

EVENING TALK, 19 OCTOBER 2026 · TIE THE MIND TO THE BREATH

Knowing outward is the origin of suffering, knowing inward is the path · Ajahn Jayapaṇṇo (ชยปญฺโญ ภิกขุ), Sakon Nakhon · Translated from the Thai · with the teacher's blessing, sādhu

[00:00] Happiness and Dhamma to you all. Dusk already, and we sit together a little and chat. Before the end of the Rains (the end of the monks' three-month retreat) there is one week left, then the day is here. Seven more days to the end of the Rains. That went fast, didn't it?

[00:29] Because when we sink into suffering, time drags, it stretches on and on. But how it feels to us is not what it was. When something torments you, when the heart is heavy, oh, it takes long till evening, long till dark, long till morning, time crawls. But when the heart is light and at ease, it passes in a flash. Time itself stays what it is. Only our view has changed.

[01:11] This is the fruit of training. We may think: I cannot do this. But if we stop and look at ourselves, tie (the mind) down a little, it settles. Otherwise we drift along with the suffering, drift along with its stirrings. If mindfulness (sati) is good, it catches the arising in time, and it does not grow further. A feeling (vedanā) is merely a feeling: pleasant, unpleasant. It is not we who feel; it is a process of feeling. The remembering and recognising (perception, saññā), there too it is not we who remember and recognise. It is the working of the five aggregates (khandha): form, feeling, perception, what the mind creates (saṅkhāra), that is, thinking. It (the mind) thinks. But we see it thinking.

[02:28] When mindfulness is awake and catches it in time, it sees the process as it runs: the process that feels, that remembers, that thinks, that knows. That is simply the five aggregates. There is nothing more than that to study. Whoever does not understand the five aggregates suffers, because he firmly takes them to be me: this form is mine. Now it is me, now it is him. The mind creates an «I», it creates an «other». Because it is lost. It gets lost in an I. See, it is this being lost that grasps the five aggregates and imagines the five aggregates to be me, to be a self, an own self. Ignorance (avijjā) is the condition. One looks only at this, one looks only at that.

[03:29] The Dhamma he (the Buddha) set out is a path that draws our view in that direction. So whoever listens often, his heart follows that direction. However you listen, whether you listen to the Dhamma or to what is not Dhamma: what you take in often and grow familiar with, the heart comes to like it, delight arises. Right there you turn the habit round: the heart grows familiar with what is useful, it grows familiar with the Dhamma. In listening to the Dhamma often, a lustful delight may sometimes arise, you get carried along; the heart creates something. But it creates in a direction that causes neither harm nor danger. It still creates, but it is a wholesome thought (kusala-saṅkappa), a creating in the direction of giving up. See, that is its development: wisdom from hearing (sutamayapaññā).

[04:43] But if we hold on to the knowledge we have heard, we show it off at once. Nothing but enlightened people these days. But they argue with each other. They are enlightened, and they argue. As soon as the heart is lost, drunk on knowledge, it cannot let go. It knows and cannot let go. Then suddenly it is clever. For as soon as it knows, it becomes clever at once, then it shows off, then it puts others down, then it judges that others are wrong, that others are inferior. So it gets more and more lost, more and more. Whoever is very lost, much comes of it (much quarrel, much suffering). Whoever is not lost, it is nothing at all.

[05:40] In this being lost one wants to win and put others down. We do not see the defeat that stands right at the beginning: that we have lost to our own defilements (kilesa), to conceit, to our own arrogance. We do not see it. The defilement fools us a little with being good, fools us a little with being clever, fools us a little with being right. That is all it takes, and we are its slave, we are lost in it. So we must turn back, back to the beginning, just like a beginner: train a lot, train mindfulness to be awake. We create the cause. The result comes by itself when the cause is complete. The result we cannot make.

