

# **Ānāpānasati: Stopping the Flow of Dependent Origination**

by Ajahn Buddhādāsa

Interpreted into English by Santikaro Bhikkhu

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[Note: for further reading on this theme, see the book *Under the Bodhi Tree : Buddha's Original Vision of Dependent Co-arising*, Wisdom, Boston, 2017]

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*In the late 80s and early 90s, until his health deteriorated too much, Ajahn Buddhādāsa gave regular talks 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](http://www.suanmokkh.org) and [www.bia.or.th](http://www.bia.or.th). The following is a verbatim transcription generously made by a Dhamma volunteer. If you noticed possible improvements to the text and would like to contribute, please kindly contact the Buddhādāsa Indapañño Archives in Bangkok ([suanmokkhbkk@gmail.com](mailto:suanmokkhbkk@gmail.com)).*

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Yesterday we discussed the flow of dependent origination or the stream of *dukkha*. Today we will consider how to stop that flow or stream of *paṭiccasamuppāda*.

We stop the stream of *paṭiccasamuppāda* with *sati*, that is mindfulness. Or we can say that mindfulness is the means to stop the flow of dependent origination. Today we're going to explain this in a simple direct way that even our children can understand. This is important because we must be able to explain these things to our children.

We'll distinguish two aspects of this. There'll be the simply, purely material side, the physical kind, which is very simple and easy to see. And then there will be the mental or spiritual side which is much more subtle, profound, and difficult to see.

To explain this to children, we point out to them that in this world there is the Sun and there is water, and the Sun heats the water so that it evaporates; and due to this evaporated water there are clouds, there are rain clouds; because of the rain clouds the rain falls; and then you get rained on and catch a cold; and then if you're sick and you need to go to see the doctor to get some medicine.

Or because the rain falls, the road is slippery when wet; because the road is slippery you slip and fall down; and when you fall down you hit your head and crack your skull, and have a nasty wound; so you have to see the doctor to take care of your wound. That these things depend and depend and depend... that each happens dependently one after the other is called *paṭiccasamuppāda* or ‘dependent origination.’

But if you have sufficient mindfulness and intelligence then you won’t get rained on and you won’t catch a cold. Or if you have enough mindfulness you won’t fall down on the slippery road. And so you needn’t hurt because you’ve got mindfulness. So this is a material example of *paṭiccasamuppāda*. Now we’re going to teach our children on a higher level, on a mental level.

And so we point out to our children that they have eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind. So we must teach them to know these things very well. And this isn’t so difficult that they can’t understand. And then we point out to them that in this world there are sights, sounds, smells, tastes, touches, and mental objects which will make contact, which will stimulate their eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind – that is of our children.

When a form or a sight stimulates the eye, then there arises what we call *cakkhu-viññāna*, what we call ‘eye consciousness.’ And we ask them to observe that this eye consciousness just happens when the form stimulated the eye, before that there wasn’t the eye consciousness. It only happens after the form or sight stimulates the eye.

So when the light waves stimulate the part of the nervous system we use for seeing, the visual part of the nervous system, then our children ought to recognize that it’s the visual nervous system that sees the form, it isn’t ‘I see the form,’ it’s not ‘me seeing the form,’ it’s just the visual part of the nervous system that sees the form.

And we must have them observe so that they see for themselves that if there are just the light waves striking the nervous system then there is a certain kind of result. But if it’s ‘I see the form,’ if there’s ‘me seeing’ the form then the result is totally different. If there is merely the activity of light waves stimulating the visual nervous system, or the visual system, it has a meaning which is quite small. But if it’s the

form stimulates ‘me,’ and ‘I’ see the form, then the meaning is quite strong, even violent.

When sound waves stimulate the oral system, the hearing system, then let it just be that, just the sound waves striking the ear drums, and so on. Don’t let it be ‘I hear,’ if it becomes ‘*I am* hearing,’ then the results are totally different. Merely having the sound strike the eardrum is enough to determine whether one should do anything about the sound or not, and what should be done. There’s no need for some crazy ego to come in and love the sound, or hate the sound or anything like that.

When an odor stimulates the smelling system, there is no need for it to be ‘I smell,’ there is just a smell stimulating the nose, that’s all. When flavors stimulate the nervous system in the tongue, for example while we’re eating food, there’s no need for there to be ‘I taste.’ Just leave it alone so that it is just the flavors stimulating the nervous system in the tongue. For example, if the food isn’t very delicious you can improve it with some seasoning, but if it’s ‘*I’m* not delicious,’ then we criticize and insult the cook.

When certain touches or pressures stimulate the nervous system on the skin or in the body, then just leave it at that, merely the sense of touch being stimulated without concocting it into ‘*I am* touched,’ or ‘*me* is touched,’ and then the result will be very different. And when the mind or the mental system thinks, let it just be thinking. Don’t turn it into ego things or ‘my’ thinking.

We need to instruct our children and point these things out to them so that they know all six of these possibilities. The big difference is in that, one way the egoistic concept of ‘me,’ of ‘I,’ of ‘self’ is born, but in the other way, this egoistic thought, ‘me,’ ‘mine,’ or ‘I,’ ‘me,’ doesn’t need to be born and the situation is dealt with, and is responded to without any egoism.

