

Ānāpānassati Session 2

Here is some reference material, based on our work in the First Tetrad

This week, for homework,

- Try to use the roadmap we have used in class to visit the breath centers in the body
- Follow along with the guided audio file if you would like
- Notice at times in daily life, where it is that the breath is felt in the body as you breathe.

[The First Tetrad](#)

[Ṭhānissaro Bikkhu on Breath Energies](#)

[Buddhadāsa on Prāṇa, Breath and the First Tetrad](#)

[Ṭhānissaro Bikkhu's use of the same map we use in his book](#)

[Buddhadasa_and_counting](#)

[Ajahn Sucitto on Pāna \(Prāṇa\)](#)

First Tetrad

1. Dīghaṃ vā assasanto dīghaṃ assasāmī'ti pajānāti
Dīghaṃ vā passasanto dīghaṃ passasāmī'ti pajānāti
Breathing in long, he knows 'I breathe in long';
Breathing out long, he knows 'I breathe out long';
2. Rassaṃ vā assasanto rassaṃ assasāmī'ti pajānāti
Rassaṃ vā passasanto rassaṃ passasāmī'ti pajānāti
Breathing in short, he knows 'I breathe in short';
Breathing out short, he knows 'I breathe out short'.
3. Sabba-kāya-pañisaṃvedī assasissāmī'ti sikkhati
Sabba-kāya-pañisaṃvedī passasissāmī'ti sikkhati
He trains thus: 'I shall breathe in experiencing the whole body'.
He trains thus: 'I shall breathe out experiencing the whole body'.
4. Passambhayaṃ kāya-saṅkhāraṃ assasissāmī'ti sikkhati
Passambhayaṃ kāya-saṅkhāraṃ passasissāmī'ti sikkhati
He trains thus: 'I shall breathe in calming the bodily formations'.
He trains thus: 'I shall breathe out calming the bodily formations'.

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Breath

the word “breath” covers a wide range of energies in the body. Most prominently, there’s the energy of the in-and-out breath. We tend to think of this breath as the air coming in and out of the lungs, but this air wouldn’t move if it weren’t for an energy in the body activating the muscles that draw it in and allow it to go out.

When you meditate on the in-and-out breath, you may start by paying attention to the movement of the air, but as your sensitivity develops, you become more focused on the energy. In addition to the energy of the in-and-out breath, there are subtler flows of energy that spread through all parts of the body. these can be experienced as the mind grows more still. there are two types: moving energies; and still, steady energies. the moving energies are directly related to the energy of the in-and-out breath. For instance, there is the flow of energy in the nerves, as all the muscles involved in breathing, however subtly, are activated with each breath. is energy ow also allows you to have sensation in the different parts of the body and to move them at will. There is also the flow of energy that nourishes the heart with each breath, and then spreads from the heart as it pumps the blood. This can be felt with the movement of blood through the blood vessels and out to every pore of the skin.

As for the still, steady energies, these are centered in different spots in the body, such as the tip of the breastbone, the middle of the brain, the palms of the hands, or the soles of the feet. Once the in-and-out breath grows calm, these energies can be spread to fill the whole body with a sense of stillness and fullness that feels solid and secure.

To some people, these energies in the different parts of the body might seem mysterious—or even imaginary. But even if the concept of these energies seems foreign to you, the energies themselves are not. They form the way you directly experience the body from within. If they weren’t already there, you wouldn’t have any sense of where your own body is.

So when you try to acquaint yourself with these energies, there are three points to keep in mind:

- 1) You’re not concerned with your breath as it might be observed by a doctor or a machine outside you. You’re concerned with your breath as only you can know it: as part of your direct experience of having a body. If you have trouble thinking of these energies as “breath,” see if thinking of them as “breathing sensations” or “body sensations” helps —whatever enables you to get in touch with what’s actually there.

2) is is NOT a matter of trying to create sensations that don't already exist. You're simply making yourself more sensitive to sensations that are already there. When you're told to let the breath energies flow into one another, ask yourself if the sensations you feel seem unconnected to one another. If they do, simply hold in mind the possibility that they can connect on their own. This is what it means to allow them to flow.

3) These energies are not air, they're energy. If, while you're allowing the breath energies to spread through the various parts of the body, you sense that you're trying to force energy into those parts, stop and remind yourself: Energy doesn't need to be forced. There's plenty of space even in the most solid parts of the body for this energy to flow, so you don't have to push it against any resistance. If there's a sense of resistance to the energy, it's coming from the way you visualize it. Try to visualize the energy in a way that can slip around and through everything with ease. The best way to get in touch with these energies is to close your eyes, notice the sensations that tell you where the different parts of your body are, and then allow yourself to view those sensations as a type of energy. As you get more sensitive to those sensations and see how they interact with the energy of the in-and-out breath, it will seem more and more natural to regard them as types of breath energy. That allows you to get the most use out of them.