[06:30] The meditators of today chase after all kinds of mental states and force the mind to be this way or that. They do not know that they are lost, that they are stuck in what the mind itself creates (saṅkhāra), in their own creating. At the beginning, when we practise concentration (samādhi), mindfulness of breathing (ānāpānasati), at the beginning it is still calming practice (samatha). When we direct the knowing to the breath going in and out, fix the mind on the breath going in and out, we do it for two reasons: first, so that mindfulness becomes more complete; second, so that mindfulness dwells in the body and does not wander outward. Tie it down, to the body or to the breath. Tie it down.

[07:22] Why must mindfulness be tied? It is necessary to tie it. And why is it necessary? It is like a wild animal we have caught and want to tame. As soon as we have it, we cannot train it straight away. A mind that has never been subdued leaps about wildly, it does not stay, it struggles. One moment of carelessness and it runs off elsewhere. It will not stay. So we must tether it firmly. Mindfulness is the rope, the body is the post, the pillar, the stake we hold it to. Tied until it can struggle no more. That is the beginning: direct the knowing, stay close to the breath, until the mind no longer wanders, no longer strays, until it has no strength left. Do not go looking for anything else yet. First this must succeed: just knowing this breath.

[08:18] From knowing at a single point, little by little it comes to know along with the in-breath and the out-breath. The beginning is directing the knowing to the breath, in and out. If the mind strays, start again. Until it knows: breathing in long, it knows. It follows and knows. Let this breath be like a vehicle we are sitting on. Wherever it goes, let it go. We do not get off. We do not stop by the roadside, do not go here, there and everywhere. When it stays until it has become familiar, this mind begins to settle. At the beginning the knowing is close to a single object (ārammaṇa). That is calm, which arises from intention, from directing the knowing: calming practice (samatha). Calm and empty are two different things. And empty and empty are two different things as well (the emptiness of calm and the emptiness of insight).

[09:25] So when it stays close to the breath and does not wander outward, when it cannot go out now, it turns inward. It cannot think outward, so it turns inward and remembers. As soon as the eyes are closed, old images come up, in rows. Some cannot sit with their eyes closed. As soon as the eyes close, it thinks, perception (saññā) arises. Then do not close the eyes. Just sit and know the breath. Whether the eyes are open or closed, in whatever posture. The breath is not even the point. We are only training mindfulness to dwell in the body, so that our mindfulness becomes more complete.

[10:16] The states you meet while sitting in concentration are nothing to show off or brag about. That is child's play, I say it from here: child's play. The images (nimitta) that appear are the business of little children on the way of concentration. Whatever you see, let it be. See it, know it, let it go. Do not delight in it, do not be troubled by it. Do not get lost in that state. Some get lost: they see lights, colours, hear sounds, smell scents. These things exist. It is not that they do not exist. Whoever does not turn back in time loses the way and strays into the jungle of wrong concentration (micchā-samādhi). Even one who attains deep concentration (jhāna), who attains the higher knowledge (abhiññā), has still not removed the defilements.

[11:14] Most people get lost right here, and here they show off. The enlightenment fools see such things and say they are enlightened. They are still lost in what the mind creates; how could they see the truth? But it is a stage one passes through. Whether someone sees little or much, whether someone stays stuck long or briefly, depends on each one's causes and conditions, on the fruit of his kamma (vipāka). One cannot judge it. Whoever is lost cannot be blamed. He did not want to get lost. But he got lost.

[11:48] See, so when you stay with the breath, tell yourself in advance: whatever I see, I will not drift after it. Back to the present. Do not let it drag you away. Some sit with their eyes closed, breathe a few times, and as soon as the mind starts wandering, as soon as something created arises, already they are here and there, seeing this person, that person. That is close to madness, if it goes on like this. Soon one no longer speaks with anyone, believes what one sees oneself, and holds that others are not as clever as oneself. The creating, the thinking, runs off. They see heaven.

And what does that mean? They have been there before (in an earlier life). Had they never been there, they could not remember it. Where one has once been, that really exists. Had one never seen it, it could not come to mind.

