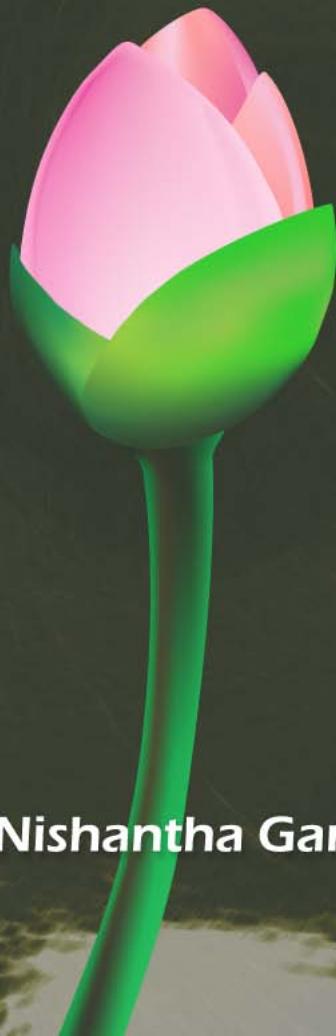


# **Coming Alive**

**with**

# **Mindfulness of Breathing**

(Ānāpānasati)



**Upul Nishantha Gamage**



To rise from this mechanical, depleted, imprisoned life of slavery and to liberate yourself, just know that you are inhaling and exhaling. If someone knows that he is breathing, he is a living being. He is awake and he is not asleep, not a dead body but a living being, he is a vigilant person. There are two ways of living, either as a dead person or as a living one.

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# **Coming Alive with Mindfulness of Breathing (Ānāpānasati)**

**Upul Nishantha Gamage**

Translation based upon 11 talks  
given in Sinhala in Kandy  
from 2009 to 2010

*Translated by*  
**Guptani Gunasekera**

*Published by*  
**Nilambe Deshana Publication Board**  
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## **Coming Alive with Mindfulness of Breathing**

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## *DEDICATION*

*In memory of my beloved grandparents -*

*Bobob (Robert) & Olive Greenwood*

*and*

*Arthur & Doreen Sachse,*

*whose inspirational good qualities*

*are still a guiding light to me.*

*May they all attain the peace of*

*Nibbāna !*

*Ven. Khema Dhamma*

*Kandy, June 2013*

## FOREWORD

Mindfulness of breathing (Ānāpāna Sati) may seem to be the most straightforward of meditation techniques, but it is also the most profound. It is said that Prince Siddhartha Gautama used awareness of the breath to reach full enlightenment – the complete release of heart and mind – the highest goal of human endeavor.

The breath is always with us. It is our constant companion from birth to death. We do not need to believe in anything, convert to anything or commit to anything in order to observe it. The breath is the same for everyone, regardless of race, nationality, gender and ideology. It is something we can all easily connect to. It is a bridge to our inner world – the as-yet-unexplored universe within.

This book is based upon 11 of the 36 Sinhala public talks on the Girimānanda Sutta given by Upul Sir in Kandy, from 2008 to 2010. Two books have been published in Sinhala, the first dealing with the first nine perceptions of the Girimānanda Sutta and the second dealing with Ānāpāna Sati, the last perception. It was decided to translate the second book into English.

The Girimānanda Sutta, with its ten insightful ‘perceptions,’ prepares the ground for the seeds of awareness to be planted, cultivating the right attitude and intention before we start our work. The 10<sup>th</sup> Perception is Ānāpāna Sati, and here the Ānāpāna Sati Sutta and the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta come in to guide us in detail through all the steps of meditation up to spiritual awakening. As to when and how that day will dawn, we don’t know. But it is certain that every good seed well cared for will in time flourish and grow and one day bear fruit. Every step of the way is an opportunity for us to deepen in understanding and joy – awakening from a beginning-less slumber to the beauty of life and to the vastness of our potential.

Many thanks to Kalyānamitta Upul Nishantha Gamage for sharing his wisdom and instructions with us and to Guptani Gunasekera for her

fine translation from Sinhala to English. Her selfless hard work will enable this invaluable teaching to reach a much wider audience. As an English native-speaker I was asked to check through the drafts of the English version, but I realized: the teaching is already perfect; the manner of expression is already perfect. There is nothing to correct (only scope for pedantic fine-tuning). If anything, I could only add the final touch of varnish on an already sublimely beautiful object. Lastly, thanks also to Deshika Gunasekera who helped by formatting the book to make it ready for printing and Sujeewa Krishantha who did the final arranging and designed the beautiful and very appropriate cover.

May you gain the full benefit of this precious practice and apply it to your life, making the world a better place for all.

With gratitude and Metta,

**Ven. Khema Dhamma.**

**Kandy, June 2013**

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## ĀNĀPĀNA SATI SAMĀDHİ

Most Venerable Rev. Sir, Dear Dhamma Friends. We Buddhists use the *Girimānanda Sutta* (discourse) when chanting *Pirith*. It is included in the Book of Great Protection which is used for chanting *Pirith* throughout the night, and our Rev. Sirs use this *Girimānanda* chanting to bless lay people, especially when someone is sick. It is used mostly as a chant. It must have great power as a chant; otherwise it wouldn't have been used in this way for so long (for over 1000 years). But, this *Girimānanda* discourse has more depth than a mere *Pirith* (chant), giving, as it does, clear and very interesting instructions leading us towards "*Nibbāna*" (Final liberation). The ten perceptions are given to us to motivate our meditation. That is why we decided to discuss them. Now we have completed the first nine perceptions, with relevance to meditation.

There are so many different stories and discussions included in other Buddhist texts. Without going into the theoretical aspects of this discourse found in other books, we tried to concentrate on the practical aspects of it, which can be experienced in life and kept in mind and which can be developed as a practice. These simple and concise discussions show how valuable this *Girimānanda* discourse is. When we say that the *Girimānanda* discourse is valuable it does not mean that the other discourses of the Lord Buddha are not valuable. This is certainly not the case, but for some reason due and proper consideration has not been given to the *Girimānanda* discourse. Especially for people

who are anxious to use *Dhamma* practically and to lead a peaceful life, the assistance provided by the *Girimānanda* discourse is immense.

## **The Background to the *Girimānanda* discourse**

This discourse talks about ten ways of healing a person. When the monk *Girimānanda* was sick, the monk Ānanda informed the Lord Buddha as follows: "Look, monk *Girimānanda* is very sick, he is ailing and bedridden. Please go and see him." Maybe the monk Ānanda thought that if the Lord Buddha went to see the monk *Girimānanda*, he would be happy. This is a normal kind of thought to have when someone is sick. Usually patients in hospitals impatiently wait for the visiting hour, looking at their watches, anxious to see whether anyone is coming to visit them. Monk Ānanda, thinking that his spiritual brother the monk *Girimānanda* must be feeling like this, suggests that the Lord Buddha should go and see the patient who is very sick, critically ill and bedridden.

Then the Lord Buddha says, "No, I do not have to go. You learn these ten perceptions and go and recite them to monk *Girimānanda* and by listening to them he will be cured, become well and able again". The Lord Buddha revealed the ten perceptions. When monk Ānanda, having learnt them, went and recited them to monk *Girimānanda*, he was cured. The sickness that the monk *Girimānanda* was suffering from and the cause of the sickness are not explained in this discourse. If they were, somebody could have tested out the effectiveness of the teachings on different sicknesses, but - fortunately or unfortunately - such details are not mentioned anywhere.

Our discussion today, Dear *Dhamma* Friends, is aimed at the tenth perception. That is the well-known *Ānāpāna Sati* (Mindfulness of Breathing), the last treatment. This is called *Ānāpāna Sati Bhāvanā* (Meditation on Mindfulness of Breathing). Though the other nine perceptions can also be used for meditation, they are not considered to be meditation techniques as such, but everybody agrees that Mindfulness of Breathing is a meditation technique.

## The Most Popular Meditation Technique

In all the *Theravāda* Buddhist countries such as Sri Lanka, Thailand and Burma, Mindfulness of Breathing is the most popular meditation technique. The way in which it is practiced may differ from country to country, place to place. Some pay attention to the tip of the nose, while others focus on the abdomen, but globally, most people use Mindfulness of Breathing as their meditation object. When we say we are meditating, what we practice is Mindfulness of Breathing. Most people think of meditation as Mindfulness of Breathing, and of Mindfulness of Breathing as meditation. Even in the Buddhist countries which are not *Theravāda*, such as Tibet, Japan, Taiwan and also China, Korea, Vietnam, and Bhutan (which are *Mahāyāna* or *Vajrayāna*) they also practice Mindfulness of Breathing in different ways.

We can discuss these methods later if necessary. Whether these countries are *Theravāda* or *Mahāyāna*, they are all Buddhist, and now we find that meditation techniques are becoming popular even in non-Buddhist countries. Among Buddhists and Non-Buddhists alike, the

most widely-practiced meditation technique is Mindfulness of Breathing. It is used for different purposes, such as for physical wellbeing, psychological wellness, concentration of mind, to enhance memory power and to reduce stress. Whatever the reason it is used for, the most popular meditation technique in the world is the Meditation on Mindfulness of Breathing.

This shows, without a religious division; or a *Theravāda/Mahāyāna* division, the usefulness of the meditation of Mindfulness of Breathing. Otherwise, why would doctors prescribe it for patients? Why would educationists instruct their students in it? Why would Meditation teachers advise their followers to do it? Therefore, this is a discourse which has specific results. There is a separate section called the “*Ānāpāna Sati Samyutta*”, in the *Samyutta Nikāya*, in the *Sutta Piṭaka* of the *Tipiṭaka*. This includes various other references to *Ānāpāna Sati Bhāvana* made by the Lord Buddha.

The first *Sutta*, “*Eka Dhamma Sutta*,” means “one *dhamma*”(i.e. ‘one thing’). The Lord Buddha says, there is one *dhamma* which is very fruitful - what is it? It is *Ānāpāna Sati Samādhi* (Composure of Mindfulness of Breathing). If somebody develops Composure of Mindfulness of Breathing, s/he achieves seven results. Though it talks about seven results, it actually saysat that person definitely attains enlightenment. If a person could not attain enlightenment in this life, then at the time of death s/he will attain it; or will be born in a place -that is in a heaven or above the heaven, where they can attain Final Liberation. Because, if one can be with the breath always, and can die with the awareness of the breath, s/he is as light as breath. Therefore, as light

articles go up while heavy articles go down, adhering to the same phenomenon, nature's law, this happens. This is further clarified by monk *Buddhaghosa* in the *Visuddhi Magga*. He says that if a meditator dies without achieving the expected results then he will be born in a place where *Dhamma* is still available.

When we hear about heaven, Dear *Dhamma* Friends, we visualise places where there is happiness and glory, where all are enjoying themselves and playing games like at a carnival. Maybe there are also places like that, but there are some worlds where you find gods who have actually listened to the Lord Buddha and have some understanding of His teachings. They do not indulge in lust. They are always to be found with other gods having the same understanding of *Dhamma*. The *Visuddhi Magga* says that if someone dies after practicing Composure of Mindfulness of Breathing, and they were unable to attain Final Liberation, that person will be born in such spiritual worlds, and by studying, discussing and practicing *Dhamma* with spiritual beings they are able to attain Final Liberation there.

Do we need any more facts to realise that Mindfulness of Breathing is of immense value? It gives results here and now, in everyday life. Today most people in the world practice Composure of Mindfulness of Breathing for materialistic and worldly gains: the lightness experienced in that moment; bodily lightness; development of the memory; development of awareness. See how many benefits one can achieve in everyday life: reducing anger; being able to stay in the present moment; being able to stay without lamenting over the past and being able to face the future without fear.

One day the Lord Buddha asked monk *Aritta*, “Do you practice Mindfulness of Breathing meditation?” He replied, “Yes I do practice Composure of Mindfulness of Breathing.”

“How?”

“I do not tour in the past with lust, do not dream of the future with lust, do not run with lust, do not wander in the past or the future in lust or in aversion, thereby I do not get attached or distressed. Being in the present, I breathe in and out with awareness”. Here the Lord Buddha appreciates this and declares that the Composure of Mindfulness of Breathing can be practiced and developed that way too.

Living in the present moment is being discussed in different aspects, Dear Dhamma Friends - the breath happens totally in the present moment. In-breath fully happens in the present moment; out-breath fully happens in the present moment; this moment, here and now. There is no division whatsoever - poor-rich, learned-illiterate, brainy-foolish, ethnic, religious, national, political, good-bad. No division in any of these categories, which are usually found in society. When it comes to breath, everybody without any distinction has breath which is totally equal. There is no room here for either a ballooned ego, or an inferiority complex, condemning yourself as a person who can't do anything and who can't achieve anything. Since this activity develops concentration by being aware of the in-breath and out-breath, it is called the Composure of the Mindfulness of Breathing.

## **It can be practiced by anybody**

Most meditation techniques, Dear Dhamma Friends, are not easy to practice. It is difficult to find a universal technique which could be practiced by everybody, because of personal anticipations and opinions. Just imagine, a person who admires beauty, who leads a romantic life, cannot meditate on impurities; cannot meditate by looking at decayed things and decomposed flesh; such minds will never be concentrated. On the other hand, someone who is always distressed, who is in anger, cannot meditate on loving-kindness. When you ask such a person to develop *Metta* (unlimited friendliness), they only develop more aversion. A person who always thinks logically and always tries to argue and also thinks scientifically cannot practice contemplating on Buddha's qualities where you develop belief, faith, and devotion. A logical mind cannot practice these recollection meditation techniques. They have to come from the heart. Faith is a quality of the heart. Faith is in the heart, not in the head or the brain. A person who gets scared by anything and looks suspiciously at everything cannot practice contemplation on death because it can increase paranoia and instability. Therefore, Dear Dhamma Friends, most of the meditation techniques have to be evaluated and selected according to the person's mind and their thinking patterns to establish the best fit.

But, when you consider Mindfulness of Breathing, it can be practiced by anybody who can feel that he is breathing. Sometimes, due to physical conditions, someone may not feel the breath. For example, if a person is suffering from influenza he may not feel the in-breath and out-breath, but you can use a different technique to

create sensitivity to breathing. Therefore, on the whole, Mindfulness of Breathing meditation can be practiced by anybody, a small child or even an old person. When we consider in this direction, Dear Dhamma Friends, we find that this Mindfulness of Breathing goes beyond all closed limits and different opinions. Whatever the differences we may have, whatever the ups and downs we may have, Mindfulness of Breathing meditation can level them all and make anyone and everyone deeply still.

## **The Importance of in-and out breathing**

We have discussed *Ānāpāna Sati* meditation, looking at it from several angles. It is a mirror through which you can see both mind and body, since both the mind and the body cannot live without the breath. The mind is psychological. It is not physical. What is the colour of it? What is the shape of it? You can't say. The body is physical; it has a weight, shape, colour, and volume. The mind doesn't have any of these things. The mind gets attached to the body or the carcass. The mind gets attached to the embryo, in the mother's womb, with the help of the mother's breath. Only then we can say it has life. Then we can say it is a living being. Until then it is not a living being. Even now the mind and the body are connected because of the breath. When there is no breath, there is no living being. When mind and body are not connected, it is dead. Then it is only a dead body or carcass. There is no mind. The mind is not functional. There won't be any remembering, thinking, enjoying, suffering, liking or disliking anything. This breath is the bridge that connects the mind to the body. The body and the mind are two different things, one is physical, and the other is psychological. Mind has

no matter. It is just an action. Therefore, the breath is the bridge that connects this psychological mind and the physical body. When somebody is on a bridge, he can see both sides; can see the body and the mind. By looking at the breath, one can say whether the body is tired. Is the body light? By looking at the breath one can assess the mind, is it suffering? Is it fast? Is it hot tempered? Is it in anger? Or is it in fear? Or is it very light? By looking at the mind side, all these can be assessed. The breath is a very good observatory. From it we can observe all our physical and psychological activities.

Dear Dhamma Friends, it is not only about observing a person's nature. By changing the breath, a person can be changed. Another benefit from the breath can be, when you carry something heavy, run or climb a mountain you start panting. Breathing becomes difficult. In such a situation, if you want you can take a few deep breaths intentionally, and stop the panting quicker and give strength to the body. With the normal breath it would take 5 to 10 minutes to overcome panting. But a person can understand the tiredness of the body, without a special effort to find out the reason for the tiredness. When you are panting, by just having the awareness on the breath, and intentionally taking deep breaths (you should not hold the breath) slowly inhale and when the lungs are full, exhale slowly. If you repeat this 3 or 4 times, the tiredness of the body will vanish. The breath will become natural very soon. The tiredness, weariness, fatigue will vanish. Therefore, by controlling the breath, one can control the body.

There is a part of Hindu Yoga meditation called “prāṇayāma,” but nobody knows what the “prāṇa” is. It

cannot be explained. What is this “*prāna*”? Everyone talks about this life force. We can say we lost a life. We can say we have life. What are we talking about? Has anybody seen it? Can we take a photo of it? Or can we see it on an X-ray? The Hindu science of Yoga talks about this. In the physical world this is supposed to be the most important factor. True enough, if it is lost, no being exists anymore; neither an animal nor a human being. *Prāna* is a force. This force can be developed and strengthened through the breath, and as no-one knows where it is no-one can touch it, but the breath can touch it. Therefore, by controlling the breath, one can control life; the force called life can be developed, strengthened, and increase the life span. This force is usually generated by food. We load ourselves up with food. But by merely controlling the breath, without using food, this force can be strengthened. In Yoga teachings, there are exercises based on this concept called “*prānayāma*”. There you find the breath is controlled according to a rhythm. By controlling the breath, one’s life is controlled. Those who practice *prānayāma* have taken the life force into their own hands, to some extent.

Dear Dhamma Friends, think of sleepiness or drowsiness. When we are sleepy, say we want to read a book, we want to watch the TV, we want to listen to a talk, we want to meditate, but we are sleepy. In such a situation, the breath helps us. We don’t need anything else, just take a deep breath. In such a situation, it is ok to hold the breath for a few seconds, but not if we are short of breath. When we are feeling lazy, when the breath is slow, take a deep breath and hold it for a few seconds, until the entire body is energised and enthused and then exhale slowly. The sleepiness vanishes, the body becomes ready for action

and the mind becomes alert. Also, when concentration becomes poor we can increase it by taking a deep breath with awareness and exhaling slowly. Concentration then gets regenerated and this is a very good exercise to practice while studying.

Furthermore, when we are emotional and agitated our mind becomes very restless and our breathing becomes tense. If that breath which is not relaxed, which comes in and is thrown out without any control, can be taken in and sent out with control, then our mind becomes settled very quickly. Here you can either start breathing intentionally or you can have your awareness on the disturbed in-breath and the disturbed out-breath, then the breath becomes stable. When the breath becomes stable, the mind becomes stable. These are common benefits, Dear Dhamma Friends, and there are a lot more important benefits we can gain in day-to-day life.

## You become deeply silent

In sickness, the breath can be used for healing the body. Breath can also be used to increase the memory. By the *Ānāpāna Sati Samādhi* or Composure of Mindfulness of Breathing, Dear Dhamma Friends, both the body and the mind get tranquilised. There is no other meditation method which achieves this to such an extent. *Ānāpāna Sati Samādhi* deeply tranquillises the mind and the body, because breath is connected to both body and mind.

Monk *Thakshina* is seated with crossed legs, motionlessly. The Lord Buddha questions the other monks, “See how monk *Thakshina* is seated motionlessly?” Then the other monks reply, “Monk *Thakshina* always behaves

in the same way, whether he is in a crowd or alone - his body is so still, so motionless, so calm, and his mind is so still." The Lord Buddha explained why that is: "That monk is in *Ānāpāna Sati Samādhi*" (settled mindfulness on the in-and out-breath). If someone can have his/her mindfulness totally settled on in- and out-breathing, then every cell of their body becomes deeply tranquillised; becomes deeply silent. Every cell in the body is breathing, not only the nose and the lungs. Every living cell breathes in and out. Every thought needs the breath. When the mind gets agitated, the breathing changes; when the body moves the breathing changes. Therefore, when you are in *Ānāpāna Sati Samādhi*, the body and the mind gets tranquillised deeply and gets so calm. There is a long explanation about this in the *Thakshina Sutta* by the Lord Buddha.

When we discuss Mindfulness of Breathing in this manner, it becomes an appreciation. Having your Mindfulness settled on in-and out breathing is something you cannot appreciate enough - it is so beautiful, so beneficial and so stunning. We all believe that Mindfulness of Breathing meditation leads to Enlightenment. The Lord Buddha says he was practicing *Ānāpāna Sati* very frequently, during his pre-Buddha days. He breathed in with awareness; breathed out with awareness, and as a result he ultimately achieved Full Enlightenment. The body is energised, the body does not faint and the eyes do not faint. We have heard that the Buddha fainted during the time he was practicing "Self-mortification".

When somebody faints, doctors flash a light into his/her eyes to see whether s/he is conscious or not. Here the Lord Buddha says, the eyes do not faint, the

body does not faint, if you are practicing Composure of Mindfulness of Breathing. This meditation makes you enthused, alert, motivated, vigilant, and the ultimate result is Enlightenment.

## All the qualities required for Buddhahood will be developed in due course

Dear Dhamma Friends, the Lord Buddha explains this in a number of steps. *Ānāpāna Sati Samādhi* or Composure of Mindfulness of Breathing is very beneficial in both worldly and spiritual ways. Moreover, the “Mindfulness of Breathing” discourse explains that the Fourfold *Satipatṭhāna* (Foundations of Mindfulness), Four *Iddhipāda* (Roads to Success), Four *Sammapadhbāna* (Right Efforts), the Five *Bala* (Powers), Five *Indriya* (Spiritual Faculties), Seven *Bojjhaṅga* (Factors of Enlightenment) and also the Eightfold Noble Path can be developed through this Composure of Mindfulness of Breathing. Now a question arises in our mind: do we have to develop all these things separately? No, not separately. When practicing Composure of Mindfulness of Breathing correctly all of these qualities will develop simultaneously.

Practicing *Ānāpāna Sati* correctly has become a problem. Though it is the most popular meditation method, a step-by-step approach towards spiritual development and developing letting-go is not very popular. Moreover, it is mostly used as a relaxation technique and to achieve worldly benefits such as a composed mind, or as a means of temporarily releasing mental and bodily tension.

Without being satisfied with only a relaxed mind, a tranquilised mind; then achieving a concentrated mind and enhancing knowledge, one should go forth up to liberation,

through observing the breath with awareness. When it is practiced in this manner, all the other factors will naturally be developed. No need to develop the Four Foundations of Mindfulness separately. Not necessary to get involved in the Four Right Efforts, Four Roads to Success; Five Powers; Five Inner Faculties (i.e. *Saddhā* (Confidence), *Vīrya* (Effort), *Sati* (Mindfulness), *Samādhi* (Composure) and *Paññā* (Insightful thoughts); *Satta Bojjhaṅga* (The 7 Factors of Enlightenment); and the Eightfold Noble Path (Right Vision, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Bodily Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Composure) separately. By developing *Ānāpāna Sati* methodically, all these will get developed.

All these qualities put together are called the *Bodhipakkhiya Dhamma*. Factors for *Buddhahood*, realisation, or *Arahatship*, *Nibbāna*, whatever the word used, one has to develop these qualities, which lean towards the ultimate. That is why these qualities are called *Bodhipakkhiya Dhamma*, factors that support Buddhahood and do not support an individual being. We must develop the factors which support Buddhahood or realisation. All these 37 qualities are called Supreme *Dhamma*. Wherever the Supreme *Dhamma* is described, these 37 qualities are explained. If one practices *Ānāpāna Sati* methodically, all these 37 qualities will be developed.

## **The Noble living of the Lord Buddha**

Once the Lord Buddha was in a village near a forest. He says to the other monks, “I will go into the thick forest for 3 months and do not come and disturb me; only one monk should come with daily alms, as I will be in the forest

relaxing." With that announcement, the Lord Buddha went into the thick forest. Nobody asked him why he was going alone or tried to join him; "Since you have already attained Buddhahood, why are you going again into the forest to meditate?" - This nobody asked. The Lord Buddha spent the entire three months away and only one monk went daily with alms. After three months, the Lord Buddha returned to the village and even then nobody asked the reason why he went to the forest.

He asked from the monks, "If somebody asks you, especially non-Buddhists, what was your teacher doing in the forest for three months, what will be your answer?"

They replied: "We don't know; only you would know".

Then the Lord Buddha says, "The best answer that can be given is: *The Tathāgata* (The Perfect One) was experiencing *Ānāpāna Sati Samādhi* during those three months." See how valuable this is. After the Enlightenment, there is nothing more to be done. "*Kataṁ karanīyam na paramitthattāya.*" What had to be done has been done, and nothing more is left to be done. He, who had already attained the ultimate bliss, also used *Ānāpāna Sati Samādhi* for deep relaxation.

After that it was known as "*Ariya vihāra*" (Noble Living). What is *Ariya vihāra*? '*Ariya*' means 'noble'. '*Vihāra*', means 'being'; 'living'. Therefore *Ariya vihāra* means noble living. Not worldly living. Hence if someone is said to be *Ariya* living that means s/he is experiencing *Ānāpāna Sati Samādhi* (Composure of Mindfulness of in- and out-breathing). If somebody uses the words *Ariya vihāra*, or

Brahma *vihāra*, that means *Ānāpāna Sati Samādhi*; the most supreme living. There are so many ways to live, but Supreme living, *Tathāgata vihāra*, living like a *Tathāgata*, all these mean being in *Ānāpāna Sati Samādhi*. See, by using these adjectives, the Lord Buddha has given a great value to *Ānāpāna Sati Samādhi*. He has given us a practical example by spending three months in *Ānāpāna Sati Samādhi*. After becoming the Lord Buddha, He declared that He just observed the breathing process to attain Enlightenment. He did not mention any other method.

No other teacher has explained like this. They have all told mysterious stories such as how a God or his or her messenger came from above, or something similar. The Lord Buddha did not tell any supernatural stories. “I was just observing the breath. I saw the in-breath with awareness, and I saw the out-breath with awareness. As a result of this I attained Buddhahood.” See how simple it is; that is the truth; that is the reality. No other teacher has given the path for liberation in such a simple way as this and no other teacher has attained Buddhahood either. Wherever they went, that was never explained so simply for others to follow. Furthermore, the Lord Buddha very humbly declared that he used *Ānāpāna Sati Bhāvana* for Enlightenment and after that, by spending some time experiencing it, he described the value of it. By spending three months practicing it, he made it the *Tathāgata vihāra*; Brahma *vihāra*; Ariya *vihāra*.

Therefore, Dear Dhamma Friends, there are so many other factors we could mention to elaborate on this point, but isn't it already very clear that *Ānāpāna Sati Samādhi* is something very powerful, valuable and precious?

## The Direct path

That is why at the beginning of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (The discourse on the Four Foundations of Mindfulness), the Lord Buddha says: “*Ekāyano ayam bhikkhave maggo*”. This is the one and only direct path, for what? “*Sattānam visuddhiyā*”, for the purification of beings. For the spiritual purification of any being, this is the only path.

“*Soka paridevānam samatikkamāya dukkha domanassānam atthaṅgamāya*”, - This is the way to end sorrow and grief. “*Soka parideva*” means to be in distress about different things. We lament for one thing, we also cry, sob, howl, sigh, moan and groan, and then after some time it is forgotten. Then we think it is all O.K. But it is like temporarily applying a plaster. After a while, again we start crying, sobbing, howling, sighing, moaning, and groaning, and so on for something else. There is no end to sorrow. But “*atthaṅgamāya*” means to go to the end without stopping halfway or somewhere in the middle; completely ending sorrow and grief. “*Soka paridevānam samatikkamāya*” means to overcome sorrow. “*Samatikkamāya*”, means to overcome. If someone wants to overcome sorrow and grief and put a stop to weeping this is the only path. “*Ñāyassa adhigamāya*” is the path for realization. “*Nibbānassa sacchikiriyāya*” – is the only path to attain *Nibbāna*, Full Liberation. This has a deeper meaning than just “the only path”. If you take the path of *Satipaṭṭhāna* (“*yadidam cattāro Satipaṭṭhānā*”), or the direct path, you will not be misled. That meaning is also there. You will not get lost, will not go round in circles and will not be misled. This road leads only to one place.

Where does it lead to? To the above-said terminus, without sorrow, without grief, the Realisation called *Nibbāna*. It also means the direct path. The direct path means, you do not go round in circles, you go the shortest way. That is why at the end of the discourse on the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, the Lord Buddha guarantees that if any practitioner fully develops the four foundations of mindfulness that practitioner will attain Arahatship (Full Liberation) or the position of an *Anāgāmi* (the 3<sup>rd</sup> stage of liberation) within 7 years. Let alone 7 years, if practiced for 6 years a monk will attain Arahatship or the position of an *Anāgāmi* in 6 years. Let alone 6 years, if practiced for 5 years monk will attain Arahatship or the position of an *Anāgāmi* in 5 years.... He goes on like this and lastly he says, if practiced to the full it is possible to attain Arahatship or the position of an *Anāgāmi* in only 7 days.

The first section of the 4 Foundations of Mindfulness is contemplation on the body and *Ānāpāna Sati* is the first part of that. The entrance to the Four Foundations of Mindfulness is *Ānāpāna Sati Bhāvanā*.

## **Your closest friend**

Dear Dhamma Friends, *Ānāpāna Sati Bhāvana* is the entrance to liberation. There may be other entrances but this is the easiest and closest door anybody can reach. Some doors are very far away but this one is already with you. There is no need to go in search of the door. It is here and near to you, with you. That is the most important fact. Breath is always with us. From when? Up to which date? From birth to death. From birth to death even your parents cannot be with you. Parents do love their children the best.

Even if we do not have anybody else our parents will be with us, but still even they cannot be with us from birth to death. Not only that, sometimes even parents may be fed-up with their children. There are instances where parents say, "From now on do not ever worry about us, we will not even look at you." There are instances where parents and children get into conflict.

There cannot be anyone else who could be with us for our entire lifetime, not even the wife or the husband. There are no friends who can be with us from birth to death. They get friendly, get to know us and then we part, get angry, get irritated. Other things can never be with us throughout our life: vehicles; houses; knowledge; jobs; money. How long will they be with us? How do we know? We did not have any of these at birth. Even if we do not have any of these, Dear Dhamma Friends, the breath; both in-breath and out-breath will be with us, from birth to death, whoever else leaves us. The breath will be with you; the breath will never desert you. The entire world may desert you, but the breath will never do so. All your money could be lost, you may become poor, you may be all alone, without anybody, but the breath will be at your side; will be your companion until your death. The last one to bid farewell to you is the breath. Until the last second of your life the breath lives with you, sharing your sorrow and happiness. There is nothing in the world which is so close, so attached, so helpful, as the breath.

When we lead a prosperous life everybody sticks to us. That is the norm in society. If somebody is wealthy, happy, living well, popular, admired, then everybody likes to be friendly, but when you become poor, fall sick, are not popular any more, lose the job, get insulted by society,

nobody likes to get closer to you or to get to know you. This is the norm in society.

But whether you are living badly or well, wealthily or in poverty, being admired or being insulted, the breath will be with you. The breath does not evaluate you. It is with you, not only when you are good and but also when you are bad. The breath is so unbiased.

The Lord Buddha says: look at the friend who is so close to you. After attaining Buddhahood, he advised us to be aware that we are breathing. "Get to know that you are breathing". You might be wondering, what is the deep spiritual message in this? There is no other guidance which can take you to such a great depth. This is the way to go up in life. How many of us experience, practically and knowingly, that we are inhaling and exhaling? We all know it theoretically as we have learnt about it, but practicality is very important.

If one does not know that he is inhaling and exhaling, how does he know that he is living? He is just living like a machine; like a robot; like a scarecrow. They do not breathe. Puppets do not breathe; machines do not; a dead body does not; a scarecrow does not. Someone who does not know that he is inhaling and exhaling is like a scarecrow, he just exists. He just exists according to other people's requirements, external forces, environmental stimulations and all he can do is shout, dance, laugh, cry, and lament in the face of these pushes from outside, like a puppet.

To rise from this mechanical, depleted, imprisoned life of slavery and to liberate yourself, just know that you are inhaling and exhaling. If someone knows that he is breathing,

he is a living being. He is awake and he is not asleep, not a dead body but a living being, he is a vigilant person. There are two ways of living, either as a dead person or as a living one.

*Ānāpāna Sati* meditation makes one alive; converts a lifeless person to a living one. A sleeping person will awaken and one who lives under illusions will come out of these illusions. This waking up is done by *Ānāpāna Sati Samādhi* - to be woken up by the friend nearest to you. Wake up and see the breath with friendliness. Dear Dhamma Friends, you will not feel lazy. Laziness is a big problem for us - loneliness, boredom, nothing to do. So we cling to something. Try instead to see the breath. When living with the breath, you do not feel lazy. Try to be friendly with the breath. We do not feel lazy when we are with a friend and the same feeling will be there when we become friendly with the breath; how happy we are and how enjoyable it is. How much pleasure do we experience? We will experience pleasure 100 to 1000 times more if we can be with the breath, practicing *Ānāpāna Sati Samādhi*.