Then we teach the children further, that when the visual system is stimulated by some sight, some form, then a third thing happens – this thing we call ‘eye consciousness’ arises. And these three things when they meet and work together, the visual system or the eye, the form, and the eye consciousness, these three together are call *phassa* (contact).

When there is already this contact, *phassa*, then there will be a reaction which comes out as *vedanā* (feeling). And because we didn’t have any mindfulness and

wisdom in the womb and have been lacking this intelligence since birth, then we don't understand the vedanā. So when a pleasant vedanā stimulates us, then we react to it with liking, with being satisfied. When a negative vedanā, an unpleasant vedanā stimulates, then we react to that with disliking, with anger, with hatred.

Once there is some vedanā, then there happens some desire. The desire develops according to the vedanā. If the vedanā is a positive, pleasant one then there is the desire to get, to have, to keep, to get more of. If the vedanā is unpleasant, disagreeable or negative, then the desire comes out in a form which is to get rid of, to destroy. It can be one of displeasure, one of anger, even of hatred. These foolish kinds of desire happen because of our getting caught up in the vedanā.

But if the vedanā is intelligent, there is mindfulness and wisdom with the vedanā, then the wanting that occurs in response to the vedanā is also intelligent and wise, which we call 'wise aspiration.' But if it's, the feeling is experienced ignorantly, then the desire that happens will also be ignorant. This is called 'stupid desire.' But we've been stupid since the moment we were born, since the mother's womb we've lacked mindfulness and wisdom, so whatever stimulates our senses, and whatever vedanā will react to that stimulation, these tend to be foolish and ignorant. So we need to be very, very careful about all of this.

And when this blind desire happens the things start to get more intense, and there develops the feeling or the ignorant concept that there must be some 'me' that desires, there must be some ego which desires. So out of this ignorant desire there arises 'me,' or attachment to the 'me,' to desires.

This concept of 'me' is called *upādāna* – or in Thai pronunciation *upathan* – which has just happened. This concept of 'me' just occurred right there, it didn't exist originally. Once there is this *upādāna*, attachment, this clinging to the 'me' who desires, then there occurs a state of mind which we can call 'existence.' The Pāli word for is *bhava* – can be translated 'being' or 'existence.' This refers to a certain state of mind that results from that ignorant attachment to the 'me' who desires.

And then once there is this *bhava*, this existence, as it solidifies a bit more, there arises the state of mind we call *jāti* (birth). The ego has formed fully, it is developed fully and is born. This birth of the ego is called *jāti* or 'birth.' This is a mental birth, a birth that arises from ignorance and attachment. We're not referring to some

physical birth where one is born from a mother's womb. Physical birth is no problem, we're not concerned here with physical birth. We're concerned with this mental birth that comes from ignorance and attachment. That is what causes all our problems. This mental birth is called *jāti*.

This *jāti* means that the fool has been born. This is the birth of the ignorant man or the ignorant woman. Because of ignorance and attachment the ego is fully developed and then is born as a foolish man or foolish woman. Once this ego is born then there is the ME, this big fat 'me,' and everything around it is taken to be 'mine.' So from the 'me,' there also becomes 'mine.' This is how the ignorant person is born out of ignorance and attachments.

So dependent on the eye this ignorant person is born, dependent on the ears this ego is born, dependent on the nose, the tongue, the body, and the mind, this ignorant person is born. In these six different ways the ego can be born. And once this 'me' is born then it takes everything to be 'mine,' it takes physical birth to be 'my' birth, it takes getting old to be 'my' old age, it takes illness to be 'my' sickness, and so on and so on.

Now, this ego-birth happens dozens of times, even hundreds, sometimes more than a thousand times in a day. In one day this ego birth happens dozens, hundreds, maybe thousands of times. And then in a physical lifetime it happens tens, hundreds of thousands, millions of times. If the parents aren't overly thick and ignorant, then they will be able to help their children to understand this matter of *paṭiccasamuppāda*.

Our children should be able to understand the physical dependent origination about the rain, and slipping on the pavement and cracking open one's head, and they ought to be able to understand the mental dependent origination, of how through ignorance attachment and ego occur. And then they'll realize that mindfulness can stop the stream of *paṭiccasamuppāda*. It can stop the physical dependent origination. With mindfulness, we're careful and we don't let such mistakes occur, there are no such accidents.

And also with mindfulness the mental stream of dependent origination can be stopped at contact. By being mindful at contact the stream is stopped. Or we can say

this stream is redirected in a totally different way so that this stream of causes and conditions doesn't lead to *dukkha*, doesn't create any pain.

If they have mindfulness and wisdom from the very start then there won't be any trouble. If one really has mindfulness, and if one is really mindful and wise, then that mindfulness will be there right from the start at the moment that anything makes contact. So that when there's 'seeing some form,' there's just 'seeing the form,' there is no 'I see.' And when a sound stimulates the ears there's just 'hearing,' there's no 'me hearing.' And the same when odors stimulate the nose, tastes the tongue, touches the body, and thoughts the mind, there's just smelling, tasting, touching, and mental experiencing. There's no 'me' or ego involved.

