



A Companion volume to
Brief Discussion on
Ānāpānasati
(Mindfulness of the breath)

Venerable U Paññānanda (Intagaw-Pa Auk)



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*Ciraṃ tiṭṭhatu saddhammo
sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhittā*

Introduction

The Four Noble Truths are the foundations of the Buddha's teachings. Through the practice of The Buddha's teachings, one can attain supreme Nibbāna, Cessation of Suffering. So, if you want to attain supreme Nibbāna, Cessation of Suffering, you must follow The Buddha's teachings. These Noble Truths are:

- [1] The Noble Truth of Suffering
- [2] The Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering
- [3] The Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering
- [4] The Noble Truth of the Path Leading to the Cessation of Suffering

Unless one knows and sees The Four Noble Truths, he cannot realize The Buddha's Teachings. The Buddha taught the Four Noble Truths for us to realize the Third Noble Truth, Nibbāna. This means that one cannot put a complete end to suffering (one cannot attain the Third Noble Truth, Nibbāna) unless he has first fully realized the First Noble Truth (suffering (dukkha)), and fully realized the Second Noble Truth (the origin of suffering (samudaya)). The aim of the Fourth Noble Truth (the Noble Eightfold Path) is to realize the Third Noble Truth (Nibbāna). The only way to realize the First Noble Truth (suffering (dukkha)) and the Second Noble Truth (the origin of suffering (samudaya)) is to first practise the mundane Fourth Noble Truth, the mundane path truth (lokiya magga-sacca), which is the mundane Noble Eightfold Path.

The First Noble Truth and the Second Noble Truth are mentality, materiality (nāma-rūpa) and their causes (dependent origination (paṭicca-samuppāda)). By practising the mundane Noble Eightfold Path systematically (by practising the morality, concentration and wisdom step by step) a meditator can know and see mentality-materiality and their causes, and then comprehend their impermanent,

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suffering, and non-self nature; that is vipassanā meditation by which we are able to realize the supramundane Fourth Noble Truth, the Noble Eightfold Path associated with supramundane Path Truth (Lokuttarā Maggasacca) : the Path (Magga) of Stream-Entry (Sotāpatti), Once-Return (Sakadāgāmi), Non-Return (Anāgāmi), and Arahantship.

Before one can do vipassanā, one must be able to discern ultimate materiality, ultimate mentality and their causes. So, one's path to discernment of materiality is first to develop a samatha subject of meditation that must be one of the forty samatha subjects (such as ānāpānasati practice), up to Right Concentration (Sammā Samādhi), based on morality. The Buddha explains Right Concentration (Sammā Samādhi) in the Mahā Sati Paṭṭhāna sutta 'The Great Mindfulness Foundation Sutta' as the first jhāna (absorption), second jhāna, third jhāna, and fourth jhāna. In 'The Path of Purification' (Visuddhi Magga), Right Concentration is explained further as the four jhānas (rūpa jhāna), the four immaterial jhānas (arūpa jhāna) and access concentration (upacāra samādhi). Right Concentration serves as the proximate cause for vipassanā. The Buddha encourages His disciples to develop Right Concentration, jhāna as a basis for practising vipassanā meditation, as insight-basis jhāna (vipassanā.pādaka.jjhāna).

Ānāpānasati meditation is one of the very popular among the meditation subjects. A meditator can develop up to the fourth jhāna in ānāpānasati meditation. When there is access concentration or jhāna, the mind is full of bright, brilliant and radiant light: that is what The Buddha calls the light of wisdom (paññ-āloka). A meditator first establishes the fourth ānāpāna jhāna, at which time the light of wisdom (the light of concentration) is bright, brilliant and radiant. After switching to discernment of materiality meditation (rūpa kammaṭṭhāna) through the four elements meditation (catudhātu vavatthāna) a meditator can see ultimate materiality clearly with the light of wisdom. Although the

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ultimate materiality is very subtle, because of the strength and momentum of the fourth-jhāna concentration, based on ānāpānasati, a meditator finds that both four elements meditation (which is the samatha subject of voidness of self (suññata)) and discernment of ultimate materiality will become deep and fully established. Meditation subjects in discerning ultimate mentality and dependent origination are far subtler. However a meditator can proceed to develop them because of the strong and powerful light of jhāna concentration, and because of the power of discernment of ultimate materiality.

In the booklet *'Brief Discussion on Ānāpānasati'*, we discussed the fundamental principle of ānāpānasati meditation. We also talked about how to focus on the meditation object, and how to overcome some of the obstacles which appear along the way. This book is very much alike, but *'A companion volume'* is much more detailed than the former one.

It is not easy to achieve jhāna with any concentration meditation. "This ānāpānasati is difficult, difficult to develop, a field in which only the minds of The Buddhas, The Pacceka Buddhas, and The Buddha's sons are at home." We discuss important and basic rules that meditators have to understand and apply (mainly in the lower and middle phases leading up to concentration). May this book illuminate the meditator's thinking. Hopefully after reading this book, the reader will be able to have a deeper understanding of ānāpānasati meditation and will be able to apply the fundamental principle of ānāpānasati up to the attainment of 'Right Concentration', jhāna.

May you succeed in ānāpānasati meditation.

May you realize the profound teaching of The Buddha.

Bhikkhu Paññānanda (Intagaw-Pa Auk)

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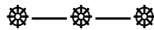
Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato

Sammāsambuddhassa

HOMAGE TO HIM, THE BLESSED, THE WORTHY,
THE PERFECTLY SELF-ENLIGHTENED ONE



We would like to give you some instructions on how to develop concentration through practising *ānāpānasati*. This discussion is aimed especially at meditators who have yet to attain concentration. The explanatory notes are intended as **‘a basic and medium course’** in *ānāpānasati*. Before discussing *ānāpānasati*, firstly we should know some of the salient points.



Sīla is the first training

The Buddha's Teaching comprises a threefold training:

- 1) Training in morality (*Sīla-sikkhā*),
- 2) Training in concentration (*Samādhi-sikkhā*),
- 3) Training in wisdom (*Paññā-sikkhā*).

“Such is morality; such is concentration; such is wisdom. When morality is fully developed, concentration is of great fruit and benefit; when concentration is fully developed, wisdom is of great fruit and benefit.”¹

The aim of the threefold training (the mundane Noble Eightfold Path)² is to realize the Nibbāna. One must develop the training (the Noble Eightfold Path) step by step, in the order of morality, concentration, and wisdom³. After purifying one's morality one must train in concentration, and after purifying one's mind by way of concentration practice, one must train in wisdom.

Morality (Sīla) is the first of the threefold training. To develop Samādhi and Paññā, morality-training (*sīla-sikkhā*) is an important foundation. First of all one needs to train in morality (sīla). This means one should first undertake either the eight

¹ Dīgha-Nikāya.16.2.4 “Mahāparinibbāna Sutta” (“Great Parinibbāna Discourse”)

² Right Speech, Right Action, and Right Livelihood comprise the training of morality (sīla). Right Speech, Right Action, and Right Livelihood are together called the training of morality (sīla). Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration are together called the training of concentration (samādhi). Right View and Right Thought are together called the training of wisdom (paññā).

³ Some people have a great accumulation of pāramī, and they can attain Nibbana by simply listening to a brief or detailed talk on the Dhamma. Actually they practice the three trainings while listening to the talk. Most people, however, do not have such pāramī, and must practise the Noble Eightfold Path, the threefold training in its gradual order. They are called person-to-be-led (neyya-puggala).

precepts (Uposatha precepts) of a layperson, the ten precepts of a nun or novice, or the Pātimokkha precepts of a fully ordained Buddhist monk. Here, in Sidikalang, lay meditators have to undertake eight precepts. If meditators strain or break their precepts, they can purify themselves by taking the precepts again. Most of the meditators observe the morality well, but to stay pure, they undertake the precepts every morning. 'A meditator who is virtuous (behaving in a very honest and morale way) has nothing to be remorseful about.'

When we are established in good morality well, we can practice mental training; here mental training is meditation practice. There are two types of meditation, namely, Samatha (tranquillity meditation) and Vipassanā (insight meditation). Samatha is the development of concentration, whereas Vipassanā is the development of wisdom. The system of Vipassanā meditation is unique to The Buddha's Teachings and is intended to generate direct personal realization of the truths discovered and enunciated by The Buddha.

Here we encourage you to develop Samatha for the sake of using it to develop Vipassanā meditation. Samatha is a very important foundation for Vipassanā.⁴ By practicing Samatha, one can cultivate access or absorption concentration, and then proceed to develop wisdom, which is Vipassanā meditation.

Strong and deep concentration is a proximate cause (padaṭṭhāna) for insight. Only the mind steeped in strong and

⁴ It is explained by The Buddha in, for example, the 'Samādhi' Sutta ('The Concentration Sutta') of the 'Sacca-Saṃyutta' ('Section on the Truths'): Develop concentration (samādhi), bhikkhus. Concentrated (samāhito), bhikkhus, a bhikkhu according to reality understands. Saṃyutta- Nikāya.V.XII.i.1;

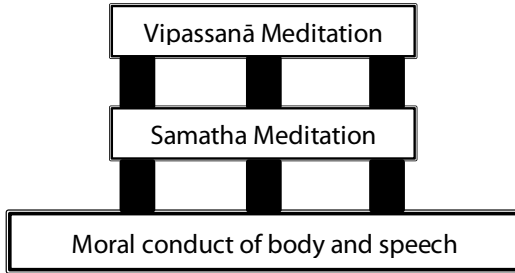
And also see: "*samāhito yathābhūtaṃ jānāti passatī*" ti vacanato pana samādhi tassā padaṭṭhānaṃ. (Vs..68)

"*samāhito yathābhūtaṃ jānāti passatī*" One who is concentrated knows and sees correctly. (A.3.259, Myanmar edition).

Ānāpānasati

deep concentration (access or absorption concentration) can know and see things (objects of Vipassanā) as they really are.⁵

The object of vipassanā are ultimate mentality-materiality (past, future, present, internal, external, gross, subtle, inferior, superior, far and near) and their causes, including the jhāna dhammas (e.g. the thirty-four mental formations of the first jhāna, the thirty-two mental formations of the second jhāna, the thirty-one mental formations of the third, fourth and immaterial jhānas). Vipassanā is comprehending the impermanence, suffering, and non-self nature of ultimate mentality-materiality and their causes. Systematic practice of Vipassanā leads to the attainment of Nibbāna, the destruction of all attachments, all defilements and all suffering.

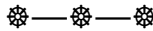


⁵ This is the second benefit of jhāna concentration.

There are five benefits of jhāna concentration:

1. a present blissful abiding (diṭṭha.dhamma.sukha.vihāra) **that is** enjoying jhāna happiness in this very life.
2. the benefit of vipassanā (vipassanā.nisaṃsa), **this is called** vipassanā-basis-jhāna (vipassanā-pādaka-jjhāna).
3. psychic powers (abhiññ.ānisaṃsa).
4. 'a specific existence' (bhava.visesāvahānisaṃsa).
5. cessation (nirodh.ānisaṃsa), the attainment of cessation (nirodha.samāpatti). (See VsM. xi.362)

- Practice is the threefold training in morality, concentration, and wisdom.
- Meditation consists of samatha (tranquillity) and vipassanā (insight) practice, and both of them must be based upon moral conduct of body and speech.
- Samatha meditation (samatha·bhāvanā) is the training of concentration and vipassanā meditation (vipassanā·bhāvanā) is the training of wisdom.
- Samatha meditation is a support for Vipassanā Meditation.
- The development of insight (Vipassanā) culminates in penetration of the Four Noble Truths.



What is Samatha?

The word *samatha* (serenity) is a general term for concentration. The word is almost synonymous with concentration (*samādhi*).

Samatha= samādhi

Samādhi

Before starting to discuss Samatha practice, we should first clarify what concentration (samādhi) actually is. Concentration is the mental ability to direct all your effort and attention on one thing without thinking of other things. It is the head of non-distraction⁶. In texts, it is mentioned as 'mental one-pointedness' (*'onepointedness of the mind – Cittasś-ekaggatā'*)⁷.

Actually concentration is of many sorts (*bahuvīdho*) and has various aspects. We shall confine ourselves to the kind intended here, calling the concentration *profitable unification of mind (kusalcittakaggatā samādhi)*. Its function is to eliminate distraction.

Samatha

Samatha (serenity) is a synonym for absorption concentration. The word *samatha* sometimes is rendered as

⁶ ... avikkhepasīsañca samādhi. (Paṭisambhidāmaggaṇī, 1.Mahāvagga, 1.Ñāṇakathā, 36.Samasīsaṭṭhaññaniddeso.)

⁷ "*Cittasś-ekaggatā*" is rendered as '**unification of mind**' in the sense of agreement or harmony (*samagga*) of consciousness and its mental factors in focusing on a single object. It is sometimes rendered as '**one-pointedness of mind**' in that sense, or *in the sense of the focusing of a searchlight*. This term is a synonym of concentration (*samādhi*). (*Samatha= samādhi*)

'*calm*' or '*tranquillity*', it denotes quietude of a mind. Technically, *samatha* is defined as one-pointedness of the mind in jhānas.

So, *samatha meditation (samatha kammaṭṭhāna)* is a method to develop strong and deep concentration (one-pointedness) on one object: either access concentration (*upacāra-samadhi*) or absorption concentration (*appanā-samādhī*). The eight meditative attainments (*samāpatti* — the four fine-material-sphere jhānas and the immaterial-sphere jhānas) are called calm (*samatha*) as owing to one-pointedness of the mind, wavering or trepidation of the mind is subdued and brought to an end.

Under body contemplation (*kāyānupassanā*), The Buddha taught two types of meditation: *samatha* and *vipassanā*. Under body contemplation, He included *ānāpānasati*, and the thirty-two parts of the body etc. So, if you are practising *ānāpānasati*, you are practising body contemplation.

Ānāpānasati meditation is one of the *samatha* meditation subjects and it is a method to develop strong and deep concentration (one-pointedness) of mind on the breath. It can be developed up to the fourth jhāna. The four jhānas are called fine-material-sphere jhānas (*rūpāvacara-jhāna*).

Since a meditator has to develop deep and stable concentration by focusing on one meditation object, he or she should take up only one meditation subject. So, we would normally suggest leaving aside all previous practices while practising the current meditation subject.

Three types of concentration

One-pointedness) of mind on the breath is concentration (*samādhī*). In *ānāpānasati*, there are three types of concentration (*samādhī*) and three types of mental development. The three types of concentration are as follows:

Ānāpānasati

- 1) Preparatory concentration (*parikamma.samādhi*). Sometimes it can be called momentary concentration (*khaṇika.samādhi*).
- 2) Access concentration (*upacāra.samādhi*). When strong and deep concentration is very close to absorption concentration, it is called 'access concentration'.
- 3) Absorption concentration (*appanā.samādhi*). Absorption concentration is also called *jhāna* ⁸.

The three types of mental development are:

- 1) Preparatory development (*parikamma.bhāvanā*)
- 2) Access development (*upacāra.bhāvanā*)
- 3) Absorption development (*appanā.bhāvanā*)

When preparatory concentration, or momentary concentration, is fully developed it leads to access concentration. When access concentration is fully developed, it leads to absorption concentration (*jhāna*).

Preparatory concentration

Preparatory development (*parikamma.bhāvanā*) is the same as preparatory concentration (*parikamma.samādhi*).

Ānāpānasati goes under body contemplation.

In-breaths and out-breaths while acquainted with the whole body [of breaths] are a body. When a beginner thinks of a *particular sign from the [in & out] breath (i.e. breath body)*, that object is called the preparatory sign (*parikamma-nimitta*). Here

⁸ VsMṬ (Visuddhi-Magga-Mahā-Ṭīkā) explains *absorption*: 'Application (applied thought) that occurs as though absorbing associated states in the object is absorption (*appanā*). DhSṬ (Dhamma-Saṅgaṇī-Mūla-Ṭīkā) .I.iii.160 'Paṭama-Jjhāna-Kathā-Vaṇṇanā' ('Description of the First-Jhāna Discussion') explains that 'absorption' is in commentarial usage used to refer to the application's distinctive function (*vitakkassa kicca-visesena*) of stability (*thirabhāva*) gained in first-jhāna concentration, as well as that same stability in the concentration of the second-, third-, and fourth *jhāna*, even though they are without application.' See also footnote 95, 112 and 132.

the nimitta (sign) is the object of concentration. And that meditation is called preparatory development.

Body (*Kāya*): material body = collection of material/material grouped together

Breath body = collection of breath [particles] = mass of breath [particles]

When that sign has been thoroughly apprehended and enters into range of the mind door just as if it were seen by the eye, then it is called the learning sign, and that meditation becomes concentrated.

Preparatory concentration (preparatory development) occurs from the time one begins the practice of meditation up to the time the five hindrances are suppressed and the counterpart sign emerges.

Momentary concentration

According to *Visuddhi-Magga*, there are three types of concentration: momentary concentration, access concentration and absorption concentration.

“Now this fivefold joy (*pīti*), when conceived and matured, perfects the twofold tranquillity (*Passaddhi*), that is, bodily and mental tranquillity. When tranquillity is conceived and matured, it perfects the twofold bliss (*sukha*), that is, bodily and mental bliss. When bliss is conceived and matured, it perfects the threefold concentration, that is, momentary concentration, access concentration and absorption concentration.” (Vsm.iv.72)

joy (*pīti*) → tranquillity (*passaddhi*) → bliss (*sukha*) → concentration

The momentary concentration is a type of preparatory concentration and it in samatha refers in particular to the concentration that takes a sign (i.e. mass of breath in *ānāpānasati*) as object. *It is the concentration before access*

concentration. This is for a samatha vehicle person (samatha-yānika).⁹

Access and absorption concentration

Access development (upacāra-bhāvanā) occurs when the five hindrances become suppressed and the counterpart sign

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■ Knowing and Seeing (by the most Venerable Pa-Auk Tawya Sayadaw) explains: the momentary concentration in samatha takes a counterpart sign (paṭibhāga-nimitta) as object, like the ānāpāna counterpart sign.

■ There is another type of momentary concentration for a pure-vipassanā vehicle person. The approach, called the vehicle of pure insight (suddha-vipassanā-yāna), does not employ the development of calm as a foundation for developing insight. A pure-vipassanā-vehicle yogi must usually begin with four-elements meditation (catu-dhātuvavatthāna.bhāvanā) in a systematic way (i.e., developing in ten ways (VsMṬ.xi.308 ` Catu-Dhātuvavatthāna.Bhāvanā' (four-elements definition meditation)) in order to attain access concentration or momentary concentration, [and see the rūpa-kalāpas, and the four elements in one kalāpa]. The Visuddhi-Magga says that is access concentration. [Jhāna cannot be attained with four-elements meditation.] The sub-commentary to the Visuddhi-Magga says it is only a metaphor, not real access concentration, because real access concentration is close to jhāna concentration. This it is called access-concentration only according to popular speech (*ruḥhī-vasenā*).

Pure-vipassanā (insight alone) is meant to exclude not virtue, etc., but serenity (i.e. jhāna). For a one whose vehicle is insight does not imply that there is no concentration; for no insight comes about without momentary concentration.

■

"...; for without the access and absorption concentration in one whose vehicle is serenity, or without the momentary concentration in one whose vehicle is insight, and without the gateways to liberation, supramundane can never in either case be reached"(See Vism-mhṭ 13).

■ Vipassanā momentary concentration is seeing thoroughly the impermanent, suffering, and non-self nature of ultimate mentality-materiality and their causes. (See VsM.viii.235 '*Ānāpānasati-Kathā*' ('Mindfulness-of-Breathing Discussion') PP.viii.232.)

emerges. Deep and strong concentration before absorption concentration, with the counterpart sign [with the concept of breath (mass of breath) appearing as a counterpart sign¹⁰] as object, as a metaphor called ‘access concentration’ or ‘access development’. It endures from the moment the counterpart sign arises up to the change-of-lineage citta (*gotrabhū*) in the cognitive process culminating in jhāna. The citta that immediately follows change-of-lineage is called absorption. This marks the beginning of *absorption development*. The number of absorption impulses depends on how long the jhana attainment lasts, which depends on the yogi’s practice and skill.

Real access concentration, and *real* access development are very close to absorption concentration; this is why they are called ‘access’.

Preparatory sign ----- learning sign	Counterpart sign	
Preparatory development	Access	Absorption

Real access concentration is the three impulse consciousnesses that follow the mind-door adverting consciousness and precede the Change-of-Lineage to the jhāna process.¹¹

¹⁰ When mind knows/contemplates the concept of breath (mass of breath) in the nostrils, counterpart sign (purified and clear version of uggaha-nimitta) appears at stable perception and strong concentration. Access- or absorption concentration takes counterpart sign (*paṭibhāga-nimitta*) as object. See also footnotes 39, 52, 94, 96, 98, 99 and 109.

¹¹ See table ‘1a: The Jhāna-Attainment Process’ in *Knowing and Seeing* by Venerable Pa-Auk Tawya Sayadaw, VsM.iv.69 ‘Paṭhama. jhāna.kathā (Explanation of the First Jhāna) and Abhidhammattha Sangaha.IX ‘Kammaṭṭhāna saṅgahavibhāga’ (Compendium of meditation subjects).

Ānāpānasati

There are six types of consciousness that comprises a mind-door process (mano-dvāra-vīthi) of the jhāna. The six types of consciousness are:

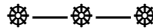
- 1) A mind-door adverting consciousness (mano-dvār-āvajjana)
- 2) A preparatory consciousness (parikamma)
- 3) An access consciousness (upacāra)
- 4) A conformity consciousness (anuloma)
- 5) A change-of-lineage consciousness (gotrabhu)
- 6) An uninterrupted sequence of jhāna impulsion-consciousnesses (jhāna-javana-citta).

Table: The absorption javana (impulsion) process
The initial attainment of jhāna

Avrg: B { V A M Pr Ac Cn Ch Jh } B B B

Keen: B { V A M Ac Cn Ch Jh } B B B

KEY: Avrg = one of average faculties;
Keen = one of keen faculties;
B = stream of bhavaṅga;
V = vibrational bhavaṅga;
A = arrest bhavaṅga;
M = mind-door adverting;
Pr = preparation;
Ac = access;
Cn = conformity;
Ch = change-of-lineage;
Jh = jhāna;
{ } = extent of the process.



Ānāpānasati can be your first choice

Samatha meditation has its own methodology and the whole range of meditation subjects. There are forty methods of Samatha meditation in the Buddha's teaching; a person can develop progressively through any of these to attain concentration.

In the 'Meghiya' sutta of the Khuddaka-Nikāya it says:

'*Ānāpānasati* should be developed to cut off discursive thoughts.'

(*ānāpānasati bhāvetabbā vitakk-upacchedāya.*)

The Most Venerable Pa-Auk Tawya Sayadaw ¹² has taught meditators Samatha as well as Vipassanā practice in strict accordance with the standard Pali texts and commentaries. Over the years, he concluded from his vast teaching experience that, of the forty methods, *ānāpānasati* practice is very efficient for many meditators, and that it should (potentially) improve their concentration. That is why if a meditator cannot decide which meditation subject to develop, Pa-Auk Tawya Sayadaw usually suggests: "You can practise *ānāpānasati*; it may be suitable for you".

Nowadays children are reckoned to be more sophisticated. They have to learn much scientific and technological material at an early age. Unfortunately, all this comes with a high price. People's minds are becoming quick, but in an agitated, restless way. From the point of view of the path, multi-tasking is bad for the mind. The mind must be steadied in order to grow and develop. Mind-dancing is actually a disease.

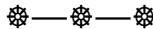
¹²The Most Venerable Pa-Auk Tawya Sayadaw is an abbot and a principal teacher at the Pa-Auk Tawya Monastery, a meditation centre outside Mawlamyine in the Mon State, Myanmar. He has centres also elsewhere in Myanmar, in Singapore, in Malaysia, in Indonesia, in Thailand and in some other countries.

Ānāpānasati

The breath, because it continues over time, can soothe and calm tense, tired mind. “*Ānāpānasati* should be developed for the purpose of cutting off applied thought,” as the Buddha said. *Ānāpānasati* is one meditation subject suitable for one of deluded temperament and for one of speculative temperament. Now, this hi-tech world tends to produce a huge amount of information. People become infoholic. This increases their tendency to be of a speculative temperament. This too is a reason for practising *ānāpānasati*.

Moreover, after the retreat they can continue to practise meditation (*ānāpānasati*) at home or in a monastery. For many meditators this is an important factor as they cannot stay in a meditation centre for many weeks or months. So this practice is suitable for those who want to continue their practice at their own place. But there is no doubt that it is better and wiser to practise under the close guidance of a qualified teacher. As meditators are often confused whether their practice is on the right path to concentration, a teacher can help them.

Although *ānāpānasati* is very practical, at certain stages of development, some meditators often misunderstand and get confused about how to apply the technique to concentrate on the meditation object (in this case the breath). As a result, their development of concentration is delayed. The author of this book has some meditation teaching experience, both at main Pa-Auk Tawya centre and other branches. Based on this as well as many meditators’ experiences, this book offers a discussion of the principle of *ānāpānasati* meditation and some techniques by which to overcome a number of obstacles that often appear along the path to concentration.



Ānāpānasati is not a breathing exercise

Ānāpānasati: **Ānāpāna** means **an inhaled and exhaled breath**, **Sati** means **mindfulness**.

A generally used translation of *ānāpānasati* is 'mindfulness of breathing'. However, such rendering is not really satisfactory. In the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, breathing is defined as 'the action of taking air into the lungs and sending it out again'. And in the *Visuddhi.Magga ānāpānasati* is defined as mindfulness arisen inspired by in-breaths and out-breaths (*ānāpāna*). This is a term for mindfulness that has as its object the sign of in-breaths and out-breaths.¹³ So, it would be more accurate to translate *ānāpānasati* as **mindfulness of the breath**.

Ānāpānasati practice is one of the ten kinds of recollection (*anussati*). Mindfulness (*sati*) itself is recollection because it arises again and again.

Mindfulness means remembrance. Mindfulness remembers, puts and *keeps* attention on the breath. So it keeps the object in mind. Wisdom knows the breath clearly. Therefore, when you are practising *ānāpānasati* to develop samatha, you must establish mindfulness (remembrance) on the breath.

¹³ *Ānāpānasati* — (*ānā + apāna + sati*): 'Ānaṃ is air entering inwards; apānaṃ is air issuing outwards. Sati is mindfulness.'

— 'Ānanti assāso no passāso. Apānanti passāso no assāso.'
(*Paṭisambhidāmagga*—160)

Āna is in-breath (*assāsa*); *apāna* is out-breath (*passāsa*). ('*Asāssa* is the wind issuing out; *passāsa* is the wind entering in' is said in the Vinaya Commentary. But in the Suttanta Commentaries they are given in the opposite sense.)

— *Ānāpāne ārabhha uppannā sati ānāpānassati, assāsapassāsanimittārammaṇāya satiyā etamadhivacanaṃ* (*VsM. vii. 123*)

The mindfulness arisen inspired by breathing [in-breaths and out-breaths] (*ānāpāna*) is *ānāpānasati*. This is a term for mindfulness that has as *its object the sign of in-breaths and out-breaths*.

Ānāpānasati

To develop *ānāpānasati* meditation, must understand clearly the meaning of mindfulness.

- + Mindfulness (*Sati*): *Being mindful* is mindfulness. Its characteristic (*lakkhaṇa*) is ‘*remembering* or not wobbling’, i.e., not floating away from the object (*apilāpana-lakkhaṇā*). Mindfulness *remembers* the object and discerns it *again and again*.¹⁴
- + And its function (*rasa*) is *not to forget* (*asammosa-rasā*). It protects the mind, and keeps the object of meditation not allowing it to become lost (*ārakkha-paccupaṭṭhānā*).
- + It is manifested as guarding.

In the very beginning and early stages, concentration is not well-developed yet. At that time some meditators do a common mistake by focusing on (or being keenly aware of) their breathing actions¹⁵ and / or noticeable sound of breathing, as if they are practising some deep-breathing exercise.

Such improper practice may create a disturbance in group sittings, as noisy breathing sounds can distract to other meditators.

Samatha meditation is a method to develop strong and deep concentration (one-pointedness) on one object. And *ānāpānasati* meditation, being a samatha practice, is a way to cultivate strong and deep concentration (one-pointedness) of mind on the breath.

Ānāpānasati goes under body contemplation (*kāyānupassanā*). The Buddha explains breathing action step by step: in breath, out breath, long breath, short breath, whole

¹⁴ Now as to mindful: here, he **remembers** (*sarati*), thus he is *mindful* (*sata*). ...*ettha saratīti sato. (Visuddhi-Magga. iv. 85)*

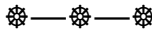
¹⁵ ‘Breathing action’ means breathing movements of chest and abdomen. The chest expands and relaxes and / or the abdomen moves rhythmically when breathing.

breath. *That is to say, breath as a mere body should be cognized somewhere around the nostrils.*¹⁶

Breathing occurs continuously. In this meditation practice a yogi ¹⁷ has to train his or her mind to remember or to be mindful of the breath in every bodily posture [*while breathing*]. However, it is essential to not pay attention to the actual breathing action itself. In mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasati*), to be mindful of *breathing* is to be mindful of the *breath* (*breath body/mass*).

Although at the beginning and early stages of the path to concentration (or at the start of a sitting session) the movement or flowing of breath will be noticed to some degree at the focus area, *one should consider that he or she is practicing meditation by focusing and concentrating on the breath (breath body)*. The meditator is not actually doing a breathing exercise; he is not focusing and concentrating on the breath's [inward & outward] movements and breathing movements [rise and fall] of chest and abdomen.

When concentration improves, the yogi realizes for himself that his breath (breath's movement) automatically becomes subtle, and he overcomes the noticeable sound of breathing.



¹⁶ See footnote 26.

¹⁷ Yogi: One devoted to mental training.

What is breath? What is paññatti?

A meditator practising *ānāpānasati* (*mindfulness of the breath*) meditation should first know clearly what the breath is. Some meditators may think, “It is simple, we know what the breath is”. Actually it is not so easy to comprehend it throughout the course of practice that culminates in the attainment of deep concentration (i.e. absorption; *appanā-jhāna*). By understanding the meditation object (the breath) meditators can overcome the obstacles that they may often encounter on the way.

What is the object, what is the breath?

Breath is the air that you take into your lungs and send out again. *Herein the object, the breath is **conceptual**. Conceptual breath means the mass (amount of material) of breath that is cognized only by mind consciousness.* Again, we should know what the concept (*paññatti*) is.

According to Abhidhamma, there are two kinds of realities— conventional (*sammuti*) and ultimate (*paramattha*). Concepts (*Paññatti*) pertain to conventional reality and not to ultimate reality. They are unreal (unsubstantive) and non-existent (concepts having no existence) in the ultimate sense. Now, let us look a little bit more at *paññatti*.

Concepts (*Paññatti*) are twofold:¹⁸

- concept as that which *is made known*, and
- concept as that which *makes known*.

The concept as that which is made known is the *atthapaññatti* or the *meaning-concept (concept-as-meaning)*; the concept as that which makes known is the *nāmapaññatti* or *concept-as-names* (the making known of a name).

¹⁸ See ‘analysis of concepts’ (*paññattibheda*) in Abhidhammattha Saṅgaha.

The former are the meanings conveyed by the concepts, the latter the names or designations which convey that meaning. The notion of the thing with its shape, size, appearance, quality etc. is the concept-as-meaning.

For example, a dog:

The notion of a four-legged furry domestic animal with certain physical (i.e. amount of material/mass) features and traits is the concept-as-meaning of the term “dog”; the designation and idea “dog” is the corresponding concept as-name.

The things we refer to /concepts (paññatti) (conceptual entities) are living and non-living and they are infinite in number: e.g. men, women, bhikkhu, sayalay, children, dog, cat, cow, mouse, silver, gold, skeleton, breath, etc. Thus not only the names (‘men, women, dog, cat, breath, etc.’) are paññatti but the things the names refer to are also paññatti.

All this shows that the word paññatti carries the meanings of either appellation or concept or both together, and that no English word quite corresponds.

In-breaths and out-breaths are *a body (kāya) or a mass*. the in-breaths and out-breaths, which exist as particles though they have the aspect of length, constitute a ‘body’ in the sense of a mass.¹⁹ [See footnote 20.]

