

DISCOURSE ON THE FULL AWARENESS OF BREATHING



Anapanasati Sutta

Translation by Thich Nhat Hanh

I heard these words of the Buddha one time when he was staying in Savatthi in the Eastern Park, with many well-known and accomplished disciples, including Sariputta, Mahamoggallana, Mahakassapa, Mahakacchayana, Mahakotthita, Mahakappina, Mahachunda, Anuradha, Revata, and Ananda. The senior bhikkhus (monks) in the community were diligently instructing bhikkhus who were new to the practice — some instructing 10 bhikkhus, some 20, some 30, and some 40; and in this way the bhikkhus who were new to the practice gradually made great progress.

That night the moon was full, and the Pavarana Ceremony was held to mark the end of the rainy-season retreat. Lord Buddha, the Awakened One, was sitting in the open air, and his disciples were gathered around him. After looking over the assembly, he began to speak:

O bhikkhus, I am pleased to observe the fruit you have attained in your practice. Yet I know you can make even more progress. What you have not yet attained, you can attain. What you have not yet realized, you can realize perfectly. To engage your efforts, I will remain here until the next full-moon day.

When they heard that the Lord Buddha was going to remain in Savatthi for another month, bhikkhus throughout the country began traveling there to study with him. The senior bhikkhus continued teaching the bhikkhus new to the practice even more ardently. Some were instructing 10 bhikkhus, some 20, some 30, and some 40. With this help, the newer bhikkhus were able, little by little, to continue their progress in understanding.

When the next full-moon day arrived, the Buddha, seated under the open sky, looked over the assembly of bhikkhus and began to speak:

O bhikkhus, our community is pure and good. At its heart, it is without useless and boastful talk, and therefore it deserves to receive offerings and be considered a field of merit. Such a community is rare, and any pilgrim who seeks it, no matter how far he must travel, will find it worthy.

O bhikkhus, there are bhikkhus in this assembly who have realized the fruit of Arhatship, destroyed every root of affliction, laid aside every burden, and attained right understanding and emancipation. There are also bhikkhus who have cut off the first 5 internal knots and realized the fruit of never returning to the cycle of birth and death. There are those who have thrown off the first 3 internal knots and realized the fruit of returning once more. They have cut off the roots of greed, hatred, and ignorance, and will only need to return to the cycle of birth and death one more time. There are those who have thrown off the 3 internal knots and attained the fruit of stream-enterer, coursing steadily to the Awakened State.

There are those who practice:

- the **4 Establishments of Mindfulness**,
- the **4 Right Efforts**,
- the **4 Bases of Success**,
- the **5 Faculties**,
- the **5 Powers**,
- the **7 Factors of Awakening**,
- the **Noble Eightfold Path**,
- (True Love:) **loving kindness, compassion, joy & equanimity**,
- the **9 Contemplations (on death)**,
- the **Observation of Impermanence**.
- There are also bhikkhus who are already practicing **Full Awareness of Breathing**.

Full Awareness of Breathing

O bhikkhus, the **Full Awareness of Breathing**, if **developed and practiced continuously**, will be rewarding and bring great advantages. It will lead to success in practicing the **4 Establishments of Mindfulness**. If the method of the **4 Establishments of Mindfulness** is **developed and practiced continuously**, it will lead to success in the practice of the **7 Factors of Awakening**. The **7 Factors of Awakening**, if **developed and practiced continuously**, will give rise to understanding and liberation of the mind.

What is the way to **develop and practice continuously** the method of **Full Awareness of Breathing** so that the practice will be rewarding and offer great benefit?

It is like this, bhikkhus: the practitioner goes into the forest or to the foot of a tree, or to any deserted place, sits stably in the lotus position, holding his or her body quite straight, and practices like this:

(1. Body)

Breathing in/out, I know I am breathing in/out.

