

Ānāpānasati is the Practice which Controls Dependent Origination

by Ajahn Buddhādāsa

Interpreted into English by Santikaro Bhikkhu

A Dhamma lecture given at Suan Mokkh on 9 January 1991

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. Audio recordings are now available from www.suanmokkh.org and www.bia.or.th. 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 Buddhādāsa Indapañño Archives in Bangkok (suanmokkhbkk@gmail.com)

Listeners, this talk will continue where we left of the last one. Last time we spoke about *paṭiccasamuppāda* (dependent origination), which points out that life is just a flow of natural events, is just a process of natural things, happening according to their causes and conditions. Specifically it shows how *dukkha* occurs, and also how the quenching or cessation of *dukkha* occurs.

The essence of dependent origination is to not the feelings or concepts of ‘me’ and ‘mine’ arise, because through dependent origination we realize, whenever the concepts of ‘I,’ or ‘mine,’ occur, life becomes heavy and burdensome exactly then. And so the essence of this is to not the concepts of *attā* (‘self’) and *attaniya* (‘of self’) interfere with life.

The meaning of this is profound and subtle, to the point that even life itself cannot be taken to be ‘mine,’ or ‘me.’ Life is merely concocted, created, out of and by nature; natural elements are compounded together into what we call ‘life’ and none of that can be truly taken or held onto as being ‘me,’ or ‘mine.’

Buddhists have a simple way of expressing this which is a bit metaphorical, that this life is borrowed from nature. These natural elements – earth element, water element, fire element, wind element, space element, and consciousness element – are borrowed from nature and compounded or concocted into what we call life. Or we can call it ‘body-mind,’ ‘mind-body,’ whichever we prefer. The

important thing is that this life, this mind-body, these elements, are merely borrowed from nature. They don't really belong to us.

There is nothing in this life which can be taken as being 'self.' This 'self' is merely a concept or an illusion of the ignorant mind. But you can't actually find any reality behind this illusion. There's just this body and mind, and there isn't any need to add a self to it. There's this body and within the body is the nervous system, and through the nervous system, we contact, we communicate with the external world. And so the various experiences and feelings regarding the external world, happen just as natural functions of this nervous system. There's absolutely no need to go and claim any of it to be 'me,' or 'mine.'

And then there's the mind, the thing which experiences, which is aware, which thinks what to do, which responds, and this can all happen naturally, the natural functions of the mind. There's nothing in that mind or any of its natural abilities which can rightfully be taken to be self, to be 'me,' or 'mine.' So in short, there's merely this mind and body, functioning naturally, using its abilities and the 'self' is merely an illusion that our ignorant minds impose upon reality.

Now when the nervous system experiences the world, there arise feelings, and in these feelings, there is positive and there is negative. And especially this positiveness in the feelings, there is something very attractive, very lovely, very satisfying about the positiveness. And of course, we like this very much; we want to have it very much. But the way to practice towards positiveness and negativeness is just to leave it all alone, to toss it all away. But then we feel that we've really lost something. We find this positiveness so attractive and satisfying. We fall in love with it, and so nobody wants to just toss it away. And so the result is most people are unable to practice Dhamma because they're still so infatuated with the positive; they're still clinging to this satisfying, attractive quality in feeling. In fact, the whole world is going this way. The whole world these days is nothing but a massive obsession with positive feeling. Our social structures, our economies, our industries, are really centered on creating and attempting to sustain, positive feelings. And so people get more and more lost in this obsession because it's so wide spread. They don't see any other way. But in Dhamma, our sole wish is to toss all that away and be free. But everybody's worried that they'll lose something. They're worried they'll be missing something if they leave the positive feelings alone, and so they continue to fall in love and cling to these things.

In fact, we don't really toss them away, because we can't really do it. But what we mean is that, although we still feel a bit positive or a bit negative, we don't allow these positive & negative feelings to overwhelm, to dominate the mind. They may be felt, but we don't take them too seriously, we don't attach them. That means they are unable to enslave us. So what we're speaking of is not letting the influence or the power of positive & negative feelings take over the mind. Instead, to just leave them alone so those positive & negative feelings don't stir up all the kinds of values, all the kinds of dualistic values, which lead to further discrimination, judgment and obsession.

