

Mindfulness of Breathing

(Ānāpāna Sati)

(Second Revised Edition)

‘The Mindfulness-of-Breathing Sutta’

(‘Ānāpāna· Ssati· Suttam’)

explained by

the Pa-Auk Tawya Sayadaw

A G I F T – N O T F O R S A L E

CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Places for Meditation	2
Posture for Meditation	3
Breathing Mindfully	3
The First Set of Four	5
Practising Samatha	6
Three Kinds of Nimitta	7
The Five Jhāna Factors	7
The Five Masteries	8
The Four Jhānas	9
The Requisites of Enlightenment in Samatha	9
Discerning the Objects for Vipassanā	11
Discerning Ultimate Materiality	12
Discerning Ultimate Mentality	13
Discerning Dependent Origination	16
Practising Vipassanā	17
The Requisites of Enlightenment in Vipassanā	19
The Second Set of Four	21
The Third Set of Four	24
The Fourth Set of Four	27
Path and Fruition	29
The Requisites of Enlightenment in Path and Fruition	30
Conclusion	33

Here we should like to explain very briefly how one meditates using mindfulness of breathing, in Pali called *ānāpāna· ssati*. Our explanation is based mainly on the ‘*Ānāpāna· Ssati*’ sutta (‘The Mindfulness-of-Breathing Sutta’) of the *Majjhima· Nikāya* (*The Middle Collection*).ⁱ

There the Buddha explains why one should practise mindfulness of breathing:

- *Ānāpāna· ssati, bhikkhave, bhāvitā bahulīkatā maha· pphalā hoti mah· ānisaṃsā.*

Mindfulness of breathing, bhikkhus, when developed and cultivated, is of great fruit (*maha· pphalā*) and great benefit (*mah· ānisaṃsā*).

Then The Buddha explains how mindfulness of breathing is of great fruit and great benefit:

- *Ānāpāna· ssati, bhikkhave, bhāvitā bahulīkatā cattāro sati· paṭṭhāne paripūreti.*

Mindfulness of breathing, bhikkhus, when developed and cultivated, fulfils the four foundations of mindfulness (*cattāro sati· paṭṭhāne*).

- *Cattāro sati· paṭṭhānā bhāvitā bahulīkatā satta bojjh· aṅge paripūrenti.*

The four foundations of mindfulness, when developed and cultivated, fulfil the seven enlightenment factors (*satta bojjh· aṅge*).

- *Satta bojjh· aṅgā bhāvitā bahulīkatā vijjā· vimuttiṃ*

paripūrenti.

The seven enlightenment factors, when developed and cultivated, fulfil True Knowledge and Liberation (*Vijjā· Vimuttiṃ*).

Here, the Buddha explains that when *ānāpāna· ssati*, (mindfulness of breathing) is developed and cultivated, it fulfils the four foundations of mindfulness, which developed and cultivated then fulfil the seven enlightenment factors. By this, The Buddha means that when *ānāpāna· ssati* is developed and cultivated, it fulfils the thirty-seven requisites of enlightenment (*satta· tiṃsa· bodhi· pakkhiya· dhammā*).

We shall now explain how it is done. We shall refer section by section to the ‘*Ānāpāna· Ssati*’ sutta.ⁱⁱ

Let us then take The Buddha’s next explanation:

*Idha, bhikkhave, bhikkhu araṇṇa· gato vā
rukkha· mūla· gato vā suñṇā· gāra· gato vā, nisīdati,
pallaṅkaṃ ābhujitvā, ujum kāyaṃ paṇidhāya, parimukhaṃ
satim upaṭṭhapetvā.*

Here, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu gone to the forest, or gone to the foot of a tree, or gone to a secluded place, sits down, having crossed his legs, set his body straight, having mindfulness established before him.

So sat· ova assasati; sat· ova passasati.

He ever mindfully breathes in; ever mindfully breathes out.

PLACES FOR MEDITATION

The Buddha said the bhikkhu has **gone to the forest, or gone to the foot of a tree, or gone to a secluded place**. That refers to places suitable for practising *ānāpāna· ssati*: quiet places. In such

places, there is little noise and other disturbance. That means one can easily calm one's mind down. But if there are no such places, one must simply ignore all noises and other disturbances. Then does any place become like a forest, the foot of a tree, or a secluded place. Then can one practise *ānāpāna· ssati* anywhere.

POSTURE FOR MEDITATION

The Buddha said also the bhikkhu **sits down, having crossed his legs, set his body straight**. It refers to the posture most suitable for *ānāpāna· ssati*.

Although *ānāpāna· ssati* can and should be practised in every bodily posture, sitting is usually the best posture for developing deep concentration. And in sitting, one must keep one's body naturally straight: not too straight and stiff, and not too relaxed. A straight and comfortable sitting posture allows one to sit for a long time without developing tension or tiredness in the body.

BREATHING MINDFULLY

The Buddha said also the bhikkhu has established **mindfulness before him**. This means he has mindfulness established upon the breath in front: at the nostrils (*nāsāpuṭa*) or at the upper lip (*uttar· oṭṭha*).

He ever mindfully breathes in, ever mindfully breathes out. This is *ānāpāna· ssati*, mindfulness of breathing: being mindful of the breath. To be mindful of the breath is to pay attention to the breath as it goes in and out at the nostrils or at the upper lip. When breathing in, one knows one is breathing in; when

breathing out, one knows one is breathing out. That is how one breathes in mindfully, and breathes out mindfully.

Whenever one’s mind wanders, one brings it calmly back to the breath. One does not get upset when one’s mind wanders. And if one has trouble keeping one’s mind on the breath, one counts the breaths:

- 1) On one in&out breath, one counts ‘one’.
- 2) On the next in&out breath, one counts ‘two’.
- 3) On the next in&out breath, one counts ‘three’.
- 4) And so on, up to eight.