The meditation object in ānāpānasati practice is the meaning-concept (atthapaññatti) of the term “breath” so instead of saying breath (in and out breath) the author of this book often uses ‘conceptual breath’ or ‘concept of breath’ or ‘mass of breath’ to clarify it.

conceptual breath = concept of breath = mass of breath =
breath body

¹⁹ Mass = gather [things or] particles together in large numbers;
body = collection of something

HOW DO WE KNOW THE MEANING- CONCEPTS?

Here, we would like to quote some notes. According to Abhidhamma, cognition follows a fixed procedure, according to the natural law of consciousness (*citta-niyāmā*). For example, visual cognition:

- 1st) Eye-door process (The Five-Door Process) that ‘picks-up’ the object; cognizes colour.
- 2nd) Mind-door process that *perceives the colour*; knows the past colour, the object of the eye-door process.
- 3rd) Mind-door process that knows which colour it is; knows the colour’s name.
- 4th) Mind-door process that knows *the object’s ‘meaning’*; sees the whole image, a concept determined by past experience (*perception (saññā)*).
- 5th) Mind-door process that judges and feels. This is the beginning of *true cognition*.

It is from the fifth mind-door process onwards that the concept is known: ‘a man’, ‘a woman’, ‘a pot’, ‘a sarong’, ‘gold’, ‘silver’ etc.

‘Concept as what is made known’ is meaning-concept. **Through cognizing the colour, shape, form, size (extent), attribute etc. of conceptual objects (one after another), we cognize these objects well.** For example, by knowing such and such colour, by knowing such and such shape and form (configuration), the mind cognizes them as men, women, bhikkhu, sayalay, skeleton, earth, water, etc. All such different things, though they do not exist in the ultimate sense, become objects of consciousness in the form of shadows of ultimate things.

For instance, you may have seen before, a cigarette smoker puffing at his cigarette and exhaling his breath through the nostrils together with streams of cigarette smoke. If you have

looked at cigarette smoke being exhaled deeply through the nose before, you may have thought that it looked like a whitish stream of puffs.

Therefore, many yogis (especially in the beginning stage, early stage and middle stage of practice) think of (and see) breath as a column (cord /string) like object. It is making a sign as a condition for perceiving again ‘this is the same’; it is recognizing what has been previously perceived (paccābhiññāṇa) — it is perception (*Saññā*). It is also (mentally) marking the object and *it shows where the breath-mass is. Perception (Saññā) has characteristic of perceiving (sañjānana) of the qualities of the object.*

It is important to have strong and firm perception (thira saññā) of conceptual breath as it is a proximate (nearest) cause for mindfulness of the breath (Sati).

The concept of the breath is the object of *ānāpānasati*. To achieve the end of meditation, yogis must comprehend the object of *ānāpānasati*. Mass or body (bodily part) is the most striking feature of the breath. After having cognized the shape, size (or delimitation), form (or configuration), etc. of an object, you can perceive and memorize the attributes of an object. But, after perceiving the object (vividly or clearly) at its place it is no longer important to be *fully* aware of its *specific* shape, form or colour.

Here ‘concept’ [of breath] is used to refer to really existing particular thing [breath-column or mass of breath] which is cognized *only* by mind consciousness. **The object of meditation, the concept of breath (mass of breath) which is a conceptual reality is not to be known as concept/theory only, because that is just to know and see it (mass of breath) as it appears at its proper place.**

When there is production of mindfulness of the [conceptual] breath, there is production of concentration through mindfulness of the breath. The conceptual breath (mass

of breath) manifests as various types of images (milestones (*Nimitta*)) depending upon [perception and] *level of concentration*. If the sign is far from the nostrils, it is not a real sign of concentration (colour of the nimitta / breath-mass).

Some important changes of breath image (sign/milestone (*Nimitta*)) represent important milestones in the development of concentration. Author of this book explains yogis certain stages in development of concentration that important or very vivid milestones of breath-mass pass through: beginning stage, early stage, middle stage, high stage and sinking stage.

HOW ABOUT THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BREATH?'

If one misunderstands The Buddha's samatha instructions in the 'Mahā-Sati-Paṭṭhāna Sutta', one's practice will be wrong. If one's practice is wrong, one will not attain concentration.

- Should one try to pay attention to the coldness or warmness in in&out-breaths?
- Should one contemplate in&out-breaths as impermanent, suffering, or non-self?

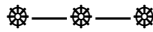
Conceptual breath is a concept. It is compactness / concreteness of *mass*. Because in *ānāpānasati* (*mindfulness of the breath*) meditation, the meditation object is the conceptual breath,²⁰ [which is not ultimate materiality (paramattha-rūpa)],

²⁰ **Conceptual breath** is a concept, not ultimate materiality (paramattha-rūpa). It is compactness / concreteness of *mass*. One may think it has actual existence. *By discerning four elements meditation systematically*, we penetrate the concept of it (we resolve the seeming compactness of it) and it is resolved into its ultimates, i.e., into bare materiality that is impermanent. Breath is a group of material clusters (rūpa-kalāpas). Rūpa-kalāpas : small particles or sub-atomic particles of materiality; The Most Venerable Pa-Auk Tawya Sayadaw use the term, sub-atomic particles to indicate what kind of reality one is looking at. And they are born of consciousness. But breath outside the body (between the nostril and upper lip) is a group of rūpa-kalāpas born of temperature. If we analyse those rūpa-kalāpas (inside or outside the body), we see that they are

meditators must not pay attention to the individual or natural characteristics (*sabhāva-lakkhaṇa*)²¹ and general characteristics (*sāmmañña-lakkhaṇa*)²² of the breath.²³

The individual characteristics (*paccatta-lakkhaṇa*) are the natural characteristics of the four elements in the breath: hardness, roughness, flowing, heat (warmness or coldness), supporting, pushing, etc. The general characteristics are the impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), or non-self (*anatta*) characteristics of the breath.

Understanding ultimate reality will help us to overcome some formidable obstacles that might be encountered on the path to concentration.



untranslucent (*napasāda*) and there are nine types of materiality in each one kalāpa: earth-, water-, fire-, and wind element, colour, odour, flavour, nutritive essence, and sound. (See VsM. Viii.223.)

“Assāsapassāsā cittasamuṭṭhānāvā”ti etena assāsapassāsānaṃ sarīraṃ muñcitvā pavatti natthīti dīpeti. Na hi bahiddhā cittasamuṭṭhānassa sambhavo atthīti. Yadi evaṃ kathaṃ “passāsoti.....vuttanti veditabbaṃ. (*Visuddhimagga-mahāṭīkā,307*)

²¹ natural characteristic (*sabhāva-lakkhaṇa*): the characteristic peculiar to one type of ultimate reality, be it materiality or mentality: also called individual characteristic (*paccatta-lakkhaṇa*);
Sabhāva — individual essence

²² general characteristic (*sāmmañña-lakkhaṇa*): the three characteristics general to all formations, be they material or mental: impermanence, suffering, non-self.
²³

- ...*samathavasena* ***nimittakāyānupassanā***, vipassanāvasena nāmakāyarūpakāyānupassanā ñāṇanti attho. (*Paṭisambhidāmagga-Atṭhākathā, 166.*)
- Aniccānupassanādayo hi nāmarūpakāye eva labbhanti, na nimittakāye. (*Paṭisambhidāmagga-Atṭhākathā, 167.*)
- Athānena taṃ nimittaṃ neva vaṇṇato manasi kātappaṃ, na lakkhaṇato paccavekkhitappaṃ. (*Visuddhimagga, 232*)

By contrast the ultimate reality (paramattha) is?

Paramattha is a Pali term which means lofty intrinsic nature. 'Lofty' here does not mean high, noble or good, but it means that which is upright and firm being unchanging by way of intrinsic nature.

Paramattha = Parama+attha = lofty + intrinsic nature²⁴

Paramattha is ultimate reality. And it is real forever.

Ultimate realities are things that really exist by reason of their own intrinsic nature (*sabhāva*). These are the dhammas²⁵: the final, irreducible components of existence. They hold on their characteristics and they never change their nature or characteristic.

There are four ultimate realities: *Citta* (consciousness), *Cetasika* (mental factors), *Rūpa* (materiality), and *Nibbāna* (permanent peace).

How they are unchanging: *Lobha* (greed) mental factor never changes its intrinsic nature of greed (grasping an object, like birdlime (lit. 'monkey plaster')) whether it arises in the mind of the wise and virtuous, or wicked, or of dogs. *Dosa* (Hatred) also never changes its nature (savageness, like a provoked snake) in whomsoever beings it arises. It should be noted that other ultimate realities also hold their nature in the same way.

Physical phenomena /materiality (*Rūpa*) is the third of four ultimate realities. There are four principal elements in the physical phenomena; namely, the earth element (*Pathavī*), the water element (*Āpo*), the fire element (*Tejo*), and the wind element (*Vāyo*).

Touch objects (tangible/tactile (*phoṭṭhabba*) objects) are composed of three elements only: the earth element (*Pathavī*), the fire element (*Tejo*), the wind element (*Vāyo*). Characteristics

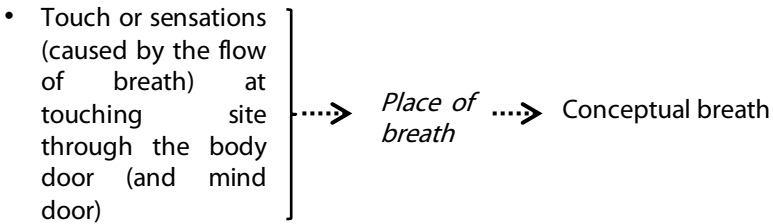
²⁴ Abhidhamma in daily life By Ashin Janakābhivaṃsa.

²⁵ Dhamma: thing, phenomenon; state; object solely of the mind.

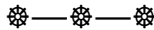
of these elements are hardness, roughness, heaviness, softness, smoothness, lightness, heat, coldness, supporting, pushing, and **these characteristics can be cognized as touch through the body door and mind door.** These ten characteristics are all known directly through the sense of touch. Because they are ultimate materiality, they cannot come in specific shape and form; we cannot say, for instance, that heat is rounded, flat, rectangular or of such and such shape. (The operation of sense doors will be discussed later.)

In ānāpānasati meditation the mind detects the touch (tangible objects) or sensations (feeling) at the breath-touching area around the nostrils or upper lip first, before being able to perceive the breath object. The mind rests on touch (and sensations) for some mind moments, and then tries to cognize the conceptual breath (mass of breath). When *the skills and concentration improve*, the mind consciousness can perceive the object as the mass of breath strongly and focus on it.

The Ānāpānasati is developed through the sense of touch /the flow of breath. Why?



Mind [of beginning, early stage yogis] should detect the sense of touch /the flow of breath *only for a very, very short moment.* It conducts a survey to find out where the *nostril and upper lip are as landmarks. Ignoring the touch of breath, simply discern the place of breath till your mind detect and see the 'place of breath' through the mind door.*



Where is the breath object?

'*Sabbakāya*paṭisaṃvedī (D.ii.9 'Mahā-Sati-Paṭṭhāna Sutta')
'Experiencing the whole [breath] body.....

Breathing occurs *continuously (all the time)*.

Whether it is inhaled or exhaled, the breath is present all the time at the nostril area and along the airway tract (the passage from the nose and throat to the lungs).

For one whose meditation subject is breath discerns the wind in his own nostrils. Focusing on the breath (mass of breath) at the nostril area²⁶ (between the nostril and upper lip) as a meditation object is of great value. By focusing on the breath at that area concentration can develop deeply.

Breath as a meditation object has a *definite* location²⁷. We usually refer that area between the nostril and upper lip as '*proper focus area*'. If the object is out of focus (sometimes we say "As if trying to focus on the object by taking constant pot-shots"), concentration cannot develop.

To consistently focus on the breath object (between nostril and upper lip), it is important to understand clearly that when

²⁶The Buddha explains *ānāpānasati*:

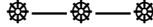
- He mindfully breathes in; mindfully breathes out.
- Breathing in long, he *understands (pañānāti)*: 'I breathe in long;'
- breathing out long, he understands: 'I breathe out long.'
- Breathing in short, he understands: 'I breathe in short;'
- breathing out short, he understands: 'I breathe out short.'
- 'Experiencing the whole [breath] body, I shall breathe in': thus he trains;
- 'experiencing the whole [breath] body, I shall breathe out': thus he trains.

This is explained by The Buddha in the Mahā-Sati-Paṭṭhāna Sutta ('The Great Mindfulness-Foundation Sutta' D.ii.9 and M.i.i.10). *The Buddha's teaching here means what the meditation object is and where yogis should focus on it.* *ānāpānakammaṃhāniko attano nāsikavātaṃ pariggaṇhāti (Visuddhimagga, 116).* For one whose meditation subject is breath discerns the wind in his own nostrils.

²⁷*okāseṇa ca paricchinnāṃ. (Visuddhimagga, 47)*

the in-breath ends, the out-breath starts, and when the out-breath ends, the in-breath starts. There is **no gap (no additional space) between the in and out breath**. One simile I regularly use to elaborate this fact, is that the breath is like flowing tap water. You have run a tap before; when the tap is turned on, tap water flows out continuously, running down at a certain speed without any gap in the stream of water. But the tap water flows down in only one direction; breath flows down during out-breath and up during in-breath, thus moving in two directions, alternating between in-flow and out-flow without any interrupting gap in the stream of breath.

As the breath is present throughout our entire life,²⁸ the yogi can focus and concentrate on it whether it is very subtle or not. *Clear and strong understanding (wisdom) of this fact makes the yogis feel confident* of cognizing the conceptual breath vividly when the breath is extremely subtle.



²⁸ Breathing action stops when one is in fourth jhāna or cessation attainment (*nirodha-samāpatti*) and also may stop in very deep coma.

The Mobile eye & Two Steps Focusing Approach

The Focusing Approach — TWO STEPS: The place is the *first* and the object is the *next*.

Now let us discuss *the focusing approach (focusing technique) in ānāpānasati meditation*. It is a fundamental approach in focusing and concentrating on the meditation object.

There are Two Steps in the focusing approach.

Two Steps: Focus on the place first and then on the object afterwards.

- How can we focus on *the place* where the conceptual breath exists?
- How can we focus on *the conceptual breath*?

Before we discuss the topic of 'how to focus on the conceptual breath', first we should learn the technique by which to focus on the place where the conceptual breath exists: *the focusing technique*. So, we say that the place/location is to be focused on first.

Breath as a meditation object has a definite location. The breath that lies between the nostril opening and upper lip is the object to be focused and concentrated on. After detecting the actual moving in-breath and out-breath for a moment or *a split second*, the beginning yogi should start to be *aware of this place only* (the immediate vicinity of right or left nostril, between nostril and upper lip); *but not yet of the conceptual breath and absolutely not of the skin between nostril and upper lip*. Because there are two nostril openings at your nose, we can say that there are two *streams of breath*. You can choose which side to focus on either left or right,²⁹ **as if you are an onlooker, focusing on/**

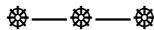
²⁹ Focusing on any one side (left or right) where breath exists is usually encouraged for beginning yogi and those who have yet to attain the 'stable'

looking at it with a movable eye from somewhere (from a distance of few centimetres). It may appear strange to you in the conventional sense. In this first step, you are preparing to focus on the meditation object, the conceptual breath (mass of breath).

As a next step you have to cognize (or pick up) the breath (mass of breath) at that place without paying attention to the movement (or touch) of breath and sensations around the nostril and upper lip. When you become a skilful meditator, without paying attention to the movement (or touch) of breath, you can cognize (your movable eye looks at/focuses on) proper focus area (nostril area). Immediately after your focus on the place where the conceptual breath exists, you can be able to focus on the meditation object, the mass of breath. This technique³⁰ will be discussed again under the topics: 'The breath object is the next on sensible reflection alone' and 'How can you start focusing on the still conceptual breath?'

When you start to take the Two Steps approach, you actually enter upon the state of gateway to concentration. You have to apply this focusing approach until you reach jhāna. During the progress of concentration, the breath usually becomes increasingly calm and subtle. 'The higher the phase of concentration, the subtler the conceptual breath to be cognized.' The breath becomes so subtle at a certain phase that a meditator may become confused about the object, but they can be certain that the breath is still present. At those times the meditators can continue to apply the 'TWO STEPS-Focusing Approach':

The place is the first and the object is the next. ("Focus on the focus area first, and on the meditation object afterwards".)



counterpart sign of breath. The breath object has definite location and a meditator needs to focus on / contemplate (know and see) it clearly.

³⁰ Some yogis call it 'gazing approach'.

Do you know the material doors and the mental mind door?

To understand fully how you should focus on the place (and the breath object at this place), we would like you to learn:

- The material sense doors, the mind door,
- The objects that strike upon the doors.

THE SIX DOORS AND THEIR OBJECTS

The term ‘door’ (*dvāra*) describes the fact that objects (*ārammaṇa*) need an entrance through which they can be known by a consciousness.

As explained by the Buddha, there are six doors:

- 1) Eye door (*cakkhudvāra*)
- 2) Ear door (*sotadvāra*)
- 3) Nose door (*ghānavdāra*)
- 4) Tongue door (*jivhādvāra*)
- 5) Body door (*kāyadvāra*)
- 6) Mind door (*manodvāra*) (life-continuum /bhavaṅga)

The first five sense doors are materiality and the sixth door, the mind door, is mentality. The mind door is a life-continuum³¹ (*bhavaṅga*) from which the cognitive process emerges. The life-continuum functions as the mind door.

³¹ The life-continuum consciousness is a flow of resultant consciousnesses, maintained by the kamma that matured at the time of death in the previous life. It maintains the continuum of mentality between mental processes. In between each mental process a number of life-continuum consciousnesses arises so that consciousness moments do not stop in one’s life. The life-continuum always cognizes the same object, which is independent of the objects that enter the six doors: that is why it is called process-separate (process-freed) (*vīthi-mutta*). It functions as the mind door (*manodvāra*).

The first five material sense doors take only their respective material objects, whereas the mind door (life-continuum) takes these previous five objects as well as its own objects (i.e. Dhamma objects).

Thus we have six types of objects (*ārammaṇa*):

- 1) Colour objects
- 2) Sound objects
- 3) Odour objects
- 4) Flavour objects
- 5) Touch or tangible or tactile objects
- 6) Dhamma objects (*Dhammārammaṇa*)—mental objects.

Colour or visible objects strike upon the eye door; sound objects strike upon the ear door; odour objects strike upon the nose door; flavour objects strike upon the tongue door; *touch objects (tangible or tactile objects) strike upon the body door and dhamma objects strike upon the mind door*. When material objects strike upon their material sense doors, at the same time they strike upon the mind door (bhavaṅga).³²

Dhamma objects are all other objects in the world which can be cognized by the mind through the mind door *alone*: in other words, all objects apart from the previous five material types of objects, thus including the concepts.

And the six doors and their objects are as follows:

- 1) The eye door, which takes colour objects.
- 2) The ear door, which takes sound objects.
- 3) The nose door, which takes odour objects.
- 4) The tongue door, which takes flavour objects.
- 5) The body door, which takes touch objects (*phoṭṭhabbārammaṇa*).

³² When a bird lands on the branch of a tree, its shadow strikes the ground at the same time. In the same way, when the object strikes the material door, it strikes the mind door at the same time. The simile is mentioned in the Aṭṭhasālinī (The Expositor p.96).

- 6) The mind door (*bhavaṅga*), which takes the previous five objects of the five material sense doors, and dhamma objects.

SIX TYPES OF CONSCIOUSNESS AND SIX PROCESSES

When one of the six doors comes together with its appropriate object, consciousness arises. Thus there are six types of consciousness:

- 1) Eye consciousness,
- 2) Ear consciousness,
- 3) Nose consciousness,
- 4) Tongue consciousness,
- 5) Body consciousness (*kāya-viññāṇa*),
- 6) Mind consciousness (*mano-viññāṇa*).

Due to (having depended upon) eye and to visible data (colour), eye-consciousness arises. ...Due to mind and to mental data, mind consciousness arises.

The consciousnesses that arise in one of the material sense doors are very weak. They 'just pick up' the object (*abhinipātamattā*). The actual knowing of the object is done by a series of mind consciousnesses that arise later.

According to the doors the six cognitive processes are as follows:

- 1) the process connected with the eye-door;
- 2) the process connected with the ear-door;
- 3) the process connected with the nose-door;
- 4) the process connected with the tongue-door;
- 5) the process connected with the body-door (*kāyadvāravīthi*); and
- 6) the process connected with the mind-door (*manodvāravīthi*).

Or, according to the consciousness, the cognitive processes are these:

- 1) the process connected with the eye-consciousness;
- 2) the process connected with the ear-consciousness;
- 3) the process connected with the nose-consciousness;
- 4) the process connected with the tongue-consciousness;
- 5) the process connected with the body-consciousness (*kāyaviññāṇavīthi*); and
- 6) the process connected with the mind-consciousness (*manoviññāṇavīthi*).

The consciousness of the five-door process that has a five-door object as its object does not attain deep concentration.

HOW DOES THE BREATH STRIKE?

The breath enters and leaves the body through the nostrils. Some meditators try to feel the touch at the nostrils or upper lip. Actually, the breath is not a touch (a tangible object). For *ānāpānasati* meditators, it is important to know that the breath (the conceptual breath) strikes upon the mind door alone (and not upon other doors at all) as the breath is one of the infinite numbers of concepts (*paññatti*). Because of this, the conceptual breath is cognized by the mind through the mind door alone (not by touch through the body door and the mind door).

Concentration that has the actual breath as object has to lead to concentration that has the concept of breath (still breath or mass of breath) as object.

- ▶ One consciousness lasts one consciousness moment (*citta-kkhaṇa*).
- ▶ Two consciousnesses cannot arise at the same time. I.e. two consciousnesses cannot arise in one consciousness moment.

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A meditator should have such knowledge. With that knowledge, one can perceive the conceptual breath (still breath or mass of breath) in the mind door.

When objects strike upon the doors, only one of the six objects is taken at one mind (consciousness) moment; no two objects can be taken simultaneously. When a colour object is taken, sound and other objects cannot be taken, and when a sound object is taken, colour and other objects cannot be taken.

For instance, when you watch television, you may think that you are listening to the sound and simultaneously seeing the pictures. From the Abhidhamma point of view, however, you cannot do both simultaneously (seeing and listening within one mind moment). It is because of our extremely fast mind³³ that we believe and misunderstand that seeing and listening occur at the same time. Actually, when we are seeing, we cannot hear, and vice versa.

Likewise, the mind which is taking a touch object cannot take the conceptual breath-object, and vice versa. It is because the mind cannot take two objects simultaneously. This knowledge is important for ānāpānasati meditators who whether on purpose or unintentionally easily feel touch objects around the nostrils and the upper lip (such as heat, coldness, pulling, pushing, pulsation, hardness, numbness, etc.). It is not easy for some beginning yogis to focus only on the conceptual breath-object not being aware of touch (touch objects).

When their skills and concentration improves, meditators will be able to focus on the place of the conceptual breath as well as on the conceptual breath (the mass of breath) itself. It means that as soon as skilled meditators pay attention to the concept of breath, they cognize it at its place. [Please see footnote 76.]

³³ Mind (consciousness): The Buddha explains that when the mind is alert, then within a snap of the fingers, many thousands of millions of consciousnesses arise and perish. These many thousands of millions of consciousnesses include many thousands of millions of mental processes.

When meditators feel touch objects (touching or brushing of breath) at the nostril or the upper lip, they can cognize both the quality of the actual breath (whether it is gross or subtle) and the movement of the actual breath. When they are aware of the moving breath, they can distinguish between the in-breaths and out-breaths. At the mind-moment when they distinguish and are aware of the in- and out-breaths, they cannot clearly perceive the mass of breath (still or conceptual breath) in the mind door.

There are three distinct consciousnesses: one that has the in-breath (the moving in-breath) as its object, another one that has the out-breath (the moving out-breath) as its object, and another one again that has the mass of breath (the still breath) or concept of the breath as its object.³⁴ We should also understand that the consciousness that has the mass of breath (the still conceptual breath or the concept of the breath) as its object is more valuable than the others. This is because concentrating on

³⁴ This discussion is very similar to the statements in the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* and *Visuddhimagga*:

*Nimittam assāsa.passāsā, an.ārammaṇam.eka.cittasa;
a.jānato ca tayo dhamme, bhāvanā n.upalabbhati.*

‘Sign (*nimitta*), in-breath, out-breath, are not an object of a single consciousness’;

By one who knows not these three things development is not obtained.

*Nimittam assāsa.passāsā, an.ārammaṇam.eka.cittasa;
jānato ca tayo dhamme, bhāvanā upalabbhatīti.*

‘Sign (*nimitta*), in-breath, out-breath, are not an object of a single consciousness’;

By one who *does know* these three things development can be obtained.

(Paṭisambhidāmagga.i.159, Visuddhimagga.viii. 227, 231)

Here, the sign (*nimitta*) is the place where the in-breaths & out-breaths touch. ‘*nimittanti assāsapassāsānam phusanatt’hānam*’. (*PsA 155* E.g. the nostril *nimitta* (*nāsika-nimitta*), and upper-lip *nimitta* (*mukha-nimitta*) (*PsMA.154; VsM. viii. 227*) One consciousness knows the sign (*nimitta*), another consciousness knows the in-breath, and yet another consciousness knows the out-breath. So one consciousness knows only one thing: the sign, the in-breath, or the out-breath. But to succeed, you need to know all three at the same time: the sign as well as the in-breath as well as the out-breath, all at the same time.

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the concept of the breath can culminate in the attainment of deep concentration (i.e. absorption; *appanā-jhāna*), whereas by concentrating only on the actual breath (moving in and out-breaths) or the touch (of breath) deep concentration cannot be developed.

Meditators who sit for a long time feel pain in their bodies, up to the level that they think they cannot bear pain any further. At that time, since the mind cannot take two objects simultaneously, it is difficult for them to concentrate on the meditation object. As painful feelings disturb concentration, the meditator should change the posture to relieve the pain. Even, if a part of the body is tingling or itchy, it feels slightly unpleasant and disturbs concentration. Meditators should rub these tingling parts or change their posture so it does not disturb concentration. When meditators are free from bodily pain, tingling and itchiness, they can recollect the meditation object, boost their mindfulness again and focus on it. Please note the changes below!

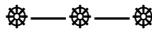
Can you work out what this means?

- ▶ *STRONGER THE TOUCH, WEAKER THE BREATH;*
WEAKER THE TOUCH, STRONGER THE BREATH

Beginning Yogis ...

Sensations at breath-touching site
(or touch objects) are *still strong* } → *Weak* conceptual breath

Yogis who are developing concentration:
Sensations at breath-touching site
(or touch objects) *become less and less* } → *Strong* conceptual breath



How do yogis see conceptual objects at the mind door?

'KNOWING IS SEEING':

You know that there is air all around you although you cannot see or grasp it. You accept it willingly even without fanning this air in order to touch and feel it on your skin. How do you know it? Because you have already experienced that; so you know and accept it now. Likewise, as you breathe all the time, you know that your nostrils (focus area) are full of the breath (the mass of breath). It is common sense. Knowing or cognizing the breath at your focus area itself is an important factor which enables you to ignore both the touch (touch objects at the nostrils and the upper lip) and the movement of the breath.

Knowing is actually concentrating. With a help of common sense knowing (cognizing) the presence of the meditation object, the mass of breath at its area enables the mind to concentrate well, and to clearly see this object at the mind door. As a benefit of meditative development the concentrated mind knows and sees its object as it really is. Concentrating *leads* to seeing. Because of this, it can be said, 'Knowing is seeing.'

Knowing = cognizing the meditation object (clearly) at the focus area.

= knowing (penetratively) with mind consciousness (*mano.viññāṇa*) what the meditation object is (i.e. what the meaning concept of the breath is).

Seeing = being able to use the mental/ knowledge/ wisdom eye (*ñāṇa-cakkhu/paññā-cakkhu*) (i.e. mind consciousnesses) to look at the meditation object, the mass of breath; and the ability of mind to see the signs of concentration, the breath-signs (*breath nimitta*) (i.e. colour

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of the breath-mass) or milestones of the breath penetratively.

= understanding what the meditation object, concept of breath, is (by means of power of knowledge).

= seeing the meditation object, breath, in its true nature (in the light of wisdom).

SIMILES FOR BETTER UNDERSTANDING

By using some similes to explain how conceptual objects are seen at the mind door, meditators are often able to understand this process better and easier:

▷ For example, sometimes you remember your parents, friends or your home. When you remember one of your close friends, his or her image appears in your mind *as if you were looking at him or her from ten, twenty feet or some distance away in one direction*. Usually these images are more apparent when your mind is clear and fully alert. Images that appear in the mind door look like photos taken with a zoom lens camera, i.e. from close-up or from further away.

▷ For example, you may have been absorbed in playing computer games or watching a TV series for a few hours; later, perhaps when you close your eyes just before falling asleep, these images may appear vividly in your mind. You experience it as if you would be watching pictures and games in reality. With your eyes closed, in the mind you can again see these images of definite shapes and colours in three dimensions.

Please note the changes below!

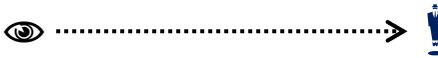
- * If a camera zooms in, it makes the person or thing that you are taking a picture of seem bigger and closer.

Mental eye
(wisdom eye)

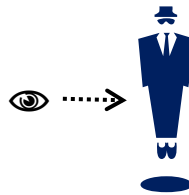


Conceptual object
taken in mind door

- * If a camera zooms out, it makes the person or thing that you are taking a picture of seem smaller and further away.
- * As a camera does, the mind (mind's eye) is focusing on the conceptual object in one direction.



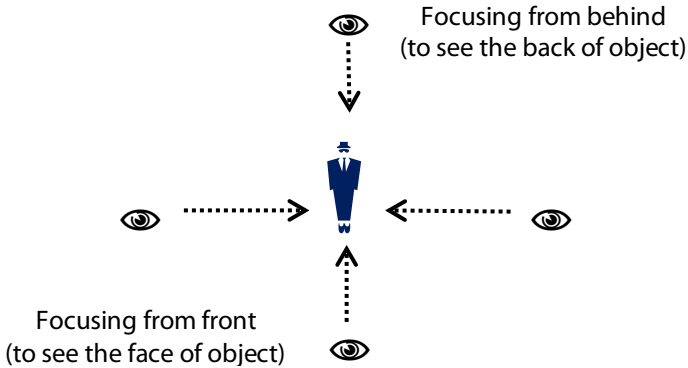
Conceptual object taken at distant range in mind door
Apparent becoming smaller object (Zoom Out)



Conceptual object taken at close range in mind door; Apparent becoming bigger object (Zoom In).

- * You (your mental eye) are focusing on the object that appears nearer to or further away from you (your mental eye).
- * Which one is *appropriate range/distance* by which object (*appropriate-sized image*) is seen / watched in acuity comfortably and consistently?
A skilled meditator can understand it.

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Now you are vividly remembering your friend. It is just an example.

- * In your mind, from *which direction of approach* can you achieve most convenient and stable focusing on the image/object? Focusing from left? Focusing from right? Focusing from front? Focusing from behind?
- * A skilled meditator can understand it.

▷ While you are sleeping and dreaming, a series of pictures may appear at a distance or in a close range in your mind as though they were really happening.

Actually you are seeing these images or concepts in your mind or mental vision through the mind door only. The similes given here should be sufficient for you to at least understand how conceptual objects are seen at the mind door.

“YOU HAVEN’T SEEN IT YET, BUT YOU CAN SEE IT NOW!”

Beginners or meditators who have experienced the beginning stage are taught in this way:

- ‡ ‘It is usually best to take an overview of the breath between the nostril and the upper lip as if looking from behind the breath or the nape of your neck’.

‡ ‘And in the early stage of development of concentration many yogis have seen it as a breath tube or a breath column’. The breath-column is the breath-mass that is in a shape of a column. It is a stationary and it stands still.

The breath-mass or a part of the breath-column that is visible to the mind’s eye is called a breath-sign (*ānāpāna-nimitta*). A real breath-sign comes from the breath. Here the [breath-] sign that arises with the [actual] breaths as its support is also called the [in&out-] breath. [Please see footnote 39 and 52.]