[12:49] These things have perception (saññā) as their birthplace, they rest on old kamma. For what one has never seen does not come to mind. And what does not come to mind cannot be thought. The flash, the perception, is like the head of a match. As soon as it is struck, the spark flares up at once. And what comes after that? The flaring does not stop at flaring, because now one does not catch it in time. It spreads to the matchstick: that is the creating (saṅkhāra). It burns on and on until everything is burnt. Then it goes out. Then it is struck again, and it arises again like that: perception, creating, perception, creating. Why? Because we have nothing that stops the current. Because we are not yet awake.

[13:49] So: the states one meets while sitting in concentration are not yet enlightenment. I say it clearly. Do not think that is enlightenment. Many show it off, these days on social media: I have attained this, attained that, attained the other. Wherever something is attained, right there it is wrong. Everything we train serves to make mindfulness more complete, until mindfulness dwells in the body. The beginning, the main fruit of mindfulness of breathing: training mindfulness so that it stays awake with the breath. The breath is the tool we use to train mindfulness to be awake. Recollection: not merely a knowing, but a recollecting, a remembering (to come back).

[14:47] So the more one trains, the more the deliberate directing of the knowing to the breath fades, the directing of the knowing to the breath becomes lighter. The state of concentration becomes light, it opens up, it is no longer heavy, no longer presses and squeezes. It is open and knowing. And what for, when that becomes ever more complete? When readiness is there and mindfulness has become more complete, concentration that is correct concentration (sammā-samādhi) arises by itself. For mindfulness holds the mind so that it stands firm, and that is concentration, correct concentration. The word concentration covers both: wrong concentration and correct concentration.

[15:43] Being still, holding the mind so that it does not wander, does not flow outward: that is concentration in the Buddha's way. Not sitting grimly with eyes and ears squeezed shut, aware of nothing. Mindfulness is firm, the mind stands firm. At contact (a sense impression) one catches it in time, outside and inside alike. What happens outside one knows; what happens inside one sees. Whoever catches it in time does not drift along. So one can live in society, with its conventions, without getting lost in the conventions. When mindfulness dwells in the body, one can let go of the breath.

[16:25] When we have come this far, out of what we have passed through, the four foundations of mindfulness (satipaṭṭhāna) arise. The one who can develop the four foundations of mindfulness is the one who has passed through this, who has practised mindfulness of breathing. He steps beyond clinging to rules and rituals (sīlabbata-parāmāsa), that is, beyond practising in rigid forms, beyond holding on and going astray. Whoever steps beyond clinging to rules and rituals, his doubt (vicikicchā) about what the Buddha taught comes to an end, for he has seen the real thing. Then the view that this body is me (sakkāya-diṭṭhi) ends as well. View of a self, doubt, clinging to rules and rituals: these are the first fetters (saṃyojana, what binds to the round of birth and death), which can be cut. That is not beyond our reach.

[17:32] When mindfulness becomes complete, it is correct mindfulness (sammā-sati), the mindfulness of the four foundations. With the four foundations one develops mindfulness so that pure wisdom arises, that is pure insight (vipassanā). Contemplating the body is insight. But one does not contemplate with intention. Because one lets go of the body (no longer deliberately fixes on it), one sees the mind. Only beyond intention does wisdom arise. For as long as we still have an intention, that intention is bound up with craving (taṇhā). So: directing, making, forcing, that is not yet the way of wisdom.

[18:22] The meditators of today force the mind to be this way and that way and the other. That is the concentration of the rishis (the ascetics outside the Buddha's way), which the Buddha taught is not correct. But we do it anyway; people like it. One sees lights, colours, a flickering and glimmering, hears this and that, and in one's delusion rejoices

that one is enlightened. Even one who hears the voice of thoughts, who hears other people's thoughts, is not enlightened for that. Even one who knows events in advance is still not enlightened for that. These are supernatural powers that come from worldly deep concentration (lokiya-jhāna). From the path out of suffering they are far away.