Dear Dhamma friends, we have talked about *Ānāpāna Sati* Meditation from different angles and we have seen that the breath is a mirror to look at the mind and the body. If possible, we will try to discuss in the future days how we can progress methodically in the practice of *Ānāpāna Sati Samādhi* Meditation. Keeping that space we will focus our attention on our best friend, the entrance to liberation, the door and the window which is here, the in-breath and the out-breath.

## **Meditation**

***If the breath is entering know that the breath is entering.....***

***If the breath is leaving know that the breath is leaving.....***

***See how silent the mind becomes.....***

***how light the body becomes....***

***With a body and a mind which have become light by being attentive to the in- and out-breath,  
Dear Dhamma Friends, we will conclude today's Dhamma program.***

***May the Triple Gem bless all of you!***

## PENETRATION INTO ĀNĀPĀNA SATI SAMĀDHİ

Most Venerable Rev. Sir, Dear Dhamma Friends, we have had an introduction to the *Ānāpāna Sati Bhāvanā*, (meditation on in- and out-breathing). We discussed the benefits, taking into consideration physical health, physical relaxation, and mental health, mental relaxation etc. Besides this we briefly discussed the benefits as declared by the Lord Buddha. Today we will turn our attention to penetrating into the Meditation on Mindfulness of Breathing.

### The Right environment

We know that there are some environmental requirements. The statement we all know - “*araññaagato vā, rukkhamūlagato vā, suññāgāragato vā*” - having gone to a forest, a park or underneath a tree. “*Suññāgāra*” means a quiet house or any peaceful place. It can be an isolated room or even a Buddha shrine or any peaceful place. Dear Dhamma Friends, here it talks about special environmental conditions which are conducive to deep meditation.

We initially discussed that Meditation on Mindfulness of Breathing is the most popular meditation method in the world. It has gained popularity due to very basic aims such as physical and mental relaxation, improving the power of the memory, and healing physical sicknesses. It is not used mainly for purification of the mind to attain the Supreme Spiritual Realization and to understand life deeply; not for letting go; most of the time the aim of practicing Mindfulness

of Breathing is not so deep. If it is practiced for worldly and physical aims and objectives, without going onto a spiritual level, then there is no need for special preparation. Even while travelling on a bus, staying at home or while having a meal, one can be mindful of the breath. One can derive worldly benefits from such a practice. Awareness becomes refined. Physical and mental fatigue lessens. If the mind was restless, twitchy or agitated this gets reduced.

But, if you want to follow the path described by the Lord Buddha, then the recommended environment is essential. Though we cannot touch the mind, it is very coarse Dear Dhamma Friends. It is coarser than the things we can touch. We think that physical things are coarse and hard, we see it like that. A person can be injured by having a stone thrown at them since a stone is hard and we know that it is hard when we feel it. There are some other things which cannot be seen or felt, such as poison and rays. But they may be more dangerous than the stone we think is hard. A fine ray can totally injure a person at a distance. Here coarse or hard means they are very harsh and destructive. Some rays are harder than physical iron, metal and earth, which we think are hard. That is why chemical weapons are considered more powerful than bullets, missiles and mortars. Chemical weapons are not seen.

The mind is also like this. The mind is coarser than the visible body. Dear Dhamma Friends, the mind is coarse, rigid and rough, but we think it is not. We think that the mind is delicate and the body is coarse. No, the body is very delicate and subtle compared to the mind. The body is very innocent compared to the mind. The mind is very violent. The body never harms anybody. The mind is not like that as it can easily

harm not only one person, it can harm the entire world. The mind is so violent and the body is so innocent. Therefore, it is not easy to fine-tune such a violent mind. We all have experienced this even in a small way and as meditators we know the roughness of the mind and how violent and aggressive it is; how difficult it is to control, discipline and regulate! The body is easy but the mind is difficult. Therefore such a mind, which is full of violence, bent towards cruelty and without any control, is very difficult to tranquilise deeply and to polish and tame. For this it needs a long-term plan and a suitable environment.

Now, a small wound can be dressed anywhere; a tablet or painkiller can be taken anywhere; someone can give you coriander to drink even on the road, no problem. However, a complicated disease cannot be treated like that - on the way or by the side of the road - it has to be dealt with in a clinic. If the wound is complicated, it needs an operating theatre. A normal hospital cannot handle such a situation. It needs a specialised hospital with a specialised theatre as per certain standards and the treatment should be given under controlled environmental conditions.

This treatment to cure the life-after-life ailment, the treatment called *Ānāpāna Sati Bhāvanā* (Meditation of Mindfulness on in- and out-breathing), Dear Dhamma Friends, has to be performed in a suitable operating theatre. Therefore, if you want to cure the *samsaric* (life-after-life) ailment, you have to go there; but if you only want to gain the worldly benefits of this practice then you do not require special environmental conditions and need not go so far – these benefits can be achieved even ‘on the way’. You can practice mindfulness of the breath at a basic level.

Dear Dhamma Friends, if you are practicing Composure of Mindfulness of Breathing to go far, then a coarse environment is not advisable. Therefore, you have to find a quiet environment or you have to generate one. No place can be called completely quiet. Therefore, we should know how to fit the practice into our daily routine, wisely managing our household duties. During the 24 hours in a day, which time, which hour and which instant would be the best moment for you? Which time is quiet, relaxed, less active, less problematic and calmer? Find out and then start practicing.

Then there will be a difference. Your practice of Mindfulness of Breathing can go in-depth, without disturbances. These prescribed locations are just examples. It doesn't mean that you *have* to go to a forest or under a tree, or chase everybody out from the house. No, "*araññagato vā*" means go to a forest, a jungle or a park; or "*rukhamūlagato vā*" means go under a tree; or "*suññāgāragato vā*", means go to a peaceful, isolated place. Here the word "or" has a deep meaning. We should each be able to find a similar location for our own meditation. It depends on your circumstances. You should not be thinking very narrowly like: "That is the only place to go to and only if I go to that place will I be able to meditate." You should be efficient in your busy life and be competent enough to find a break, to create your own retreat inside your own home and within the limits of your own routine. Another person's perimeters will be different to yours; do not compare, it should be according to your own circumstances. Without being a disturbance to others you should be able to sort out your place for meditation.

## The Right Posture

*"Nisīdati pallaṅkam ābhujitvā."* The posture is very important. It says, sit with crossed legs. Everywhere Mindfulness of Breathing is described, the cross-legged sitting posture is recommended. We use the sitting posture for this practice. We have four main postures and right through our life we use these four postures and we know that we should meditate in all these postures.

When we practice mindfulness and loving kindness, as per the *Metta sutta* – “*tiṭṭham caram nisinno vā sayāno vā, yāvatassa vigatamiddho, etam satim adiṭṭheyya*”, “*tiṭṭham*”–while standing; “*caram*”–while walking; “*nisinno vā*”–while seated; “*sayāno vā*”–while lying down; “*yāvatassa vigatamiddho*”–whenever you are not sleeping; “*etam satim adiṭṭheyya*”–make a determination to be mindful as much as possible. You can't be mindful without making an effort; you need a determination. When you come to a posture, think, "Now I am standing and until I change this posture I will be mindful, I will be aware, not in the past, not in the future, I will be in this moment. Now I have started to walk, I am walking from here to the bus stop." You must have the determination, that you will be aware and be mindful throughout the walking meditation you started from here to the bus stop.

“*Etam satim adiṭṭheyya*”–The mindfulness comes with determination. Though we go to the bus stop we are not mindful. Whenever you come to a posture you must first make a determination to be aware of the posture as long as you are in that posture. You must be mindful until you fall asleep, “*yāvatassa vigatamiddho*”–not after you are sleeping, only until you fall asleep.

Most of the places where meditation is discussed, we are advised to meditate in all four postures. Why? We get angry in all postures; we have desires in all postures; sorrow is there in all postures. We can't say that if we are in a particular posture we will not feel unhappy. There is no liberated physical posture; no posture without defilements; reactions can come in any posture. The mind can always run to the past, it can always dream about the future. So you should be mindful in all the postures, but when Composure of Mindfulness of Breathing is discussed, the other three postures are not considered. The reason is similar to that of the environment. Mindfulness of Breathing can be practiced in all four postures and there is no argument about that. One can be aware of the breath when standing, walking or lying down, until you fall asleep, but one cannot go far.

Why? Breathing basically happens as a physical requirement. Breath is required for physical existence. When the body is active, during physical activities, a certain amount of breath is required according to the activity. When we walk, according to the energy we need, the lungs expand, contract; inhale, exhale. The breath is different when lying down or going to sleep. A deep breath is not required. When standing it is different again - more energy is required.

Dear Dhamma Friends, the way it changes between inhaling and exhaling, the way it becomes subtle and fine, cannot be comprehended step by step, while bodily activities are being performed. Standing is a bodily activity. Walking is a bodily activity. When lying down there is another danger. We do not need much breath. We might fall asleep, without feeling the breath. This shows us that even if we can be aware of the breath in all four postures we cannot go to the

same depth in the other postures. That is why the sitting posture is prescribed. Then you need very minimal energy. Though minimal energy is required, you have to be alert. It is different from the lying-down posture. Even to sit on a chair is OK; a comfortable chair could be used to practice Mindfulness of Breathing. There is no rule to say that half the leg should touch the floor. Even leaning against a wall is allowed. It is better if you can sit cross-legged on the floor as that is the recommended way to sit but it is not that easy at the beginning.

The way an image of Lord Buddha is seated, such as the lotus or half lotus positions (*Siddhāsanaya*, *Padmāsanaya*) are difficult at the beginning because of unfamiliarity. It is good to train gradually to sit cross-legged on the ground for practising Mindfulness of Breathing if you intend to go in-depth. Try to be in that posture as much as possible – you can gradually increase the time you sit like that. What are the benefits of sitting like that (“*pallaṅkam ābhujitvā*”)? When you sit like that, both your legs completely touch the ground. Then the weight of the body is borne by the entire leg, otherwise the body weight will be borne by two or three points of the leg and those points will start hurting fast. That is one reason.

Therefore, if you can sit cross-legged with the whole of each leg placed on the ground, it is easier on the body. When you get used to it , it will be very comfortable. Even if you do not meditate, this posture itself has a great comfort. Try to train yourself gradually. Not two or three hours - stay as long as you can. Start with half an hour and gradually increase it to forty-five minutes and then to one hour and so on.

“*Pallaṅkam ābhujitvā.*” When you sit like this, your backbone is straight. “*Ujuṁ kāyam paṇidhāya*”, is the next pre-requisite recommended for deep meditation. When you are seated in the other sitting postures you have to maintain the back-bone yourself. It gradually becomes bent. Again you have to straighten it, but if you sit in the prescribed cross-legged posture with your legs entirely touching the ground, the upper body becomes straight without any effort as if you are in a mould. When you pour something hot into a mould it takes on the shape of the mould; likewise, when you are in this posture you don’t have to worry until you finish your meditation and you don’t have to correct your posture again and again. You don’t have to be aware of whether you are bending, falling towards the right or to the left and so on. If you succeed to be in this posture at the very beginning you are free and further development can easily be achieved.

## Aches and pains

The next problem is, whatever posture you are sitting in, after some time numbness and pains set in. This is inevitable. Either both legs or one leg may get numb or painful. Most meditators fear this condition, especially Westerners. After some time they inquire whether the numbness is alright, or whether it could be a health hazard. If this continues, with the blood not flowing properly to the legs, will the legs be totally disabled? Will they be paralysed? No, we are not staying like that for days; and even if we did, no physical disability would occur. A posture like this is specifically designed to minimise the blood flow to the legs. The postures we use during the day send most of the blood to the feet due to the gravitational force, thereby minimising

the blood flow to the brain. The heart has to make a great effort to pump blood to the brain against the gravitational force. When we are seated in such a posture that is designed for meditation, since the blood doesn't flow much to the legs, it becomes easier for the heart to pump blood to the brain. Numbness is natural and it will ease off after some time if we do not become impatient, and after that we can change the posture if necessary. If you try to change while the numbness is still there, you will then feel the pain.

In meditation we do not give any importance to other physical activities. During that time the digestive system is not important. Meditation enhances knowledge, develops memory power, increases awareness and cultivates wisdom; therefore, more blood is needed in the upper part of the body, not in the lower part. Normally the lower part of the body requires more blood. It is during meditation that energy is taken to the upper part of the body, which is usually meant for the lower part. Therefore, Dear Dhamma Friends, it is also of physical benefit to be familiar with a posture like this.

### **The Benefits of maintaining the upper body straight**

‘*Ujum kāyam*’ - to have the upper part of the body straight - is very important. This helps the breath that enters through the nose to travel down to the lungs without any difficulty. When we are bent or crooked, the breathing passage is not straight, not free and we might start panting. When the upper body is straight, the inhalation and exhalation occurs very easily, freely and lightly. The blood then easily and efficiently flows up to the brain. The spinal

cord is straight, not bent and not crooked. The sending of blood to and from the brain happens efficiently. Even if you do not practice any spiritual meditation, with a posture like this, the brain develops. Scientific experiments have proved that, and mental vigilance also happens naturally when seated with the upper part of the body straight. That is to say, when seated like this, the rays that the brain emits are different to that of other postures. Therefore, for mental activities like studying and learning the best posture is to sit with the upper body straight.

The supreme state in the process of mental evolution is the Realization of the Truth. The prescribed posture for this is to sit with the upper body straight. These are not rules. There is no legislation to say that if you do not follow these recommendations to the dot you can't meditate. This is a help, an aid and assistance for meditation. Mental development does not depend on the body. Our posture does not determine our path of spiritual progress but this posture helps with meditation therefore it is advisable to use it.

When the mind becomes relaxed, the body tends to slump, and then you have to concentrate on the posture to get the body straight. The relaxation of the mind may then be lost and the body may also not be relaxed. If you are in a posture which does not change, as if you are in a mould, then you don't have to worry about the body. Whatever period of time you want to stay in that posture, it does not change; you do not have to worry about that and you can continue on your path relaxing both your body and your mind. The Lord Buddha discusses the practicality of this in the *Girimānanda Sutta* when he describes *Ānāpāna Sati Saññā* (Perception of Mindfulness of Breathing).

The next item, Dear Dhamma Friends, is the most important aspect of our discussion. This is the description of ‘Perception of Mindfulness of Breathing’ or ‘Composure of Mindfulness of Breathing’. Whatever word we use there is not much of a difference. We expect to discuss this broadly, taking into consideration the other places where this meditation is described in addition to the *Girimānanda Sutta*. The description found in the *Girimānanda Sutta* itself is sufficient; this doesn’t mean that it is insufficient but there are other places where it is described in great detail. We will be considering those as well.

## Awareness

Go to an isolated place. Sit with crossed legs and with the upper part of the body straight. Pay attention to the environment. Identifying the environment is the first step. One can recognise how silent, calm, serene and quiet the environment is. When you are sensitive to the silence, calmness, and the quietness of the environment, and get connected to it; the stillness of the environment automatically calms down the mind. You do not need any effort to experience the serenity, if you are not disturbed. However much the environment is calm, one can become agitated if one wants to be. Otherwise the stillness, calmness and the serenity of the environment flows through to you if you are aware.

This is the usual rule when we pay attention to something. Attention is like a pipe. Attention is the connector. The one who pays attention and the object on which the attention is focused get attached. Then something flows from the person who pays attention to the object to which

he pays the attention, and vice versa. It happens both ways like in a telephone conversation.

Let us take an example: If we pay our attention to an animal, we can observe some change in that animal. Look at an animal; look at its eyes; if you are looking at it with anger, the animal too gets angry and the animal gets disturbed. You don't have to do anything. Maybe you didn't scold it, you didn't shout, but you were just looking, you were just observing, and something flowed from you to that animal through the attention. This is inevitable. Attention is like a medium. Things pass to and fro via attention; it is a kind of transaction. It is difficult to be attentive without giving and taking something from the object of attention. When we pay attention to an object we take something from the object and give something back to it.

Look at somebody or even an animal with compassion, and that animal changes, reduces its violence if it was violent and you don't have to say anything. You didn't recite a mantra; you didn't anaesthetize the animal. Via the attention we have sent it compassion, sent empathy, given him/her sympathy - these things flow through the attention to the target. Whatever mental condition we have at that moment flows through the attention to the object we pay attention to, like giving an injection. Not only that, we also take something from the object. We suck in what is there. When we are watching somebody shouting we get disturbed and sometimes we too might get angry and might get agitated. There is no requirement to be disturbed, no connection, but we become agitated. When we watch a film or a drama, see how we get infected with all the problems, sorrow and misery in those episodes. There is no connection

to us; we are not characters; we are not a part of it. We are just watching, but by just watching, we get infected with all the emotions. If you can pay a deep, peaceful attention to a disturbed group they too will get peaceful to an extent. The peacefulness in you will flow to them.

Attention is like a pipe through which things can flow. That is why you are advised not to pay attention to unnecessary things. If we can't control our attention, that is, if we can't manage what will flow to the object, what should be given, what should be absorbed, if we are not mindful of what is happening there, it is better not to pay attention to unnecessary things, as results can be unpredictable. Either we will be destroyed or others could get hurt.

Be mindful of the environment. When one is aware of the quietness, the silence and the calmness of the environment of the forest or the park that s/he has gone to, to practice meditation, the stillness of the environment flows to his/her mind. The calmness, the stillness and the silence of the environment having flowed into the meditator's mind, tranquillises the meditator too. This is natural. It is not a miracle. This happens always. It happens bi-directionally, not only among animals and human beings. Just observe a flower, which changes according to the person observing. It starts changing without us noticing. Not only the flower, even the person who is observing also starts to change. See, it is not the same person any more as the one who started to observe. S/he too has changed; can even become prettier. So Dear Dhamma Friends, this is the first lesson. The first lesson is, to be conscious and to be aware of the environment.

## External sounds

Not only the silence and stillness of the environment but also the sounds in the environment should be identified. There is no environment which is one hundred per cent silent. Therefore, you must identify the sounds in the environment and get used to them so that you are aware that they might occur when you meditate. Then, even if you hear such a sound while meditating, you will not be disturbed, will not panic and will not get shaken because your mind is used to such sounds from the beginning. It is very important. You may hear new sounds, sounds which you have never heard before, and you may tremble but the probability is low. Any environment has sounds related to it, so let the mind recognise them and be silent while getting used to the sounds in the environment.

You need to practice both things and should not be attached to one or the other. That is – if you get attached to the silence and expect the environment to be silent throughout your meditation then you will not be able to continue your meditation because you are attached to something which is not proper. On the other hand, when you hear a sound, you may think that it is a disturbance and develop an aversion towards the sound. You might get attached to the silence and develop an aversion to the sound. Both attachment and aversion hinder your meditation and you should try to minimize both of these as much as possible.

Therefore, the best thing is to recognise and understand the silence; let the mind be silent and through that let the body also become calm. Not only that, you must

realise that a natural environment is not completely silent as it has inherent sounds and noises. There could also be unexpected events. Expect them too and do not hate them. Do not get attached to one thing and be agitated towards its opposite. Such an equanimous mind is required for this delicate operation. Be mindful about the environment and being aware of it from the beginning is very fruitful.

### **Establish a comfortable posture**

The next point is the posture. Be aware that you are seated. This is a very important part of being in the present moment. What is your posture at the present moment? Being aware of the posture and being in the present moment are not two different things. They are one and the same. The next point is, you have to be aware and recognise the qualities of your posture, whether the back is straight, upright or relaxed and the stillness in it. The environment is still and the posture too is still.

Once you are aware of the posture, then by identifying any pains or discomforts in the body you can adjust the posture to minimise them. You cannot start meditation with pains and aches. Therefore, adjust the posture accordingly. Again, by being aware of the body from top to toe, you can identify any pains, discomforts or aches and adjust the posture so that you can meditate for about half an hour without any problem. It is better to adjust at the beginning rather than to change the posture later on while meditating.

### **Identify the external sensations**

When you are aware of the body you will feel the coarser/more obvious things, how the body is placed on the ground and the feeling of the impact of the parts of the body which are touching; the feeling of your clothes. You will feel the external sensations mentioned above first. Be aware of them. This is the third stage.

First is the awareness of the environment and second is the awareness of the posture. Bring the awareness to the present moment and adjust the posture to be comfortable. The third is the external sensations in that comfortable posture. When you are aware of the external sensations it helps you to feel the internal sensations. It is difficult to go into the interior at first.

First, when you are aware of the external factors, by sharpening the awareness, you will start feeling the internal sensations. First you will feel the contacts and then the activities of the body. It doesn't stop with the contacts. Starting with contacts the awareness will go on into the activities inside the body. This body is like a large factory. What a lot of things happen inside! You may not feel all the activities, but at least some of them. Among the activities of the body, breathing is very important; the activity of inhaling and exhaling. Do not be in haste to find the breath.

Most meditators, as soon as they sit, try to find the breath. Then it is difficult. Let it happen slowly. First become aware of the environment, the stillness and the sounds, the attachment and the aversion towards them, and let go of them. Bring the mind to the present moment and feel the posture - is it upright? Feel the stillness - is it relaxed? If not, adjust accordingly. You will then feel the external sensations

from that relaxed posture from top to bottom, or bottom to top, or considering the entire body. You will also feel the internal sensations and activities, little by little. Be patient. Don't be in a hurry. When the awareness becomes subtle, the subtle breath will be felt. Nobody knows how long it will take for this. It doesn't matter, however much time it takes. Be patient until you feel your breath automatically, without any effort. Until you feel the breath, be aware of the body and bodily sensations.

When you continue to be aware of the body, at some point, you will feel the breath and only then can you start the Meditation on Mindfulness of Breathing. It has to be felt naturally. The waiting time is not a loss; you are aware, observing with equanimity, then even if you do not feel the breath your awareness improves. You will then feel that the body is inhaling and exhaling. Mindfulness of Breathing can proceed only after you start feeling the breath.

## Meditation

*Let us observe that feeling for a moment.....*

*With a mind which has become still and calm to some extent because of this awareness of the body, we will end our meditation.....*

*Let us try to practice what we have heard and try to investigate how much we can experience what was explained to us today. Through such investigations, may the meditation be your own experience.*

*With that determination, Dear Dhamma Friends, we will disperse.*

*May the Triple Gem bless all of you!*

## **PREPARATION OF THE MIND**

Most Ven. Rev. Sir, Dear Dhamma Friends, we have been discussing the Composure on Mindfulness of Breathing or *Ānāpāna Sati Samādhi*, which is known to all of us and has already been heard about and practiced by most of us. When describing the final Perception - *Ānāpāna Sati Saññā* - in the *Girimānanda Sutta*, basically what we have to do is to go to an isolated, secluded and silent place, sit in a proper cross-legged posture, keep the upper part of the body straight and upright and then be aware of the breath.

### **The Rat-race**

Dear Dhamma Friends, can we ask just anybody to sit down now to meditate?... somebody such as a student who is studying; a person who is in search of a job; a person who is about to get married; parents who are searching for schools for their children, concerned about their education, marriage or building houses for them; a person who is involved in war or in politics – people who are involved in what is called the materialistic world or ordinary day-to-day life? To a person who has any of the above objectives and considers that, “this is what life is all about”, if we try to say to them: “Dear Dhamma Friend, stop studying for a moment; stop racing behind marriage for a moment; stop running behind money; don’t think about building a house; go to an isolated, secluded place, sit on the ground in a cross-legged posture, keep your back upright, and observe the breath,” will any of these people follow this advice? Forget about following the advice, will anybody even listen? They

will think the person advising them is insane and ask, “Are you mad, I am doing every possible thing to pass the exam which is just around the corner,” or, “How can I forget about getting a job, in the middle of all these arrangements for the marriage?” or, “When there is not even enough time for my day-to-day activities, you are asking me to go to an isolated, secluded place, sit cross-legged with an upright back and observe the breath!”

Though it looks like a joke, this is a serious problem. Even if you quote the Lord Buddha, “This is what should be done,” the weight, seriousness and the depth of this statement is not felt by the world caught up in the rat-race. Dear Dhamma Friends, people do not understand, do not give any importance to meditation; do not practice because they do not see any meaning in doing so. Just imagine a person going to an isolated place, sitting in a cross-legged posture with an upright back and being observant of the breath. Can anyone see the benefits of this through argument or by thinking? No-one can understand, Dear Dhamma Friends, no-one can understand or realise the benefits of meditation by argument or thinking.

You know that you are inhaling, you know that you are exhaling, what is the benefit of going to such and such a place and sitting cross-legged in order to see this? How can someone be changed by doing this? How can a mind be developed by such an exercise? No-one can understand this. This will never be realised by argument. This cannot be proved by arguments. Not only this, how can you find time for meditation in the middle of all the calamities of life; caught up in the never-ending, materialistic rat-race, totally fed-up, when the 24 hours in a day are not enough; when

you are forced to do overtime, with numerous sleepless nights; in a life like this, could someone find time to go to a secluded place, sit and observe the breath? No.

And even if it *is* proved by argument that this is the correct path, there is no time to walk on it. Why? Because when the time you have is already insufficient to complete your existing jobs, to meet so many targets, to fulfil so many aims and so many expectations, the human life span is already much too short to achieve all of these things. Expectations are so many and a life-time is so short. Therefore, in the short period of a life-time in which you are going after unlimited aims and targets, you have to race behind them all to try to achieve them. There is a battle on between unlimited desires and a limited life-time. Dear Dhamma Friends, no-one comes to the end of their life having achieved all these goals. On the contrary, life ends with a mountain of unfulfilled expectations humiliating us.

“I have done all I have to do. I do not have anything more to do, and I am bidding farewell to life.” How lucky we are if we can say this! While a thousand or more expectations and desires are twinkling at us, while the torch of expectations is still being fuelled by the oil of desire, the lifespan ends. Therefore, expectations continue. The remaining expectations are carried forward to the next birth by the desires, like lighting a new lamp from an old one.

## The Meaning of life

Dear Dhamma Friends, for people in such a society - you cannot advise them to practice mindfulness on the breath. Even if you tell them about it, they will not understand. They will not have any interest in practising

meditation; cannot find the time and cannot find a place. Suppose you scientifically prove the importance of meditation to a person, how to find a location? There are disturbances everywhere. How to find time? They have to work all the time. Therefore, Meditation on Mindfulness of Breathing cannot be started just like that. It needs a change in attitude. It is not a big problem for us, as we are supposed to be born Buddhists. Most Sri Lankans are born Buddhists. We have the inspiration to some extent. The Lord Buddha has instructed us. Therefore it is not a problem for us, as we like to meditate, so we practice accordingly.

But Dear Dhamma Friends, to allocate enough time for this, to make the decision to practice seriously and to realise that it can be done in *this* life, a person has to change his/her attitude. The way they see life has to change. Life is not only money, life is not only enjoying yourself with friends, life is not to be spent only on your family's welfare; life is not only devoting your entire energy towards the job, similarly life is not for correcting the world.

All these things are very small parts of life. Life is much bigger than all of them. It is more serious and has more depth. That is why it is called human life. If you are filling such a deep human life with a small job it is a big offence. A job is not the life, marriage is not the life and social service is not your entire life. They are essential for living, true; there is no argument, debate or two words about it. Dear Dhamma Friends, all these things are necessary parts of life, especially for lay people, but does life comprise only of them? What happens to them? Just evaluate the things we dedicate ourselves to, taking them one by one. Can we always keep

them as we want? Will they help us with all our problems? Do they have the capacity to help us? Even if they want to and try to, will they be able to? How many times do we feel helpless?

## **Experience the impermanence**

Such a view is necessary for a person to start deeply practicing some form of meditation like Mindfulness of Breathing. That is why, in the *Girimānanda Sutta*, Ānāpāna Sati is described at the end. It is not the first Perception. It is the tenth and the last Perception. First the *Sutta* prepares a person to be ready to practice Mindfulness of Breathing. Everything is impermanent, so first propagate *Anicca Saññā* (Perception of Uncertainty) – by analysing the things we imagine to be permanent and eternal. Then we start to realise the unpredictable nature of things, as no-one knows when they will depart or when we will lose them. Where are the people we imagined to be permanent and expected to live forever? Nowhere! The things we spent every cent we earned on, spent every moment on, thinking we could not live without them, today they are no longer to be found even. They are all gone, and it is not certain whether what we have today will be there tomorrow or not. All things are impermanent. *Anicca Saññā* (Perception of Uncertainty) is important because of this nature of things. It prepares a mind to move towards a spiritual world from a materialistic world.

## **Things owned will perish**

*Anatta Saññā* (Perception of No-owner) is also like this. When we deeply consider, we realise that the things

that we imagine to be ours cannot be controlled. Ownership is just a thought. If you go beyond the thought, what is there in the ownership? When we analyse our rights deeply there is nothing in them. There is nothing other than just a thought; a thought on the surface. We can claim ownership of the world, starting with this body, all the things we can see around us, human beings, animals, machinery, buildings, heaps of bricks, pieces of thread, up to the Himalaya mountains..... no-one is objecting. Someone can think 'they are all mine', but Dear Dhamma Friends, when the time comes, all these things and people start war against the person who claims ownership, which proves that it is just a thought. Everything, even the body, is like that. Dresses, wristwatches, cars and indeed everything in your home is the same.

Even though you claim ownership, things and people do not act as you want; they may act in a way you dislike and make you miserable. The things we own start reacting quite unexpectedly. Even if you imagine that a particular thing will act according to your liking; that a particular person will act according to your liking, always enchanting you, can we issue a certificate that this will be the reality? Dear Dhamma Friends, can we get such a certificate? No we can't. Is there a person or a thing or a job that will adhere to this? No, there isn't.

Therefore, for people who take legal action, fight, or compete to preserve their ownership, to secure, to protect their property, and devote day and night or spend their entire life on this, without considering a life beyond this, *Anatta Saññā* (Perception of No-owner) is very valuable. When we ponder a little on this, we realise the truth that

ownership is just a presumption. Whether you say you own them or not, both the things owned by you and not owned by you will perish with time. No-one can stop that. You will be left alone. Even while you are there, right in front of the owner, making the owner lonely, the owned things bid farewell. You have to watch this, lamenting, crying, and weeping. You have to watch how the things you acquired, spent good money on, devoted precious time to, and strained the brain for, depart.

This is *Anatta Saññā*. When you look at life from this point of view, you start to wonder, “Is this life?” We realise that whatever we imagined to be ours is not really ours. You have to face life alone. You have to die alone. If you do not have the strength to face life you become helpless. Who is there for you?

That is why the *Dhammapada* says, thinking that ‘these people are mine’ and ‘these things belong to me’ are very childish thoughts and because of these childish thoughts ‘*iti bālo vihaññati*’ one gets hurt and ‘*vihaññati*’ - tired. Because of this presumption we try to legalise our inheritance for people, and our ownership of animals, vehicles and fixed assets. And for every pencil, pen and dress we create a mental legality even though it is not documented. Who is the owner of all these things? “I”. If somebody has this childish presumption that all these things are mine, when they perish, the owner will be sad, tired and miserable.

‘*Atthā hi attano n'atthi*’ Even “I” am not “mine.” This is a very important statement. The owner doesn’t even own the owner, let alone the things owned. If you analyse

logically you can see clearly that the things or the people we own are not “mine”, but this is a profound statement. The owner who imagines he owns the world, does not own even him-/herself! If this is so, can somebody say these are mine, they are mine? We assume we can. But will there be anybody or anything to remain “mine” forever? Can you find a single person who is with you from birth to death?

We associate with thousands of others, have friendships, have acquaintances, relationships; going beyond this we have agreements endorsed by witnesses. Can we say that a person who was with us in the past, through every problem, will be with us in future too? It is just a dream, just a thought. These things are necessary for living. We are not saying that practically we don’t need anything but what is required is to correct the perception. Therefore, if this is true, if the owner doesn’t own even him-/herself, if “I” do not own “me”, then who will help me? What will help me? Who will be the liberator? What can I have as my salvation?

When we analyse *Anatta Saññā* this way and contemplate, Dear Dhamma Friends, deeply and spiritually, we get an urge to search for something different from what we usually experience; a requirement to search for something non-materialistic, to find something on an elevated plane.

The other Perceptions too have a similar effect. Contemplating on the body using *Asubha Saññā* and *Ādīnava Saññā* has the same effect. What is this body? How long do we take to clean each part of this body? Dear Dhamma Friends, how much effort do we need to put in? Even after

cleaning the body with a lot of effort, how long will it stay clean? How much effort do we make to keep the body healthy? How much trouble do we take to beautify the body? Is there an end to it?

If someone presumes that life is to keep the body beautiful, attractive and charming, from hair to toenails, then there is no time for meditation, and there is no necessity either. To a person like that, Buddhism prescribes the practice of *Asubha Saññā* and *Ādīnava Saññā*. Look at what happens to the body. The body gets sick. All the different sicknesses, given various names, infect only the body. Can we say for sure that a particular sickness will not infect this body? However much we try, however much money or time we spend, we cannot. This body is open for any ailment. If that is the case, what is the meaning in assuming this body is the life? Then one turns towards the mind. Life cannot be only the body. Then one starts to see the need to purify the mind, beautify the mind and make the mind healthy and strong.