Positive feelings make us glad and this gladness makes us laugh. Negative feelings make us sad and this sadness makes us cry. But both laughing & crying, both sadness & gladness aren't worth the trouble. They're too much hassle, because neither laughing nor crying is peaceful. Neither gladness nor sadness are truly peaceful and so the thing is to be beyond them, to be above these rather crude feelings and reactions of gladness & sadness, laughing & crying, to beyond the power of such unpeaceful things.

These kinds of feelings, about all they're good for is they create thoughts and discriminations in us such as 'good luck' & 'bad luck,' or 'getting' & 'losing,' 'having the advantage,' or 'being taken advantage of.' These dualities and discriminations are the results of all this positive & negative feeling and our attachment to it. All of these dualisms and discriminations of our minds are merely to ride a roller coaster, a roller coaster of out-of-control thoughts and emotions, and none of that roller coaster is peaceful. So we're looking to drop all those discriminations, to get out from the power of those positive & negative feelings, in order to get off this crazy roller coaster of confusion and pain, in order to find true peace.

And then the mind will be stable or still. The mind will be unshakable, and that's when it is truly peaceful. But when this mind is truly peaceful in the way we're describing, it can do anything – any work, any thinking, any activity that you need to do can be done in the best possible way. So don't get the irrational fear that 'without the positive, I can't do anything.' That, it's not at all true. That in fact, it's only when we are free of the influence of positive & negative, that we can actually do anything correctly, because only then can we do things peacefully. So don't worry that you'll be missing something positive. As long as you cling to the positive, you'll never know peace and you'll never do anything correctly either.

The mind is beyond positive & negative, which means it is free; it's no longer trapped by positive & negative feelings. That mind can study and learn; it can work; it can earn money; it can use money, spend money; it can have various possessions; it can play. It can do anything. In fact, it can do everything much better than the mind which is trapped within positive & negative feelings. This is why we're looking for this freedom, so that we can do things, especially life, in a much better way.

When one acts merely because of positive feeling, then one works like a slave. When one acts merely in reaction to negative feeling, then one is just acting like a slave. But when one no longer is enslaved, or under the control of these positive & negative feelings, then one is free. And when one is free, one no longer acts and works like a slave. Instead, one becomes the master. One is the master of everything, where a while ago, one was the slave of everything, because the positive & negative feelings we have towards things is what was running our lives. But now the mind is above all that and one is the master of everything, and so one no longer works like a slave, acts like a slave, and thinks like a slave. One is the master and things are totally different.

When one can eat tasty food, one can listen to beautiful songs, one can experience wonderful things, without being trapped in the positiveness of all that, without being a slave. At the same time one can eat food which doesn't taste very good, listen to music which is pretty bad, and experience things that are ugly, or not very attractive. And one isn't a slave to the negativeness of all that, one is no longer a slave. This is what it is to be free. We experience, we're still alive, but this positiveness & negativeness doesn't entrap us. And so everything we do has this quality of freedom about it. One is no longer merely blindly reacting to things. And one no longer has to discriminate things as being good & bad, as being 'I like it, I don't like it,' and all the other kinds of false dualities we with which we judge and interpret reality. One can be free of all those dualities. One can even fight with one's enemies in the most competent and skillful way with this kind of mind. Without this kind of mind, it's much harder to deal with your enemies.

Most of you come from Christian cultures and Christian families, some of you from Jewish families. And so we ask you to pay special attention to the wonderful story in the book which is so holy and sacred for you. On practically the first page of the Bible, there's the story where God speaks directly to Adam and Eve and warns them, "Don't eat the Fruit of the Tree which will cause you to know Good and Evil. Otherwise, you will die." God warned them that if they ate

this Fruit, they would die. This is exactly what we're talking about here. This is the very heart of Buddhism. And so we ask you to pay attention to this story from your own background, from your own culture.

This wisdom is very ancient. As we can see here, it goes back to the early formation of the Christian Bible. Thousands of years ago, there was this wisdom that we shouldn't discriminate things as being good & evil, as being positive & negative. That once we discriminate things as being positive & negative, we inevitably attach to those discriminations. And then as soon as we do that, we're as good as dead. This wisdom is very ancient, and it's about time that modern humanity payed attention to it, to stop concocting all these discriminations and dualities out of our own ignorant thinking, in order to be above all that, and no longer have to be going through the death that ensues from that.

Now there's an itchy-bitsy little problem which turns out to be quite a big problem. Many of our Christian friends say that they cannot accept this thing we're talking about here. They say that they can't abandon the positive, because since they were little, their parents taught them to go to church and to pray to God for all kinds of positive things. Their understanding of God is you go and worship Him so that He will give us all kinds of wonderful, positive things.