1. Breathing in/out a long breath, I know I am breathing in/out a long breath.
2. Breathing in/out a short breath, I know I am breathing in/out a short breath.
3. Breathing in/out, I am aware of my whole body.
4. Breathing in/out, I calm my whole body.

(2. Feelings)

5. Breathing in/out, I feel joyful.
6. Breathing in/out, I feel happy.
7. Breathing in/out, I am aware of my mental formations.
8. Breathing in/out, I calm my mental formations.

(3. Mind)

9. Breathing in/out, I am aware of my mind.
10. Breathing in/out, I make my mind happy.
11. Breathing in/out, I concentrate my mind.
12. Breathing in/out, I liberate my mind.

(4. Objects of Mind)

13. Breathing in/out, I observe the impermanent nature of all dharmas.
14. Breathing in/out, I observe the disappearance of desire.
15. Breathing in/out, I observe the no-birth, no-death nature of all phenomena.
16. Breathing in/out, I observe letting go.

The **Full Awareness of Breathing**, if **developed and practiced continuously** according to these instructions, will be rewarding and of great benefit.

4 Establishments of Mindfulness

In what way does one develop and continuously practice the Full Awareness of Breathing, in order to succeed in the practice of the 4 Establishments of Mindfulness?

1. When the practitioner breathes in/out a long or a short breath, aware of his breath or his whole body, or aware that he is making his whole body calm and at peace,
he abides peacefully in the observation of the body in the body, persevering, fully awake, clearly understanding his state, gone beyond all attachment and aversion to this life. These exercises of Breathing with Full Awareness belong to the 1. Establishment of Mindfulness, the body.
2. When the practitioner breathes in/out aware of joy or happiness, of the mental formations, or to make the mental formations peaceful,
... feelings.
3. When the practitioner breathes in/out with the awareness of the mind, or to make the mind happy, to collect the mind in concentration, or to free and liberate the mind,
... mind.
Without Full Awareness of Breathing, there can be no development of meditative stability and understanding.
4. When the practitioner breathes in/out and contemplates the essential impermanence or the essential disappearance of desire or the no-birth, no-death nature of all phenomena or letting go,
... objects of mind.

The practice of Full Awareness of Breathing, if developed and practiced continuously, will lead to perfect accomplishment of the 4 Establishments of Mindfulness.

Attaining the 7 Factors of Awakening

Moreover, if they are developed and continuously practiced, the 4 Establishments of Mindfulness will lead to perfect abiding in the 7 Factors of Awakening. How is this so?

1. When the practitioner can maintain, without distraction, the practice of observing

- the body in the body,
- the feelings in the feelings,
- the mind in the mind,
- and the objects of mind in the objects of mind,

persevering, fully awake, clearly understanding her state, gone beyond all attachment and aversion to this life, with unwavering, steadfast, imperturbable meditative stability,

she will attain the 1. Factor of Awakening, namely mindfulness. When this factor is developed, it will come to perfection.

2. When she can abide in meditative stability without being distracted and can investigate every dharma, every object of mind that arises,

she will attain ... investigation ...

3. When she can observe and investigate every dharma in a sustained, persevering, and steadfast way, without being distracted,

she will attain ... energy [diligence] ...

4. When she has reached a stable, imperturbable abiding in the stream of practice,

she will attain ... joy ...

5. When she can abide undistractedly in the state of joy, she will feel her body and mind light and at peace,

she will attain ... ease ...

6. When both body and mind are at ease, the practitioner can easily enter into concentration,

she will attain ... concentration ...

7. When she is abiding in concentration with deep calm, she will cease discriminating and comparing,

she will attain ... letting go [equanimity] ...

This is how the 4 Establishments of Mindfulness, if developed and practiced continuously, will lead to perfect abiding in the 7 Factors of Awakening.

How will the **7 Factors of Awakening**, if developed and practiced continuously, lead to the perfect accomplishment of true understanding and complete liberation?