## **Our attitudes should change**

When that spiritual need emerges, everything - the time and a suitable location - comes automatically. This is the miracle. There is no point in providing anything if the need is not there. There is no value in drugs, money or books if there is no need for them. But when there is a need for something, you have time, you can find a location and you meet people who talk about these things. This is the truth. This desire paves the way to all the other things. Therefore you must cultivate the desire and then you realise how beneficial it is to go to an isolated place, to sit cross-legged

with an upright back and to observe the breath. Not only do you realise the benefit, you will find the time and the location to do so.

Dear Dhamma Friends, up to the ninth Perception, you can practice anywhere- at home, in the garden, in a temple or a meditation centre. Thus the mind should be adaptive, to be able to practice a subtle experience like Mindfulness of Breathing; otherwise it would be difficult to start all at once just by sitting. It wouldn't be successful. There would be no need for meditation. The mind should have the proper attitude and the enthusiasm. Therefore, before starting the meditation, the mental environment should be cultivated. The Lord Buddha does not advise anybody to meditate without any pre-process.

The Lord Buddha did not teach meditation immediately to the people who came to visit him. He had a general chat, inquired after their health, sometimes he even asked whether they were hungry, and that was the tradition. First condition the mind. First inculcate the proper attitudes.

We know about a certain farmer. The Lord Buddha visited this farmer in his field every day, from the planting stage onwards. He did not preach, but visited like a friend. The farmer very proudly describes how he works - how he prepares the field, plants the seed, spreads manure, the magnitude of the investment - day by day. The Lord Buddha just listens, like a friend who visits. Now the farmer is protecting the harvest. The Lord Buddha still comes and inquires about the daily processes. Then the farmer very proudly announces that the next day is the harvesting day -

so happy. But, alas, that night there is a severe thunderstorm, the entire area goes under water and the whole crop is destroyed. But the Lord Buddha still visits the farmer on the following day too. That is one of the qualities of a Dhamma Friend. If any other person was visiting like this he might have had an expectation to receive at least a portion of the harvest and wouldn't have gone any more after the harvest failed, but the Lord Buddha went again. That day the farmer was lamenting with his face in his hands. Where was that pride? Where was that dignity? Where was that feeling of superiority? None of them were there that day. The entire dream was completely shattered. The farmer didn't know what to do. The benefits he was anticipating were all gone. Perhaps he borrowed money for the cultivation, and now he has to repay it. At this juncture, the Lord Buddha preached about reality.

Meditation cannot be started immediately. No-one can advise another person to meditate. Before that, the mind should have naturally gone in that direction. A person must start turning his/her mind in that direction, and then they start realising little by little that whatever you create is not worthwhile if you have not corrected your mind first. In this story, the farmer then asks, "What am I to do?" When someone asks such a question, this is the proper time to preach advice and direct someone towards meditation.

Sometimes, someone starts to meditate because their mother or father asks them to or a Venerable Monk preaches to them that they should, but that is not how it should happen. The mind should say "now you must meditate". That necessity must surface from within, deeply, Dear Dhamma Friends. Only then will you be able

to find time and appropriate locations. Letting go of all the arguments, you agree to practice Meditation on Mindfulness of Breathing.

Then the decision is not half-hearted; it comes from the bottom of the heart. Usually we don't give our consent to anything wholeheartedly. When we say we agree to something, within that agreement there is often some element of disagreement; disliking. If someone says that he likes something a lot that means there is some part of dislike in it. Any wholehearted trust has a little suspicion built in to it. If you say somebody is very trustworthy to you, you say so because you suspect that person even to a small extent.

When meditation becomes a wholehearted requirement, it becomes your life and no-one else's. It becomes a life's necessity. Not to fulfil a requirement of the Lord Buddha that we should meditate; not to fulfil the Ven. Monk's requirement; not to fulfil a teacher's request. It is now a life requirement, to fulfil your own spiritual requirement. Not to make anyone else happy, not to show-off to anybody, we know that if we meditate we will benefit.

When we come to that point, all the barriers are no more, Dear Dhamma Friends, and we find a place where we can meditate in our own surroundings. Without saying "no time," "too much work," "no proper location," - eradicating all these barriers it emerges as something that we can do and should do. When we come to that point, wherever you are, you feel as if you are in a meditation centre. Wherever you are - maybe you are actually in the middle of a town, maybe with a lot of sounds and noise around you - but when the necessity arises deeply, wholeheartedly, when we see

the worthlessness of all our attachments, when we see the significance of the spiritual investigation, Dear Dhamma Friends, we can experience the silence anywhere. You can hear the silence in between two sounds and can see the calmness within all calamities. Until then you see only the calamity, you hear only the noise.

Until then Māra tells you that you can meditate only when you are in a meditation centre or a forest; you can't meditate where you are. Getting distracted by the voice of Māra, even the minds which recognised the benefits of meditation to some extent would postpone further meditation and might be satisfied with just superficial praying, conviction or faith. You need to see the necessity of meditation more deeply than that. You should see that meditation is as necessary for life as the breath. We do not imagine that breath is necessary to live. We think money is necessary to live and a lot of other things as well, but Dear Dhamma Friends, we require all these only while we have our breath. If there is no breath there is no value in any of these things. Similarly, Dear Dhamma Friends, the meaning of the entire life rests on meditation. When we realise that, none of the barriers are barriers anymore; time is not a problem anymore.

### **Realize the uselessness of thoughts**

First we have to neutralize these problems. If somebody sits for meditation with all these problems, then these problems crop up during meditation. Then, forgetting all about the meditation, we start trying to solve these problems and do not meditate. After sitting for meditation we start solving household problems, educational problems,

marital problems, children's problems, political problems and so on. Because we have given more importance to these things, we consider them to be our life and that sense of priority is still there within us. That is why we tend to try to solve these issues. Therefore, we must see the unsatisfactory nature of all these things before starting to meditate.

There are a lot of things required for living but to what extent do you really need them and what do you actually get from them? Do they really have an essence and will they survive for a long time? Will they stay with us? When we investigate these questions deeply, Dear Dhamma Friends, we can easily stop these thoughts arising in our minds while we are meditating, without trying to solve them.

Otherwise, we have to keep on letting go of them, saying that we don't need them now while meditating. That is also a way of meditating, not that you can't meditate like this. Without correcting our attitudes and opinions we start meditation and then while meditating we remember the job, the promotion, dresses, dinner and so on. Whenever we remember these things we have to tell the mind that they are not important at this time and we are trying to do something more significant. Therefore, we have to see the uselessness of every thought. Only if we see the uselessness can we let go of that thought. Only if we realise they are not valuable can we let go of the thoughts. If we treat them as valuable we will get attached to them.

If someone appreciates anything - saying this is "pretty," "lovely," "tasty", - the moment they give a value to it, they become a slave to that thing. This happens continuously. Try to give a value to anything - a button, a pin

– and you become a slave of the button; you become prey to that button - a servant. The person who said the button is valuable becomes small. The thing that was given the value becomes superior. Even if it is the Himalayan Mountain or a gold mountain, if you do not give any importance to them you are bigger and stronger than them, while you are meditating.

The wandering mind is a great problem for all of us. We sit and sometimes we take the first breath consciously and even exhale the second breath consciously and then we don't know where our mind has gone. Every thought tells us, "Think about *this*, how could you *not* think about it?" We see all these thoughts as very important. As soon as we give a value to a thought, the giver becomes weak. The thought becomes strong. Thereafter the thought can drive you. It will make you forget yourself. Now you have forgotten why you sat. The thought has driven you a long way off the track like a servant, pulled by a rope tied around your neck.

Then another thought comes along, and as soon as you think that, that thought is also very valuable, what you remembered is also valuable, the person you remembered is also valuable and then you again become a servant of the thought. It takes you away from meditation. We call it meditation but it is not really. We must see each and every thought that comes as insignificant. The Perceptions that we developed earlier come in handy at this moment. Dear Dhamma Friends, when we are meditating, whoever we remember is considered to be insignificant even though s/he may be very important in our normal life and may even be a person we cannot do without.

Not important at all! It is not the person who came but only a thought. What is the importance of just a thought? Even if you remember your meditation teacher, don't think "S/he is my meditation teacher, how can I be without thinking about him/her?" No, treat that thought also in the same manner. In some meditation doctrines, they say even if you see the Buddha's image, let it go. It is not a real experience while you are meditating. It is only an image of the Lord Buddha created in your mind. How do we know whether the image is of Lord Buddha or not? Just let it go, otherwise we get stuck with that thought. We get frozen in that thought. You will not have a flow thereafter.

Therefore, Dear Dhamma Friends, when you are meditating, you must see all thoughts as worthless. Here again we can use the earlier perceptions. We should see them as impermanent; should see that they do not belong to us; see them as impure; and see that we are not gaining anything by thinking about them. It will create problems if we try to think about all the thoughts that come. If you can practice *Ādīnava Saññā*, then it becomes easy and simple to let go (*Pahāna Saññā*). You can try to go beyond the thought. Contemplate on the relief you get when you let go of thinking about every thought that comes (*Virāga Saññā, Nirodha Saññā*). Similarly be ashamed of creating an imaginary world from the thoughts that come. Develop *Sabba Saṅkhāresu Anicca Saññā*. Whatever we remember, we build an imaginary world with it which stays in the mind. We build castles in the air. We go along with that, build one or two floors and - stopping halfway - we build another castle in the air with the next thought. These are what we call *saṅkhāra* or fantasies.

Be ashamed of building castles in the air with the thoughts, "What a childish thing to do!" "I sat down here with such a meaningful objective. Now look what I am doing!" When we contemplate like that it becomes easy to let go of the imaginary building with thoughts. Whatever is built perishes and breaks down. We cannot stay forever in a castle in the air. We remember the things that we were attached to, things we were happy with, things we were enjoying; we remember the things that we expect to enjoy in the future.

The usual practice, Dear Dhamma Friends, is to remember something that we once enjoyed in the past and to plan and create expectations about how to achieve, practically, in the future, the same happiness again or even more happiness. Our mind is used to running with the thoughts, getting attached to happiness, then indulging in it over and over again; thinking how to gain that happiness again and making plans for it. We are so attached to happiness.

### **No end to joyful moments**

We see happiness in this world as eating, drinking, dancing, watching things and so on. We are so attached to this kind of happiness and are so greedy and enslaved to it. It is difficult for such a mind to divert towards meditation where there is no greed or slavery. Therefore, when we get thoughts of those happy moments in the past and the expectations about the future, we should use the *Sabbaloke Anabhirata Saññā*. This perception makes us perceive the end result of all the joy and happiness we indulge in, and forms a healthy attitude to keep the mind away from them

at least temporarily. If we have trained our mind in that perception it becomes very helpful here.

Dear Dhamma Friends, you may be thinking that I am not teaching you about Meditation on Mindfulness of Breathing. But this is practical advice on how to find the time, and the place (which can be a big problem), to begin Meditation on Mindfulness of Breathing. It is a big problem for us if we do not have the proper attitude deep within us.

Then even if you sit down for Meditation on Mindfulness of Breathing, you cannot practice because of these thoughts. Do not think that the first Nine Perceptions are over. Whenever you get the chance, for every sound you hear, for every thought that comes, for every sensation in the body, Dear Dhamma Friends, be mindful without letting them create a problem for your meditation - let go of them and come back to the breath. You can use one of the first nine perceptions for this, as a key to open the lock.

So, you cannot take Meditation on Mindfulness of Breathing in isolation. Most of the problems are due to trying to do Mindfulness of Breathing separately. One can practice *Ānāpāna Sati* as the sole form of meditation, taking it separately without cultivating the basic mental environment and without using this knowledge to make the mind concentrated when it is wandering.

It is said that we should first get the mind concentrated, and then develop insight. First you have to cultivate concentration and then insight. But both of them go hand in hand. Dear Dhamma Friends, the words *Samatha* and *Vipassanā* (concentration and insight) are not used

anywhere in Meditation on Mindfulness of Breathing. That is because both are there from the very beginning. Start with both. Start with *Vipassanā* and *Samatha*. That is how meditation is developed. They go hand-in-hand, supporting and complementing each other on their way forward. Therefore, if you do not have a proper skilful attitude towards the thoughts that come and the wandering mind, you cannot concentrate the mind on the breath. You need insight to develop concentration. On the other hand, you will be able to see the thoughts more clearly if you have a concentrated mind. Therefore, concentration is necessary to develop insight, and insight is necessary to develop concentration. They mutually nurture each other. In the Composure of Mindfulness of Breathing, these two develop nicely and progressively together.

Let us draw our attention to the breath....

## Meditation

*What is the importance of the sounds we are hearing now? Is there any need to even think of them as a disturbance? Whenever we attribute a value to them by labelling them as a disturbance, we give them more strength to disturb us. Just let the sounds be heard.....*

*We might remember things or people, but they are just thoughts. All of them will be forgotten in a little while when a new thought comes.....*

*Why do we get attached to these thoughts and run miles with them when their existence is very temporary and they are something we forget after a while?.....*

*Within a-thousand-and-one sounds and thoughts you will deeply feel that you are breathing.....*

*Dear Dhamma Friends, try to find time to practice Composure of Mindfulness of Breathing as frequently as possible....It will bring you peace.*

*May the Triple Gem bless all of you!*

## THE FIVE HINDRANCES

### Do not disturb

We often hear, “I cannot meditate, there are lot of barriers”. Some complain that when they try to meditate, “Māra” obstructs them and various unexpected duties come up, they get involved in unplanned trips, fall sick.... and whenever they try to start meditation, their workload increases and problems crop up in the office. Most people think these are acts of “Māra”. Maybe there is such a person called “Māra,” we do not know. Whether “Māra” can create obstacles such as financial obstacles and health obstacles to meditators, we do not know. Dear Dhamma Friends, how do you look at these obstacles? The important thing here is that no-one can obstruct you unless you obstruct yourself.

Do we become an obstacle to ourselves or not? This is the most unfortunate thing, Dear Dhamma Friends; we obstruct ourselves in everything and not in just one thing. In education, the biggest obstacle is not financial problems but indolence, laziness, a poor memory - that is how we obstruct ourselves. Even our work is like that. Even in relationships, we create our own barriers to our life – no-one else does. There are certain things outsiders can do. Others can do black magic, voodoo, can recite evil mantras, may petition us, scold us, but they are at a distance and they do not come into contact with our body. Who takes these things into the body? Therefore whatever the situation is, even in the material world, Dear Dhamma Friends, the barrier against one’s success is oneself. In other words, we are “Māra”. A “Māra” from the outside world doesn’t come and obstruct

us – we obstruct ourselves. Who obstructs us when we are earning? We do. When we try to save money, from where does the obstruction come? A major part of the obstruction comes from within us since we do not have proper control over our expenditure.

This doesn't apply only to the worldly life. Consider physical health. We fall sick because of our negligence and unawareness most of the time. Even when we consider the spiritual life, an external "Māra" need not come. This is a very important teaching in Buddhist philosophy. Everything in Buddhist Philosophy is important for that matter, but when we consider this topic; all the other religions talk about an external opponent, a Devil, a person like Satan. Buddhism doesn't talk about any external enemies. "Māra" is described as the six sense doors and their objects such as forms seen by the eye, etc.....; and thoughts that come to the mind. There is no other "Māra".

In a way this is a very sad situation. We have become our own enemy. We are trying to escape from ourselves life-after-life. The biggest obstacle against everything is ourselves. Not realising this, we get agitated over trivial obstacles and become angry. The biggest hindrance is within us, the biggest blockage is within us. Wherever you go in this *samsāra* (rotating in suffering) there is no escape from yourself – it is as if you are trying to escape from your own shadow. However much you run, no-one can escape from your own shadow. Meditation is not about being victorious by escaping - it is about realization, and with that realization you will not be a barrier to yourself any longer. The greatest result of meditation is peace, inner serenity.

Peace is a pleasant experience in a person's mind, a person's psyche. There is no conflict within; no problem. You may have financial problems, social problems, health problems, but if you can say, "I have no problem with myself" - no conflict within - you are not an enemy or an opponent to yourself; you have total agreement within you, that is *Sammā Samādhi* (Right Composure). Composure can be defined as 'total agreement'. Agreement means everybody agrees upon something. That means no conflict. For example, in a home, if a family is trying to figure out what to cook for breakfast someone might say, "Let's eat rice." If everybody agrees to that suggestion, then they are all in agreement. But if someone says, "No, today let's eat bread," then there is no agreement. There is a conflict; there is an opposition, a going-against, a disagreement. There is no peace. There is no composure. Peace and composure are found only in agreement. It should be a wholehearted agreement and not just at face value. If such agreement prevails in a home, what a peaceful place and what a composed place it would be. If the same peace, calmness and composure could be found in a society, a country, how beautiful it would be!

Before going that far, Dear Dhamma Friends, this needs to be cultivated within a person - this total agreement. You should be able to say, your mind is in agreement with your life, the mind is in agreement with the mind itself, you are in agreement with your own consciousness, you are not an enemy to yourself and you do not obstruct yourself. Therefore, Dear Dhamma Friends, when you are being trained to meditate, you should be aware of the obstacles. If we think that we cannot meditate because of fate, because we have not done enough good-deeds (*Puñña*) in the past, or because there are obstacles from "Māra," because "Māra"

will not let us out of *Samsāra* (life-after-life), or because our family does not like us meditating, we will never be able to overcome the obstacles. We will never be able to meditate.

To investigate whether we are obstructing ourselves is an important thing. Are we obstructing ourselves? Sometimes there are notices saying, “Do not disturb.” That is a very narrow outlook. Actually we should direct that notice towards ourselves. There is no point in telling an outsider. We do not gain anything by telling an outsider not to disturb us, as an outsider can only disturb us to a very small extent. Most disturbances come from within. We come across many reasons not to meditate. These reasons are called “Māra.” “Māra” need not come from outside. One thousand-and-one reasons not to meditate or to postpone meditation come to our mind. These reasons are very attractive and when we look at these reasons we feel they are true.

But who is deceived by these reasons? Who becomes a fool? You. You fool yourself. *Samsāra* doesn’t get fooled. Whether we do meditate or not *Samsāra* will continue, we will fall sick, become old and one day die. Again we will be born, will fall sick, will become old and again we will die. Therefore, we must understand this cycle clearly and must be inclined towards meditation.

There will be no disturbances from the outside. Your workload may increase. Someone may be shouting outside during your entire meditation session. These things can happen. But who is treating them as a disturbance? That is the important aspect to consider. We should get used to identifying the inner obstacles and not allow ourselves to be our own obstacle.

At this point the discussion about *Nīvarana* (Hindrances) will commence. 'The five Hindrances' means the five ways of disturbing ourselves. That is why they are called Hindrances; five ways of hiding the way. They close the path. Who does this? We ourselves do it. Nobody else does it. Nobody can activate a Hindrance in your mind - there are no other people capable of doing so. We create these things, we become our own Hindrance. 'The Five Hindrances' means the five ways of disturbing ourselves - the obstructions in five ways.

In the Meditation of Mindfulness of Breathing, we go to a relaxed place and find a relaxed time; sorting out an isolated place and a peaceful time for ourselves, we sit in a comfortable posture, with the upper part of the body straight. Let's assume we have found a completely silent location and we are able to stay in the same posture for a considerable length of time, and no-one is shouting or coming to bother us.

Such an environment and posture is recommended to avoid the two obstacles that come from outside, - "arañña-gato vā, rukkhamūlagato vā, suñña-gāragato vā", nisñdati pallañkam ābhujitvā, ujuñ kāyam pañidhāya" but even though we stay like that, the problem is not solved. Just see, when you are in an isolated place the mind wanders more. Try to stay stationary and it is the same - the mind starts to wander. We start remembering things that we never realized were in our mind before. Since we have a busy life, we do not have time to remember things.

## **Dialogues within the mind**

When we are running, talking, watching TV or reading a book, then the thoughts are minimal. When we are in the midst of a loud noise we do not remember other things, but we remember so many things when we start to meditate. When the environment becomes calm, the noise of the mind increases. That is because the mind tries to fill the vacuum, the mind is not used to silence, the mind feels lost without sounds and therefore it tries to fill up the space with mental noise. If no-one is talking, the mind starts to talk. Just try to listen to the mind talking, as if it is talking with another person. There is a dialogue going on in the mind. The mind cannot talk alone. There has to be a listener, and one who talks; one who questions, one who answers; one who says "Okay," one who says "Wrong;" one who criticises, one who agrees.

When we think, don't these conditions prevail? Do we think in a straight line? No. Just see with whom we are chatting. By dividing yourself you are in a discussion and debate with yourself. If we tell somebody that we want to go to Kandy that person might say, "It might rain," and then you might say, "It does not matter – let's take an umbrella," and then the other person might say, "You can't escape from rain with an umbrella." Like that the discussion will continue. Just see how this type of discussion is created in your mind even if there is no second person. Then you will tell yourself, "It might rain," then, "It is ok, I will take an umbrella," then, "Still the rain might increase." Like that your mind will start talking to you as if there is another person there. The same dialogue happens within the mind; a second person is not necessary. As soon as the mind is lonely, the mind that feels

a vacuum in that silence tries to fill it by shouting and making noises. The lonely mind decides that "this is not enough; I cannot be lonely; this is wrong," and so creates another character, imagines somebody and starts a dialogue with that imaginary character, criticises, scolds, has a fight, or creates a calamity with a loud noise.

This condition, Dear Dhamma Friends, will not decrease. If you are alone or you go to an isolated place it will only increase. You have to face this. You are advised to be alone and asked to go to an isolated place and be calm because when you are running round in haste, shouting, you would not see this dilemma. Only when we are silent and sitting still in a posture will we see the reality of the mind. That is why you are advised to go to an isolated place for meditation. There may be other reasons as well - and there are some very subtle reasons which we discussed earlier - but this reason is very important. The actual nature of the mind, the entangled mind, can be seen as it is when you are alone. The true nature, the helplessness and the weaknesses will be seen as they really are - the dances performed to cover this up, the pretending done to avoid loneliness because of the unwillingness to be lonely, the way you try to deceive yourself.... Imagining that somebody is there, we start chatting. The mind starts talking. These are obstacles. These are called Hindrances, the factors contributing to the entangled nature of the mind. These are the five ways of distressing ourselves. Nobody gains anything from them. Hindrances facilitate neither the material life nor the spiritual life.

The reason why the topic of the Hindrances comes here should be explained first, Dear Dhamma Friends. If you do not recognise the Hindrances, you are unable to

meditate; you will not be meditating. You will just be lost in the Hindrances. We sit for meditation and indulge in various chains of thought. This happens because of these five Hindrances. Nobody else drags us along, we willingly go off. Why do we go away from meditation? It is because of these Hindrances.

### **“Kāmacchanda” (Craving for sensual comforts)**

At any given moment, you may realise that you are not meditating but thinking of something else. Immediately investigate what happened to you. You sat down to observe the breath, to know that you are breathing while you are breathing, but now what has happened? “I am now thinking of something else. How did I come to this moment?” If you trace the chain of thought back to the beginning, you observed the in-breath, observed the out-breath and at that moment you had a thought, you remembered somebody and then what happened to you? What happened to that thought? As soon as the thought came you got attached to the thought, got emotionally involved, willingly got involved since the thought was about a person you like. Usually you like to think about that person, like to meet that person, like to talk with that person, therefore, as soon as you remember such a favourite person you receive the same pleasant feeling; willingness arises. That person did not come to your mind and only a lifeless thought entered your mind that had nothing to do with that person. However, as soon as you willingly get attached to that mental figure, that lifeless thought gets energy and that mental figure becomes real. Now you feel as if that person is here, as if you are talking to the real person and walking with the real person.

*Kāmacchanda* energises the thought like that; strengthens the thought. That thought of just a mental figure is now converted into a living person. Who does this? It is desire that does this. Then it is not easy to stop the wandering mind. It is easy to escape from a lifeless thought but very difficult to get rid of an energised mental figure. You feel that s/he is real. The past is revisited. You create plans for the future. You go a long way like this. Whenever you gain awareness, investigate. Where am I? I am neither in the in-breath nor in the out-breath. I am just chatting away with an imaginary person; enjoying a meal with an imaginary person; having a long walk with an imaginary person. How did I come here? Go back to the beginning and then you will see that you had just a thought and no sooner it came you got attached to it quite willingly. That is what is called *Kāmacchanda*. Whatever name is used, the name is not important. This is the first way you hinder yourself.

Getting willingly attached to every thought that comes to the mind, to every sound that you hear, every form you see and then energising them, willingly giving life to them, strengthening them, feeding them, this is called *Kāmacchanda*. Thereafter it becomes a big problem for you, with no freedom whatsoever. We say we remember such a person whenever we try to practice meditation. We remember our children, husband or wife, and friends. Therefore, however much we try we cannot meditate whether we are at home or whether we go to a meditation centre or to a forest.

Dear Dhamma Friends, the problem is not with the thought; the crisis is in our attachment to the thought. This is the first way you obstruct yourself. This is the way you

obstruct your spiritual life. You must let go of the desire, having observed the tendency of willingly getting attached to all the sensual experiences that you get through the eye, ear, nose, mouth, body and the mind.

You don't have to let go of the thought or the vision. We always go wrong there. We think we cannot meditate because we remember things, hear sounds. The person who thinks like that tries to stop hearing, since as soon as s/he hears something her/his mind goes along with that sound and forgets about the meditation. As soon as you remember something you go along with that thought and you can go far, far away into the past and into the future and forget all about the present. Therefore, we perceive that the thought is the problem and assume that if a thought hadn't come we might not have gone so far, but actually the thought is not the problem. If we consider things in this way we have to forget our past, stop hearing and be deaf, stop thinking and be mentally impaired. Meditation doesn't mean that you have to be a deaf, blind and dumb or mentally impaired person.

This is a wrong perception, wrong understanding. The problem is not out there. What is the problem in hearing, seeing or remembering? The problem is the *desire* for these things; the eagerness to indulge in sensual experiences. That is the obstacle. Let the thoughts come but do not go after experiencing them. You may hear sounds but do not try to enjoy them. Let go of that desire. Stop taking pleasure in what you hear and do not try to stop the hearing.

The eagerness to indulge in pleasure is *Kāmacchanda*. Having realised this, you should let go of the desire for pleasure. You did not go to an isolated place and sit cross-

legged with the upper part of the body straight in order to think about something and indulge in sensual pleasures or to hear something and enjoy it. Eradicate the eagerness to experience sensual pleasures. As soon as this feeling comes identify it and let it go. If we do not disturb ourselves in this manner, our mind will be free from that obstacle and will become tranquil.

### **“Vyāpāda” (Aversion)**

You may remember a person who irritates you, or a person you do not wish to see - or even hear of. There is an incident connected to this person - something that has happened in the past. You do not wish to remember that person. This thought is very infuriating as you have anger towards that person. There is disagreement within you, you feel like an enemy. The more you think about it, the more you get entangled in that thought as if you have got caught on a thorny bush. You go a long way with this thought because of the great displeasure you have towards that person. The thought gets energised.

Aversion is another way of energising thoughts. First we energised them because of our willingness. Willingness is one way of energising something and hatred is another way. We do not like remembering certain things as we get hurt. We can obstruct our mind with both pleasure and hatred. For everything - whatever we hear, whatever we see, whatever we remember - we can obstruct ourselves either by entertaining the mind or by hurting the mind. We obstruct ourselves with disagreement by fighting and feeling hostile towards all we see, hear and remember.

Here again we believe that we cannot compose our mind because we remembered a certain person. No, it is not because of that - it is just a thought. Having identified it as a thought, you should let go of the displeasure you have towards that thought. Let go of the anger towards that thought. Stop fighting with it. Do no energise that lifeless thought with aversion and create a live enemy. Perceive the thought as just a thought. Eradicate the aversion. Then you will be able to win over the obstacle created by aversion. The disagreement, discomfort and dislike found in the mind do not allow the mind to be peaceful. Therefore, when you let go of these factors you will still hear sounds and thoughts will still come but your mind will be at peace.

### **“*Thīna Middha*” (Sleepiness and drowsiness)**

The third obstacle is lack of effort; “*Thīna Middha*”; sleepiness and drowsiness. Your effort is not adequate to continue meditation. You lag behind, you tend to procrastinate, you are lazy, and this can arise both mentally and physically. Laziness, Dear Dhamma Friends, is a reaction as it doesn't happen mechanically. Laziness is a reaction against something. It is subjective. When you try to meditate you feel sleepy, become lazy and then you cannot concentrate. But if at such a moment a person you like comes along, where is that laziness? Where is that sleepiness? If you start watching a TV program, where is that sleepiness? Do you become lazy then? How much can you concentrate? Lack of effort is subjective.

The mind which was used to enjoying rough and coarse things feels it is not sufficient to enjoy an elusive happiness through subtle things. Then the mind gets fed-up

of meditation, becomes lazy and lethargic. This is a reaction. Understand the reaction. Then without energising it, do not accept the thought that says: "I am sleepy, I am feeling lazy, I can't meditate now," as a truth.

If you are dominated by sleep once, then the next day you will be feeling even sleepier. Do not let that happen. Encompass an effort. We have been sleeping throughout *Samsāra*. That is why we are still suffering in *Samsāra*. Awakening is very valuable. Think of that and generate enthusiasm.

We have started on the Buddha's Way. This is more important than all worldly and divine duties. This *Samsāric* problem can be eradicated by the Buddha's Way and not by the other two ways. Your job is required for living and worldly benefits. If there are gods, the divine way will be beneficial but we do not know. These two ways will not solve your inner problems. Therefore, generate enthusiasm, interest and zest to go forward in the Buddha's way. For this, it is most important to overcome *Thīna Middha*.

Initiate a drive within. Drive is a force - not a dancing force but a very calm force. What have we been doing all this time? Doctors say that we sleep for one third of our life. Infants sleep the whole day. Thereafter we sleep one third of the day, at least 8 hours. Then in old age again we become bedridden. Therefore we have been trained to sleep most of the time. Throughout the circle of life, *Samsāra*, we must have always been like that. Are we trying to continue like this in the future too? Ask yourself this question.

When you sleep for one third of the day what happens during the rest of the day when you are up? What

is the mental development you have earned? What is the enhancement of the mind? Where are you? Are you lower or higher than where you were before? If you were to continue like this, what would be the end result? How long will life last? Nobody knows. Who knows whether the work load will be increased in the future? Who knows what ailments will strike?

When you start investigating in this way, an urge will be developed. You will wonder, "Oh! Is this what living means?" "What is the benefit of living like this?" Then you get an inner impulse to change this condition. Dear Dhamma Friends, this inner impulse wakes a person up. Banishing laziness, the person will be woken up. If you try to get rid of *Thīna middha* with certain thoughts, you cannot escape; it comes over and over again. The nature of the *Thīna middha* is to make you lethargic by thinking, "However much I meditate my mind does not get tranquilised and now I feel lazy and effort is not sufficient to tranquillise the mind," or thinking, "This is not the proper time - just after a meal," or "I just got up," or, "This is sleeping time," finding a thousand-and-one such reasons to keep away from meditating.

You always try to find excuses to evade meditation and console your mind. These excuses are not for somebody else but for yourself. You know you are doing the wrong thing. Therefore to justify yourself against the blaming mind, creating your own court, you try to defend yourself. Do not get caught in this trap. Do not receive the punishment of *Samsaric dukkha* (the continued cycle of suffering) by becoming a respondent and the guilty person in the court created by *Thīna middha*.

Challenge it, inquire into the reasons. What will you be doing after getting up from meditation? Then your messenger will say, there is a small job, an urgent job. Just see - when you are meditating even trivial jobs are shown to be very important and urgent by *Thīna middha*. There is no special value in them but for *Thīna middha* all these extra jobs become very valuable – more valuable than meditating. Do not get caught up in *Thīna middha*. Identify *Thīna middha* - the enemy who tries to postpone meditation - and build up effort, create enthusiasm and interest by thinking of the unpredictable nature of life and the dangers of *Saṃsāra*.

### **“Uddhacca kukkucca”( Restlessness and Worry)**

The fourth obstacle is mental instability and uncertainty (*vipilisarabawaya*). This is called “*uddhacca*” and “*kukkucca*”. “*Uddhacca*” means you balloon yourself with pride and consider everything you have to do as minute. You take yourself to a higher elevation; inflate yourself. You are then unable to do even the things you easily could have done. You see everything as very low and simple. You think that you can meditate whenever you want to.

If you start studying the day you begin your ‘A’ Level classes it will be easy for you at the final exam time. However if you assume that it is very simple and you can study at any time and therefore you postpone studying until the last moment, closer to the exams you will find a heap of books and notes which you suddenly have to revise. The student who ballooned himself up, considered the exam very simple and himself very big, in the end realises that the exam is like a mountain and he is like an insect. You should not treat yourself with pride, inflating yourself and considering

other things to be very simple. You should not think that meditation is very simple and can be done at any time later. The mind becomes restless and twitchy with “*Uddhacca*”.

Similarly, you should not consider yourself to be low. That is “*kukkucca*”. Then you assume meditation is like a mountain and that you are very small. You think, “How can I climb this mountain? I will never be able to accomplish a complicated thing like this, though others can do it, I am not fortunate enough. I should therefore partake in good deeds and accumulate good karma first and then I can start meditating.” You should neither underestimate yourself nor over-inflate yourself. You should build a moderate self-esteem, as otherwise you will not be able to traverse this path. You should neither run too fast nor too slowly but go at the correct pace. You should let go of both over-estimation and under-estimation of yourself.

