

# To Escape from the Round of Rebirths Based on Mindfulness of Breathing

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## Summary

Four Noble Truths has always been the core of Buddhas' Teaching. Because of not understanding and not penetrating the four noble truths that all beings wander through this long course of saṃsāra, exist in various forms of rebirths, experiencing and repeating everlasting distresses through birth, aging and death. However, The Buddha told: **"Now these truths have been seen; The conduit to existence is severed; Cut off is the root of suffering..."** Then, the Buddha revealed the Four Noble Truths, the Dhamma that is unrefuted, undefiled, irreproachable, and uncensured by wise ascetics and brahmins. Practical realization of Four Noble Truths begins with developing concentration (samatha). **"With concentrated mind, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu understands Dhammas as they really are."** Out of the forty samatha meditation subjects available for developing concentration, the author discussed about Ānāpānassati Meditation (Mindfulness of Breathing) methodologically by referring to the systematic tetrad of Ānāpānassati Practice taught by the Buddha in 'Ānāpānassati Sutta' ('The Mindfulness of Breathing Sutta') of the Majjhima Nikāya. The Practice includes both Samanā and Vipassanā approaches, culminating in the realization of the Deathless, Nibbāna, which bring great benefit for oneself and all other beings.

## Introduction

Here, we should like to explain very briefly about Paṭhamakoṭigāmasutta<sup>1</sup> from Koṭigāmaṅgaḍḍhā in Saṃyuttanikāya.

## Paṭhamakoṭigāmasuttaṃ

*Ekam samayaṃ bhagavā vajjīsu viharati koṭigāme. Tatra kho bhagavā bhikkhū āmantesi – "catunnaṃ, bhikkhave, ariyasaccānaṃ ananubodhā appaṭivedhā evamidaṃ dīghamaddhānaṃ sandhāvitaṃ saṃsaritaṃ mamañceva tumhākañca".*

On one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling among the Vajjians at Koṭigāma. There the Blessed One addressed the bhikkhus thus: "Bhikkhus, it is because of not understanding and not penetrating the Four Noble Truths that you and I have roamed and wandered through this long course of saṃsāra.

*"Katamesaṃ catunnaṃ? Dukkassa, bhikkhave, ariyasaccassa ananubodhā appaṭivedhā evamidaṃ dīghamaddhānaṃ sandhāvitaṃ saṃsaritaṃ mamañceva tumhākañca.*

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<sup>1</sup> Saṃyuttanikāya, Mahāvagga, Saccasaṃyutta - 377

*Dukkhasamudayassa ariyasaccassa...pe... dukkhanirodhassa ariyasaccassa...pe... dukkhanirodhagāminiyā paṭipadāya ariyasaccassa ananubodhā appaṭivedhā evamidaṃ dīghamaddhānaṃ sandhāvitaṃ saṃsaritaṃ mamañceva tumhākañca. Tayidaṃ, bhikkhave, dukkhaṃ ariyasaccaṃ anubuddhaṃ paṭividdhaṃ, dukkhasamudayaṃ ariyasaccaṃ anubuddhaṃ paṭividdhaṃ, dukkhanirodhaṃ ariyasaccaṃ anubuddhaṃ paṭividdhaṃ, dukkhanirodhagāminī paṭipadā ariyasaccaṃ anubuddhaṃ paṭividdhaṃ; ucchinnā bhavataṇhā, khīṇā bhavanetti; natthidāni punabbhavo"ti.*

What four? "It is, bhikkhus, because of not understanding and not penetrating the noble truth of suffering that you and I have roamed and wandered through this long course of saṃsāra. It is because of not understanding and not penetrating the noble truth of the origin of suffering ... the noble truth of the cessation of suffering ... the noble truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering that you and I have roamed and wandered through this long course of saṃsāra. "That noble truth of suffering, bhikkhus, has been understood and penetrated. That noble truth of the origin of suffering has been understood and penetrated. That noble truth of the cessation of suffering has been understood and penetrated. That noble truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering has been understood and penetrated. Craving for existence has been cut off; the conduit to existence has been destroyed; now there is no more renewed existence."