One counts the breaths until one’s mind settles down calmly with the breath. Then one stops counting and is just mindful of the breath.

After this introductory explanation, The Buddha continues with four sets of four explanations.

THE FIRST SET OF FOUR

With the first set of four explanations The Buddha explains:

- [1] *Dīghaṃ vā assasanto ‘dīghaṃ assasāmī’ti pajānāti;*
Dīghaṃ vā passasanto ‘dīghaṃ passasāmī’ti pajānāti.
Breathing in long, he understands: ‘I breathe in long’;
Breathing out long, he understands: ‘I breathe out long.’
- [2] *Rassaṃ vā assasanto ‘rassaṃ assasāmī’ti pajānāti;*
Rassaṃ vā passasanto ‘rassaṃ passasāmī’ti pajānāti.
Breathing in short, he understands: ‘I breathe in short’;
Breathing out short, he understands: ‘I breathe out short.’
- [3] *‘Sabba· kāya· paṭisaṃvedī assasissāmī’ti sikkhati;*
‘Sabba· kāya· paṭisaṃvedī passasissāmī’ti sikkhati.
‘Experiencing the whole [breath] body, I shall breathe in’:
thus he trains;
‘Experiencing the whole [breath] body, I shall breathe out’:
thus he trains.
- [4] *‘Passambhayaṃ kāya· saṅkhāraṃ assasissāmī’ti sikkhati;*
‘Passambhayaṃ kāya· saṅkhāraṃ passasissāmī’ti sikkhati.
‘Tranquillizing the body formation, I shall breathe in’:
thus he trains;
‘Tranquillizing the body formation, I shall breathe out’:
thus he trains.

Here, mindfulness of breathing fulfils body contemplation (*kāy· ānupassanā*), the first foundation of mindfulness. Here, The Buddha explains it for attainment of the four *ānāpāna* jhānas, which is samatha (tranquility meditation).

PRACTISING SAMATHA

The Buddha said the bhikkhu breathes in and out understanding that his breath is long or short. As one's mindfulness of breathing develops, this comes naturally: one comes naturally to understand that one's breath is sometimes long, sometimes short. It is not important whether it is long or short; what is important is that one is calmly aware that it is either long or short.

Then The Buddha said the bhikkhu breathes in and out experiencing the whole body. By the whole body (*sabba· kāya*), The Buddha means the whole body of breath. This understanding also comes naturally. As one's mindfulness of breathing develops further, one becomes naturally aware of the beginning, middle, and end of each in-breath and each out-breath as it passes by the nostrils or at the upper lip. Here again, it is not important whether one's breath is long or short; what is important is that one all the time knows the whole body of each in&out breath; that one knows the whole body of breath from beginning to middle to end.

Lastly, The Buddha said the bhikkhu breathes in and out tranquillizing the bodily formation. By the bodily formation (*kāya· saṅkhāra*), The Buddha means the breath passing in and out through the nose.

Tranquillizing the breath also comes naturally, because as one's mindfulness of breathing develops, one's breath becomes more and more subtle, more and more tranquil. So, all one does is try all the time mindfully to comprehend the subtle breath.

If one is able in that way to be aware of the subtle breath for a long time, say for two or three hours, one's concentration will

become even deeper than before. Eventually, one may experience the nimitta (sign of concentration).

THREE KINDS OF NIMITTA

To different meditators the sign of concentration, the nimitta, may appear differently: it is because of their different perception of the breath. To one the nimitta may appear as a mist, to another it may appear as smoke, to another as cotton wool, or simply as light, etc. In the beginning, however, the nimitta is usually grey: that is the *parikamma nimitta* (preparatory sign). Then, as one's concentration develops, it becomes white, which is the *uggaha nimitta* (learning sign). And as one's concentration develops further, it becomes bright and translucent, which is the *paṭibhāga nimitta* (counterpart sign). The *ānāpāna paṭibhāga nimitta* is the object of absorption concentration based on in&out breath: it is the object of the *ānāpāna jhānas*.

THE FIVE JHĀNA FACTORS

When the nimitta first appears, it comes and goes. But as one continues to be mindful of the breath, one's concentration deepens further, and the nimitta remains for longer and longer. When the nimitta joins the breath, and one's mind itself fixes onto the nimitta, one no longer pays attention to the breath, only to the nimitta. Then, as one's concentration becomes deeper and deeper, so does the nimitta become brighter and brighter. The bright light that also appears is the light of wisdom (*paññā āloko*).

One continues to focus on the *ānāpāna paṭibhāga nimitta* for longer and longer periods. One may then experience

absorption concentration. It will first be the *ānāpāna* first jhāna.

Once one can maintain the first jhāna for about two or three hours, one may try to discern the five jhāna factors. Whenever one emerges from jhāna, one discerns the area in one’s heart where the bhavaṅga consciousness rests: that is the heart materiality. The bhavaṅga consciousness is bright and luminous, and looks like a mirror in the heart: that is the mind door. And when one discerns the mind door, one will see the *ānāpāna paṭibhāga nimitta* appear there. Then one discerns the five jhāna factors:

- 1) Application (*vitakka*): it applies one’s attention onto the *ānāpāna paṭibhāga nimitta*.
- 2) Sustainment (*vicāra*): it sustains one’s attention on the *ānāpāna paṭibhāga nimitta*.
- 3) Joy (*pīti*): it likes and is joyful over the *ānāpāna paṭibhāga nimitta*.
- 4) Happiness (*sukha*): it feels happiness at experiencing the *ānāpāna paṭibhāga nimitta*.
- 5) One-pointedness (*ekaggatā*): it concentrates the mind into one point on the *ānāpāna paṭibhāga nimitta*.

First one discerns the jhāna factors one by one, afterwards all five at once.