### **“*Vicikicchā*” (Doubt)**

The fifth Hindrance is called “*Vicikicchā*” (Doubt). This is very common in meditation. Why? You do not have enough confidence in the meditation technique. The fourth hindrance is about self-confidence and the fifth one is about confidence in the technique. We have a lot of questions in our mind: is this the correct medicine? Is this the correct path? Is this the correct technique? We do not have confidence in anything. When we know so many different techniques we become a pharmacy and we do not know which medicine to select. You consume one medicine a little, read one book a little, try to meditate using one technique and you feel that it does not give the expected results. So you try out some other technique. Like this you go on trying

out various techniques and you do not build up confidence in any one of them, as if you are jumping from one branch to another. This is because you do not have enough faith in the practice.

Do not get caught in this trap. It is very difficult to escape from this trap if you get caught. You go to one teacher, you are not satisfied and then you go to another. You go from one meditation centre to another, from one book to another, from one *sutta* to another, from *Sutta Piṭaka* to *Abidhamma Piṭaka*, from *Abidhamma Piṭaka* to *Visuddhi Magga*, from *Visuddhi Magga* to *Atṭhakathā* (commentaries) and there is no end to this search, Dear Dhamma Friends.

If you get caught in the cobweb of suspicion you never know where you will end up. There is no end to it. You may go from country to country in search of the correct meditation technique; you will not find it in any meditation centre or in any book. The correct meditation technique is only to be found within you.

If we have confidence in a particular technique then that technique is correct but if we have no confidence everything is wrong. There is no point in meditating with doubt. You will never achieve anything. Therefore, you have to have confidence in one technique very clearly. This doesn't mean the other techniques are wrong, they are all correct. That is why the phrase, "One thousand ways," has evolved. There could be one thousand roads to our target.

Every river flows to the ocean - not only one river - if you keep going along the same river until you reach the ocean. After going along one river thinking that it is not flowing down to the ocean, you find another river and start

going along that one. You then go to the top of a mountain and try to go along a river that starts from the top for another short duration. If you keep doing this you will never get to the ocean. Dear Dhamma Friends, even though every river flows to the ocean, however much you travel along different rivers - maybe even a thousand miles - you will not reach the ocean if you do not continue travelling along *one* river until you reach the ocean.

Therefore, do not try to go in search of correct meditation techniques as meditation is simply being aware. There are so many ways of being aware. You should differentiate between meditation and meditation techniques. Meditation is to enhance awareness. There are so many traditions of enhancing awareness which are being propagated by different teachers. There are a lot of different teachings in the *Suttas*. Therefore, do not get all these entangled. You should not be evaluating and comparing them as you will be wasting your time. If you have confidence in one technique, then continue with that. If you practice continuously, only you will be able to gauge whether it is correct for you and bringing results for you. It is very important to have total confidence in your practice.

Start your meditation practice this way and thereafter do not try to evaluate and think and give energy to thoughts as to whether it is correct; thoughts like, "This book says this; that teacher says that." This energising effort is *Vicikicchā*. You get into an unnecessary cobweb. With this realisation, Dear Dhamma Friends, let go of these thoughts and come back to your meditation object.

So, you only have to do these five things in meditation. To re-cap, simply you should not disturb yourself - nothing else. Usually we disturb ourselves, like enemies, whatever we are trying to do. It is the same in meditation. The Lord Buddha declared the five ways of disturbing yourself and called them the Hindrances.

While you are meditating, identify when a disturbance occurs within you: here I am, being disturbed by myself. You can also name them: "This is *Kāmacchanda*," "This is *Vicikicchā*," - like that - then be mindful to eradicate that disturbance. "*So sato va assasati, sato passasati*," means you inhale mindfully; exhale mindfully.

When you start like this you do not have to remember the hindrances. It is not mentioned anywhere in the *Ānāpāna Sati Sutta* to bring back the attention and know when the Hindrances arise. This is because once you correct yourself at the very beginning it is not necessary. When Hindrances arise, know them and let go, and be mindful of the in-breath and be mindful of the out-breath. That is the beginning of the *Ānāpāna Sati Sutta*, the foundation and the first step.

## Meditation

*Let us inhale consciously and exhale consciously for some time.....*

*Let the breath come in calmly. Let the breath go out calmly.....*

*Be aware that you are inhaling; be aware that you are exhaling.....*

*Observe every in-breath consciously and every out-breath consciously.....*

*Dear Dhamma Friends, whenever you find time try to inhale consciously and exhale consciously. Let us be aware even for a few minutes that we are living in this long Samsaric journey. With that determination let us conclude this Dhamma symposium.*

***May the Triple Gem bless everybody!***

## TRAINING IN MEDITATION

Most Venerable Rev. Sir, Dear Dhamma Friends, today we are paying attention to the training of the Mindfulness of Breathing and its foundation. We have been discussing its foundation from different angles. We must initially neutralise the obstacles that arise when we start meditation by understanding them, such as- obstacles to being able to find time; being able to sit in one posture for a long period; being totally free of thinking about the work we did before or will do afterwards, while we are meditating; and the five Hindrances.

These are the natural obstacles to meditation. Hindrances are barriers we create and no-one else obstructs us. We have that opinion but Buddhism does not talk about an external enemy like that. All the other religions have opponents like Satan and devils who come and obstruct people. Buddhism doesn't talk about such enemies. When compared with other religions, the most unique feature in Buddhism is that there is no external enemy. We do not have a Satan or Devil. *Māra* is not an external force. We discussed this the other day - and even if there is a *Māra* in the external world, he has never been treated as an enemy.

*Māra* is within us. The tendency to obstruct ourselves and the mental qualities that obstruct our own progress and destroy us are categorised as *Māra*. Even the 10 forces of *Māra* are similarly described. They are not a group of people who are armed with guns, bombs and knives, but hunger,

thirst, sleepiness, sensual desires, considering ourselves to be someone great and others to be inferior, etc. Then we discussed that this ‘*Māra*’ is the combination of the internal sense door, the external sense object and the perception formed by these two.

The five obstacles that we face at the beginning of our practice are described as Hindrances. We meet them in our day-to-day life too but we are unable to identify them and when we are meditating they become clear. Therefore, whenever the mind gets disturbed, bothered, distressed and it wanders, if we investigate why the mind became disturbed, how it ran over there, what was the reason for this distress, then Dear Dhamma Friends, we will be able to identify some mental quality behind it.

Basically these mental qualities are called Hindrances. When they arise during meditation, we must identify them and let go of them. Hindrances come like vehicles. When we are walking along a road to go somewhere, vehicles come in the opposite direction. They may be buses, or cars driven by people we know who stop and call us to get in. We then forget where we were going. We forget the direction we were supposed to go in, forget everything and get into a vehicle that is going in the other direction. Only after travelling for a long time do we ask, “Where are we going? We didn’t plan to go this way. We sat down to be mindful of the breath; now what are we thinking?” As soon as we realise that we are travelling on the wrong bus, the first thing to do is to get off the bus and go in the correct direction. Then another bus comes. After one breath it shouts, asking us to get in, saying you can go here and there. Then we get into that bus too. We must identify the buses that are going

in the wrong directions. We must identify this before getting into them or at least as soon as we get in. Don't be a traveller on so many wrong buses; with realisation, get off.

Dear Dhamma Friends, it is important to realise that you are on the wrong bus. The wrong bus doesn't mean that there is something wrong with the bus - no, it is going in the wrong direction. Someone who is mindful of the breath has a direction to go in and whatever thought comes along that is going in any other direction, s/he recognizes that this is an unnecessary thought for this moment. The thoughts are not wrong but they are useless for the moment. You must realise that the useless ones as useless. The Hindrances mislead us by making useless thoughts seem useful. By attributing an unnecessary value to these useless thoughts, the Hindrances conquer our attention.

We then forget what we started on and get bored, become dull, lose enthusiasm and then we can't meditate. However much we continue to sit we are just thinking. Why is that? The Hindrances come, hidden behind the thoughts that come one after the other. We become lazy, doubtful, desire comes, and these things do not come openly but come hidden and covered. They never come announcing that the desire for sensual experiences is coming, carrying boards or advertisements or in an official uniform. They come disguised, covered by the sound that we heard. If it is beautiful it is *Kāmacchanda* or if it is a nuisance then it is Aversion. We remember something. There is no problem in remembering, but the desire comes concealed or we remember an enjoyment we have had. Then you build up willingness and a desire to re-experience that happiness and pleasure. Then, covered by the memory, desire for sensual

pleasure comes. Aversion can arise hidden by a sound you hear. These Hindrances always come with one of the senses. They do not come on their own. A Hindrance can arise only through a sensual experience.

Therefore, you must be aware of every sensual experience and know that you have heard a sound or that a thought came. If you are conscious, just because a vehicle or a bus arrives, do you have to get into it? You must investigate before getting into it whether this thought is aligned with your path or not. Then you can avoid getting into wrong buses and the buses will go. Buses will continue on their way whether we get in or not. Dear Dhamma Friends, we must have an established mindfulness for this. This cannot be achieved easily; just sitting will not do. This requires the right form of mindfulness.

## **Establish mindfulness**

Initially you are asked to follow the instructions:- “*Idhānanda bhikkhu araňagato vā, rukkhamūlagato vā, suňāgāragato vā niśidati pallańkam ābhujitvā ujuṁ kāyam pańidhāya*” - go to an isolated place; sit in a relaxed, cross-legged posture with the upper part of your body upright. All these instructions are very important. We have discussed up to this point.

What should we do next? “*Parimukham satiṁ upaṭṭhapetvā*”. We are discussing this for the first time. We must establish very good mindfulness before starting to apply this instruction. The problem most of us are faced with is, as soon as we sit down we try to observe the breath. This is difficult and tiring. You cannot

develop mindfulness like that. There is a procedure for this. First you must establish your mindfulness correctly.

Mindfulness is the most important factor in meditation. “*Parimukham*” means “prime factor.” Mindfulness is the primary factor. First place should be given to mindfulness. We are not trying to concentrate our mind on the breath. Dear Dhamma Friends, most meditators get confused at this point. The most common answer to what *Ānāpāna Sati* is, is “to concentrate the mind on the breath.” This is wrong. It says, “*parimukham sati*.” We should establish good mindfulness, nothing to do with concentration. Not to control the mind, not to stop it from wandering, we are just being aware of what is happening.

The word “*parimukham*” is explained in so many different ways. One way is to say, first place is given to mindfulness and not to anything else - not to concentration, not to the tip of the nose or the abdomen, but to mindfulness. For *Ānāpāna Sati* the most important factor is mindfulness and not the place the breath touches, enters, or causes rising and falling - none of these. Further, “*parimukham*” can be taken to mean ‘in front’. That is to hold your mindfulness in front, physically hold the mindfulness in front of you. Dear Dhamma Friends, if we were to sit in front of a person and observe them for some time we would notice that the person is breathing. If we are not observant enough we would not see that. If we are very observant and watch from in front of someone we can distinguish when that person is inhaling and exhaling.

“*Parimukham sati* upat̄hapetvā.” One interpretation is that we should give priority to mindfulness and the other interpretation is to hold mindfulness in front

of you. You all are sitting in front of me, looking at me. Similarly, as a meditator you should sit properly and hold the mindfulness in front of you and not in the internal body or in any of the external senses - as if you are holding a flash light towards you. You can then see the totality of yourself, holding mindfulness in front of you and watching yourself, thereby being aware of the entire body. There is no particular point you should be limited to, Dear Dhamma Friends - do not try to search for isolated points. You create an unnecessary problem by searching for and focusing on a single point, as the points are not important; the entire body inhales and exhales. We should have our mindfulness on this total inhalation and exhalation, not on a particular point and not on only a small part of the body.

Therefore, establishing mindfulness in front of you, "*Parimukham satim upatthapetvā*", and giving priority to mindfulness is the most important aspect. That is the physical side of it and next we will discuss the psychological side. Mindfulness is not about running after some kind of sense impact after a lapse of an hour or so. Mindfulness should be then and there all the time with every sensual impact. Mindfulness should be there before getting on to the wrong bus. You can then avoid getting on to the wrong path. Therefore, mindfulness has a very important role to play in this meditation. You should give it that role. Giving *priority to other things* in *Ānāpāna Sati Bhāvanā* is a crime. Trying to concentrate the mind is not important at all, the mind will get concentrated but the most important thing is mindfulness.

## What is happening in this moment?

Dear Dhamma Friends, mindfulness can be explained in several ways. One way is: you do not live either in the past or the future. You see, hear and feel what is happening in the present moment; you are aware in this present moment. The best way to gauge whether a person was aware is to check whether he knows what is happening at that moment. If you are not aware you will be in the long-lost past. On the other hand, you may be dreaming of or building castles in the air about the future which hasn't yet come. You may be enjoying or lamenting over the past or the future and then again you are not in the present and you don't have awareness. We miss the present moment in both these situations. The present is being wasted moment to moment, Dear Dhamma Friends, if you are not aware. This is not mindfulness.

We may be emotionally involved with the hindrances and may be enjoying or lamenting about what we are remembering. If we are emotional and bogged down in defilements, there is no awareness at that moment. When you are aware you may also get defilements but you know that it is happening in the present moment. This is the second point.

The third point is, if we are not here and do not know what is happening that means we are not in this moment spatially. We are at a different place. We sat down here to give importance to mindfulness. We sat down to be aware and to establish mindfulness and not with any other objective than precisely to be in the present moment with mindfulness and to observe the breath. We must develop that overall attitude, forget the rest, keep other intentions

aside and do not bring all of them into the meditation and become a prisoner. Do not bring all the expectations to your seat and spoil the meditation, do not corrupt the meditation and do not cover the meditation as otherwise meditation practice becomes difficult to continue.

### **Nothing to ponder about**

*"So sato va assasati, sato passasati".* Inhale consciously and exhale consciously. Having brought your mindfulness to the front, pay attention and observe that you are inhaling and exhaling. It is something that you feel; an experience; it is a feeling, not a thought. That is the next important thing in this Ānāpāna Sati meditation, there is no thinking. Thinking of what? Whether you think or not the body breathes, no need to think, without having a complicated thought this action is always happening. Only when we try to think it becomes irregular and abnormal. Breathing becomes tiresome when we try to think.

The other important point is this. If somebody tries to think about the breath as soon as s/he sits down, the breath which was not a problem becomes a problem. Then the breath cannot enter and exit naturally, we cannot inhale as required for the body and cannot exhale when necessary. The mind has come and obstructed it. This is an important factor: when you start to think about something it starts changing. This is the norm. As soon as you start thinking the object starts changing. The mind cannot keep aside and let it happen the way it needs to happen. We always think that a particular thing should happen *this* way and not *that* way, either with attachment or with aversion. We either try to enforce what we agree with desire, or destroy or stop what

we don't like with aversion. See, this is what happens with thinking. There is no thinking in *Ānāpāna Sati*, there is no need to think of anything; and then this mind turns into something superb.

Here, Dear Dhamma Friends, 'superb' means, the mind attains a status which it had not had before; a thing happens which has never happened before. Previously the mind had been thinking, thinking and thinking; thinking well; thinking badly; thinking happily; thinking unhappily; thinking with desire; thinking with anger; thinking sadly; thinking with fear; thinking, thinking and thinking throughout the life and life after life, you and I have been only thinking. For the first time in this long journey (*Samsāra*), we are giving a break to that thinking mind. Thinking of what? We tell our mind to have a rest for a moment and let the breath be active; let the in-breath and the out-breath go in and out freely.

Give a break to the thinking process. Though you believe that nothing will happen if you do not think, the breath has been coming in and going out from birth, and not because you were thinking about it. Even in the future until you die the breath will come and go whether you think or not. Therefore, dear mind please vacate for a moment; for a moment give way to the breath to come and go. Do not place road blocks in the way. Stay at the side of the road and let the procession of inhalation and exhalation come and go. The meditator is not an organiser or a manager but just an observer - a person who pays attention from the side. The entire road is open; s/he doesn't block the road.

## **Bombarded by “Ego”**

What has happened now, Dear Dhamma Friends, is that your whole mind has become full of “I”. That is how the entire mind is, or else the entire life is full of “I” or the ego. All the sounds that we hear get bombarded by ego when they enter our mind and they cannot come in independently. Both ears are totally filled with ego. Not only the ear, but the eye, the body, the nose, the tongue and the memory are all filled with ego. The ego has ballooned him-/her-self up and fills all of them. A sound comes and strikes against the inflated ego. I am hearing, is it a pleasant sound to me or not? When anything strikes against any of the senses we feel either happy or sad; basically we feel these two sensations. Even though there are other sensations, ultimately we feel these two, either we feel happy or sad.

If you are standing near a lake at noon, you will feel the hot sun and you will be sweating and then all of a sudden a nice breeze comes along and strikes against your body. You will then feel coolness and the sweat will vanish, the body will get cool but what do you feel ultimately? You are happy with all these sensations. In this way you are always happy or unhappy with any sensation that you feel. Let us take another example: our ears are filled with the ego. Dear Dhamma Friends we say that our ears are filled with sound. No, the ears are filled with “I”, ego. Like this, the “ego” checks everything that strikes our body to see what sort of sensation it gives. In that total communication path; the views, ways and veins are all filled with ego. Therefore nothing can avoid ego. “Ego” pleads for joy from every sensation.

Some feelings are comfortable and then we get attached to the sound from which we had that comfortable feeling. Who gets attached to it? It is the person who had the comfortable feeling. This is what is described in “*Paṭiccasamuppāda*” (Dependent Origination). “*Phassa paccayā Vedanā*”, when a contact strikes, a feeling is generated. If that feeling is good then “*Vedanā paccayā Taṇhā*”, desire arises. Sometimes it is very painful. Consider when the smoke emitted from vehicles beats our nose, we don’t like it, the “I” who is inside the nose doesn’t like it, that disliking is because it is unpleasant to “I”, then “I” becomes angry, then fights with the sensation which created the unpleasantness. Who does all this? The “I”, who is inside the nose does all this. If “I” was not there it would not be a misery and there would be no reason to get angry. You become angry because “ego” is there.

Therefore Dear Dhamma Friends, the ego or the “I” is always full and overflowing everywhere. The eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue, the body and the mind all are filled with ego; not with forms, not with sounds, not with smells, not with tastes, not with touch and not with thoughts. The “ego” that is used to being like this now wonders “what is happening to me?” when you start to be aware. What am “I” to do now? The “I” who was used to barging in on everything, trying to cling to some things and kicking out other things wonders, “what is my duty, my task in meditation?”

The ego cannot do anything. It cannot meditate so it wants to do something. It starts to think, “Should “I” inhale or exhale?” “Should “I” do it fast or slowly?” This is what happens in the beginning Dear Dhamma Friends. The

ego which was in the ear, eye and everywhere now tries to come forward and dominate in the meditation too; tries to meditate with ego. Dear Dhamma Friends, this must be identified. Let the thinking mind have a rest and send it on retirement at least for a moment.

By sending the thinking mind on retirement - “*So sato va assasati, sato passasati*” - you inhale with mindfulness and exhale with mindfulness. Know that you are inhaling, know that you are exhaling. That is all; there is no thinking, no action, just to know, just an observation, just to be vigilant about the breath.

After stabilising the body properly and bringing the mindfulness to the front, accepting that the most important factor is mindfulness, when you are being aware you begin to feel that you are inhaling and exhaling. This is a feeling, not an action. Therefore understand the word “meditation”, it is not an action, it is only a feeling. The ego that was doing everything with desire and aversion, now thinks that it has to meditate too, that “I” have to do this too.

No, there is nothing to “do” in meditation. By saying we have to “do meditation” we create a problem. The word “meditation” is complete; it does not need any prefixes or suffixes. It means knowing, cultivation, practice, development; that is all. It is a feeling. We are trying to know the feeling, cultivate that attitude. Not to do anything but just to know. What should you know? There are a lot of things to know but out of all of them there are two important things we have selected, two actions: the inhalation and exhalation.

## Being aware of the body

The action of inhalation and the action of exhalation usually happen without our knowledge; without our observation. Though it happens without our knowledge, when we are aware of our body, Dear Dhamma Friends, we begin to feel that the body inhales and exhales. Therefore when you are silent and calm just be watchful of your body, be aware for about two, five, ten, fifteen or even twenty minutes. Then when our mindfulness is established in front we begin to see, the body is inhaling and exhaling throughout all the physical activities.

When you are aligned with the body, being free of past and future thoughts and in the present moment, being here in this moment, you will instantly begin to feel that the body is inhaling and exhaling. Do not be hasty thinking now I felt the breath, now it is ok, now I can concentrate my mind. Just be observant of the body, not with your eyes but with mindfulness. Sometimes you will feel the breath, again it will disappear and again it might be felt. Whether you feel it or not, just be observant of the body and the posture.

Do not try to get attached to the breath or get locked in the breath. Without having the narrow attitude that you should continue to feel only the breath, feel the body, not the breath. Be mindful of the body as if you are standing at a door, then you can see who is entering and exiting. You could be standing at a door with your eyes closed and then you wouldn't know who is passing you and in which direction. It is the same for a person who is in a complicated thought.

Dear Dhamma Friends, there are so many reasons for not feeling the breath or not feeling the inhalation

and exhalation, such as: inadequate mindfulness, not being attentive in the correct way and mindfulness being distracted. When all these conditions are cleared you will feel the breath. Again, when one of the above obstructions occurs, the breath will not be felt.

Without judging whether you feel the breath or not, as wrong, just be aware, then whenever the barriers clear up you will feel the breath. Gradually the duration of your awareness of the breath will increase - know this. Just know whether you are inhaling or exhaling at this present moment.

### **Breathing is an action**

When you continue to investigate the process of inhaling and exhaling, you gradually experience the breath. Inhalation is not what we assume, it is an action. There is nothing called in-breath or out-breath, they are only actions. We use a noun for this action. It is just an action, only an entering and exiting, with the meditation we start understanding that there is no 'thing' that is entering or exiting.

Dear Dhamma Friends, understanding this is very important. This is a very important milestone that steers somebody onto the path of spiritual knowledge. The entire life we have been fighting with nouns, unable to describe the nouns and unable to understand nouns and we find ourselves in a big jumble. If you convert any noun which is difficult to understand into a verb, it will be very easy to understand; very simple.

Let us take an example: who is a “good person”? It is very difficult to describe but there are good deeds. Who is a “bad person”? This again is difficult to describe. Why? It is difficult to describe a person because a person is multi-faceted. However, there are actions categorised as good or bad. They can be performed by someone and then you can identify them as bad actions or good actions. Let us take the noun ‘taste’. We say something has a sweet taste, but it is not a thing. Dear Dhamma Friends, it is a feeling, an action. If we did not touch the food with our tongue we could not feel whether it has a sweet taste or not. This sweetness depends on the tongue and some other things. Feeling the taste is an action. Even smell is like that. You cannot show smell. When it touches the nose we feel the smell. There is nothing called sound. There is only an action called hearing. There is no form without seeing.

There is nothing called thoughts. It is just thinking. We say that a thought came; a thought about yesterday came; what came? There is no ‘thing’ that came; we cannot touch it, cannot prove it, we have been thinking about an event which took place yesterday or a person who we met yesterday - that is all. **There is only thinking, no thoughts. Likewise, there is only seeing, not a form; only hearing, not a sound; only a feeling, nothing touched; only tasting, not a taste; only smelling, not a smell. There is just a feeling. There is nothing called in-breath and out-breath. There is an entering and exiting.** This is very important in meditation, as well as to understand life.

Dear Dhamma Friends, starting with this simple breath we can go very deep. In the end we see that even the noun “I” also doesn’t exist. Who is “I”? Considering it

to be a vast philosophical problem they argue whether “I” exist or not; whether you say it exists or not both parties have got it confused. This question arises, assuming that there *is* something called “I,” whether that “I” is there in the present or not. Buddhism doesn’t say whether there is an “I” or not, because even the question is wrong. There is nothing tangible called “I,” it is just a process. “I” or ego is a process. If you take it as a thing you get misled; you will never be able to sort it out.

That is why so many philosophical books are written on this subject as people have been misled - assuming that certain processes are things and then trying to analyse and investigate whether such things exist. By being simple, Dear Dhamma Friends, we can examine a process as a process - like breathing. Breath comes in and goes out. This process becomes more evident and clearer and finer with meditation.

To give an example, if you watch a flower for a long time you might see it blooming or wilting. But you have to watch and be attentive for a long time. Usually we see a bud, then a flower in full bloom and then a wilting one with petals withered. You see the nouns: the bud; the flower in bloom; the wilted flower. We do not see the process of blooming and then wilting. To understand that there is only a process you have to be attentive for a long time.

Dear Dhamma Friends, a similar kind of attention should be established on the body and breath. Only then will mindfulness be developed; become subtle. The more the awareness becomes subtle, the more you will be able to feel the process of breathing and not the breath. Only

then will you understand properly the process of inhalation and exhalation. It is not a thing but a happening, an event being observed.

In this investigation you may observe differences but you are not going in search of them and will naturally start observing the differences. Two in-breaths are not the same. Two out-breaths are not the same. We are not labelling them to state whether they are good or bad. But just be watchful and observe how the breathing in is and how the breathing out is.

Being aware of the entire going in of the breath and going out of the breath is the observation required here. "*So sato va assasati sato passasati*". Inhalation happens consciously, exhalation happens consciously. Only then will you start to realise the characteristics of the inhalation and exhalation. All those characteristics are very important. Why? They describe the person in that moment; the person in that moment is revealed. Then the "I" of that moment can be recognised by the breath of that moment. As a western doctor assesses physical stability or sickness by using a stethoscope, an Ayurvedic doctor examines a patient by feeling the pulse; by observing the inhalation and exhalation you can identify yourself.

Not the person who was there yesterday or the person who will be breathing later but the person who is breathing at this moment can be identified completely by the breath. Therefore, the breath displays a cross-section of the person and it is very important to examine every characteristic.

Dear Dhamma Friends, make an effort to meditate in this manner at least once a day. Start simply, let the natural breath flow, just be aware. As we discussed, what has to happen will happen, without having narrow expectations and being fixed as to how the breath should come in and go out and how it should or should not be.

Let us pay attention to our body with awareness for a moment.

## Meditation

*Again and again be aware of the inhalation and exhalation. This is the meditation practice. Happily bring back the awareness to the breath, to the process of inhaling and exhaling.....*

*Be attentive with this practice, at least for a few minutes every day. Be composed, be alive.....*

*This attention, composure and aliveness, Dear Dhamma Friends, makes us lively, makes us enthusiastic and makes us awaken to life.*

*With that determination let us conclude today's meditation.*

*May the Triple Gem bless all of you!*

## DEVELOPING MINDFULNESS

Dear Dhamma Friends, if someone is observing the breath it means s/he is being aware of him-/herself. Therefore, this *Ānāpāna Sati Samādhi Bhāvanā* is a meditation in which one pays attention to oneself, is aware of oneself, observes oneself and recognizes oneself. If that is the case, when you are practicing and developing this meditation it facilitates you to see the beauty within and to understand yourself in a way you have not understood yourself before; and to get to know some of your qualities which you were unaware of before.

*Ānāpāna Sati Samādhi Bhāvanā* is not a mere meditation method. It is not a meditation method which should be developed mechanically. There is more depth to *Ānāpāna Sati Samādhi*. There are some meditation methods which someone could just go on practicing without realising who is meditating, who is practicing, and what is happening to him/her. Most of the popular meditation methods today do not bother to find out who is meditating and what is happening to the meditator; only the method is important, they are being asked just to develop a method. *Ānāpāna Sati Bhāvanā* is not like that. Who is practising, who is meditating, what is happening to the Yogi? With every in-breath and with every out-breath you see yourself. You get a chance to recognise yourself. Therefore, breath is not merely air. The breath, in-breath and out-breath which comes in and goes out, is not a mere physical phenomenon, it includes information about you and it includes your bio-data,

information about the person in the present moment. The breath gives an inner-view and is a cross-section of you. We have already discussed this, and what is important is to be aware of the breath. In this *Ānāpāna Sati* meditation, from the beginning to the end it gives importance to awareness of the breath. “*Parimukham satim upaṭṭhapetvā*”. You should start by having awareness prominently established in front of you.

## Tiredness in meditation

There are some common complaints by people who practice and those who say they are practising *Ānāpāna Sati* Meditation. One such complaint is that they feel very tired. They feel tired while meditating on the breath but not with other meditation methods. There could be a number of reasons for this tiredness. One reason is, somebody may start breathing intentionally when meditating. When you ask what you do in meditating on the breath the most common answer is: “breathing in and breathing out.” Our body knows to breathe according to the required quantity and speed to maintain the body. Not only the body is doing this but both the body and the mind together do this. If somebody tries to breathe the way s/he wants, then it is not as per requirement but according to desire.

This is OK once, twice or thrice, but if it is continued it becomes physical exertion. The lungs get tired. This is one reason. Therefore, when you are practicing mindfulness on the in-/out-breath, if you become tired, see whether it is the natural breath that comes in and goes out. If you feel and think that your breath is not natural, let go of the effort to breathe. Even if we do not try, the breath has

been coming in and going out from the day we were born. So, why should we barge in and try to take over? Stop this effortful breathing, but if find you are still breathing in and out intentionally, use this tactic: Bring your attention back to the posture. Come back to “*Ujuṁ kāyam pañidhāya*,” the correct posture, “*pallaṅkam ābhujitvā*”, seated in a cross-legged posture with a straight back. Now observe how the posture is, see whether it is bent or crooked and be alert about the posture. When the awareness of the breath is not there and the one who was trying to control is not there, the breath will become natural again. If you can now feel that it is the natural breath then very slowly try to ascertain whether it is in-breath or out-breath.

The second reason for tiredness is more of a psychological one than a physical one. Without being aware of the breath some try to concentrate the mind. We clarified this at beginning also that *Ānāpāna Sati* Meditation is not trying to concentrate the mind on breathing but observing the in-breath and the out-breath, knowing, feeling - “*pajānāti*” means you just know. There is no concentration coming in here. Like the myth that *Ānāpāna Sati Bhāvanā* means to breathe in and breathe out, the next myth is that *Ānāpāna Sati Bhāvanā* is to concentrate the mind on the breath. Whoever is bound by this explanation may be trying to concentrate the mind totally on the breath without allowing any thought to come. Without letting any thought come, without letting the mind think, you might be focusing your mind forcibly on your nose. See if you try to focus your mind on anything, your eyes also get focussed on that. If you hear a sound and you pay your attention to that sound, your eyes will get focused on that side. This

happens whether your eyes are open or closed. So, when you focus your mind on the tip of the nose, your eyes also get focused on that point. Just try this, see whether you can keep your eyes focused elsewhere when the mind is focused on the tip of the nose. You just can't. Looking at the tip of the nose is not easy. It is the most difficult point for the eyes to focus on. Therefore, if you try to concentrate on the tip of the nose, your eyes will start hurting, even the forehead and the head will also start hurting. Some people, after practicing *Ānāpāna Sati Bhāvanā*, complain that they develop a headache, which they don't feel with *Mettā Bhāvanā* (friendliness meditation). So this is the reason for headaches when practicing *Ānāpāna Sati Bhāvanā*. This is because of the unnecessary focusing and controlling of eyes and mind. By unnecessarily controlling the mind, not letting thoughts come and go freely, your head starts hurting inside. You might even feel as if your head is going to burst if this continues.

What is it for? Is this the way to practice *Ānāpāna Sati Bhāvanā*? In a leisurely way, just know that the breath is coming in and going out. "*So sato va assasati*" - when breath comes in we know that the breath is coming in and "*So sato passasati*" when breath goes out we know that the breath is going out. As we also mentioned earlier, thoughts come, we hear sounds - we are not going to stop them and we cannot stop them. Try to see whether any *Nīvaranās* (Inner barriers) come with these thoughts - such as desires, aversions and laziness. If they are coming, recognise them; do not try to stop thoughts. When a thought comes you might get a desire to continue thinking about that. Recognise that desire and let go of that desire, not the thought. There

is nothing wrong with the memory. There is no problem in remembering anything without a desire to continue thinking; you will just forget it then and there. However, if a desire develops for that thought then you will be carried away with that thought. In this way you need to be friendly with your own thoughts. Otherwise it creates tiredness in the body and the mind.

Dear Dhamma Friends, we start the meditation like this: Find an isolated place, in silence. We sit either on the ground with crossed legs or even on a low chair, comfortably, very relaxed, with a straight back, head and shoulders. It is OK to keep the eyes open but it will be very much easier if they are half closed. Then we develop mindfulness. We are aware that we are seated. We are aware of the environment, of the peaceful environment. The awareness thus developed is now brought to the fore-front of the breath. This does not mean to the front of the nose. No. It is at the front, so that we are capable of observing the breath fully, and then we observe what happens at this moment. The breath comes in, the breath goes out. When we are observing like this, we realise that every breath is not the same. There is a difference between every breath. There could be a specific duty allocated to each breath. Each breath has unique qualities and you will start seeing them. You are not searching for differences but you see them and you try to recognise them separately.

This might take some time; it may not happen during the first minute, but maybe even after some days. When you continue to meditate you will start to observe the differences: the present in-breath is faster than the previous one, now the in-breath is long, the out-breath

is also long and the in-breath and the out-breath are very heavy. Basically you will start observing the three main qualities of the breath.

The first quality is the duration of the breath: how long it takes for every inhalation and exhalation, from the moment it starts to the end.