Even better, there is mindfulness from the moment of contact. With this mindfulness, one can understand the contact, one knows what contact is. Contact is merely the meeting together of the sense organ and the sense object and the sense consciousness, that's all that is taking place. And with this understanding then, the *vedanā* is not ignorant. *Vedanā* isn't merely a blind ignorant reaction, and then one isn't deceived by the positive & the negative. One isn't tricked by these things. And so there isn't any desire, and without desire there is no attachment, there's no grasping at the 'me' who desires, because there is no desire.

So when there's mindfulness from the moment of contact, from the moment that contact arises, this mindfulness will stop the stream of concocting so that it doesn't end up in *dukkha*. Instead, there is understanding, the contact the feelings are understood and so there is no need for desire and attachment. The problem is that most of us, being just ordinary people, don't have enough mindfulness.

Ordinary people aren't mindful enough to be able to stop the flow of *paṭiccasamuppāda*; so it keeps flowing, it keeps going on and on. For this reason we need to train *sati*, we need to develop *sati* (mindfulness), and this is why we take up the system of training that's called *ānāpānasati* (mindfulness with breathing in and out) as you have been learning about and practicing at the center. We need to use this approach to develop sufficient mindfulness, mindfulness that is strong enough and quick enough to be there at the moment of contact in order to stop the flow of dependent origination.

If there is this mindfulness then all kind of other things will develop. Wisdom will develop, a clear, ready comprehension of what's happening will develop, and all kinds of other *dhammas* will come once we develop that mindfulness at the moment of contact. This is the importance of using mindfulness with breathing to train and develop mindfulness.

So when we speak of 'being mindful,' or 'having mindfulness' we mean that mindfulness must be complete. It must be sufficient and it must be fast. To really have mindfulness, that mindfulness needs to be perfect, lacking in nothing. And it needs to have enough strength to do its work, and it has to be fast. When these three aspects of mindfulness are fully developed we call that *Phra arahant*, the one who has this kind of perfect mindfulness is called the *arahant*. This is the human being that no longer has any problems with the flow of dependent origination – the arahant.

The importance of mindfulness is its great speed, the great speed of mindfulness brings wisdom to the situation in time. If it's fast enough, if it's in the nick of time, then it's called mindfulness, or *sati*; but if it's too late, if it's slow, then we don't call it mindfulness.

The word *sati*, mindfulness, comes from the word *sara* which means 'arrow.' It seems that in the old days the arrow was the fastest thing which people knew so they used the arrow, *sara*, as the symbol of the great speed of *sati*. Nowadays we would maybe use something else such as a bullet, or maybe the speed of light, as our symbol for mindfulness. The point is that *sati* is fast. It has the speed necessary to be there immediately the moment there is contact.

You can see the importance of this by reflecting on all the knowledge and experience we have. We've learned many things in life but so often we're unable to apply what we've learned from life. This is because mindfulness isn't fast enough. We lack the mindfulness to bring this experience and understanding into action, so all our learning and intelligence is wasted simply because we lack mindfulness.

But when there is mindfulness it retrieves, or you can say it delivers the necessary wisdom immediately in the nick of time to deal with whatever is making contact. So with mindfulness all our intelligence, experience, and wisdom is useful; but without mindfulness, all of that intelligence and knowledge is wasted.

Yesterday we spoke about the stream of paṭiccasamuppāda, today we'll speak about the thing which stops that stream of dependent origination, namely mindfulness. So now we'll talk about mindfulness as it goes under the name of *ānāpānasati-bhāvanā* – or the development of mindfulness every time one breathes in and breathes out.

Now this understanding of how to use sati is something mental, it's not a physical kind of understanding or skill. In human life we need both physical knowledge and mental knowledge. We need to be able to deal both with our physical and mental realities. The understanding of how to develop mindfulness, and how to use mindfulness to stop the stream of paṭiccasamuppāda is a mental understanding. It regards what's taking place within us, within the mind.

Now don't think that this mental understanding has just occurred, that it was totally missing until just a moment ago. This mental understanding has existed along with our physical understanding from the start, they've both evolved together. The thing is that we have tended to ignore the mental or spiritual understanding. It is much more subtle so we tend to overlook it but it has been developing, evolving all along.

All along we've had the kind of mindfulness which we can call 'instinctual.' This instinctual kind of mindfulness was good enough to enable us to walk, to move, to do the physical things we need to do in the world. So this kind of understanding and ability has been with us all along. And not only this instinctual mindfulness but also basic levels of intelligence that enable us to deal with our surroundings and environment. If we get wet we know how to dry ourselves off, if we get dirty we know how to clean ourselves, and so on.

And then further there is an instinctual kind of concentration, the mind already has the ability to focus, to collect itself and focus on something. The mind can do this naturally, instinctually. So all these kinds of mental knowledge, mental understanding have already existed and have developed and evolved along with our physical development. However, these instinctual levels of mindfulness, intelligence, and concentration, although good enough to enable us to survive in the physical world and deal with physical realities, these aren't strong enough. They aren't developed enough to deal with the mental realities. Specifically they are not able to cope with the stream of dependent origination.