For us though, it's much different. God is merely the... There is the supreme God of *idappaccayatā*, the law of nature, the law of conditionality that all things occur depending on other things, and they pass away depending on the passing away of other things, or the law which is also called the 'law of dependent origination.' This is the highest God; and this God is right here, in these bodies, so one doesn't have to go to any church. Once one sees that dependent origination is with one all the time, that God is within us, always has been.

And when one sees this, highest God, then the way to worship this God is just to live in line, to live in harmony, with it. And that's to worship this God. One doesn't have to go to the church and pray for all kinds of positive things. Instead, the highest God wants us to live totally free of the positive & the negative. But most of our Christian friends don't want to accept this.

Through this principle, our body becomes the church, and we are in church all the time by following this principle, by living in harmony with the law of *idappaccayatā*, of conditionality, of interconnectedness. And we are worshipping God all the time while we are in this church, by following this principle. If we're still entrapped by the positive & negative, our life is just an endless series of ups

and downs, a roller coaster on which we find no peace – a very neurotic roller coaster at that.

That is a life which bites its owner. Whenever any positive or negative arises, we get trapped by it and that life bites its owner. This has the quality of being a prison. One is glad, one is sad, one is glad, one is sad, back and forth, over and over again, gladness & sadness, bouncing back and forth in a way that is just like being caught in a prison, because life is totally cramped and there is no freedom. One has no control over one's life when one is always blindly attaching to the positive & the negative.

The life which is falling for the positive & the negative has the quality of being bitten by itself. Love bites us, and then anger bites us, and then hatred bites us and then fear bites us, and it goes on and on like this. Hoping after the future bites; longing after the past bites us; envy bites us; jealousy, possessiveness bites us; sexual jealousy about one's partner bites us. These things keep biting us over and over again. When one is falling for these things and being bitten by them, then one's life is biting its owner. Life is falling into the state of biting its owner. This is our problem, that we chase after the positive and fall for the negative so much that our life is in a constant state of biting its owner.

Knowledge of dependent origination enables us to be free of all this prison and all this biting. Through understanding dependent origination, through really understanding it for ourselves, the feelings of positive & negative won't happen. Or, if they should happen, then we don't get trapped in them. They don't force us into desire and attachment and all that. By understanding dependent origination, the meaning of positive and the meaning of negative doesn't arise. Or if there is some of this, these positive & negative meanings, we don't fall for them. And then life is in control, rather than being under the control, of these positive & negative feelings. Life is in the driver's seat.

The details of dependent origination were discussed in the last talk. Now, we only want to discuss the essence of this entire subject, which is how to prevent the positive & negative from biting us. When forms make contact with the eyes, and sounds with the ears, odors with the nose, tastes with the tongue, touches with the body, and mental objects with the mind, how can we regulate that or control it, so that no positive & negative arises? This is the essence of the subject –how to live with seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, and mental experience, without positive & negative happening in our hearts.

Once there is the contact, whether at the eyes, the ears, the nose, or wherever, feeling arises. This is totally natural that feeling arises due to contact. But now we don't let feeling take over the mind, we don't fall for the feelings and get trapped in their meaning. Instead, one is able to control the feeling. One controls it so that it doesn't take control of the mind.

Then after feeling, there arises perceptions and conceptions, kind of thinking about things, which becomes desire and leads to attachment. As soon as there is this attachment in the positive & negative, then life suddenly becomes heavy. This is the life that is trapped, the life that bites, which means the life of dukkha. Which is of course is totally stupid. It's totally stupid to take natural life and turn it into a prison, to turn into needless suffering, although we do this over and over again. As soon as we allow attachments, this 'me,' and 'mine,' feeling to grab onto the positive & the negative, then this is what happens to life.

When our lives are no longer run and dominated by the positive & the negative, then they are cool and this is the supreme coolness, which you can call blissful or you can call peaceful, whichever you prefer. And when life is supremely cool and peaceful in this way, then it is useful. This is the life which is able to serve and benefit others in the most wonderful ways. This then is the results of a life that is out from under the domination of positiveness & negativeness. It's supremely cool; it's peaceful; and it's most wonderfully useful. This ought to be enough. This in fact is the highest that human beings can realize. And this is sufficient for a human life.