The second quality is the speed at which the breath comes in and goes out.

The third quality is the weight of the breath.

To observe these qualities it is not enough to know only the entering and exiting. That is only the start.

## **Phases of breath**

When you progress in your meditation you come to this position. You start observing the entire in-breath and you will feel the three phases of the in-breath: when it starts to come in, when it is continuing to enter and then when the entering finishes. Similarly with the out-breath: now it is starting to move outwards, it is continuing to exit and then the exiting is finished. Therefore there are six phases of the breath.

At first you might feel this as only two phases, just entering and exiting. Even this is not easy and you have to make a considerable effort even to recognise these two phases. Initially, no sooner we feel the breath entering, our mind will start wandering and then that breath has already gone out. Little by little, with great effort, we will be able to identify the following two situations: the breath starting

to enter and finishing entering; starting to exit and finishing exiting. You may observe that the end of the entering is the start of the exiting; and the end of the exiting is the start of the entering.

## **Mindfulness becomes sharp**

In the second step you will begin to see these four stages separately. Inhalation starts and ends. Exhalation starts and ends. The end of inhalation and the start of exhalation are tied together. Similarly, end of exhalation and start of inhalation are tied together. We observe this condition mindfully. When you develop your mindfulness, your awareness becomes subtle. That is the nature of awareness. The more you use your awareness, the sharper it becomes. The nature of the tool called awareness is just like that. You do not find this quality in any other tool. Take a knife - when you keep on cutting with it, it becomes blunt; an areca nut cutter, a saw, a chisel, a razor, all of them will become blunt when you go on cutting with them. In the physical world you find all the tools used for cutting get blunt with usage but this awareness tool, the more you use it, the more you meditate, the sharper it becomes. Even the most delicate things can be perceived with sharp awareness. Dear Dhamma Friends, when awareness is properly sharpened it can ascertain even the slightest characteristic of a process. Think of a spanner - a gross, large spanner cannot hold small objects. The spanner has to be delicate to hold delicate objects and awareness is also like that.

Initially, by the time we think about the in-breath, it is already over; by the time we realise that it is over, the out-breath has already started; and by the time we think

about the out-breath starting, it is already over. We have to be very patient, very patient to observe this process. For this meditation, patience is vital. If you try to be hasty, you fall back to the beginning again. The breath becomes hurried, again the breath becomes fast and again you are back in grade one. Therefore you must maintain excellent patience for this meditation. You should not be thinking of the results, just be in the present moment. Dear Dhamma Friends, when we are seated with the upper part of body straight in a very calm place and with lot of patience, having brought the mindfulness to the front, we see the inhalation and exhalation.

### **The interval between inhalation and exhalation**

When we let go of the attachment and aversion which willingly give importance to the thoughts that pop up, by understanding them, mindfulness gradually becomes very subtle and then we will be able to see the beginning and the end of the inhalation and the beginning and the end of the exhalation. Initially we perceive that the end of the inhalation is the same as the beginning of the exhalation, but as you go on, when the awareness becomes further refined, a minute space - where the tip of a needle could be inserted - is formed between these two events. Only a very refined mindfulness can see this. This interval might have always been there but the mindfulness was not sharp enough to perceive it.

The breath does not start to come in as soon as the breath finishes going out. There is a small gap; a small interval is experienced. This is the most important interval. This is the breaking-point. Dear Dhamma Friends, during the

interval experienced like this in meditation every cell in the body relaxes. Why? There is no inhalation or exhalation; not only the lungs - every cell in the body, relaxes after every inhalation and exhalation.

The mind relaxes too. Why? There is no emotional thinking at that moment. There is no other exercise that relaxes the body as deeply as mindfulness on the in and out breath. With every inhalation and exhalation the body gets lighter. When you proceed further you begin to observe another two happenings - the six we discussed earlier plus the two intervals. You should not be probing into these happenings, do not try to go in search of these six or eight happenings, do not get entangled in them, Dear Dhamma Friends, if you do, you will be unable to go on with the meditation. But you should just be familiar with these milestones to know that you are on the correct path.

### **Three properties of the breath**

The breath started to come in, then was continuing to come in and now the coming in is finished; the interval occurs; then the breath is starting to go out; continuing to go out; now the going out is finished and again the interval occurs. You will experience this interval too. When you get to this point you will be able to observe easily the three qualities of the breath we discussed earlier - the time, speed and weight. To measure time you need two events. The time taken on a track race is calculated as the difference between the start time and the end time. Similarly, in meditation to ascertain the time you at least should be able to observe the four happenings during breathing, that is: the breath is entering, entering has finished, the breath is exiting, exiting

has finished. Then you will be sensitive to the concept of time. This is not the time of the clock but you will be sensitive to your own experience. Then the next quality is speed and for that you also require a start and an end point; speed is the time taken to go from this point to that point. Therefore, with the experience of the four occurrences you will be able to experience the speed too. From this point to that point means the space, so you will be sensitive to the space in between the breaths. This should not be a concept but your own experience. With every inhalation there is the time factor and the space factor; similarly with every exhalation there is the time factor and the space factor.

The third quality is the mass, weight or heaviness. What is the density of the breath that we take in? What is the density of the breath we let out? We also discussed the other day that when we are seated close to a strong person we can see this, that person is breathing; we can see him/her inhaling and exhaling. This is easy if the breath is heavy. We call it a sigh. Why do we say that? When the breath is heavy we say that person is sighing. Their breath is so heavy it could even hit a neighbouring person. The breath has a weight anyway. You can also experience the mass of the breath by placing your finger at the tip of the nose; you can feel the heaviness of the breath. So we can observe these three qualities:

1. The time taken for the breath to come in and go out;
2. The speed at which the breath comes in and goes out;
3. The quantity, density or mass of the breath.

These three qualities will become clearly apparent as you proceed with the meditation. When you experience these qualities you must clearly distinguish between them. They are summarised as follows: “*Dīgham vā assasanto dīgham assasāmīti pajānāti*”-when the in-breath is long you know that the in-breath is long; “*Dīgham vā passasanto dīgham passasāmīti pajānāti*”-when the out-breath is long you know that the out-breath is long. Initially you may feel the breath is rough, which is normal. If we sit for meditation after walking, the additional breath required for the effort of walking will be felt initially. Furthermore, we are always in a rush and then we feel the breath is very fast as the rushed mind requires a fast breath. Therefore, as soon as you sit you will usually observe a heavy breath; it depends. Initially you may not feel the breath; it will take some time to establish mindfulness; then after some time you will observe that the breath is long and you can make a note of it. You then become sensitive to time; you observe that the in-breath is long and the out-breath is long. When you start to realise the time duration other qualities too become evident.

Do not exhaust yourself by trying to ascertain whether the breath is fast, heavy or long but just be mindful. When you are aware, these qualities will be felt. You should gradually identify one after the other. First just be mindful and then one of these qualities will be felt and then just know that. Initially you are only being mindful with the awareness well-established in front, “*parimukham satim*”. With well-established awareness just go on watching, observing, then little by little you will start to feel.

Then if the breath is long you know it is long and if the breath is short you know it is short. Here the word “if”

is very important. This doesn't mean only long or short - only if they are like that you know that and if they are not you know that too. "*Rassam vā assasanto rassam assasāmī ti pajānāti*". If the in-breath is short you know that the in-breath is short and if the out-breath is short you know that the out-breath is short.

The in-breath and the out-breath which were initially long gradually become shorter and shorter; gradually become simpler, become more relaxed and now you do not require that much long and heavy breathing, because you are seated and calm, you are not walking, you are not running, you are not exercising, you are not carrying anything heavy, there is not even any complicated thinking, then why should you need a lot of breath? So the breath becomes shorter. Then the rush that was there also subsides, you do not have disturbing thoughts, the tangle you were in gets untangled, the mind doesn't need much solid food, you are also mentally calm and then the breath gets shorter. Breath is a food for both mind and body.

Then the breath becomes shorter. As soon as this happens the other two qualities also become reduced. The time taken to breathe becomes less. The breath which entered and exited very fast now becomes very slow. There is no haste. The haste in a person is shown by the breath, Dear Dhamma Friends. If the body is in haste, the breath becomes hasty. If the mind is in haste then again the breath becomes hasty. Mental and bodily haste can be seen through the breath. With that realisation both the body and the mind get tranquillised, the body becomes calm and the mind becomes calm. The body becomes clear and the mind also becomes clear. When the body and the mind become clear

the breath also becomes clear. So, now the breath is very calm and it comes and goes very slowly.

The third aspect is, the weight of the breath reduces and then you feel the breath very lightly. Initially you felt the breath as something very heavy but now it is very light. It is like the wind or a piece of cotton wool entering and going out. It is not actually a state; it is just a feeling. If the breath has changed know that the breath has changed. When the breath becomes light you know that it is light. Now the breath enters very slowly and exits very slowly; now the breath is very short, it is not long. “*Rassam vā assasanto*”. If the in-breath is short you know that it is short, if the out-breath is short you know that it is short.

In both, the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* and the *Ānāpāna Sati Sutta* there is a simile: the carpenter’s simile: “*dakkho bhamakāro vā bhamakārantevāsi vā*”- an experienced carpenter or a trainee of his would know that they are making a long turn when they are making a long turn and that they are making a short turn when they are making a short turn on a piece of wood. They know what is happening. A person who turns a piece of wood would know how they are turning it and how it is being cut.

Dear Dhamma Friends, these factors can be perceived step by step or as different situations in a continuous flow. Observation is not like climbing stairs. The composure of *Ānāpāna Sati* meditation progresses like a river; like water flowing as a wave with harmony and in a rhythm and not like climbing up and down a stairway - the way a stream flows on its own in one direction, calmly and silently. The meditation path of *Ānāpāna Sati* also happens with a rhythm.

On the onward path, these milestones will be passed. You should then know what sort of an experience you are passing through and only with that knowledge will you be able to pass that point, otherwise you will stop there. As explained above, you will need to observe the entire inhalation and the entire exhalation while experiencing the complete set of qualities of the inhalation and exhalation, such as: the beginning, the end and the gap between them; the speed; the time taken; and the mass, the weight, the density and the lightness – all of these aspects.

When you continue with your meditation like this, there is nothing more for you to know. There are only these two or three factors for you to understand. Inhalation starts, inhalation continues and then inhalation finishes, then there is a gap and after the gap exhalation starts, exhalation continues and exhalation finishes; then again there is a gap and after the gap inhalation starts again and this circular activity continues with these eight happenings occurring. The cyclical activity continues endlessly and you start observing the qualities of this cyclical activity.

### **The entire body breathes**

What are the qualities of this circular motion? Is it fast? Is it slow? Is it a big circle which goes on for a long time? Or is it going in a small cycle? Is it carrying a load? Or is it moving lightly? You experience all of these qualities. With this experience there is nothing else to know because you have observed the totality, Dear Dhamma Friends.

Then you are observing the variations due to the above qualities. Most people assume that the breath is

physical but with this meditation it becomes evident how much the mind is involved in the breath. Usually in the breathing process the inhalation is taught as being a physical activity. We assume that the breath enters from the nose and goes down to the lungs and again starts from the lungs and exits through the nose. This is general knowledge. In school we are taught beyond that too: the breath then goes from lungs through the arteries with the blood to all the living cells in the body. Every living cell needs oxygen. Every living cell produces carbon-dioxide which has to be released from the body. Thus every cell inhales and exhales.

Every cell usually breathes and that is why you are advised not to be attached to a particular place in *Ānāpāna Sati* meditation. If you cannot feel the breath at all then it is OK to observe a limited point initially but then let it go. Do not try to live, if you do, you will be rooted to that place and you will not be able to proceed further. Therefore it is very important, without clinging to a particular point, "*parimukham satim*", to establish mindfulness to the front and be aware of the entire body from the beginning. Remember the example we gave before. It is as if you are holding a flashlight in front of you and can cover the whole body with the beam of light. You have to establish your mindfulness like that. Now I am in front, with the mind focused on the body; a perception similar to that should be there. With a view like that, which has awareness from the top of the head to the toes of the feet, you should begin your meditation and then it is easier. Not that you can't begin without it but it is easier and you won't come across complications half-way through; then there won't be any conflicts.

When you stick to one place, maybe the tip of the nose, upper lip, throat or stomach, you come across problems later because you may or may not feel the breath at that place. If this happens, what do you do? It is a dilemma. When you are aware of the entire body then eventually the breath will be felt and you have to wait until then. Do not go in search of the breath. Be aware of the posture and if you so wish you may observe your body from top to bottom and if you find any muscle is rigid or tight you can loosen it, thereby making the posture lighter. When you are aware of the entire posture, which has become very light, the inhalation and exhalation become evident to your mindfulness. That is how you should begin.

If you start in this manner you can go a long way, without any unwarranted difficulty. Observing the entire breath passing through the eight situations, the inhalation and exhalation cycle will be experienced. In that journey you will come to see the three qualities of the breath: is it long? Is it short? Is it fast? Is it slow? Is it heavy? Is it light? If someone continues the meditation while observing these things, Dear Dhamma Friends, that person will know that the entire body breathes: not only the tip of the nose; not only the upper lip; not only the throat or the mouth and not even only the lungs. You will feel that every in-breath and out-breath travels from top of the head to the toes of the feet. Not that you feel the path but you will be able to feel the breathing process throughout your entire body wherever the awareness is focused.

If you are aware of the body you will know whether it is an inhalation or an exhalation that is active at this very moment. You need not have your awareness on the tip of

the nose to feel this. The in-breath goes to every cell of the body from top to bottom, every cell of the body inhales and exhales. Here you become sensitive to the entire body during the inhalation and exhalation. “*Sabbakāya paṭisamvēdī assasissāmīti sikkhati, Sabbakāya paṭisamvēdī passasissāmīti sikkhati*” – means being sensitive to the entire body; being properly sensitive; being responsive to every inhalation and exhalation. With every inhalation and exhalation one can feel the entire body.

Dear Dhamma Friends, this word “*sabbakāya*” is explained in some books as the entire breath - that is: the beginning, the middle and the end of the inhalation and the beginning, middle and end of the exhalation. These three points are described as: the start at the tip of the nose, the middle at the throat and the end at the lungs for the in-breath; and for the out-breath: the beginning at the lungs, middle at the throat and the end at the tip of the nose. There are some other books which describe it as follows: the beginning of the in-breath is the start and the ending of the in-breath is the end. These facts are felt anyway. We discussed this before and these are felt at the very beginning. Here it is said that you feel these facts with progress in meditation and then reach the point of “*sabbakāya paṭisamvēdi*”. This means you feel that the entire body is breathing, not only a particular point but the entire body. With this sensitivity you train yourself to know that you are inhaling and that you are exhaling.

What happens here is a training process. Now the word has changed, Dear Dhamma Friends - at first it said “*pajānāti*”. Do not get entangled in the words and do not cling too much to the words but there is a subtle difference

between these words. First it said, if the breath is long know that it is long and if the breath is short know that it is short. “.....*pajānāti*” “*Dīgham vā assasanto dīgham assasāmī ti pajānāti*,” “*rassam vā passasanto rassam passasāmī ti pajānāti*.” Now it does not say “*pajānāti*” it says “*sikkhati*”- training. What do you need to train in? Observing the breath associated with the entire body. You focus your mind towards it; do you feel the in-breath in the whole body? You have to train yourself to do that. You have to coach yourself for this. Without getting stuck at one point, focus your mind on the entire body. Do you feel the in-breath? Do you feel the out-breath? “*Sabbakāya paṭisamvēdī assasissāmī ti sikkhati*”. Here you are not training yourself to breathe; you do not need training for that, but you feel the breath with the entire body. You have to develop and sharpen that experience. “*Sikkhati*” means to develop that training.

Dear Dhamma Friends, we discussed numerous points here and do not exert yourself to remember all of them. If someone pays attention to this natural breathing process with mindfulness and awareness, s/he will observe that all these occurrences are touched upon and experienced one by one. Whatever you experience should be noted in your memory and after the meditation is over, it is a good idea to note it down on a piece of paper. Not to note down that you felt like you were floating and not what you saw, but when you were with the breath, what did you observe with regard to the breath?

## Meditation

*Let us observe our in-breath and out-breath for a moment. What sort of qualities can we experience in our own breath.....?*

*Know the entering of the breath and the exiting of the breath.....*

*If you can identify that the breath is long or the breath is short.....*

*Within the physical stillness and spiritual silence you will feel that the body is inhaling and exhaling. Observe the qualities: whether it is long or short; fast or slow; heavy or light; in this moment.....*

*Dear Dhamma Friends, this meditation takes us to a very subtle mindfulness. With a mindfulness which has become fine to some extent, and with a mind and a body which have become relaxed and silent, let us conclude the meditation effort for the day.*

*May the Triple Gem bless all of you!*

## TRANQUILIZING THE BODY

Dear Dhamma Friends, meditation tranquilises both the body and the mind and you can gain complete knowledge about your body and mind through meditation. There are three types or stages of meditation, described as: “*Kāya Bhāvanā*” – cultivating the body, “*Citta Bhāvanā*” – cultivating the mind, and “*Paññā Bhāvanā*” – cultivating insight.

Cultivating the body is about the posture. Even for a moment, the calmness in the posture, stillness of the body, tranquillity and lightness can be developed by cultivating awareness of the body. The body can be trained towards efficiency. A competent body which can progress towards enlightenment can be built. The untrained body which doesn't practice meditation will continue on the *Samsāric* path. Cultivating the body is a training process, developing the body and moving the body towards enlightenment. This develops good posture, right discipline, the performance of courtesy and good physical behaviour etc. Then cultivating the mind includes developing the mind and calming the mind. The final type or stage of meditation involves the development of insight / wisdom.

Dear Dhamma Friends, *Ānāpāna Sati* meditation can be used to develop all of these three stages. We discussed how important the posture is and how it becomes tranquil in *Ānāpāna Sati Samādhi*. The more you progress in *Ānāpāna Sati* meditation, the more your body becomes

tranquil. The next step in this meditation - “*passambhayam kāyasaṅkhāram assasissāmīti sikkhati, passambhayam kāyasaṅkhāram passasissāmīti sikkhati*” – is to train yourself to calm and tranquillise your body and all the activities of the body while inhaling and exhaling.

## Breath makes us alive

Dear Dhamma Friends, the breath is the life force. Breath is not enough to live but it is an essential factor. Even if you lose everything else, you will continue to exist; you will live for some days if you can breathe. But without the breath whatever you have is meaningless. It is true you need money to live but you need the breath to earn money. You also need the breath to spend the money you have thus earned. To live you need clothes; houses. True, but all of them are meaningless and worthless and become similar to discarded money, the day you lose the breath. Therefore everything only has a value as long as you are breathing. Your job, your position, to be a mother, to be a father, all these things will be given a value by the breath. Who gives a value to houses, vehicles, machinery, goods, positions, etc.? It is the breath. As soon as you stop breathing even this body has no value. Then nobody even wants to touch the body. To touch a breathless body you have to pay, you have to pay the funeral undertakers. Nobody would willingly agree to do this. The breath gives a very big value even to the body.

Therefore breath is the life force not only to the body but to the entire life; to the entire world. When you inhale impure or polluted air, you lose the life force. That is why we feel in difficulty when we inhale the air that comes from a factory, or vehicle fumes, or the air that comes from

a gas cooker, or even from a fireplace of wood. When you inhale such air you do not feel inspiration but feel tired instead; in distress; you can even die, if the air you inhale is poisonous. On the other hand, if you go to a beach or a hill top or a fresh green forest or near a clear and pure pond and take one or two deep breaths see how you become enthused; you feel the life force stimulating you. The entire body becomes lively and fresh. The entire body becomes alert just because of one breath. The entire body awakens with just one fresh inhalation coming into it. The entire body gets rejuvenated.

Therefore the breath is not merely air, it is the life force. Inhalation is the life force. The life force is required all over the body; for every organ. The body is a collection of a huge number of organs which perform different activities such as digesting food, absorbing nutrients, releasing waste, pumping blood all over the body, thinking and making decisions. There is a specific organ for every function starting from the brain. Every organ needs the life force. As soon as the energy stops coming in, none of the organs work.

From where do we get this energy? It is from inhalation; from the in-breath. We saw that breathing is not a simple action, Dear Dhamma Friends. It is an essential factor which binds together the whole biological system and the entire physical system with all its organs. Therefore to whatever extent we need the breath in our lives, to that extent it also has the capability of changing our lives. It can give life to a person or kill a person. Not only that, in between life and death it can change a person.

## Main junctions on the road map

Dear Dhamma Friends, this process of inhalation and exhalation is bound to us and mutually ‘holds hands’ with every cell of the body. If someone is aware of this process, as we discussed step by step, s/he can observe what is happening and what could happen. The important thing is this: When you are going to Colombo from Kandy you may pass Peradeniya, Kadugannawa, Mavanella, Kegalle, Warakapola etc. but you do not pass only these places as there are so many other small towns on the way. However, when you describe the route to someone you do not have to mention all the towns you pass - you list only the main towns. Look at any map - only the main towns are marked.

Similarly, when *Ānāpāna Sati* meditation is described, Dear Dhamma Friends, in the *Girimānanda Sutta*, *Ānāpāna Sati Sutta* or the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, only the most important preliminary milestones and the experiences where you have to pay a great deal of attention with great awareness are described. On the way, while you are experiencing these mentioned milestones, you will be observing many more experiences according to your personality and physical habits, but they are not that important and you may therefore ignore them. When you are observing the *Ānāpāna Sati* process, as it happens within you, you will come across many experiences as you settle down, like water in a tank which has started to calm down after being stirred and moving over a long period of time.

Dear Dhamma Friends, that calmness will not occur immediately. Just see, when a vehicle which is travelling very fast tries to apply the brakes very suddenly, what a

lot of commotion can happen. The travellers inside will get thrown around and the vehicle will tilt. This is what happens when you try to stop a fast moving vehicle. We assume that there are sounds and calamities when it is moving. No, if it is something that has been active very fast from the beginning, when you try to quieten, neutralise and halt the calamities and the turmoil which were there from the very beginning, then there will also be lot of commotion. Therefore there will be many experiences. Physically you might feel warm while meditating - as if the body is heating up; you might start sweating; one might feel the body is getting tighter. Psychologically too one might have various experiences: your body might feel very light, as if you are floating. Dear Dhamma Friends these are not important and you may or may not get these experiences. Whether you have these experiences or not, if you try to pay unnecessary attention to them, try to analyse them and if you try either to stop at them or to eradicate them with attachment, then you are creating unwarranted problems. You will not be able to continue on your path.

If someone who is going to Colombo stops at every step and asks: "Where is this place on the map? Why isn't it there? It must be wrong. Which is wrong, the map or the way?", he will never be able to reach Colombo. That is why, when describing meditation only the main experiences and important milestones are discussed.

We discussed that you stay with the natural breath with mindfulness for the first time in your life, you know that you are inhaling and exhaling mindfully, that is all, you are not trying to control the breath; you are not trying to change the breath; you are not trying to concentrate the

mind on the breath. None of them. You just know. When you are inhaling you know that you are inhaling; and when you are exhaling you know that you are exhaling. When you go on in this manner you observe the various qualities of the breath. We discussed this: if the breath is long you know it is long; if the breath is short you know it is short; if the breath is light you know it is light; if the breath is rough you know it is rough. Like this you observe these different qualities.

## **Not feeling the breath**

The next important point is this: sometimes you may not feel the breath. Please do not take it as a big problem. The aim of this meditation is neither to stop the breath nor to stop feeling the breath. To stop the breath and to let go of feeling of the breath, you do not need to meditate. There are other techniques for that. On this path of meditation our aim is different. Therefore, whether you feel the breath or not, do not take it as a big problem. What foolishness if you assume that not feeling the breath is an achievement and you give yourself a certificate for that! If you do not feel the breath you will find it difficult to continue the *Ānāpāna Sati* meditation. Therefore, if you lose the feeling of the breath at any point *do not take away the awareness*. Only if you were trying to *concentrate* your mind on the breath would the problem occur: "Now I do not feel the breath; now what am I to do? There is no object to concentrate my mind on." Dear Dhamma Friends, if we are inhaling we know that we are inhaling; if we are not inhaling we know that we are not inhaling, that is all. To know that the breath is not there is also part of the meditation. When you are mindful that it is not there you will know when it occurs again.

Dear Dhamma Friends, since the process of breathing is not only for a single point but a process for the entire body; whatever point you pay attention to, you may feel that the body is breathing. You will gain sensitivity to the whole body that is breathing. The meditator will be sensitive to the breathing of the whole body. The breathing process of the entire body becomes very clearly evident to the meditator. “*Sabbakāya paṭisamvēdī assasissāmīti sikkhati*” - we have to train ourselves in this. It doesn't suddenly and automatically dawn on us. You should be mindful of the totality of the body, from the top of the head to the toes, when you are inhaling and exhaling. Letting go of specific points on the body, when you take the whole body as one from the beginning it becomes easy; you train yourself in awareness of inhalation and exhalation in the whole body. Then the mind becomes calm and emotions do not arise at the mental level; there is no physical activity or tiredness; there is no talking. With all this we experience deep relaxation.

One result of this relaxation is detachment; disengagement. Through meditation we detach ourselves from all of the following three complicated responsibilities: the first thing is, we stop all physical activities like running, walking and carrying goods, we are just sitting still; the second is, we refrain from talking, arguing, answering, questioning and criticising; the third is, we disengage ourselves from thinking emotionally.

At that point what do we do? Why do we need to breathe? Only just to live. We do not need the breath for arguing since we are not arguing now; not for talking nor for shouting because we are in deep silence; we are not thinking emotionally out of fear, or desire, or in anger, or despair. See

just how tired you become when you are emotional. Since we are used to living a busy life we are normally not sensitive to this but if you become sensitive you will understand how much energy is wasted when you are in anger. Then the energy is really wasted. When you lament you waste energy. When you are in fear you waste energy. To burn to produce energy, a lot of breath is required. Similarly greediness also makes you tired. None of these emotions are light; there is no relaxation; both verbal and physical activities are like that. In *Ānāpāna Sati* meditation, Dear Dhamma Friends, these formations (*saṅkhāra*) or activities are minimised and reduced.

### **Training to tranquilize bodily actions**

Therefore you do not need a lot of energy. We do not have a huge lunch before sitting for meditation, so the physical activity of digestion is minimised. Just see, Dear Dhamma Friends, when we have a meal - starting from the lips, passing between the teeth, over the tongue, the upper palate, the lower palate, through the throat, then on to the entire digestive system, what a lot of organs and muscles are active. When we meditate all of them are relaxing. Because of this the body doesn't need much blood and then the heart is relaxed. Every organ, Dear Dhamma Friends, every organ relaxes during meditation. Therefore, all physical activities are calmed. If you feel any tension, pushing or stress in any part of the body, focus your attention on that point. Investigate whether the body - from top to bottom - is calm, or whether there is any tension, pushing or tightness in any muscle; any rigidity or stiffness.

When we walk through the body like this from top to toe and then toe to top, from inhalation to

exhalation and exhalation to inhalation, we come across areas where there is tension, if the entire body is not pacified. Maybe there is tension in the eyes, or the forehead, or the cheeks; maybe you are clenching your teeth, or you are holding your hands very tightly, or you are hunching up your shoulders. When we investigate like this with every inhalation and exhalation we come across such areas. If there is any such area, we can focus our attention on that point and think: "May that area be relaxed," with every inhalation and exhalation. "*Passambhayam kāyasañkhāram assasissāmīti sikkhati, Passambhayam kāyasañkhāram passasissāmīti sikkhati*" – you will be trained to pacify those physical activities with every inhalation and exhalation.

When you go on assessing in your meditation like this you realise that *Ānāpāna Sati* is not merely concentrating on breathing. It is a meditation that has to be done mindfully with lot of awareness. Someone might think that there is nothing to do in this meditation, but when you observe the body if you feel any physical discomfort, you must train yourself to intentionally neutralise it while inhaling and exhaling. The in-breath that comes into the nose travels down to the place where you feel the discomfort, and supplies oxygen to that point; gives it energy; gives it attention, and relaxes it. Furthermore, if there is a reason for that area to be stiff and uncomfortable, the air going out will help to ease it; help remove the difficulty from the body. If you observe this process several times, while you are breathing, you can relax that area very quickly. Even when you are not meditating, if you feel any tension in any part your body, if you intentionally breathe deeply several times while paying attention to the point that has a

problem, the inhalation goes to that point and the pain is lessened with the exhalation. Therefore, “*passambhayam kāya saṅkhāram*” - these physical activities are pacified. You train yourself to calm down the body with inhalation and exhalation. Dear Dhamma Friends, when the body is calmed in this manner we do not feel the weight of the body.

Just imagine a person, who is carrying a 10 kilo bag of rice, he would feel the weight of it. When you carry 10 kilos you feel the weight with every step and even if you do not walk you feel the weight when you are just standing. Even if you are sitting with a load on your lap you will feel it. Even if you lie down and keep 10 kilos on your chest you feel the weight. This body itself has a weight of about fifty or sixty kilos. Therefore we feel the weight. We always experience that weight, whether we are sitting, walking or lying down. But now, since we have been carrying this weight for so long, we do not notice the burden of our own body weight. We feel the weight only if we carry something. And also, if we get tense we feel the weight more. Try to stiffen an arm and see - you will feel the weight more. You need more energy to make a tense body walk. When you relax a body which was stiff you need less energy. When we are tense more energy is wasted and when relaxed less energy is wasted. In meditation the body relaxes - every cell and every muscle relaxes - and in that relaxation the entire body becomes light. The actual body weight is not important – whatever it is, it becomes lighter and you feel lighter. You do not feel the weight of 50 or 60 kilos. What you feel is lightness in every cell. We can imagine this lightness is like air and that what you feel is air and empty space. Now you do not feel the body as a rock

or a mountain but you feel the lightness of every cell. In between every cell there is an empty space and this empty space becomes more and more evident.

Similarly, bodily needs and discomforts such as thirst, sleepiness, hunger, pains and aches and also coughs, even the need to attend to nature's call, will be calmed down for some time. In short, the body will become totally calm and will not make any demands. "*Passambhayam kāyasaṅkhāram assasissāmīti sikkhati, Passambhayam kāyasaṅkhāram passasissāmīti sikkhati*". The problem called the body vanishes temporarily. Not the body itself, but the *problem* called body vanishes.

### **Training to experience joy and happiness**

The machine called the body is now working very slowly, just enough to live. Therefore this machine is now still. You feel that stillness too. There, Dear Dhamma Friends, you will feel a happiness the kind of which you have never felt before in your life. Because we were engrossed in unwanted activities, unwanted thoughts, unwanted discussions, unwanted physical activities and hurried tours, how could we feel happiness? We felt our life was a stress, a suffering, a pain and not happiness or a joy. When this entire system called 'you' - especially the entire system called 'the body'- is calmed, this machine starts to become relaxed; takes a vacation. When the tension and tightness get relaxed, you will feel a great joy. You are not happy because you got something, it is not the coarse happiness you feel by meeting a person you like or by eating something you like, it is a natural happiness, the happiness we are supposed to enjoy, the happiness of which we have

deprived ourselves. It is the happiness we lost just because of our haste and unawareness. The happiness we lost due to physical stiffness and physical tiredness, starts coming back to us. "*Pīti paṭisāmvedī assasissāmīti sikkhati, pīti paṭisāmvedī passasissāmīti sikkhati*" – you train yourself to enjoy happiness and joy while inhaling and exhaling; not because of anything in particular, nothing special has happened. This is an important factor: to be happy usually one needs a reason. If somebody asks you "Are you happy?" and if you say "No," then you will be asked, "Why? What is the problem? Are you sick? Was an expectation not fulfilled?" or else you might say: "I am happy *because* I passed an exam; I got a promotion." There is always a reason. Only when something happens do you become happy or sad. In meditation, without getting anything, you do not get anything but you feel happiness. All this time we have been losing out on the natural joy which we are entitled to, due to the coarse way of life we are used to leading. This is similar to losing natural pure air for breathing. We are gradually losing natural, unspoilt air through the activities we do without proper understanding. Likewise the joy and happiness we are entitled to is deteriorating due to the gross, violent, hasty, fast paced and emotional lifestyle we are leading.

Therefore Dear Dhamma Friends, when we keep on losing that natural joy, we need rough, coarse, artificial kinds of happiness as we cannot live without happiness. We do everything to be happy. We earn to be happy; we save to be happy; we spend the saved money to be happy; the entire life is like a pilgrimage in search of happiness; we make friends to be happy; we become angry to be happy; again we become

friends to be happy; we get married to be happy; then get divorced to be happy; with all these activities we search for happiness. We just cannot live without happiness; it is difficult. Therefore, to indulge in the food called happiness, we do everything. But with all of this, we are still not happy in the end. After all the effort and expenditure we taste bitter things; we started to cook sweetness but by the end it has turned bitter - not sweet - harsh.

So, there is some problem here. The entire life has turned bitter. Man is experiencing a bitter life. The life that man has to live is bitter. This is a very unsatisfactory fact. Mixing all the sweet things together, Dear Dhamma Friends, you have cooked a bitter thing which cannot even be tasted. Therefore, from the beginning to the end we are consuming suffering in this life. When we turn around and look at the past we see how we have been eating, munching, licking, drinking suffering throughout our life. What a shame!