If the practitioner follows the path of the **7 Factors of Awakening**, living in quiet seclusion, observing and contemplating the disappearance of desire, he will develop the capacity of letting go. This will be a result of following the path of the **7 Factors of Awakening** and will lead to the perfect accomplishment of true understanding and complete liberation.

This is what the Lord, the Awakened One, said; and everyone in the assembly felt gratitude and delight at having heard his teachings.



DISCOURSE ON THE 4 ESTABLISHMENTS OF MINDFULNESS



Satipatthana Sutta

Translation by Thich Nhat Hanh

I heard these words of the Buddha one time when he was living at Kammassadhamma, a market town of the Kuru people. The Buddha addressed the bhikkhus: O bhikkhus.

And the bhikkhus replied: Venerable Lord.

The Buddha said: Bhikkhus, there is a most wonderful way to help living beings realize purification, overcome directly grief and sorrow, end pain and anxiety, travel the right path, and realize nirvana. This way is the 4 Establishments of Mindfulness.

What are the 4 Establishments?

1. Bhikkhus, a practitioner remains established in the observation of the **body** in the **body**, diligent, with clear understanding, mindful, having abandoned every craving and every distaste for this life.
2. ... **feelings** ...
3. ... **mind (mental formations)** ...
4. ... **objects of mind (perceptions)** ...



1. Body

And how does a practitioner remain established in the observation of the **body** in the **body**?

She goes to the forest, to the foot of a tree, or to an empty room, sits down cross-legged in the lotus position, holds her body straight, and establishes mindfulness in front of her.

- She breathes in/out, aware that she is breathing in/out.
- When she breathes in/out a long breath, she knows, "I am breathing in/out a long breath."
- When she breathes in/out a short breath, she knows, "I am breathing in/out a short breath."

She uses the following practice:

- Breathing in/out, I am aware of my whole body.
- Breathing in/out, I calm my body.

Just as a skilled potter knows:

- when he makes a long turn on the wheel, "I am making a long turn."
- and knows when he makes a short turn, "I am making a short turn."

so [does] a practitioner ...

Moreover,

- when a practitioner walks, he is aware, "I am walking."
- When he is standing, he is aware, "I am standing."
- When he is sitting, he is aware, "I am sitting."
- When he is lying down, he is aware, "I am lying down."

In whatever position his body happens to be, he is aware of the position of his body.

Moreover,

- when the practitioner is going forward or backward, he applies full awareness to his going forward or backward.
- When he looks in front or looks behind, bends down or stands up, he also applies full awareness to what he is doing.
- He applies full awareness to wearing the sanghati robe or carrying the alms bowl.
- When he eats or drinks, chews, or savors the food, he applies full awareness to all this.

- When passing excrement or urinating, **he applies full awareness to** this.
- When he walks, stands, lies down, sits, sleeps or wakes up, speaks or is silent, **he shines his awareness on** all this.

Further, the practitioner **meditates on her very own body** from the soles of the feet upwards and then from the hair on top of the head downwards, a body contained inside the skin and full of all the impurities which belong to the body: "Here is the hair of the head, the hairs on the body, the nails, teeth, skin, flesh, sinews, bones, bone marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, diaphragm, spleen, lungs, intestines, bowels, excrement, bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, grease, saliva, mucus, synovial fluid, urine."

Bhikkhus, imagine a sack which can be opened at both ends, containing a variety of grains — brown rice, wild rice, mung beans, kidney beans, sesame, white rice. When someone with good eyesight opens the bags, he will review it like this: "This is brown rice, this is wild rice, these are mung beans, these are kidney beans, these are sesame seeds, this is white rice." Just so the practitioner passes in review the whole of his body from ...

Further, in whichever position her body happens to be, the practitioner passes in review the **elements which constitute the body**: "In this body is the earth element, the water element, the fire element, and the air element."

As a skilled butcher or an apprentice butcher, having killed a cow, might sit at the crossroads to divide the cow into many parts, *[just so does the practitioner]* ...