When one is totally beyond the influence and domination of the positive & the negative, when one's life is thoroughly cool because there is no more positive & negative taking over the mind, this supreme coolness is called 'Nibbāna.' In the Pāli language of the oldest Buddhist scriptures, this is Nibbāna. But most of you are more familiar with the Sanskrit form of the word which is 'Nirvāṇa,' but in the Pāli language we call it 'Nibbāna.' However the meaning is the same – it means coolness, this supreme coolness when life no longer bites its owner, when positive & negative has no more power over the mind. So let's investigate and develop some understanding about Nibbāna as being the thing where there is no, the thing or whatever we would call it, where there is no positive & negative influencing the mind. When there is this supreme coolness that is beyond positive & negative, what qualities or characteristics does it have?

The first quality is called is *arahaṃ*. *Arahaṃ* means that there are no more secrets about life to be understood. One has realized all the truth about life that

needs to be understood – so there are no more secrets in life. This is called *araham*.

The next word is *khīṇāsava*. This means one has finished the causes of defilements. Defilements are the things which pollute the mind – things like greed, hatred, confusion, fear, worry, and so on. And the deepest causes of these in the mind are called the *āsava* (the eruptions). And when these *āsava* are totally finished, when there's no more potential for defilements, this is called *khīṇāsava* – the total ending of any potential for defiling the mind.

The third term is *vusitavā*. This probably rather strange for most of you. What it means is that one has completed one's spiritual duties. All the things that need to be studied and practiced by one have been thoroughly completed. There's nothing left to do spiritually. This called *vusitavā*.

The next term is *katakarāṇīyo*, which means one has done all the things that a life needs to do, all the duties, responsibilities of life on the highest level, have been done. This we call *katakarāṇīyo*.

The next is *ohitabhāro*, which means one has thrown away all burdens, all the heavy things in life are thrown away. One's gotten rid of them, so there's nothing heavy or burdensome left in life. We call this *ohitabhāro*.

The next is a little long – *anupatta-sadattho*, which means one has received all the successive benefits of life. That, through life and through spiritual living, all the benefits which ought to happen have been received or experienced successively. Until one has received all the things that one, you could say one has gotten all that one ought to get out of life. One has gotten the best thing that there is to get. This is called *anupatta-sadattho*.

The next one is even longer – *parikkhīṇa-bhava-saññojano*, which means that all the chains, all the bonds which tie us to life, to existence, has been severed. One has totally cut all the chains which trap one, which bind one.

The last one is *samma-daṅṅā-vimutto*, which means that one is liberated, freed, emancipated through right wisdom. All the things from which we ought to be saved, ought to be liberated, one has escaped them through true wisdom, through genuine understanding of the way things really are. This awareness, this understanding, is not only correct, it's one's own. else can liberate you, but the mind must liberate itself through its own correct wisdom.

So are these at all interesting for you? Are you interested in these qualities? First, *araham* – there’s no more secrets. One has realized all the truth of life. Then *khīṇāsava* – all the causes, roots and potential of defilements, has been ended. *Vusitavā* – all one’s spiritual duties are finished. *Katakaraṇīyo* – one has done everything that a human being ought to do. *Ohitabhāro* – one is thrown away all burdens. And then *anupatta-sadattho* – one has received one’s true benefits successively until realizing the highest benefits and potential for life. Then *parikkhīṇa-bhava-saññojano* – one has absolutely severed, obliterated all the bondages. And lastly, *samma-daṅṅā-vimutto* – one is liberated through right one’s own right wisdom, one’s own true understanding of nature, of life, has emancipated one from all the things we need to get free of. So these are the highest benefits that one can get from dependent origination, according to the Buddhist perspective. Whether are of any use for you, if you’re interested in them or not, is for you to consider for yourself.

Actually if we speak truthfully and justly, none of these things belong to Buddhism. None of these are really Buddhist; they’re simply natural. All of these principles belong to nature. The Buddha didn’t ever say that these were his truths. All he said was that he had discovered them. He understood them, and because he understood them, he told other people about them. These don’t make them his truths. They’re merely the truths of nature. So these are qualities of the highest goal of Buddhism, which we call ‘*Nibbāna*.’

Now, for *Nibbāna* there are two levels, or stages. The first level of *Nibbāna* is when there are no more defilements, when the defilements and any potential, any seeds of defilement, have been destroyed – this is called *Nibbāna*. But in this first kind, there is still *upādi* remaining. What this means is that, although there is no more defilement, there is still some feeling of positive & negative left over. However, this positive & negative can’t do anything to the mind of the one who has realized *Nibbāna*, because there are no more defilements. So although there’s some positive & negative left over, it can’t stir up any of the defilements of greed, anger, fear, and so on. This is the first kind of *Nibbāna*.