We did not plan to suffer - we wanted to be happy. Where is the happiness and joy we searched for? Are we experiencing that happiness? We planned our life ten, fifteen years ago, claiming that this is the path to happiness and if we go along that path we will be able to enjoy this much happiness. If we learn all these things; if we pass these exams; if we secure this type of job; if we get these promotions; if we are entitled to this much salary; if we are able to marry in this manner.....how many plans like this did we have to ensure our happiness, Dear Dhamma Friends? But though we travelled on that path, where are we now? Are we in a place of happiness? Are we in a park of happiness? Are we in a valley of joy? Or are we in a hell full of thorns? Are we in a forest of thorns?

To escape from this unsatisfactory life, Dear Dhamma Friends, you do not have to stand on your head; you do not need to fight great wars. Buddhism has a very simple way. Simply Buddhism says: "do not do anything special," rest for a moment from all your work – you can do all that later. For a moment keep all that aside. Find a few minutes in which you can be relaxed and silent and sit well with the upper body upright. Then recognise the inner qualities, habits and behavioural patterns which contribute to the wandering mind and try to overcome them; and by identifying the obstacles to your own freedom, try to eradicate them. Then observe the nature and see how silent the environment is, and how silent is the posture you are in. Then when you are totally aware of the environment and the posture you are seated in, know that you are breathing. These are not complicated things, not difficult exercises, you do not have to spend a cent, you do not need a big knowledge and you do not need any of those other things. You do not need a big crowd. See how simple it is.

These Buddhist guidelines for happiness are so simple. Spend a few minutes, know that you are breathing, know whether the inhalation is short or long, know whether the exhalation is short or long, and then observe and experience that the entire body is breathing. With every inhalation and exhalation, experience that the entire body is relaxing, becoming calm, becoming lighter, that is all.

That is all, Dear Dhamma Friends, and then happiness dawns and it becomes evident. The natural happiness, which was buried all this time, which was trampled on by us and therefore did not dawn and could not be experienced, will be exposed to you by meditation. You have not received

anything. The problem of being alone will then be solved to a great extent. Usually being alone is a suffering to most people. That is why you try to do so many things and get entangled in so many unwanted activities to avoid aloneness, Dear Dhamma Friends. When you become happy in this meditation and when the happiness grows, it cannot be compared to any happiness that you gain through any of your senses. You get happiness through your senses. When you eat something sweet you feel more happiness than when you drink something bitter. However, the serenity and the happiness you experience when the body becomes tranquil and the entire physical system becomes calm cannot be compared with the happiness you gain through your five senses as that happiness is so basic. This spiritual bliss, the happiness gained by meditation, Dear Dhamma Friends, is very much deeper. Experience that happiness.

Some say that Buddhism talks about suffering all the time. No - we are asked to experience happiness. "*Pīti patisamvedī*"- indulge in that happiness well. Be totally aware of the happiness you feel at that moment; experience it, be sensitive to it, train yourself to be sensitive. During inhalation and exhalation, train yourself to be sensitive, experience the happiness. Train yourself to enjoy the natural happiness you have been entitled to your whole life. We are used to unnatural experiences, which we might need sometimes. There are times we like candy but should you miss your main meal for candy? - That is the question you should ask yourself. Should we forget our main meal? What is our main meal? Our main meal should be this inner happiness and now we have forgotten it and continuously indulge on sugar candy. For years we have been feeding

ourselves on junk food, candy, toffees, sweets and lozenges, which do not have any nutritional value. We have been just continuing to live, being cheated.

We know that the taste of the candy does not last long, it melts. Dear Dhamma Friends, we have been living by just licking some candy which melts. Then what has happened to the main meal and the nutrition required for the body? We have forgotten about it. Be a person who experiences the main meal called inner happiness, prepared by the legendary chef called awareness. Be a person who experiences true happiness, who can enjoy life. Therefore, the saying that meditation gives rise to happiness is a truth. Do not be frightened to say so. It is not a sin. To say that you are happy through meditation is not a sin. Not a fact to be proud about either; not to be arrogant about it; not to develop ego. But it is the truth. If somebody says "I am happy because of meditation" what is wrong with that? Even if you do not say it, Dear Dhamma Friends, you can know it. You can know the person who is sad also. Meditation is not to make you experience hell in life -as if you are carrying a load on your head, causing you to have a bent back, with all the muscles tightened -being surrounded by a lot of problems.

Meditation makes you a happy person. As a result your face becomes lighter and brighter. The happiness flows through you. When you breathe out you will be donating happiness to the world that gave you the experiences which help your spiritual life. Just as we propagate sadness, anger and fear, we can also propagate happiness. When we associate with a person who has become happy within, when we talk to such a person, we become happy too. That happiness

grows. We forget our problems even for that moment. Therefore meditation is very meritorious, Dear Dhamma Friends. Meditation is not selfish. You give happiness to the world. Sometimes you may be meditating in a forest very far from human civilization, maybe in a dark, unknown cave or maybe at a height nobody else can reach. Someone might say that, that meditator is selfish. Isn't it better to come to civilization and be helpful or even without being helpful just live in society? No Dear Dhamma Friends, by meditating you become a generator of happiness, a source generating happiness, a spring generating happiness, which flows throughout the world to reach even the insects - in a world where everyone is lamenting over everything; is born with misery, lives with misery and in the end dies in misery. Dear Dhamma Friends, you can spread happiness; you can grant happiness to others; you can donate happiness; you become a shower of rain of happiness for the desert of misery. If a meditator like that – a person with inner happiness – lives in a house, Dear Dhamma Friends, it will bring luck to the house and is a blessing for that house. There is no need to ward off any black magic; no need to recite any mantra or chant special blessings in the house. A fortune or blessing similar to meditation cannot be found. Whatever special blessings you chant, if everybody is in misery, in stress, in sadness or consuming only suffering, Dear Dhamma Friends, the chanting cannot negate the waves of suffering generated within their minds and bodies.

Therefore, meditation is of great merit. Meditation is one of the greatest acts of merit one can perform. You give happiness and as a result you become happier. You are not meditating to provide happiness

for others, but through meditation you create happiness which is not only for you; everybody who comes from all four directions can consume the food called happiness and gain happiness. Meditation is the way out of this world where everybody is exhausted by both happiness and sadness. When you look at meditation from that angle and walk along the path of meditation, a town that you will definitely come across is happiness. The city of happiness, the pleasant plane, the city of joy has to be passed on your way to liberation. We know when we have to pass a town like Kegalle it takes a long time. Similarly every meditator wants to cling to this inner happiness. Clinging does not mean a stop. The meditator continues on his/her path and will be able to experience happiness for a considerable time. Do not avoid it; do not go in search of other by-lanes, experience happiness mindfully. Know that this happiness is not only for you but it is also for all the countless beings who are suffering.

If happiness like this could be shared with all who are suffering within a house, within a village, within this town, within this country and in the entire world, even for just a moment, how valuable that would be? Accompanied by that thought, you should train to experience happiness while inhaling and exhaling. Within this meditation you become a city of glory, an oasis of delight and a valley of happiness. Experience the city of glory; oasis of delight; valley of happiness with every inhalation and exhalation, mindfully.

## Meditation

*Relaxing, calming and tranquillising the entire body from top to bottom, letting the entire physical system rest, let happiness penetrate into you.....*

*Let your body relax from every inhalation to exhalation and every exhalation to inhalation. Be sensitive to whatever peace, lightness and calmness you are experiencing with every inhalation and exhalation.....*

*Whatever physical calmness you are experiencing, whatever happiness and joy you are noticing, without owning it or calling it 'mine', the happiness that is enjoyed through the breath which comes and goes which does not belong to anybody.....*

***May the lightness that is experienced by you .....  
be experienced by everybody in this hall.***

***May this much happiness be experienced by  
everybody with whom we are living together in  
this life.....***

***This happiness is experienced for all of them.....***

***With a broad attitude like that, experiencing  
happiness from inhalation to exhalation and  
exhalation to inhalation, and with the generous  
thought of sharing it with everybody you meet,  
talk with, and encounter until you go to sleep, we  
will conclude our meditation for today.***

***May the Triple Gem bless all of you!***

## AN UNPRECEDENTED DISCOVERY

Dear Dhamma Friends, in this world, individuals, scientists, and various explorers have discovered and invented different things at different times. When you study human history, you come across lists of different things added to life at different times. Fire was discovered. Then the wheel was invented. The discovery of fire created a great revolution in the life of human beings. Fire can be seen as the main factor which differentiates animals from human beings. None of the animals use fire; it is used only by human beings. Then the wheel was invented - this initiated a major industrial revolution.

Dear Dhamma Friends, if we continue to investigate, one by one, all these inventions and discoveries which have changed society, we can clearly see that so many new things are being added every day: scientific equipment, new species, new plants, machinery, works of art, diseases, medicines, etc. Every such discovery or invention changes the direction of mankind. If there were no recording equipment, this program would have been conducted differently. If there were no cars, buses or trains just imagine how different our lives would be. Nobody would travel ten or twenty miles to go to work, so how different would our jobs be? If there were no aeroplanes or ships, there would not be any travel out of any country; no migration; no tourism.

With every invention or discovery, human culture or the direction of mankind changed. What a change has TV

brought to people's lives? If you can remember, just try to imagine the difference in the daily routine before and after the coming of TV. See the difference TV has made in twenty or thirty years. Can we go back to the era where there was no TV? It is very difficult. With every invention, the world started flying through new avenues. Some inventions were for the betterment of mankind, whereas some created damage to mankind. There are some inventions by human beings which have created a threat, not only for mankind, but also for the environment, as well as for other planets.

On this voyage, Dear Dhamma Friends, one day the thing called "meditation" was also discovered. In a similar way to the discovery of fire, the wheel, diseases and medicines in the history of mankind, one day one human being discovered "meditation". With that discovery, the person who discovered it became a totally changed person. Whoever found meditation was not the same person who continued to live after the discovery. Before the discovery he was a normal human being, after the discovery he became the *Sammā Sambuddha*, the Fully Self-Enlightened One.

## **Evolution due to meditation**

This is the significant difference regarding meditation. The person who discovered fire was the same before and after the discovery. There was not much of a difference in him. The fire would have been able to burn various other things but the person was the same, the suffering was the same. The person who invented the wheel may have found transportation easier after the invention, but continued living the same miserable life as before. The wheel could not reduce the suffering he was undergoing. The wheel could

not minimise the misery he was experiencing, or reduce the burden the man was carrying on his shoulders. Fire could not negate the problems and entanglements Man was facing, in order to give him peace; the wheel couldn't do this; vehicles couldn't do this; machinery couldn't do this. None of them had the ability to do this. But, Dear Dhamma Friends, the day meditation was discovered; it completely changed the person who discovered it. Before the discovery he was a normal person, but with this discovery he became the Lord Buddha, The Enlightened One. Meditation was introduced to the world. With that introduction he himself was changed from a normal person to an Enlightened One. Now even today, if someone experiences meditation within him-/herself, if someone enters onto the path of meditation, then if that person understands what meditation is, that realisation changes him/her. If one starts to meditate, the person who exists after the meditation is not the same as the person who started to meditate – s/he is a changed person; a transformed person. Meditation is for that transformation. If the way we are now were perfect, one hundred per cent happy and contented, then Dear Dhamma Friends, there would be no need to meditate. Meditation is not a decoration or a fashion which beautifies someone on the surface; meditation completely transforms us.

Therefore, when we look at the world, how much has the world has changed because of meditation? Every field of knowledge has changed because of meditation - education has changed; medical sciences have changed; they keep on changing because of the mind. The medical field which was locked within the confines of medicines, injections, and surgery, has been released and has been opened up to the skies by meditation. The mind has also

become a medicine. It has come to a point where we can say that meditation is a medicine. Not only the educational and medical fields, whichever field meditation enters into, that field changes; the person who studies in that field also changes. Therefore if meditation enters a home, that home starts changing. If one person meditates, the entire household starts changing; with the changes in the person who is meditating. This transformation happens very gracefully and calmly, because of the changed atmosphere surrounding the meditating person that radiates out towards the others who are living in the same house. Not only the humans, even the animals living in the same house, every plant and tree in the garden, will be influenced by the peace and calmness of that mind.

Therefore, if there is a meditator in a house it is fortunate, it is a blessing. If there is a meditator in your office, in your department, it is a blessing to your office or department; special blessings are not needed. Because a meditating mind spreads well wishes for others - very calm thoughts, thoughts with loving kindness - it does not create aversion, does not produce destruction, it does not curse the world. A mind that generates kindness and patience; a mind which can know others' suffering; a mind that can understand the problems we all share; a mind which is not trapped inside one's own world, is prepared to listen to others, such a kind heart is produced by meditation. Such minds and hearts are essential today. Dear Dhamma Friends, you and I are living in a society where patience is crucial. It is a time when everybody should think twice about their every action. Going beyond selfishness, and being altruistically committed to the well-being of others,

has become vital in the present society. There is no other exercise like meditation to minimise selfishness, because the inner joy, the inner happiness and the inner contentment you feel from meditation cannot be derived from any food, song, dance, dress, or trip. A person can be happy from all these external things for a brief moment; can be happy by listening to a melodious song, or by consuming very tasty food, only for that moment. A person can wear a very expensive dress, be proud of it, and can show off its beauty and can gain attention, only for that moment.

But if you consider, Dear Dhamma Friends, the spiritual happiness you experience through meditation, the spiritual contentment you gain, any happiness you gain through the senses cannot be compared with that. Meditation makes you a happy person. This transformation is very important. Such a miraculous transformation fire and the wheel could not perform; nor could the atom, nor nuclear fission, nor the electron. None of them could transform someone into a happy person. Fire can help us a lot, but it cannot make us happy internally, by burning all our problems to ashes. Fire does not have that capability. No wheel can rotate all your problems away and make you a totally happy person within. But meditation has that power - we become happy within.

We discussed the various steps of this journey, at different times, when we were discussing *Ānāpāna Sati* meditation. When we let go of the thoughts gradually, and let go of living in the past and dreaming about the future; when we are experiencing the present moment, and are totally aware of the in-breath and out-breath, we reach the realisation within us: how wonderful this moment is;

how splendid this present moment is. Try to experience this; the present moment is not just theoretical knowledge. When you are entangled in the past, when you cannot escape from the misery of by-gone incidents, when you cannot understand where you are and what has happened to you, listen to the in-breath and listen to the out-breath, be meditative with your own natural breath, penetrate into the present moment, step back into the present moment. Then you can escape, you will be free from the past trap. You do not have to do anything special. You need not do anything to those old, by-gone, spoilt, rotten miseries of the past. The mind just detaches from them. Those layers of misery vanish, like fog disappears when the sun dawns. The present becomes clearly visible. Similarly, instead of trying to plan the future, and in the end getting caught up in a mess; when the future has become something to be afraid of and suspicious about, listen just for moment to your simple in-/out-breath; listen to this moment. Then you can climb down from day-dreaming and can safely step on to the ground.

Dear Dhamma Friends, at that moment you can free yourself from that mental confusion. We are always full of thoughts.... always endless thoughts.... every moment thoughts.... no end to thoughts.....useful and useless thoughts.....When these thoughts are reduced, what a relief do you feel? Emptiness has a pleasure, lightness, but do we experience that lightness? How many of us feel that life is light? It is not the endless errands and responsibilities which pressurise the mind; it is the way we think about them. No-one gets stressed by exams, but by the way they think about the exams. We are not afraid of the devil, but by the way we think about the devil. With meditation this

entire stream of thoughts vanishes for a moment, leaving the awareness of in-breath and out-breath. Peacefully and lightly the breath enters the body. For a moment the body becomes a simple inhalation. The totality of the body - every organ, every cell - becomes an inhalation. Then it takes a rest for a moment. In the next moment exhalation begins. At that moment the entire body becomes an exhalation.... again a moment of rest.....and again an inhalation. This is a never-ending process: inhalation, rest, exhalation.

In normal life there is no rest. Always work, work and more work. In meditation, for the first time in your life you realise what rest means. The body is calm; the body becomes light to that extent. Just a little breath is enough. What is it for? Just to be mindful; just sufficient to be aware that the breath is coming in and going out; what a small amount of energy is necessary? You become such a light person. This breath gradually becomes shorter and shorter; inhalation becomes shorter; exhalation becomes shorter; the interval in between becomes longer. Initially the body has a long inhalation, short interval, long exhalation, short interval, again a long inhalation. Gradually this changes. The inhalation and exhalation become shorter and shorter, the interval becomes longer and longer. At that point you really experience deeply what relaxation is all about. You feel the relaxation of the entire body after every inhalation and exhalation.

Dear Dhamma Friends, when the body becomes completely tranquil, your mind feels the joy which we were talking about earlier. One of the main reasons the mind cannot feel this joy is the body weight of about 50 or 60 kilograms. The body which is about 5 or 6 feet in height;

the body which has never-ending complaints and demands: thirst, hunger, sweat or coldness, bothering you to change the posture; the body which is full of bodily actions is a burden. Our minds, Dear Dhamma Friends, have become tired of paying attention to and providing for all these demands of the body. The mind has become exhausted, worn-out and shattered by thinking and planning how to manage and maintain this enormous body until death.

At this point in meditation the body stops demanding. This body doesn't demand anything anymore. If the breath wants, let it enter the body; if the breath wants, let it leave the body. The body becomes totally relaxed. The body becomes so responsive to you; it becomes totally under the control of the meditator. The body is not a weight anymore to the mind. The body is not a burden anymore to the mind. The body is not a problem anymore to the mind. It is not a question mark any longer. The body is not a collection of question marks any longer.

Therefore the pleasure, the joy never experienced before - "*pītipaṭisamvēdī assasissāmīti sikkhati, pītipaṭisamvēdī passasissāmīti sikkhati*"- the happiness, the mental happiness, the delightfulness of the mind can be experienced, can be properly experienced. This is not by singing or dancing, not by doing anything like that, just by the tranquillisation of the body. Because this body has become totally calm, because the body is no longer a burden to your mind, you can experience such a joy. At this moment you might even feel as if the body is not there anymore.

The pleasure that is felt at that point is like laying down a load of about 50 or 60 kilograms after carrying it for a long time. Imagine a person who has to carry a load

of 50 or 60 kilos tied to their head and who is not allowed to put it down even for a moment. If that person is able to put that load down even for a moment, just imagine how much relief s/he would feel! Such relief can be experienced in meditation: “*pītipaṭisamvēdī*.” Not only a joy, without stopping at a joy, s/he would feel a great relief.

Happiness is a feeling, Dear Dhamma Friends. When we say that we are happy, it means that we have got something to our satisfaction. When a problem is solved, we are happy. When you are cured from a sickness you are happy. When you complete a journey you are happy. Happiness is a feeling. It is a reaction in the mind. What we experience is this reaction. Whether we have that reaction or not, there is an immense lightness, there is tremendous contentment. You will be able to see these two things separately: the mental happiness and, even if it is not there, the feeling of contentment. When we are happy due to a particular event, Dear Dhamma Friends, the happiness covers the event; we are overwhelmed by the happiness. Why are we happy? Is there anything to be happy about? Really, from where did this happiness come? We don't see any of these things – we are overwhelmed by happiness.

Within this meditation, at a certain point, both you and I experience an enormous joy by solving this problem called the body at least temporarily. The entire body is a problem. Hunger is a problem. Thirst is a problem. Flu, coughs, fevers, headaches, these are all problems related to the body. The need to use the toilet is a problem. Coldness and heat are problems. Dear Dhamma Friends, pain is a problem. Therefore this entire body is like a collection of problems, a collection of question marks.

## Train to be sensitive to the inner joy

We saw the question marks you find in the body when we discussed “*Ādīnava Saññā*”. We saw each and every question mark. All the physical question marks will vanish here. At that moment, we will be happy to think about this condition. Whether you think or not you will have a mental happiness, a pleasure beyond mental happiness is there, lightness is felt. This is experienced by the mind. “*Sukhapaṭisamvedi*”. You experience pleasure, not just happiness. It is not a joy gained by thinking. When you let go of thinking about experiencing joy, you experience this pleasure. You train yourself to experience the pleasure with every inhalation and exhalation. You become trained to experience pleasure. This needs training. It has to be cultivated. It doesn't happen automatically. Therefore, it is clear that *Ānāpāna Sati* meditation is not just observing the breath.

If somebody says that s/he has been practicing *Ānāpāna Sati* meditation for more than 10 or 15 years, but there is no improvement yet, the reason for this is very clear at this point. If you just practice observing the breath nobody changes. This is a step by step way forward, and it should be trained in systematically, rather than just being happy with thinking. In the next step you get trained to experience pleasure, “*sukhapaṭisamvedi*.”

Dear Dhamma Friends, someone may think: “This is like a fairy tale, nothing like this has happened yet,” even though they have been practicing *Ānāpāna Sati* meditation for a long time. It might be true. Investigate the two basic factors, the environment and the posture. Then

check whether you are giving importance to mindfulness - “*parimukham satim*”. Are you giving due importance to mindfulness, or are you trying to concentrate the mind; trying to get rid of thoughts; trying to stop the wandering mind; trying to control the mind? If so, you will not be able to experience this subtle joy and pleasure. This can be achieved only by being mindful. Start from that point, begin with observing the in-breath and the out-breath, then experience that the breath is long, then how the breath becomes shorter and shorter, and the interval in between becomes longer and longer. Then observe how the entire body calms down, and all the physical complaints and demands vanish. The body does not say it is hungry; it does not say it is thirsty; it does not want to stand up or to stretch the legs; for a certain period of time the entire body stops all its needs. The mind becomes happy about such a serene body.

At this point you will experience pleasure to the maximum. Then, Dear Dhamma Friends, one goes beyond it. You can proceed further and further into the pleasure; the joy and the pleasure becoming more and more subtle, to a greater depth. Therefore if somebody experiences pleasure in meditation, s/he should not be scared. Do not perceive that experiencing pleasure in meditation is wrong. We started our journey to eradicate suffering, so why should you treat happiness as wrong? No, there is nothing wrong in this. Buddhism never advises you to suffer, but to eradicate suffering. When suffering is reduced you experience lightness. On the way forward to experience this lightness, a deep enthusiasm dawns in this meditation. That is why if somebody continues meditation, s/he becomes addicted. They can't do without it. You feel compelled to

sit for meditation at a particular time and for a particular duration and you want to stay there for the whole duration, as if you have been mesmerized. When you are addicted to alcohol, you become like that. When you are addicted to smoking before a meal or after a meal, you cannot do without it. Similarly when you are addicted to chewing betel before or after a meal the entire body demands it and if you don't get it, the entire body becomes disturbed - it starts shaking; it becomes difficult to speak. Similarly if somebody gets addicted to the joy in meditation, it will end up the same way. The entire body asks to meditate at that moment. If you were unable to meditate for some reason the entire day becomes bleak. Therefore let go of the addiction, initially it is OK but it should not continue.

Dear Dhamma Friends, in the next steps, you need to let go of this joy. Not initially - initially you must understand the joy or the happiness. Because, in everyday life the things we take to be happiness are not real happiness. They are just the wrapping, covering a huge pile of suffering. You find the suffering inside the bag. We call this bag of suffering 'happiness'. We consume suffering inside the wrapper of happiness. Therefore, being deceived by the wrapping, we continue to think it is happiness. Within happiness you always find suffering; a great suffering. You cannot know the extent of this suffering, and nor can I. Due to all the things we have inherited, bought and owned in order to be happy, now we experience a never-ending suffering. The happiness is gone, now the suffering is continuing like a chain without an end. Getting linked together one by one, the problems and troubles we have created by trying to be happy, seem to have no end.

Is that happiness? Can you call a thing that can turn in to suffering 'happiness'? Can you call a medicine which will create a sickness, a 'medicine'? When you take some medicines the existing sickness may be cured, but they may also pave the way to a greater sickness. This type of medicine is not proper medicine. In real life, most of the things that seem to someone to be a remedy for that moment of suffering can open the door to unlimited, endless, and even greater suffering for them. Therefore it is essential to experience the inner joy; to experience what is really meant by the word 'happiness,' what should really be called pleasure. Then life becomes very simple. When one is enjoying the inner happiness, and lives in the enthusiasm generated by the inner joy, the external happiness and suffering is not felt much. We feel they are colossal now because we are suffering from an inner fire. Because there is a tremendous inner fire which yells and makes turmoil within, we are going after tiny external pleasures. An inner thirst makes us run towards a mirage. When you are more and more internally happy and contented, missing a meal, eating food that doesn't taste as good as it should, your clothes being old, or the absence of a smile from someone is not that important. Why is that? We are not suffering anymore. External events cannot diminish the great joy flowing within.

Dear Dhamma Friends, through *Ānāpāna Sati* meditation you experience happiness and joy. Your body, mind and life become an ocean of joy. You can go deeper and deeper into this joy. There is yet more to describe. By getting into a great bliss and deep joy you can go further in this meditation.

Dear Dhamma Friends, we discussed two stages in *Ānāpāna Sati* meditation. When someone is continuing meditation in this manner, s/he can cultivate all the four Foundations of Mindfulness (*cattāro Satipaṭṭhāna*). Initially we discussed how we identify the long inhalations and long exhalations, then short inhalations and short exhalations, and how the body becomes serene. These stages are included in *Kāyānupassanā*, (mindfulness of bodily actions). At that point we are cultivating mindfulness of bodily actions. Meditation is on the body; we are meditating on the physical activities.

Then you come across joy. Experiencing joy; experiencing happiness; experiencing pleasure; becoming enthused; one continues with meditation. That experience is *vedanānupassanā*, mindfulness of sensations. When we say “*vedanā*” it means all feelings, but usually we associate only pain with the word “*vedanā*”. This is wrong – half the meaning has been lost. When we talk about a “smell,” we tend to associate the word with a bad smell. No, it is talking about *all* smells. In Pali language, “*Gandha*” means both good smell and bad smell. When someone says “taste,” we assume they are talking about tasty food, but “taste” means *all* tastes; it includes bitter, sweet, salty, and sour as well. Similarly “*vedanā*” is a word used collectively for all the sensations. When we say we are developing “*vedanānupassanā*” in *Ānāpāna Sati* meditation that means we are training ourselves to experience mindfully all the sensations, such as happiness, joy and pleasure, which we encounter in “*kāyānupassanā*”. Therefore Dear Dhamma Friends, as we have been describing, if you follow the steps of the *Girimānanda Sutta*, you will be developing mindfulness of both body and sensations.

Someone may ask: "How can one penetrate into *Satipaṭṭhāna* through *Ānāpāna Sati* meditation?" There is no need to do anything extra. By developing *Ānāpāna Sati* correctly according to the Dhamma, all four Foundations of Mindfulness are developed. There is no special way of going from concentration meditation to insight meditation, like turning a vehicle from one direction to another. It is just a continuation; we should know that none of them are halting places. That is the most important thing. Whatever feeling you experience in meditation, you should be mindful of that experience; you should know that you are now experiencing that feeling. That is more than enough. Then when that experience is no more, you should know it is no more, mindfully. None of the experiences will be there indefinitely. That is the nature. When it is not there, know that it is not there. Do not try to live in any of these experiences forever. Just as you entered the palace of happiness, the palace of pleasure, you will have to exit from it the same way. If we come out willingly, we will be able to enter higher planes, but if we try to linger there, we might lose even the ground we have gained.

Therefore in meditation, from beginning to end, you must have the intention to let go. We are not meditating to gain anything. It is to understand what is there, and to let go. We know what is there, and then let go the desire for it. Only if we continue like this will we be able to penetrate into all the four houses called the Foundations of Mindfulness. Otherwise we might stop at the first entrance, build a small hut, live at the gate, convert the gate into a house and not ever enter the main house. Assuming that the entrance to 'Mindfulness of the Body' is home, we try to live there

forever. No. This is a long journey, which takes you from Mindfulness of the Body to Mindfulness of Sensations, to Mindfulness of Mind and lastly to Mindfulness of Mental Phenomena. Therefore we must go into each and every house, must stay in every one of them, but must leave each one to go onto the next one, like a person who is on a long journey: at a bus stop he gets onto a bus, travels on that for some time, then gets off at another bus stop, again gets onto another bus, and repeats this until he reaches his destination. If you try to stay in one bus you can complete only a part of your journey. Dear Dhamma Friends, *Ānāpāna Sati* meditation moves through all these four houses. We have to give way, step by step, to adapt and to change without getting rooted to any point.

We discussed two concepts: mindfulness of body and sensations; how *Ānāpāna Sati* meditation can penetrate into them. When we practice observing the breath coming in and going out, it is mindfulness of the body. Then once the body becomes totally serene and calm, breathing is no longer a physical activity, we are training to experience the pleasure, joy, happiness and lightness within, cultivating mindfulness of sensations. After this, we will continue with the other two.

Let's be mindful for a moment of how the breath is entering the body and leaving the body; how the body feels the inhalation and exhalation.

## Meditation

*Be mindful of the thousand-and-one sensations; the feelings of discomfort, numbness and pain in the body .....*

*With every inhalation, reflect, “Let the sensation, the pain, or the numbness reduce,” and with every exhalation reflect: “Let all the discomforts felt by the body go”. Observe the inhalation and exhalation with these thoughts .....*

*Even for a moment, all the pains and discomforts of the body may vanish. The body will become lighter, contented and free. When the mind becomes free from the body, and the body becomes free from the mind the mind will experience a great relief, and the body will experience a great relief.....*

*Experience the joy of the mind. With every inhalation reflect “How much joy there is in the mind” and also with every exhalation.....*

*With a lightened body, tranquillised body, and with a mind, full of joy and happiness - enthusiastic and deeply delighted - Dear Dhamma Friends, let us conclude, with a mind of compassion, to generously share this joy and lightness with our friends and relations.*

**May the Triple Gem bless all of you!**

## **REAL COMFORT EXPERIENCED IN A COM-POSED MIND**

Dear Dhamma Friends, we are trying to share some sort of relaxation - not just some knowledge or understanding - but we are trying to share a deep relaxation; some relief; a freedom to be shared with universal friendliness. As a group in search of comfort; as a group which was born in search of comfort; as a group which has come this far in life searching for comfort, Dear Dhamma Friends; as a group with an expectation of going in search of comfort until we find it, we are devoting our time like this, to find what is real comfort by experiencing it and to endorse it by penetrating into ourselves.

### **The two sides of the coin**

We saw that we all experience various different types of comfort, to a greater or lesser extent, in our lives. We can list all the types of comfort we know and the types of comfort we are in search of; all the types of comfort we have experienced so far; and all the types of comfort we are expecting to experience in the future; the comforts we purchase with money; comfort obtained on credit; freely available comforts; comforts earned by hard work; comfort dawned upon us by former merits; comforts inherited from parents; comforts earned by employment. Like this, Dear Dhamma Friends, we can be aware of all the types of comfort we acquire, experience and consume. We exhaust

ourselves throughout our lives in search of all these types of comforts, one by one. There are times we are happy. We exclaim that we have succeeded in the world. There are times we exclaim and proclaim success with the comforts we are proudly experiencing; the comfort we have experienced and the comforts we expect to experience.

Similarly, all these types of comfort have left us, bidding us farewell; even now they are leaving us; in future too they will be leaving us. Every type of comfort will invite suffering, and leave us to give room for misery. We cannot guarantee that this particular comfort will not turn into misery, though we do not like to think that way.

But Dear Dhamma Friends, comfort and suffering are like two sides of a coin: you cannot put only the side of comfort into your pocket and put the side of misery into the dustbin. Therefore someone who is trying to indulge in comforts will have to experience misery too. You will not be able to experience only love in this life. Someone who is going in search of love will meet anger and hatred and will also have to face jealousy. This is the truth. These things are not to be found separately. We have given them two separate words, like 'love' and 'hatred,' 'comfort' and 'misery'. We think they are different things as they are pronounced differently; spelt differently - we have created this dichotomy. Comfort and misery are the two ends of the same event, Dear Dhamma Friends. It is like a flower: a blooming flower; a withered flower. We use two words, but they are two stages of the same process. When we give something two names like this, we think they are two different things; two different activities. We like one activity, while we dislike the other activity. What we assume

to be good we try to keep forever, and we use all sorts of techniques and arrangements to avoid the other activity.

We call this fight or struggle 'life'. But Dear Dhamma Friends, these are the two ends of the same event: comfort and misery; love and hatred; clinging and rejection. Therefore there is no relief, lightness or freedom in any of these situations. Be it comfort or misery, we are experiencing the same result. Comfort is better than misery, we experience this with comfort. But we have discussed this so many times; all the comforts end up with exhaustion. Whenever we are supposed to be experiencing comfort, just investigate our body and mind - both are exhausted - '*upāyāsā sambhavanti*'. Therefore *Dhamma* says none of these are real comforts. They bring some comfort, but not real comfort. There is a huge story of misery behind each one of these comforts, Dear Dhamma Friends. While we are indulging in comfort, laughing away in delight, the pages of the book of sorrow are simultaneously being turned. Whenever the comfort, delight and laughs end, the misery, sorrow and tears start their story. How can you call such a miserable end 'comfort'?

