

## INTRO TO THE SUTTA

Anapanasati means mindfulness while breathing in and breathing out

While you've been introduced to the Mindfulness OF Breathing we can think of what we'll be doing on this retreat as expanding from that base of breath awareness and expanding to Mindfulness WITH breathing.

The Thai teacher Buddhadasa Bhikkhu says, 'Actually, the meaning of anapanasati is quite broad: 'to recall anything with sati [mindfulness] while breathing in and breathing out''

The anapanasati sutta is a recording of the teaching on mindfulness while breathing in and out that Shakyamuni gave to his disciples at the end of one of their annual three month rainy season retreats in Savatthi. We can imagine 400 of them together on the rainy season retreats. The rain can help us become imaginatively closer to the time this teaching was actually delivered. Maybe that can help us think of this retreat as very small! The senior monks were teaching 10, 20, 30 or 40 monks.

They've been practicing so diligently he decides to stay on with them for an extra fourth month and in that extra month he teaches them the anapanasati sutta. It is a night with a bright moon and he teaches this sutta by moonlight.

Tonight before the meditation we'll hear the whole scene as described in the original sutta.

The Buddha says, "Mindfulness of in-and-out breathing, when developed and pursued, is of great fruit, of great benefit. Mindfulness of in-and-out breathing, when developed and pursued, brings the Four Foundations of Mindfulness to perfection. The Four Foundations of Mindfulness, when developed and pursued, bring the seven factors of awakening to their culmination. The seven factors of awakening, when developed and pursued, perfect clear insight and liberation."

Basically this means that practicing anapanasati is a means to complete enlightenment and as such, in addition to being a samatha or calming practice is also a vipasyana or insight practice. The Buddha was using anapanasati when he attained enlightenment. So the breath, while an excellent object of meditation for the development of calm, is also an excellent vehicle for the development of wisdom. The process of how enlightenment comes about is described in the seven factors of awakening or bojjhanga (well described by Sangharakshita in Buddha Mind).

Mindfulness (*sati*)

Investigation (*dharma vicaya*)

Persistence or energy (*virya*)

Rapture (*piti*)

Serenity or tranquility (*passaddhi*)

Concentration (*samadhi*)

Equanimity (*upekkha*), fully developed is synonymous with enlightenment

The heart of the sutta contains the actual step by step meditation instructions for anapanasati. The sixteen contemplations are a structure for dharma vicaya or investigation which makes the anapanasati a vipasyana bhavana practice. They are both practical, actionable meditation instructions and a description of the process by which awareness of the breath sets in motion a sequence of cause and effect leading all the way to nibbana. After we practice the sutta for a while we can see how the seven factors of awakening come about. They're no longer just another one of those Buddhist lists!

These meditation instructions are organized by the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, or satipatthanas which are:

Body (*kaya* or RUPA)

Feelings (*vedana*)

Mind (*citta*)

Mental Objects (*dhammas*) or explorations of the nature of our experience and reality itself, bringing to mind the dhamma, the teachings on how things are, with our experience

In general they are emphasized because they are always there, they comprise our subjective experience, and our lack of understanding of them leads to suffering. By working with understanding the nature of our experience we can learn wiser ways of being and slowly become free from self-created reactive suffering.

For each of the four foundations there are four instructions or contemplations given to us by the Buddha. This makes 16 instructions altogether. Each group of four instructions, corresponding to a foundation of mindfulness is called a tetrad. So there is a body tetrad, a feelings tetrad, mind tetrad and dhamma tetrad. Only the first two contemplations are exclusively focused on the breath but the breath is there with us through the remaining 14 contemplations as an anchor, helping us to stay mindful and present.

A general note about each of these 16 contemplations.

Contemplation is Anupassana (pali). It means looking at, viewing, contemplating, consideration, realization

Not intellectually theorizing about things in lieu of experiencing or outside what is happening in the practice as we breathe in and out

They are a way of learning from our experience. An honest, non-acquisitive motivation to learn is the key to the sutta.

Sometimes I translate these as instructions because it reminds me that they are direct instructions on how to proceed from the Buddha himself speaking to meditators

They are very process oriented and not very goal-oriented. Thich Nhat Hanh remarks on how the sutta doesn't talk in terms of getting into any particular states at all. It doesn't talk about creating dhyana. The language is all in terms of how we work with our experience and what is actually happening.

The Anapanasati sutta is a very elegant, pared down, and immediately actionable set of instructions that walk us through the four foundations of mindfulness through to enlightenment. If you've studied the satipatthana sutta (which I've put on your resource list) you'll find a consistency with the anapanasati sutta. The anapanasati is a way to practice the material in the satipatthana. Not the only way but a very effective way.