We have already discussed how the [conceptual] breath strikes upon the mind door only (under the topic of ‘Do you know the material doors and the mental mind door?’) and the similes for easier understanding how to focus on the mass of breath (the concept of breath). But some beginning meditators [who have not seen the breath column or the breath mass yet] still may be not satisfied with our discussion:

➤➤ “We met our friends many times. So we remember (images of our friends) whom we saw.”

“We haven’t seen the breath (the mass of breath) yet. How can we see it as if looking at it some distance away in one direction?”

This is a question that is asked very often. The usual answer is, “You haven’t seen it yet, but you can see it now!” It is useful to look at this issue from Abhidhamma’s point of view.

We have discussed ‘sense doors and their objects’. Mentality arises as a series of mental processes. There are processes that cognize an object seen through the eye, processes that cognize an object heard through the ear, etc., and there are processes that cognize an object taken by the mind.

There are six types of mental processes. The first five are the eye door-, ear door-, nose door-, tongue door-, and body-door processes. Together they are called the ‘five-door process’ (*pañca-dvāra vīthi*). The five-door process includes the five processes occurring at each of the material sense doors. The sixth

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type of process is called the 'mind-door process' (*mano-dvāra-vīthi*). What is called a mind-door process is a cognitive process that occurs exclusively through the mind-door, without any admixture of the material sense doors.

The object of *ānāpānasati* practice, the breath, being a concept is a mental object (mind-door object). The (conceptual) breath strikes only upon the mind door and it is seen through that door. By help of reflection on it, you let your mind (the wisdom eye) look at the breath's place (proper focus area), and you cognize the (conceptual) breath object mindfully. It does not mean letting your mind look for the object. It is certain that the conceptual breath-object (the mass of breath) can be cognized or seen by independent mind-door process.³⁵

Note: An independent mind-door process occurs when any of the six objects enter range of cognition entirely on its own, and not as a consequence of an immediately preceding sense-door process.

An object can strike upon the mind door independently of a proximate sensory impingement:

- through what was directly perceived earlier, or by inference from what was directly perceived;
- through what was learned by oral report, or by inference from what was learned by oral report;
- on account of belief (or faith);
- on account of opinion;
- on account of reasoning or

³⁵ The mind-door process (*mano.dvāra vīthi*) includes the sense-sphere process (*paritta-vīthi*) and the cognitive process in absorption pertaining to the sublime (*mahaggata*) and supramundane (*lokuttara*) attainments. The sense-sphere mind-door process is itself twofold: (1) that consequent to a five-door process (*pañcadvārānubandhakā*), and (2) the independent process (*visuṃsiddhā*). (See CMA (English translation of *Abhidhammattha-Saṅgaha* edited by Bhikkhu Bodhi).iv.12& *Abhidhammattha-Saṅgaho*.iv.17.)

-on account of reflective acceptance of a view;
-by the power of kamma, psychic power, disturbance of the bodily humours, the influence of a deity, comprehension, realization, etc.

Then, the independent process is analysed as sixfold:

- 1) the process based on what was directly perceived earlier;
- 2) the process based on inference from what was directly perceived;
- 3) the process based on (what was learned by) oral report;
- 4) the process based on inference from (what was learned by) oral report;
- 5) the process based on the cognized;
- 6) the process based on inference from the cognized.

“The cognized” here includes belief (or faith), opinion, comprehension, and realization; “inference from the cognized” includes judgements arrived at by inductive and deductive reasoning.

‘FOCUS ON THE WISDOM BREATH!’

At a certain phase on the path to concentration in *ānāpānasati* after abandoning the touch at the nostrils and the upper lip (i.e. after ignoring the touch of the moving-breath), a meditator does not notice the movement of the breath, and can see the breath-object through the mind door, as a still object of a certain shape and colour³⁶ That is seeing the conceptual breath

³⁶ In *ānāpānasati* practice when the mind becomes concentrated on the concept of breath (the mass of breath) at the nostril, the mind by itself gets fixed on the object [the wisdom breath] of any colour (brightness) that appears at the nostril and is coincided with the real breath. That could be called an *ānāpāna nimitta*. Here ‘nimitta’ means the sign upon which concentrated yogi’s mind fixes. There is an image of the breath-mass that is vivid in mind because of one’s concentration, because of one’s perception of the breath-mass. The mind-door can take and review the colour, form or appearance of the breath-mass, which comprise the image of the breath-mass.

or the ‘still breath’. It is a significant breakthrough in your practice. *The concentrated mind that is associated with wisdom*³⁷ can know and see the breath (the mass of breath) as a still object. **It may be either vivid or faint (in shape) and have any colour (i.e. white, yellow, dark or any other).** Knowing the breath as a mass is wisdom (pañña). Because of this, sometimes we refer to such an object—the conceptual breath or the still breath in terms of the *Wisdom Breath*’ or *‘the Breath of Wisdom*’ (as a metaphor).

It is important to have strong faith in the practice and confidence in yourself throughout the practice especially in the beginning stage or in the beginning stage with the light of concentration³⁸ and transitional phases. Without these, a meditator will not gain (or will lose) the ‘Wisdom Breath’. There is always the [moving] breath at your ‘proper focus area’. ‘Knowing is seeing’ — there is no need to wait for the ‘Wisdom Breath’ at all. As soon as you know the mass of breath at your ‘proper focus

³⁷ In ānāpānasati practice when the mind becomes concentrated, there are thirty-four mental formations in each impulsion consciousness (javana-citta). Wisdom faculty (paññ-indriya) is one of them. They are: 1) consciousness (citta) 2) contact (phassa) 3) feeling (vedanā) 4) perception (saññā) 5) volition (cetanā) 6) one-pointedness (ek-aggatā) 7) life faculty. (jīvit-indriya) 8) attention (manasikāra) 9) application (vitakka) 10) sustainment (vicāra) 11) decision (adhimokkha) 12) energy (virīya) 13) joy (pīti) 14) desire (chanda) 15) faith (saddhā) 16) mindfulness (sati) 17) conscience (hiri) 18) shame (ottapa) 19) non-greed (a-lobha) 20) non-hatred (a-dosa) 21) ever-evenness (tatra-majjhataṭā) 22) tranquillity of [mental]body (kāya-passaddhi) 23) tranquillity of consciousness (citta-passaddhi) 24) lightness of [mental] body (kāya-lahutā) 25) lightness of consciousness (citta-lahutā) 26) flexibility of [mental] body (kāya-mudutā) 27) flexibility of consciousness (citta-mudutā) 28) wieldiness of [mental] body (kāya-kammaññatā) 29) wieldiness of consciousness (citta-kammaññatā) 30) proficiency of [mental] body (kāya-paguññatā) 31) proficiency of consciousness (citta-paguññatā) 32) rectitude of [mental] body (kāy-ujukatā) 33) rectitude of consciousness (citt-ujukatā) 34) wisdom faculty (paññ-indriya).

³⁸ Please see p.107, under the topic: Have you focused on the bright light before? If you say ‘yes’, what was all that about?

area' with mind consciousnesses alone, you can obtain the 'Wisdom Breath'.

Like a camera taking a photo sharply from some distance with the use of a *zoom lens*, you can make your mind focused on the meditation object by conceptualizing it as the mass of breath or the breath column or a piece of the breath-string. *You can focus on and perceive your breath-object as if you are an onlooker and were looking at it in any direction (from some distance away). If you can do so, one thing is for sure: whether the object is vivid, dim, fuzzy, or even colourless, contour-less (boundary-less), — it is at that time very clear for the skilled yogis that they can cognize the breath-object³⁹ instantly by wisdom.*

'YOU MUST ON NO CONDITION CONCENTRATE ON THE COLOUR OF THE BREATH.'

HOW CAN YOU FIX YOUR MIND ON YOUR ĀNĀPĀNA-NIMITTA?

The concept of breath is the object of *ānāpānasati*. This is the object (the mass of breath) you must concentrate on to develop concentration. You should not concentrate on colour, shape, or image of the breath-mass.

Conceptual breath-objects are seen in your mind door as if through a zoom lens – either close or far away (zoom-in or out). When seen from far away (zoom-out), the object looks tiny. When seen from near (zoom-in), the object looks big. *But after focusing sharply on the 'appropriate size' of the mass of breath, between the nostril and the upper lip, the size of the conceptual breath does not need to be paid attention to, thus ignoring the apparent bigger or smaller size of the object.*

³⁹ The ān-āpāna-nimitta which arises depending on the ordinary, natural breath is also said to be as assāsa-passāsa (in-and-out breath)'.

'Assāsa-passāsa nissāya uppannamittampettha assāsa-passāsa sāmāññameva vuttam.' (VsMṬ.viii.215 Ān-Āpāna-Sati-Kathā) (See also footnote 10, 52, 94, 96, 98, 99 and 109.)

Before attaining stable, deep concentration (in sinking stage), you can sometimes notice the colour (*vaṇṇa*) at your focus area that is the breath's colour or light's colour. It is mentioned above (under the topic of 'What is the breath') that after perceiving the object (vividly) it is no longer important to be continuously fully aware of the particular shape and colour of the breath-object. After having cognized the object, the mass of breath, you actually perceive the attributes of the object.

Here, the consciousness that has colour (or shape or appearance) as its object is one, the consciousness that has the conceptual breath (the mass of breath) as its object is another. The consciousness that has conceptual breath as its object is actually concentrated. The consciousness that has colour (brightness) as its object is unconcentrated. The colour that is in the conceptual breath (the mass of breath) should *not be thought about carefully*. Concentration will occur weakly and interruptedly in one who reviews the colour (brightness, shape and form) a lot. While concentrating on the concept of breath (so the concern is not with the colour), the colour that is there in the breath-mass, or light that is spreading out around the nostrils, should not be reviewed. You should not pay attention (*manāsikāra*) to the conceptual breath object (the mass of breath) as to its colour or as light; you must not concentrate on the mass of breath as its colour, as its shape or as light.

So we say: Do not pay attention to the colour of the nimitta (sign of concentration).⁴⁰ In an attempt to concentrate on the

⁴⁰ This rule is same as 'Do not pay attention (*manasi-kāra*) to the colour of the nimitta (the sign of concentration)'.

- *Athānena taṃ nimittaṃ neva vaṇṇato manasi kātappaṃ, na lakkhaṇato paccavekkhitappaṃ. (Visuddhimagga.232 Ānāpānasatikathā)*
- *na vaṇṇo paccavekkhitabbo, na lakkhaṇaṃ manasikātappaṃ.* =The colour should not be reviewed. The characteristics should not be given attention. (*Visuddhimagga. IV. 56.Pathavīkasiṇaniddeso*)

colour, size and shape or appearance of the breath, the mind fails to become concentrated (on the concept of breath), or concentration does not develop further, and with continued practice, it can even block your progress.

When the conceptual breath-object (the mass of breath) becomes visible to the mind's eye, having relegated its shape and colour to the position of a property of its physical support, meditators have to continue focusing and concentrating on it as the breath (the mass of breath). To relegate means to move into a less important position.

As concentration is developed through the four jhānas, the breath (the mass of breath) becomes progressively more and more subtle. Depending upon perception and stage (level) of concentration, vivid objects are still variable in shape and

Because of this rule, some teachers often advise yogis not to look at 'colour (shape, size and brightness) of the conceptual breath. Instead of saying here, 'colour should not be looked at,' should say that it should not be recognized by reviewing. The light should not be thought about. The colour of breath- mass should not be thought about carefully. Because of shiny, bright (colouring) object, if yogis still have difficulty to follow this rule, need to understand clearly the principle of ānāpānasati practice. The colour (brightness and form) should not be reviewed (again and again) while concentrating on the conceptual breath (the mass of breath).

Apīca vaṇṇaṃ amaññitvā nissayasavaṇṇaṃ katvā ussadasena paññattidhamme cittaṃ paṭṭhapetvā manasī kātabbhaṃ. (Visuddhimagga. IV. 56)

But rather (*Apīca*), while **not abandoning (releasing) the colour** (*vaṇṇaṃ amaññitvā*), **attention should be given by setting the mind on the concept** (*paññattidhamme cittaṃ paṭṭhapetvā manasī kātabbhaṃ*) as the most outstanding mental datum (*ussadasena; as a mass of breath*), **relegating the colour to the position of a property of its physical support** (*nissayasavaṇṇaṃ katvā*).

– *Tassevaṃ ghaṭentassa pathavīkaṣiṇe vuttānukkameneva tasmīṃ nimitte catukkapañcakajjhānāni nibbattanti. (Visuddhimagga.232)*

Ānāpānasatikathā

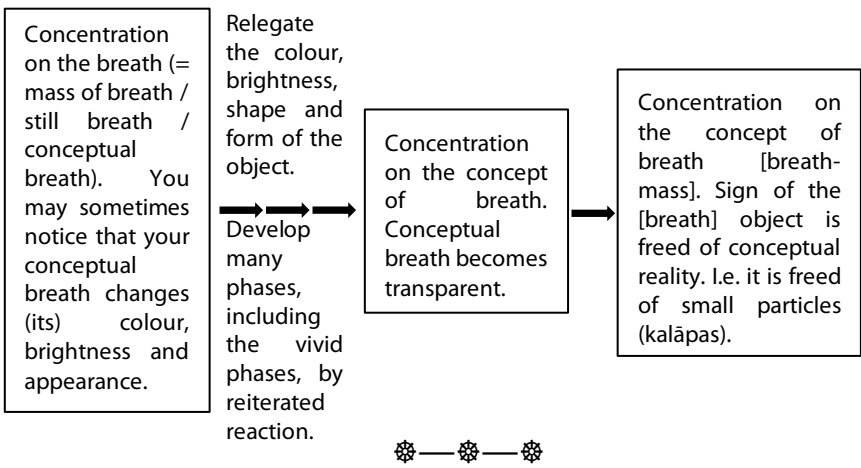
As he strives thus, fourfold and fivefold **jhāna is achieved by him on that same sign in the same way as described under the earth kaṣiṇa.**

colour⁴¹. And the appearance of the breath-mass may vary until the sinking [of very subtle breath-mass] stage, which has a sign of the breath-mass.

To develop concentration faster you should not review (examine carefully) the changes in the shape and colour of the breath-mass, i.e. while concentrating deeply on the breath-mass you should not be very conscious of your breath-mass's (nimitta's) appearance. So, whatever the shape or colour of your nimitta, it is certain that you should not play with the breath-mass (the breath nimitta). Do not intentionally change its shape, colour or appearance. In conclusion, the principle is as follows:

When you perceive (cognize) the conceptual breath or the wisdom breath (that has the shape, size, colour and appearance)... **do not review (pay sustained attention) to the appearance, shape, size, colour (and brightness) of the conceptual breath /wisdom breath'.**

Please keep this principle in your mind firmly. Please note the changes below.



⁴¹ The Visuddhimagga explains that this is because the nimitta is born of perception. (*Visuddhimagga.viii. Ānāpānasati Kathā*)

Some yogis confuse: *focusing on the breath with focusing on the touching point.*

A GATE-KEEPER AND THE TOUCHING POINT

Yogi must look for the in-breaths and out-breaths nowhere else than the place normally touched by them.

This is the simile of the gatekeeper:

“A gate-keeper does not pay attention (does not examine) to people (who have gone) inside and outside the town—for those people are not his concern.”

“A gate-keeper pays attention (examine) only to people who arrive at the gate.”

In the same way, the incoming breaths that have gone inside and the outgoing breaths that have gone outside are not the yogi’s concern and *the yogi has to pay attention only to the breath that arrives at the touching point, the (nostril) gate.*⁴²

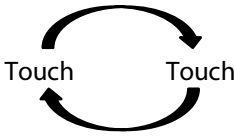
MISUNDERSTANDINGS OF THE STATEMENT

Do you understand these statements about ‘the gate-keeper and the touching point’? These statements sometimes lead to the following misunderstandings:

⁴² A gate-keeper: Such simile is given in the Visuddhimagga.

‘... dvārappattā dvārappattāyeva bhārāti ayamā dovārikūpamā’. : This is the simile of the gatekeeper: Just as a gatekeeper does not examine people inside and outside the town—for those people are not his concern—but he does examine each man as he arrives at the gate, so too, the incoming breaths that have gone inside and the outgoing breaths that have gone outside are not this bhikkhu’s concern, but they are his concern each time they arrive at the [nostril] gate itself. VsM.viii.226

– It is necessary to be continuously aware of the touch (tangible objects) at the nostril or the upper lip in preparation for, and throughout the practice of ānāpānasati. [The author of this book names such way of practice as ‘Touch and Touch Style’⁴³.]



- That is a mere ‘Touch and Touch Style’.
- ‘Does that (‘touch and touch style’) help to develop ānāpānasati meditation?’
- ‘No, absolutely not.’ That only poses a non-path to concentration. ‘Touch and Touch’ approach is actually pointless and futile.

Or

– It is the standard practice to focus *strongly* on the touch (and sensations) in that area, followed by detecting the in- and out-breaths (touching / moving-breaths) there.

(The author names such way of practice as ‘Strong Touch and Breath Style’.)

UNDERSTANDING OF THE STATEMENT

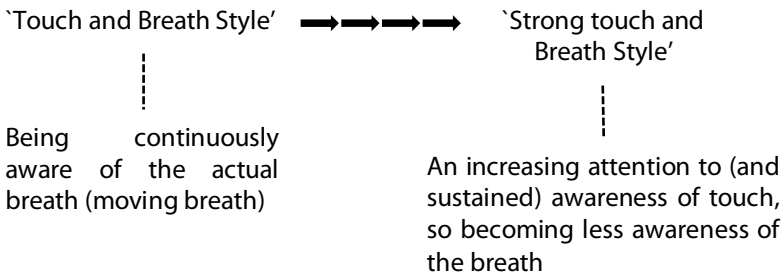
That statement indicates the part of the breath you should concentrate on. That says:

⁴³ Some meditators focus and concentrate *only on the touch* at the nostril or the upper lip. They misunderstand what the breath is and practise in the wrong way. Instead of breath, they take as their object any obvious tangible objects (the characteristics of earth, fire, and wind elements). That practice is definitely not ānāpānasati. So ‘Touch and Touch Style’ poses a serious obstacle to attainment of concentration.

- You need only to be aware of **the breath** at your chosen touching point **that is either just below the nose or somewhere around the nostrils / the upper lip.**
- Do not follow the breath into or out of your body, as it will prevent you from developing your concentration.

BE CAREFUL NOT TO DEVELOP A FURTHER COMPLICATION OF `STRONG TOUCH AND BREATH STYLE'.

The `*Strong* Touch and Breath Style' is an undesirable consequence of the `Touch and Breath style'. So, before discussing the complication of the `*Strong* Touch and Breath Style', we will briefly look at the `Touch and Breath style'.



The `Touch and Breath Style': Some *ānāpānasati* meditators are consistently (and habitually) aware of the real breaths through the sense of *touch* or sensations at the nostril or the upper lip. The object that their minds are fully aware of is the real breath, — i.e. they *feel the moving breath simply and constantly* at the most obvious place where it brushes against either the top of the upper lip or around the nostrils. And their minds *become aware of movement* of the breath through touching or brushing.

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The author of this book calls such a way of practice the 'Touch and Breath Style'.

There are many yogis who have the 'Touch and Breath Style' as their standard practice. *Why* do yogis practise *ānāpānasati* in the way of feeling the breath for a long time?

⊕ They think (misunderstand) that the breath can *only* be known (cognized) *directly through* the touch (sense of touch) at the touching point.

They do not break away from their usual or conventional practice, the 'Touch and Breath Style'. They do not apply the 'Two Steps-Focusing Approach' to focus on the meditation object, the mass of breath at the nostril. Ānāpānasati is recognized through the touch. In actual fact, the touch of the moving breath at the nostril and the upper lip is [more] useful for detecting "an exact place" of touch where touching sensations (feeling) occur or appear.⁴⁴ Since the touch of the moving breath is merely a tool, repeated and frequent awareness of it is of course not necessary to develop concentration on the conceptual breath. Please note the changes below.

Touching-point or place touched [by the breaths]: Place where the breath brushes against or touches most obviously — top of the upper lip or around the nostrils.

Nimitta = touching point

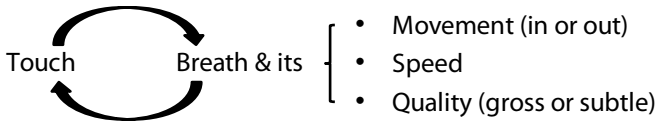
The nostril nimitta (nāsika-nimitta), and upper-lip nimitta (mukha-nimitta)



⁴⁴ Dependent on the body and tangibles, body consciousness arises. (S.II.v.4) The body translucency (kāya.pasāda) (the body door) is sensitive to touch (tangible objects). Body consciousnesses and associated mental factors (including feeling) arise dependent upon the body translucency, tenth type of materiality (the door) of the body decad-kalāpas.

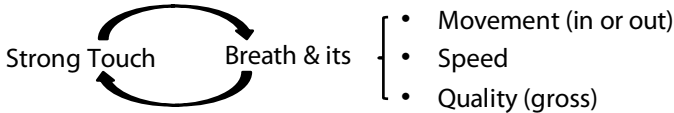
As meditators apply the 'Touch and Breath Style', they feel the gross or subtle moving-breath at the place where it is clear to them. Throughout their practice, they focus lightly or strongly on the touch, that is on any of the tangible objects, and that is followed by detecting the touching or brushing in- and out-breaths in those places. They perform this particular sequence of actions (i.e. focusing on the touch and detecting the breath) repeatedly within a short moment. It seems as if they are detecting both touch (i.e. any obvious elements characteristics of the tangible objects) and the breath at the same time.

They are not only (fully) aware of movements of the [in&out] breath, but also easily take notice or become aware of changes in the quality of the breath whether gross or subtle and changes of the breathing rhythm.



- Some yogis are so consistent in applying the 'Touch and Breath Style' throughout their practice that they fall into the trap of knowing alternately the breath (in- or out-) and the touch.
- Touch (tangible object) is known by body-door process (kāya-dvāra-vīthi) and many subsequent mind-door processes (both body-door- and mind-door consciousness).
- The breath object (the concept of breath) is known *only* by the mind-door process (mind-door consciousness).
- Be careful not to focus on the touch: the 'Touch and Breath Style' can occasionally lead to the 'Strong touch and

Breath Style'. That 'Strong touch and Breath Style' is really *dangerous*, because it adds a further complication to the path to concentration.



The 'Strong touch and Breath style': If a yogi tries to feel the moving-breaths while practising the 'Touch and Breath Style' *continuously* for a period of time, spending too much time feeling the moving-breath, and an improper approach to concentration can occur. A yogi with the 'Touch and Breath Style' practice may tend to gradually feel there or in that general area touch stronger (such characteristics of elements as hardness, softness, roughness, heat, cold, pulling, pushing, etc.). And because of this, his meditation may gradually move away from the path to concentration, and lead up to the complication of the '(Strong) Touch and Breath Style'. It is a problem common to meditators of the 'Touch and Breath Style'.

In the beginning they feel comfortable and can practise 'Touch and Breath Style' with a happy mind. When the breath becomes subtler and subtler, it (the touching or the moving-breath) is clearer inside the nostrils. (Be careful if you experience this!) They may then follow the clearer touching-breath into the nostril (or into the body). What is actually clearer to them mostly is the wind element's characteristics of pulling or pushing.

Later on, they strongly feel characteristics of the elements and this may lead to imbalance of the elements (such as hardness of the whole nose, hardness, heaviness and tension of the face, strong pulling or pushing inside the nose). For those

people, it becomes difficult to ignore elements' characteristics and sensations (below the nose or somewhere around the nostrils) afterwards. Instead of concentrating on the breath, they may then seem to concentrate on the touch and elements' characteristics. As soon as they start to be aware of the movement of the breath and notice the in- and out-breath, they feel tension, hardness and tightness at their nose area, or even on the whole head. This complicates their mental development.

Now, I have given a lot of warnings regarding the 'Touch and Breath Style' practice. Please be careful:

- not to fall into the trap of the 'Touch and Breath Style' (the trap of trying to feel the touching or brushing breath consistently),
- not to develop your practice to the complication of the 'Strong Touch and Breath Style'.

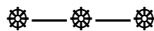
As the statement 'focus on or feel the breath that is at the touching point' sometimes confuses the meditators and leads them off the right path onto the wrong path, we usually avoid mentioning the words 'feel the breath' and 'touching point' in this teaching. Instead, we explain as follows:

The Focusing Approach — TWO STEPS:

"The place is the *first* and the object is the *next*."

"Focus on the place first and then on the object."

We need to develop the Two Steps- Focusing Approach to the 'Touch' problem. The object (the breath) exists in a place between the nostril and the upper lip within the boundary [which is itself perception-born] of the breath (a column or a mass).



The breath object is the next on sensible reflection alone

The Focusing Approach — TWO STEPS:

- The place is the *first*.
- And the object is the *next* on sensible reflection alone.

“... nisīdati pallaṅkaṃ ābhujitvā ujum kāyaṃ paṇidhāya parimukhaṃ satiṃ upattḥapetvā.”

(D.ii.9 ‘The Great Mindfulness-Foundation Sutta’)

...sits down, having crossed his legs, set his body straight, having mindfulness before him.

[‘*Parimukham*’ means, literally, “in front of his face.”]

To be able to see the conceptual breath (the still breath, the breath column or the breath mass), a yogi needs to apply the Two Steps Focusing Approach. A yogi should first focus on the nostril area, where the (conceptual) breath exists, and after that on the conceptual breath at this area. Just like a photographer who can focus his camera on an object, a yogi can apply this ‘Two Steps Approach’ to focus his mind (the mind’s eye) on the conceptual breath and see it.

FIRST STEP:

THE PLACE IS THE FIRST.

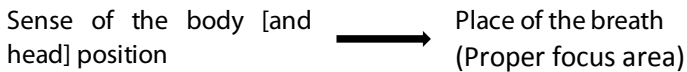
Just as you focus on images in your mind (for example, an image of your friend), you can focus sharply on the place where the breath exists: the immediate vicinity of right or left nostril, between either nostril and upper lip. To express the importance of focusing on the exact place, sometimes I refer to that place as ‘**the proper focus area**’.

- The sense of touch is useful to detect the place of the breath. Places of touch or sensations are landmarks in mind door or mental vision. Mind (mind's eye) detects (sees) the place of the breath through the places of the touch or sensations.



Note: When focusing on the meditation object, an unskilful, unwary meditator very frequently uses touch or sensations at the nostril or upper lip.

- The best way to detect the place of the breath is by having the sense of position of the body (or the bodily parts) while sitting crossed legged with the body erect. It is because of the sense of the body position, that is knowing or understanding the position of the whole body and head with the mind consciousnesses, that your mind knows and sees the place of your breath. Places of bodily parts are landmarks in the mind door or the mental vision.



SECOND STEP:

THE OBJECT IS THE NEXT ON SENSIBLE REFLECTION ALONE.

... *desato āharitabbaṃ.* = Substitute the place
(*Visuddhimagga.viii. 229*) [Please see footnote 76.]

‘COMMON SENSE AND SENSIBLE REFLECTION’

Your breath (the mass of breath) is present at your nostril all the time. You know and accept this, since you have been breathing all your life. It is common sense to cognize the breath (the mass of breath) without paying attention to the movement (touch) of the actual breath and (even gentle) sensations at the nostrils or upper lip.

On reflection, you bring [the mass of breath] to your mind. Here, sensible reflection means letting the mind cognize the presence of the breath (the mass of breath) clearly at the proper focus area (by focusing and concentrating on it) without using the movement of the breath or sense of touch at the nostrils or the upper lip.

- Skillful yogis having common sense and sensible reflection. ‘Knowing is Seeing.’

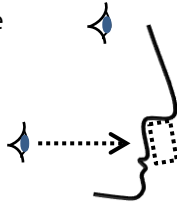
Place of breath  Breath [mass]

*For the early and middle stages of practice, it is usually best to focus on an ‘**overview of the breath** (the mass of breath)’ as if looking from behind about 5-6 inches (12- 15 cm) away, to overcome the obstacle of feeling the movement (touch) of the actual breath and sensations at the nostril. It can also be done as if looking from any other direction. But I prefer meditators not to focus from above or below.*

FOCUSING FROM BEHIND

It is usually best to take an overview of the breath as if you were looking at your breath from behind.

Physical eye



The proper focus area: yogi's development is successful when he fixes his mindfulness on this area (and the wisdom breath). The focus-object (conceptual breath, wisdom breath) exists in this area (between the nostril and upper lip within the boundary of breath column.)

Wisdom eye is focusing perpendicularly on the target (proper focus area) from a distance.

FOCUSING FROM ABOVE

'Focusing from above the breath-object' unknowingly causes the meditators to look at the breath-object with their physical eyes.

Because of a life-long habit of using physical eyes and the eye consciousnesses to look at objects some meditators who are unskilled at applying the focusing technique sometimes try to use their physical eyes to see the object. It can cause them to suffer from eye tension or eye strain and tiredness eventually.

A meditator is focusing on the breath-object as if looking down at it. His wisdom eye is focusing (looking) downwards on the target.



His physical eyes (that are closed) are also focusing downwards on the target.

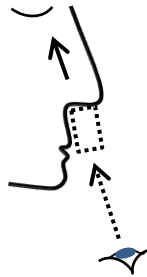
The proper focus area

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‘The meditation object, the mass of breath is known by the mind consciousnesses alone. It is visible to mind’s eye in light of concentration. The mass of breath is actually invisible to physical eye. That is why for the one focusing and concentrating on it, ‘physical eyes are not useful in all instances.’

FOCUSING FROM BELOW

Flowing direction
of in-breath



A meditator is focusing on the breath object as if looking up at it. His wisdom eye is focusing upwards on the target.

While focusing on the breath-object from below, the sight line of the wisdom eye is parallel with the flowing direction of in-breath. A yogi cannot stabilize his focus on the proper focus area or target, the conceptual breath at the proper focus area for long and easily follows the moving (real) in-breath into his nose. It can cause a sharp pain inside the nose and adds a complication to his practice. As a result, he cannot continue his *ānāpānasati* meditation and breaks off his practice. He is not even able to follow the first step of focusing approach and cannot develop concentration.

Now, you know what obstacles meditators who focus on the object from above or below have. In both cases, there is weakness of skill in applying the focusing technique (Two Steps - Focusing Approach).

To improve the skills, sitting meditation alone cannot be enough.

Please concentrate at all times on the meditation object with the *mind alone*. You have to apply the focusing technique, 'Two Steps-Focusing Approach' (focusing on the object as if looking from behind) skilfully.

Constant practice is necessary and a meditator should be mindful of the conceptual breath in every bodily posture, and be so with respect.

Within a ten-minute walk, for instance, a meditator has to apply the focusing technique several times in order to keep cognizing the conceptual breath-object. Thus it allows him to improve the skill in applying the focusing technique well.

Walking, standing or sitting, you should take no other objects apart from the conceptual breath (the breath column or the breath mass). If you try continuously in this way, you will certainly overcome these obstacles (focusing on the object from above or below) and will steadily improve your concentration.

After focusing on the place (proper focus area) where the actual breath exists, *you need to reflect on the presence of the breath or the mass of the breath*⁴⁵ for some moments at an appropriate rate (fast⁴⁶, regular⁴⁷ or random⁴⁸) in this way:

⁴⁵ I often instruct a beginning yogi who has not seen the breath mass vividly yet to reflect the breath as a breath column, 8-10cm long. It is helpful for yogis to contemplate (focus upon/ look at with the wisdom-eye) the breath-mass within the breath-column. Yogis should define the breath-mass by its location and by its delimitation. The breath-mass is delimited by the boundary. After seeing the object vividly, they need to focus on an appropriate area of the focus-object (the breath-mass) between the nostril and the upper lip.

⁴⁶ The reflection rate should be fast when mindfulness and understanding of the object are weak or very weak (wondering thoughts arise). For example, reflecting every five to ten seconds. The period of fast reflection should not be long.

⁴⁷ The reflection rate should be regular when the object becomes gradually evident.

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- ‘this area is full of the breath’, or
- ‘this place is occupied by the breath’, or
- ‘the breath is all the time present here’, or
- ‘(a part of) the breath column exists there’, or
- ‘the mass of breath’ or ‘the breath body’, or
- ‘the breath’.