THE FIVE MASTERIES

Next one develops the five masteries of the first jhāna:

- 1) Mastery in entering the first jhāna when one wants to.
- 2) Mastery in remaining in the first jhāna for as long as one has determined.

- 3) Mastery in emerging from the first jhāna at the determined time.
- 4) Mastery in adverting one's attention to the factors of the first jhāna after one has emerged from it.
- 5) Mastery in reviewing the factors of the first jhāna.

THE FOUR JHĀNAS

After that, to attain the *ānāpāna* second jhāna, one reflects on the disadvantages of the first jhāna and the advantages of the second jhāna: the one has the two gross factors of initial and sustained application, which the other does not have. And determining to remove the two grosser factors, one concentrates on the *ānāpāna paṭibhāga nimitta* again, to enter into jhāna. Then one emerges from that jhāna, and if one sees only three jhāna factors (joy, happiness, and one-pointedness), it means one has successfully attained the *ānāpāna* second jhāna. Then one develops the five masteries of that jhāna.

In the same way, one removes the factor of joy to attain the third jhāna, which has only happiness and one-pointedness. And one removes the factor of happiness to attain the fourth jhāna, which has only one-pointedness and equanimity. One develops the five masteries for all the jhānas.

As one progresses through the jhānas, one's breath becomes more and more tranquil, more and more subtle. With the fourth jhāna, one's breath stops: that is how one fully tranquillizes the bodily formation.

THE REQUISITES OF ENLIGHTENMENT IN SAMATHA

When one attains the four *ānāpāna* jhānas, one is practising

samatha (tranquility meditation). That means one is actually developing the thirty-seven requisites of enlightenment (*satta-
· tiṃsa· bodhi· pakkhīya· dhammā*). How?

- To be mindful of the breath body, in the way we have explained, is body contemplation; to be mindful of the jhāna factors of pleasant and neutral feelings is feelings contemplation; to be mindful of the exalted mind is mind contemplation; and to be mindful of things such as the *ānāpāna paṭibhāga· nimitta* and the jhāna factors is dhammas contemplation. That is to develop the four foundations of mindfulness (*cattāro sati· paṭṭhānā*).
- Furthermore, to make effort to remove unwholesome things such as the five hindrances (sensual desire, ill will, sloth& torpor, restlessness&worry, and scepticism); and to make effort to develop wholesome things such as the five controlling faculties (faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom), that is to develop the four right efforts (*cattāro samma· ppadhānā*).
- Furthermore, to enter into jhāna with either predominantly desire, or predominantly effort, or mind, or investigation, is to develop the four bases of spiritual power (*cattāro iddhi-
· pādā*).
- Furthermore, to have strong faith in *ānāpāna· ssati*, meaning to have strong faith that it is possible to attain jhāna by watching the breath; to make constant effort to concentrate on the *ānāpāna paṭibhāga· nimitta*; to be mindful of the *paṭibhāga· nimitta*; to concentrate on the *paṭibhāga· nimitta*; and to comprehend the *paṭibhāga· nimitta*, is to develop the five controlling

faculties (*pañca indriyāni*). To develop them in this way, is also to develop the five powers (*pañca balāni*).

- Furthermore, to be mindful of the *ānāpāna paṭibhāga nimitta*; to investigate the *paṭibhāga nimitta*; to make constant effort to focus on the *paṭibhāga nimitta*; to be joyful upon focusing on the *paṭibhāga nimitta*; to tranquillize one's mind upon the *paṭibhāga nimitta*; to concentrate on the *paṭibhāga nimitta*; and to look upon the *paṭibhāga nimitta* with equanimity, is to develop the seven enlightenment factors (*satta bojjhāṅgā*).
- Lastly, to understand the *ānāpāna paṭibhāga nimitta* is Right View; to apply one's mind to the *paṭibhāga nimitta* is Right Thought; to abstain from wrong speech, wrong action, and wrong livelihood by having undertaken the precepts beforehand, is Right Speech, Right Action, and Right Livelihood; to make effort to concentrate on the *paṭibhāga nimitta* is Right Effort; to be mindful of the *paṭibhāga nimitta* is Right Mindfulness; and to have *jhāna* is Right Concentration. To develop those eight things is to cultivate the eight factors corresponding to the Noble Eightfold Path (*Ariyo Aṭṭhaṅgiko Maggo*): at this stage the factors are only mundane (*lokiya*).

That is how to develop *samatha* using *ānāpāna ssati* (mindfulness of breathing) is to develop all thirty-seven requisites of enlightenment.

DISCERNING THE OBJECTS FOR VIPASSANĀ

Having developed the four *ānāpāna jhānas*, one is now able to practise *vipassanā*. Because with the light of wisdom one has

developed with *ānāpāna-ssati* (mindfulness of breathing), one is now able to discern ultimate materiality, ultimate mentality, and their causes. They are the objects of vipassanā.

DISCERNING ULTIMATE MATERIALITY

To discern ultimate materiality, one begins with four elements meditation (*catu- dhātu- vavatthānam*). That is, one discerns the four elements in one's body, including one's breath. One discerns the four elements by way of twelve characteristics:

Earth Element	Water Element	Fire Element	Wind Element
1) hardness 2) roughness 3) heaviness 4) softness 5) smoothness 6) lightness	7) flowing 8) cohesion	9) heat 10) cold	11) supporting 12) pushing

One discerns these twelve characteristics first in one part of one's body, and then in another. With practice, one will be able to discern all twelve characteristics throughout one's body quite quickly: about two to three rounds a minute. Then, to develop one's concentration further, one takes an overview of the body to discern each characteristic in the body as a whole. With practice, one will be able to discern all twelve characteristics almost at once. And with yet further practice, one will then be able to discern the twelve characteristics as just the four elements: earth, water, fire, and wind. Then, as one's mindfulness and concentration on the four elements develops, one will perceive one's body in different ways. It will first

appear as a grey body, then as a white body, and then as a translucent body like a block of ice. When one discerns the four elements in that translucent body, it emits brilliant light, and then breaks into tiny particles that arise and pass away at great speed: they are in Pāli called *rūpa· kalāpas* (clusters of materiality). But they are not ultimate materiality.