[19:11] Otherwise it turns into nonsense: consecrating amulets, invoking magic diagrams (yantra), making charms. Because one has lost the way, one drifts further from the Buddha with every moment. Yet people praise and glorify them, oh, ah, and crowd around them. These people are called «keji» (revered master monks). We honour them as keji. That sounds like a lofty word. In truth «keji» (Pali: keci, «certain people») just means: a group, a sort, a kind of people. The meaning behind it: those who deviate. See, and we get lost. Just a shaved head (just being a monk), and at once we are wonder-workers. They consecrate amulet coins without pause, issue coins and all sorts of things and trade in them.

[20:00] And then they trade in the Buddha. Whoever opens his mouth and says «Buddha business» betrays the Buddha at that very moment. For the Buddha did not teach us to trade and seek profit. He did not teach us to deceive one another. They name the Buddha, advertise miraculous powers, and what do they (the buyers) hope for? They hope only for an object that is sham. Whoever buys such a thing spends money on an object, and what more does he get? With money alone you cannot buy it. For such things you also need stupidity; only then can you buy them. For you are buying something of no use. And do not come to me saying it is a personal preference. Personal, yes. But it is not on the path of the Buddha's teaching. Magic is the business of fools, not the business of those who have wisdom.

[21:06] Now, when our mindfulness has become more complete, we return to the Buddha's teaching. As soon as mindfulness dwells in the body: because there are the sense bridges (āyatana), there is contact (phassa). Eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind. Because there are the sense bridges, there is contact, a meeting takes place. When a meeting takes place, a rippling arises (in the mind, as on the surface of water): contact, feeling (vedanā). This is where we work. This is where we let go of becoming and birth. This is where we cut off becoming and birth. For with feeling comes craving (taṇhā), comes clinging (upādāna), comes becoming (bhava), comes birth (jāti). Look back at dependent arising (paṭiccasamuppāda): with ignorance as condition comes what the mind creates, comes consciousness, come mind and body, come the six sense bridges, comes contact, comes feeling. With contact comes feeling, comes craving. You see? Clinging, becoming, birth.

[22:05] That is birth: each time the feeling arises: this is me. That is one birth, one round. What is born ages and dies. In this sense there is no word for sickness in dependent arising. When one says birth, ageing, sickness, death, the body of flesh is meant. But in dependent arising the words are: birth, ageing, death (jāti, jarā, maraṇa). Why? Because it concerns the mental side. You see?

[22:45] Now when our mindfulness catches it in time: contact arises at the ear, at the eye, and one sees its rippling. Pleasure and displeasure arise. One sees that it is pleased or displeased, and does not drift along with the mood, with the feeling. One knows, and one can stop it. For mindfulness is what stops the current. One need not do anything, just catch it in time. The force of the feeling, its strength, then weakens. It dissolves. The word is: it fades (virāga). That is the way of practice, to develop mindfulness so that it catches things in time.

[23:33] Now when our mindfulness becomes quicker, when it wakes more quickly, then at contact the rippling no longer reaches far. The feeling gradually lessens. What one sees most clearly at the beginning is aversion (dosa), anger. When mindfulness catches it in time and sees that the mind is angry, one sees it fade. But if it does not catch it in time, well, then it breaks loose. The five aggregates work at full stretch. The breath snorts and pants, the blood boils, everything runs its course, the body shakes. Our reaction comes from the mental side (nāma), from the mind (citta), which gives the orders. You see? It acts on the body. Yet the body is really only the four elements, earth, water, fire, wind. It knows nothing. It feels nothing. It is only the tool of the mind, only a tool, only a slave, a hand of the mind. The mind is the master, the body is the servant.