This word *upādi* is very, very hard to translate, and it usually gets translated in fairly confused ways, such as ‘substratum,’ is the most typical translation. What it actually means is things which have been heavy for the mind, things which have ever been heavy for or heavy on the mind, which means things that have ever squeezed the mind, this is what *upādi* means. So in this first kind of *Nibbāna*, there is still *upādi* remaining; there’s still some things left over. These

are things which have previously been heavy for, which have squeezed the mind, but although they're still leftover, they can't stir up any of the defilements.

What this means is one still knows what is positive and what is negative. One still has some sense of this, feels this way, but that minimal level of positive & negative can't do anything to one. It doesn't do any damage in the mind. This first kind is called *sa-upādi-sesa*, which means 'with upādi remaining.'

The second kind is called *an-upādi-sesa*, which means 'without upādi remaining.' And this second level or stage of Nibbāna, there's no upādi leftover; it's totally finished. Which means that the positive & negative are thoroughly cool. All feelings are totally cool so that in them there is no more positive & negative left over. And of course this mind is totally free of greed, anger, and delusion, of all the defilements. And further these feelings of positive & negative are absolutely cooled, and will never happen again in that mind. This is called *an-upādi-sesa*, without anything heavy left over in the mind.

Neither of these kinds of Nibbāna have anything to do with death. They can be realized, they can be entered, in this lifetime. One doesn't have to die or anything first. There's a lot of people teaching Nibbāna incorrectly. There's a lot of Buddhists with a wrong understanding of Nibbāna. They've gone and borrowed non-Buddhist ideas about Nibbāna, and thoroughly confused themselves. And so there are some people who talk as if Nibbāna is death, or Nibbāna comes after death, and this is absolutely incorrect. But for the Buddha, Nibbāna doesn't depend on death. Whenever one has practiced Dhamma successfully and fully, then Nibbāna appears right then. Nibbāna doesn't depend on death, it just depends on truly practicing Dhamma. Any idea of Nibbāna, that has something to do with death, or ends up being death, is totally incorrect, at least from the Buddhist understanding.

There's another word that you ought to know. It's the word *akāliko*. Nibbāna is *akāliko*, which means it's totally independent of time and space. Nibbāna can be realized right here, right now, or anywhere, anytime. It's not limited or constrained by time and space. This is called *akāliko*.

So we've discussed dependent origination and the fruits of understanding dependent origination, namely, Nibbāna. What remains is to discuss how to put this understanding into practice, so that we realize the highest fruit of it, that is, Nibbāna. For this we require perfect mindfulness, so we need to consider how to develop and practice perfect *sati* (mindfulness).

If you don't have mindfulness, you won't be able to control the flow of dependent origination. *Ānāpānasati* means to have mindfulness every time that one breathes in and breathes out. This is *ānāpānasati*, or what we usually translate 'mindfulness with breathing.'

Then we ask, to be mindful of what? To be mindful of what, while breathing in and breathing out? The best answer is to be mindful of natural truth, to be mindful of the law of nature, every time we breathe in and breathe out. If we are mindful of natural truth, not man made truth, but natural truth, natural law, with every in breathe and every out breathe, then nothing can go wrong. If we speak like a child, we say 'to get the most out of breathing in and out, to get the best you can get from breathing in and out.' This is what *ānāpānasati* is.

Understanding of how to make use of the breathe came way before the Buddha, very long ago in the early stages of human history, there was understanding of how to use the breathing for certain benefits. And then as humanity developed, certain people studied the breathing very carefully and deeply, and so the understanding of how to make the most of it grew. But this understanding wasn't completed and perfected until the Buddha. It was the Buddha who found how to truly make the most out of the breathing, to get the best thing there is from the breathing. And this then is called *ānāpānasati-bhāvanā*. *Bhāvanā* is development of the mind through mindfulness with breathing in and breathing out.

In fact some of this is totally natural, even instinctual. There are times when one is upset, when there's something painful in the mind and one naturally will take, without thinking about it, a few deep breathes, and this helps to soothe the mind, to chase away whatever is disturbing it. This is something which nature has arranged, and there are a number of things similar, where nature naturally uses the breathing for the purposes of better health and peace.