To discern ultimate materiality, one discerns the four elements in single *rūpa kalāpas*, one element after the other. Afterwards, one discerns the various kinds of derived materiality (*upādā· rūpa*): for example, colour, odour, flavour, and nutritive essence. Altogether one discerns and analyses twenty-eight types of materiality. They are ultimate materiality, arising and passing away. Then one analyses the ultimate materiality of the external world: that of other beings, and that of inanimate things.

DISCERNING ULTIMATE MENTALITY

Having discerned ultimate materiality, one then discerns ultimate mentality. One begins with the four *jhānas*. One enters into *jhāna*, and emerges. Then as before, one discerns the *ānāpāna paṭibhāga· nimitta* in the mind door. And then one discerns the *jhāna* mental-process's individual mental formations. For example, one discerns the thirty-four mental formations of the *ānāpāna* first-*jhāna* mental process:

Mental Formations of the Fine-Material Jhāna

1. consciousness (*citta*)

MENTAL FACTORS (*cetasika*)

Universals (*sabba· citta· sādharmaṇa*)

1. contact (*phassa*)

2. feeling (*vedanā*)

3. perception (*saññā*)
4. volition (*cetanā*)
5. one-pointedness (*ek· aggatā*)
6. life faculty (*jīvit· indriya*)
7. attention (*manasikāra*)

Occasionals (*pakiṇṇaka*)

1. application (*vitakka*)
2. sustainment (*vicāra*)
3. decision (*adhimokkha*)
4. energy (*virīya*)
5. joy (*pīti*)
6. desire (*chanda*)

Beautiful Universals (*sobhana· sādharmaṇa*)

1. faith (*saddhā*)
2. mindfulness (*sati*)
3. conscience (*hiri*)
4. shame (*ottapa*)
5. non-greed (*a· lobha*)
6. non-hatred (*a· dosa*)
7. ever-evenness (*tatra· majjhataṭṭhā*)
8. tranquility of [mental] body (*kāya· passaddhi*)
9. tranquillity of consciousness (*citta· passaddhi*)
10. lightness of [mental] body (*kāya· lahutā*)
11. lightness of consciousness (*citta· lahutā*)
12. flexibility of [mental] body (*kāya· mudutā*)
13. flexibility of consciousness (*citta· mudutā*)
14. wieldiness of [mental] body (*kāya· kammaññatā*)
15. wieldiness of consciousness (*citta· kammaññatā*)
16. proficiency of [mental] body (*kāya· pāguññatā*)

17. proficiency of consciousness (*citta· pāguññatā*)

18. rectitude of [mental] body (*kāy· ujukatā*)

19. rectitude of consciousness (*citt· ujukatā*)

Non-Delusion (*a· moha*)

1. wisdom faculty (*paññ· indriya*)

TOTAL MENTAL FORMATIONS 34

One discerns these thirty-four mental formations systematically: one by one. First, one emerges from the *ānāpāna* first jhāna, and discerns the mental formation consciousness of each of the jhāna mental process's consciousness moments. Then again one enters the first jhāna, again emerges, and now one discerns both the mental formation consciousness as well as the mental formation contact. Then again one enters the first jhāna, again emerges, and again discerns consciousness and contact, and now also feeling. In that way, one adds one mental formation at a time, till one in the end is able to discern all thirty-four mental formations of the first jhāna.

In the same way one discerns the thirty-two mental formations of the second jhāna; and the thirty-one mental formations of the third and fourth jhānas. That is ultimate mentality, arising and passing away.

The four *ānāpāna* jhānas are fine-material realm mental processes, and they are only wholesome. But there are also other kinds of mentality. So one discerns also the various mental formations of sensual-realm mental processes: of the eye-, ear-, nose-, tongue-, body-, and mind door, wholesome and unwholesome. Afterwards, one discerns the ultimate mentality of the external world: that of other beings.

When this stage of the meditation is complete, one will have

done four things:

- 1) One will have discerned one’s own ultimate materiality (internally), and all other materiality (externally).
- 2) One will have discerned ultimate mentality internally and externally.
- 3) One will have discerned ultimate materiality and ultimate mentality together internally and externally.
- 4) One will have distinguished ultimate materiality and ultimate mentality internally and externally to see that there is no self, no person, and no being, but only materiality and mentality arising and passing away.

When one has completed these four things, one will have attained the Mentality-Materiality Definition Knowledge (*Nāma· Rūpa· Pariccheda· Ñāṇa*).

DISCERNING DEPENDENT ORIGATION

Now one is able to discern dependent origination (*paṭicca· samuppāda*). Gradually recollecting one’s past materiality and mentality, one is able to recollect the first moment of one’s present life: at conception. Then one goes further back, to recollect the last moments of one’s past life. There one goes along the continuity of mentality-materiality, backwards and forwards, to find the causes for one’s present rebirth.

One’s present mentality-materiality is the result of mainly five things:

- 1) ignorance (*avijjā*): ignorantly believing that there exists a real human being.

- 2) craving (*taṇhā*): craving for that human being's life.
- 3) clinging (*upādāna*): clinging to that human being's life.
- 4) volitional formations (*saṅkhārā*): the volitional formations responsible for one's present rebirth. When it is a human rebirth, the volitional formations are always wholesome.
- 5) existence of kamma (*kamma· bhava*): the kammic force that produced one's present rebirth.