[24:55] Now when our mindfulness catches things in time more and more, aversion, the coarsest side, gradually gets lighter, softer, softer, until no aversion arises any more. In everyday speech one says: he has abandoned aversion. To the degree one can abandon aversion, those are the stages of training. Its final fruit is: the gap until mindfulness catches it gets shorter, aversion does not arise. One has given it up completely, one has no more aversion. That is the quality of the noble one at the first stage (the first stage of awakening): he has abandoned anger. Even if there is still some vexation, mindfulness catches it in time, it can hold it back, it does not grow further. So it no longer happens that he abuses, blames, beats or harms others; that is no longer possible for him. He is one who no longer causes harm, danger or enmity. You see?

[26:00] Then the development goes further inward, because wisdom arises. The side of irritation (paṭigha), the vexation in the heart, gradually gets lighter. When a contact hits on the negative side, the rippling gets less and less. After coarse aversion has gone, irritation disappears too. The negative moods disappear. Then one is still attached to what is subtler than that: the side of passion (rāga). When irritation no longer arises, the mind rises one level, inward; by name, by convention, this is called sakadāgāmī (the second stage of awakening). So what the Buddha taught can be checked and confirmed. It does not contradict itself. The state that arises, we see it and we understand. It needs no explanation when one sees the truth.

[27:04] So we must train a lot. For even if someone describes the extinguishing (nibbāna) to us, we cannot know it as long as we have not arrived there. Do not puzzle over it, do not want to know what we do not yet know. It is of no use at all. Just stay knowing in this present. Then we see how the development changes little by little. Our view (diṭṭhi) is gradually cleansed, it changes, there is a development. In the section on the four foundations of mindfulness he (the Buddha) also says: «with mindfulness dwelling in the body, with clear comprehension (sampajañña) and mindfulness, putting away greed and distress towards the world». That is: when one sees liking or disliking arise and catches it in time, one can put it away. Towards that liking and disliking one can stay even. Nobody forces the mind to let go. But it no longer gets lost in liking and disliking. That it does not get lost is because mindfulness is awake. It has something to recollect. Recollection arises.

[28:26] That is the practice: gaining clarity on the foundation of the body, gaining clarity on the foundation of feeling, contemplation of the body (kāyānupassanā), contemplation of feeling (vedanānupassanā), then into the mind itself, contemplation of the mind (cittānupassanā). At the beginning, with body and feeling, one cuts off future becoming. Then one goes in and studies the mind: contemplation of the mind. That is the beginning of the process in which one dismantles becoming and birth, or what is steeping and fermenting (in the mind) (āsava), until one reaches the truth: contemplation of the Dhamma (dhammānupassanā). Body, feeling, mind, Dhamma, if one explains it by the four foundations of mindfulness. But when mindfulness is complete, the tool stays the same: body, feeling, mind, Dhamma. Only the quickness of mindfulness, the sharpness of wisdom, the completeness are greater. From the name «four foundations of mindfulness» one thus comes to the seven factors of awakening (bojjhaṅga).

[29:44] If we speak frankly: the noble path (ariyamagga) begins with mindfulness of breathing, then the four foundations of mindfulness, then the seven factors of awakening. Outside of this there is no way to see the noble path. There is only a noble path one thinks up. Whoever does not know these things, does not know the practice, cannot find the right way. So do not yet want to know what is too far away. Find your starting point, for the new ones: train your mindfulness. As for temperament, whether one prefers sitting, standing, walking, lying, this or that, chanting: that is not the measure. Do not cling to the form.

[30:32] Most meditators today: if the teacher does not lead them by the hand, like ducklings following the mother, they think they have not practised. However many years, however many lives pass, that is all that comes of it. This is no disparagement. It is because we refuse to grow up. We wait to be fed, wait to be called. We cannot help ourselves yet, we are still weak and run after the mother like ducklings. However many years, however many lives pass, we do not grow. Yet when ducklings are grown, they go their separate ways to find their own food. These only wait and only follow. If the mother does not walk, they do not walk. And how does that end? However many years, however many lives pass, one goes round in circles, following along like ducklings, walking in a row.