The breath is a reality (a really existing thing).⁴⁹ Cognizance of the presence of the breath-mass is not an imagination. By reflecting on the presence of the breath-column (the breath-mass) you can convince your mind in the reality of the meditation object, and you can strengthen the mindfulness and understanding of the meditation object. Your meditation is now preparatory.⁵⁰ In order to unify the mind, focusing on the appropriate size of meditation object needs to be combined (connected) with reflecting on that object at an appropriate rate; just as a boat in a swift current is steadied with the help of a rudder.

When you have both detected and cognized the breath (the still conceptual breath) at your focus area, you can **continue to focus on it ‘as a whole’** and concentrate on it as the mass of breath or the breath. (It is usually suggested to focus on the object as a whole within the appropriate area.) Herein, it should

⁴⁸ The reflection rate should be random when the focus-object is obvious and stable but a few distractions arise frequently.

⁴⁹ Breath is existent (vijjamāna) in conventional reality (*sammuti sacca*), but it is non-existent in the ultimate sense. It represents a quality (—a mass or a body) in conventional reality. For details, see also explanation, p.15.

⁵⁰ The way of practice herein is similar to that of samatha meditation—*‘Ādikammikassa hi paṭhavimaṇḍalādisu nimittaṃ uggāhantassa taṃ ālambanaṃ parikammaṇimittān ti pavuccati. Sā ca bhāvanā parikammabhāvanā nāma.’*

‘When a beginner apprehends a particular sign from the earth-circle, etc., that object is called the *preparatory sign*, and that meditation is called *preparatory meditation*.’ (gocarabheda, Abhidhammattha Sangaha)

be ascertained that your focus-object is not an actual moving breath-object but the ‘wisdom breath’.

By using the focusing technique, it is clear in the mind that the non-moving breath-object or the wisdom breath (in whatever shape and colour) has been detected, even at the first glimpse or sight. It is a mental image of the breath that arises because of your concentration. The object has been thoroughly apprehended and enters into the range of the mind door. You can see it as clearly as if you were looking at it with your (physical) eyes open.

If you sometimes concentrate on the actual moving breath, i.e. when breathing in, you know you are breathing in; when breathing out, you know you are breathing out; and you may discern the breath whether they are long or short, and sometimes concentrate on the conceptual breath that is the still breath or the wisdom breath, you will not be able to develop powerful and deep concentration.⁵¹ You can be successful in cultivating concentration only with the conceptual breath, and developing sufficiently deep concentration to be able to see the breath (the breath-mass) stably.

⁵¹ Please see Vs-232.

*“Nimitteṭhapayaṃ cittaṃ, nānākāraṃ vibhāvayaṃ;
Dhīro assāsapassāse, sakaṃ cittaṃ nibandhati”ti.*

Fixing his mind upon the sign; And **putting away extraneous aspects**
The clever man anchors his mind upon the [in&out] breaths.

Extraneous aspects here mean these **four characteristics of the real breath**:
long and short, in and out (VsMṬ-232).

*... Assāsa-passāsa nissāya uppannamittampettha assāsa-passāsa
sāmaññameva vuttāni.* (VsMṬ.viii.215 ‘Ānāpānasati-Kathā’)

.... It is said that since it is dependent on the in&out-breath, the arisen nimitta may also be called just the in&out-breath.

**THERE IS SHARP FOCUSING ON THE OBJECT.
SO IS THERE ALWAYS A SHARP MENTAL IMAGE?**

‘Knowing is Seeing’.

Whenever thoughts occur in your mind, just ignore them and bring your mind back to the breath. The occurrence of thoughts in the mind is a natural thing. It is useless to get angry at the thoughts or at yourself and you should not get entangled in them. By ignoring the thoughts, you start removing yourself from them. And by always knowing the breath, you make yourself familiar with the breath. That is the right way to deal with discursive thoughts.

For removal of discursive thoughts ānāpānasati is the best weapon. In the ‘Meghiya’ sutta of the Aṅguttara-Nikaya it says:

‘Ānāpānasati should be developed for the cutting off of discursive thought.’

(ānāpānasati bhāvetabbā vitakk-upacchedāya.)

When you are mindful of your conceptual breath, you can pick up (cognize) it instantly. By using the focusing technique, you will let your wisdom eye focus on your conceptual breath. When you become skilled at applying the focusing technique (Two Steps-Focusing Approach), you can look at your meditation object instantly with your wisdom eye. It may take only a few moments to see your meditation object (clearly) with your wisdom. Although there is sharp focusing on the object, there may or may not be a sharp mental image in the dark (= light of concentration not appear yet) or in the light of concentration. In other words sharp focusing on the breath-object does not mean that there will always be a sharp mental image of it.

‘Knowing leads to Seeing’.

‘Knowing (the breath) is actually Concentrating (on the breath)’. When concentration develops or after overcoming a

transitional period, the mental image of the breath will be clear in the dark or in the light of concentration. Concentrated mind sees the object clearly. So we say `Knowing (the breath) leads to Seeing (the breath) ´. At that time (consciousness moment) knowing the conceptual breath exists to see it. The state belonging to knowing the breath-mass exists in seeing it — `Knowing is Seeing´. In the sinking [of very subtle breath-mass] stage⁵², the focus-object (the conceptual breath) does not have strong clear and sharp outline (boundary) but is clear, vivid and bright as it catches the light (= as the light shines on it).

- Yogi having the light of concentration can see the place of the breath sharply and clearly. But having the light of concentration does not necessarily mean that yogi will see the conceptual breath (the breath-mass).
- Only by knowing the breath can a yogi [who is concentrated] succeeds in seeing it.
— `Knowing leads to Seeing.´

MENTAL STATES CAN CATCH YOUR ATTENTION STRONGLY!

Another thing to be mindful of, is that, to see the breath object clearly, repeated awareness of mental states such as happiness or calmness, is an obstacle.

⁵² A meditator herein obtains a stable, bright and clear breath (= counterpart sign, paṭibhāga-nimitta). He develops the last stage of concentration *or access concentration* in *ānāpānasati meditation*, and then can gain the first jhāna. *Taṅca kho neva vaṇṇavantaṃ, na saṅghānavantaṃ.....Kevalañhi samādhilābhino upaṅghānākāramattaṃ saññajametanti. (VsM, IV.57); 57. Taṅca kho paṭibhāganimittaṃ neva vaṇṇavantaṃ na saṅghānavantaṃ aparamatthasabhāvattā. (VsM-Mahātīkā-1)* Counterpart sign has neither colour nor shape because there is no ultimate reality in it; ... For it is *born only of perception* in one who has obtained (access) concentration, being a mere mode of appearance. (See also footnotes 10, 39, 94, 96, 98, 99 and 109.)

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Concentrated mind possesses tranquillity (*passaddhi*), joy (*pīti*) and happiness (*sukha*). You can experience such mental states when you have removed the defilements⁵³ which make the mind hot. Because you have never experienced them before, you (your mind) may easily become attached to and shakable by them. The enjoyment of mental states is not the ānāpānasati practice. Repeated awareness or attachment to them (calmness, tranquillity, joy or happiness) will lead you to forget your practice and the meditation object. — And that will cause delay and will obstruct the progress of your meditation.

To be mindful of the conceptual breath is to pay attention to the conceptual breath (the wisdom breath). Your mind should not go to any other objects. (While meditating,) (Even) craving as hope for real in-breath or out-breath, is an obstacle. Even attachment to moving, that is the real, in-breath and/ or out-breath is an obstacle to concentration.⁵⁴

When any attachments to the real breath, (jhāna) happiness, wandering thoughts, sensual objects, etc. recur, your mind cannot stably focus on the meditation object (the mass of breath or the concept of breath), thus you will not be able to develop concentration well.

Some beginners want to see the bright nimitta or light while meditating. But they have not clearly understood yet what the nimitta is. To avoid wandering to seeing the nimitta, and to develop concentration, yogis should try to understand the principle of practice first.

⁵³ Ten defilements(kilesa): 1)greed(lobha), 2)hatred(dosa), 3)delusion(moha), 4)conceit(māna), 5)views(wrong)(diṭṭhi), 6)scepticism(vicikicchā), 7)sloth(thina), 8)restlessness(uddhacca), 9)consciencelessness(ahiri), 10)shamelessness (anottappa).

⁵⁴ It is one of the eighteen imperfections that arise in ānāpānasati meditators successively from moment to moment.

– *Assāsapaṭikāṅkhanā nikanti taṅhācariyā samādhissa paripantho.*

– *Passāsapaṭikāṅkhanā nikanti taṅhācariyā samādhissa paripantho.*
(Paṭisambhidāmaggaṭṭi; Mahāvaggo; Upakkilesāññāniddeso 154)

[In my teaching, I seldom use the term nimitta, but usually I use the term `the focus-object' to say the mass of breath, the still (non-moving) breath, the wisdom breath or the conceptual breath⁵⁵.]

Whenever your mind wanders, you bring it back to your breath-mass. You should not get upset or agitated when your mind wanders. You should ignore the very short distractions like just hearing the sounds or voices. Simply cognize your meditation object as the breath (the breath-mass or the concept of breath). If you are cognizing your meditation object without interruptions, your mind has become fixed on it. And you do not know anything else. At that moment, low sounds or voices cannot distract you easily from your meditation object.

While you are trying to fix your mind firmly on the focus-object (i.e. the conceptual breath, the mass of breath, the still breath or the wisdom breath), do not pay attention to these:

- the touch and sensations at your nostrils, lip or any other part of your body. (It is important to understand and follow faithfully this rule especially when you reflect on the presence of the conceptual or wisdom breath at your focus area and in the period of transition to a higher phase of concentration.)
- your real, ordinary, moving in-breaths or out-breaths,⁵⁶
- your bodily comfort⁵⁷ or

⁵⁵ For nimitta, see footnotes 10, 39, 52, 94, 96, 98, 99 and 109.

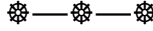
⁵⁶ When you advert to the in-breath or out-breath, your cognizance is shakable (still distracted) by 'Touch'. When you advert to in-breath, your cognizance is shakable (still distracted) by out-breath and vice versa. They are obstacles (imperfections/impurities) to concentration. (See *PsM, Upakkilesāñāṇaniddeso, 155*)

⁵⁷ Consciousnesses of samatha are very pure, very powerful and superior, because there are no upakkilesa (imperfections / contaminations). That means these consciousnesses produce very many generations of pure and superior consciousness-born materiality of which the earth-, fire- and wind element are very soft and subtle. When those soft and subtle rūpa-kalāpas touch the body

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- your states of mind, such as calmness, happiness and even any longing⁵⁸ for the real in-breath or out-breath.

All of them can divert your attention away from the focus-object, the wisdom breath.



door (the tenth type of materiality in the body decad-kalāpas) the yogi experiences great *bodily comfort, with no heaviness* (the earth element). See Talk 4, Knowing and Seeing (by the Pa-Auk Tawya Sayadaw).

⁵⁸ It is imperfections / contaminations that arise in ānāpānasati meditators.

- *Assāsenābhitunnassa passāsapaṭilābhe mucchanā (=longing) samādhissa paripantho.*
- *Passāsenābhitunnassa assāsapaṭilābhe mucchanā samādhissa paripantho. (Paṭisambhidāmaggapāḷi; Mahāvaggo; Upakkilesaṇi āṇaniddeso 154)*

Do you have the pure breath?

CONCENTRATION VS THE MOVING BREATH

We have discussed and clarified what the concentration is at the early part of our discussion.

☆ In what sense is it concentration?

It is concentration (*samādhi*) in the sense of concentrating (*samādhāna*).

What is this concentrating?

It is the centring (*ādhanā*) of consciousness and its mental factors *evenly and rightly on a single object*; placing, is what is meant. So it is the state in virtue of which consciousness and its mental factors remain *evenly* (*samañ*) and *rightly* (*sammā*) on a *single object* (*ekārammaṇe*), *undistracted and unscattered*, that should be understood as concentrating.⁵⁹

'Sign (*nimitta*), in-breath, out-breath, are not object'
'Of a single consciousness';
'By one who knows not these *three* things'
'Development is not obtained'.

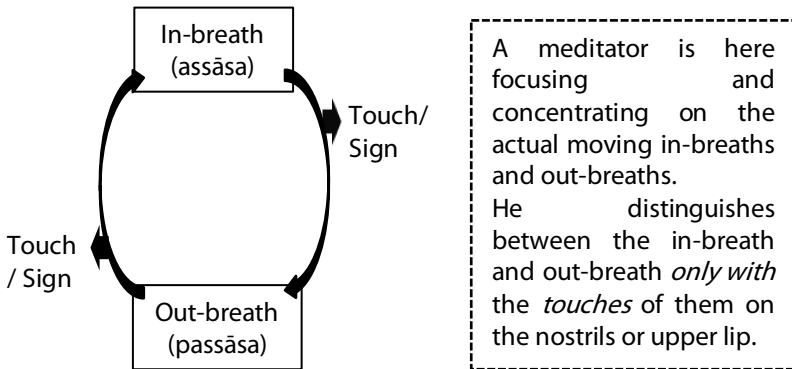
(*Paṭisambhidāmagga.i.159, Visuddhimagga.viii. 227, 231*)

A meditator discerns the in-breath and the out-breath in the beginning stage of the path to concentration. Touch (tangibles) of the moving breath is the sense that enables a meditator to be aware of it (as the breath enters and leaves the body through the nostrils) and to distinguish between the in- and out-breath. The in-breath is distinguished from the out-breath by its touch or vice versa. This means that one cannot discern the (moving) in-breath or out-breath unless one has first felt the touch of it. In the

⁵⁹Visuddhimagga. iii. 38

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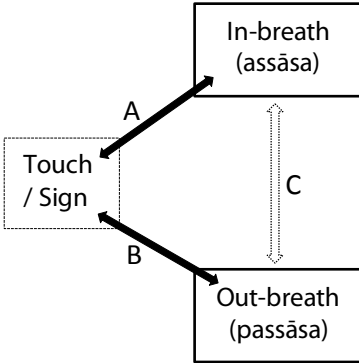
beginning stage of practice, one tries to know what the moving breath is by feeling its touch either just below the nose or somewhere around the nostril: that is called the touching-point (or) place where the in- and out-breaths touch. (touching-point= sign = nimitta). Please see footnote 34.



- Knowing of the actual moving breath-object (touch and breath) is done by countless series of both *body-door* and *mind-door* consciousnesses.
- One consciousness knows the sign (nimitta= the place where the in- breaths and out-breaths touch, touching-point (touching-place), another consciousness knows the in-breath, and yet another consciousness knows the out-breath.
- *Ānāpāna* jhāna or *Ānāpāna* concentrated consciousnesses (that is only *mind-door* consciousnesses) take only the concept of breath as object.

Here, we need to know **some obstacles to concentration** (—thoughts that *shake* or distract the mind) that arise because of the knowing of the actual (moving) breath and thus get in our way.

- A { + If, when a meditator adverts to the sign (= the place where the in-breaths and the out-breaths touch), his consciousness is shakable (*still distracted*) by the in-breath.⁶⁰
- + If, when he adverts to the in-breath, his consciousness is shakable by the sign.⁶¹



Here a consciousness takes things (— in-breath, touching-point/ sign, out-breath) *one at a time*. Thus, it should say that the knowing of the actual (moving) breath is done by two doors (: both body-door and mind-door) mental processes.

- B { + If, when he adverts to the sign, his consciousness is shakable by the out-breath.⁶²
- + If, when he adverts to the out-breath, his consciousness is shakable by the sign.⁶³

⁶⁰ Nimittam āvajjato assāse cittaṃ vikampati – (samādhissa paripantho.) (Paṭisambhidāmaggaṇṇī; Mahāvaggo; Upakkilesaṇṇāniddeso 155)

⁶¹ Assāsam āvajjato nimitte cittaṃ vikampati – (samādhissa paripantho.)

⁶² Nimittam āvajjato passāse cittaṃ vikampati – (samādhissa paripantho.)

⁶³ Passāsam āvajjato nimitte cittaṃ vikampati – (samādhissa paripantho.)

- C { + If, when he adverts to the in-breath, his consciousness is shakable by the out-breath.⁶⁴
+ If, when he adverts to the out-breath, his consciousness is shakable by the in-breath.⁶⁵

THE PURE BREATH VS THE DIRTY BREATH

'Is your breath dirty or pure?' Sometimes I use these particular terms to question yogis who are only at the beginning and early stages of the path to concentration. It is meant to make yogis understand that the meditation object is the breath (the concept of breath) only and not the touch (the touching-point or the patch).

It has been noticed that some yogis who practise only mindfulness of the real breath ('Touch and Breath Style') have a strong focus on the touch and weak focus on the breath:

first they are *acutely* aware of the touch (the tangible objects) caused by the breath flow, then they cognize the actual breath. So they recognize the (moving) breath through the touch (and sensations) at the nostrils and upper lip.

[They do not focus on the place of breath and on the breath as if looking from a distance.]

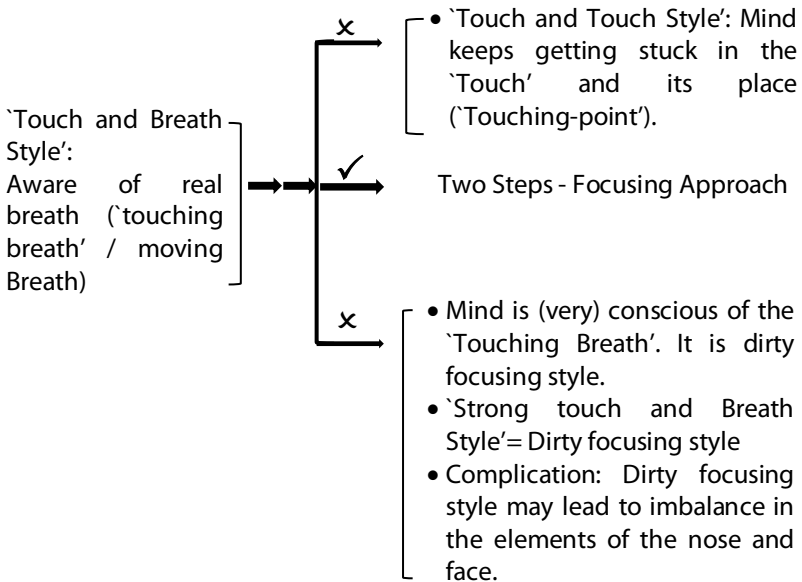
By practicing this repeatedly, they make their minds perceive or recognize the *'touching breath'* and then there comes to be *'a stronger touch and a weaker breath'*; sometimes this is being referred to as *'a dirty focusing style'*. This focusing style can occasionally lead to the complication of awareness of elements' characteristics (such as hardness, heaviness and

⁶⁴ Assāsaṃ āvajjato passāse cittaṃ vikampati – (samādhissa pariapantho.)

⁶⁵ Passāsaṃ āvajjato assāse cittaṃ vikampati – (samādhissa pariapantho.)

tension of the face) and in chronic cases making it difficult to recover unless they change their focusing-style.

Yogis cannot actually achieve continuous mindfulness of the breath or of the concept of breath, i.e. Yogis cannot cognize the pure breath unless they have relinquished and overcome their habitual `touch and breath style` and the `dirty focusing style`.



Now you can understand that a yogi who habitually practises in the `touch and breath style` keeping his mind on the touching breath or the dirty breath (with a strong focus on the touch and weak focus on the breath) for long time takes up a wrong approach to concentration. Although this was explained to the meditators, some still could not abandon their dirty focusing style easily. It is as if they are not aware of what they are

doing. “You still have the touching breath and the dirty breath” was remarked to them.

Nowadays most *ānāpānasati* yogis intentionally feel the real or moving breath. If you focus habitually or conventionally on the moving-breath throughout your sitting session, mind your practice! There can be an obvious sequel to the consistent and habitual ‘Touch and Breath Style’. **Because of habitual practice in the ‘Touch and Breath Style’ being long (— many days or weeks), the ‘dirty focusing style’ arises.**

Some meditators of the ‘Touch and Breath Style’ who emphasise awareness of the touch objects at the nostrils and the upper lip to a certain degree can obtain some calmness and happiness. Sometimes even strong light (light of wisdom, *paññāloka*) appears in front of their face, or surrounding their body. Although they may think that they are attaining good concentration and even *jhāna* factors, actually this is only preparatory concentration (*parikamma-samādhi*)⁶⁶ that is (still) far away from *jhāna* or access concentration.

The mind of the ‘Touch and Breath Style’ is actually shaking uncontrollably with three things: the in-breath, touch (sign, nimitta) and the out-breath so that the mind cannot stay steadily fixed on the breath-object alone long enough to attain deep concentration. Focusing and concentration on the breath-object are still interrupted by a lot of touches, and shakable thoughts.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Preparatory concentration (*parikamma-samādhi*): sometimes it is called momentary concentration (*khaṇika-samādhi*). We have discussed it in the section on ‘what is samatha?’.

⁶⁷ As The Buddha explains that within a snap of the fingers, many thousands of millions consciousnesses arise and perish, in those who have alternate focus on the breath and the touch, concentration on the breath will be interspersed with countless thousands of millions of mental process (the five-door processes and the mind-door processes taking one of the objects of tangibles.) and a great many life-continuum consciousnesses arising between such mental processes.

'Sign (nimitta), in-breath, out-breath, are not object'
'Of a single consciousness';
'By one who does know these three things'
'Development can be obtained'

(Paṭisambhidāmagga.i.159, Visuddhimagga.viii.227, 231)

One consciousness knows only one thing: the sign (touching-point or *nimitta*, that is the place where the in-breaths & out-breaths touch), the in-breath, or the out-breath. Meditators must concentrate on a *single* object to develop higher and higher states of concentration. How can you take three things (— sign, in-breath and out-breath) as an object 'of a single consciousness' (— in one consciousness moment (citta-kkhaṇa))? It is a puzzle of how the consciousness takes these three things (together) as the object 'of a single consciousness'.

If a meditator concentrates on the touch, he cannot attain *jhāna* concentration (absorption concentration, *appanā .samādhi*). Meditators who skilfully apply the 'Two Steps-Focusing Approach' are able to focus on a *single object*, conceptual breath (non-moving breath) without adverting and giving attention to the touching or moving breath. They do not emphasise touch (tangible objects) and sensations. They are aware of breathing (or are knowing the real in&out-breath) for a split second only⁶⁸; thereafter, they immediately ignore the movements of the actual breath and abandon the touch and sensations at the nostril and the upper lip. Thereby their minds no longer distinguish between the in-breath and the out-breath and no longer notice changes in the breathing rhythm at all. And

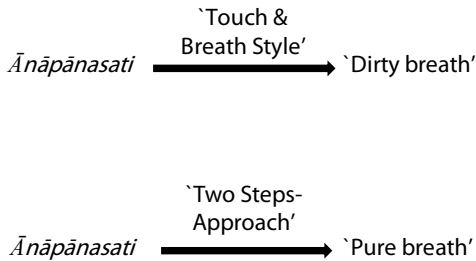
⁶⁸ Skilled yogis (who *may* have already attained concentration and light of wisdom) can focus on the meditation object, the concept of breath *without* paying attention to the touch (and sensations) at the nostril or the actual breaths *at all*. They use the sense of body position only. See footnote 75.

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they are focusing their minds on the *place of breath* as if they were looking at it from a distance with great attention.

With reflection an applied thought occurs and it occurs as a state of directing the mind onto the mass of breath object (i.e. the breath column or a part of the breath column). It is manifested as leading of the mind to an unadulterated breath-object. By means of sensible reflection yogis' minds (the wisdom eyes) are able to focus on the conceptual or still breath at their place (without paying attention to the touch and the movement of the breath). Later on, they repeatedly concentrate until their minds steadily fix on the conceptual, pure breath.

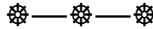
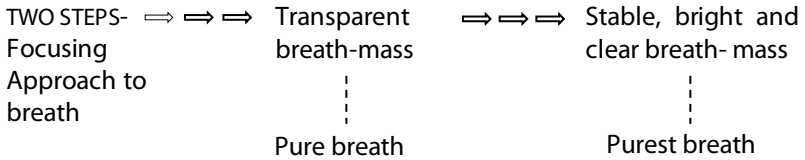
They now solve the puzzle by skilfully applying the 'Two Steps-Focusing Approach' and do not encounter the obstacle of 'the dirty focusing style' and its complication at all.



'You have focused on the breath sharply, so you got the pure breath'.

Sometimes these striking terms are being used in order to make meditators to understand and grasp the significance of the *mere focusing on the conceptual breath*. When they can obtain

stable, bright and clear breath (the wisdom breath) which is like a mirror disk, they have won the purest breath⁶⁹.



⁶⁹ Purest breath = Stable, bright and clear breath. When the concentration has become stronger and more powerful, the breath changes its manifestation and it appears as a more purified image, like a mirror disk, like a mother-of-pearl dish well washed. It is a counterpart sign.

What is natural breathing?

When concentration improves, breathing rhythm will start to change. During the progress of concentration, usually the breath will become increasingly calm and subtle. But it is not necessarily the case in the lower levels of progress. There may be regular (normal) breathing in the first session then fast in the next session, or slow the next day or no change. Sometimes the breath flow may even be jerky. If there are no intentional efforts to change the breathing, the variations in its rhythm are all natural phenomena, due to physiological responses to the progress of concentration.

During the course of practice, some meditators notice the changes of their breathing rhythm. They remark 'Oh, my breathing is a little bit fast in this session' or 'my breathing is slow in this session'. They notice that sometimes their breathing is fast (short duration of the breath, short breath), sometimes slow (long duration of the breath, long breath).

After that, some of them comment: 'it is an improper rate', 'it is not a good sign in the practice', 'it is good to get the subtle breath' and so on. And then, to obtain a previous or an intended state, they intentionally try to change and control their breathing rhythm by using effort. It is because they already have some prior information that, for example, "subtle breath is better than regular breath (because as one's mindfulness of the breath develops, one's breath becomes more and more subtle, more and more tranquil)"; "gross breath is worse than regular breath"; "subtle breath can be obtained when the breath becomes long". By using effort, they attempt to obtain the subtle breath or long breath.

It is generally accepted that tranquillizing of the breath comes *naturally*, as one's mindfulness of the breath develops.

We have discussed why breathing actions are not the object of meditation and *it is essential not to pay attention to the breathing actions* itself. It is wrong to intentionally make an attempt to change the breathing into strong, light or tranquil by using effort, because it actually interferes with the natural breathing, thus preventing improvement in meditation. After changing and controlling the breathing rhythm (for example, from fast breathing to regular or slow) by effort, eventually, it will go back to its previous state (for example, to the fast breathing).

Attempts to change and control the breathing rhythm by using effort make the mind overly aware of the breathing action or movement of the breath. Some meditators who make the breath strong on purpose and concentrate on that breathing, on the forceful breathing actions and or touch on the touching point can get happiness for a while. But such an attempt to change and control the breathing rhythm, making it strong, impairs mindfulness of the conceptual breath, the mass of breath or the non-moving breath), and it becomes a disturbance for the improvement of concentration.

The breath's movement is an incorrect object of meditation. Ānāpānasati meditators who apply the 'Two Steps-Focusing Approach' are able to fix on, gaze or look steadily at the conceptual breath-object (wisdom breath or non-moving breath-object) in their mind. Their breathing is usually light and subtle; they do not make noticeable sound of breathing.

Unnatural (Abnormal) breathing

- Regular or
- Fast or
- Slow or
- Strong and forceful

Attempts to change the breathing by using effort



Ānāpānasati Concentration cannot develop.

Ānāpānasati

Natural (Normal)
breathing

- Regular or
- Fast or
- Slow or
- Jerky

No attempts to
change the
breathing by
using effort



Ānāpānasati
Concentration
can develop.

- **You must not purposely try to make the breathing fast, slow or regular.**
- **You must not make the breath light, tranquil and subtle on purpose.**
- **Also, you must not make the breath strong on purpose.**
- **Be aware of the breath as it is.**

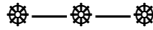
Although the fundamental principle of *ānāpānasati* practice is to focus and concentrate on the conceptual breath, in the beginning or early stage of the practice the breathing actions as well as the movement of the breath are noticed or cognized to a greater or lesser degree. While concentration is developing, meditators who are mindful and skilful will ignore the movement of the actual breath (the touching or moving-breath), as well as the breathing actions, in order to develop awareness of the non-moving or immobile conceptual breath (the wisdom breath). Therefore, during the course of *ānāpānasati* practice, yogis who have become skilful and mindful, can focus on the still conceptual or wisdom breath (the mass of or concept of breath), despite of any unintentional changes in the breathing or of the movement of the actual breath (such as changes of the breathing rhythm to fast, normal or slow, of gross or subtle breath).

In the progress of development of concentration, at a certain time the breath-mass may become very subtle and unclear. Yogis may think that the breath has stopped or got lost.

Although they can focus on the place where the breath-object exists, it is difficult for them to cognize (perceive) the breath-object (the mass of breath or the breath of wisdom) after reflecting on the presence of the breath. 'Touch' should at no time be used as a meditation object. As the touch of the actual-breath (the moving breath) is no longer felt, one has already overcome a hindrance (touch at the nostril area). So a yogi may need to convince him or herself of the presence of the conceptual breath (the mass of breath) at the focus area with buckets of confidence.

The breath is present throughout the entire life. A dead person, a foetus in the womb, a drowned person, an (deeply) unconscious person, a person in the fourth jhāna, a person in the cessation attainment (nirodha-samāpatti), and a brahmā: only these seven types of person do not breathe.

A yogi needs to understand the fact that he or she is not one of them, that he or she is in reality breathing, that it is just mindfulness (wisdom and concentration) which are not strong enough to be aware of the breath mass, and that it is just concentration which are not yet strong enough to see the very subtle breath-mass. A yogi who is focusing *mindfully* with repeated reflection (labelling 'this place is full of the breath', or 'this place is occupied by the breath', or 'breath, breath' or the breath-mass or the breath-body or the breath-column) at an appropriate rate should be able to overcome this obstacle. And this happens only when his meditation has matured.



How can you start focusing on the still conceptual breath?

Here, we would like to briefly discuss the “approach to cognizing the still conceptual breath (the mass of breath)”. To do that, it is better if meditators have already learned and experienced some basic steps of *ānāpānasati* practice:

‘Beginning stage of practice’

- Breathing in *mindfully*, breathing out *mindfully*,
- *Understanding* breathing in long, breathing out long, breathing in short, breathing out short;⁷⁰
(*Understanding* the long in-breath, the long out-breath; the short in-breath, the short out-breath; and developing awareness of whether the in&out breaths are long or short ;)
- *Experiencing* the whole [breath] body (sabba-kāya)⁷¹ while breathing in and out.

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• *So satova assasati, satova passasati.* Ever mindful he breathes in; ever mindful he breathes out.

• *Dīghaṃ vā assasanto ‘dīghaṃ assasāmi’ti pajñānāti, dīghaṃ vā passasanto ‘dīghaṃ passasāmi’ti pajñānāti. Rassaiṃ vā assasanto ‘rassaiṃ assasāmi’ti pajñānāti, rassaiṃ vā passasanto ‘rassaiṃ passasāmi’ti pajñānāti.* Breathing in long, he understands: ‘I breathe in long.’ Breathing out long, he understands: ‘I breathe out long.’ Breathing in short, he understands: ‘I breathe in short.’ Breathing out short, he understands: ‘I breathe out short.’

Long breath: the breath that takes a long time to breathe. Short breath: the breath that takes a short time to breathe. You should decide for yourself what duration you will call ‘long’ and ‘short’. The long and short breath (length and shortness) should be understood by extent (addhāna). For just as water or sand that occupies an extent of space is called a ‘long water’, a ‘long sand’, a ‘short water’, a ‘short sand’, so the breaths regarded as particles slowly go in the long extent (and slowly goes out). That is why they are called ‘long’. They rapidly go in a short extent (and rapidly go out). That is why they are called ‘short’.

⁷¹ *'Sabbakāyapaṭisaṃvedī assasissāmi'ti sikkhati, 'sabbakāyapaṭisaṃ vedī passasissāmi'ti sikkhati.* Experiencing the whole body, I shall breathe in:' thus he trains. Experiencing the whole body, I shall breathe out:' thus he trains.