Ṭhānissaro Bikkhu

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The First Tetrad

In the kāya tetrad, or kāyānupassanā (contemplation of the body), we study and understand the breath. We learn to understand the different kinds of breath, their various qualities and characteristics, and the influences they produce. We get to know the breath in all aspects and from all angles in order for it to be correct. To put it briefly, we must have correct prāṇa. Prāṇa is a Sanskrit word, the Pali equivalent is pāṇa. Ordinarily, this word means “life” or “life force” or “that which preserves and nurtures life.” We must understand it correctly; our prāṇa should be healthy and correct. Then our lives will be correct. Thus, it is necessary to study the subject of the breath.

In India every style of yoga—and there are dozens of styles—has trainings involving the prāṇa. These trainings are called prāṇāyāma, which means “control of the prāṇa” or “breath control.” To control the breath is to control life. When the prāṇa enters the body, it is called āna and when it leaves it is called apāna. The two words combined become ānāpāna, that is, the prāṇa enters and the prāṇa exits. To control the prāṇa is to control that which enters to preserve life. Then we live a life that is fresh and cheerful, ready and fit for training and practice. Such prāṇa training can be found even in Buddhism.

Prāṇāyāma is the first subject of ānāpānasati. Although this may seem surprising, it does not contradict our principles at all. In fact, ānāpānasati is the equivalent of any system of yoga; indeed, it actually improves on all of them. This system of kāyānupassanā (contemplation on the body) takes up the prāṇāyāma of the Indian yogas and improves upon them in appropriateness and practicability.

Thus, our first item of study is this system of training known as kāyānupassanā. If we adjust the prāṇa-body, so that it is good, healthy, and calm, it makes the flesh-body good, healthy, and calm as well. Calm and healthy prāṇa brings the greatest peace and well-being in this life. This is why we must understand both kāya (bodies): the flesh-body and the breath-body. Then we shall be able to cultivate the “good” until there is good peace and good calm. The word good here means “fit and proper to be used in performing duties and work.” The last item of this tetrad is calming the body-conditioner, that is, making the preservers of the body peaceful and calm. By calming the breath, which conditions the body, then the body too becomes tranquil. The citta will feel this tranquility and will also be calmed. When the citta is calm, it is ready to perform its further duties. This is the subject matter of the kāya. It is important to note that the more you understand these facts, the more benefits this training will bring; you will become able to make this the best life possible. So we begin with learning about the kāya as the first tetrad.

THE BUDDHA'S PRĀṆĀYĀMA It is essential that we understand this profound truth: the prāṇa-body is the conditioner of the flesh-body. We ought to know that there are these two kāya or levels of kāya. We know about the first level, the flesh-body, but we hardly know the prāṇa-body at all. Therefore, it is very important to understand the prāṇa-body, as it can condition the flesh-body in beneficial ways. In India, the prāṇāyāma is considered to be the highest and most important subject for study. While different schools vary in their explanations and meanings for the prāṇa-body, all schools seek to regulate the prāṇa-body so that it conditions the flesh-body appropriately.

Buddhadasa Bikkhu, translation: Thēpwisutthimēthī, Phra . Mindfulness with Breathing: A Manual for Serious Beginners. Wisdom Publications. Kindle Edition.

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This is an excerpt from Thanissaro Bikkhu's book, "[With Each and Every Breath](#)", Pg 45, which describes the same 'map' that we are using in this class. To learn more about his recommended maps, you can consult this free book, pages 42-25. We often have free copies in the tea room, but you can also get a pdf online. Note that his whole method differs from what we are using in class, so don't get confused. You may want to have his book as a reference to use *after* we go through all the steps together.

From page 45

.....If one point or section seems to respond especially well to your attention, releasing tension in a refreshing way, stick with that point as long as it responds. If a point or section doesn't respond after several minutes of attention—or if you find that tension increases when you focus on it—drop it for the time being and move on to the next point. If your time for meditation is limited, you might want to limit your survey to the center points on the front of the torso—navel, solar plexus, middle of the chest—and then to the base of the throat and the middle of the head. If focusing in the head gives you a headache, avoid focusing there until you learn how to maintain focus with a minimum of pressure.

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This excerpt from Buddhadasa shows a similar way of using counting to how we use it in our practice group. However, there are differences. He tries to get the counting to come out the same each time, and recommends making the counting come out to 5 or 10. Instead, we are using the counting to measure the actual length, allowing it to be different with each natural breath. Don't get confused.