The dependent origination is too fast and subtle for these ordinary levels of mindfulness, intelligence, and concentration, and so we need to develop them further. We can't just rely on the natural development of life. We need to use a specific form of training in order to develop mindfulness, intelligence, and concentration to the levels we need, to stop the flow of paṭiccasamuppāda.

From the start, mind and body have existed together, *nāma-rūpa* have been inseparably connected from the beginning of life. And life continues with these two aspects interrelated and interdependent. So from the start we must develop both of them together. We can't just develop the body and ignore the mind, or vice versa. They need to evolve together, even if this happens accidentally or through coincidence.

For example, if we reflect on history a bit, we know that originally human beings ate raw meat. But then somewhere along the line somebody dropped some meat in fire, and then after tasting it they found that it tasted better. So the idea of cooking the meat developed, although it was discovered by accident. And then later somebody dropped a piece of meat in some liquid, and they found out that that added to the taste. And so then people learned to make sauces out of fruits and seasonings, out of leaves and different things.

So this kind of physical development occurred even if through accident. But people were learning how to make improvements, how to develop things. And it's the same with the mind, one needs to develop the mind even if one comes across things somewhat by accident. For example, one learns that 'Oh, if I breathe like this, instead of the other way, the old way, it's better, it's healthier, more invigorating, more relaxing, it gives more strength and energy.' One discovers that to breathe in a certain way is superior, so one can develop the mind in these ways.

So body and mind go together, you can't separate them, they're an intimate pair throughout life. Since ancient times human beings have known how to use the breathing to develop both the body and the mind. They found how to use the breathing to increase health and strength, to develop the body. They also knew how to use the breathing to develop the mind.

Nowadays this kind of knowledge is pretty much lost. People have no interest in it because they prefer quick and easy methods. For example, nowadays we have lots of pills and medicines to use to affect the minds, we no longer use the ancient

techniques. So for example, we have things like heroine or opium to suppress the mind.

Or when we want to get stimulated we have various stimulants such as caffeine as well as amphetamines in order to stimulate and excite the mind. Or if we want to do all kinds of strange and interesting things we have things like LSD, we have hallucinogens to really give the mind a strange and fascinating ride. And then we have, if we want to calm and soothe the mind, we have tranquilizers.

Nowadays we have all these different kinds of drugs to change the mind. But the old hermits, and *rishis*, and sages, and meditators, they didn't need to use any of these pills or medicines, they know how to use the mind to do it. If they need to push down the mind, they can do that using the breathing. If they need to raise up, stimulate the mind, they can do that with the breathing. They can even fantasize and hallucinate and see all kinds of visions. And they can calm and soothe the mind without having to use any of these medicines and things.

The old meditators in the forests and caves knew how to use the breathing to deal with the mind directly, they didn't have to rely on these drugs and things. But eventually of all this knowledge they selected that which was essential. There are a lot of fascinating things one can do with the mind but it's not all necessary. So with experience it was discovered what kind of things were truly needed, and these have been refined and developed so as to be able to deal with the basic problems of the mind.

Nowadays we don't bother with any of that, we just go to our psychologist and have them give us these pills and that pill, or we may use alcohol or whatever. We try to change our minds or develop our minds using these physical tricks. But there's the purely mental way of meditation as well.

In short, from the beginning body and mind have always existed together, interdependently, and as the ways we develop our bodies for physical health and our knowledge of the physical material world, we also need to at the same time develop our mental knowledge, of the mental life, of how to develop the mind.

So of all the ways of developing the mind, all the tricks that have been discovered in human history, there have been selected the essential ingredients, the things that

are absolutely necessary. So what remains are two primary ways of developing the mind.

The first way is to calm the mind, to make the mind peaceful so that it has a deep but peaceful joy. And then the other way is to develop the mind in the way that leads to direct realization, to direct intuitive experience of reality, of truth.

So the first means of development leads to what is called, *samādhi* (concentration) – the mind that is focused, calm, collected, stable and peaceful. The second form of developing the mind is the way of wisdom. It leads to insight into the nature, the true nature of things. So of all the ways of developing the mind these two particular ways have been, and remain as the essentials.

Now these two can be brought together because if they're done in the right way, they mutually support each other. So by bringing these two together we get the system of practice called *ānāpānasati*. In this way of training the mind, first, the mind is calmed and made peaceful, so concentration is developed. And then, that concentration is used for the purpose of realization, for insight. In this system of practice the two can't be separated, they go together.

So what the Buddha has done has refined the knowledge and means of development that were available, and then systematized it in a very efficient yet comprehensive way which covers these two basic areas of developing the mind, that of concentration and of wisdom.

In this system of training, there are four areas to be explored. In order to fulfill these two means of development we will investigate and train with four areas of life. The first is the *kāya* (body) – the physical aspect of existence including the senses. The second are the *vedanā*, the feelings which arise toward the body, the different kinds of feelings or sensations that occur regarding sensual experience. And then the third is the mind, the thing that experiences those feelings. And then fourth, are all the things that trick the mind, all the things that deceive the mind into attaching to them, all the things that put on an illusion and then the mind buys that illusion and goes and attaches to things as being 'me' or 'mine.'