There are two types of body in vipassanā: the materiality-body (rūpa.kāya) and the mentality-body (nāma.kāya). The materiality-body is a group of materiality. The mentality-body is a group of consciousnesses and their associated mental factors. But samatha meditation objects such as breath (in-breath&out-breath), the thirty-two parts of the body (as foulness (asubha)), the sign for anchoring (mindfulness) and the four elements are also called body (*kāya*). Why? They are also compactness of materiality. For example, **breath is a group (mass) of consciousness- born rūpa-kalāpas** with nine types of materiality (rūpa): earth-element, water-element, fire-element, wind-element, colour, odour, flavour, nutritive essence and sound. *cittaje assāsapassāsakoṭṭhāsepi ojaṭṭhamakañceva saddo....* (Visuddhimagga.xviii.664) (See also Paṭisambhidāmagga I, iii, and Talk 8, Knowing and Seeing (by the Pa-Auk Tawya Sayadaw).)

Katamo rūpakāyo? Cattāro ca mahābhūtā, catunnañca mahābhūtānaṃ upādāyarūpaṃ, assāso ca passāso ca, nimittañca upanibandhanā, ye ca vuccanti kāyasaṅkhārā – ayaṃ rūpakāyo. (Paṭisambhidāmagga I, iii, 170)

Thus, under body-contemplation (*kāyānupassanā*), The Buddha taught two types of meditation: *samatha* and *vipassanā*. Under body-contemplation, He included *ānāpānasati*, and the thirty-two parts of the body etc. So, if you are practising *ānāpānasati*, you are practising body-contemplation.

– The whole breath body refers to the whole body of breath, not the whole body from head to foot. Here The Buddha is instructing to be aware of the whole breath from beginning to end at the nostril or upper lip only.

– In M .III. ii.9 *'Ānāpānasati Sutta'*, The Buddha explains that the body here refers to the in&out breath; '....Among the bodies, a certain body, bhikkhu, I declare this, that is, the in&out breath.' *'Kāyesu kāyaññatarāhaṃ, bhikkhave, evaṃ vadāmi yadidaṃ – assāsapassāsā'.*

– The Arahant Dhammadinnā explains that in&out breath is bodily, since they depend on the body. (M. I.v.4 *'Cūḷa.Vedalla.Suttaṃ'* *'The Small Catechism Sutta'*)

– 'In-breaths and out-breaths taken as particles are a body in the sense of mass.' *'Kāyoti cunṇavicunṇāpi assāsapassāsā samūhatthena Kāyo.'* (Paṭisambhidāmagga-Atṭhākathā ,166); [Mass is a large number of things (particles) grouped together or an amount of material in something.] *breath body = breath mass*

In this way, The Enlightened One taught ⁷² his disciples simply and clearly. His word is profound and should be taken as it is intended, giving due weight.

In this 'Beginning stage of practice', a meditator knows the movement or flow of the in- and out-breaths. He distinguishes and discerns the real in- and out-breaths. There are four characteristics of the real breath: long and short, in and out. In order to discern the in-&out-breaths, the long or short in-&out-breaths and the whole breath bodies, he has to be aware of them through the sense of touch at the nostril or upper lip. Herein, it is understood that he knows them *only* at the place where the in-breaths and out-breaths touch— the nostrils and or the upper lip. The touch on the skin where he feels the flow of breath (i.e. uncountable billions of mental processes —the body-door and subsequent mind-door processes that take the tangible or tactile objects ⁷³—) interrupts his knowing the breath uncountable times. His concentration through the mindfulness of the breath is not yet established and he is very consistent in applying the 'Touch and Breath Style' throughout the stage. He cannot keep his mind *only* on the conceptual breath (the still breath) as the object yet. **It is a 'Beginning stage of practice'— so I remark that there is a 'Beginning stage of concentration'** ⁷⁴.

⁷² 'The Great Mindfulness-Foundation Sutta (*Mahā-Sati-Paṭṭhāna Sutta*) D.ii.9 (Also M.I.i.10). See also footnote 26.

The body is the establishment (foundation): there is that body, and mindfulness approaches it by making it its object and remains there, thus it is called 'establishment'.

⁷³ 'The *actual knowing* of an object is performed by seven javana consciousnesses in the mind-door process, this regardless of the door through which the object has arrived.

Sabbopi panesa pabhedo mano-dvārika-javaneyeva labbhati. (The Dispeller of Delusion): All phenomena are known by the mind-door impulsion (javana).

⁷⁴ Because the mind (the mind door) takes a breath-object momentarily (for a very short time), there attains 'preparatory concentration' that is not deep and profound. This concentration does not last long and occurs interruptedly. But

Ānāpānasati meditation is so called because it is attained in meditation by being mindful of the breath. One-pointedness of mind on the breath is concentration (*samādhi*).

We develop *jhāna* by concentrating on one and the same object: one cannot attain *jhāna* with an object that is always moving (changing).

A meditator is unable to perfect his concentration by keeping his mind *only* on the real (moving) breaths as an object. Applying the 'Touch and Breath Style' (i.e. knowing *only* the real breaths) consistently is a very real problem. It is very common to *ānāpānasati* meditators. To achieve *jhāna*, high attainments in the development of concentration (*samādhi*), yogis must grasp the the 'meaning of the breath', that is, the idea that the breath represents.

By learning and practising the steps of the 'Beginning stage' (breathing in, breathing out; breathing in long or short, breathing out long or short; experiencing the whole breath body), **meditators should comprehend the (meaning of) the breath-object and the principle of meditation practice.**

You should carefully think about some terms used in 'The Great Mindfulness-Foundation Sutta', such as *pañānāti* (understand), *paṭisaṃvedī* (experiencing) and *sikkhati* (train).

In our experience, there are many meditators who have failed to comprehend the meaning of the breath, and who are unable to apply the 'Two Steps-Focusing Approach'. Usually their concentration cannot become strong and powerful. But some yogis are able to understand the meaning of the breath-object, what the breath represents, within one sitting. Meaning of the breath-object and the principle of the meditation practice are these:

with continued practice, the mind will be followed by 'quite secluded from sense desires'.

Ānāpānasati

- + The breath (the in&out breath) is *bodily* since it depends on the body of a breather (a breathing being).
- + The breath is the part of one's own body. It is *a mass*, or a solid-like concrete object (i.e. an individual three-dimensional object that has mass and that is distinguishable from other objects).
- + Because breathing is a continuous process, there is *no gap* between the in-breath and the out-breath.
- + One has to simply be aware of the in&out breath as *a concept* (i.e. as one compact continuity, as a continuous whole, as one compact mass, as one lump or as a body) of breath. The concept of breath i.e. the mass of breath is the conceptual reality that is based on the real breath.
- + One has to know and see the mass of breath *as it really is*, and *not just as* a concept that is based on general ideas instead of being based on the real breath.
- + One has to focus on the object of meditation that is only at the area between the nostril and the upper lip (nostril and, or upper lip area).
- + Meditators must concentrate on the object, the mass of breath only by the mind-door processes (mano-dvāra-vīthi) to develop concentration.
- + If we do that, it can be said that we breathe according to The Enlightened One's wishes.

Here you should consider this: to develop concentration is actually not easy. The concept of the breath is the object of *ānāpānasati* meditation. If a yogi takes as object a concept that is based on general ideas and not on the real breath, he cannot attain strong concentration or *jhāna*. To attain *jhāna* he must take as object a concept (the mass of breath) that is based on the real breath at his nostril.

It is because of *not understanding* the object of meditation *clearly* that many yogis fall into the trap of trying to concentrate on *only* the real (moving) breaths (for many months or years).

Some are hard to recognize the need to understand what problems or obstacles are involved in concentrating on the concept of breath.

We should actually apply our minds to finding a solution to this problem of falling into the trap. The mass of the breath is known by the mind-door impulsion (*javana*) alone. We have learnt how the focusing technique (the Two Steps-Focusing Approach) is applied to focus on the [conceptual] breath during the early stage of concentration development. Please recollect the points mentioned above on how to focus on the object by using the focusing technique. Through applying this, you cognize the meditation object, the mass of breath with the mind door alone [i.e. you cognize the mass of breath only with the mind-door processes (*mano-dvāra-vīthi*)], and you are taking a decisive and big step towards the still conceptual breath — that actually solves the problem of the ‘Touch and Breath Style’.

Awareness of the actual breath at the nostril (between the nostril and upper lip):

- in and out-breaths and or
- Long breath or
- Short breath or
- The whole breath body

pajānāti →

Atthapaññatti
or *the*
meaning-
concept; The
breath is a
mass (a body),
or a solid,
concrete
object.

Concept of
the [in&out]
breath

‘Early stage of practice’: --- 3 phases.

[1] ‘Preparation step’ (‘Tool phase’): —

You can start to be aware of the breath movement or the touch of the moving-breath around your nostril area for a moment. It is the usual way *for most [early] yogis*, because when

they try to start focusing on the conceptual breath-object (the mass of breath), they do not know the exact location of this focus-object in the mind door.

A yogi makes his or her mind aware of the touch of the moving-breath between the nostril and the upper lip for a short moment (a few seconds) beforehand. That is enough— yogis are able to know the exact location or the place of the focus-object (the mass of breath) in the mind door in this 'Preparation step' ('Tool phase'), using the *touch* of the moving-breath, *as a tool*.⁷⁵ The nostril and upper lip are as landmarks. That tool marks its place and surroundings (= nostril, upper lip and nearby area) in his mind (vision).

* [*Skilled* yogis who *may* or may not have attained light of wisdom can quickly focus on (i.e. skilled yogis' wisdom eye can quickly look at) the meditation object, the concept of breath *without* paying attention to the touch (and sensations) at the nostril or the actual breaths *at all*. They use the sense of head and body position only. That means they can experience the whole body of breath without touch of breath. See footnote 75.]

[2] 'First step'

(Location phase): "Place is the first to focus on".

"The focusing approach (technique) is appropriate for yogis who are going through the 'early stage' of concentration development":-

Because there are two nostril openings at your nose, left and right, *you can select the side you prefer to focus on. As if*

⁷⁵ The sitting posture having crossed legs and body straight is best to develop a strong sense of head and body position (= the ability to know with mind consciousnesses alone where the body / bodily parts, such as breath-mass, is positioned). Skilled meditators (with / without light of wisdom) have such ability. *Without the tool, touch of the moving-breath, they (their mental eyes) are able to focus on (look at) the place of breath-mass (proper focus area) and breath-mass in it.*

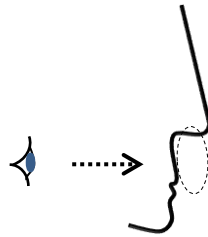
you are an onlooker looking at it from a distance, you can start focusing on your chosen side and area. Although it can be done as if looking from any direction, usually it is suggested to focus towards the target point from behind and perpendicularly (straight forward) or slightly downwards, as it has been noticed that this direction is very convenient and safe for most meditators.

At 'the location phase', *you can start trying to focus on the location of the breath-object while ignoring the touch of the breath, sensations (feeling at the nostril area) and the moving-breath (the actual breath).*⁷⁶ You can succeed in focusing on the place of the breath-object *only when* you abandon the tool (the *touch* of the moving-breath) and the *movement* of the breath. This is only a preparation for the next step where the wisdom breath (the still breath) is the focus-object.

'Place is the first focus':-

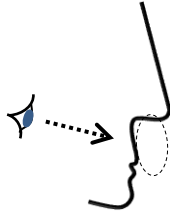
* Within the first few days, it is not easy to get stable sight line for the very beginners. They notice their mental eyes (observational positions) being unstable and changing direction of the sight-line to the place of the breath-object (the mass of breath).

You start to focus your wisdom eye on the proper focus area that is the place of target breath. Now your wisdom eye is looking straight forward, in front of it, and you see that place in your (mental) vision.



The proper focus area [or] a target area

⁷⁶ ... *desato āharitabbam*. (Visuddhimagga.viii. 229) = Substitute the place: Bring the meditation back to mind "as the place (*desato*)" where the (moving) breaths were last noticed, instead of "as (moving) breaths". See also Pārājikakaṇḍa-aṭṭhakathā, 165 and Paṭisambhidāmagga-aṭṭhakathā, 163.



Proper focus area:
the amount of space
that coincides with
the mass of breath.

- * It takes a few moments for the unskilled yogis' wisdom eyes to focus.
- * It is proper to keep the mental eye (observational position) stable.
- * Sight-line is perpendicular or slightly downwards towards the target.
- * The best sight-line is perpendicular.

[3] 'Second step'

(Object phase): — "Object is the second focus".

*After focusing on the location where the breath exists, **you can then switch your focus to the mass of breath (the still conceptual breath) by ignoring the movement of the actual breath** — you already understand that this focus area is **'full of the breath (the mass of breath)'**.*

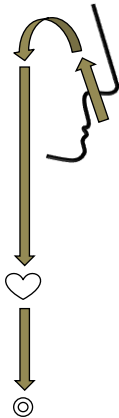
"There are all kinds of thoughts running through the mind. This mind wanders easily. If you pay attention to the movement of the object, movement itself will distract or divert this mind easily away from focusing and fixing on the object. Only when you are able to focus and concentrate on a stable object, can concentration develop strongly."

When you go (inside the body) with mindfulness after the in-breath, your mind becomes distracted internally.⁷⁷ Likewise,

⁷⁷ It is one of the eighteen upakkileśa (imperfections / contaminations) that arise in ānāpānasati meditators and it can obstruct the concentration.

when you go out with mindfulness after the out-breath, your mind becomes distracted externally.⁷⁸ You cannot develop meditation any further and you will not be able to perfect your concentration. So in order to develop meditation, you have to concentrate on the breath (the in- and out-breath) without following it. That means you have to focus and concentrate on the mass of breath (the still breath) by ignoring the movement of the actual breath.

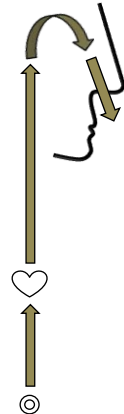
While concentrating it is not important whether the breath is in or out; long or short; what is important is that the object of *ānāpānasati*, the breath (the in- or out-breath), is only a concept (the mass of breath).



One is following the breath into the body or out of the body.

The heart is the middle.

The navel is the end or beginning.



When one goes in with mindfulness after the beginning (nose-tip or upper lip), middle (the heart) and end (the navel) of an in-breath, his mind becomes distracted internally.

(Paṭisambhidāmagga; I, iii, 154)...ajjhattivikkhepagataṃ cittaṃ samādhissa paripantho.)

⁷⁸ It is one of the eighteen imperfections that obstruct the concentration. When one goes out with mindfulness after the beginning (the navel), middle (the heart) and end (nose-tip or upper lip) of an out-breath, his mind becomes distracted externally.

(Paṭisambhidāmagga; I, iii, 154)... bahiddhāvikkhepagataṃ cittaṃ samādhissa pariapantho.

Herein, awareness of the breath object as ‘in-breath – out-breath’ (or noting it as ‘in-breath – out-breath’) will not exist any longer. Unless one can ignore the movement of the actual breath, one will not be able to know (and see) the mass of breath (the still breath or the still breath-column).

How can you ignore the movement of the breath?

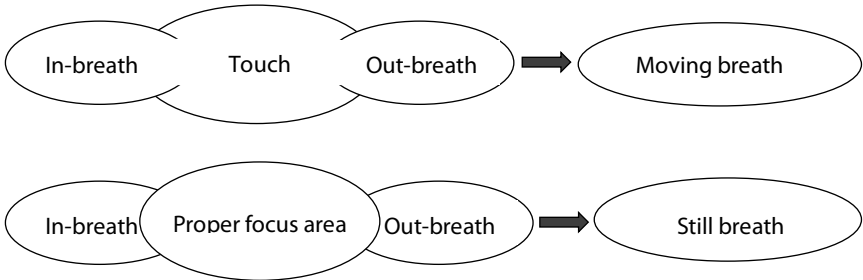
“He sits, having established mindfulness at the nose tip or on the upper lip (=proper focus area), *without giving attention to the in-breaths and out-breaths as they approach and recede*, though they are *not unknown to him as they do so*, and he manifests endeavour,” (*Discrimination Path, 159*)⁷⁹

We would like to elaborate on this by using one simile. When crossing a bridge, you may have watched a fast flow, swift current of a river. Have you noticed that you cannot stay focused for a long time on the flowing water itself? This is because the object is constantly moving, and you cannot stabilize your focusing on it for a long time. If you really want to, you have to follow this flowing water in a boat. However, only after abandoning focusing on the movement of the water, can you focus with stability on one specific area, from one position (e.g. a bridge), and see ‘mere water’.

Breath is the air that you take into your lungs. Here, to focus on the ‘mere breath’ (the still or conceptual breath), you have to abandon both following the breath flow (up or down), and distinguishing between the in- and out-breath. After that,

⁷⁹ bhikkhu nāsikagge vā mukhanimutte vā satim upatthapetvā nisinno hoti, **na āgate vā gate vā assāsapassāse manasi karoti, na āgatā vā gatā vā assāsapassāsā aviditā honti**, padhānañca paññāyati, payogañca sādheti. Visesamadhigacchati padhānañca. (Paṭisambhidāmaggaṭṭhī, 159)

you can still know the [mass of] breath that exists in its place. It is a conceptual breath that is still.



The conceptual breath is the breath that is cognized by mind alone (i.e. the mind-door process alone). The impulsion consciousness of the mind-door process that has the [conceptual] breath as its object is actually concentrated.

In the very first few attempts to focus on the still conceptual breath you may feel as if suffocating. Or you may feel as if you are holding your breath. When feeling like this, you should ignore it. Later, you will succeed in focusing on your still breath. But if you alternate concentration between the actual breath (the moving breath) and the still conceptual breath (the mass of breath), your focusing and concentration on the still conceptual breath will be on and off. It (focusing and concentration) can last only for a moment. You will not be able to make your conscious processes uninterrupted longer. As a consequence, it will be difficult for you to succeed in obtaining the still conceptual breath vividly. You will not see it clearly in your mind (mental vision). Your concentration will not develop any further and your progress will stop as well.

Meditators who are able to cognize the still conceptual breath and no other object over a period of time (a few minutes, a few sessions, or a few days), develop mindfulness and perceive

it as a mass of any colour (for example, white or yellow or smoky or dark) vividly.⁸⁰

It is the ‘Early stage of practice’— so I remark that there is the ‘Early stage of concentration’⁸¹. In the early stage of practice, a meditator undertakes a preparatory meditation (*parīkamma.bhāvanā*). Actually, before even being able to perceive the conceptual breath as a mass (with any colour) vividly, meditators can also cognize the still conceptual breath well. Meditators experience it as if their mind sticks (fixes) to the object or the object attracts the mind.⁸² They feel stickiness [between the mind and the object] and say that [wandering] thoughts have stopped. So, we say — we are able to see even a colourless, contour-less (having or showing no outline of shape or form) breath object or dark, contour-less breath object. As soon as a meditator fixes his mind to the object, his hindrances⁸³ are suppressed, his defilements subside and his mindfulness is established.

⁸⁰ This is the sign of the [in-&out-] breath (*ānāpāna nimitta*). To see the sign (stably), a yogi must develop concentration phase by phase (up to jhāna) by concentrating on the the concept of breath. By concentrating on the concept of breath, he is able to fix his mind upon the sign of breath.

[A Pa-Auk yogi should learn the statements in the ‘Knowing and Seeing’ (by the most Venerable Pa-Auk Tawya Sayadaw).

“If your nimitta (appears at the place where the breath touches,) is stable, and appears as the breath itself, and the breath as the nimitta, then forget about the breath, and be aware of just the nimitta. By moving your mind from the breath to the nimitta, you will be able to make further progress.”]

⁸¹ This is preparatory concentration.

⁸² This object is a very rudimentary or nascent / primitive state of ānāpāna nimitta. Meditators start to experience the one-pointedness (*ekaggatā*).

⁸³ i) sensual desire (*kāma.cchanda*) ii) ill will (*byāpāda*) iii) sloth&torpor (*thina.middha*) iv) restlessness&remorse (*uddhacca,kukkucca*) v) scepticism (*vici.kicchā*)

Sign (= nimitta = touching point), in-breath, out-breath, are not object of a single consciousness;
'By one who knows not these three things'
'Development is not obtained'.
'By one who does know these three things'
'Development can be obtained.'

This means:

'By one who comprehend the meaning of breath and who apply the 'Two Steps-Focusing Approach' (i.e. by one [knows and] sees the still-breath as if looking at it from behind), development can be obtained.'

- Many yogis (especially in the beginning, early and middle stage of practice) think of the breath as a column (cord /string) like object. It is a surmise (*parikappa*) and a (mental) marking of the object (*perception (saññā)*).⁸⁴ A meditator reflects upon the object as **breath column** or **mass of breath** or breath (concept of breath)⁸⁵. His mind is

⁸⁴ Perception does not arise alone. It is a mental formation that arises always together with the individual consciousness and other mental formations: these mental formations associated with the individual consciousness are called associated mental factors (*cetasika*). It is not the case that when a yogi thinks of the breath as a column with a happy mind, only perception arises, but rather altogether thirty-three mental factors arise.

⁸⁵ Breath column: It is the breath [-mass] shaped like a column. It has a boundary that limits the size of the breath-mass and that separates the breath-mass from the outside area. The breath-mass is delimited by a boundary. The boundary or column shape (image) of the breath-mass is created by the perception (*saññā*) during the development of *ānāpānasati*. When one's mind is familiar with the perception of the breath column, his mind knows the breath object's meaning—his mind knows (judges and feels) that the breath exists as a mass. He takes the breath column as an object and it helps to develop the ability or

(sometimes) engaged in reflecting upon the concept of breath, and this involves an intense application of thought

knowledge how to take (and see) the breath-mass object. *With the perception of breath column comes the perception of breath-mass.* Attention is given by setting the mind on the concept (the breath-mass).

It (the breath column or the breath-mass) is meaning-concept because it is surmised, understood, and made known.

Ānāpānasati vs. earth kasiṇa: In this method firstly an *ānāpānasati* yogi reflects upon the object as a breath column (in this stage) so that to cognize the object with mind consciousnesses (*javana* consciousnesses in the mind-door process) alone. Then he takes the breath column as a breath-mass *evenly* (as a whole) and uses that as his preliminary object to acquire knowledge of the concept of breath decisively. He then can develop his preliminary-work (*parikamma*). The powerful mindfulness of the breath is the mindfulness associated with knowledge of the concept of breath-mass.

Kasiṇa: meditation object that represents a quality in conventional reality, e.g. earth, colour, space and light; used for samatha meditation. The word ‘*kasiṇa*’ is used in the sense of entirety (*sakalaṭṭhena*).

In the practice of the earth *kasiṇa* a yogi looks at the earth circle (of one foot across) for a while and concentrates on it with his eyes closed. He takes an earth circle as ‘earth’ and uses that as his preliminary object to acquire knowledge of the concept of earth decisively.

Herein, both practices (*ānāpānasati* and earth *kasiṇa*) are similar in approach of focusing and there is acquisition of the knowledge of a concept (i.e. knowledge of what the concept of breath-mass and earth is). Focusing approach on the breath column or earth circle acts as the gateway to preparatory meditation (*parikamma-bhāvanā*).

kasiṇanimittādikā cā ti evamādippabhedā pana paramatthato avijjamānāpi atthacchāyākārena cittuppādānamārammaṇabhūtā taṃ taṃ upādāya upanidhāya kāraṇaṃ katvā tathā tathā parikappiyamānā saṃkhāyati samaññāyati vohariyati paññāpiyatitī paññattitī pavuccati. Ayaṃ paññattī paññāpiyattā paññatti nāma. (Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha viii Paccayasāṅgahavibhāga 30)

All such different things [*Kasiṇa* signs and the like (**including the concept of ānāpāna**)], though they do not exist in the ultimate sense, become objects of consciousness **in the form of shadows of (ultimate) things**. They are called concepts **because they are thought of (surmised)**, reckoned, understood, expressed, and made known on account of, in consideration of, with respect to, this or that mode. This kind of concept is so called because it is made known.

See also footnote 125.

(*vitakka*). Here his mind stops noting the breath as in & out, and abandons the real breath (i.e. stops taking attention to the movement and touch of the breath).⁸⁶

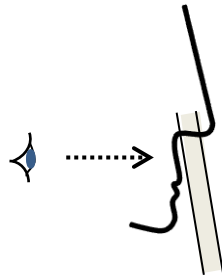
‘Early stage of practice’

‘Early stage of concentration’ – ‘Object is the second focus’.

- A meditator has no alternative but to apply the focusing technique (Two Steps-Focusing Approach).

You can see breath[mass], not with the naked eye, but with the eye of wisdom (*ñāṇa-cakkhu*).

Need to sharpen the focus area that is between nostril and upper lip. The volume of a target breath that a yogi tries to focus on is there. It is important to have a *focusing acuity on the object as a whole* in early stage of practice.



- Oh! How wonderful! The breath column is gleaming and stationary.
- You concentrate on it as a concept, as ‘a breath or a mass of breath’. You have succeeded in applying Two Steps-Focusing Approach. Now by knowing shape (column) and colour (brightness), your mind cognizes it as breath mass.

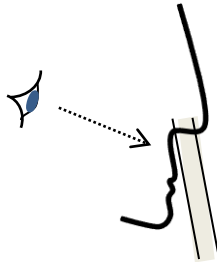
⁸⁶ When we discuss how to discern and reflect upon the breath, some are confused about this and are in doubt as to whether this practice is *ānāpānasati*. Here a meditator does not pay attention to the real (moving) breath as either: ‘In-out’; or ‘In-out-long’; or ‘In-out-short’, but to the concept of breath (breath body/mass). That is actually ‘being mindful of the breath’ — that is how one breathes in mindfully, and breathes out mindfully.

- Tangible objects (touch) of somewhere around the nostrils or just below the nose now do not interrupt or affect his gaze (cognizance) easily.
- He knows and concentrates on the still breath. He lets his wisdom eye (mind) look at it until his mind gradually sticks to it. He fixes the breath-column with a gaze, and then sees it vividly. He should feel as if there is a bridge between mind and the focus-object, the breath-column.
- His mind knows and sees the breath *directly*: it is aware of the breath as a concept.
- He sees the still breath (the breath-column) because it (breath-column, perception) is kept in the mind. And it becomes object of consciousnesses in the form of shadow of ultimate things.
- The light of concentration shows up the object and its outline. The image (sign) becomes manifest, and the object, the breath column usually appears *with a bold outline (an obvious border)* in this stage of concentration.
- The still breath (the motionless breath-column) is now really opaque, but can be bright or metallic contrasting with its dim background.
- There are variable size and shape of breath-masses from person to person.
In vivid phase of early stage, length of the breath-column varies from person to person. In most cases, the breath column is between 1 and 5 cm in length. In some cases, it is even longer than 8 cm and is like a (downward-curving) tusk.
- The colour (and the brightness) that is there in the breath column (breath-mass) should not be thought about.
- He *intends* to focus as a whole only on the external appearance or surface of the object (the conceptual, wisdom or still breath).

- He knows that the breath-column is full of breath-mass. But because the concentration has not matured enough, he (the wisdom eye) cannot see inside the breath-column yet in this level of concentration. Some meditators of the 'early stage of practice' say: ' there is an empty breath-column '. Some also say: ' there is only a breath-tube '.

Mental (wisdom) eye focusing from behind (as a camera does.)

Appropriate distance between mental (wisdom) eye and wisdom breath (mass of breath)



Focusing on an *appropriate mass of breath*; For example, it may be a rounded column of breath (with bold outline) or a portion of it (at the proper focus area) only.

- * *Appropriate distance* between the mental (wisdom) eye and the wisdom breath (the mass of breath) means the distance from which the mental eye could look at an image with acuity comfortably. It is variable, but for beginning yogis, usually about 5-6 inches (12- 15 cm). The mind's eye of the beginning and the early stage yogi should be not too far from and not too close to the breath-column (the mass of breath).
- * *Appropriate mass* of breath means the mass on which the mental eye could *focus* and concentrate *conveniently and rightly*⁸⁷.

⁸⁷ Herein, we should like to mention what the concentration is.

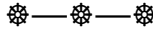
Do not get confused with it. The breath object is actually not for playing. One's mind should not play with the size of the breath mass. The breath-mass object has a definite location, and must be confined to the proper focus area.

Depending on the phase (the level of concentration), the appropriate mass is variable in size (and shape). Usually it should not be too big or too small. But in some higher level of concentration, it can be small or very small. From session to session (or phase to phase) it may change.

Focusing cannot observe inside the column of breath yet:

You know the breath-mass is there inside the breath column, but you cannot see it. Some yogis reported that when experiencing this stage they see the breath object as a breath tube (i.e. hollow object) only, not as a solid breath-column. It is because concentration is not strong enough in the early stage to penetrate deep into and to see the inner parts of the breath-mass (breath column). In this vivid phase of the early stage even if you try to penetrate and investigate through the surface or exterior part of the breath mass, you cannot detect the interior part of it vividly. That interior part (the inner breath) does not yet manifest to you in your vision.

- * The 'Vivid phase' of early stage — It is just a phase that you are going through.



"It puts (*ādhīyati*) consciousnesses *evenly* (*samañi*) on the object, or it puts it *rightly* (*sammā*) on it, or it is just the mere collecting (*samādhāna*) of the mind, thus it is concentration (*samādhi*). Its characteristic is non-wandering, or its characteristic is non-distraction." (VsM. xiv. 463. Ārammaṇe cittaṃ samaṃ ādhīyati, sammā vā ādhīyati, samādhānamattameva vā etaṃ cittassāti **samādhi**. So avisāralakkhaṇo, avikkhepalakkhaṇo...)

If you try, if you can

If at first you do not succeed in the early stage of concentration, try again.

Very beginning yogis!

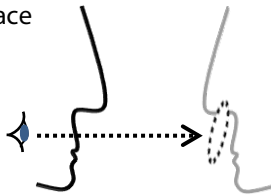
The technique, the Two Steps-Focusing approach looks easy, but it certainly is not.

Be careful not to misunderstand this focusing technique!

Some frequently occurring misunderstandings with regard to the focusing technique are listed below. It is a wrong approach!

- Some beginning yogis cannot understand the Two Steps-Focusing technique (focusing on the object as if looking from a distance, from behind about 12-15 cm away) they are applying.

A yogi's face



A yogi's imagined face and breath

This is a common *mistake* among very beginning meditators.

- The above picture shows a very common mistake beginning yogis make.
- A yogi is so confused about the focusing technique that the wisdom eye cannot focus on the proper focus area; he is imagining that his face and the breath mass (mirror image of his face and breath mass) are facing him. They (a yogi's face and his imagined face) are facing each other. Yogi's wisdom eye is trying to focus on imagined breath.

Yogis of dirty breath and light of wisdom!

Beginners' wisdom is inferior. Some meditators, especially those who have followed a conventional approach, the 'Touch and Breath Style', for many months and attained the dirty breath and the light of wisdom, cannot succeed within a few days in focusing on the place of breath as if looking *from a some distance*. Their weakness is knowing of the moving breath. They encounter difficulties. Even after succeeding in focusing on the place of breath, there may be another delay in seeing the still breath (i.e. the breath column, the wisdom breath) there.

If it takes some days or weeks to apply the focusing technique or cognize the mass of breath vividly in this early stage of practice, there may be some weaknesses in the practice:

- Either in the mindfulness or understanding of the mass of breath, the still breath, or
- In the understanding and applying the focusing technique. Meditators should assess if they are accurately focusing on the proper place using the technique. And they *may* need to thoroughly reflect or reflect at an appropriate rate on the mass of breath (for example, the column of breath or the mass of breath or the breath) and focus mindfully on it.

The position of the proper focus area coincides with that of the moving breath (the actual breath). You should start focusing on the proper focus area. The actual knowing of the object is done by a series of mind consciousnesses (*mano-viññāṇa*). Without distinguishing the in- and out-breath (*while ignoring the touching sensations as well as the moving-breath or the actual breath*), you have to focus on the mass of breath (for example, a column of breath or a portion of it) as 'mere breath' in that proper focus area. The position of the breath-column coincides with that of the moving-breath (the actual breath). *Meditators*

*need to reflect seriously upon the object as a breath-column or breath-mass.*⁸⁸

Breath column Attention switch to Breath-mass

The breath-mass is in the shape of a column. With the perception of the breath-column comes the perception of the breath-mass. Shapes, such as a breath-column or a portion of the breath-column, help yogis' [especially beginners'] wisdom to know [and see] the meditation object as a concept (i.e. as a mass). The object should be given attention with awareness of both the accompanying breath (the breath-mass) aspect and its ancillary shape-aspect (the column-aspect). The concern is not with the shape, which is the channel or support. But rather, while not abandoning (releasing) the shape such as a column, attention should be given by setting the mind on the concept (the breath-mass).