Further, the practitioner **compares his own body with a corpse** which he visualizes thrown onto a charnel ground and lying there for 1, 2, or 3 days — bloated, blue in color, and festering, and he observes: "This body of mine is of the same nature. It will end up in the same way; there is no way it can avoid that state."

- Further, ... , pecked at by crows, eaten by hawks, vultures, and jackals, and infested with maggots and worms, and he observes: ...
- Further, ... , it is just a skeleton with a little flesh and blood sticking to it, and the bones are held together by the ligaments.
- Further, ... , it is just a skeleton, no longer adhered to by any flesh, but still smeared by a little blood, the bones still held together by the ligaments.
- Further, ... , it is just a skeleton, no longer adhered to by any flesh nor smeared by any blood, but the bones are still held together by the ligaments.

- Further, ... ; all that is left is a collection of bones scattered here and there; in one place a hand bone, in another a shin bone, a thigh bone, a pelvis, a spinal column, a skull.
- Further, ... ; all that is left is a collection of bleached bones, the color of shells.
- Further, ... ; it has been lying there for more than one year and all that is left is a collection of dried bones.
- Further, ... ; all that is left is the dust which comes from the rotted bones, and he observes: ...

This is how the practitioner remains established in the observation of the **body in the body**, observation of the **body** from within or from without, or both from within or from without. He remains established in the observation of the process of coming-to-be in the **body** or the process of dissolution in the **body** or both in the process of coming-to-be and the process of dissolution. Or he is mindful of the fact, "There is a **body** here." until understanding and full awareness come about. He remains established in the observation, free, not caught in any worldly consideration. That is how to practice observation of the **body in the body**, O bhikkhus.

2. Feelings

Bhikkhus, how does a practitioner remain established in the observation of the feelings in the feelings?

Whenever the practitioner has a pleasant feeling, she is aware, "I am experiencing a pleasant feeling."

The practitioner practices like this for all the feelings, whether they are

- pleasant,
- painful,
- or neutral,

observing when they

- belong to the body (physiological)
- and when they belong to the mind (psychological).

This is how the practitioner remains established in the observation of the feelings in the feelings, observation of the feelings from within or from without, or observation of the feelings both from within and from without. She remains established in the observation of the process of coming-to-be in the feelings or the process of dissolution in the feelings or both in the process of coming-to-be and the process of dissolution. Or she is mindful of the fact, "There is feeling here." until understanding and full awareness come about. She remains established in the observation, free, not caught in any worldly consideration. That is how to practice observation of the feelings in the feelings, O bhikkhus.

3. Mind (Mental Formations)

Bhikkhus, how does a practitioner remain established in the observation of the **mind** in the **mind**?

- When his **mind** is desiring, the practitioner is aware, "My **mind** is desiring."
- When his **mind** is not desiring, he is aware, "My **mind** is not desiring."

He is aware in the same way concerning:

- a hating **mind**,
- a confused **mind**,
- a collected **mind**,
- a dispersed **mind**,
- an expansive **mind**,
- a narrow **mind**,
- the highest **mind**,
- and a concentrated & liberated **mind**.

This is how the practitioner remains established in the observation of the **mind** in the **mind**, observation of the **mind** from within or from without, or observation of the **mind** both from within and from without. He remains established in the observation of the process of coming-to-be in the **mind** or the process of dissolution in the **mind** or both in the process of coming-to-be and the process of dissolution. Or he is mindful of the fact, "There is **mind** here." until understanding and full awareness come about. He remains established in the observation, free, not caught in any worldly consideration. This is how to practice observation of the **mind** in the **mind**, O bhikkhus.

4. Objects of Mind (Perceptions)

Bhikkhus, how does a practitioner remain established in the observation of the **objects of mind** in the **objects of mind**?