You can test this for yourself. Whenever you love something, or you hate something, or you're afraid of something, just take a few deep, long, soothing breathes. And you can chase away that love, that hate, that fear, or whatever. And then you can develop this ability further, to chase away more and more refined kinds of things which disturb the mind, until you're able to remove all *dukkha* from mind.

This word *ānāpānasati*, 'being mindful with every in breathe and out breathe,' is totally ordinary; this is absolutely ordinary. For example, you can sit

here and bring up an image of home in your mind, whether your home is in America, Europe, Australia, or wherever. And while thinking of home, with every in breathe and out breathe, you can call that *ānāpānasati* also, although that kind of *ānāpānasati* won't end dukkha.

Regarding the details of how to practice *ānāpānasati*, we understand that you have gotten these from your instructors over at the meditation center, and so here we will focus on certain essential principles to help you understand more clearly what *ānāpānasati* is about, so that you will be more successful in achieving your objective.

There are four matters or subjects which need to be studied in *ānāpānasati*. The first one is the breathing. The second are the feelings, the positive & negatives feelings we've talked so much about. The third is the *citta* (the mind, the heart) which experiences, knows things. And fourth is we study attachment. We study how the mind is deceived into attaching to things. We study the things which deceive the mind. This is called to investigate Dhamma, which is investigating attachment and the things we attach to, which are called *dhammas*; all the things we attach to are called *dhammas*.

So there are these four things that need to be studied – the breathing, the feelings, all the different minds which we experience, and all the *dhammas* which we attach to as being 'me,' and 'mine.' If we study these four thoroughly, then we will be free. But if our understanding is not yet complete, we won't be free.

In the first area of our study, you learn all about the breathing, as you have been doing for the past week. And so now you are learning many things, for example you know that if you don't breathe, you will die. You understand that the breathing is what nourishes or cherishes life. It's the breathing that keeps life going. One sees this – one sees the inseparability of the breathing and life. One sees how the breathing cherishes and influences the body. In fact they're both called 'body.' In Pāli, the word for body is *kāya*. The breath is a body, which means 'a group.' Even the English word has this meaning of 'a group of things, a collection of things.' And the breathing, it's not just one thing, as you know from observing it; it's a collection of things. And the flesh and blood and muscles and nerves, which are connected with the breathing, is also called 'a body.' So there's the body of the breathing and there's the flesh and blood body which is associated with the breathing. And as we investigate the breathing, we see more and more clearly and deeply how the breathing body influences and controls the flesh and blood body. And then one sees how one can control the state of the body

through the breathing. You know that you can't control the body directly. You can't directly put it into a state or condition that you need, but this can be done indirectly through the breathing. So by calming the breathing, by making it longer and more natural, we can put the body in a very calm and natural state. This is called controlling the body through the breathing, and as we learn more and more about the breathing, we are more and more able to control the body in this way. Notice that it's not an overt, forceful kind of control, but it's a totally natural and gentle, peaceful kind of control.

So we get to know all the kinds of breathing in order to know the breathing in and out. We study the long breathing thoroughly. We study the short breathing. We see how the course, rough breathing is. And we take a good look at the more subtle and refined breathing until we know all the different kinds and types of breathing. And then we choose the kind of breathing which is most subtle and peaceful, until the mind develops more and more *samādhi* automatically, naturally. We breathe in a more subtle, increasingly subtle and natural way, until the mind naturally gathers itself together, collects itself, in *samādhi* or one-pointedness.

In the end, one becomes master of the body through the breathing. By becoming master of the breathing, the body is mastered. We can put the body into the state or condition that we require. And we do this by through our mastery of the breathing.

The second area of training is about the *vedanā* (the feelings). By doing this, we develop mastery over the feelings, which is the same as saying mastery over the world. All the things we do, all the things we create in this world are simply because of the feelings. We're chasing after the positive and running away from the negative, and the world that we create is solely because of these feelings. All the meaning that we give to the world is merely because of the feelings. And so when we master the feelings, we master the world.

The kinds of feelings that can be called 'rapture,' the excited sense of accomplishment and success that we get on crude levels like sex, to more refined levels, such as meditation. And then the more refined and calm kinds of happiness, which we can call 'bliss,' the very peaceful kinds of happiness – all of these can be controlled. And when we control these feelings, even the most refined kinds of feelings that come from meditation, then we also control the thinking, because all thinking is sparked and powered by the feelings. And so when we have

mastery over the feelings, we also have mastery over the thinking. And then we have mastery over the world.