[31:27] One must take responsibility for oneself, attend to oneself, look after oneself, restrain oneself. In practice it has nothing to do with anyone else. Whether another practises or not is not our concern. So whoever is responsible for himself can practise, and he progresses quickly, he need not wait. Restrain the mind always. If you get tired from sitting long, get up and walk. If you get tired from walking long, stand. If you get tired from standing long, lie down. You can practise lying down too: developing mindfulness. How much or how little each one gains, let us not judge. For causes and conditions are not the same for all. People do not all gain the same.

[32:28] So I want to leave you this, as a starting point for all who develop mindfulness of breathing: take it and try it. Do not want to know more than that yet. First be aware of yourself. Do not get lost in the images (nimitta). That is very dangerous. One moment you are enlightened, the next you see this person, that person, you see hell, you see heaven. See it long enough and you talk to nobody any more and cannot live among people. One does not understand that that is convention. One does not understand that this is deception, illusion. That is the danger of concentration that is wrong concentration.

[33:10] So one develops mindfulness so that correct mindfulness arises, the four foundations of mindfulness. That is how one escapes the lower realms (apāya). This way is the only one that leads out of the lower realms. There is no other. Not even with supernatural powers, with flying through the air. Among all who had supernatural powers from worldly deep concentration, from the Buddha's time until today, none surpasses Devadatta (the Buddha's cousin) in powers and deep concentration. And yet Devadatta fell into hell. So do not practise concentration in Devadatta's way. Practise concentration in the Buddha's way: for wisdom. Train mindfulness to be awake, so that wisdom arises that sees clearly how things really are. Otherwise one gets lost and remains a rishi, a forest ascetic.

[34:14] We do not need to search for the way. For we have great merit, we have built up much, which is why we have met the one who shows the way: the Buddha. We only need to trust the Buddha and walk the path the Buddha has shown. Do not put on airs. Do not want to be cleverer than the Buddha. These days people do not want the path the Buddha pointed out. Most teachers put on airs, show off their cleverness, raise themselves up to be this and that, and do not walk the path the Buddha pointed out. Soon they will fall into the abyss. This path is narrow. One walks as on the edge of a sword. Stop even once and you fall.

[34:58] So the safest path the Buddha has shown is developing mindfulness of breathing. It is the safest practice (kammaṭṭhāna), the most suitable, the most direct. It is the one practice that gathers all practices into itself. However clever anyone may be, his practice falls under mindfulness of breathing. Mindfulness of breathing is like a great river that takes in all its tributaries. It is like the footprint of the land animals, the elephant's footprint: all the footprints of the land animals fit inside it. Whatever practice one brings, it must flow into mindfulness of breathing in order to reach the four foundations of mindfulness. Otherwise there is no way to come to know the noble path, no way to see the real thing. For there is only this one way.

[36:07] So. We make effort little by little, knowing the breath, knowing the breath. Do not hold on to the breath. Do not hold on to the states one sees inside. Do not get lost in them. While we delight in what we see, we drop the breath without noticing. We drop the present. Train mindfulness until it no longer needs to know the breath but is aware of itself, because mindfulness has ripened. The words for it are: experiencing the whole body (sabbakāyapaṭisaṃvedī). The body of flesh as well as the breath body (the breath taken as a body). Every posture, small or large, every movement to and fro: mindfulness is awake and catches every movement in time. As soon as the mind stirs and wants to slip off to the left or the right, it already catches it. It can hold it so that it does not wander outward. Knowing outward is the origin of suffering (samudaya). But knowing inward is the path (magga).

[37:16] So we create good causes. How much result we reap depends on the causes we create and on the conditions that come to them. «Causes and conditions» means: with the same capital, one gets more added, another less, and so the result differs. The same capital does not mean the same yield. Each person's conditions and circumstances are not the same. So do not compare yourselves. Look after yourself. For today let us stop here.