*Idamavoca bhagavā. Idam vatvāna sugato athāparaṃ etadavoca satthā –*

*"Catunnaṃ ariyasaccānaṃ, yathābhūtaṃ adassanā;  
Saṃsitaṃ dīghamaddhānaṃ, tāsū tāsveva jātisu.  
"Tāni etāni diṭṭhāni, bhavanetti samūhatā;  
Ucchinnaṃ mūlaṃ dukkhassa, natthidāni punabbhavo"ti.*

This is what the Blessed One said. Having said this, the Fortunate One, the Teacher, further said this:

"Because of not seeing as they are The Four Noble Truths, We have wandered through the long course In the various kinds of births. "Now these truths have been seen; The conduit to existence is severed; Cut off is the root of suffering: Now there is no more renewed existence."

## **1. What is dukkha-ariyasacca (the noble truth of suffering)?**

*Saṅkhittena pañcupādānakkhandhā dukkhā.<sup>2</sup>*

In brief, the five aggregates subject to clinging are suffering.

## **What are five upādānakkhandhā (five clinging aggregates)?**

### **Khandhasutta<sup>3</sup> (Aggregates)**

*Sāvattihinidānaṃ. "Pañca, bhikkhave, khandhe desessāmi, pañcupādānakkhandhe ca. Taṃ suṇātha. Katame ca, bhikkhave, pañcakkhandhā? Yaṃ kiñci, bhikkhave, rūpaṃ aṭṭhānāgatapaccuppannaṃ ajjhattaṃ vā bahiddhā vā oḷārikaṃ vā sukhuṃ vā hīnaṃ vā*

<sup>2</sup> Aṅguttaranikāya, Tikanipāta, Mahāvagga, Titthāyatanādisutta - 178

<sup>3</sup> Saṃyuttanikāya, Khandhavagga - 39

*pañītaṃ vā yaṃ dūre santike vā, ayaṃ vuccati rūpakkhando. Yā kāci vedanā...pe... yā kāci saññā... ye keci saṅkhārā atītānāgatapaccuppannā ajjhataṃ vā bahiddhā vā oḷārikā vā sukhumā vā...pe... ayaṃ vuccati saṅkhārakkhandho. Yaṃ kiñci viññāṇaṃ atītānāgatapaccuppannaṃ ajjhataṃ vā bahiddhā vā oḷārikaṃ vā sukhumaṃ vā hīnaṃ vā pañītaṃ vā yaṃ dūre santike vā, ayaṃ vuccati viññāṇakkhandho. Ime vuccanti, bhikkhave, pañcakkhandhā".*

*"Katame ca, bhikkhave, pañcupādānakkhandhā? Yaṃ kiñci, bhikkhave, rūpaṃ atītānāgatapaccuppannaṃ...pe... yaṃ dūre santike vā sāsavaṃ upādāniyaṃ, ayaṃ vuccati rūpupādānakkhandho. Yā kāci vedanā...pe... yā dūre santike vā sāsavā upādāniyā, ayaṃ vuccati vedanupādānakkhandho. Yā kāci saññā...pe... yā dūre santike vā sāsavā upādāniyā, ayaṃ vuccati saññupādānakkhandho. Ye keci saṅkhārā...pe... sāsavā upādāniyā, ayaṃ vuccati saṅkhārupādānakkhandho. Yaṃ kiñci viññāṇaṃ atītānāgatapaccuppannaṃ...pe... yaṃ dūre santike vā sāsavaṃ upādāniyaṃ, ayaṃ vuccati viññāṇupādānakkhandho. Ime vuccanti, bhikkhave, pañcupādānakkhandhā"ti.*

At Sāvattī. "Bhikkhus, I will teach you the five aggregates and the five aggregates subject to clinging. Listen to that.... "And what, bhikkhus, are the five aggregates? Whatever kind of materiality there is, whether past, future, or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near: this is called the materiality aggregate. Whatever kind of feeling there is ... this is called the feeling aggregate. Whatever kind of perception there is ... this is called the perception aggregate. Whatever kind of volitional formations there are ... these are called the volitional formations aggregate. Whatever kind of consciousness there is, whether past, future, or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near: this is called the consciousness aggregate. These, bhikkhus, are called the five aggregates. "And what, bhikkhus, are the five aggregates subject to clinging? Whatever kind of materiality there is, whether past, future, or present ... far or near, that is tainted, that can be clung to: this is called the materiality aggregate subject to clinging. Whatever kind of feeling there is ... that is tainted, that can be clung to: this is called the feeling aggregate subject to clinging. Whatever kind of perception there is ... that is tainted, that can be clung to: this is called the perception aggregate subject to clinging. Whatever kind of volitional formations there are ... that are tainted, that can be clung to: these are called the volitional formations aggregate subject to clinging. Whatever kind of consciousness there is, whether past, future, or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near, that is tainted, that can be clung to: this is called the consciousness aggregate subject to clinging. These, bhikkhus, are called the five aggregates subject to clinging."