We will work through the 16 contemplations over the course of the retreat. Reading them at face value they might seem opaque but we'll explore and unpack each one seeing what it's pointing at. Each contemplation is really bottomless, we can keep learning from it over years of practicing. This quality of the sutta has led me to have a great deal of gratitude and even aesthetic appreciation for this teaching. It is truly profound and artful. The succession of instructions do describe a sequence of cause and effect. Practicing each paves the way for the next instruction to be practiced. Cumulatively they show a causal path by which wisdom will arise. While the instructions are quite specific as a whole the sutta points at an organic process of bare awareness maturing into understanding. And we don't need to perfect one instruction before moving on to the next. Gradually go deeper with the teaching as a whole.

Also we don't need to practice all 16 steps one by one although we will do so on the retreat for the most part. There is a simplified way of practicing called a condensed method that you will also be introduced to. You can also focus on a particular tetrad such as feelings, or the mind or dhammas in a particular meditation session. Also, the learning can be taken from the 16 steps into the simpler 4 stage mindfulness of breathing technique we're all familiar with. This we can also explore here.

A retreat setting is a good opportunity to practice the detailed instructions one-by-one and to deepen our understanding of what it is exactly the Buddha is trying to point out to us through this teaching.

*SAID IN FRIDAY NIGHT INTRO There will be plenty of teaching on the retreat but if you want more resources they are listed on the handout. The two main books I've used are the practice commentaries on the sutta in the books by Larry Rosenberg and by Buddhadasa Bhikkhu. I'd recommend starting with Larry Rosenberg who really does well with getting the spirit of the sutta and what it's getting at across. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu's book then is a useful resource and more technical.*

*We've recommended in the silence that you don't read other than what could be called spiritual reading. This is non-consumptive reading to aid reflection and meditation. You might find dipping into the Rosenberg or Buddhadasa book while here useful and they are available through the bookshop. But I'd recommend keeping reading to a minimum. Maybe just a page at one sitting. While here we have the opportunity to learn from what's happening, through direct experience.*

There are plenty of ways to practice anapanasati. The different commentaries on awareness of breath (including for example, Buddhaghosa's Vissudhimagga or Path of Purity) abound.

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Rosenberg who really does well with getting the spirit of the sutta and what it's getting at across. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu's book then is a useful resource and more technical. The new book by Analyo on Satipatthana is a very good reference text as well.

While it's the anapansati is a sutta from the Pali Canon in the Theravadan tradition, we can bring an ekayana approach drawing out the Mahayana and Vajrayana implications that are there in the sutta. This is something I've done in how I practice the anapanasati. These different approaches are all upayas or skillful means to help the meditator access the wisdom of the sutta and over the course of our practice over the years we can use these tools as they seem useful or necessary or appropriate. I'll try to give you a sense of the different ways one could practice the contemplations as we go along.

While we'll work through the 16 contemplations in periods of formal meditation a let's bring a spirit of continuous practice  
Mindfulness can be practiced throughout our day  
On my recent solitary an emphasis was keeping a flow of awareness through all activities and doing one thing at a time.  
Not trying to fabricate a certain quality of experience, but just being awake to what's actually happening. Being alive in our life  
During meals, noticing the texture taste of food, aware of our interconnection to others who grew and prepared the food, to the source of the food, the plants, the farmworkers)  
Mindfulness during work periods, include it in the retreat (the sensation of chopping, an attitude of loving kindness, generosity)  
Whatever we're doing. The Buddha often exhorted his disciples to include all activities in their practice of mindfulness including defecating and urinating. So it's not there are particularly spiritual activities that constitute our practice. What can we be mindful of? Anything and everything. When can we be mindful? Anytime and at all times. On Thai forest retreats they speak in terms of knowing whether you woke up on an in breath or an out breath!  
And learning how to do this in a skillful way that isn't forced or strained or willful. So at times if we're feeling tight we might need to break up the pattern of what we're doing and refresh our practice. Taking a walk or doing yoga or an activity that loosens a body is a good way to loosen the quality of willful or tight mental states. It's a way of being more than a project of doing.

A note on terminology. I'll be using the Pali terms for the most part and giving you the Sanskrit when I've got it. I'm not a Pali scholar so my pronunciation may be wrong but in the handouts you'll have the spelling of the terms and you'll get the correct meaning.

First paragraph,

“Having gone to the forest, to the shade of a tree, or to an empty building...”

Starts with an element of renunciation and intentionality

Purposely going to practice

Something we can bring to retreat (leaving behind cell phones, work, things that habitually define us)

Take advantage of conditions on retreat. Remember that you chose to come here, that you are choosing to practice and maybe reflecting on why you've done that. Why are you meditating? especially if it starts to feel an obligation.

## INTRO TO MINDFULNESS

“Sets mindfulness to the fore”

What is mindfulness (sati)

Present moment awareness that simply notices, “what is happening?” without in anyway interfering, without adding or subtracting anything to the experience.