Having discerned these five main causes for one's present life, one then discerns the relationship between the five past causes and the present results. Then, in the same way, one discerns the relationship between causes and results in more past lives, and in future lives. And systematically one discerns all twelve links of dependent origination: ignorance, formations, consciousness, mentality-materiality, the six bases, contact, feeling, craving, clinging, coming into existence, birth, and ageing&death. One discerns their causal relationship in past lives, the present life, and in future lives.

When one has discerned the relationship between causes and results in this way, one will have attained the Cause-Apprehension Knowledge (*Paccaya· Pariggaha· Ñāṇa*).

PRACTISING VIPASSANĀ

With the two knowledges we just mentioned (the Mentality-Materiality Definition Knowledge, and the Cause-Apprehension Knowledge), one will have discerned ultimate materiality, ultimate mentality, and their causes. They are altogether called formations (*saṅkhārā*). Formations are ultimate reality, which, as explained before, is the object of vipassanā. Based upon the two knowledges, and using the light of the fourth *ānāpāna* jhāna,

one now practises vipassanā (insight).

Vipassanā is to know and see the true nature of all formations. How to practise vipassanā? One discerns all the formations that one discerned before, but this time, one contemplates them in three ways:

- 1) Knowing and seeing formations arise and perish, one contemplates them as impermanent (*anicca*).
- 2) Knowing and seeing how formations are oppressed by arising and perishing, one contemplates them as suffering (*dukkha*).
- 3) Knowing and seeing that they possess nothing permanent, no eternal essence, one contemplates them as non-self (*anatta*).

Contemplating ultimate materiality, ultimate mentality and their causes in this way, again and again, one comes to understand that formations are nothing more than three things: impermanence, suffering, and non-self. That is their intrinsic nature; their true nature. And contemplating ultimate reality in this way, one attains higher and higher insight knowledges (*vipassanā ñāṇa*).

As one's vipassanā knowledge increases, one contemplates also the vipassanā knowledges themselves as impermanent, suffering, and non-self. That is called reflective insight (*paṭivipassanā*). A vipassanā knowledge appears in a mind-door mental process. In each such mind-door mental process there is a mind-door advertent consciousness and seven impulsions. Usually, each of the seven impulsions comprises thirty-four mental formations: the same as the thirty-four mental formations we mentioned in connection with the *ānāpāna* first

jhāna.

THE REQUISITES OF ENLIGHTENMENT IN VIPASSANĀ

When one uses *ānāpāna·ssati* to practise vipassanā, one is also cultivating the thirty-seven requisites of enlightenment (*satta·tiṃsa·bodhi·pakkhiya·dhammā*). How?

- To practise vipassanā is (as we have explained) mindfully to contemplate the three characteristics of impermanence, suffering, and non-self in four things: materiality, feelings, mind, and dhammas. That is to cultivate the four foundations of mindfulness (*cattāro sati·paṭṭhānā*).
- Furthermore, to make effort to remove unwholesome things such as the perverted perceptions of permanence, pleasure, and self; and to make effort to develop wholesome things such as the perceptions of impermanence, suffering, and non-self, to attain the vipassanā knowledges, is to cultivate the four right efforts (*cattāro samma·ppadhānā*).
- Furthermore, to practise vipassanā with either predominantly desire, or predominantly effort, or mind, or investigation, is to cultivate the four bases of spiritual power (*cattāro iddhi·pādā*).
- Furthermore, to have strong faith in vipassanā (which is to have strong faith in the usefulness of knowing and seeing that the true nature of formations is impermanence, suffering, and non-self); to make continuous effort to know and see the true nature of formations; to be mindful of their true nature; to concentrate on the true nature of formations; and to comprehend their true nature, is to cultivate the five controlling faculties (*pañca indriyāni*). To cultivate them in

this way is also to cultivate the five powers (*pañca balāni*).

- Furthermore, to be mindful of the true nature of formations (their nature of impermanence, suffering, and non-self); to investigate their true nature; to make constant effort to know and see the true nature of formations; to be joyful at knowing and seeing their true nature; to tranquillize one’s mind upon the true nature of formations; to concentrate upon their true nature; and to look upon their true nature with equanimity, is to cultivate the seven enlightenment factors (*satta bojjhā aṅgā*).
- Lastly, rightly to understand the true nature of formations (their nature of impermanence, suffering, and non-self) is Right View; to apply one’s mind to the true nature of formations is Right Thought; to abstain from wrong speech, wrong action, and wrong livelihood by having undertaken the precepts beforehand is Right Speech, Right Action, and Right Livelihood; to make effort to know and see the true nature of formations is Right Effort; to be mindful of their true nature is Right Mindfulness; and to concentrate on the true nature of formations is Right Concentration. To cultivate those eight things is to cultivate the eight factors corresponding to the Noble Eightfold Path (*Ariyo Aṭṭhaṅgiko Maggo*): at this stage they are only mundane (*lokiya*).

That is how to cultivate vipassanā using *ānāpāna-ssati* (mindfulness of breathing) is to develop all thirty-seven requisites of enlightenment.

That was the first set of explanations in the ‘*Ānāpāna- Ssati*’ sutta.