## **2. What is Dukkhasamudaya-ariyasacca (the noble truth of the origin of suffering)?**

*"Katamañca, bhikkhave, dukkhasamudayaṃ ariyasaccaṃ? Avijjāpaccayā saṅkhārā, saṅkhārapaccayā viññāṇaṃ, viññāṇapaccayā nāmarūpaṃ, nāmarūpapaccayā saḷāyatanaṃ, saḷāyanapaccayā phassa, phassapaccayā vedanā, vedanāpaccayā taṇhā, taṇhāpaccayā upādānaṃ, upādānapaccayā bhavo, bhavapaccayā jāti, jātipaccayā jarāmaraṇaṃ sokaparidevadukkhadomanassupāyāsā sambhavanti. Evametassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa samudayo hoti. Idaṃ vuccati, bhikkhave, dukkhasamudayaṃ ariyasaccaṃ.*

“And what, bhikkhus, is the noble truth of the origin of suffering? With ignorance as condition, volitional activities [come to be]; with volitional activities as condition, consciousness; with consciousness as condition, nāma-rūpa; with nāma-rūpa as condition, the six sense bases; with the six sense bases as condition, contact; with contact as condition, feeling; with feeling as condition, craving; with craving as condition, clinging; with clinging as condition, existence; with existence as condition, birth; with birth as condition, old age and death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, dejection, and anguish come to be. Such is the origin of this whole mass of suffering. This is called the noble truth of the origin of suffering.

According to this sutta, the forward order of the dependent origination is called the noble truth of the origin of suffering.

### **3. What is Dukkhanirodha-ariyasacca** (the noble truth of the cessation of suffering)?

*"Katamañca, bhikkhave, dukkhanirodhaṃ ariyasaccaṃ? Avijjāya tveva asesavirāganirodhā sañkhāranirodho, sañkhāranirodhā viññāṇanirodho, viññāṇanirodhā nāmarūpanirodho, nāmarūpanirodhā salāyatananirodho, salāyatananirodhā phassanirodho, phassanirodhā vedanānirodho, vedanānirodhā taṇhānirodho, taṇhānirodhā upādānanirodho, upādānanirodhā bhavanirodho, bhavanirodhā jātinirodho, jātinirodhā jarāmaṇaṃ sokaparidevadukkhadomanassupāyāsā nirujjhanti. Evametassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa nirodho hoti. Idaṃ vuccati, bhikkhave, dukkhanirodhaṃ ariyasaccaṃ.*

“And what, bhikkhus, is the noble truth of the cessation of suffering? With the remainderless fading away and cessation of ignorance comes cessation of volitional activities; with the cessation of volitional activities, cessation of consciousness; with the cessation of consciousness, cessation of nāma-rūpa; with the cessation of nāma-rūpa, cessation of the six sense bases; with the cessation of the six sense bases, cessation of contact; with the cessation of contact, cessation of feeling; with the cessation of feeling, cessation of craving; with the cessation of craving, cessation of clinging; with the cessation of clinging, cessation of existence; with the cessation of existence, cessation of birth; with the cessation of birth, old age and death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, dejection, and anguish cease. Such is the cessation of this whole mass of suffering. This is called the noble truth of the cessation of suffering.

According to this sutta, the reverse order of the dependent origination is called the noble truth of the cessation of suffering.

### **4. What is Maggasacca** (the noble truth of the path)?

*"Katamañca, bhikkhave, dukkhanirodhagāminī paṭipadā ariyasaccaṃ? Ayameva ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo, seyyathidaṃ – sammādiṭṭhi, sammāsaṅkappo, sammāvācā, sammākammanto, sammāājīvo, sammāvāyāmo, sammāsati, sammāsamādhi. Idaṃ vuccati, bhikkhave, dukkhanirodhagāminī paṭipadā ariyasaccaṃ. 'Imāni cattāri ariyasaccānīti, bhikkhave, mayā dhammo desito aniggahito asaṅkiliṭṭho anupavajjo appaṭikuṭṭho samaṇehi brāhmaṇehi viññūhīti. Iti yaṃ taṃ vuttaṃ idametaṃ paṭicca vutta"nti.*

“And what, bhikkhus, is the noble truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering? It is just this noble eightfold path; that is, right view, right intention, right

speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. This is called the noble truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering. "When it was said: "These are the four noble truths": this, bhikkhus, is the Dhamma taught by me that is unrefuted, undefiled, irreproachable, and uncensured by wise ascetics and brahmins,' it is because of this that this was said."