If a flower has already started to wither, when we try to say that it is blooming, how correct is it to call it a blooming flower? It is not a real blooming, not a real blossoming, if it is going to become withered in a moment; if the petals will be falling in a minute; if it is fading and giving off a bad smell, it is not a real blooming; it is not a real blossoming. A real blooming cannot wither; cannot fade. It cannot be a real comfort if there is a huge misery waiting in a queue to hit us. It cannot be real love if it is armed with hatred, jealousy and anger, ready to fight back with us. In

this *Ānāpāna Sati* meditation, Dear Dhamma Friends, this battle is not happening.

This battle of clinging and rejecting is at least temporarily stopped; this battle is abandoned with *Ānāpāna Sati* meditation. There are no such problems. The pleasure derived from *Ānāpāna Sati* meditation does not lead to misery. Any pleasure can take you to misery - the pleasure experienced from taste or coolness. Now if you are feeling too hot, the breeze you experience from the fan will bring you pleasure, this can happen. When a person who was angry becomes friendly, this will generate some comfort, but that person could get angry again at any moment. Nobody can become friendly who could never be angry. Anybody can become angry, anytime. The pleasure experienced due to someone becoming friendly lasts for how long? That pleasure is good, and being friendly is a thousand times better than being angry, but Dear Dhamma Friends, it is unpredictable; we never know how long the friendship will last. The windows of the house called friendship will open to let anger and dissatisfaction enter. A revolution or a defacement of this nature cannot happen in *Ānāpāna Sati* meditation.

We discussed that the body becomes totally tranquil. The body has a weight of so many kilograms. This huge weight we are carrying always, even while asleep. That is why even during normal sleep we have to turn from one side to another. We are turning the entire weight because it is difficult for us to carry it only on one side. This huge weight, we make it stand; sit down; get it to walk, make it run. Even if we do not have any other sorrow in life, even though we are laughing, even if we are getting everything

we want, Dear Dhamma Friends, the effort and the misery we experience in maintaining the body is there always; we experience this every time we become hungry, every time we get thirsty and every time we become sick.

In *Ānāpāna Sati* meditation the body becomes totally tranquil, there is no problem with the body at that moment - maybe for an hour, not for a day, for a certain time period there is no problem with the posture. No problems of standing, sitting, walking, or moving; no need to drink water, to eat some food, or to go to the toilet. All these requirements will vanish and the body will become tranquil. Even the body vanishes to the extent that you would not know whether the body is there or not. That means the body weight of so many kilos is reduced kilo by kilo.

If you are holding a pile of bricks on your head and if you slowly lay them down one by one, then you feel relieved to the extent of what you have laid down. If you were carrying 50 kilos and now you have laid down 25 kilos, you are relieved of 25 kilos; you are relieved of half the weight. If you lay down another one, you are relieved by that. If you go on like this, putting down each brick one by one, and you ultimately lay down them all, you will gain total relief. With this body weight you cannot experience total bodily relief. That is why when one goes in depth in meditation, '*passambhayam kāyasaṅkhāram*', all the bodily activities - including the perception of the body - become tranquillised; vanish. That is the point of real liberation; real happiness; real pleasure is experienced. This is physical. Most of the time, you feel bodily wellbeing and bodily pleasure, but you continue to feel the breath - the breath will not disappear. Dear Dhamma Friends, in *Ānāpāna Sati*

meditation, in the beginning, when the mind becomes very subtle, and the breath becomes unnoticeable, somebody might think and come to the wrong conclusion that: "My meditation is complete, now I do not feel the breath." Not feeling the breath anymore is not the aim of meditation. We do not get any benefit from that. On the other hand, there is nothing wrong in feeling the breath, it is not an obstacle. You feel the breath continuously. From the beginning to the end in *Ānāpāna Sati* meditation you feel the inhalation and exhalation. The feeling of the body disappears before the feeling of the breath does. First you are mindful of the body, and only then you feel that you are breathing. You experience inhalation and exhalation as physical activities. Gradually the body becomes silent; the body becomes calm; the body becomes still; the body becomes motionless; tranquillised, but you continue to breathe. Then you feel the breath in your mind, not in the body.

When the breath is coarse and crude it in fact is a bodily activity. But now the body is tranquillised, now the breath is directly felt by the mind. Now you begin to experience the mind, for the first time, Dear Dhamma Friends. The mind is properly experienced at this point -until then it was the body that we were experiencing and not the mind. Our life has been full of the body all this time - everywhere is the body - in the clothes it is the body; in the food you eat, and the drinks you consume. The body has them, the mind selects them, but all these are physical requirements. Everywhere the body is present. We do not see the mind, because the body spreads over everything. We give such a lot of emphasis to the body; it has spread its dictatorship everywhere; the entire life is covered by

the body. From morning till night; from the time we get up, till the time we go to bed and fall into a deep sleep, we call the body our life. Trying to fulfil the thousand-and-one requirements of the body has become your entire life.

Therefore where is the time or the break for you to even see that there is a mind? The mind is a very subtle thing. Therefore to see such a subtle mind you need a sharp mindfulness. You cannot establish such mindfulness if you presume that the rough and coarse activities of the body comprise the whole life. If you are busy you cannot see the mind, the body needs to be silent for this. During sleep the body also vanishes, you do not feel that there is a body, but there is no spiritual benefit here, because the mind is also sleeping. You cannot get a sleeping mind to do anything. When you are in a deep sleep the mind cannot see the mind because there is no mindfulness - that is the difference. In meditation, mindfulness is there; the body has stopped all its demands and at least temporally becomes serene. The body has taken a step back and has given way to let the mind reveal itself. You will be actually seeing the mind at this point. Until then we call the body the mind. Anger is felt by the body; so is sorrow. They are mental qualities, true. We look at a person and say he is in anger, another one is in sorrow. Though they are mental qualities, we judge them by looking at their bodies. Being happy or lamenting - both are considered with regard to the body.

Dear Dhamma Friends, for the first time the mind becomes visible when the veil of the body vanishes; when the mist of the body evaporates. The body vanishes. This doesn't mean the body is not there, but you do not experience any difficulty in regard to the body. Here what do

we mean by the body? Not the hair or any particular parts of the body - they are there as they were - what we lose here is the feeling of the *weight* of the body. That is the biggest problem we have with our body - we find it difficult to climb the stairs - the mass or the weight that we perceive of the body is not there for that moment.

‘*Kāya saṅkhāra*’ means all the activities of the body. All the demands of the body: it has to inhale, exhale; it claims it feels hungry; it shouts “thirsty!”; it becomes tired easily; it falls asleep; it wants to turn to this side and that side; it has to bathe; it says to comb the hair; it needs to go to toilet; it starts coughing - there is no end to the physical activities. All these demands become silent; become deeply silenced; that is what it means to say the body vanishes. It is not that the physical body disappears. There is no major problem with the physical body. The problem is the mass of the body and the bodily activities. By minimising the hindrances, when you go on meditating with more and more mindfulness on the inhalation and exhalation, the weight of the body and the feeling of the body by the mind are being gradually reduced.

Since the mind doesn’t pay much attention to the body anymore, the body gets slowly grounded; the body is no longer a mental activity; to beautify the body, maintain and take care of the body is not required at this moment - not for the entire life time, only for this moment. The mind lets go of maintaining the body for this moment. The wrong view that "maintaining the body is my only target" disappears for that moment; without our knowledge it gets unleashed; at that moment the mind is not carrying this body; the mind is so relaxed. Because of this - though

initially the body shows some resistance - in meditation, with the realisation of the benefits to the body, the body too becomes silent. Letting go of the habit of always shouting, the body becomes totally silent. Dear Dhamma Friends, all the physical activities related to the body are discontinued temporarily, during meditation.

Dear Dhamma Friends, in this way it dawns upon us that the body is not a problem anymore; at that moment the mind experiences an abundance of joy. The mind experiences this joy, simply because the ailment called the body is temporarily cured – no other reason. When you have a thorn in your foot, with every step you feel the pain; if the foot strikes somewhere it gives a pain; as soon as the thorn is pulled out, the entire pain is no more. A pleasure similar to that is experienced by the mind when it realises the thorn called the body is temporarily removed. The mind experiences a tremendous happiness, not because the mind has received anything, just because of the tranquillisation of the body. Then the body is not felt anymore; then you start feeling the mind; also you experience joy, happiness, lightness - all of them due to the fact that the sickness called the body is being cured.

When we are experiencing this supreme happiness, there is nothing more to experience, you start experiencing the pure mind. Until then you always see the emotions bound up with the mind. When we talk about any emotion, the body is there. Even if you are with closed eyes, with ears plugged, with the lips bitten together, so that you do not see anything, do not hear anything, do not smell anything, do not taste anything; if a thought comes you still automatically create mental formations. As soon as you remember a

person, his figure is formed. As soon as the figure is formed the eye gets stimulated. With closed eyes, if you remember a person you will see him. Think of a walking person and your eyes will start moving with the pace. The body is always at work, though we think the body is stationary, the body is working, getting attached to the thoughts.

### **Train to experience the reactions of mind**

At this point the body is totally silent; the body is totally relaxed; there is a pleasure experienced due to this. Then you see the mind which is experiencing comfort and pleasure. That is the next step in *Ānāpāna Sati* meditation, “*cittasaṅkhāra paṭisaṁvedī assasissāmīti sikkhati, cittasaṅkhāra paṭisaṁvedī passasissāmīti sikkhati*”. Until now we were experiencing the thoughts as the mind. Now we start to consciously experience what happens in the mind. You see that the mind is experiencing joy; see that the mind recognises that joy. At this moment you may get thoughts like “How good meditation is, I must meditate daily,” “What a joy!” “What a pleasure!” All these thoughts should be clearly identified. At this moment you should train yourself to see the activities of the mind clearly with every inhalation and exhalation; that is why it is called meditation. It doesn't happen automatically. You have to train yourself to experience the joy; train yourself to experience the joy with the inhalation; train yourself to see the mind that is experiencing pleasure; train yourself to see the mind, the thoughts in the mind, the joyful experiences the mind is having. The breath will continue to be felt. You will see the mind that is cohering because of the joy; the mind that is in joy because of meditation; the mind that is experiencing

pleasure because of meditation; the mind that is attached to meditation. You will see the desire of the mind; the mind that is meditating with enthusiasm.

### **Give a rest to the mind**

Next, Dear Dhamma Friends, you must train yourself to let go of the commotion of each and every thought –“*passambhayaṁ citta saṅkhāraṁ*.” Initially the mind is rough, now it is very delicate. The mind is now very subtle -much more subtle than the mind that was stuck to the body and was feeding, bathing and beautifying it like a servant. Now you can see a beautiful, soft and supple mind. But this mind is also coarse as it is clinging to the joy gained from meditation. The mind is not totally refined while it is thinking of pleasure, and feeling proud to have been released from the load of the body. That mind is also rough; that is also a mind with clinging. Understand this clearly; otherwise you will tend to get stuck at this point in meditation. We like to meditate; like to experience that feeling; as if our only aim is to reach a state of “Oh so light, as if the body is not there, there is pleasure in the mind,” so every day we sit in search of the experience of physical lightness and mental joy. Sometimes we reach that point; some days we may be not able to get that far - that is all our meditation is about.

This is a very short way along the journey, compared with the journey we started in order to go much further. When compared to that long journey, we are still at the beginning; have gone only one or two steps. It is as if you are satisfied thinking that, now my journey is complete, I have reached the destination. Therefore see this mind, the mind that is clinging to the joy derived from meditation.

By understanding this mind, you should not stop, try to let go of this mind too. Try to let go of the discontent of that mind. Try to train yourself with the intention of letting go with every inhalation and exhalation. Do not try to observe the inhalation and exhalation in order to experience more and more joy. Do not sit for meditation thinking that this mind which is attached to the joy is the ultimate thing. Until you reach that point, let that desire be there. If you want to go further, this attachment to the joy also should be seen as another attachment and you must let it go. If you try to cling to the joy, the pleasure, you will be anchored. The ship which started a voyage to cross the ocean has now anchored as soon as it left the harbour. The ship which left the harbour is now just floating aimlessly in the sea. This floating is very serene, but there is no going forward. The ship called meditation started on a long journey, but right at the beginning it became anchored. Therefore, train yourself to let go of the thoughts, and to keep aside even the thoughts that arise about the meditation and the experiences of meditation. The meditation is not to cling to or increase any thoughts.

This is very important, Dear Dhamma Friends, but not at the beginning. If we try to do this at the very beginning we might not be able to meditate at all. Therefore this instruction is introduced at the 3<sup>rd</sup> stage. So, you should be able to let go of the thoughts that arise about the pleasures of meditation. While letting go of the thoughts, focus your attention on the breath; being mindful of the inhalation and exhalation try to tranquillise the mind. '*Passambhayam cittasaṅkhāram*'- tranquillising the mental actions such as all the expectations and desires that are arising in the mind

at this moment, try to tranquillise the mind. Try to let go of the experiences of inhalations and exhalations and their memories. At this point, Dear Dhamma Friends, you begin to perceive the liberated mind.

First we experienced the body, then the breath. Then with the tranquillisation of the body we experienced joy and pleasure. With every inhalation and exhalation we experienced the mind which is in joy. We saw the mind that is in pleasure being liberated from the body. Then we saw the mind which is attached to the joy that is gained through meditation with inhalation and exhalation.

Now while letting go of these thoughts as well, we are inhaling and exhaling. At this point you experience the mind which does not collect any of these things. Start experiencing an empty mind. Now you do not think of anything. "How long have I been meditating?" "How much longer have I got to meditate?" "Now my mind is calm; now my breath is subtle; now my breath is long," we do not think any of these things. They have all been experienced and completed before. Now nothing of the sort is thought; there is an empty mind - '*cittapaṭisamvedī*' - the mind that has nothing. You train yourself to be precisely aware of the mind while inhaling and exhaling. This is very important.

## **The Illuminated mind**

Dear Dhamma Friends, it is usually the collection of thoughts that we call the mind. In our normal life we do not experience anything other than the thoughts as our mind. We always call the mind to the body or to the physical needs or feelings like hunger and thirst, or else thoughts and

emotions. Thoughts are about what happened in the past and the things to be done in the future. We always call all of these ‘the mind’. Having dropped all the thoughts about past and future, all such mental activities being tranquillised, like the sky without a single cloud, like a mirror without an image, the mind becomes visible - the mind which is like a lake without any waves, mud, colour, bubbles or weeds; it is unadulterated. It is pure; it is still. The mind becomes visible like that.

The mind, which is like a mirror without any images of good and bad, or beautiful and ugly, or black and white, emerges. A mind like an empty sky without a single cloud can be experienced. This is a state of mind. This is not *Nibbāna*. Most people might think “Now there is no problem here, so everything is completed now.” Why? Because there is no thought and thoughts were considered to be the problem. Therefore in meditation people try to stop thoughts, when they do not have thoughts they assume that it is *Nibbāna*. No, that is wrong. There is no connection between not having thoughts and *Nibbāna*. *Nibbāna* does not vanish because you get a thought; nor does it dawn just because you do not have thoughts. It is an action, an event, being blown-out. What you experience here is not *Nibbāna*. There is great calmness here. This experience can be called ‘composure’ - a state of that nature, where such a mind is experienced, we can call it an empty mind.....; without thinking of anything.....; like an empty sky.....; a mind like a lake without any wave.....; but the breath is felt; the only feeling is the breath; breath is experienced; this state can be called the one-pointed mind. At all other times, not only the breath is felt, the pleasure is there, and the thought of the joy of the pleasure is there.

Now, all the activities being tranquillised, only the breath is experienced - not a single thought. “*Samādaham cittam assasissāmīti sikkhati, samādaham cittam passasissāmīti sikkhati.*” The entire mind is now composed on the breath, with nothing less than one hundred per cent attention on the inhalation and exhalation. There is no past, no future, no hunger, no thirst, no sleepiness, and no tiredness - nothing of the sort - also there is no judging the meditation as good or bad. The mind is totally on the inhalation and exhalation: “*Samādaham cittam assasissāmīti sikkhati.*” You have to train yourself for this. If you just train yourself to let go of the thoughts, the mind will become composed on the breath. When you let go of all the expectations about the meditation, and any judging and comparisons, the mind *becomes* inhalation and exhalation. Then the breath and the mind become one and not two. At this point you can experience the breath as the breath, until then you felt the breath mixed with thoughts.

Dear Dhamma Friends, initially we experienced a great pleasure through the lightness of the body and the body becoming silent, at this point the mind too becomes totally light. The mind is a huge load. Thoughts are heavier than the body. You can walk carrying a load of about 25 or 50 kilos on your head, but can you do any work when you have a big problem in your head?

A job that you have to accomplish the next day, you have to complete it by the next day, and the thought as to whether you will be able to achieve it or not, is so heavy! You can't even sleep when you remember it. Thoughts are heavier than the body - that is the truth. Although thoughts cannot be seen, cannot be touched, cannot be measured in

terms of thickness, volume, length and breadth, thoughts are very heavy. Just think of the duties and responsibilities you are loaded with, don't you sigh even when you remember them? You feel a tremendous weight - since this mental load is there you don't feel the weight of the body. "*Passambhayam citta saṅkhāram*". At this point even the weight of the mind is totally kept aside. The only duty is to live moment to moment with inhalation and exhalation. That is all - there are no other targets, no other responsibilities; no weight. Then the *sutta* goes on to describe the joy that arises: "*Abhippamodayam cittam*" – it is incomparable to any other joy in life. "*Abhippamodayam*" is an unbelievable pleasure - not just pleasure - the word '*'promodaya'*' means a great joy, you use the word '*'modati'*' for joy. Now when you say '*'anumodanā'*', it means you become happy accordingly. '*Promodaya*' means pleasure beyond words. Because of the extra special joy, the mind gets attached to it, the mind becomes composed.

Then '*abhippamodayam*' means the maximum joy or pleasure. This is even greater than the joy that you experience by tranquillising the body. When the mind is calm, if we do not generate any thoughts and if we do not intentionally continue to think of something, if the mind becomes concurrent with the inhalation and exhalation, we start training ourselves to experience the joy that is felt by the composed mind with every inhalation and exhalation; with every inhalation and exhalation we train ourselves to be mindful. The satisfaction derived from a mind which is in total equanimity is great. By letting go of all comparisons and contradictory thoughts, the mind which is in total equanimity is truly enchanted. The composed mind is overflowing with joy.

Most people claim that everyone should have a teacher for meditation, but at a glance do we really need a teacher? When you are observing the breath you may not need a teacher, but when you are continuing step by step, Dear Dhamma Friends, if you are planning to go on until you reach the end, then you need some directions. Otherwise you might stop somewhere half-way and be happy thinking that you have reached the destination. Therefore if you want to reach the destination, at every step - whatever words you may use - you should know what to do next, and what should happen next. Clearly at every step, the main thing is to let go, not to cling to anything. This is very important in meditation, we are not trying to grab anything, similarly we are not trying to reject anything either. We let go; letting go and rejecting are two different actions.

We usually reject what we do not like. We snub, kick out or throw away what we do not like, but letting go does not mean pushing away in disgust. Things are good - very good, sweet - very sweet, tasty - really tasty, but if we try to cling to any of them we get stuck at that point. We presume that when we grab something that thing loses freedom. No - the person who grabbed that thing loses their freedom, not the thing; the person who grabbed loses freedom, the person who grabbed loses lightness.

Therefore, Dear Dhamma Friends, from beginning to end, you see what happens, and you let go of that; you train yourself to let go while inhaling and exhaling. Finally, you also let go of the joy and comfort derived from meditation. After realising and understanding them, you let them go. Even these experiences and even the thoughts of rejoicing should also be released. With that releasing, the

mind synchronises with the breath. At that point you will experience a great and deep fascination. When we say it is an empty mind, some might get the feeling it is a dull mind; no it is not a useless mind which cannot comprehend anything. It is a delightful mind full of joy and therefore a mind clear of tension. "*Abhippamodayaṁ cittaṁ assasissāmīti sikkhati, passasissāmīti sikkhati.*"

Dear Dhamma Friends, one could say that up to this point is concentration (*samatha*) meditation; then beyond this should be insight meditation (*vipassanā*). There cannot be a wall and a gate to draw the boundary, to show that this is concentration meditation and beyond this is insight meditation. But generally and superficially you could say that until you experience this deep fascination, you are developing concentration meditation (mindfully) and beyond that comes realisation, wisdom, or the path of insight. Please do not try to train yourself in these steps mechanically like walking up a stairway; continue the way it happens, giving importance to mindfulness. Get a vacation, go to a silent location, and try to cultivate this meditation. To establish these steps deeply in the mind, let us devote these 5 minutes, let us be committed.

## Meditation

*If you are feeling any tiredness, pain or discomfort, be aware of that discomfort mindfully. Be mindful of the discomfort. Experience the inhalation and exhalation, with the intention of reducing the discomfort in the body. . ....*

*With every inhalation and exhalation experience how the body is getting lighter and lighter.....*

*When the body is becoming lighter, experience the feeling of lightness of the mind.....*

*Experience the positive thoughts about meditation. While experiencing such thoughts, be mindful of inhalation and exhalation.....*

*By letting go of such thoughts as well, train yourself to tranquillise the mind to experience the real meaning of tranquillity. .....*

***Maybe for a moment you will experience only the inhalation or exhalation. The mind which does not wander, without any thought, at such a point, a mind totally concentrated, experiences a great joy.....***

***Learn to enjoy that delightful moment, while inhaling and exhaling.....***

***Comprehending what a profound lightness and bliss is hidden in this life, Dear Dhamma Friends; let us conclude today's meditation session.***

***May the Triple Gem bless all of you!***

## A VOYAGE WITH NO RETURN

Dear Dhamma Friends, we have been discussing and developing during the last few weeks a meditation practice which takes us to higher spiritual planes by developing the mind on a positive path. When we talk about *Ānāpāna Sati* meditation, the most common presumption people make is that it means ‘to be aware of breathing,’ which is not incorrect. But that is only the starting point. Having started there, we saw how subtle we can make the mind, how sharp we can make the mind to develop it. This is quite evident by the way the Lord Buddha explains the Perception of *Ānāpāna Sati*.

We discussed the *Ānāpāna Sati* perception, the meditation and the composure, step by step, and in general. We tried to meditate accordingly. Today we will be discussing the final episode and the final stages - the area of insight. What we discussed so far was not 100 per cent about composure, but aligned more towards it. Most of what we discussed falls within the field of composure. Lastly we discussed ‘*samādaham cittam*’, how the mind becomes properly composed; the mind becomes serene; there are no conflicts with contradictory views. ‘*Samādaham*’ does not mean exactly settlement, but something very close to it. There are no conflicts; it is a mind that has been resolved. The mind only starts wandering when there are conflicts. Just observe, whenever the mind wanders, there is a conflict. You want to read the paper, but another part of the mind wants to go for a walk. This inner disparity is

called the wandering mind and so the mind is not able to be concentrated. You want to listen but at the same time you are thinking about your journey home. There is a conflict; because of this conflict the mind is wandering. Eradicating all these conflicts of the mind, be it at the beginning, in the middle or at the end, the mind becomes totally composed; the mind becomes totally composed on the inhalation and exhalation.

This is something we have to train ourselves in - it does not happen automatically. We have to train ourselves with every step, with awareness and mindfulness. '*Sikkhati*' means 'to train' and it has implications of being obedient as well. But here the meaning is more towards being trained. One becomes learned this way; this should be studied. A student is someone who studies. So you train your mind to be totally composed while you are inhaling and exhaling. This is not merely experiencing the inhalation and exhalation. All you need to experience about the breath has been completed by now. However, Dear Dhamma Friends, when the mind is totally composed on the breath, there is nothing more to do in composing the mind. Beyond that is the door to Realization. Therefore, where the concentration ends, insight dawns. You could also say that insight starts where concentration ends. But you find insight everywhere, without which - without realisation, without comprehension and by being foolish - you cannot come so far. *Ānāpāna Sati* meditation has to be cultivated with understanding from the beginning. But initially more importance is given to tranquilising the mind, calming the mind and relaxing the mind.

If somebody wants, when the mind becomes composed, s/he can stop there and be a permanent resident and if they so wish, they can get rooted there and rest in peace. When we get a pleasant experience we tend to reside there; to try to stay there forever; to try to reach that point the next day too. Therefore whoever started the journey to go a long way is now residing at the beginning of the journey. It is as if you just go a little way along a path and when you come to a turning you stop, since you can experience pleasure there - it is better than the place you were before. Yes, that is true, but there is a long journey ahead and you need to go forward, otherwise you may fall back to the earlier position - that is the experience we have already had. It is really good at that moment - an unbelievable pleasure both to the mind and the body - but it might vanish in a moment, and you might fall back to your earlier position. The insight path does not take you backwards. Composure can take you backwards, not that you go intentionally, but it can happen. Worldly habits can pull you back, since the fetters are still there. It is like an elastic band: however much it is pulled, it comes back. No sooner our effort is weakened, the rubber band called defilements pulls us back to the beginning. This is a journey where you have to break all those defilements to go forward. Once they are broken, who would be able to pull us back? Nobody.

Insight is a vehicle for such journey with no return. When we call it 'a journey with no return' you might get alarmed, thinking it is not a good omen. But every one-way journey we think of is a return journey. Though we think death is a non-returning journey, it is a returning journey. That is why the prefix-'re' is used in the word 'rebirth' -'re'

means ‘again.’ Though we think death is a voyage with no return, you come back. If there is one journey with no return in the whole world, in the entire galaxy, it is the journey of insight. The path is the insight path. Any other path brings you back to the same point one day, after taking you in circles; in a maze. After taking so many turns, we come back to the starting point. Since it is a long circle we have forgotten that we were here before, and we feel that we have come to a new place. So we build a new house and reside there. It is the same old place, the same old land - maybe you use the same timber, the same door frames, the same roofing that was used for your previous houses - you build the new house in the latest design. We have forgotten - we think we are in a new house. So, like this we go from one house to another - all these are return journeys. Only the journey of insight is a journey of no return.

Dear Dhamma Friends, you should have that determination. We are meditating to travel on a one-way path. If you do not have that understanding and that determination, you may stop at the joy of meditative composure. Dear Dhamma Friends, it is a sublime pleasure. Cultivate and experience, train yourself to be in *Ānāpāna Sati* for some considerable time, then you can enjoy this first-rate pleasure. That pleasure is above all the comforts you can experience in the world.

You can stop there for some time, but you may have to leave unexpectedly. Maybe you will find yourself back at the beginning - that is why determination is very important. What is your aim? Not to be residing in such a place. On your way forward you must erase all your footprints - only if they are there can you find your way back. By the end, with

the cultivation of insight, the path and the follower both vanish. Then who is there to come back? No-one. What is the route to come back? There is no route. That is insight. At the end of insight, there is no-one who is practising. Who is practising insight meditation? There is no-one. That is the exquisiteness of insight. When you start on insight meditation, the meditation started by you will also one day make you vanish. We are using insight meditation for that, not to continuously perpetuate the same person. Why would you need insight meditation for that? Therefore if somebody travels this path to its end, you will be not able to find that person. Insight is simply described as impermanence, suffering and non-self. Non-self also means that the one who meditates does not remain.

Therefore Dear Dhamma Friends, without any external thought, any movement or any conflict, when you are totally focussed on the inhalation and exhalation and are composed on the breath, be mindful of that mind. Composed doesn't mean two things separately. So now the mind and the breath are one and the same. Initially we are mindful of the *breath* as they are two separate things - that is how we have to express ourselves. We are being mindful of the breath. That means breathing is one action and being observant is another. That is how the *Ānāpāna Sati* begins. We are mindful of the breath, which is elsewhere. The mind wanders to other places and comes back. Being with the breath is a pleasure. Finally the breath and the mind become one. The mind means the breath and the breath means the mind. Being composed is just that. Both become equated with each other, there is not even a slight difference between them - '*samādaham*' - no difference at all. At the point of '*samādaham*', you are totally engaged with the breath.

## Train to liberate the mind

Thereafter what do you have to do? Then you should realise with wisdom. What is there to realise? What should you train yourself in? It is not about composure now; you have already done that to the maximum. There may be other techniques to develop composure, not only Ānāpāna Sati - maybe even better methods. But this is the climax. The climax means the ultimate end. Now the meditator starts learning ("sikkhati") how to liberate the mind: "*vimocayam cittam assassisāmīti sikkhati, vimocayam cittam passasisāmīti sikkhati.*" Train yourself, educate yourself to liberate your mind with every inhalation and exhalation. This is very important.

Now the mind is totally bonded with the breath, it is an addiction to an extent. You are being trained to liberate your mind from that addiction too. What is there to let go of? The attachment to the breath, the lightness you are experiencing at that moment, whatever, whatever you are experiencing at that moment. You train yourself to let go of whatever you are experiencing with every inhalation and exhalation, to liberate your mind. '*Vimocayam cittam*': You train yourself to liberate your mind from whatever the mind is bonded with at that moment, with every inhalation and exhalation. You should not let the mind bind itself to, cling to, hug or be rooted to anything. Dear Dhamma Friends, you train yourself to liberate your mind from whatever the mind becomes bonded with, whatever the mind is clinging to or whatever the mind is entangled with at that moment, with every inhalation and exhalation. See whether you can create a space in the mind with every inhalation and exhalation.

This exercise is essential, Dear Dhamma Friends, when you are sitting for *Ānāpāna Sati* practice. Moreover this is a very good habit which should be practised, which should be exercised and which should be studied even in daily life. What is the knowledge we gain from it? When the mind gets entangled in anything, if the mind is trying to get involved in some problem, as soon as you realise this, you can use this knowledge, this ability to liberate your mind from that.

If your mind gets entangled in some problem while inhaling, train yourself to let go of that within that inhalation itself, and do not carry it even to the next inhalation. That is the most important message here. Do not let these bonds stay for days, months or years and let them go on growing in the mind - let each one go with the same breath. That is wisdom. That is a skill. Getting stuck is not a skill. It just happens - things just get bonded, get glued together, get entangled, get stuck, get intertwined and get tied together. None of these are skills. The skill is to know that your mind is getting bonded, glued, stuck or entangled at that very moment and to liberate your mind as soon as possible. This is the capability you should cultivate. That is the skill. In this meditation we build that skill. Getting entangled with something - particularly with a joyful experience - happens without any intention, mechanically and without awareness. Therefore you need a special training for this; to be able to let go of such clinging and aversions with awareness. If you experience any slavery, train yourself to let go of that, in the same inhalation or exhalation.

## Train to experience nothing is permanent

Next comes, “*Aniccānupassī assasissāmīti sikkhati, aniccānupassī passasissāmīti sikkhati*”, experiencing, according to impermanence, here there is a particular view: ‘*anupassati*’. ‘*Aniccānupassī*’ – ‘*anupassi*’ means to look accordingly, look with this view, not to be just thinking. Train yourself to investigate from the point of view of impermanence while inhaling and exhaling. What do you investigate in this way? Whatever you experience at that moment, whatever happens at that moment, nothing else, nothing that happens elsewhere, nothing that happened in the past, nothing that could happen in the future. Whatever happens in this moment, whatever it is, is immaterial. Whether it is gold or rubbish it doesn’t matter, whatever - good or bad - is not important, beauty or ugliness is not important, it is not necessary to analyse whether it is joy or misery. Whatever happens here is viewed as impermanent - it was not there before, now it is there. This statement itself implies impermanence - it cannot be forever. If it were forever, it would have been there in the past, it would be here now in the present moment, and it would continue to be there in the future. But it is not so.

There were no sounds before; the mind was not calm like this before. This inhalation was not there before. This exhalation was not there before. All the inhalations in the past are over; the inhalation at this moment is also impermanent. It was not there before, now it is there, in the next moment it will not be there. The exhalation at this moment too is impermanent. The exhalation has never been like this before, in the whole life in the past, nor will it ever be like this again in the future. This breath will change;

the person who breathes will also change. Everything is changing. You train yourself to see everything with the view of impermanence in every inhalation and exhalation. Everything that is there - whether there is pleasure, whether there is comfort, whether there is peace, whether there is joy – you see all of them as impermanent, without dreaming about having them forever. Without having the immature expectation that the same experience will happen again during the next sitting for meditation, all these views and backdrops change with the next episode. You should not try to establish the same screen, the same stage, the same backdrop or the same setting with every episode - they all change, we cannot retain them. The impermanent nature of all these things, the fact that they cannot exist forever, that they are temporary and time-bound, should be viewed with every inhalation and exhalation. You train yourself and educate yourself in this way.

You train yourself to see the uncertainty of your being there, or not, for the next inhalation. Similarly, you train yourself to observe the uncertainty of being able to progress onto further steps in every inhalation and exhalation. Train yourself to accept that the joy, happiness, pleasure and bliss you experienced through being mindful with the breath, are also experiences that change, topple and vanish, with every inhalation and exhalation. All those colourful, glamorous physical and mental pleasures exist only for as long as their essential causes and components exist. When these reasons and components change, all the created pleasures vanish. When you are trained to observe in this manner, you become deeply silent and internally unanimous, which is a serene state far beyond the ones you were enjoying before.