THE SECOND SET OF FOUR

The second set of four explanations by The Buddha is:

- [1] *‘Pīti· paṭisaṁvedī assasissāmī’ti sikkhati;*
‘pīti· paṭisaṁvedī passasissāmī’ti sikkhati.
‘Experiencing joy, I shall breathe in’: thus he trains;
‘Experiencing joy, I shall breathe out’: thus he trains.
- [2] *‘Sukha· paṭisaṁvedī assasissāmī’ti sikkhati;*
‘sukha· paṭisaṁvedī passasissāmī’ti sikkhati.
‘Experiencing happiness, I shall breathe in’: thus he trains;
‘Experiencing happiness, I shall breathe out’: thus he trains.
- [3] *‘Citta· saṅkhāra· paṭisaṁvedī assasissāmī’ti sikkhati;*
‘citta· saṅkhāra· paṭisaṁvedī passasissāmī’ti sikkhati.
‘Experiencing the mental formation, I shall breathe in’:
thus he trains;
‘Experiencing the mental formation, I shall breathe out’:
thus he trains.
- [4] *‘Passambhayaṁ citta· saṅkhāraṁ assasissāmī’ti sikkhati;*
‘passambhayaṁ citta· saṅkhāraṁ passasissāmī’ti sikkhati.
‘Tranquillizing the mental formation, I shall breathe in’:
thus he trains;
‘Tranquillizing the mental formation, I shall breathe out’:
thus he trains.

Here, mindfulness of breathing fulfils feelings contemplation (*vedan· ānupassanā*), the second foundation of mindfulness. It is both samatha and vipassanā meditation.

- 1) The Buddha said the bhikkhu breathes in and out

experiencing joy (*pīti*). Joy is one of the jhāna factors of the first and second jhāna: one's mind is focused on the *ānāpāna-paṭibhāga· nimitta* with joy. That is how one breathes in and out experiencing joy in samatha.

Then again, one enters those two jhānas, emerges, and emphasizing joy, one discerns their mental formations, and contemplates them as impermanent, suffering, and non-self. That vipassanā knowledge will then also be associated with joy. It is a law of nature that when there is joy in the object of vipassanā, there is also joy in the vipassanā knowledge. That is how one breathes in and out experiencing joy.

- 2) Then The Buddha said the bhikkhu breathes in and out experiencing happiness (*sukha*). Happiness is one of the jhāna factors of the first, second, and third jhāna: one's mind is focused on the *ānāpāna-paṭibhāga· nimitta* with happiness. That is how one breathes in and out experiencing happiness in samatha.

Then again, as before, one discerns the mental formations of those three jhānas (now emphasizing happiness), and contemplates them as impermanent, suffering, and non-self. Here, one's vipassanā knowledge will be associated with happiness. That is how one breathes in and out experiencing happiness.

- 3) Then The Buddha said the bhikkhu breathes in and out experiencing the mental formation. By mental formation (*cittasankhāro*), He means here perception (*saññā*) and feeling (*vedanā*). Perception and feeling are associated with all four jhānas: one's mind is focused on the *ānāpāna-paṭibhāga· nimitta* with perception and feeling. That is how one

breathes in and out experiencing the mental formation in samatha.

Then again, as before, one discerns the mental formations of the four jhānas (now emphasizing perception and feeling), and contemplates them as impermanent, suffering, and non-self. That is how one breathes in and out experiencing the mental formation.

- 4) Lastly, The Buddha said the bhikkhu breathes in and out tranquillizing the mental formation: tranquillizing perception and feeling. One does that automatically when one enters the four *ānāpāna* jhānas in succession. Why is that? Because the higher the jhāna, the more tranquil perception and feeling: one's mind is focused on the *ānāpāna-paṭibhāga nimitta* with increasingly tranquil perception and feeling. That is how one breathes in and out tranquillizing the mental formation.

Then again, discerning the increasingly tranquil mental formations of the four jhānas, and contemplating them as impermanent, suffering, and non-self, one's vipassanā knowledge will also be increasingly tranquil. That is how one breathes in and out tranquillizing the mental formation.

We have now explained the second set of instructions given by The Buddha in the '*Ānāpāna Sati*' sutta.

THE THIRD SET OF FOUR

The third set of four instructions by The Buddha is:

- [1] ‘Citta· paṭisaṃvedī assasissāmī’ti sikkhati;
‘citta· paṭisaṃvedī passasissāmī’ti sikkhati.
‘I shall breathe in experiencing the mind’: thus he trains;
‘I shall breathe out experiencing the mind’: thus he trains.
- [2] ‘Abhippamodayaṃ cittaṃ assasissāmī’ti sikkhati;
‘abhippamodayaṃ cittaṃ passasissāmī’ti sikkhati.
‘I shall breathe in gladdening the mind’: thus he trains;
‘I shall breathe out gladdening the mind’: thus he trains.
- [3] ‘Samādahaṃ cittaṃ assasissāmī’ti sikkhati;
‘samādahaṃ cittaṃ passasissāmī’ti sikkhati.
‘I shall breathe in concentrating the mind’: thus he trains;
‘I shall breathe out concentrating the mind’: thus he trains.
- [4] ‘Vimocayaṃ cittaṃ assasissāmī’ti sikkhati;
‘vimocayaṃ cittaṃ passasissāmī’ti sikkhati.
‘I shall breathe in liberating the mind’: thus he trains;
‘I shall breathe out liberating the mind’: thus he trains.

Here, mindfulness of breathing fulfils mind contemplation (*citt· ānupassanā*), the third foundation of mindfulness. Here too, it is both samatha and vipassanā meditation.

- 1) The Buddha said the bhikkhu breathes in and out experiencing the mind. When one abides in any of the four *ānāpāna* jhānas, one’s mind is focused on the *ānāpāna-paṭi-bhāga· nimitta* with mindfulness and comprehension. That is how one breathes in and out experiencing the mind in

samatha. Emerging from jhāna, and emphasizing the mind, one then contemplates its mental formations as impermanent, suffering, and non-self. That is how one breathes in and out experiencing the mind in vipassanā.

- 2) Then The Buddha said the bhikkhu breathes in and out gladdening the mind. Gladdening the mind is the same as joy, and as explained before, joy is one of the jhāna factors of the first and second jhāna: that is how one breathes in and out gladdening the mind in samatha.

Emerging from one of the two jhānas, and emphasizing joy, one then contemplates its mental formations as impermanent, suffering, and non-self. That is how one breathes in and out gladdening the mind in vipassanā.