For realization of these four noble truths, one should develop concentration.

*Samādhiṃ, bhikkhave, bhāvētha. Samāhito, bhikkhave, bhikkhu yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti.*<sup>4</sup>

Bhikkhus, develop concentration. With concentrated mind, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu understands Dhammas as they really are.

There are forty samatha meditation subjects available for developing concentration. Among these forty, we should like to discuss about Ānāpānassati Meditation (Mindfulness of Breathing).

## **Mindfulness of Breathing**

(Ānāpānassati)

### **Introduction**

Here we should like to explain very briefly how one meditates using mindfulness of breathing, in Pāli called ānāpānassati. Our explanation is based mainly on the 'Ānāpānassati Sutta'<sup>5</sup> ('The Mindfulness of Breathing Sutta') of the Majjhima Nikāya (The Middle Length Discourses). There the Buddha explains why one should practice mindfulness of breathing:

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

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

**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.**

Here, the Buddha explains that when ānāpānassati (mindfulness of breathing) is developed and cultivated, the thirty-seven requisites of enlightenment (sattatiṃsabodhipakkhiyadhammā) are thereby also developed and cultivated.

We shall now explain how it is done. We shall refer section by section to the 'ānāpānassati Sutta'. Let us then take The Buddha's next explanation:

**Here, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu gone to the forest,**

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<sup>4</sup> Saṃyuttanikāya, Mahāvagga, Saccasaṃyutta, Samādhisutta - 363

<sup>5</sup> Majjhimanikāya, Uparipaṇṇāsa, Ānāpānassati Sutta - 122

**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.  
He breathes in mindfully; he breathes out mindfully.**

### **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 ānāpānassati: 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 noise and other disturbances. Then does any place become like a forest, the foot of a tree, or a secluded place, which means one can practise ānāpānassati anywhere.

### **Posture for Meditation**

The Buddha said also the bhikkhu **sits down, having crossed his legs, set his body straight**. That refers to the posture most suitable for ānāpānassati. Although ānāpānassati 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 **mindfulness established before him, and, he breathes in mindfully, he breathes out mindfully**. That refers to ānāpānassati, 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 one's nostrils or at one's 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 it 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:

- On one in-and-out breath, one counts 'one'.
- On the next in-and-out breath, one counts 'two'.
- On the next in-and-out breath, one counts 'three'.
- 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:



## 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 the nimitta and breath unify together. At that time, the meditator should not pay attention to the nimitta but should pay attention to the breath only. When concentration develops further the concentrated mind automatically will stick to the nimitta. When the mind sticks to the nimitta then one should pay attention to the nimitta. When concentration develops further it becomes white, which is the uggaha-nimitta (learning sign). And as one's concentration develops further, it becomes bright and transparent, which is the paṭibhāga-nimitta (counterpart sign). The ānāpāna paṭibhāga-nimitta is the object of absorption concentration based on in-and-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 of itself fixes onto the nimitta, one pays no longer 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. That light is the light of wisdom (paññāloka).

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) Initial application . . . . . (vitakka):  
it applies one's attention onto the ānāpāna paṭibhāga-nimitta.
- 2) Sustained application . . . . . (vicāra):  
it sustains one's attention on the ānāpāna paṭibhāga-nimitta.
- 3) Rapture . . . . . (pīti):  
it likes and is rapturous about the ānāpāna paṭibhāga-nimitta.
- 4) Bliss . . . . . (sukha):  
it feels bliss 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 former has the two gross factors of initial and sustained application, which the latter 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 (rapture, bliss, 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 rapture to attain the third jhāna, which has only bliss and one-pointedness. And one removes the factor of bliss to attain the fourth jhāna, which has only one-pointedness and equanimity. One develops the five masteries for both 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 Tranquility**

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. 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 satipaṭṭhānā).
- Furthermore, to make effort to remove unwholesome things such as the five hindrances (sensual desire, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and 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 sammappadhānā).
- Furthermore, to enter into jhāna with either predominantly zeal, or predominantly effort, or mind, or investigation, is to develop the four bases of spiritual power (cattāro iddhipādā).