Be very careful of the word ‘appreciate.’ There are many things which you probably appreciate. But notice that if we appreciate something, then it traps us. There’s a whole other way of appreciating things, in which we appreciate them, whether it be art or whatever, without getting trapped in the positive or negativeness of that. When the positive & negative feelings have no power over us, then appreciation doesn’t trap us.

All these things which we call the feelings, these lead to concepts and thinking. The thinking doesn’t cause the feelings, but it’s the feelings from which come the concepts and thoughts. If we can manage the feelings, if we can deal with the feelings properly, then we can control thinking. Ordinarily we think about all kinds of useful useless things, and even harmful things. But when we can control the feelings, we can control the thinking. So that we don’t think, or so that we think only in ways which are truly beneficial and useful, ways which aren’t at all dangerous. So by dealing with the feelings properly, we can control the thinking so that it is truly safe and beneficial.

The next area is the *citta*, the mind, the heart. We study, investigate, all the different kinds of mind. For example, we study the mind that is in love, the mind in which there is lust. And when we know that thoroughly, then we will also understand the mind that is free of that quality of love or lust. And then we study the mind in which there is anger or hatred, until we know it thoroughly, and then we will understand the mind that has no anger, that has no hatred. We study the mind in which there is delusion, the deluded mind, and if we really know that, we will also understand the mind in which there is no delusion.

So we study both sides – the minds of love, hatred, delusion, and the mind in which there is no love, hatred, or delusion. Then we practice controlling the mind. One way of doing this is to make the mind joyful, to delight the mind, satisfy the mind, in different ways. And then we practice stabilizing the mind, making the mind very stable. And lastly, practice liberating the mind, which means making the mind let go of anything painful or anything dukkha which it is grabbing onto. These are ways of controlling the mind in any way we wish, delighting it, stabilizing it, so it’s not caught in any meaning or value of anything, and liberating it from anything that causes dukkha.

You ought to know what the concentrated mind is like. In studying the mind, it's most important to thoroughly and properly understand the mind that has *samādhi* or concentration. To understand this we need to understand at least three factors. The first factor of the concentrated mind is that it is clean. There aren't any defilements – any greed, delusion, hatred, making it dirty. Second, all the energy of the mind which is usually dispersed, is gathered and collected together, until it has just one focus, or it is one-pointed – just like the way a magnifying glass will gather the sun's rays and focus them into a very powerful point. This is called stability. And then the third factor of the concentrated mind is its activity. It's not a passive or a dull mind; it's thoroughly active and alert. It's completely agile or fluent in doing its duties, doing whatever needs to be done. So to properly understand the concentrated mind as it is understood in Buddhism – and be very careful because outside of Buddhism, people have all kinds of other kinds of Buddhism about *samādhi*, about concentration – but in Buddhism, it means the mind that is, because it's not disturbed by any defilements, the mind that is stable because all of its energy is focused into a very stable point. And it's active; it's totally fluid, flexible, agile, in carrying out any duty.

When we are masters of the mind or the heart, then it's the same as being master of the worlds, because when we can control the mind, or the heart, the *citta*, then we can control all worlds. When there's this mental control, we can create any world we wish. Any world we want, we can make it. And so mastering the mind is the same as mastering all the worlds, whatever world you wish.

When one has mastery over the mind, one can create any world one wishes. You can create this kind of experience, or if you want, you can change it to this kind of experience and other experiences, we don't have. One can create the kind of feeling or experience one wishes, and that means one can create any world that one wishes. This is having mastery over the mind.

The fourth area of study, the last one, is contemplation of Dhamma. Now ordinarily 'Dhamma' means everything, but here Dhamma means specifically the things which are the basis of attachment. Dhamma here means all the things which are objects of attachment. The things that through delusive attachment we cling to as being 'me,' as being 'mine.' We investigate them until seeing them as they really are, until realizing that none of them should be attached to, that there isn't anything worth clinging to as being 'me,' and 'mine.' This is what it is to understand all dhammas, especially the dhammas that are the objects of attachment.

All the harmful, and nasty, and wicked things that we've been mentioning, such as love, hatred, anger, fear, excitement, longing after the past, worrying about the future, envy, jealousy, and sexual possessiveness, all of these are merely the results of attachment to something, attaching to the positiveness and negativeness of something, we end up with all these wicked and nasty things, which points out the necessities of understanding dhammas, the objects of attachment, until we stop creating all these problems because of them.