When mindfulness becomes established on the mere breath (the still breath, breath-mass, breath-body or wisdom breath), concentration (samādhi) increases progressively. Then you will succeed in seeing the image of the breath-mass (the still breath), for example, a breath-column. It is an important step towards the strong and powerful concentration of the jhāna (absorption concentration (appanā-samādhi)).

Yogis who are going through the early stage of concentration development can use this technique of the 'Two Steps-Focusing Approach'. After seeing the object vividly, yogis will notice that a straight sitting-posture (having folded legs

⁸⁸ This is a preparatory stage of meditative development.

Bhāvanābheda: Bhāvanāsu pana sabbathāpi parikkammabhāvanā labbhateva, (Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha)

The preparatory meditation is attainable in all (forty) subjects of meditation.

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crosswise) is very supportive, helpful and determinant for their mind to obtain precise focusing and fixity on the meditation object. This is because the direction of the sight-line to the conceptual breath-object or the wisdom breath is stable and appropriate in an upright sitting posture.⁸⁹ The Buddha recommended meditators who practise *ānāpānasati* to sit down cross-legged and to keep their upper body erect.⁹⁰ That refers to the posture most suitable for *ānāpānasati*. Although *ānāpānasati* can and should be practised in every bodily posture, sitting is usually the best posture for developing deep concentration.

As your skill develops with practice, the still conceptual breath can be cognized instantly. As soon as you can focus on this still conceptual breath-object (the wisdom breath), it is no longer important for you whether the breath is in or out-breath, long or short. Because these basic steps of practice are already obsolete in this phase, you will then notice that you have already overcome some obstacle to *ānāpānasati* meditation.

So, my suggestions for focusing stably on the still conceptual breath-object here can be summarized thus:

- Please! Don't pay attention to any sensations (feelings at your nostril area), mental feelings and states such as lightness of the mind, lightness of the body (such as feeling as if the physical body were ready to leap up into the air or it were flying in the air), etc.
- Please! Ignore the movement (touch) of the breath. Don't follow the moving breath. You need not distinguish between the in- and out-breath.
- Please! Do not assess the quality of the breath, whether it is gross or subtle.

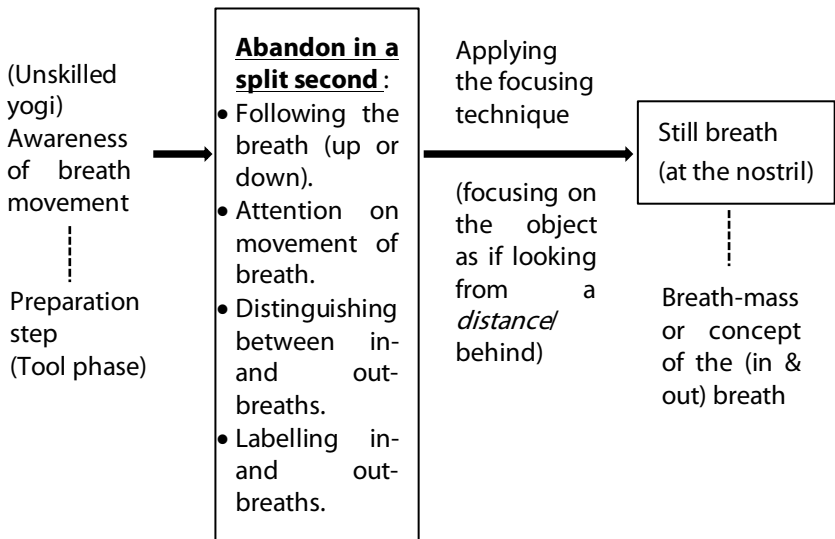
⁸⁹ Meditators who reached the sinking stages of concentration development can focus on the focus-object more skilfully in all bodily postures.

⁹⁰ Dīgha-Nikāya.ii.9 The Great Mindfulness-Foundation Sutta (Mahā-Sati-Paṭṭhāna Sutta).

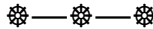
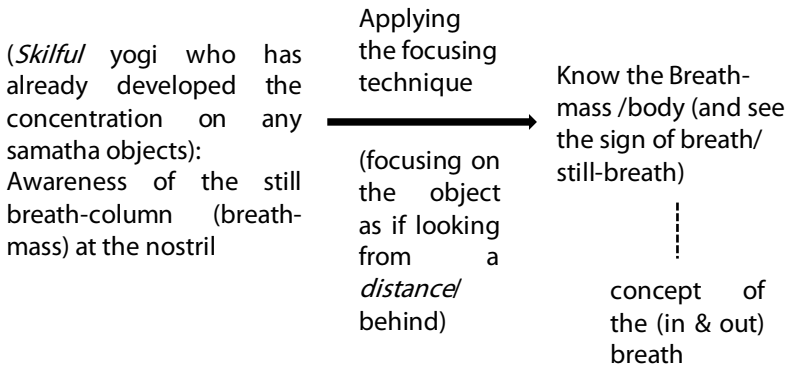
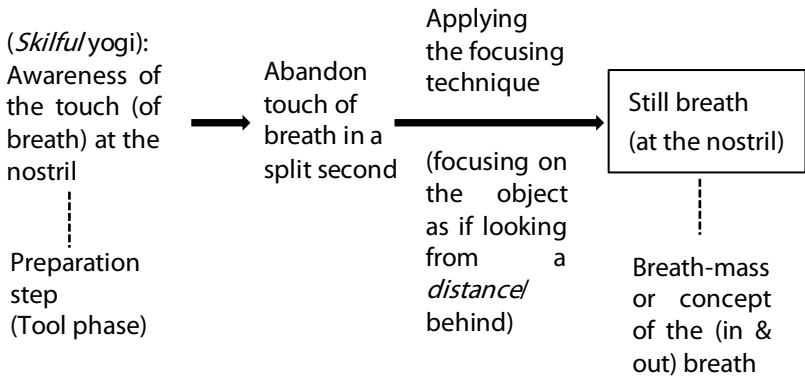
- Please! Sit upright with your back naturally straight, but not too straight and stiff, and not too relaxed.
- Please! Be mindful of the still breath in every bodily posture, and do so with respect. Walking, standing or sitting, take no objects apart from the still breath: you should mindfully cognize only the still breath.

We have now discussed some of the rules and situations under which the focusing technique operates. Although these seem difficult to follow, if you persevere in your attempts to apply this technique, you will find that they are not really difficult once you have got the knack, and grasped the principle of *ānāpānasati* practice.

If at first you do not succeed in early stage of concentration, try again and again:



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Have you focused on the bright light before? If you say 'yes', what was all that about?

In the previous topic we discussed the “approach in cognizing the still conceptual breath (the mass of breath)” during the early stage of concentration development.

There are 3 steps during the early stage of practice:

- Preparation step ('Tool' phase),
- First step ('Location' phase) and
- Second step ('Object' phase).

Before starting to apply the focusing technique, to be able to know the exact location or place of the focus-object (the mass of breath) through the mind door, in the 'preparation step' (the 'Tool' phase), the mind starts to focus on the moving-breath for a very short moment. It conducts a survey to find out where the nostril and the upper lip are as landmarks in the mind door. These are the preparations for the next phase (the 'Location' phase).

[A skilled yogi who already has concentration and the light of wisdom develops the ability not to use the movement or touch of the breath as a tool.]

After that, locate the place of the breath (the proper focus area) and cognize the meditation object (the breath column or the breath-mass) that is in there. This is the 'Two Steps-Focusing Approach' in the cognizing of the conceptual breath: the place is the *first* (, i.e. 'Location' phase) and the object is the *next* (, i.e. 'Object' phase).

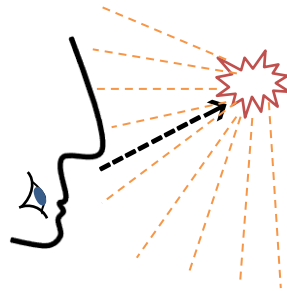
Immobile (handicapped) eye & the light of wisdom:

A meditator who knows what the meditation object (the conceptual breath) is, but is not yet skilled in applying the

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focusing technique recognizes the moving breath through the touch (and sensations) between the nostrils and the upper lip in many meditation sessions. Such a meditator is even unable to apply first and second step of the 'Two Steps-Focusing Approach'. Although his mind rests on the touch object for a moment, it tries to cognize the breath object nearby *longer*, so the concentration gradually develops. But he is still applying the 'Touch and Breath Style'. *Because the mental (wisdom) eye is too close to the breath object, the mind cannot see the external appearance or surface of the breath object (the mass of breath) clearly.* Almost at the same time the light of wisdom (paññ-āloka) (light of concentration) appears in his surroundings.⁹¹ He starts to notice this dim or bright light that appears usually in front of his face. The light actually spreads out around him in all directions. A meditator who cannot grasp the principle of *ānāpānasati* practice pursues these lights or bright objects and tries to focus on them.

Oh! There is a light.
That's an amazing
thing.



⁹¹ Light of wisdom (Light of concentration): — Strong and powerful concentration produces strong and powerful light. It is explained by The Buddha in the 'Ābhā-Vagga' ('Splendour Chapter') of Aṅguttara-Nikāya .IV.III.v.1-5. And He refers to the light also in His very first teaching, the 'Dhamma-Cakka-Ppavattana' sutta, when He explains His enlightenment. ... pubbe ananussutesu dhammesu cakkhuṃ udapādi, ñāṇaṃ udapādi, paññā udapādi, vijjā udapādi, āloko udapādi. (S.V.XII.ii.1 'The Dhamma-Wheel Setting-in-Motion Sutta')

- * An easy prey. A meditator is now an easy prey for the allure of mysterious light.
- * The light of wisdom. A meditator can see the light in not only the *ānāpānasati* practice, but also in other meditations.

In the 'Beginning stage' or the 'Early stage' or any other stage of *ānāpānasati* practice the light of wisdom can appear. This picture shows a meditator who has developed the light of wisdom with the practice of the 'Touch and breath style'.

- * The 'Touch and breath style'. A style of focusing when the mind knows the *flow* of the breath, or *feels* the breath [through the touch].

The mind rests on touch objects (and sensations) of the moving breath between the nostril and the upper lip. And then the mind tries to recognize the moving breath. Mind takes the breaths through the sense of touch again and again, i.e. mind that takes (feels) the [actual] breath as its object is continually interrupted by touch. This mind may still *distinguish between* the in and out-breath.

It is important to distinguish the mere breath from actual (moving) breath. Because of applying the 'Touch and Breath Style', a meditator cannot focus on the breath object alone; he cannot focus on the mere breath-object (the mass of breath) as *if he is an onlooker, focusing on, gazing at or contemplating it from some distance away.*

There is a very real impurity, an imperfection in the practice.

- * Handicapped (immobile) eye. The mind's eye (the wisdom eye) is in the 'Touch and breath style' stably located just behind the skin of the upper lip or somewhere around the nostrils (, the place of touch where the in- and out-breaths touch or brush against most obviously and where touching sensations (feeling) happen) — the mind's eye cannot zoom in or out on the object, and is stuck fast — usually a yogi is unable to move it (his mind's eye) to another place and direction.

The 'Touch and Breath Style', knowing of the actual (moving) breath for many days or weeks can make the wisdom eye handicapped.

*Wrong and improper focus-object. Here, a meditator is focusing on the (bright) light appearing in front of his face. In fact, this light is not at the proper location of the breath object.

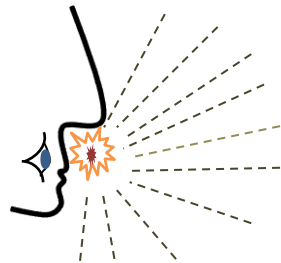
The focus-object (the mass of breath) is at the place of the actual moving-breath between the nostril and the upper lip. Therefore, here meditator's focus area is not correct. The light or anything else that appears outside the proper focus area should be completely ignored.

Even if there is any light at the proper focus area, yogis must not concentrate on it. The light is not a meditation object in ānāpānasati practice.

Dirty breath & dense light at the [nostril] gate:

This picture represents a meditator who has developed the light of wisdom with the practice of 'Touch and breath style'. Actually he can see such light anywhere in front of his face. If he applies the Two Steps-Focusing technique, he should feel as if there is a bridge between mind and the focus-object, the breath-mass.

- ☺ Oh! There is ānāpāna-nimitta.
- ☹ Oh, no! The bright thing you saw is not an ānāpāna-nimitta. It is just a dense light of wisdom. You have got only *immobile eye & light of wisdom through the practice of touch and breath style*. Now you don't feel as if there is a bridge between your mind and the bright light object.



First light before the *ānāpāna-nimitta* appears:

‘A meditator of the beginning stage of practice tries to be aware of the breath as it enters and leaves the body through the nostrils. He feels it and distinguishes between the in- and out-breath. Then he develops awareness of whether the in&out breaths are long or short. He discriminates between the four, that is long in-breath, long out-breath, short in-breath and short out-breath. Then, again to discern them in more detail he tries to be continuously aware of the whole breath from the beginning to the end. In all these steps he is aware, through the sense of touch, of breath at the place where it is clear to him: the nostril or the upper lip. That means when any type of these breaths (the in&out, long, short or whole breath) comes into focus, he simply concentrates on the real breath (the moving breath). He concentrates on the breath-object in the ‘Touch and breath style’. **For some meditators, there is the light of concentration (the light of wisdom) before they can focus on the still breath (the mass of breath).**⁹² This is a beginning stage of practice that is concomitant with the light of concentration.’

It is because of not understanding and not applying the the Two Steps-Focusing technique (focusing on the breath-object as if looking from a distance) *on time* that meditators for a long time (many days or many weeks) practise the beginning stage of *ānāpānasati* in the ‘Touch and Breath Style’. And in this case of the ‘beginning stage with light of concentration’ as long as they keep practising ‘beginning stage in the ‘Touch and Breath Style’, there is light of concentration.’ It is still difficult for them to obtain the still breath (the mass of breath) vividly. They face a challenge of the ‘beginning stage with light of concentration’.

⁹² This means: for some meditators, there is first light before the *ānāpāna-nimitta* or vivid breath-mass appears.

They have not known 'the (moving or dirty) breath in Touch and Breath Style' and 'the (still or wisdom) breath in Two Steps-Focusing approach' clearly. Only in the 'Touch and Breath Style' they have concentrated on the (moving) breath for a long time and have not known the risks and weakness in the concentration involved. It is not very difficult for the most yogis to cut off the discursive thoughts when practising beginning stage of *ānāpānasati*. If they are not aware that they have an obstacle to the attainment of strong concentration with their practice, they may *delay switching over* to a new approach of focusing on the breath, the 'Two Steps-Focusing approach'. Only when yogis recognize that *more and more mindfulness on the moving breath is not the solution* and the weakness their practices have, they try to correct them. It is not very difficult to do and succeed for some of them. But for some yogis, it is often difficult to understand (and to apply) the 'Two Steps-Focusing Approach'. It is a new dimension to their practice and they encounter some difficulties at the start and have to try many times, again and again.

The meditators who overcome the difficulties of 'the beginning stage with the light of concentration' *may* not meet the vivid phase (a vivid breath-object / breath tube) of the early stage and will move on to the middle stage of practice. So, there may be a seemingly skipped early stage of practice.

Immobile (handicapped) eye & Dirty nimitta:

A yogi continues concentrating on the breath (*ānāpāna-nimitta*) at the nostril in the 'Touch and Breath Style'. Intermittently he notices the touch or the movement of breath. And he cannot attain steady object. His mind (the mind's eye) stays close behind the skin touched by moving breaths, and is *immobile* there. His wisdom-eye cannot zoom in or out on the object. The practice leaves yogi's wisdom-eye handicapped.

- ⊗ Oh, the object (*ānāpāna-nimitta*) I see is like cotton or cloud. It is still a little unsteady!!
- ⊗ Your body is comfortable. But with your unsteady object, your concentration is unstable and interrupted. You sometimes notice the touch of breath. Actually you are now focusing on your breath object in 'Touch and Breath Style'. Your wisdom-eye is immovable. You only get *immobile eye & dirty nimitta*.

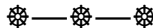


The light of wisdom may appear stably in his surroundings. The sign (*nimitta*) is opaque or translucent. He will find that his *ānāpāna-nimitta* is unsteady and concentration is not very strong. There is still distraction.

In order to make his concentration strong and last a long time, he needs to apply only the 'Two Steps-Focusing Approach'.

If it is very difficult to overcome 'dirty *ānāpāna-nimitta*' in this way, you should try to develop 'mindfulness occupied with the body' (*Kāya-Gatā-Sati*). This is mindfulness that has as its object the sign of the bodily parts consisting of head hairs and the rest. You may succeed in applying the 'Two Steps-Focusing Approach' in 'mindfulness occupied with the body'.

- ⊗ Oh, the *nimitta* is translucent. I see inside the object (*nimitta*). But it is still a little *unsteady*!!
- ⊗ You will notice that with your unsteady object, your concentration is *unstable and interrupted*. Your wisdom-eye is *immovable* inside the *nimitta*. You feel breath-flow or breath-movement, and actually, you haven't succeeded *uggaha-nimitta* yet. Immobile eye & *dirty nimitta* still occur.



‘Just cognize the breath!’

‘Object is there always.’

In the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*, the Buddha praises *ānāpānasati*:⁹³

“Bhikkhus, this concentration through *ānāpānasati*, when developed and practised much, is both peaceful and sublime. It is an unadulterated blissful abiding, and it banishes and stills evil unwholesome thoughts as soon as they arise.”

Now, we shall discuss one approach, ‘how to return to (and keep on) being mindful of the breath mass when the mind becomes distracted or weak’. It is one of the important approaches in *ānāpānasati* practice.

‡ The meditation object, the breath-mass is actually *always* at its place. When there is outward distraction, the meditation subject gets neglected. You should give your attention to it warding off distraction. So we may say:

‘Object is always there’; it is only because your mind is distracted and you lose your meditating mind’. ‘So you just cognize the breath mass!’

This is called a ‘just cognizing approach’. It is important that every clever meditator understands its usefulness. *Ānāpānasati* has the ability to remove discursive thought (applied thought (*vitakka*)). The concept of the breath (the breath-mass) is cognized (*viññāta*) through the mind. As soon as you cognize your meditation object, it banishes all other thoughts. This approach can really develop the meditation subject of *ānāpānasati* and it is very simple and easy to apply.

‘Just cognize the concept of breath!’

=‘just know the presence of the breath-mass at the proper focus area’.

⁹³ S.V.X.i.9 ‘*Vesālī Sutta*’ (‘Vesali Sutta’)

‡ During the course of practice meditator's mind sometimes (especially in the transitional period) is so weak that

- concentration is not very stable;
- wisdom is unable to see the object penetratively;
- mindfulness is not strong and it is unable to keep the object of meditation in mind from becoming lost;
- faith in the teaching or his meditation declines;
- effort is unable to keep sharp focusing on the object (for some time); and mind cannot let arouse enough effort and is easily shakeable (by the defilements).

At those times, a meditator can apply the **'just cognizing approach'**. It is that a meditator has to 'just cognize the breath' at the proper focus area (= the immediate vicinity of right or left nostril, between either nostril and upper lip). As the breath (the mass of breath) is present throughout the entire life, it can be cognized without any delay by applying the common sense, "Knowing is Seeing."

'Knowing' is 'Concentrating': By keeping the mind cognizing the breath (the mass of breath), a meditator finds that his concentration gradually develops. Knowing the meditation object, mass of breath enables the mind to concentrate on it. Based on it, we say "Knowing (Cognizing) is (leads to) Concentrating". When you develop sufficient concentration, your concentrated mind can see the object of meditation, mass of breath.

You can apply the 'just cognizing approach' under some conditions:

1) Before you succeed in applying the focusing technique:

You may have already learned and experienced some basic steps of *ānāpānasati* practice—'Beginning stage of practice.

The focusing technique has *Two Steps: Focus on the place first and then on the object afterwards*. Unless your mind has

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become sufficiently skilled at (focusing sharply on the object by) applying the focusing technique, you cannot get out of the 'touch and breath style'. I.e. you cannot be able to succeed in focusing on the conceptual breath object as if looking from a distance.

You do not need to distinguish between in and out breath. You have to abandon the 'touch at the nostrils and upper lip' (= distinguishing between in- and out-breath and following the breath flow (up or down)).

Herein, to keep the mind concentrated you should practise:

- Just cognizing the breath (mass of breath) at its proper area.
- Applying the common sense— Knowing is Seeing.”

When your *ānāpānasati* (mindfulness of the breath) develops, your concentration deepens. With the support of concentration, it should not take you long to arise the focusing acuity in your mind and you can succeed in applying the 'Two Steps-Focusing Approach'. Concentrated mind produces the light of wisdom. Your breath (mass of breath/ still breath) becomes visible in the light of wisdom and (image of) breath becomes thoroughly apprehended and *enters into range of the mind door as if it were seen by the eye*.⁹⁴

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► 'When that sign has been thoroughly apprehended and enters into range of the mind door just as if it were seen by the eye, then it is called the learning sign (*uggaha-nimitta*), and that meditation becomes concentrated.'

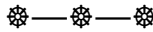
Uggaha-nimitta: taken-up sign or learning sign; image that is exact mental replica of object of meditation.

'*Yadā pana taṃ nimittaṃ cittaṃ samuggahitaṃ hoti, cakkhunā passantasseva manodvārassa āpātham āgataṃ tadā taṃ evārammaṇaṃ uggahanimittaṃ nāma. sā ca bhāvanā samādhīyati.*' [A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma. IX. 29 (English translation of Abhidhammattha-Saṅgaha edited by Bhikkhu Bodhi)]

Herein, the appearance of the breath (breath-mass) [as to colour, shape, direction, location, and delimitation] come into focus is the learning sign.

2) Whenever, after (succeeding in) applying the focusing technique:

- ◆ Yogis who practise *ānāpānasati* applying the focusing technique but have not obtained yet the vivid focus-object, sometimes have difficulties concentrating on the meditation object. They also can apply this 'Just cognizing approach'.
- ◆ Yogis of any stage of practice — early stage, middle stage, high stage and sinking stages (especially in their transitional phases) also can apply this 'Just cognizing approach' without any delay (without paying attention to the real (in and out) breath for some moments).
- ◆ In any bodily posture (walking, standing, sitting or lying posture) if a yogi is not sufficiently skilled to apply the focusing technique yet and / or not able to keep sharp focusing on the meditation object (mass of breath), can apply this 'Just cognizing approach'.



■ When, while he is developing it in this way, *it comes into focus (āpāthamāgacchati) as he adverts with his eyes shut exactly (nimīletvā āvajjantassa)* as it does with his eyes open, *then the learning sign is said to have been produced.*

‘Comes into focus’: becomes the resort of mind-door impulsion.

Tassevaṃ bhāvayato yadā **nimīletvā āvajjantassa** ummīlitakāle viya **āpāthamāgacchati**, tadā uggahanimittam jātam nāma hoti.

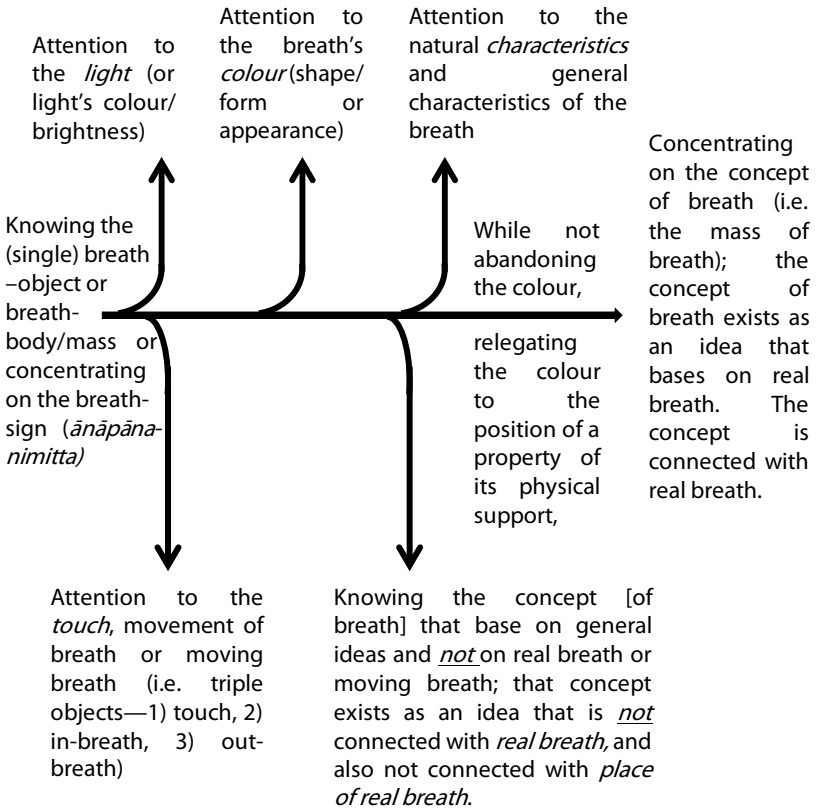
[Path of Purification. Chapter IV - The earth kasina (Pathavīkasiṇaniddeso). 30 (English translation of Visuddhimagga by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy, Sri Lanka)]

(See also footnote 10, 39, 52, 96, 98, 99 and 109.)

A road map to the ānāpāna jhāna

Impurities in the path to concentration

Owing to unknowing about the object of *ānāpānasati* meditation and the path, a yogi misperceives the object of meditation to be in some particular object [such as the light of wisdom] that is not in fact object of meditation, and he misperceives the path to concentration.



Object of *jhāna* consciousness:

The fine-material *jhāna* consciousnesses take as object a conceptual entity [such as the counterpart sign in the case of the *kaṣiṇas* or living beings in the case of the illimitables].

The concept of breath is the object of *ānāpānasati*. At the last stage (sinking stage) of concentration development a meditator's mind-door consciousnesses stay continuously concentrated on the conceptual breath (breath-mass). The light of concentration becomes bright, radiant and penetrative, and consequently there is shining light of concentration on the object and its surroundings.

When his concentration and skill in relegating the colour (image / the bright) to the position of a property of its physical support get better, the object appears as transparent and contour-less (no shape). He (his mind / wisdom eye) looks steadily at it from a short distance away and his mind by itself has become fixed immovably on it.

Now it comes to the point at which the [wisdom] breath or sign is *stably manifest*. Herein, concept of breath represents the sign that appears motionless and quiet. He has accomplished in skill in taking the colour/brightness of sign [breath mass] as belonging to its support, and setting his mind on the concept as 'the breath mass'.

The counterpart sign is *a cause of* access meditation (*upacāra· bhāvanā*) and absorption meditation (*appanā· bhāvanā*). With the appearance of the counterpart sign he can reach *jhāna* concentration.

A meditator in *ānāpāna jhānas*⁹⁵ takes the concept of breath as object. The object of the *jhāna* consciousness is a

⁹⁵ *Jhāna*:

▷ *Ārammaṇūpanijjhānato paccaṇīkajhāpanato vā jhānaṃ.*

mental image called the counterpart sign (*paṭibhāga-nimitta*). This sign is considered a conceptual object (*paññatti*).

His *jhāna* mind by itself has steadily fixed on the breath (concept of breath) that appears as a *nimittapaññatti*, sign concept (mental sign)⁹⁶, gained by meditative development. He

It is called *jhāna* because of lighting (*upanijjhāna* ?) the object and because of burning up (*jhāpana*) opposition. Visuddhi-Magga.iv.75/ Path of Purification (by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli).IV.119

Upanijjhāna = reflection; close contemplation

- ▷ The *jhāna* factors are together called *jhāna*.
See also footnote 112 and 132.
- ▷ The word *jhāna* is used in the usual sense of **meditative absorption**.
See also footnote 8.
- ▷ *Jhāna* can also be used in the broader sense of **close contemplation** (*upanijjhāyana*) of an object.

...Paccanīkadhamme **jhāpetīti jhānaṃ**, iminā yogino jhāyantītipi jhānaṃ, paccanīkadhamme **lahanti gocaraṃ vā cintetīti attho**. Sāyaṃ vā taṃ **jhāyati upanijjhāyatīti jhānaṃ**... (Pārājikapāḷi Aṭṭhakathā, 11)

- ▷ The commentators derive the Pali word *jhāna* from a root meaning ‘**to contemplate,**’ and again from another root meaning ‘**to burn up**’. Thus the *jhānas* are so called because they **closely contemplate** the object and because they burn up the adverse states opposed to concentration. The adverse states are the five hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*).
Upanijjhāyatī = closely contemplate [in a way that is close to object in space]

⁹⁶ The breath (mass of breath) itself is transparent. When sufficient degree of concentration on the concept of breath and skill in relegating the colour (image/bright) to the position of a property of the physical support is developed, a transparent breath appears.

When concentration is deeper and stronger, the stably bright and clear breath that is like a mirror disk drawn from its case, like a mother-of-pearl dish well washed, like the moon’s disk coming out from behind a cloud appears. It is referred as counterpart sign of concentration (*paṭibhāga-nimitta*).

Uggaha-nimitta (taken-up sign or learning sign) or *paṭibhāga-nimitta* (counterpart sign), which is a convention (*sammuti*) derived from real sign (e.g. real breath) as a benefit of meditative development.

Paṭibhāga-nimitta (counterpart sign): ...tappaṭibhāgaṃ vathudhammavimuccitam paññattisaṅkhātam bhāvanāmayamārammaṇaṃ citta sannisannaṃ samappitam hoti, tadātaṃ paṭibhāganimittam.... (See *gocarabheda*

has obtained a stable, bright and clear breath (= counterpart sign, *paṭibhāga-nimitta*),⁹⁷ and gains the first *jhāna*, at which time the five *jhāna* factors are prominent.

The counterpart sign he sees with his mind's eye is now a conceptual unreality/non-existent (*Avijjamāna paññatti*), i.e., a dhamma that is free of materiality (or without ultimate reality (*asabhāva-dhamma*)), and it is in fact non-existent in the ultimate sense.⁹⁸ It (counterpart sign) has neither colour nor shape

30. from *Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha*); [*Vatthudhammavimuccitanti paramatthadhammato vimuttaṃ..*].

An object which is the counterpart of that (learning sign) becomes well established and fixed in the mind —(an object) which is *freed of the mass (small particles (rūpa-kalāpas)) and ultimate reality of the original object*, reckoned as a concept, born of meditation.

It (counterpart sign) is the mentally visualized image freed of all defects and is a purified and clear version of *uggaha-nimitta* (taken-up sign). It has neither colour nor shape because there is no ultimate reality. The counterpart sign, it is said, "appears as if breaking out from the learning sign, and a hundred times or a thousand times more purified, ...". That appears only at stable perception and strong concentration. The meditator's mind by itself has fixed on it. It is by means of the counterpart sign that access concentration and absorption concentration occur.

...*upacārappanānaṃ ārammaṇattāti paṭibhāganimittaṃ.*

The counterpart sign is a *cause of access meditation (upacāra-bhāvanā)* and absorption meditation (*appanā-bhāvanā*).

Paṭibhāga = counterpart, likeness, resemblance (to *parikamma-nimitta*, *uggaha-nimitta*) = imitation (of the original).

(See also footnotes 10, 39, 52, 94, 98, 99 and 109)

⁹⁷ I.e. in the *jhāna*, the *ānāpānasati* meditation has counterpart sign (*paṭibhāga-nimitta*) as object.

In this case, the *ānāpāna-nimitta* which arises depending on the ordinary, natural breath is also said to be as *assāsa-passāsa* (in-and-out breath).

Assāsa-passāsa nissāya uppannanimittampettha assāsa-passāsa sāmāññameva vuttaini. (VsMĪ.viii.215 'Ānāpānasati-Kathā')

⁹⁸ - *Ālambaṇasaṅgaho: Sesāni mahaggatacittāni sabbānipi paññattārammaṇāni. (Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha).*

*Taṅca kho **neva vaṇnavantaṃ, na saṅghānavantaṃ.** Yadi hi taṃ ḍḍisaṃ bhaveyya, cakkhuvihānēyyaṃ siyā oḷārikaṃ sammasanupagaṃ*

(because there is no ultimate reality). It is born only of perception in one who has obtained concentration, being a mere mode of appearance. The perception or absorption concentration of *ānāpānasati* is the *dhamma* which takes the object of concept of *navattabba dhamma*.⁹⁹

tilakkhaṇabbhātaṃ, na paṇetaṃ tādisaṃ. Kevalañhi samādhilābhino upaṭṭhānākāramattaṃ saññajametaṃ. (VsM, IV:57);

= But it (Counterpart sign) has neither colour nor shape; for if it had, it would be cognizable by the eye, gross, susceptible of comprehension [by insight] and stamped with the three characteristics [of impermanence, suffering and non-self]. But it is not like that. For it is born only of perception in one who has obtained (access) concentration, being a mere mode of appearance. (See also footnote 10, 39, 52, 94, 96, 99 and 109.)