- Furthermore, to have strong faith in ānāpānassati; 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 rapturous upon focussing 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 bojjhaṅgā).
- 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, 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.

That is how to develop samatha using ānāpānassati (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 ānāpānassati (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 (catudhātuvavatthānaṃ). 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:

<b>Earth</b>	<b>Water</b>	<b>Fire</b>	<b>Wind</b>
<b>Element</b>	<b>Element</b>	<b>Element</b>	<b>Element</b>

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

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 of 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 transparent body like a block of ice. When one discerns the four elements in that transparent body, it emits brilliant light, and then breaks into tiny particles that arise and pass away at great speed: they are in Pāḷi 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* cognitive-process's individual mental formations. For example, one discerns the thirty-four mental formations of the *ānāpāna* first-*jhāna* cognitive process:

(1) consciousness	(19) non-greed
(2) contact	(20) non-hatred
(3) feeling	(21) neutrality of mind
(4) perception	(22) tranquility of mental body
(5) volition	(23) tranquility of consciousness
(6) one-pointedness	(24) lightness of mental body
(7) life-faculty	(25) lightness of consciousness
(8) attention	(26) malleability of mental body
(9) initial application	(27) malleability of consciousness
(10) sustained application	(28) wieldiness of mental body
(11) decision	(29) wieldiness of consciousness
(12) effort	(30) proficiency of mental body
(13) rapture	(31) proficiency of consciousness
(14) desire	(32) rectitude of mental body
(15) faith	(33) rectitude of consciousness and
(16) mindfulness	(34) wisdom faculty
(17) shame of wrongdoing	
(18) fear of wrongdoing	

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 cognitive process's consciousness-moments. Then again one enters the first jhāna, again emerges, and now one discern 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 cognitive 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 cognitive-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 Knowledge of Defining Mentality-Materiality (Nāmarūpaparicchedañña).

### **Discerning Dependent Origination**

Now one is now able to discern dependent origination (paṭiccasamuppāda). 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 (kammabhava): 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 The Knowledge of Apprehending the Condition (Paccayapariggahañña).

## **Practising Vipassanā**

With the two knowledges, we just mentioned (the Knowledge of Defining Mentality-Materiality, and the Knowledge of Apprehending the Condition), 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.

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 pass away, one contemplates them as impermanent (anicca).
- 2) Knowing and seeing how formations are oppressed by arising and passing away, 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 cognitive process. In each such mind-door cognitive process there is a mind-door advertent-consciousness and seven impulses. Usually, each of the seven impulses 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 ānāpānassati to practise vipassanā (insight meditation), one is also cultivating the thirty-seven requisites of enlightenment. How?

- To practise vipassanā as we have explained is to contemplate mindfully 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 satipaṭṭhānā).
- 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 sammappadhānā).

- Furthermore, to practise vipassanā with either predominantly zeal, or predominantly effort, or mind, or investigation, is to cultivate the four bases of spiritual power (cattāro iddhipādā).
- 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 to 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 rapturous 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 bojjhaṅgā).
- 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 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.

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

That was the first set of explanations in the 'Ānāpānassati Sutta'.

## The Second Set of Four

The second set of explanations by The Buddha are:

1. **'I shall breathe in experiencing rapture': thus he trains;**  
**'I shall breathe out experiencing rapture': thus he trains.**
2. **'I shall breathe in experiencing bliss': thus he trains;**  
**'I shall breathe out experiencing bliss': thus he trains.**
3. **'I shall breathe in experiencing the mental formation': thus he trains;**  
**'I shall breathe out experiencing the mental formation': thus he trains.**
4. **'I shall breathe in tranquillizing the mental formation': thus he trains;**  
**'I shall breathe out tranquillizing the mental formation': thus he trains.**

Here, mindfulness of breathing fulfils feelings-contemplation (vedanānupassanā), the second foundation of mindfulness. It is both samatha and vipassanā meditation.