- 3) Then The Buddha said the bhikkhu breathes in and out concentrating the mind. All jhānas have the factor one-pointedness: it makes one's mind concentrate on the *paṭibhāga nimitta*. That is how one breathes in and out concentrating the mind in samatha.

Emerging from jhāna, and emphasizing one-pointedness, one then contemplates its mental formations as impermanent, suffering, and non-self. Doing so, one's mind concentrates on the three characteristics of jhāna mental formations headed by mind. That is how one breathes in and out concentrating the mind.

- 4) Lastly, The Buddha said the bhikkhu breathes in and out liberating the mind. In the first jhāna, one's mind is liberated from the five hindrances; in the second jhāna, one's mind is liberated from application and sustainment; in the third jhāna, one's mind is liberated from joy; and in the fourth

jhāna, one’s mind is liberated from happiness. That is how one breathes in and out liberating the mind in samatha.

Emerging from any of the four jhānas, one contemplates its mental formations as impermanent, suffering, and non-self. In doing so, one’s mind is liberated from the perverted perceptions of permanence, pleasure, and self on the mental formations of any of four jhānas. That is how one breathes in and out liberating the mind in vipassanā.

We have now explained the third set of instructions given by The Buddha in the ‘*Ānāpāna· Ssati*’ sutta.

THE FOURTH SET OF FOUR

The fourth set of four instructions by The Buddha is:

[1] *‘Anicc· ānupassī assasissāmī’ti sikkhati;*

‘anicc· ānupassī passasissāmī’ti sikkhati.

‘I shall breathe in contemplating impermanence’:

thus he trains;

‘I shall breathe out contemplating impermanence’:

thus he trains.

[2] *‘Virāg· ānupassī assasissāmī’ti sikkhati;*

‘virāg· ānupassī passasissāmī’ti sikkhati.

‘I shall breathe in contemplating fading away’:

thus he trains;

‘I shall breathe out contemplating fading away’:

thus he trains.

[3] *‘Nirodh· ānupassī assasissāmī’ti sikkhati;*

‘nirodh· ānupassī passasissāmī’ti sikkhati.

‘I shall breathe in contemplating cessation’: thus he trains;

‘I shall breathe out contemplating cessation’: thus he trains.

[4] *‘Paṭinissagg· ānupassī assasissāmī’ti sikkhati;*

‘paṭinissagg· ānupassī passasissāmī’ti sikkhati.

‘I shall breathe in contemplating relinquishment’:

thus he trains;

‘I shall breathe out contemplating relinquishment’:

thus he trains.

Here, mindfulness of breathing fulfils dhammas contemplation (*dhamm· ānupassanā*), the fourth foundation of

mindfulness. Here, it is only vipassanā meditation.

- 1) The Buddha said the bhikkhu breathes in and out contemplating impermanence. One emerges from any of the four *ānāpāna* jhānas, and discerns the arising and passing away of ultimate materiality, ultimate mentality, and their causes, and contemplates them as impermanent. That is how one breathes in and out contemplating impermanence.
- 2) Then The Buddha said the bhikkhu breathes in and out contemplating fading away. There are two kinds of fading away: fading away as destruction and absolute fading away. Fading away as destruction is the momentary destruction of formations. Absolute fading away is Nibbāna.

When one’s vipassanā knowledge has become sharp, one contemplates the momentary passing away of formations as impermanent, suffering, and non-self. That is how one breathes in and out contemplating the fading away of formations as destruction.

When one attains a Noble Path and Noble Fruition, one realizes the absolute fading away, Nibbāna. That is how one breathes in and out contemplating the fading away of formations as absolute fading away.

- 3) Then The Buddha said the bhikkhu breathes in and out contemplating cessation. As with fading away, contemplating cessation means either that one breathes in and out contemplating the momentary cessation of formations as impermanent, suffering, and non-self, or it means one breathes in and out contemplating the absolute cessation of formations, Nibbāna.
- 4) Lastly, The Buddha said the bhikkhu breathes in and out

contemplating relinquishment. Relinquishment is also of two kinds: giving up defilements (relinquishing them) and entering into the unformed Nibbāna (relinquishing the formed element).

When, in developing vipassanā meditation, one attains to the Knowledge of Dissolution (*bhaṅga-ñāṇa*), one's perception of impermanence is very strong and suspends conceit; one's perception of suffering suspends attachment; and one's perception of non-self suspends wrong view. That is how one breathes in and out contemplating relinquishment as giving up defilements (relinquishing them). Doing so, however, one is at the same time contemplating relinquishment as entering into Nibbāna, because one's vipassanā knowledge inclines the mind towards Nibbāna (relinquishing the formed element).

Then, when one's vipassanā knowledge matures, and one realizes Nibbāna, one's Path Knowledge gives up defilements completely (relinquishes them completely), and enters into Nibbāna (relinquishes the formed element) by making Nibbāna its object. One's subsequent Fruition Knowledge then also enters into Nibbāna this way. Whenever one later enters into the Fruition attainment, there is then again such relinquishing of the formed element. That is how, again, one breathes in and out contemplating relinquishment.

We have now explained the fourth set of instructions given by The Buddha in the '*Ānāpāna-Ssati*' sutta.

PATH AND FRUITION

To realize Nibbāna is also to realize the Four Noble Truths.

How?

- 1) Ultimate materiality and ultimate mentality, the five aggregates, are the First Noble Truth: the Suffering Truth (*Dukkha· Sacca*).
- 2) The causes for ultimate materiality and mentality, their dependent origination, is the Second Noble Truth: the Origin Truth (*Samudaya· Sacca*).
- 3) Nibbāna is the Third Noble Truth: the Cessation Truth (*Nirodha· Sacca*).
- 4) The Noble Eightfold Path that is the Path Knowledge is the Fourth Noble Truth: the Path Truth (*Magga· Sacca*).