These are the four areas to be explored. So in *ānāpānasati*, the system of training will cover all of these. First, there is contemplation of the body. The body is thoroughly contemplated in detail until it is understood and is no longer a problem.

Then there is *vedanānupassanā* (the contemplation of the feelings). These are thoroughly examined and explored until they're no longer a problem.

Then there is contemplation of the mind. The mind is explored in its different aspects until these no longer present any trouble.

And then lastly, contemplation of *dhammas* (things). Natural things are contemplated until they are thoroughly understood and are no longer able to deceive the mind, they no longer trick the mind into attaching. So this system of practice includes all four of these areas: the body; the feelings; the mind; and Dhamma.

So in the first stage of this practice, we deal with the body. There are these physical bodies, there is the physical body made up of flesh, organs, blood and all that. And then, associated with this physical body, is the breathing, which can be called the 'breath body.' This doesn't mean some separate kind of body, it just means that part of physical reality which we call 'the breathing.' It's also called the *prāṇa*, which sometimes means 'the life force.'

There's this flesh and blood body and there is the breathing, the body of breathing, and this breathing body nurtures and sustains the flesh body. So we examine both of these kinds of bodies, the breathing, the body of the breathing we study this carefully, the different forms it takes, the different qualities it has, how it changes; and then we study how that affects the flesh and blood body. We see how these two are inseparable.

Then we make that breathing correct and fit so that it's best for the flesh and body body. We find the most correct kind of breathing so that the body is healthy, it's fit, it's strong, so that it has the ability to do what is needed. This is the first stage of our training, dealing with the body. In short we can say that there are two kinds of bodies that need to be understood: the flesh and blood body and the breathing body.

When both this flesh and blood body and the breathing body are natural, when they're normal – here the word 'normal' is different than the way most people mean it – when it's in its proper natural, normal state of balance, harmony and health, that is what we are talking about. When the breathing body is in its natural normal state, then the flesh and blood body will also be normal and healthy. Conversely, when the flesh and blood body has this natural normalcy, then the breathing will be natural and normal. The two support each other in this way.

But in terms of our training, we can't directly influence or bring about that physical flesh and blood body normalcy, but we can, the mind can directly influence the breathing. So we can make use of this natural fact to improve the breathing, to improve it until it finds that normalcy, that balance, that harmony, and this in turn will influence and improve the body, so that the flesh and blood body finds its state of normalcy and health.

So we learn to use the breathing body and to make it harmonious, healthy, and then to use that to do the same with the flesh and blood body. And then our physical health – there's good physical health, physically there is normality, nothing is wrong, nothing is out of balance. This is very useful for us in all aspects of life and especially in meditation.

Now, the body doesn't just kind of sit there like a lump. The body experiences sensations, there are feelings that arise towards the body. And so these feelings give us another area for study. Some of the feelings that arise through the body are pleasant, and these pleasant, positive feelings give rise to contentment. And so in the second stage of practice, one investigates this contentment that occurs.

There are two levels to this contentment to the satisfaction with positive, pleasant sensations in the body. The first level is quite exciting, it's strong, vigorous. We can call it 'rapture' [*pīti*]. This tends to excite and stimulate the mind. The second level of contentment, is calm and cool. We can call it 'bliss' [*sukha*]. They're both similar in that they're a kind of satisfaction with, or contentment with the positive, pleasant, sensations of the body, but one is quite vigorous, strong, exciting, and disturbing, while the other is cool, peaceful, and soothing.

So we investigate and explore these feelings, these two kinds of contentment. And as we investigate them we discover that these feelings have the ability to concoct the mind. These kinds of satisfaction or contentment stimulate the mind. The energetic, excited kind stimulates the mind in certain ways, they stir up certain kinds of thoughts. Whereas the cool, peaceful, contentment, concocts the mind in a different way.

So we need to observe and thoroughly understand how these feelings can concoct or influence the mind. And then we need to be able to come to deal with that

concocting of the mind, to get control of it, so that the feelings aren't just running our lives, so that we get control over the feelings and over the mind.

This is the second stage of this practice it's called 'contemplation of the *vedanā*.' So if one can regulate or master the feelings, this is the way to master the mind. Bringing the feelings under one's control, is the way to bring the mind under control. This is what the second stage of practice is, to train in a very subtle and wise mastery of the feelings, which will give us control over the mind as well.

The next thing we come to is that which is the meeting point or the gathering point for everything. Everything comes together in the mind. This is the meeting point for all experience. So our third stage of practice concerns the mind. The feelings, the *vedanā*, are able to concoct the mind, we call them 'the mind concocters.' They have all kinds of influence over the mind. So if we can't control these feelings we can't control the mind. However, once these feelings are under control, then the mind can be brought under control. Becoming very experienced in this mental control is what the third stage of practice is. Since everything happens to the mind, for the mind, with the mind, in the mind, then having very subtle mastery of the mind, is a valuable thing.