- 1) The Buddha said the bhikkhu breathes in and out experiencing rapture (pīti). Rapture is one of the jhāna factors of the first and second jhāna. So, one enters those two

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

- 2) Then The Buddha said the bhikkhu breathes in and out experiencing bliss (sukha). Bliss is one of the jhāna factors of the first, second, and third jhāna. So, as before, one discerns the mental formations of those three jhānas (now emphasizing bliss), and contemplates them as impermanent, suffering, and non-self. Here, one's vipassanā knowledge will be associated with bliss. That is how one breathes in and out experiencing bliss.
- 3) Then The Buddha said the bhikkhu breathes in and out experiencing the mental formation. By mental formation (cittasaṅkhāra), He means here perception (saññā) and feeling (vedanā). Perception and feeling are associated with all four jhānas. So, 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. So, here 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 'Ānāpānassati Sutta'.

### **The Third Set of Four**

The third set of instructions by The Buddha are:

1. **'I shall breathe in experiencing the mind': thus he trains;**  
**'I shall breathe out experiencing the mind': thus he trains.**
2. **'I shall breathe in gladdening the mind': thus he trains;**  
**'I shall breathe out gladdening the mind': thus he trains.**
3. **'I shall breathe in concentrating the mind': thus he trains;**  
**'I shall breathe out concentrating the mind': thus he trains.**
4. **'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 (cittānupassanā), 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 focussed on the ānāpāna-paññā-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 rapture, and as explained before, rapture is one of the jhāna factors of the first and second jhānas: that is how one breathes in and out gladdening the mind in samatha. Emerging from one of the two jhānas, and emphasizing rapture, 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. 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 initial- and sustained application; in the third jhāna, one's mind is liberated from rapture; and in the fourth jhāna, one's mind is liberated from bliss. 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. 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 'Ānāpānassati Sutta'.

### **The Fourth Set of Four**

The fourth set of instructions by The Buddha are:

1. **'I shall breathe in contemplating impermanence': thus he trains;**  
**'I shall breathe out contemplating impermanence': thus he trains.**
2. **'I shall breathe in contemplating fading away': thus he trains;**  
**'I shall breathe out contemplating fading away': thus he trains.**
3. **'I shall breathe in contemplating cessation': thus he trains;**  
**'I shall breathe out contemplating cessation': thus he trains.**
4. **'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 (dhammānupassanā), 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: relinquishment as giving up and relinquishment as if entering into Nibbāna. When, in developing vipassanā meditation, one attains to the Knowledge of Dissolution (bhaṅgañāṇa), 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. Doing so, however, one is at the same time contemplating relinquishment as if entering into Nibbāna, because one's vipassanā knowledge inclines the mind towards Nibbāna.

Then, when one's vipassanā knowledge matures, and one realizes Nibbāna, one's Path Knowledge gives up defilements completely, and enters into the Nibbāna Fruition Knowledge. 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 'Ānāpānassati 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 Noble Truth of Suffering (Dukkhasacca).
- 2) The causes for ultimate materiality and mentality, their dependent origination, is the Second Noble Truth: the Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering (Samudayasacca).
- 3) Nibbāna is the Third Noble Truth: the Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering (Nirodhasacca).

- 4) The Noble Eightfold Path that is the Path Knowledge is the Fourth Noble Truth: the Noble Truth of the Path (maggasacca).

After the arising of the consciousness that takes the Path Knowledge, two or three consciousnesses arise that take the Fruition Knowledge. Then has one realized the Four Noble Truths, and the first stage of enlightenment, stream-entry (sotāpatti). And as one continues to practise vipassanā based on ānāpānassati, one may attain the higher stages of enlightenment. Eventually, one destroys all defilements and become 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 constituents 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 satipaṭṭhānā).
- 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 sammappadhānā).
- Furthermore, the first time one's Fruition Knowledge arises, and whenever one later enters into the Fruition attainment, is associated with either predominantly zeal, or predominantly effort, or mind, or investigation. That is to develop and cultivate the four bases of spiritual power (cattāro iddhipādā).
- 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 Saṅgha, disciples of The Buddha. In other words, when one attains the Noble Path, one gains unshakeable faith in The Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha. And one will have made 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 to 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 rapturous upon realizing Nibbāna; to tranquillize one's mind upon Nibbāna; to concentrate upon concentration; and to look upon Nibbāna with equanimity, is to develop and cultivate the seven enlightenment factors (satta bojjhaṅgā).
- 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 ānāpānassati (mindfulness of breathing) is to develop all thirty-seven requisites of enlightenment.

## **Conclusion**

In this talk, we explained how one develops ānāpānassati, 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 'Ānāpānassati Sutta' said:

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

If we practice ānāpānassati (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.

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