Especially all the positive things that we love, that we appreciate, we need to study these, and the first thing we need to study about them is the fact that they're constantly changing, that they're changing all the time, that they're impermanent. When one sees the delusiveness of this impermanence, when you see how this impermanence deceives us, then the tendency to attach to these things starts to dissolve; it starts to fade away. And so one investigates this fading away of attachments towards these positive things. This steady fading away and dissolving of attachment towards the things that we used to be deceived by, but now we see that they're just impermanent, changing things, this realization of the fading away of attachment, is called *virāga*. When we see the *aniccatā* (the fact of impermanence) in these things, then attachment fades away, which is called *virāga*, and it dissolves and fades away, fades away, fades away, until it's finished, and this ending of attachment is called *nirodha* (quenching). The attachment is quenched or it ceases.

When attachment has ended, when it's thoroughly quenched, we're free, and so the last thing is to throw it all away, all these things that you've piled up with attachment, we now, being free of them, we can just throw them away. We're no longer stuck with or burdened by them. This throwing away the objects of attachment is called *patinissagga*. So we begin by seeing the impermanence, the *aniccatā*, of these things, and then realizing the fading away of attachment, *virāga*, and then attachment ceases, which is *nirodha*, and we're free and so we throw it all away, and that is *patinissagga*.

And so through seeing the impermanence, the fading away, the cessation of attachment and tossing it all away, then there is liberation. This is emancipation and one is united with God, if you want to say it that way. But God here is not a person; it's not some big ego in the sky or anything personal. God here just means a certain state or condition, which in fact isn't really a state, but where there is total freedom, total liberation.

So the first stage of practice makes us masters of the breathing, or masters of the body which includes the breathing. So the second stage is be master of the *vedanā*, so that the *vedanā* can't stir up or create any harmful thinking, so that we think only in necessary, useful and peaceful ways. This is what happens with mastery of the thinking. The third stage makes us masters of the mind so that we can have any mind we wish, which makes us masters of the world. We can create any world we want. And then the last area makes us masters of the things which have tricked us into attachment, all the things that we have appreciated, that we have attached to, we now see through them and so are their masters. They can no longer trick us into attachment again.

And so these four things are the essence or the heart of what we call *ānāpānasati*. Your instructors have informed you and helped you practice in the details of this, but we want you to be very clear about the essence of mindfulness with breathing so you don't get confused. And by putting these four essences of mindfulness with breathing into practice, then you will be the master of life, you'll have total mastery of life, which means there will be Nibbāna whenever you wish.

This success in *ānāpānasati* will enable us to be above all the dualities in the world, all the pairs of opposites, or the polar opposites, such as positive & negative. One is no longer bouncing between them, but one is above it all. One is no longer bouncing between good & evil, right & wrong, but one is above all that. And so when we are beyond, above all these dualities, this means that the mind is beyond, is free from all the things which can make it suffer. All the things, all the discriminations and dualities which create *dukkha*, are below the mind. They have no influence over the mind. And then life is peaceful and useful, and what more could you ask for?

If we speak more scientifically, we would say that you have power over time and space. There's nothing in time and space which has any power over you. One doesn't fall for or get trapped in any time or any space, and then one is totally free of all time and space. So we can also speak in this way – 'one is above time and space.' And then one is free and we're finished. Everything that we need to do in life has been completed, and so the matter of mindfulness with breathing is finished.

In summary, when *sati*, mindfulness, is perfected in this way, then one can control, one can manage, the stream of dependent origination, so that it never leads to *dukkha*. When we've managed the stream of dependent origination, then

the mind is above and beyond all problems. There isn't anything in the world which is a problem for the mind. And then, that's it. We're finished. And so we've completed the subject of mindfulness with breathing.

Now this subject of dependent origination is the most profound thing in Buddhism. So it's natural that there will be some difficulties in understanding it and putting it into practice. This is why we earlier made the comparison that if you were to go somewhere for six months, and to endure the greatest difficulties in order to understand dependent origination, then it would be worth it. So we hope that you will not stop your study until you have gone into it deeply enough, until you understand its true profundity, and then you can practice it for the sake of a peaceful and useful life.

And so once again, thank you for being good listeners, because it was a very profound subject. Thank you for listening.

• • • • •

Transcribed by Jessica (*jess.haines8@gmail.com*) in Dec. 2015-Jan. 2016
Audio files: 5125340109031.mp3, 5125340109032.mp3 & 1991-01 (3) Ānāpānasati.mp3

© Liberation Park, 2016