## Train not to be attached to anything

‘*Virāgānupassī assasissāmīti sikkhati, virāgānupassī passasissāmīti sikkhati*’ - you train yourself to see according to the *virāgā* view. *Virāgā* means not being attached. You do not decorate your mind with anything. When you cling to something, your thoughts build up accordingly. See when you cling to a song, your mind is full of the perception of that song. If you cling to some food, then you get your mind decorated by that taste. If you cling to something the mind gets formed accordingly. The mind gets formed according to each and every thing that you get attached to. Your mind is not pure. The mind is like water, which takes on the shape and the colour of the vessel. The mind that is coloured and shaped according to lust obscures the pure mind. If you look with lust you see a world full of lust. Desire changes you. It decorates the world you see. Therefore ‘*rāga*’ is creating decorations according to the object that you get attached to. In this meditation you train yourself not to get decorated by anything, you train yourself not to get coloured by anything, you train yourself to be transparent, while inhaling and exhaling. You try to preserve the mind in its original form, the pure mind, colourless mind, shapeless mind, unadulterated mind.

You try to observe while inhaling and exhaling, without allowing the mind to be spoilt by anything. The mind can be spoilt. Dear Dhamma Friends, there is nothing that gets spoilt as fast as the mind, none of these outfits would get ruined that fast, not even the shoes that we are wearing. It does not take much time for the mind to get ruined, maybe just one second is enough, or in one breath the entire mind could be ruined. Therefore we train

ourselves to clean the mind with every inhalation and exhalation. ‘*Virāgānupassi*’- like that we train ourselves to eradicate desire from the mind with every inhalation and exhalation. We try to be without lust - we are usually with lust. When we have our meals, we do so with desire. We look at food with desire, we look at clothes with desire, we watch TV with desire, we read newspapers with desire, we associate with friends with desire, and we linger in parks and flower gardens with desire – everywhere, we are with desire. This is the *Samsāric* habit. You recreate the past and build castles for the future, with lust.

Now for the first time in life we train ourselves to see without lust. One might think that nobody would have desire in breathing. But the depth of desire for breathing can be seen in a person who is drowning in water. You would be ready to give away all your possessions for a single breath. We always inhale with the desire to exhale and we exhale with the desire to inhale. In this meditation we train ourselves to breathe without desire. Observe the expectation to breathe after one exhalation. Breathing does not happen unintentionally. It happens intentionally and with desire.

### **Train to stop the wandering mind**

Next comes, ‘*nirodhānupassī assasissāmīti sikkhati, nirodhānupassī passasissāmīti sikkhati*.’ ‘*Nirodhaya*’ means to extinguish. ‘*Rodha*’ means a wheel, which goes on rolling downhill, if brakes are not applied. ‘*Nirodha*’ is like applying brakes. It stops the wheel. You train yourself not to be agitated about anything. You train yourself not to just carry on without stopping with every inhalation and exhalation.

You train yourself not to become even with the meditation while inhaling and exhaling. You may think that you have been meditating for a long time, now I have only a little more to go, even this is being possessive. You train yourself not to be like that. This is something we need to specifically train ourselves in, Dear Dhamma Friends. We should train in all these aspects with utmost effort - it is not easy, but it can be achieved. It doesn't happen just because you are composed on the breath. You have to be committed, and to train with paramount effort and mindfulness. When you see things with a view of *nirodha*, 'you hear a sound.... now it is not there.....' there is nothing beyond that. We do not revolve with it any longer by making it into a wheel or a vehicle. We hear the sound, it ends, that is it, and we are still. We feel sensations, we have thoughts, and we do not travel with them. We train ourselves not to project an 'ego' into future, with a desire neither to become nor to abolish, with the present experience.

### **Return to the owner**

'*Paṭinissaggānupassī assasissāmīti sikkhati, paṭinissaggānupassī passasissāmīti sikkhati.*' Now you train yourself to have the view of letting go and discarding things. Now this is very important, Dear Dhamma Friends: whatever things you consider to be yours and hold onto as yours should be handed back, one by one, to the owner. At this point even the breath does not belong to us. It belongs to nature. Train yourself to let go of the things belonging to nature which we thought of with ego as ours. We do not meditate to grab anything, not to cling to anything; we train ourselves to discard things. Let go of the perception that

you are a meditator. '*Paṭinissaggānupassī*' - the perception that we had, that we are meditators, is over with this. The person who went to a silent location and sat down with crossed legs and with an upright back has come a long way. If you still continue to be with that person, you might have to go back. It is like a swing: however much you go upwards, that much you will have to go back down. Therefore - '*paṭinissaggānupassī*' - let go, discard, train yourself to think and perceive accordingly. Let go of the meditator. Let go the perception that I am a meditator. That is the most difficult thing - you can let go of all the external things but will still want to think "I am meditating. I am practising *Ānāpāna Sati* meditation. I came all this way. How much effort did I put in? How committed was I to eradicating all these ownerships, letting go of all my attachments, discarding all clinging, all pride? Train to let go of "I," in every inhalation and exhalation. 'Meditation without a meditator' continues at this moment. Where is the meditator? Stop creating a history of meditation, hand over the past to the past.

Dear Dhamma Friends, we discussed the ten perceptions that were disclosed and explained by the Lord Buddha to Monk *Ānanda*, according to our limited knowledge, taking each one of them in turn - the last one is *Ānāpāna Sati*. Today we discussed the final stages of that. As we initially mentioned, we used the *Satipaṭṭhāna* and *Ānāpāna Sati* discourses as well, in addition to the *Girimānanda* discourse, in our explanations. The *Girimānanda* discourse ends here: The Lord Buddha says to Monk *Ānanda*, learn these ten perceptions, and go and recite them just as you heard them - without exaggerating - to Monk *Girimānanda*, who as you said is sick, ailing, bedridden and ill. On hearing them, Monk *Girimānanda* will be cured.

Monk Ānanda recited the ten perceptions he had learned from the Lord Buddha, just as he had heard them, to Monk *Girimānanda*. This is a special skill Monk Ānanda possessed - a unique quality: he would not inflate, would not reduce, would not add, would not edit, would not cut and chop, would not exaggerate, like a very modest journalist, although journalists are not usually modest. Anyway, Monk Ānanda, like a modest journalist, went and recited what the Lord Buddha had said, to Monk *Girimānanda*, with a lot of compassion - not like just reading a report. It was also with compassion that Monk Ānanda invited the Lord Buddha to go and see Monk *Girimānanda* in the first place, saying that he was sick. The ten perceptions were recited with the same compassion. Then by listening to the ten perceptions, the Monk *Girimānanda* was cured of the sickness and became totally well. That is the story of the *Girimānanda* discourse.

Dear Dhamma Friends, we were discussing the gist of this for about a year - the interior of the *Girimānanda* Discourse. Today we discussed the last five stages of *Ānāpāna Sati* meditation.

We saw how to train yourself to liberate your mind; to see the changing nature of things; to see that nothing is permanent; not to get attached to anything; not to allow the mind to be decorated by anything and to be with *virāga*. And then to train yourself not to travel along with anything but to stop then and there, and finally to let go of all the self-exaggerations and then to discard even the meditator. Let go as well of the fact that there was such a person. Let go of that perception, that view, and that opinion.

Therefore Dear Dhamma Friends, this is not a dogma, this is a practical thing, not a pure science but an applied skill, something that can be achieved, that can be made use of. You and I have experienced these things to some extent, but you can go deeper and deeper. Find time for this, do not postpone it, find a relaxed time, and experience this. It is not like climbing a stairway. Let the mind become subtle; become sharp. With mindfulness, try to identify the sensations while inhaling and exhaling, examine clearly all that you identify, and just discard - let go. Without trying to cling to anything, try to let go. Experience the lightness in letting go, experience how the mind is getting attached to that lightness, and then let go of that attachment too.

Next week Dear Dhamma Friends we will try to re-visit the entire *Ānāpāna Sati* process simply and concisely, stage by stage. In the meantime try to cultivate this meditation. You can do it at home or anywhere. If you can find some leisure time, it is something very valuable to do, if possible for two days, a week or even a month. With that determination let us be attentive for some time on the topics that we discussed today, let us meditate a little on those topics.

## Meditation

*See the wandering mind .....*

*See whether you feel that you are inhaling.....,*

*and that you are exhaling.....*

*The importance we give to the sounds we hear reduces.....*

*When the importance becomes less and less it becomes just a physical hearing...*

*The mind is with the inhalation and exhalation.....*

*Whatever is experienced by the mind, is existing for only a moment...*

*That was not there in the previous moment, now it is there, and it may not be there in the next moment.....*

***Why should we get attached to something which is so short-lived?***

***Train yourself not to be attached to anything while inhaling and exhaling.....***

***Meditation is not for attachment.....***

***Cultivate the meditation on mindfulness of breathing, with a determination to develop wisdom. With the question, Dear Dhamma Friends, as to how much we can practise this wisdom in our day-to-day life, we will conclude today's meditation program.***

***May the Triple Gem bless all of you!***

## SUMMARY

Dear Dhamma Friends, the breath that was used to create unlimited expectations, and to chase those never-ending hopes, is now being used in meditation to stop that journey. The breath that was used for suffering is now being used to eradicate suffering. The breath that secretly provided the energy to give life to never-ending desires and brought misery to us – is now being used to enlighten life, to eradicate misery, to overcome suffering and to establish inner peace in this life itself.

That is *Ānāpāna Sati* meditation or the composure on *Ānāpāna Sati*. We have been discussing and analysing *Ānāpāna Sati*, the last perception of the *Girimānanda* discourse, for the last few weeks. Today we are trying to summarise all that we have discussed and to present concisely, with a step by step approach, how to start and to progress on *Ānāpāna Sati* meditation according to the *Girimānanda* discourse, *Satipaṭṭhāna* discourse and *Ānāpāna Sati* discourse.

Dear Dhamma Friends, the most important aspect here is that there are three different actions that can be taken with regard to the breath:

One is to just forget whether we are breathing or not, whether we are beings that breathe. We can just forget this and carry on as we have been doing so far. The body will inhale and exhale. When we are running, the body will

inhale accordingly; when we are carrying things, the body will inhale accordingly; when our mind becomes agitated again the body will inhale and exhale accordingly. There is no need for us to be concerned about it; we can carry on going on our path. That is the first method, living mechanically.

The second one is to consider the breath as the only life force. The breath supplies the life force for every desire. You cannot fulfil any desire without the breath. To fulfil any desire the breath has to be there. Dear Dhamma Friends, to fulfil any expectation the breath has to be there. Therefore, there evolved a view, science, or technique that claims, since the breath is the life force of desire, we can control desire by controlling the breath. This is called '*Prānayāma*'. This is a yoga exercise. We are aware that the Bodhisattva Siddhartha also practiced these exercises. The Buddhist texts say that he developed '*apranaka dhyāna*'. The expectation was to control the breath in order to control and manage the desire that we cannot see and know, because it is the breath that gives life to desire. With this view and attitude, a doctrine was formed in the world, called '*Prānayāma*'. There are some exercises in this, where the four stages (inhaling, holding the breath, exhaling and pausing before inhaling again) are controlled or done in a rhythmic way.

Dear Dhamma Friends, by doing these exercises you can control the body very well and very quickly. When you are tired, if you try to breathe intentionally and deliberately, you can eradicate the tiredness very quickly. Similarly you can strengthen your body. You can give strength to your physical body by controlling your breathing according to a rhythm - you can even cure some sicknesses, and can make yourself immune to them.

Not only the body, Dear Dhamma Friends - one can even control the mind through inhalation and exhalation. By controlling the breath one can improve the memory power which is an intellectual property of the mind. By taking one or two deep breaths, you can reduce the restlessness of the mind and make the mind more relaxed, and then if you concentrate on something, it will be easier to remember. These exercises were used to develop intelligence and to understand better as well. There is so much research going on in the world to understand the benefits gained by controlling the breath for the betterment of the mind.

Also you can use the breath to control emotions. In an instance where you have become emotional – perhaps you are upset, angry, frightened or oppressed by desire - if you concentrate on the breath, and if you breathe in a rhythm or in a harmonious sequence, then these emotions can be suppressed temporarily. When the mind is restless, by controlling the breath, the mind can be calmed down. Therefore to control emotions, to control suffering and to cultivate the power of recollection, you can use the breath.

You can even control your life span. That is another science by itself. There is a limited number of times our heart and lungs can work. This is determined at birth itself. It can be changed, but there is an overall maximum number of times a heart can beat. Then, as we all know, when the mind gets restless all these organs start working faster. Therefore, when you become agitated, your life span becomes shorter, because the limit of the number of times that the heart can beat is reached faster. On the other hand, by practising mindfulness and when the mind is calm, the heartbeat slows

down, which thereby increases the life span of the person. This phenomenon is true for all the organs in the body and every cell in the body. This is not the only reason - there are some other external factors which determine the life span - but this is one of them. Anyway, by controlling the breath the life span can be controlled.

Likewise, you can control many things in life by controlling the breath. That is how the controlling of the breath became a spiritual exercise - the yogis of an earlier era treated it as a form of meditation. But in the end, however much you control the life span, you cannot overcome death. That is certain.

You cannot say whether it will be in one year or two years. We talk of miracles - yogis who live in the Himalayas for 500, 1000 or even 2000 years. We are very impressed to hear these stories, but they have not overcome death. You can extend your life span with these exercises, it is a very clear scientific phenomenon, but they are defeated at death. They have not conquered death. Controlling something and being victorious are two different things. Dear Dhamma Friends, the one who controls loses in the end – they cannot win. Therefore, when you try to control your life with all these yoga exercises, you become a regulator, and that becomes within your control, but in the end you are defeated.

A husband can control the wife; a wife can control the husband; both of them can control the children; children may try to control the parents; teachers may control students; students might try to control teachers; a country can control its people, but one day all these fail, since there is

a limit up to which anybody can control, so when you exceed the limit you fail. You can postpone some of the conditions, but one day those postponed conditions start to become active - this cannot be stopped by anybody. Therefore the regulator becomes a failure. So, however many benefits you gain through all these yoga exercises, when it comes to liberation, Dear Dhamma Friends, they create a loser and not a successful person. Someone may control all his desires, but one day he will become a failure.

Controlling anger is one thing, overcoming anger is another thing. Controlling misery is one thing; overcoming misery is a totally different thing. This is the second way the breath can be treated. Controlling the breath is a totally different doctrine - a well-developed doctrine, compared with the numerous religious doctrines in the world, the yoga doctrine which is centred on the breath is a precious doctrine, since it took human beings to a considerable height by giving them a power of their own, from the low position of blind faith, where they were just praying to an unknown creator for their liberty. That science, that vision is a very precious doctrine.

Even the Seeker Siddhartha Gautama took this science to its limits. Nobody could tell whether he was breathing or not, most of them thought he was dead - he could control his breath to that extent. Dear Dhamma Friends, you can control your breath to an extent that no-one else can be aware of, and not even the latest instruments can measure. There were yogis in the past who could do this, there are yogis even today who can do this, they have even taken part in some experiments, but the instruments for checking the inhalation and exhalation could not say

whether they were inhaling or exhaling. All the readings confirmed that they were dead, as if the instruments were fixed to dead bodies, there was no heartbeat. Then after some time they all got up. Seeker Siddhartha Gautama could also reach these heights. Everybody thought he was dead, thought it was all over, but his consciousness (*viññāṇa*) was fully active. His consciousness realised that this is not real liberation. Even if you achieve this state - you can be like a corpse if you want to be - all the senses which create desire can be 'killed,' and the world thought that is liberation, even today it may think like that, but the Lord Buddha realised that the consciousness is active with desire. It is not in the body, it is in the mind. Desire is not in the ear but in the mind. Desire is not in the tongue, not in the nose, not in the body, it is related to the consciousness, in the mind.

Therefore even if all the senses are sedated, the sedated consciousness is active with desire. Like polar bears. During the winter time they are like corpses, but come springtime they are the same dangerous bears, who can kill anybody. Our desires, the defilements and emotions in the mind are similar to this. The Lord Buddha realised this, that this is not liberation; this is not the end of desire - not the full stop. I have not defeated discontent. I can only control - controlling and conquering are two different things. At that point, there was no-one to ask; no-one from whom to get some advice. He had gone to everyone who could advise him and had practiced what they taught to the maximum; had gone to the end of their teachings; had gone almost to the end of being- that is the word used by the Lord. He had gone to the nearest decimal of the end point of life, but still that decimal point is inside life and not beyond. Now what to do? Whom to ask? Who could be his teacher? When

he was pondering upon this matter without a decision he remembered when he was small, on a Vap ceremony day, in his father's field, how he was sitting outside with crossed legs, and how he was watching his breath coming in and going out. This watching was a new thing, it was an original experience, and nobody had asked him to do it. Normally you either forget it, thinking, "Why should I think about these things? Better to just be happy, to enjoy life," (this is known as '*kāmasukhallikānuyoga*'), or by trying to control everything (this is known as '*attakilamathānu yoga*'). Rejecting both extremes he started to be watchful, be mindful. Seated under the Bo-tree, in that silent environment, he continued to practice mindfulness.

That is the birth story of *Ānāpāna Sati*. By not going to the two extremes he won. We say he won the '*Māra* battle'; that he defeated '*Māra*' - whatever the word used, he became a non-loser. Therefore when *Upaka* asked him 'Are you a winner'? Are you a '*jina*'? The Lord answered, 'Yes I am a winner in the true sense of the word - not an ordinary winner, but an infinite winner, who will never be a loser, and I achieved this not by controlling or ignoring but by being fully aware and mindful'.

The Lord Buddha is recommending us to cultivate this *Ānāpāna Sati* composure, since it has many valuable benefits. If someone cultivates this one and only *Dhamma*, that person can eradicate suffering in that moment itself. And if s/he cannot do so then and there, before long s/he will be able to, certainly at death - for sure - because a person who is used to being mindful on the breath can exhale the last breath mindfully without any problem. Usually this is the problem: when you realise that this is the last breath

everybody gets really scared. Just imagine a person who is drowning, how frightened would they be? When you, yourself realise that you will not be able to breathe again, you will start shouting out in death fear. This will be the same situation with the last breath - you still have the desire to have another breath, you still have a thousand-and-one desires to fulfil once you get that next breath, therefore, all those desires riot for one more in-breath, but without being given a chance, you die. That is the death pain. That is the suffering at death. Then the person who dies without being able to take one more breath, will try taking that breath in some other birth - that is how life is carried on. But a person who has been practising *Ānāpāna Sati* will be able to realise that this is the last breath, and will very calmly accept the last exhalation without any expectation and hope.

Once when the Lord Buddha was discussing about the Contemplation on Death, he asked the monks how they were practising it. All of them explained how they were practising, in different ways. He did not criticise them, but finally when one monk said that he always assumes that he is breathing in his last breath, the Lord Buddha exclaimed happily and said this is the best way to practise Contemplation on Death.

The life force is in the breath. Breath makes the life force continue. Who can say for sure that this is not the last breath? Who can certify that it is not? We assume that we have so many more breaths before us, and have a mountain of expectations built on that to fulfil in our life. At that moment - when that breath becomes the last breath - that person falls down that mountain. Who can tell what will happen in the next breath? We only know for sure that we

are breathing now and only now – no-one can be assured of the next breath. If somebody practises *Ānāpāna Sati* with such a perception of letting go, the Lord Buddha guarantees that this person can end this suffering. If not during this lifetime, at least at the moment of death or just before death that person is sure to be victorious over suffering. That person can leave this life as a victorious person; not as a failure. Who is giving this guarantee? The infinite victor - The Lord Buddha - not just somebody who is quoting from a book, not somebody who has learnt from someone else and gone halfway, not a messenger for someone else - the person who used the breath until the end to eradicate suffering and who became infinitely victorious is giving us this guarantee. The Lord Buddha advises us with great compassion to be aware of the breath, let the breath be your meditation object, and then you can win, you too can be victorious. While you are engaged in a thousand-and-one responsibilities and liabilities, if you try to be mindful of your breath, at least in your last breath you will succeed. You will not fail.

In this society, where you cannot imagine how to be without TV, without your friends or without your phone, Dear Dhamma Friends, only a person who has such an inspiration will be able to get away from all those attractions and find an isolated place, even temporarily. Such a person will find an isolated place - either in a meditation centre, or a forest, or beneath a tree, or in an empty room. Having found such a place they will go there and sit down with crossed legs. We discussed how the sitting posture - with an upright upper body - is essential for this meditation, because we should not keep on changing the posture, so that posture will look after

you. You do not have to be concerned about the posture, '*pallaṅkam ābhujitvā*' being in a cross-legged position, have the upper-part of the body upright, then the body will not tend to bend or become crooked. Then give importance to mindfulness ('*parimukham satiṁ*'). Give all importance to being mindful, not to anything else. We are not trying to fly, we are not trying to concentrate our mind - just be mindful, just make an effort to be mindful. So, bring mindfulness to the fore. Giving importance to mindfulness - '*so sato va assasati sato passasati*' - mindfully inhale; mindfully exhale. By being like that, first give attention to the calmness of the environment and let the mind become tranquil.

Let the mind be a part of the calm environment. Thereafter bring your awareness to the posture - the upright upper body and the sitting posture with crossed legs. Let the mind be attached to the body. If you do not feel the breath, mindfully inhale and exhale. Be attentive. Intentionally identify and distinguish between what is inhalation and what is exhalation, like a guard standing at a door who wants to know who is going in and going out.

When you are with the breath like this, you will notice some breaths take a long time to enter, some are fast. Some are slow, some take a long time. Similarly some exhalations are fast and some take a long time. Try to observe these differences with every inhalation and exhalation. "*Dīgham vā assasanto, dīgham assasāmīti pajānāti, dīgham vā passasanto, dīgham passasāmīti pajānāti.*" When the in-breath is long know that the in-breath is long, when it is short know that it is short. This will not be evident at once. When you are observant for some time you will realise that this inhalation is long. Gradually, when the mind and

the body become calm and tranquil you do not need a long breath. Then, “*rassam vā assasanto, rassam assasāmīti pajānāti.*” If the breath is short, you know – “*pajānāti*” - that the breath is short.

Next, “*sabbakāya paṭisamvēdi assasissāmīti sikkhati, sabbakāya paṭisamvēdi passasissāmīti sikkhati.*” Breathing involves the entire body. Therefore you must be mindful of the entire body during every inhalation and exhalation. Now you have completed just knowing the inhalation and exhalation. You know the inhalation and exhalation separately and completely. There is no secret in that. There is no doubt about that. Therefore experience the entire body with every inhalation and exhalation - you have to train yourself in this. “*Sabbakāya paṭisamvēdi assasissāmīti sikkhati*”: train yourself in that manner.

If the sensation of breath ceases or becomes irregular you have to be just mindful and know what is happening at that moment. If you are breathing know that you are breathing, if the breath is irregular know it is irregular. If you do not feel the breath know that you do not feel it. Then you can pay attention to the entire body; all the physical processes of the body, and see that all of those sensations are tranquilised. You have to train yourself in this with every inhalation and exhalation. If you have any discomfort in any part of your body, pay attention to that part and train yourself to tranquilise that discomfort with every inhalation and exhalation. “*Passambhayaṁ kāya saṅkhāram assasissāmīti sikkhati, passambhayaṁ kāya saṅkhāram passasissāmīti sikkhati.*” Both in the inhalation and in the exhalation train yourself to tranquilize the entire body - this is a training process. When the entire body is

tranquilized in this manner, you experience a tremendous joy and you do not have to think about the body or bodily needs such as thirst, hunger, going to the toilet, sweating, or needing to change the posture – nothing. No tiredness, no sickness, no cough.

All these physical disturbances and requirements have been tranquillized. “*passambhayam kāya saṅkhāram*”. When that happens what a joy you will experience! Dear Dhamma Friends, train yourself to experience that joy in every inhalation and exhalation. “*Pītipaṭisamvēdī assasissāmīti sikkhati, pītipaṭisamvēdī passasissāmīti sikkhati.*” The pleasure you experience from that joy is a mental condition. What a joy to the mind! Experience that pleasure. It is not a happiness gained by thinking. Even if you are not thinking, what a joy is there! Train yourself to experience that joy in inhalation and exhalation. “*Sukhapaṭisamvēdī assasissāmīti sikkhati, sukhaṭipasamvēdī passasissāmīti sikkhati.*”

Dear Dhamma Friends, this is an exercise which you should train yourself in step by step by sharpening mindfulness; therefore, you should be mindful at every step. Meditation is neither just to be with the breath nor just to concentrate on the breath. *Ānāpāna Sati* meditation is a voyage with awareness, not for you to linger at one point - you should go forward. We are discussing the main junctions on this voyage. There may be numerous by-roads, small junctions - they are not shown on this route map. If you tried to mark all the by-roads - every tree and every pillar - you would have to draw a map on the same scale as that country or that village. You cannot do that. Only the main points we need to follow to avoid getting lost are marked on the map. The *Ānāpāna Sati* perception in

the *Girimānanda* discourse, as well as in the *Ānāpāna Sati* discourse is a route map of that nature - it gives only the main points for a meditator to follow to avoid getting lost. Therefore when you progress in your meditation you may encounter different experiences which were not discussed here. Do not give much importance to them, do not cling to them, do not stop at them, do not think that they are wrong, and do not think that you are going astray, but recognise them. As soon as you recognise them, let go and progress on your path.

Initially we experience breathing throughout our body and then we come to a point where we do not feel the body anymore, at that point the breath is felt by the mind. Thereafter, the breath will be recognised by the mind; the breath becomes something felt by the mind. Therefore, next the mind will experience the joyful mind in inhalation and exhalation: "*Citta saṅkhāra paṭisamvedī assasissāmīti sikkhati, citta saṅkhāra paṭisamvedī passasissāmīti sikkhati.*" You start to experience the mental processes in every inhalation and exhalation. The mind that is in joy, that is in happiness, that expects that happiness, can be experienced in every inhalation and exhalation. In every inhalation and exhalation be aware of the mind, how is the mind at this moment, not the breath. You have completed experiencing the breath by now. Every time you breathe, you use the breath as a bridge, a mirror or a viewpoint to see the mind. Initially you experienced the breath, and then you experienced the body; now you experience the mind. With this experience train yourself to let go of all mental actions, do not linger with them.

Do not get into the habit of thinking of something continuously. In the meditation, let go of every thought; let go of the thoughts about joy; let go of the thoughts about whether the mind is concentrated or not. “*Passambhayam cittasaṅkhāram assasissāmīti sikkhati, passambhayam cittasaṅkhāram passasissāmīti sikkhati.*” All those mental thoughts, mental actions and expectations about making progress in meditation should be tranquilized. In every inhalation and exhalation do not try to continue being. Try to be calm. By letting go, you will be able to experience the mind which is without any movement, peaceful and unstirred. “*Cittapaṭisamvēdī assasissāmīti sikkhati, cittapaṭisamvēdī passasissāmīti sikkhati.*” We can experience just the mind, the pure mind, the brilliant mind, and realise that all this time what we experienced was not the mind itself, but the *thoughts* that we mistook for the mind. Up ‘til now we called thinking, reacting and the emotions ‘the mind.’ Train yourself to experience the mind - which is brilliant - without any reactions, thoughts, or views, in every inhalation and exhalation.

Not feeling the breath is not an achievement in meditation. The breath might get finer and finer, but in every such fine inhalation the entire life story is there. Try to read that story, page by page, from one inhalation to another, from one exhalation to another. The story called ‘you’ can be read. Read the story called ‘I’. At that point the mind discards all morning work and all night work, all overtime work, all unnecessary work, and when the mind becomes so relaxed, what a joy! It is not a joy, it is nature – an utmost awakening – bliss - try to experience that bliss. Try to experience this sublime awakening with every inhalation and exhalation. There is nothing to think about

now, the meditator has become a river of ecstasy, since there is no story about the body, there is no story about the mind - both are silent; both are tranquilised. What a blissful state it can be with such tranquillity! “*Abhippamodayam cittam assasissāmīti sikkhati, abhippamodayam cittam passasissāmīti sikkhati.*” Train yourself to experience this sublime happiness in every inhalation and exhalation. This is not by praying, just by letting go of thinking and building. In this manner when the mind becomes a fountain of happiness, a river of joy, an ocean of bliss, the mind does not need any external objects. The mind will not wander anywhere since now the joy the mind was searching for is found within. Usually the mind wanders in search of happiness. Now the mind has a hundred or a thousand times more happiness than it seeks, therefore the mind will never go astray again. “*Samādaham cittam assasissāmīti sikkhati, samādaham cittam passasissāmīti sikkhati.*” The mind becomes completely tranquil. The mind comes into total equilibrium. Be composed. You train yourself to be totally tranquil with every inhalation and exhalation.

At this point we declared that this is the end of *Samatha*, Concentration meditation, though no-one can draw a line, and all long you should have mindfulness and wisdom. But to make a demarcation, this is the maximum *Samatha* can achieve. From this point onwards it is totally *Vipassanā*, insight meditation.

For that purpose, “*aniccānupassī assasissāmīti sikkhati, aniccānupassī passasissāmīti sikkhati.*” Everything that is created - including happiness - turns upside-down; anything born will die; the in-breath becomes the out-breath. Therefore train yourself in every inhalation and

exhalation to see that this happiness that has also been cultivated will also change. Do not try to stop at any point thinking that the happiness is forever. In every inhalation and exhalation learn to see that every point of happiness you assumed to be a permanent home is only a temporary lodging. In every inhalation and exhalation train yourself to reflect in this manner.

Next “*virāgānupassī assasissāmīti sikkhati, virāgānupassī passasissāmīti sikkhati*.” When you reflect in this manner, you will not assume any point is forever. You will not cling to happiness thinking it is eternal. You will not mark those points as eternal happiness. Like this, with every inhalation and exhalation, train yourself not to cling. Next comes “*nirodhānupassī assasissāmīti sikkhati, nirodhānupassī passasissāmīti sikkhati*.” *Virāga* and *nirodha* are very similar in meaning. Dear Dhamma Friends, what is emphasised here is to experience that there is greater bliss in detachment than in attachment, and to reflect upon detachment as the way to go.

If you are stuck to anything - even to Dhamma, to Dhamma talks, to meditation, to composure, to mindfulness - let it go. You find the real taste and essence of Dhamma by letting go. That is what is meant by ‘*virāga*’ and ‘*nirodha*’ - not to cling but to let go. We are not on a journey with clinging to anything - not a single desire, not a single thought. We are stationary - they come and go, like the breath. We see that everything comes and goes: the breath comes and goes; thoughts come and go; happiness comes and goes; we reflect upon how everything comes and goes; we do not go anywhere with anything. “*Paṭinissaggānupassī assasissāmīti sikkhati, paṭinissaggānupassī passasissāmīti*

*sikkhati*'. Train yourself to let go of everything. We cannot proceed any further if we do not let go of the feelings that "I am a meditator," "I have been meditating for a long time," "I have achieved all these things." Liquidate the meditator - totally liquidate the meditator.

Just discard the raft. Let go of the raft, don't stay on the raft for long. Only when you let go of the raft can you reach the other bank. Otherwise you are still on the river - only if you take both your legs off the raft have you truly crossed the river. There '*paṭinissaggānupassī*' – discard, let go of all the views and opinions you have about yourself, your history, your meditation history, your perception of yourself as a meditator, as a person trying to be mindful, as a person trying to relax the mind - discard all of these views. Discard all these views like you would discard a worn-out pair of slippers. Meditation is not a thing to be attached to - this is '*paṭinissaggā*'. Once a yogi was questioned as to what happens in meditation. He replied, "Nothing happens - when I am hungry I eat, when I am tired I sleep, that is all." Dear Dhamma Friends, there is nothing to happen, everything starts happening in a truly natural way.

Now nothing is happening to us naturally. We do not eat when we are hungry; we eat due to our greed. We work according to our desire. Therefore when emotions like desire and greed are not there, everything happens naturally. Everything starts happening as it should. For this, letting go is essential. In short, this is *Ānāpāna Sati*. Dear Dhamma Friends - maybe we have missed out one or two steps - but this is a *Ānāpāna Sati* Composure in a nutshell.

Again, please remember, this is a very valuable route map. Dear Dhamma Friends, use this map to travel on this path. Try to progress at least one step each day. Try to find a relaxed time. Use the breath that we normally use to suffer, to be angry and to weep - try to use it to eradicate suffering and misery. To overcome all suffering, and to be victorious, please use the inhalation and exhalation. This is the advice and direction given in the *Girimānanda* Discourse. Be attentive to your breath. Do not let a single breath enter without your knowledge. And if it enters secretly, do not let it give life to any hidden defilements or to any hidden emotions. Be aware of every breath. Know what is happening to your body and mind with every breath, and let go of all the tensions in the mind. Experience the brilliant mind; let the mind become totally tranquil. Experience the joy in that tranquil mind. With that joyful mind, reflect upon how everything comes and goes. Why should one cling to anything that comes and goes? Train yourself to be detached; do not try to travel on a journey with the coming and going world by creating mental stories. Experience, '*nirodha*', then and there. Lastly, who came this far? There is no-one. The perception of journey is there. That perception also should be discarded. '*paṭinissaggānupassī*'.

Dear Dhamma Friends, the route map is requesting us to do this, by handing over the map to us. Let us be attentive to that voice, and be aware of the story of our own breath, mindfully.

## Meditation

*Let the body be silent while inhaling and exhaling.....*

*Let the mind be relaxed while inhaling and exhaling.....*

*To the breath that comes and goes; to the breath that is normally used for being angry; for being frightened; for suffering; now try to give it an unworldly value, spiritual value, sublime value by being aware.....*

*Experience tranquillity with every inhalation and exhalation....*

*Let us conclude peacefully and contentedly.....*

***May the Triple Gem bless all of you!***