After the arising of the Path consciousness, which takes Nibbāna as object, two or three Fruition consciousnesses arise that also take Nibbāna as object. Then has one realized the Four Noble Truths, and the first stage of enlightenment, Stream Entry (*Sot· Āpatti*). And as one continues to practise vipassanā based on *ānāpāna· ssati*, one may attain the higher stages of enlightenment. Eventually, one destroys all defilements and becomes an Arahant, a Worthy One, a Perfect One.

THE REQUISITES OF ENLIGHTENMENT IN PATH AND FRUITION

When one attains the Path and Fruition Knowledges, and realizes Nibbāna, one is also developing and cultivating the thirty-seven requisites of enlightenment. How?

- One's Path Knowledge destroys the delusion that concealed the true nature of the body, of feelings, of mind, and of dhammas. That is to develop and cultivate the four foundations of mindfulness (*cattāro sati· paṭṭhānā*).

- Furthermore, one's Path Knowledge removes defilements (which are unwholesome things), and develops the Path dhammas that realize Nibbāna (which are wholesome things). That is to develop and cultivate the four right efforts (*cattāro samma· ppadhānā*).
- Furthermore, when one attains the first Noble Path (the Stream-Entry Path Knowledge), it is associated with either predominantly desire, or predominantly effort, or mind, or investigation. That is to develop and cultivate the four bases of spiritual power (*cattāro iddhi· pādā*).
- Furthermore, when one attains the first Noble Path, one becomes fully confident that The Buddha was fully enlightened, that Nibbāna exists, and that there exists a Noble Sangha, disciples of The Buddha. In other words, when one attains the Noble Path, one gains unshakeable faith in The Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha. And one makes effort to realize Nibbāna; one is mindful of Nibbāna; one is concentrated upon Nibbāna; and one comprehends Nibbāna. That is to develop and cultivate the five controlling faculties (*pañca indriyāni*). To develop and cultivate them in this way is also to develop and cultivate the five powers (*pañca balāni*).
- Furthermore, to be mindful of Nibbāna; to investigate Nibbāna; to make effort to realize Nibbāna; to be joyful upon realizing Nibbāna; to tranquillize one's mind upon Nibbāna; to concentrate upon Nibbāna; and to look upon Nibbāna with equanimity, is to develop and cultivate the seven enlightenment factors (*satta bojjh· aṅgā*).
- Lastly, to understand Nibbāna is Right View; to apply one's mind to Nibbāna is Right Thought; with one's Path

Knowledge to destroy all the defilements that cause wrong speech, wrong action, and wrong livelihood means one’s realization of Nibbāna is associated with Right Speech, Right Action, and Right Livelihood; to make effort to realize Nibbāna is Right Effort; to be mindful of Nibbāna is Right Mindfulness; and lastly, to concentrate on Nibbāna means one has attained either the first jhāna or a higher jhāna with Nibbāna as object, which is Noble Right Concentration. To develop and cultivate those eight things is to develop and cultivate the Noble Eightfold Path (*Ariyo Aṭṭhaṅgiko Maggo*): now the factors are supramundane, which means they are Noble.

That is how to develop and cultivate *ānāpāna-ssati* (mindfulness of breathing) is to develop all thirty-seven requisites of enlightenment.

CONCLUSION

In this talk we explained how one develops *ānāpāna· ssati*, up to the attainment of Arahantship. First one develops the thirty-seven requisites of enlightenment with samatha meditation: they are mundane, having the *paṭibhāga nimitta* as object. The samatha meditation gives one the light of wisdom, which enables one to cultivate the thirty-seven requisites of enlightenment with vipassanā meditation: they are mundane, having formations as object. The samatha and vipassanā requisites of enlightenment then enable one to develop and cultivate the thirty-seven requisites of enlightenment with the Path Knowledge: they are supramundane, having Nibbāna as object. That is what The Buddha was referring to, when He in the beginning of the ‘*Ānāpāna· Ssati*’ sutta said:

When, bhikkhus, mindfulness of breathing is developed and cultivated, it is of great fruit and great benefit.

Evam bhāvitā kho, bhikkhave, ānāpāna· ssati evaṃ bahulīkatā maha· pphalā hoti mah· ānisaṃsā.

If we practise *ānāpāna· ssati* (mindfulness of breathing) according to The Buddha’s instructions, we are sure to reap great fruit and great benefit. That is what The Buddha was referring to when He said:

- **When mindfulness of breathing is developed and cultivated, it fulfils the four foundations of mindfulness.**
- **When the four foundations of mindfulness are developed and cultivated, they fulfil the seven enlightenment factors.**
- **When the seven enlightenment factors are developed and**

cultivated, they fulfil True Knowledge and Liberation.

True Knowledge and Liberation is to realize Nibbāna, the Unformed Element. The Buddha explains that it is the Deathless, and the Supreme Happiness.

May you all attain the Supreme Happiness, the highest in the Buddha’s teaching: for your own great benefit, and for the great benefit of all beings.

ENDNOTES

ⁱ M.III.ii.8 ‘*Ānāpāna· Ssati· Suttaṃ*’ (‘The Mindfulness-of-Breathing Sutta’)

ⁱⁱ The basis of the Most Venerable Sayadaw’s explanation may be found in the discussion of S.V.X.ii.9 ‘*Vesālī· Suttaṃ*’ (‘The Vesālī Sutta’) in the *Visuddhi· Magga*, chapter viii ‘*Ānāpāna· Ssati· Kathā*’ (‘The Mindfulness of Breathing Discussion’) §§215-237. There, The Buddha gives the same series of sixteen instructions as He does in ‘The Mindfulness-of-Breathing Sutta’.