Noticing what is happening, as it is, not controlling what's happening, letting everything come up and change of its own accord. When we're not mindful we're lost in the middle of everything, with no perspective or broader awareness.

Awareness is part of all of our experience. It's not something we have to fabricate.

As an exercise, close your eyes and become aware of hearing

Notice how easy and natural it is for us to hear, it doesn't require actively creating listening, just noticing hearing

While awareness is something we all have the capacity for, the direct, bare perceptual process, the raw material of direct noticing, is often swiftly overlaid or co-opted by our ego grasping which jumps in with stories, interpretations, fabrications.

Mindfulness then is a deeply restful and healing way of being with life. The Buddha spoke of the exhaustion of running around and away from our experience and the relief of training to just be with what's happening

Mindfulness is like a mirror, simply reflecting what's going on

The mirror image points out the clarity but a mirror can feel cold

Mindfulness is also emotionally engaged, its key quality is metta or unconditional kindness, not judging harshly no matter what is happening

In bringing our awareness to what's happening we are present and connected

When people speak of feeling alienated that's a clue that we're still holding back from the experience, often there's resistance to the experience, even aversion. A false sort of peace that is actually very tenuous and in fact, strained and draining. Hopefully practice corrects for this after a while and you notice yourself doing this.

That's one of the efficacies of the anapanasati sutta practice. By keeping the breath in our awareness throughout we are grounded in what's actually happening and can guard against creating a mentally fabricated and alienated awareness

This non-judgmentalness is so important in meditation. Trying to purify our approach to practice from the craving that we can bring to anything and that can lead to so much suffering. We can easily make meditation practice just another activity in which get better at creating suffering.

You may be used to meditation in the manner of actively controlling your meditation

such that if an unskillful state arises you substitute the skillful state (substituting metta for ill-will for example), or the other antidotes to the hindrances such as considering the consequences or suppression.

In this practice we are going to take a more allowing approach. Allowing everything to come into awareness, acknowledging it with kind awareness, and then letting it go. Letting it come and letting it go. Using the breath to help us from getting lost in distraction. This is more of the sky-like mind approach to working where everything can appear in the vast sky of mind but our awareness is big enough to contain it so that rather than obstructing practice distractions are like ephemeral clouds coming and going.

Just noticing makes all the difference in the world. It's an alternative to the well worn paths of our habits, a way to stop fuelling our reactions and to find a way to be with what's happening, to be with ourselves, to be with the reality of the moment. If we notice craving towards our meditation, wanting something else to be happening we just notice that and in that awareness our habit loosens up a bit.

So this is the instruction to set mindfulness to the fore.

“Always mindful, one breathes in; mindful, one breathes out”

So before we get onto the more specific instructions we just start by becoming aware of the breath

## **INTRO TO THE BODY TETRAD**

Today getting going on the contemplations in the body or in pali, kaya, tetrad.

Just because we are focusing on the body doesn't mean that the other aspects of our experience covered by the other foundations of mindfulness (feelings, emotions, thoughts, etc.) aren't occurring. Rather, in the stream of our experience while practicing the body tetrad we are focusing in on the experience manifesting in the body.

In Satipatthana sutta when speaking of the body it says,

Aware of the body **IN THE BODY**

This is a direct experience of the body

While feelings about the body, ideas about it may arise when we turn our attention toward the body we are looking at finding a direct experience of the body in the body

The sutta says, “mindfulness that ‘there is a body’ is simply established in her to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and mindfulness.”

*Read the first tetrad*

Today we'll work on the first 2 instructions. These are actually the only steps in which the breath is the exclusive object of attention. In steps 3-16 we open our attention to other objects with the breath in the background as an anchor helping us to stay mindful.

The essence of the first two instructions is to notice the actual characteristics of each breath. This bringing the mind to the object and engaging with it are the first two factors of a concentrated mind - vitakka (initial interest, bringing our attention to the object) and vicara (sustained interest, ability to stay interested).

It is like a bee coming to a flower and then gently alighting on the flower and staying with it gathering the pollen.

Vitakka and vicara work together. Another traditional image is one hand hold the pot handle while the other scrubs the pot.

Buddhadasa says the Pali and Thai word for this experience means to drink. So we are drinking in the flavor of the breathing.

It's not a task, it's an exploration, a discovery, a waking up to.

With all of these instructions be careful about the attitude that something is supposed to be happening.

We want to notice, what is happening?

To help we can bow at the end of each sit. Bowing to the sit itself and thanking it for what it has shown us no matter whether we like it or not.

Try to come as a learner. "In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities, but in the expert's there are few." – Shunryu Suzuki

So let's go and do some meditation to explore the first two instructions.