes in air and expands, this pulls up the whole front of the body. So the abdomen that has come out, now raises up. This is on the in-breath. On the out-breath, once the upper chest is expanded, on the out-breath then this will drop down and then the air comes out. So the long breath is the short breath plus a little more. They're not completely separate. This means that in a long breath first you have short breath of the abdomen expanding. Then you have the part that we call the 'long breath' where it comes up. This means that if your breathing is the simple process of the abdomen expanding and then contracting with almost no movement in the chest, then that is short breathing. Long breathing is where there is the abdomen expanse, then the chest expands, the abdomen comes up. So this is the difference between the two.

Many of us will find that our normal breathing is short. For almost all of us, the normal breathing is short. This may be a bit of a surprise for some of you who heard things the other way around, but the normal breathing is generally short. A short breath can actually take, maybe, as long as five or ten seconds depending on how slow and gradual it is. So this is a definition of long and short breathing which I hope is clear. If you're only breathing with your chest, that's short. If it's long, there's a movement in the abdomen and then in the chest as well.

From following the breathing, you can learn to breathe more deeply so that the breaths are longer and longer. And then after a while you may realize that your breathing is short, not very short but relatively short. But through learning to gradually extend the breath, we learn to take in more air in a relaxed way. Please don't force it. And then after a while, we begin to learn how to breathe long. So first following the breath, then learn how to breathe long. Once you're breathing long and still following the breath, then you're doing step one. In following the breath and learning how to breathe long, this may take a little while. But once you've developed mindfulness of the breathing by following the breath, you will automatically have learned quite a bit about the long breathing. And then all you need to do is study it a while longer until you are clear about the various things that Ajahn Buddhadasa pointed it out in his earlier talk.

Here I have a question that each of you can ask yourself regularly. Every time you wonder if you have been doing step one long enough, then ask yourself "can you sit for an hour or maybe two hours completely relaxed at ease and without any desire to recross the legs or anything like that?" If you can sit for more than an hour like that, relaxed, then maybe you have finished step one. But if you're still moving every 20 minutes, half hour, 40 minutes or so, then you really aren't doing the wrong breathing. Because when the breathing is really long and smooth and peaceful, then the body is relaxed and there's no problem sitting for long periods of time. So in step one, really learn how to make the breath long, slow, gentle and smooth. And then in step one you'll learn how to sit for long periods of time with ease. If you're still jumping, then don't even think about step two. Keep doing this, working on following the breath and lengthening it. In doing so you'll learn many things about step one. You become very clear about what the long breath is, and you also learn how it influences the body. When you can follow the breath and the breaths are really long and you know them well, then you can go on to step two.

Step two is where we take the short breathing as our object. It's possible that it is this time you have learned a lot about the short breathing already because in learning how to breathe long you also had to do a lot of short breathing. And so you know quite a bit about this short breathing as well. So at this point, if you know the long breathing well enough already, then you can come and study the short breathing and confirm what you have already learned indirectly while doing the previous part of the practice. So in step two, take the short breathing specifically as the object. You no longer have to try to make the breathing long. You've already learned how to do

that, or you can make the breathing longer and longer. Now in step two, take the short breathing as the object and get to know it really well. Once the short breathing is known really well, when you know what makes the breathing short, what makes it long, what the long breathing feels like, what the short breathing feels like, what influences the different kinds of breathing have on the body and you can still follow the breathing in and out, in and out, as you go you're getting even better and better at following the breath in and out, in and out, to the point where the mind is barely wandering at all, still goes off a little bit now and then but it doesn't go off for long periods of time, then after knowing the long and short breathings very well where you're very expert at this knowledge, then you can go on to step three.

Step three is where we note the influence of the breathing upon the body. You've already learned quite a bit about this indirectly. You haven't really focused your attention on the influence of the long breath or short breath. But you naturally become aware of quite a few things, it would be impossible not to. But so far you have focused your attention on the longness of the breath or the shortness of the breath and that's all. But in step three, now you begin to focus your attention on the influence of the long breath and the short breath. So breathe long and pay very close attention to what influence that has on the body. How do those long breaths affect the body? And then breathe short. You can breathe very short, almost hyperventilating, but don't do it for very long or you'll get sick. You can breathe relatively short, a second or two for each breath or you can breathe short to the point where it's almost long but not quite and see what affects the short breathing has on the body. What affects the very short, the medium short and the not so short really have upon the body. Also, in this case, not only use the long and short breathing but see the influence of smooth breathing and coarse breathing, or gentle breathing and rough breathing, when you breathe fast and when you breathe slow. See how these different types of breath influence the body. All of these things, you will have seen to some degree in steps one and two but in step three this is studied directly, exclusively, especially the influence of the different kinds of breath upon the physical body. In doing so, you will come across certain types of breathing that calm the body. You'll come across certain kinds of breathing that make the body very relaxed. So at this point, you will know what kind of breathing is necessary to allow the body to sit for long periods of time, for maybe a few hours, or you don't have to recross your legs or get up or scratch or anything. Step three is getting to know this influence.

Remember in each sitting, you begin with step one. So let's imagine we have perfected steps one and two and then we come down. We go to the meditation hall over the corner of our house where we meditate and we're gonna go, we're gonna sit down and practice step three. But first, we start with step one and make sure we're still an expert at step one. Practice step one until it's clear that we still know how to do it. Then go on to step two and make sure we can still do that. Then go to step three. In doing so, when you're doing step one, just think about step one. Don't think about "well, in five minutes I'm going on to step two." Just do step one. Once there is the awareness of "OK, I've got this down right." Then think about "OK, step two what does that mean, the new step two?" And then don't think about step three until after you've done step two. Learn to keep the mind on what you're doing and then maybe one day step three has been fulfilled and perfected. So it's time for step four. But this time we can sit down and be very relaxed, sit for long periods of time. This following of the breath is very skillful. So what we do in step four is we really perfect that following the breath, where we can follow the breath in and out, where the mind doesn't wander at all, where the mind just stay with the breath in and out, in and out, in and out, without wondering at all.