57. Tañca kho paṭibhāganimittaṃ neva vannaṅvantaṃ na santhānavantaṃ aparamatthasabhāvattā. (VsM-Mahātīkā-1)

Counterpart sign has neither colour nor shape because there is no ultimate reality.

⁹⁹ There is setting the mind on the mental datum consisting of a concept (*paññatti-dhamma*). The counterpart sign (*ānāpāna paṭibhāga-nimitta*) is a ‘*not-so-classifiable object*’ (*navattabbārammaṇa*). :

[Usual] breaths are a group of materiality (*rūpa-kalāpas*; *rūpa* (materiality) + *kalāpa* (group/cluster)). A *kalāpa* is a small particle which is smallest unit of materiality and it comprises four elements (*dhātu*) and derived materiality (*upādā rūpa*). The materiality is sensual *dhamma* (*paritta dhamma*), indeed. When concentration is strong, an *ānāpāna-nimitta* comes from the breath.

The *parikamma-nimitta* and *uggaha-nimitta* are the mass of (bright) particles in the breath. But the *ānāpāna paṭibhāga-nimitta* is devoid of the ultimate materiality of the breath, and is born only of perception. It cannot be classified into any one of the three objects of past, present and future. [Any individual types of materiality belong to the three periods of time.]

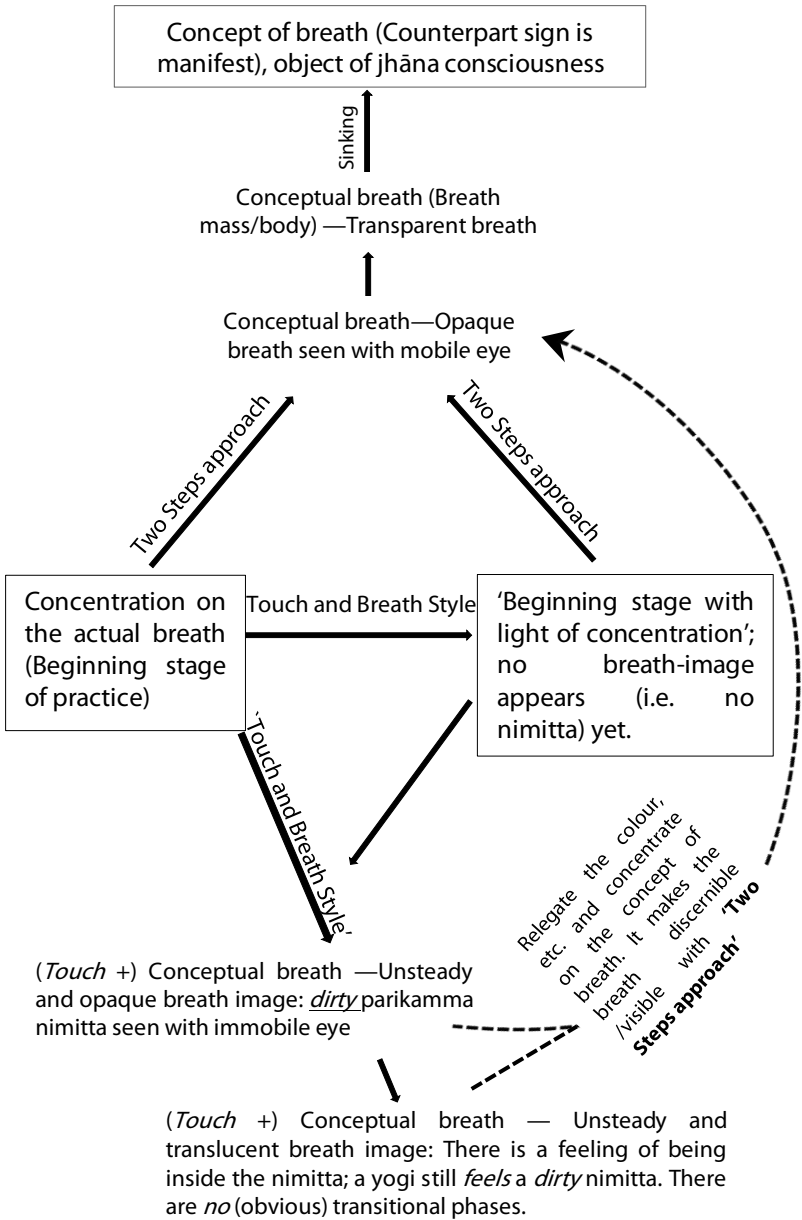
When concentration becomes deep and full up to access or absorption concentration, the mind by itself fixes on the counterpart sign. The sign of full concentration, counterpart sign of *ānāpānasati* is not only *avijjamāna* (“it is not present apparently”), due to absence in the aspect of ultimate reality, but also *vijjamāna* (“it is present apparently”), due to presence in the aspect of conventional truth (*samutī sacca*).

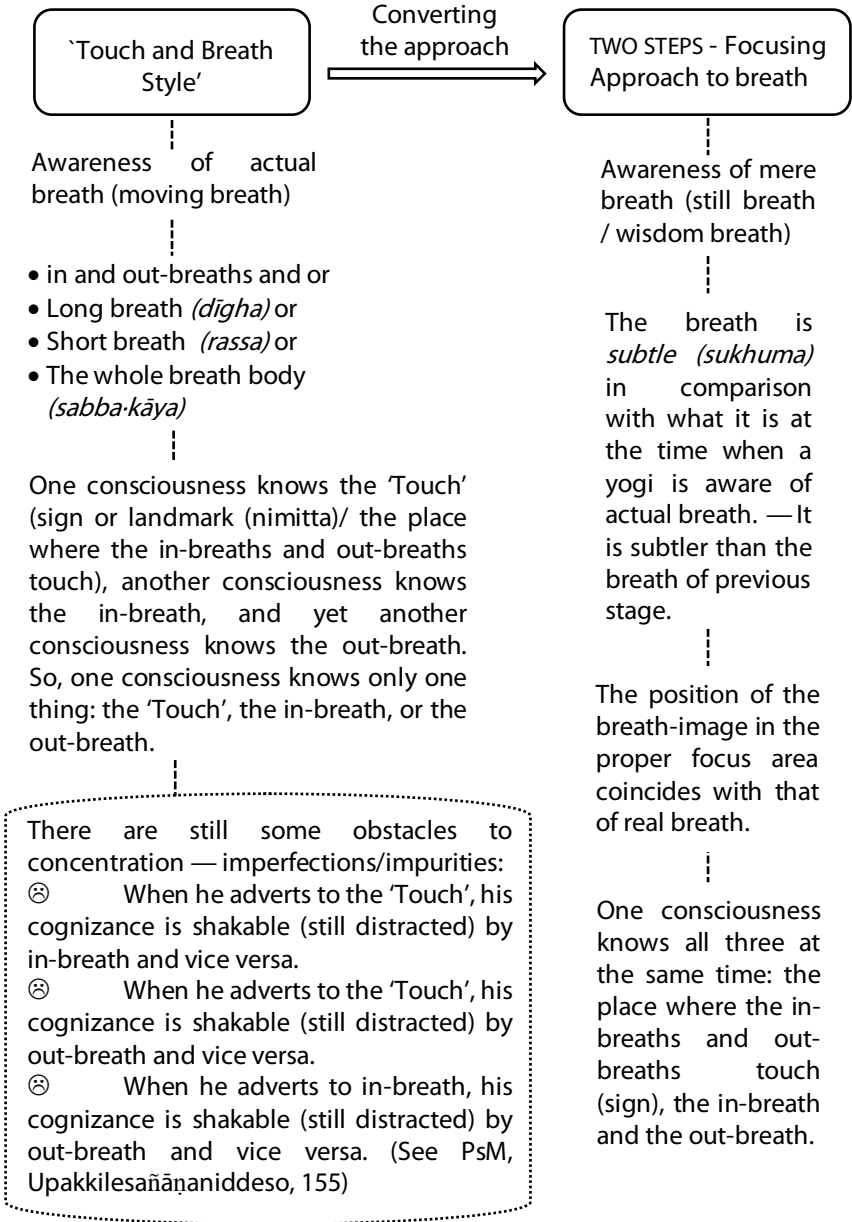
Although the perception of practice is occurred as the sensual *dhamma* for a meditator in the beginning stage, when the sign of full concentration occurs, that perception of practice faces with that object of sign of full concentration.

The sign arises on the basis of a visible form (*rūpa*), and hence this *jhāna* pertain to the fine-material sphere. In the four *jhāna* in the fourfold reckoning, including the fourth *jhāna*, mind takes the breath body (concept of breath) continuously as object.¹⁰⁰

Because of this reason, that perception of the practice is the *dhamma* which takes the object of concept of *navattabba dhamma*. (See *Mūlaṭṭikā*-1-191 in detailed) (See also footnote 10, 39, 52, 94, 96, 98 and 109.)

¹⁰⁰ There is actually no more moving breath in fourth *jhāna*. It is because with the attainment of the fourth *jhāna*, the (actual) breath stops completely.





Breaking through each phase of the stages / The milestones you pass on the path to concentration

'Early stage of practice'

In the vivid phase of the early stage of practice you can see the still conceptual breath-object (for example, it may be a column of breath or a portion of it) with a bold *outline* against the background if you can ignore the light of concentration shining around you.¹⁰¹ You get it because you focus on the object as if you were looking at it from a distance/outside. We call this focusing style *'External Focusing Approach'*. Now, the object is a mass of breath that does not have a definite shape or form. Shape or form of a breath mass is actually born of perception (and concentration). In this phase, some yogis report that their objects are really shining, metallic and luminous. It is so attractive that yogis anchor their mind on the bright objects.¹⁰²

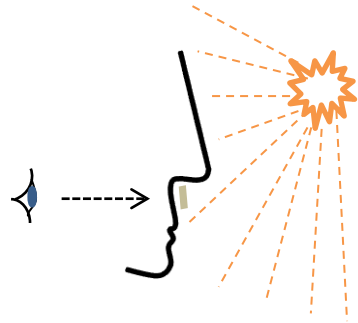
You are on the path to concentration and there will be a lot of phases and their transitions in each stage. If you are observant, you can *see and notice a lot of mile stones* on your path to concentration. They are a reflection of your progress. Since the practice is a real marathon, it may take even several months to achieve your ultimate goal. The way to develop the

¹⁰¹ You can see the mass of breath with outline/border in vivid phase of some stages of practice — early stage, middle stage, high stage, sinking stage of gross breath and sinking stage of subtle breath. But in sinking stage of very subtle or subtlest breath breath object is bright and has *no outline/boundary*. It has neither shape nor colour.

¹⁰² Meditators who experience such luminous objects (in this phase) are often confused. They think they have obtained a pellucid mass of breath or counterpart sign — they misunderstand. Actually it is only the taken-up sign of concentration (uggaha-nimitta). Their concentration is only preparatory concentration (parikamma.samādi).

concentration is through dogged perseverance. [But, some yogis' achievements are remarkable within few days. How quickly one succeeds depends on one's pāramī¹⁰³.]

- * Correct and proper object: The focus-object is still OK because the object (mass of breath) is stable at its proper place.
- * A meditator needs good focusing acuity. Like a camera, a skilled meditator's wisdom-eye (mind) *can zoom in / out* on the object. He focuses his wisdom-eye on the object.
- * Now focusing is exact and precise on the proper object. The light that appears outside the proper focus area is completely ignored.

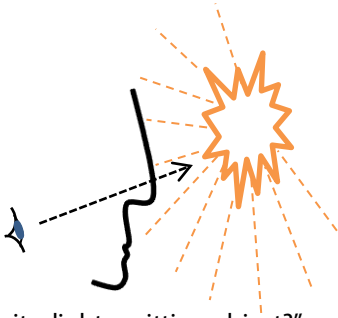


"You are now a sharpshooter!"

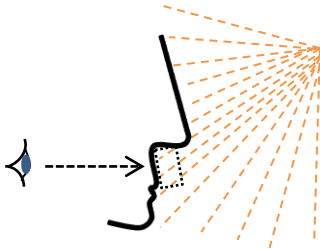
During the course of practice (in any stage of practice), sometimes a meditator may notice soft/dim or strong lights appearing in front of his/her face. Actually the light is present in surroundings or all sides of a meditator. The meditator has to ignore them and concentrate only on the meditation object (mass of breath). These are the lights of wisdom only, not the meditation object. Sometimes they are charming and attractive. The meditation object (mass of breath) and light are not the same thing. Meditators often fall into the trap of trying to concentrate on these lights for many days. So, I say sometimes "You are shooting at wrong target!" "You are caught in a trap!"

¹⁰³ pāramī : para = other shore = Nibbāna; mi = reach; qualities developed with Nibbāna as aim. The practice of morality, concentration and wisdom that one did in past lives — and the quality of one's present practice.

Ānāpānasati



- ▶ “Is it a light-emitting object?”
- ▶ No!



- ▶ Oh! I see the light flooding into my proper focus area. There is only diffuse light. Do I have to take that light as my conceptual breath-object?
- ▶ No! It is not exactly your meditation object. It is a mere light of wisdom. You cannot attain concentration using the light of wisdom as object. Now there is absence of anything (visible) yet that makes the conceptual breath (mass of breath) conspicuous. It is because your concentration (and light of concentration) is not yet strong enough to see the conceptual breath clearly.

Glowing, strong or dim light shining on your face or your surroundings: — By paying attention and focusing on these lights, concentration cannot develop any further. Moreover, concentration can be broken and fall away. A consciousness that cognizes the light is unconcentrated.

- * The seemingly light-emitting object may or may not be obvious.
- * The proper focus area is here lit by bright/dim or soft lights (light of wisdom).
- * Vivid sign of breath or still breath is not yet arisen and identified.
- * There is now barely discernible difference between the light and the breath-mass. Even before colour/shape of the breath-mass (still breath) or nimitta has not been apparent yet, a skilled yogi can differentiate between the light and meditation object, mass of breath anyway.

Herein, we should know what the light of wisdom is and how it arises.

The light of wisdom (the light of concentration) is a natural concomitant of deep and profound one-pointedness of mind. It is because *strong and powerful concentration produces strong and powerful light*.

The deeply concentrated consciousnesses (Samatha-meditation consciousnesses or vipassanā-meditation consciousnesses) are very strong and powerful; they are associated with *wisdom (paññā)*. Such consciousness produces many generations of consciousness-born materiality (cittaja-rūpa). Materiality is made up of sub-atomic particles that in Pali are called rūpa-kalāpas. Rūpa means materiality, and kalāpa means cluster, for it is a sub-atomic cluster of ultimate materiality.

The deeply concentrated consciousnesses produce uncountable generations of consciousness-born rūpa-kalāpas which spread throughout the body. When we analyse those rūpa-kalāpas, we see the eight types of materiality. They are: four elements (catu-dhātu)¹⁰⁴, and four types of derived materiality (upādā-rūpa) — the earth, water, fire, and wind elements, colour, odour, flavour, and nutritive essence. Because of deep concentration, those consciousness-born rūpa-kalāpas are all bright and luminous: that is their colour (vaṇṇa).

Then again, in each rūpa-kalāpa born of meditation consciousnesses, there is the fire element, which also produces uncountable generations of rūpa-kalāpas. They are called temperature-born rūpa-kalāpas, because they are produced by the fire (tejo) element, which is temperature (utu). This occurs externally as well as internally. They spread not only throughout the body but also outside the body. When we analyse these

¹⁰⁴ dhātu: element, substance that cannot be analysed further.

rūpa-kalāpas we see the same eight types of materiality: earth-, water-, fire-, and wind element, colour, odour, flavour, and nutritive essence. Colour is again one of them. Because of deep concentration, those temperature-born rūpa-kalāpas are all bright and luminous: that is their colour.

Since, those countless consciousness-born rūpa-kalāpas and temperature-born rūpa-kalāpas arise simultaneously as well as successively, the colour (brightness and luminosity) of one rūpa-kalāpa and the colour (brightness and luminosity) of another rūpa-kalāpa arise closely together, like in an electric bulb: that is why light of concentration (light of wisdom) appears. Consciousness-born colour materiality (the colour in consciousness-born rūpa-kalāpa) and temperature-born colour materiality (the colour in temperature-born rūpa-kalāpa) appear simultaneously. Consciousness-born colour materiality arises internally only, but temperature-born colour materiality arises both internally and externally and spreads in all directions: that is why the light of concentration (light of wisdom) spread not only throughout the body but also outside the body in every direction depending on the power of meditation consciousnesses....¹⁰⁵

Do you know how the light of wisdom works in ānāpānasati?

There are four lights: the light of the moon, of the sun, of fire, and of wisdom.¹⁰⁶ As mentioned before, the light of wisdom (the light of concentration) is a concomitant of strong concentration. In ānāpānasati you can be able to see your breath

¹⁰⁵ For a discussion (with examples) of consciousness-born materiality and temperature-born materiality, see 'Knowing and Seeing' (by Pa-Auk Tawya Sayadaw); See also 'Questions and Answers' 4.10 of it.

¹⁰⁶ It is explained by The Buddha in the in the 'Ābhā-Vagga' ('Splendour Chapter') of Aṅguttara-Nikāya .IV.III.v.1-5.

(mass of breath) with the light of wisdom. A clear and tranquil mind is superior. Breath (mass of breath) is lit up by the superior consciousness-born materiality (light of concentration) and become visible to you. But you should know that the light of concentration has to be *strong and powerful enough* to (penetrate and) shine on the breath.

There are different levels (stages) of concentration in *ānāpānasati*. The more powerful the *ānāpānasati* meditation (=the higher level of concentration) consciousnesses are, the stronger is the light. *As one's concentration becomes more and more powerful, as one's wisdom is more and more superior, so does the light become progressively more and more penetrative — the light increases gradually (level by level) in strength and power;* and so it is able to penetrate and shine in the respective breaths of different stages of concentration.

When one's light of wisdom is not strong enough to shine in the (subtle / subtler) breath and fades at the end of vivid phase, it may be a little bit problematic. Thinking that fading away or loss of the light is because of dropping or regression of concentration needs perhaps to be explained further.

Bright light does not necessarily mean very *strong light*. Having the bright light does not necessarily mean that there is high level of concentration. One has bright light in vivid phase of any stage of concentration. Actually the light of lower level of concentration is not strong enough to (penetrate) and shine in the breath of higher level of concentration.

There is a growing subtlety of breath as concentration becomes higher. The breath is gross (oḷārika) to begin with, becomes increasingly subtle (sukhuma).

‡ 'The higher the level of concentration, the subtler the breath to be cognized.'

'As one goes on developing meditation subject, it becomes more subtle at each higher stage, and it even comes to the point at which it is no longer manifest'.¹⁰⁷

- ‡ The subtler the breath is to be seen, more strong and powerful light of wisdom is to (penetrate and) shine in it.

Bright light of low concentration cannot *always* shine brightly: The light that (penetrates and) shines in gross breath [of low level of concentration] cannot (penetrate and) shine in subtle breath [of high level of concentration].

Nearer to the end of vivid phase the breath becomes steadily subtle / subtler and it is increasingly too subtle for the light of wisdom. This means the light is no more powerful enough to penetrate and shine in this (too) subtle / subtler breath. So the light fades and / or the breath becomes invisible. No more strong light exists at the end of vivid phase.

When a vivid phase ends, there is a period in which breath occurs more subtly or is seemingly lost. Subtler breath (mass of breath) cannot be seen clearly unless mind produces the stronger light of wisdom. This means mind has to develop concentration further to overcome it. This period is what I call 'transitional period'.

During that period one may need to practise harder. At the end of this period, as one's (mindfulness and) concentration develops further, one will eventually be able to see the (colour or appearance of) breath-mass again using the light of concentration that one has developed into stronger and more penetrative one. [Since the stronger light is developed, there is consciousness-born materiality which is more superior.]

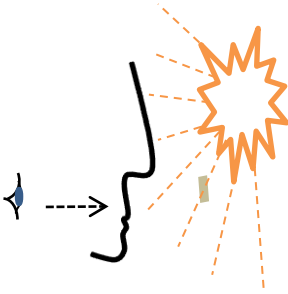
The appearance of breath-mass (breath nimitta) manifests differently at different levels of concentration. There are the

¹⁰⁷ Visuddhimagga.viii 208.

drifting or shifted object.¹⁰⁸ Such an attempt to focus and concentrate on a drifting or shifted object is of no avail.

I sometimes say,

“since your still conceptual breath (mass of breath) has moved outside of your focusing target / boundary of breath column, it is no longer valid for the practice; it is expired, no more alive.”



Expired object: As still conceptual breath (*nimitta*) has moved & positioned outside the location of actual breath, it is no longer the focus-object. On no account should you attempt to pull it back towards the proper focus area.

Meditators should start again to be *aware of the location of the breath fully* (the immediate vicinity of right or left nostril site between nostril and upper lip) and then the still conceptual breath (mass of breath) at this location (for example, an appropriate size of breath-mass about the size of the tip of a little finger). If the meditator’s focusing is skilful, precise and strong enough, the meditator can stabilize his focus on the proper object (still conceptual breath /mass of breath). Even when the focus-object shakes, or spins, or trembles, the meditator can maintain his fixity by focusing on a *new* proper object. The trembling, spinning and drifting object, as soon as it has been recognized, is ignored and the meditator can then instantly set up a new proper object anew. If the mass of breath is trembling

¹⁰⁸ A drifting or shifted breath-mass object (outward movement of breath-mass (*nimitta*) away from a place of actual breath) usually does *not occur* among meditators who apply ‘touch and breath style’ (= who simply feel the breath through its touch).

or spinning at the proper focus place, the meditator has to ignore this object and needs to reflect on the mass of breath as 'non-moving one mass of breath' or 'still conceptual breath' in order to overcome this obstacle.

'Middle stage of practice'

In the vivid phase of early stage concentration, the focus is on external appearance of the object and meditators can see it vividly. At one time, a meditator can no longer perceive it vividly and it seems as though the meditation object has been lost. It is the beginning of the 'Middle stage of practice'. This is the **transitional period** for the next phase, the '**Penetrative Phase** of middle stage'. When concentration develops gradually, *light and focusing can penetrate into the object; meditators start to see the inner part of the mass of breath as opaque*¹⁰⁹. In this penetrative phase, meditators may see the breath variable sizes and shapes or separate entities without particular shapes (for example, a stretched out spiders web, cotton wool, drawn out cotton, cloud, mist, fog, thick fog, etc). [It is born of perception, its source is perception, and it is produced by perception. Therefore it should be understood that when it appears differently it is because of difference in perception.]

To overcome this phase, meditators need to understand of what is being seen and what is concentrated on. In fact, for the development of concentration in *ānāpānasati* practice mass of breath cannot be viewed as 'a cluster of separate entities'. By cognizing the mass of breath/ still conceptual breath as '*merely one homogeneous solid thing*' meditators can overcome this

¹⁰⁹ Before the *paṭibhāga-nimitta* appears, the vivid mass of breath is the taken-up sign or learning sign of concentration (*uggaha-nimitta*). (See also footnote 10, 39, 52, 94, 96, 98 and 99.)

Ānāpānasati

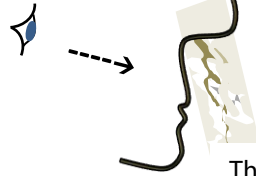
phase. Herein, solid means —having no holes or spaces inside (not hollow) and —made completely of the material mentioned (that is, the material is not only on the surface).

'a cluster of separate entities'----- ×
'merely one homogeneous solid thing'---- ✓

That is why a meditator needs to ignore the separate items, their shapes, sizes, colours and gaps between these items so the meditator can focus on the appropriate area of the mass of breath 'as a whole' (= *evenly*) from an appropriate distance. It is important to grasp and apply this view 'merely one homogeneous solid breath' to overcome some difficulties in this phase and higher phases of concentration.

'Middle stage of practice'— Penetrative Phase
'Middle stage of concentration'

'External Focusing
Approach'



The mass of
breath is

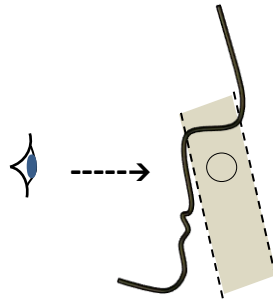
- Oh, the mass is stuffed full of things. I cannot focus on it smoothly.
- There are pieces of breath-mass. Instead of giving attention to them, you should cognize as: This is a [homogeneous] mass of breath.

* 'Penetrative Phase of middle stage': Grey or whitish or white lumps like objects or lace like objects with indefinite shapes are seen inside. Actually colours, shapes and sizes are all variable. A meditator needs to reflect upon 'merely one homogeneous solid nature of object, mass of breath'

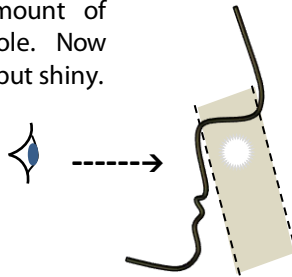
(throughout the column) and can pass this phase without undue delay.

- * 'Middle stage of practice'— Vivid phase: Vivid image/appearance of breath can hide (= conceal) your wisdom eye (mind) from view (understanding) — concept of breath (mass of breath). You have to see through the image (colour/ brightness/ shape/ appearance) of breath. Here the concern is not with the colour/image, which is the channel.

The breath (breath-column) image is now homogeneous. Yogi is clever to take an object in three-D. Mind is cropping an appropriate area/amount of breath-mass.



Wisdom eye (mind) is focusing on an appropriate area/amount of breath-mass as a whole. Now breath image is opaque but shiny.



- ▶ Oh, the pearly white breath-mass! It is very nice.
- ▶ Concept of breath is not the breath's colour or brightness. Continue your concentration on the concept of breath.

Boundary of breath column may not be seen.

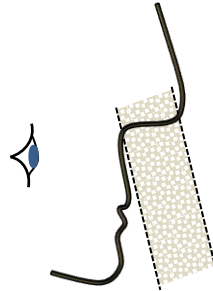
'High stage of practice'

Since the light of wisdom and wisdom-eye can penetrate the mass of breath, a yogi may often feel as if his mind and body were close to, or placed in position *inside* the breath-mass.

It is important (*even in the sinking stages*) to understand and apply the “nature of one homogeneous solid object” liberally throughout the mass of breath (within the boundary of breath column) between the nostril and upper lip to overcome some obstacles (such as changing the shape and form of focus-object / paying attention to the shape and form of focus-object).

The one who is in the phases of concentration needs to have this view to overcome some obstacles on the way. Of those, one formidable obstacle we shall discuss.

- ▶ Oh, my breath is broken down into small particles. I see only the rapid arising and perishing of small particles! Why don't they coalesce into a mass?
- ▶ You should neither review its colour nor bring its characteristic as flowing, etc., to mind.



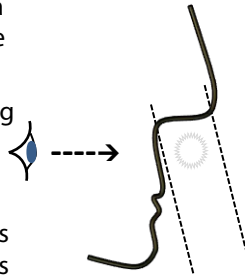
It is not very common, but I have noticed it is sometimes difficult for some yogis to break through. — After focusing on the mass of breath, the breath object becomes a group of small lumps, particles with size, and those particles arise and perish

away quickly.¹¹⁰ So, the meditator cannot find the mass of breath at the whole focus area. In fact, by focusing on these very small particles, the mind cannot develop concentration further. The meditator becomes unclear about how to obtain the focus-object. In this case, the one who understands the conceptual breath-object as ‘one homogeneous solid thing’, and applies the style of focusing on the conceptual breath (mass of breath) ‘as a whole’ at appropriate distance from it, can gradually overcome this obstacle; the particles and lumps gradually dissipate and the one will obtain vivid object [of ‘Vivid Phase’]. It is also important here not to have effort in excess while focusing on the breath object (a group of small particles). If effort is too strong, meditator will be unable to develop his wisdom of focusing on the conceptual breath-object in such a way.

‘High stage of practice’— vivid phase: Conceptual breath (mass of breath) is vivid, transparent and shiny. Since the breath is transparent, your wisdom eye (mind) can focus and see inside it.

Wisdom eye (mind) is focusing on an appropriate area of breath-mass as a whole. It (wisdom eye) is now outside the breath mass.

‘External Focusing Approach’



Oh, great, my breath has undergone a metamorphosis from opaque to transparent.

¹¹⁰ Breath exists as a group of particles (kalāpas). The particles are not ultimate reality. It is improper to do *vipassanā* practice by contemplating the arising and perishing of those small lumps or particles. Each particle is composed of the primary materiality and derived materiality. (Vs-2-223) These materialities are ultimate realities (*paramattha dhammas*).

'Sinking stages of practice'

When the breath-mass becomes transparent, the wisdom eye (mind) sinks into it (like a stone). [Gross] breath becomes increasingly subtle and very subtle in sinking stages of the path to concentration.

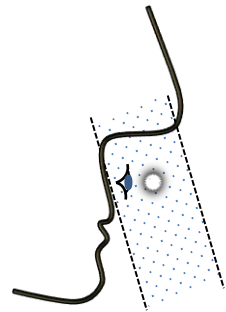
'Gross sinking stage' or

'Sinking [of gross breath-mass] stage':

Having now reached this stage, the wisdom eye (mind) can readily penetrate into the conceptual breath (breath-mass) and focus on the inside of it. A yogi who has developed proficiency in zooming in and out can readily settle his wisdom-eye in the (about) centre of the breath-mass. He feels as if his wisdom eye (mind) has sunk into the breath-mass—there is a `feeling of *sinking*' and then there is a `feeling of *being inside* the breath-mass'. He may often feel as if his mind and body were placed in position inside the breath-mass.

A yogi can still see the breath-mass inside the breath-column by the light of the wisdom. Gross sinking stage usually quickly finishes.

- ▶ Oh, my breath-mass is like a bright gem. I (wisdom eye) have entered (penetrated) the breath column!
- ▶ It's OK, you now applied the '*Internal Focusing Approach*'. It makes you feel as if you (your wisdom-eye / mind and body) were placed in position inside the breath mass. Just as there is water and nothing else in all directions for one who is actually in water, so too, should look at the breath-mass.



‘Subtle and very subtle sinking stages’ or

Sinking [of subtle and very subtle breath-mass] stages:

You should start focusing on the conceptual breath (still breath-column) with external focusing approach as if you are an onlooker, focusing on/ looking it perpendicularly (=straight forward) from behind. Before your concentration is stable, your mind may sometimes be shakable by actual (moving) breaths.

The concentration of an unskilled yogi is sometimes interrupted by [touches of] real breaths. But mind of the skilled yogi cannot be shakable by touch or actual (moving) breaths at these stages.

You may hear your heartbeat or breathing a few times, and they can distract you from your practice. You may sometimes lose your meditation object and / or meditating mind. Keep your mind only on the concept of breath (mass of breath) as object.

Let your wisdom eye focus on the part of the breath-column object that is somewhere between the nostril and upper lip. Then, as your concentration develops and becomes stronger, your mind (wisdom-eye) sinks (or penetrates) into your breath-mass. When concentrated, sinking [of wisdom eye] occurs as a passive state. Let your mind remain focused and concentrated on (about) the centre of a breath-column/breath-mass. Concentrated mind [sinks and] adjusts (itself) the position of wisdom-eye to have a good view of the object. The inner breath-mass becomes discernable at closed-range and such style of focusing is what we call 'Internal Focusing Approach'. You should be proficient in zooming in and taking up a position in (about) the centre of your breath-column / breath-mass. Now you actually know the breath-mass with direct experience.

Care should be taken not to exceed the breath's area (proper focus area). Mindfulness occupied with the breath-mass

need not be extended or exceeded proper focus area. If you exceed and look outside of proper focus area, the object does not manifest to you, and you come to feel as if reaching the empty space. And there is no benefit in it.