This training regarding the mind begins with getting to know all kinds of mind. We experience all possible kinds of mind. For example, is this a mind with *dukkha*? Or is it a happy mind? Examining, investigating whether the mind is defiled or not defiled. What is the mind like when there are defilements – greed, anger, and delusion? What is the mind like when there aren't any defilements?

Some of the time there aren't any defilements in the mind so we can experience directly that temporary undefiled mind. And then, we can even estimate the mind that has no defilements whatsoever, the mind in which all defilement is thoroughly eradicated. From direct experience of the defiled mind and the temporarily undefiled mind, we can get a quite clear understanding of the mind that is the opposite.

The defiled mind is this, and its opposite is the mind that is totally free of defilements, and we can estimate what that will be like. So through both direct experience and a kind of estimation – this isn't thinking about it, but it is just looking deeply at the defiled mind until we can understand what the undefiled mind is like. This is the first lesson for getting to know the mind.

The second lesson for this stage of practice, is to make the mind delightful, to delight the mind. We've already had experience with the feelings of contentment and satisfaction, so now we use those feelings to make the mind joyful. We force the mind to be delighted, to be glad, to be joyful, in this and that way, on various levels, with various degrees of intensity. We become totally expert in delighting the mind and making the mind joyful. This is the second lesson regarding the mind.

We don't have to use any LSD or any tranquilizers, or magic mushrooms. All we need to use, we can just use the breathing and the *vedanā* to delight the mind to make it thoroughly joyful.

The third lesson is to make the mind *samādhi* (concentrated). The word *samādhi* has a much deeper and important meaning than that which you usually give to the word 'concentration.' The English word 'concentration' doesn't really capture the full meaning of the Pāli word *samādhi*, so please listen carefully to what we mean by *samādhi*.

The first factor or component of concentration is that the mind is clean, it's free there is nothing that disturbs or annoys it. This is the factor of purity. The second factor is the mind is secure, it's securely fixed, it's collected together and focused. When the mind is strongly focused, when nothing can shake it, when it's very stable, when it's all gathered together collected into one, when there is this oneness of mind, this is called 'secure stability.' It's the focused mind, it's when the mind has the highest equilibrium or balance.

The third factor is activeness. The mind is totally active, it's very fluid and agile in performing any task, any duty. This mind is always ready to do whatever needs to be done. It's called *kammanīya* in the Pāli language. The third factor is this activeness or readiness.

So there are these three factors to *samādhi*. So the concentration we're talking about must have these three factors of purity, stable focus, and activity. If it doesn't have these three factors, then it isn't the concentration we're talking about, it's not the correct kind of *samādhi* which we're perfecting in this third lesson of the contemplation of mind. So we need to understand these three factors and develop all of them fully to really have the full meaning of *samādhi*.

The fourth step of this stage of practice is called ‘making the mind let go,’ or ‘releasing the mind.’ This is simply to have the mind let go of, to release, to drop anything that it’s clinging to, hanging on to, grasping at, or attaching to; this is to make the mind free. You can call it ‘releasing’ the mind, or ‘liberating’ the mind. Making the mind free of everything, is the fourth lesson here.

So this stage of our training has four lessons or steps: the first, is knowing every kind of mind; the second, is making the mind delightful or giving the mind enjoyment; the third is concentrating the mind; and the fourth is releasing and liberating the mind. These four lessons together make up what we call *cittānupassanā* (contemplation of the mind).

The fourth stage of practice, which is the final one, concerns *dhamma*. We’ve already talked a lot about the meaning of the word ‘Dhamma,’ we’ve said that Dhamma means ‘everything.’ And here *dhamma* means everything that tricks and deceives the mind, all the things that trick us into attaching to them. And the world, life is full of these things, everything can trick us into attachment.

Forgive us for saying so, but we have to say that even God deceives us, even God tricks us into attachment. We take God and get tricked into grasping and clinging. The same is true of Nibbāna. Nibbāna can be the object of grasping and clinging for Buddhists who don’t understand it correctly, or even for non-Buddhists. Everything can be an object of attachment, both the *saṅkhata* (the conditioned, concocted phenomena) and the *asaṅkhata* (the unconditioned, un-concocted, unborn noumenon), all of these can be the basis for attachment.

So we need to investigate, study, observe all these things, all these *dhammas*, until they can’t deceive us anymore, until they can’t trick us into attachment so not even God can make us attach or cling. So how about if we put it this way? From the lowest thing to the highest, from the crudest, coarsest thing to the most sublime thing, that which we could call the ‘supreme’ thing. All of these, the entire span from lowest to highest, without the exception of anything, all of these are the basis for attachment. We can attach to everything.

The highest dhamma, the dhamma that when truly seen, we can’t attach to -- that dhamma to which there is no possibility of attaching is called, *tathatā* which we can translate as ‘suchness’ or ‘thusness.’ When we see the suchness, that things are



merely thus – they’re just such, this such-likeness of things, that they’re merely thus, neither positive nor negative, neither good nor bad – then seeing this thusness, there is no chance of attaching. This is the dhamma that we need to see for ourselves, the dhamma of tathatā.