First of all, *[this is how]* she observes the **objects of mind** in the **objects of mind** with regard to the **5 Hindrances**:

1. sensual desire

- When **sensual desire** is present in her, **she is aware**, "Sensual desire is present in me."
- Or when **sensual desire** is not present in her, **she is aware**, "Sensual desire is not present in me."
- When **sensual desire** begins to arise, **she is aware of it**.
- When **sensual desire** that has already arisen is abandoned, **she is aware of it**.
- When **sensual desire** that has already been abandoned will not arise again in the future, **she is aware of it**.

She practices in the same way concerning:

2. **anger**,
3. **dullness & drowsiness**,
4. **agitation & remorse**,
5. **doubt**.

Further, *[this is how]* the practitioner observes the **objects of mind** in the **objects of mind** with regard to the **5 Aggregates of Clinging**:

1. Such is **form**. Such is the arising of **form**. Such is the disappearance of **form**.
2. Such is **feeling**. ...
3. Such is **perception**. ...
4. Such are **mental formations**. ...
5. Such is **consciousness**. ...

Further, bhikkhus, *[this is how]* the practitioner observes the **objects of mind** in the **objects of mind** with regard to the **6 sense organs & the 6 sense objects**:

1. eyes & form

She is aware of:

- the eyes & aware of the form,

- the **internal formations** which are produced in dependence on these two things,
- the **birth** of a new **internal formation**,
- when **abandoning** an already produced **internal formation**,
- and when an already abandoned **internal formation** will **not arise** again.

She is aware in the same way of:

2. ears & sound,
3. nose & smell,
4. tongue & taste,
5. body & touch,
6. mind & objects of mind.

Further, bhikkhus, *[this is how]* the practitioner remains established in the observation of the **objects of mind** in the **objects of mind** with regard to the

7 Factors of Awakening:

1. mindfulness:

- When **mindfulness** is present in him, **he is aware**, "**Mindfulness** is present in me."
- When **mindfulness** is **not** present in him, **he is aware**, "**Mindfulness** is **not** present in me."
- **He is aware** when not-yet-born **mindfulness** is being born,
- and when already-born **mindfulness** is perfectly developed.

In the same way, he is aware of the factors of:

2. investigation,
3. diligence [energy],
4. joy,
5. ease,
6. concentration,
7. equanimity [letting go].

Further, bhikkhus, *[this is how]* a practitioner remains established in the observation of **objects of mind** in the **objects of mind** with regard to the **4 Noble Truths**:

A practitioner is aware:

- "This is **suffering**." as it arises.
- "This is the **cause of the suffering**." as it arises.
- "This is the **end of suffering**." as it arises.
- "This is the **path which leads to the end of suffering**." as it arises.

This is how the practitioner remains established in the observation of the **objects of mind** in the **objects of mind** either from within or from without, or both from within and from without. She remains established in the observation of the process of coming-to-be in any of the **objects of mind** or the process of dissolution in the **objects of mind** or both in the process of coming-to-be and the process of dissolution. Or she is mindful of the fact, "There is an **object of mind** here." until understanding and full awareness come about. She remains established in the observation, free, not caught in any worldly consideration. That is how to practice observation of the **objects of mind** in the **objects of mind**, O bhikkhus.

Epilogue

Bhikkhus, he who practices the **4 Establishments of Mindfulness** for 7 years can expect one of 2 fruits — the highest understanding in this very life or, if there remains some residue of affliction, he can attain the fruit of no-return.

Let alone 7 years, bhikkhus, whoever practices the **4 Establishments of Mindfulness** for 6, 5, 4, 3, 2 years or 1 year, for 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, or 2 months, 1 month or half a month, can also expect one of 2 fruits — either the highest understanding in this very life or, if there remains some residue of affliction, he can attain the fruit of no-return.

That is why we said that this path, the path of the 4 grounds for the **Establishment of Mindfulness**, is the most wonderful path, which helps beings realize purification, transcend grief and sorrow, destroy pain and anxiety, travel the right path, and realize nirvana.

The bhikkhus were delighted to hear the teaching of the Buddha. They took it to heart and began to put it into practice.