Measuring the Breath by Counting

From Anapanasati (Mindfulness of Breathing) Buddhadasa Bhikkhu 1971

The first technique, counting, serves two purposes. It is used firstly to discover the length of the breaths, and secondly to prevent the mind from wandering from the breathing. To be of use counting must coexist with the control of the mind and be in harmony with it. The meditator should count at least up to five but not beyond ten. If he prefers just to estimate the length of the breaths rather than actually counting, he may do so in the way explained, in Stages i and ii. In any case he must do it with the proper state of mind; avoiding the extremes of sluggishness and excessive effort.

Counting is an effective means of facilitating concentration, though rather coarse compared with the technique of estimating. Each time the meditator takes an in-or out-breath he counts "One, two, three, four, five," the last number coinciding with the end of the breath. Even if he counts right up to ten by saying (mentally) "One, two, three,... eight, nine, ten," he must exercise judgment so that the counting ends at the end of each in-and out-breath. And whichever number he chooses to count to, he must so arrange things that the end of the counting coincides with the end of the breath. It is best to count up to either five or ten rather than to intermediate numbers. Obviously the technique of counting is used only when the breathing is naturally or normally long and is experienced in terms of beginning, middle, and end. The reason for not counting less than five or more than ten is this: If the meditator stops short of five, the intervals in counting (between each number and the next) are long enough to give the mind a chance to wander from the object (the breathing). Counting less than five is too coarse, too slack, and is not appreciably different from merely concentrating on the breath in terms of beginning, middle, and end. If on the other hand the meditator goes beyond ten, he has to count too quickly and will become flurried. Being lost in counting, his mind will once again deviate from the object, It is undesirable to be too sluggish or too hurried, to count in intervals excessively long or short. These faults affect the mind adversely and confuse it. This is the technique of counting. The meditator should experiment with it in its various forms. This trains the mind and keeps it in trim. It also helps it to get to know itself better.

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These excerpts are taken from “Breathing Like a Buddha” by Ajahn Sucitto. Several people have told me, and I concur, that Ajahn Sucitto’s writing style can be challenging. These short excerpts from the book may be helpful. We will include link to download the free book in the book list you will receive later.

Breath Energy – pāna (prāṇa in Sanskrit)

I was introduced to meditation in 1975 through a systematic approach of maintaining moment-by-moment mindfulness of the sensations associated with breathing. I found that approach to be useful for discipline, but quite intense and demanding, and not conducive to joy and ease. Moreover, when I looked into the original texts, I found that they didn’t mention awareness of physical sensations, nor of mindfulness as a practice of tracking sensations a moment at a time – though these references are plausible interpretations of ‘mindfully one knows one is breathing in ... breathing out.’ But, as an exploration, I went back to the basics of noticing how I was aware of breathing, and picked up on the fluid rhythm of the life force that the physical act of breathing moves and moderates. The Pali word for this is ‘pāna’. This is the energy, rather than the sensations, associated with breathing. This aspect of the breath as an energy is commonly acknowledged in the spiritual traditions of India and China, as well as in non-mechanist cultures – so it seems reasonable to assume that it informed the meditative process that the Buddha outlined. The significant point is that this embodied energy connects the material to the mental realm. Embodied energy runs through the stirring, stress, calm and gladdening of our entire nervous system: if it’s distorted, it inflames and corrupts the mind; if it’s healthy, it clears it. Accordingly, a trained focus on the energy associated with breathing offers a means to calm, brighten, understand and clear states of mind (and heart). -pg.14

...Approached in this way, breathing provides a path to the refreshment and soothing of body and mind; this effect encourages one to persevere with meditation without a huge amount of willpower.

This is a pragmatic approach: the vitality and ease that a settled body can bring can lift the mind out of oppressive emotional and psychological obstructions. It also brings around a greater degree of grounded stability. This has far-reaching significance: with an increase in hyperactive mentality, attention disorders, psychological breakdowns and social dysfunction, as well as a disregard for the natural world, society in general has become disembodied and groundless. This condition speaks of an urgent need to get aligned with the subtle and life-enhancing aspects of our material reality.

In the microcosm of our own bodies, ānāpānasati offers this.

The discourses describe the ongoing cultivation that leads through samādhi to liberation as being based on recollecting virtue and thereby feeling uplifted. So the ethical clarity of right view is the foundation, the guiding principle for what one should be mindful of and with what intent. This right mindfulness settles on the gladness of the heart and lets that steady to bring around bodily ease. It’s a flowing process, rather than a push to get concentrated. (See, for example, A.10:2, where the development is described as ‘one stage flows into the next.’) The stage in that process wherein mental and bodily energies settle and consolidate is called ‘samādhi’. – pg 16.

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