*Tathā* means thus or such, like this. And *tā* means state of being. So *tathātā* – can be pronounced *tathaataa* or *tathataa* – means the state of being thus, the state of being just like this.

And the one who has realized that state, the one who has realized thusness is called, *tathāgato*. *Gato* means to have reached, to have realized *tathā*. To have realized thusness is called *tathāgato*. Those who have truly realized thusness are the *arahants* (the perfected human beings), in which there is no more grasping and clinging. and the Buddha is the chief, the leader of all these *tathāgatos*.

Just sitting here we probably won’t recognize tathatā. It’s necessary to have deepening insight through a series of realizations to come to the profound recognition, realization of thusness.

So we must start with seeing impermanence, by seeing the state of impermanence in all things, which is called *aniccatā*. An insight into the fact of impermanence is the starting point. Impermanence means ceaseless change, constant change, the perpetual flux of always changing. Things are like this because they have their causes and conditions, which have *their* causes and conditions, because of the state of existing through and dependent upon causes and conditions, things must always be changing. This state of perpetual state of flux and change is the meaning of impermanence.

Now, once we’ve realized, seen this impermanence, then we’ve seen a level of thusness. Once seen a certain degree of tathatā, one has seen this aniccatā. And one sees further that having to live with impermanent things is a pain. Having to live with a world, a life of nothing but impermanent things, is hard to live with, hard to bear, hard to endure. This quality of being difficult to endure is the meaning of *dukkha*, or here *dukkhatā* (the quality of dukkha-ness). This is to see a further level or degree of tathatā.

And through seeing that everything is always changing, then one sees that in these changing things there is no real ‘self.’ There is no thing if there is all this change

and nothing but change, then there's no thing that can stand separate from that, independent and unchanging. There's nothing that has the meaning of being self. There's nothing which is really self in all that change. This is to see *anattā* or *anattatā* (the state of fact of being not-self), the fact that everything is not-self. This to see *tathatā* even more.

When one sees these three together, sees the facts of impermanence, dukkha-ness, and not-self all together, seeing the thusness of these, this is called *dhammaṭṭhitatā*. *Ṭhita* means 'standing in' or 'established in.' And so 'to be established in nature,' this essentially means the naturalness of things. This is the natural way, the natural being, the natural state of things, namely, impermanence, the difficult-to-endure-ness, and the not-selfness. And then we see further into why are things like this? Why is it that they are impermanent, not-self and so on?

And one realizes that it's because there is the natural law that makes things this way. The natural law forces things to be impermanent, and dukkha, and not-self. This is called *dhammaniyāmatā* (the natural lawfulness of things). This is the natural justice, that things are just this way because of the law of nature. When we have seen these successively, beginning with the fact of impermanence through this natural lawfulness, then one sees *paṭiccasamuppāda*, one sees the fact that all things are dependently originated, that all things exist merely dependent on causes and conditions.

When we see this fact thoroughly to its end, we call that *idappaccayatā* which is this fundamental fact that all things depend on conditions, that all things are conditioned and have their existence and change due to conditions. When one sees this *idappaccayatā*, the fact of dependent conditionality, when one thoroughly realizes in its wholeness in its depth the fact of *paṭiccasamuppāda*, one sees that nowhere can there be found an *attā*, an eternal 'soul,' or some permanent 'self,' some unchanging substance.

When seeing that all things arise, exist, and pass away according to causes and conditions, one recognizes that nowhere is there any real *attā* (self). And this is to penetrate the fact of voidness (*suññatā*). That everything is void of self. That the universe and everything in the universe is absolutely void of self, of any unchanging, inherent substance, self, or soul.

This word *suññatā* which we like to translate as ‘voidness,’ is very difficult to understand. People often confuse it with some kind of material emptiness or nothingness, which is not the meaning of voidness. So one needs to be careful to recognize the true meaning of voidness.

To really understand Buddhism, to really get to the bottom of Buddhism, one must realize for oneself, voidness. Whether we’re talking about Theravāda (southern Buddhism) or Mahāyāna (the northern Buddhism), they are exactly the same in this fundamental essential fact of the need to recognize voidness.

Voidness is not nothingness. Voidness is not some kind of nihilism, please be very careful to avoid these foolish misinterpretations. In voidness everything can exist, all things exist in their particular way. But in the existence of all things within voidness, there is no *attā* or self to be found. Voidness doesn’t mean nothing-ness, it doesn’t mean that things don’t exist, it just means that the existence and change of things is void of *attā*, void of self, void of any eternal soul. In this universe there is everything, but everything is void of self. In this body, in this life, there is everything but it’s all void of self, void of *attā*.

When seeing this voidness step by step, then one comes to the full seeing of *tathatā*. When one sees that, whatever it is, it’s void of self, when one sees that everything is voidness, then one has realized *tathatā*. Whether it’s the concocted, the *saṅkhata*, or the un-concocted, the *asaṅkhata*, whether it’s positive or negative, male or female, whatever it is, it’s void of self. Realizing this is to realize the thusness, the just-this-way-ness, the that’s-how-things-are-ness of things.