When following the breath has been perfected, then find that point in the nose. There's one point in the nose where you feel the breath more easily than anywhere else – the incoming breath and the outgoing breath. Once following the breath has been perfected, then guard the breath at that point – somewhere in the nose or maybe on the upper lip as was described. Keep your mind at that point. If the mind is so well trained that it can follow the breath in and out, in and out it will be quite easy for the mind to just stop on one point. That will not be difficult because the mind has already been very well trained. But those of you who maybe try to do this at this point will find it difficult because the mind has not been well trained yet. But if steps one, two and three have been practiced properly and then we perfect following at beginning of step four, it will not be so difficult. It will be quite easy to bring the mind to that one point or for mindfulness to be on guard at that one point in the nose.

With mindfulness on that one point, then we really begin to work at calming the breath. And the way to calm the breath is to bring the mind completely to that point. The way to calm the breath is for the mind to focus on that point, to concentrate on that point fully – this is the essential part of step four. There are the various mental images we've talked about. Those are tools which can help you in calming the breath. But as I've emphasized today, don't be in a hurry. Be patient. If some of those mental images arise, then use them. But if they don't come, then don't worry about it. Just keep working with that point.

So I've said so far most of what I intended to say. I've done my best to emphasize especially step one because that for most of us need to be working. At this retreat, we've given you a great deal of information and at times you may not have been able to absorb it all. So consider what you've gotten in these 10 days as a start. You all ought to know at least how to practice step one properly, have a good idea about the first four steps, should have a clear idea about the practice of the first four steps and have a general idea of all 16 steps. This will give you a good start and help you to stay on the right path. If you don't have this information, you may very easily wander off into dead end. So we've tried to give you a good beginning both in practice and in theory. You'll need to follow this up by reading books, by talking with other meditators, especially experienced meditators, and maybe by attending the other retreats or spending time in monasteries or meditation centers. Follow this information up in whatever way is convenient and useful for you.

Let me point something out to you. In this world, there are many different kinds of meditation techniques and so that means there are lots of meditators who are not practicing mindfulness of breathing. There are even different ways of doing mindfulness of the breathing. So when you start reading a book by this or that meditation teacher, find out what meditation technique they're using. Many people go and read a book by so and so who is doing a technique much different than the technique we're practicing. And then when you go and try to apply some of the things in that book, you can get very confused. Some of the things in that book are general to all meditation practices but some are specific to only the meditation practice that that one person is doing. So you have to find this out, otherwise, you will confuse yourself. I don't think it's necessary to only attend retreats at Suan Mokkh. If you're going to a place where a slightly different or a very different technique is taught, keep things straight, keep it clear in your mind "This is mindfulness of breathing as taught at Suan Mokkh and this other person is teaching somewhat different." You can learn a lot from that if you keep things clear and separate. But if you take everything you hear from different teachers, different books, different meditators and jumble it all together, we cannot guarantee that you will get anywhere. If you stick with

mindfulness of breathing and follow it properly, you will get somewhere. And I believe that the same can be said for many different meditation techniques. But when we take different things and lump them together, it's very difficult to predict what will happen. So please follow up the information you've gotten here. You're welcome to stay here as long as you want. Listen to the tapes of Ajahn Buddhādāsa's talks and talk with each other or follow up in other ways but keep things clear. Know what is what. Don't confuse them.

Last, I'd like to end with three short little warnings or bits of advice. First, don't play games. Many of us really like to play games. It's fun. We like to entertain ourselves. We like to play around with things. We often find it difficult to be serious about anything or to apply ourselves to anything. But if you're gonna use this meditation technique, don't play games with it. Use it wisely. Take it seriously, not with a frown on your face but a happy kind of seriousness. It's something really valuable. It deserves your respect and honor. So give it that respect and honor. Don't treat it like a toy or a joke. If you do, if you make it into a game, if it is just playing, we may not get very far. But I'm not saying, don't go around frowning and hitting yourself over the head or anything. Enjoy it, but it needs to be done in a spirit of respect and honor.

Second, follow the instructions. You've been able to hear the instructions from somebody who's been practicing *ānāpānasati* for almost 60 years and who knows this technique better than probably anybody else who's alive on this planet. He knows what he's talking about. We don't. So listen to what Ajahn Buddhādāsa has told us. You may find it necessary times to make adaptations and it's not wrong to experiment but try not to wander too far from the basic instructions that you have been given.

Last of all, practice wisdom. Any meditation practice is aimed at developing wisdom. Buddhism is all about developing knowledge of the way things are. This is what we mean by wisdom – see the truth of things. So practice wisely. Do things wisely. Develop wisdom from the very start. Approach this with patience – that is wisdom, with balance. Give it the necessary energy, respect and consideration. And don't attach and then we'll be practicing wisdom from the start. And then this practice will probably help us to really grow with wisdom. So I hope this information will be useful and that it will be very clear to each of you what you need to be doing, especially in step one. I wish you all success in this practice and hope that you can use it to successfully liberate the mind from attachment and dukkha and then help to bring peace into our confused world. Thank you.

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