Seeing fully voidness of self, seeing fully the *tathatā*, the thusness, that things are just such, meaning void of self, having seen all of these, then the mind is unaffected. The mind that thoroughly realizes *suññatā* and *tathatā* cannot be affected by anything. There is nothing positive or negative, good or bad, male or female, right or wrong, that can affect this mind.

This brings us to the last level, the highest level, the level that is called *atammayatā*. The mind that has thoroughly penetrated thusness is the mind that has *atammayatā*. Although it may be a little difficult for you, please don’t try to translate this word, translation gets people into all kinds of trouble. So please be patient and learn the Pāli word, *atammayatā*. Literally this word means ‘can’t be produced, can’t

be affected by anything.’ *Atammayatā* means there isn’t anything which can produce or affect it. When the mind has *atammayatā* there is nothing that can produce it, fabricate it, or make it into anything. There isn’t anything which can affect it, this is the highest mind there is. The mind that is above and beyond the influence and power of everything.

But if your feeling about this is that it’s lacking in flavor, that it’s tasteless, then we don’t know what to say to you. So all together there is the realization of *aniccatā*, impermanence, then *dukkhatā*, the unendurable-ness of things, and then *anattatā*, the fact of not-self.

Then there is *dhammaṭṭhitatā*, the natural-ness of things, *dhammaniyāmatā*, the lawfulness of things, and then *idappaccayatā*, the dependent conditionality of everything.

And then *suññatā*, voidness, *tathatā*, thusness, and *atammayatā*. All together there are three groups of three, they come in three trios, then three trios makes nine altogether or nine *taa* (nine ‘eyes’).

Please remember the word ‘nine-eyes’. All these words, *aniccatā*, *suññatā*, *tathatā*, *atammayatā*... end with the word *tā* which in Pāli means ‘state of being’ or ‘natural fact,’ but in Thai means ‘eye’ that we see with. So just remember this simple word ‘nine-eyes.’ Remember the nine eyes. And then with your friends when you’re traveling every night when you come to a restaurant or a guest house, when you talk to people talk about these nine-eyes. When you get home with your friends and family discuss these nine-eyes. If you spend your time discussing them, this will be the most direct and fastest way to get to the heart of Buddhism, to reach the final goal of Dhamma.

So as we investigate further through the realization of these nine-eyes, then our attachment to things begins to dissolve. This dissolving of attachment, is called *virāga*, which means ‘fading away.’ So this is the lesson of studying this fading away of attachments. So the first step is the realization of the nine-eyes. Then the second step is this fading away of attachment and observing it. And this brings us to the third step which is the extinction, the total cessation, to the utter quenching of all attachment. When the attachment is totally extinct, this is called *nirodha*. Contemplating it is the third lesson to learn.

The final step of this stage and of all of the practice is emancipation (*vimutti*) to be emancipated or the highest spiritual salvation. But here the Buddha didn't call it that, he called it 'throwing back,' throwing back which is a little bit amusing. That when coming to the highest state of human development and evolution, the Buddha used the word 'throwing back.' In Pāli the word is *paṭinissagga* which means 'throwing back.' What the Buddha is getting at, is all along we've been attaching, accumulating, hoarding, grasping, and clinging, and now we just throw it all back. Throwing everything back to nature. This is the end, this is the finish of it all. This completes the practice of ānāpānasati.

In the past we were stupid, we went around clinging and grabbing at everything as being 'me' and 'mine.' In our stupidity we cluttered up our lives with nothing but attachments, and so we were full of problems and pain. But now the stupidity has been destroyed through the realization of the nine-eyes. Ignorance is eradicated, and so attachment is ended through seeing things according to reality. There's no more clinging, no more grasping. So all those *dhammas* that previously tricked us are now thrown back to their rightful owner.

Before, in our stupidity, we were like thieves stealing everything from nature, now in wisdom we throw it all back to nature, we're no longer thieves and so we no longer need to be punished, and so we are free, liberated, saved.

Please listen very carefully we'd like to summarize this whole system of practice. The 1<sup>st</sup> stage, is about the body, to control the body to have thorough mastery of the body, to be the master or boss of the body.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> stage, is that we thoroughly understand the feelings and sensations of the body, so that we can control them. We're master over these feelings of the body.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> stage, is that we thoroughly understand the mind so that we can control it, we're masters of the mind.

The 4<sup>th</sup> stage, is that we thoroughly understand everything that can trick us into attachment, all the things that deceive us into attachment are thoroughly understood so they can't deceive us or trick us anymore. And then we are their masters, instead of them mastering and controlling us, we are the masters of all these things which have ever deceived us.

Once more: first, to be master over the whole body; second, to be master of the bodily feelings; third, to be master of the mind; and fourth, to be master of every thing that will trick us into being stupid. So there are 4 stages or tetrads, each is made up of 4 exercises or lessons, so altogether there are 16 steps or lessons that make up this system of practice called *ānāpānasati*.

Please forgive me, please forgive me very much. You've been very good listeners. So thank you very much for being very good listeners, and we close today's talk at this time.

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