Now, we discussed how we are in the process of concentrating on the meditation object in sinking stages. [Like in the other stages,] in every bodily posture, it is usually best to start focusing on the conceptual breath with external focusing approach. After having a steady look at your focus-object from the outside, *you should not check (frequently) your wisdom eye for its position and direction.* Wisdom eye looks at the object, wherever that may be, whether your wisdom-eye is inside or outside the breath-column. When wisdom eye sinks into the breath-mass, you *may not* notice its sinking. Owing to the gradually increasing subtlety of breath-mass you *may not* feel as if your mind and body were placed in position inside the breath-mass. The inner breath-mass (gradually) becomes discernable at closed-range. That means, you are in the sinking stage, and you can go on to develop your meditation further.

There goes on occurring of the successively subtler [signs of] breath-mass. Breath-mass will become vividly transparent, brilliant, and contourless (no boundary) in the vivid phases of very subtle sinking stage and it marks clear milestones in the metamorphosis of breath.

A yogi is now taking a close look at the object.

Mind's eye (wisdom eye) can look at the object (= mind can cognize the breath-mass) in every bodily posture. Sometimes the object may become seemingly lost (=the object may become dark), and with continued practice, you will be able to see it [in the light].

'Knowing' (cognizing the concept of breath) is 'Concentrating': Whether you apply External Focusing Approach or Internal Focusing Approach, knowing the breath-mass at its place can actually lead to concentrating. Whether your wisdom-

eye is positioned at either inside or outside the breath-column, you must keep your mind knowing (concentrating on) the breath as a concept (i.e. as a breath-body/breath-mass).

*Know and See, and then,
See and Know.*

*Because you know, you see.
Because you see, you know.*

Knowing is Seeing: Knowing leads to Seeing.

If you know the object of meditation, the concept of breath clearly, and keep your mind with only it, you are able to develop concentration on it. *Your concentration increases with a strong and firm perception (Thira saññā) of conceptual breath (breath-column or breath-mass).* As your concentration develops you start to notice the light and / or brightness at your focus area.

As discussed in previous topics, the breath is not the light of wisdom: the breath (breath-mass) is different from the light of wisdom. Brightness (colour) is always the colour of something, and that something is the light of wisdom or the breath-mass. Both of them are objects of mind door. You need to differentiate [the brightness of] the breath-mass from [the brightness of] the light.

Both [the brightness of] the breath-mass and [the brightness of] the light of wisdom are visible to concentrated mind (mind's eye). The light is not the objects of concentration through the mindfulness of breath. You do not need to pay

attention to the light of wisdom, wherever you see inside or outside the proper focus area.

Knowing and Seeing:

“samāhito yathābhūtaṃ jānāti passati”

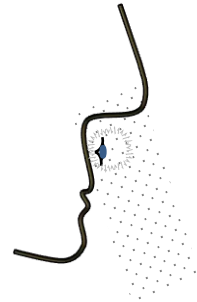
- ‡ One who is concentrated knows and sees correctly.
- ‡ Only a deeply concentrated mind (i.e. mind consciousness) is able to *know and see* the meditation object.

A yogi should be skilled in discerning the colour (brightness) of the breath-mass. The object can be given attention with awareness of both the accompanying breath (breath-mass) aspect and its ancillary colour (brightness)-aspect. You have to go beyond the colour (brightness) of breath-mass. Paying *special* attention (again and again) to the colour (brightness) or appearance (image) of breath-mass (i.e. keeping the colour of breath in the mind) is not the process by which concentration is developed. If you look at the breath-mass by its colour (brightness), it does not appear to you as a concept. **On no condition there should be concentrating on the light of wisdom, or the brightness (colour) or appearance of breath-mass alone.** Both of them are not the objects of concentration through the mindfulness of breath.

When looking at the breath-mass (when concentrating on the concept of breath), there should not be the act of knowingly abandoning the breath's [bright or dim] form (colour or brightness). That means, you do not stop knowing (concentrating on) the concept of breath (= breath-mass, bodily part), and *also do not deliberately abandon or release the [bright/dim] sign* of breath-mass that you see with a concentrated mind.

Herein, sign of breath-mass means:

- colour of breath-mass (i.e. appearance of breath-mass as to its colour (brightness), shape or form that shows that breath-mass exists), or
 - mere mode of appearance. (Please see footnote 52.)
- Oh, now my breath-mass has no more clear boundary! It appears as transparent and contour-less.
 - You are making good progress. You have actually used a shape (column) as a disposable container or physical support to know and see the breath-mass. Now you (your wisdom) have discarded a *clear* shape like a ball or a circle. But *brightness (colour) of breath-mass will still help you to make your progress*. You should take the [breath's] colour/*brightness* as belonging to its physical support and setting your mind on the concept [as breath-mass].



- ▶ Oh, my breath-mass is no more apparent! But I still feel as if my mind has sunk in the breath-column.
- ▶ Your breath-mass is transparent but dark. It has reached a subtler state, and you are going through a period of transition. Go on! *See it as your object, mass of breath*. You should keep placing your awareness of the concept of breath (mass of breath) at its place.



Ānāpānasati

To know and see the concept [of breath] with a concentrated mind, yogis need also to know and see the colour (brightness) of breath-mass. The breath-mass is not to be known only as concept, because that is to know and see the object as it appears.

Understanding the colour [of breath-mass] as belonging to its physical support you should set the mind on the concept [of breath]. *After having relegated the colour (brightness) or shape of the breath-mass to the position of a property of the physical support* [that holds a location of breath-mass firmly in position], you should only look at/contemplate it (sign/brightness) as a breath-mass (i.e. you only cognize it as: ‘This is a breath-mass/breath body, or ‘This is a bodily part’). That means you still establish consciousness on only the concept of breath (, breath-mass) *while* sign of it appears at your focus (target); your mind-door consciousness *know and see* the breath-mass.

The breath-mass reflects the shining light of wisdom and you may sometimes notice sparkles. When your concentration and skill in relegating the colour (shape / form and the bright) *to the position of a property of its physical support* develop, your mind by itself has become fixed on the sign. The development proceeds by way of fixing.

When your sign of breath-mass is maintained for long, your concentrated mind (wisdom eye) by itself will become steadily fixed on it with a stare. You will be frozen with concentration (i.e. to be concentrated that you cannot move) then just leave your mind there.

Mindfulness and full awareness¹¹¹ exist in the earlier jhāna — for one who is forgetful and not fully aware does not attain even access.

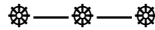
¹¹¹ He remembers (*sarati*), thus he is mindful (*sata*). He has full awareness (*sampajānāti*), he is fully aware (*sampajāna*). This is mindfulness and full awareness stated as personal attributes. Herein, mindfulness has the characteristic of remembering. Its function is not to forget. It is manifested as

- Now, I behold a bright breath-mass shining in the proper focus area.
It is pure and bright, like the morning star.
- Because of shining light, the transparent breath-mass has transformed into bright (opaque or translucent) object!

You closely contemplate the *suitable amount* of bright object (breath-mass). You can be momentarily dazzled by it. When skilled in knowing of the only one conceptual object, breath-mass taking colour (brightness) as support, the brightness (of breath-mass) will shake you not.

[Contemplate = (wisdom eye) look at something for a period of time in a way that shows you are thinking.]

By having strong mindfulness and full awareness of the meditation object, and ignoring the mental states such as joy, happiness, feeling of being inside the breath-mass you will be able to make steady progress towards jhāna¹¹² concentration.



guarding. Full awareness has the characteristic of non-confusion. Its function is to investigate (judge). It is manifested as scrutiny.

¹¹² *Jhāna*: The jhāna factors are together called *jhāna*. The word jhāna is used in the usual sense of meditative absorption and in the broader sense of *close contemplation (upanijjhāyana)* of an object.

– *Ārammaṇūpanijjhānato paccanīkajhāpanato vā jhānaṃ.*
(Visuddhi-Magga.iv.75)

– *...Paccanīkadhamme jhāpetīti jhānaṃ, iminā yogino jhāyantītipi jhānaṃ, paccanīkadhamme dahanti gocaraṃ vā cintentīti attho. Sayamaṃ vā taṃ jhāyati upanijjhāyati jhānaṃ...* (Pārājikapāli Aṭṭhakathā, 11):

It (jhāna factors together) is called *jhāna* because of burning up opposition and because of lighting (setting fire to) opposition....

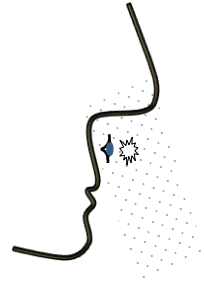
jhāpetī = to set fire to, to burn

jhāyati = to contemplate, to think upon

= to burn, to be on fire

dahanti = to burn

(See also footnote 8, 95 and 132.)



What is the 'Transitional Phase'? Do you know it clearly ?

We would like to quote some instructions of The Buddha.

- 'Tranquillizing the bodily formation'¹¹³ [the in&out breath], I shall breathe in': thus he trains.
- 'Tranquillizing the bodily formation [the in&out breath], I shall breathe out': thus he trains.¹¹⁴

The Buddha said the bhikkhu breathes in and out tranquillizing the bodily formation (kāyasaṅkhāra).

To do this, you have to go on being continuously aware and mindful of the breath (mass of breath). You should do nothing else. Tranquillizing the breath [mass] comes naturally, because as one's mindfulness of the breath [mass] develops, one's breath [mass] becomes more and more subtle, more and more tranquil.

There are many phases to overcome before attaining first jhāna concentration of *ānāpānasati*. A meditator is progressively tranquillizing each grosser breath[-mass] with continuous concentrating on the concept of breath. It is apparent that breath [mass] begins to tranquillize before the light of wisdom appeared (before vivid phase of early stage).

¹¹³ What is the body-formation? Breaths are of the body (the materiality-body (*rūpa-kāya*)). These things, belong to the body, being bound up with the body, are body- formations. (See M. I.v.4 `Cūḷa.Vedalla.Suttaṃ' `The Small Catechism Sutta'.)

Body-formation: the in-breath and out-breath. For although it is consciousness-originated, it is nevertheless called 'body-formation' since its existence is bound up with the kamma-born body and it is formed with that as the means. (*Vism-mhṭ* 263)

¹¹⁴ *passambhayaṃ kāya-saṅkhāraṃ assasissami, passambhayaṃ kāya-saṅkhāraṃ passasissami* ('The Great Mindfulness-Foundation Sutta –Mahā-Sati-Paṭṭhāna Sutta')

“For while other meditation subjects become clearer at each higher, this one does not: in fact as he goes on developing it, it becomes more subtle for him at each higher stage, and”¹¹⁵

When concentration gradually improves and breath (or breath-mass) becomes subtler at each higher phase, a meditator may sometimes feel difficult to focus on the still conceptual breath as it seems to be missing. It appears that the focus place is empty of breath [mass]. Although in one session the object (mass of breath) is vividly seen and focused upon, in the next session it may become faint. And it even comes to the point at which it is no longer manifest.

Most meditators easily think that their meditation subject is lost, their progress is no more, or their concentration breaks and falls away. In fact, this is the transitional phase, the transition from one phase to another higher one.

‘Just as when a gong is struck.’

The Visuddhi-Magga says:

‘Because previously, at the time when the yogi had not yet discerned the [in&out breath or breath body] there was no concern in him, no reaction, no attention, no reviewing, to the effect that [he knew]: ‘I am progressively tranquillizing each grosser bodily formation [the in&out breath or breath body].’ But once he has discerned [the in&out breath or breath body], there is. So his bodily formation [the in&out breath or breath body] at the time when he has discerned [it] is subtle in comparison with what it was at the time when he had not [discerned it].’

As concentration develops, the breath (breath-mass) becomes progressively more and more tranquil.

¹¹⁵ Path of purification (by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli). VIII. 208.

Ānāpānasati

Here is a simile. ‘Just as when a gong is struck.’ At first gross sounds occur and [cognizance occurs] because the sign of the gross sounds is well apprehended, well attended to, well observed; and when the gross sounds have ceased, then afterwards faint sounds occur and [cognizance occurs] because the sign¹¹⁶ of the faint sounds is well apprehended, well attended to, well observed; and when the faint sounds have ceased, then afterwards cognizance occurs because it has the sign of the faint sounds as its object.’¹¹⁷

So too, at first gross breath [mass] occurs and mind becomes concentrated on it (because the gross breath (still breath) is well apprehended, well attended to, well observed); and when the gross breath has ceased, then afterwards faint (subtle) breath [mass] occurs and mind becomes concentrated on it (because the faint breath (still breath) is well apprehended, well attended to, well observed); and when the faint (subtle) breath has ceased, then afterwards fainter (subtler) breath [mass] occurs and mind becomes concentrated on it because it has the fainter breath (still breath) as its object.

The breath[-mass] at the time when a yogi has discerned [it] is subtle in comparison with what it was at the time when he had not [discerned it]. That being so, there is production of concentration by *ānāpānasati*, and the clever one enters into and emerges from that meditative attainment.

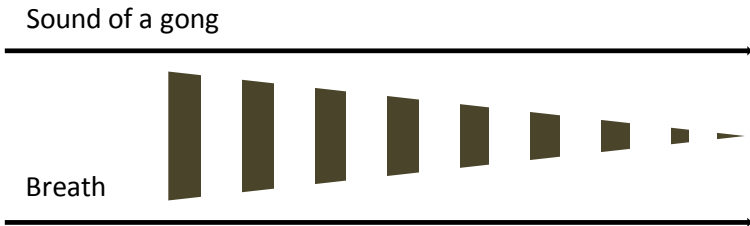
¹¹⁶ ‘The sign’ is an aspect of those sounds; and the sign of the sound is not something other than the sound.

¹¹⁷ Paṭisambhidāmagga. 171. See also Visuddhimagga. viii. 221.

Yathā kathaṃ viya?

“Seyyathāpi kaṃṣe ākoṭṭite paṭhamam oḷārikā saddā pavattanti.

Sounds of a gong or breaths of an *ānāpānāyogi*:



- Just as a sound of a gong is growing weaker: There is phase by phase tranquilizing each grosser [conceptual] breath in the development of *ānāpānasati*.
The mind may turn away from the breath-mass, which have reached the point at which its manifestation needs investigating.
- You develop concentration on the tranquilizing [conceptual] breaths, so that your concentration increases phase by phase.
- On the way to jhāna, there are *plenty* of changes in breath-image (milestone) —from opacity to transparency, and with a border to borderless/contourless.
- You will notice *some* significant milestones (changes in image) of breath to see how the concentration is coming along.
- Those changes in breath[-mass] image from phase to phase are because of development of concentration — it is (what we call) metamorphosis of the breath.

The onward march of ānāpānasati practice:

With many phases vivid and unvivid, the practice is moving onwards and upwards.

.....→V. p→ T. p→ P. p→V. p→T. p→P. p→V. p→ →Stable V. p

Abbreviations:

T. p = Transitional phase—*unvivid* phase

Light of concentration is very weak, and not powerful enough to shine or penetrate into the subtle/subtler breath-mass. In the dark the breath-mass becomes unmanifest.

P. p = Penetrative phase —*unvivid* phase

Light of concentration exists, but is not powerful. It penetrates weakly into the breath-mass at the proper focus area and shines on / through it.

The breath-mass is not vivid yet. Mostly it is fuzzy. During the penetrative phases *changes* in appearance (form) and brightness of the breath object occur *by itself* according to the level of concentration. With different level of concentration, different strength of light of concentration has different powers to penetrate into the mass of breath. So with different level of concentration, the mass of breath has a differently shaped milestone.

V. p = Vivid phase

Light of concentration becomes powerful to shine on / through or penetrate into the breath-mass and the breath-mass becomes vivid. Appearance and brightness of the breath object occur *by itself* according to the level of concentration. Many vivid phases arise before a meditator attains 'stably object'.

Stable V. p = Stable Vivid phase

Concentration on the breath-mass becomes stable and strong at sinking [of very subtle breath-mass] stage. The conceptual breath is (cognized and) seen vivid, stably at

last; no more changes of its manifestation. Now a yogi concentrates on the concept of breath that appears as bright and clear (vivid). Concentration can be the first jhāna (absorption), second jhāna, third jhāna, or fourth jhāna.

Transitional phase happens between the vivid phase and penetrative phase. The breath (conceptual breath or mass of breath) is the object of *ānāpānasati*. The practice seems simple but it is not really since there are many transitional phases before attaining 'stable, bright and clear object' of strong concentration.

Phase by phase changes are easily noticeable. (Day by day or sometimes even session by session) changes of shape, appearance, and brightness (colour) of the breath object (mass of breath /wisdom breath) are reviewed and noticed.

Don't be disappointed. The object is always there.

In the transitional phases, some yogis say that their minds are *searching for* the breath object since the object has gone missing (again), and minds become slack and cannot function effectively. Here, the object (mass of breath) has not gone missing; it is not really lost. Actually it is a seemingly lost object (for only those transitional periods). Because the yogis are still breathing, the mass of breath actually exists in them, and they are only not able to discern it.

Because the breath mass became unmanifest during the transitional phases, some felt frustrated or dismayed at the disappearance of their (previous) obvious object and they fell into the trap of trying to find the object (in the previous shape and colour) in the focus area desperately. It is useless to be angry with yourself for having the disappearance of (previous) obvious object. You should accept that the repeated occurrence of transitional periods in the *ānāpānasati* practice is a natural thing. It is before you obtain the stable, bright and clear breath object.

We usually say to them:

“The object disappears, don’t be disappointed”;

“It is remediable”;

“You do not need to wait even a second for a conceptual breath”;

“No need to search in the focus area for the mass of breath; Your object (mass of breath) is always present in the proper focus area.”

“You have to follow ‘The Focusing Approach’ anew”.

“Knowing Is Seeing”.

Follow The Focusing Approach anew!

During the period of transition to a higher phase, the object becomes unmanifest and the meditator needs to follow ‘The Focusing Approach’ anew — the place is the *first* to focus and the object is the *next* (First focus on the place and then on the object second).—

Whenever the breath object at the focus area becomes unmanifest, *the meditator should train his mind to cognize the object without taking (too) long in the ‘preparation step’ (‘Tool phase’)*. There is no need to go back to the ‘beginning stage of practice’ —labelling (and distinguishing) in breath and out breath and so on; but a meditator needs to go back to the basics (principle of practice). Because if he is not clever yet at applying the principle of *ānāpānasati* practice in these conditions (—his understanding is dull), or if his concentration is not yet strong enough, after focusing on the proper place (suitable amount) of the mass of breath, the mass of breath is nowhere to be found around the nostrils [within the boundary of breath column

between the nostril and upper lip]. The object seems to hide somewhere and it cannot be seen.

The transitional periods can last from few minutes, few sitting sessions to few days even for those who know how to overcome the obstacle. But for those who do not understand clearly what their difficulties (transitional periods) are, and who do not know how to overcome skilfully, these transitional periods can last longer.

Sharp wisdom (for e.g. a few times or a few sessions successive and thorough reflection on the 'homogeneous nature of a compact mass of breath throughout the breath column'—in transitional phases) and strong faith in the practice (principle of *ānāpānasati* practice) are very important and play major roles in detecting the mass of breath in these conditions.

If a yogi's mind is weak, and wanders frequently, or not interested in the meditation object, he may help it to stay with the breath mass by reflection or pondering. Reflection on the object at an appropriate rate has been discussed under the topic "The breath object is the next on sensible reflection alone". Here, We would like to make again some points concerning reflection on the meditation object as it takes an important role to overcome the transitional phases, and to maintain strong mindfulness on the meditation object.

Repeated reflection on the object is a simple device but invaluable for setting and strengthening mindfulness by cutting off distraction, and for having (and developing) the clear and sufficient understanding of the mass of breath. During the transitional phases, you repeat reflection: *Until*, without repeated reflection, mindfulness remains settled on the (obvious) wisdom-breath or mass of breath as its object.

When a yogi reflects quickly (successive reflection) or *steadily*, the meditation object becomes gradually apparent as an uninterrupted process. When the mass of breath becomes

evident or distractions are entirely cut off, the speed of reflection can be adjusted.

Having obtained the obvious wisdom-breath, his wisdom-eye is able to look/ gaze at it without reflection. (I.e. the object is cognized uninterruptedly). But if mindfulness is weak (again), in order to ward off the distractions, he should repeat the reflection on the breath object. And then again, there attains constant concentration on the meditation object.

‘Don’t hunt the past. Don’t love the future.’

The cognizance (mind) that hunts the past, that loves the future, is unconcentrated:

- ‡ A consciousness that cognizes the breath (conceptual breath or breath mass) is concentrated.
- ‡ The two things, concept of breath, colour or shape of the breath, are not the object ‘Of a single consciousness’. One should not review the colour as yellow or white, etc. A consciousness that reviews the colour/shape (of breath) is unconcentrated.

While concentrating on the concept of breath, the shape, form (appearance) and brightness (colour) of the mass of breath should not be thought about, reviewed, investigated or analysed (though it cannot be denied that they are cognized by mind consciousness). Because of this cognizance (review of the breath’s colour), one notices milestones (significant images of the breath in the development of concentration) one pass on the path to concentration development (course of the path), and is able to acknowledge only the status of one’s practice.

While not abandoning/releasing breath’s colour (deliberately), attention should be given by setting the mind on the concept of breath as the most outstanding mental datum(i.e.

as a breath mass or breath body), relegating the colour and brightness to the position of a property of its physical support. It is 'a guiding rule' for the practice. One has to follow it strictly especially when the object becomes clear, bright, and vivid in vivid phases.

It is because of understanding the principle and following 'a *guiding rule*' that one keeps his mind continuously concentrated on the concept of breath and develops *ānāpānasati*. When concentration is developed, the breath column or mass of breath (wisdom breath) evolves (phase by phase) from a dull and opaque into a transparent form. A yogi sees them as milestones of the breath-mass. These are before attaining the 'stable, bright and clear breath-mass' at very subtle sinking stage. Sometimes I refer to such type of condition or process in which visible mental image of the object (mass of breath) is phase by phase changing into different appearances (form) until the (stable vivid phase of) very subtle sinking stage as "Undergoing Metamorphosis of the object".

[These changes are produced by perception; it is from the single point-of-view of perception or using perception as an example because perception does not arise alone. As there are different forms and brightness of the breath object (wisdom breath) in vivid phases of concentration development, we can say from another point of view that these are produced by one-pointedness or concentration.]

The form of the breath mass appears differently to different phases. The form of the future breath-mass may be different from the past (breath-mass). The form of the breath mass you will see in the next phase may be different from the breath mass you have seen in the previous phase.

'Do not play with the colour (shape / appearance) of the breath object': It is one of the important rules that we have discussed earlier. Whatever shape or colour of breath you see you should not play with it; you do not intentionally change

breath's colour (shape, brightness or appearance). If one plays with the breath's colour (shape/ appearance/ brightness of the breath), the object appears to him as only imagination that is creating (artificial forms).

Cognizance that runs after the past breaths¹¹⁸ is attacked by distraction and is an obstruction to concentration.¹¹⁹ Cognizance shaken by looking forward to the future breaths¹²⁰ is an obstruction to concentration.¹²¹

In the transitional periods some yogis try to convince themselves to find (or remember) the object. i.e. they try to visualize the shape or colour of breath (mass of breath) they have seen in their one of the past vivid phases or in their last vivid phase of concentration development, or they want to see. Since it is that the past is hunted and the future is loved, they have played with the colour (shape / appearance) of the breath object, and have broken the rule.

In fact it is because they are confused about the 'mindfulness'. Mindfulness means remembrance. Mindfulness (sati): remembers the concept of breath and discerns it again and again. Mindfulness remembers [the breath-column and discerns] the mass of breath again and again.

`Remembrance of the breath (concept of breath) ´ is confused with `remembrance of the breath's colour (milestone or form) in the metamorphosis of breath they have vividly seen in

¹¹⁸ Here `past breaths' means breath's images or colours, which have been seen in the past.

¹¹⁹Paṭisambhidāmagga, 3. Ānāpānassatikathā, 3. Upakkilesañāṇaniddeso: 156. Ātītanudhāvanam cittaṃ vikkhepānupatitaṃ – samādhissa paripantho. English translation of Paṭisambhidāmagga by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, Pali Text Society, England.

¹²⁰ Here `future breaths' means breath's images or colours, which can be seen in the future.

¹²¹Paṭisambhidāmagga, 3. Ānāpānassatikathā, 3. Upakkilesañāṇaniddeso: 156. Anāgatapaṭīkañkhanam cittaṃ vikampitaṃ – samādhissa paripantho.

the past or previous sessions' and `remembrance of the breath's colour (form) they want to see in the future (sessions)'.

If a yogi plays the (breath's) image or colour, his practice is against the rule. When he plays or imagines the (breath's) image or colour (— the perception that there is such and such: This is because whenever yogi changes perception intentionally, his object thereby also changes, which means he intentionally acquires different images in the mind door—), his desired image (shape) or colour may appear in his mind for a short moment or few minutes. After that, he will lose his desired image. His progress stops in a vain attempt to imagine seeing his desired shape or colour.

From now on images of the breath cannot make a fool of you.

Most yogis are curious as to why breath's image is changing. New image of the breath and bright light can arouse one's curiosity. (While concentrating,) one should try to stop investigating for changes in the breath's image. If one follows (looks at again and again/ pay attention again and again to) the images (signs of concentration), one does not follow a rule. Without mindfulness the mind is incapable of keeping the object of meditation, the concept of breath (mass of breath).

Cognizing (again and again) leads to concentrating. The concentrated mind sees the breath-mass clearly. While walking, standing or lying, one can continuously see (i.e. concentrate on) the breath mass that appears as opaque or translucent or transparent form.

In every bodily posture you should take no objects apart from the breath mass— you should cognize only the concept of breath (mass of breath) in the proper focus area. If you try continuously in this way, your concentration steadily improves.

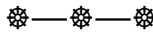
Ānāpānasati

You can develop stronger mindfulness and focusing acuity on the object especially *in the sitting posture* with the eyes closed.

The sitting posture having crossed legs and body straight is best to develop a strong sense of body [and breath body] position. In sitting posture (having crossed legs) sense of body position, breath-body position and focusing direction are developed through the mind-door processes, and unconcentrated mind becomes concentrated or concentrated mind becomes more so. That posture is convenient and favourable most to overcome the obstacles to concentration that have been placed in the transitional phases.

A meditator who has stable mindfulness in vivid phases feels as if mind (that takes the concept of breath) and vivid breath-object were fused to become a single thing.

(After attaining the vivid phase,) some yogis say ‘effort used in the higher stage is less than the previous/lower stages’. But it is not in this way. Actually, efforts in the vivid phase of higher stages become subtler (stage by stage). And it is not only the effort that is subtle, the consciousness, and all the other mental formations¹²² are also subtle in comparison with those of previous stages. As concentration develops through the four jhānas, the breath becomes progressively more and more tranquil, until it stops in the fourth jhāna.¹²³ At that time consciousness and all other mental formations (jhāna dhamma) are the subtlest in *ānāpānasati* practice.



¹²² In each impulsion consciousness-moment there are thirty-four mental formations. Mental formations are the consciousness (citta) and its associated mental factors (cetasika).

¹²³ In each impulsion consciousness-moment, there are thirty-four mental formations of the first jhāna, thirty-two mental formations of the second jhāna or thirty-one mental formations of the third and fourth jhāna.

Sometimes it is a challenge to balance the controlling faculties.

To develop meditation steadily, yogis need the help of five controlling faculties. The controlling faculties are mental powers that control the mind and keep the mind from straying off the path to concentration in order to fix the mind on the focus-object (mass of breath or concept of breath).

They are:

1. Faith (Saddhā),
2. Effort (Vīriya),
3. Mindfulness (Sati),
4. Concentration (Samādhi),
5. Understanding (Paññā).

“True devotees of the Triple Gem can show their devotion through practice”.¹²⁴

- + The first controlling faculty is faith in what one should have faith in, such as the Triple Gem or *ānāpānasati*.
- + A person who is developing concentration with a meditation subject like *ānāpānasati* needs to have strong faith and understanding in the way of practice.
- + It is important to have strong and firm perception (*Thira saññā*) of conceptual breath (mass of breath) as it is a proximate cause (*padatṭhāna*) for strengthening mindfulness of the breath (*Sati*).

Strong perception that there is a mass of breath: Perceiving the object as the mass of breath in the proper focus area



Mindfulness of the object /remembering the object

¹²⁴ *Pasanno ca pasannākāraṃ kātuṃ sakkhissati*. MA.II.iv.1 ('*Ghaṭṭikāra-Suttaṃ*')

Mindfulness is necessary under all circumstances. “And it has been called universal by the Blessed One.” For what reason? The mind has mindfulness as its refuge, and mindfulness is manifested as protection (protects the mind from forgetting the object (mass of breath)), and there is no exertion and restraint of the mind without mindfulness.”

Over-exerted cognizance (*atipaggahitaṃ citta*) is attacked by agitation (distraction) and is an obstruction to concentration. Mind with excess effort cannot focus stably on the breath object for a long. Because focusing on the object with excess effort (*Vīriya*) causes the mind a state of agitation or distraction, the mind cannot obtain stable concentration on the object.

With insufficient effort the mind becomes weak and cannot maintain a stable focus on the object; the mind falls away from the object of meditation and will be overwhelmed by wandering thoughts.

Too much energy or effort ends in flurry, and too little energy or effort ends in idleness. In these two conditions (excessive effort and insufficient effort) mind cannot obtain stable focusing and concentration on the object. Only with optimum effort mind can obtain effective and stable focusing on the object.

As mindfulness (*Sati*) protects the mind, and keeps the object of meditation from becoming lost, a mindful yogi can assess the condition quickly as either excessive or insufficient effort and adjust to obtain the optimum effort. Walking meditation (practising of *ānāpānasati* meditation while walking) is very supportive and helpful to meditators to understand these conditions. For example, while walking, a meditator can focus on the vivid object (mass of breath), but while sitting, a meditator cannot obtain the vivid object easily. How’s that? Perhaps the meditator may have exerted the effort in excess during the sitting session, as he is eager to obtain the vivid object like

previous one. So his mind is a little bit agitated at that time and has not balanced this controlling effort faculty well.

Ānāpānasati meditation appears simple, but is really profound. Strong wisdom is necessary to develop meditation. To develop ānāpānasati meditation, it is better if the yogi has already developed any *kaṣiṇa* meditation or 'mindfulness occupied with the body' (*Kāya-Gatā-Sati*).¹²⁵

During the practice especially in the transitional phases (of external as well as internal focusing approach), yogis must meet the challenge of balancing the controlling faculties. Because, in the transitional phases, the object is seemingly lost, meditator should first ponder on the principle of practice for a moment, and start to apply 'The Focusing Approach' anew. A meditator has to determine to tackle the difficulty head on.

Strong **understanding** of this problem (and the fundamental principle of practice) and complete **faith** in practice play a crucial role to obtain the vivid object again. In these

¹²⁵ Ānāpānasati vs. earth kaṣiṇa: The *Visuddhimagga* is probably best regarded as a detailed manual, and as a work of reference. The List of Contents is given in order to serve *as a guide to the work as a whole*. 'The earth kaṣiṇa' is mentioned in chapter IV. 'Mindfulness occupied with the body' and 'mindfulness of breathing' are mentioned in chapter VIII.

Having skill in focusing on object of kaṣiṇa (such as object of earth kaṣiṇa) and object of body-related mindfulness (such as skeleton), an ānāpānasati meditator will find that 'External Focusing Approach' and 'Internal Focusing Approach' become clear.

Focusing on specific bodily part (at its place) is similar to the focusing on breath-column or breath-mass with 'External Focusing Approach'.

The word *kaṣiṇa* means 'totalization'. *Kaṣiṇa* is in the sense of entirety. E.g. "One (man) perceives earth as a totality (or universality) above, below, around, absolute, measureless".

Focusing on 'totality-sign' (*kaṣiṇa-nimitta*) is *similar* to the focusing on breath-column or breath-mass with 'Internal Focusing Approach'. Inside the breath-column one perceives the breath-mass as a whole above, below, around.

See also footnote 85.

conditions, some who are not aware that there could be such milestones on their way get disappointed at the result of their practice and their **wisdom** is unable to understand the breath object as a concept (breath-body/mass).

Many yogis in the transitional phases often lose confidence (beliefs in their ability in practice to be successful) and / or faith. (For example, a yogi obtains a very bright mass of breath object in the morning session; but, in the evening session he faces the loss of that object and his focus area is full of darkness. His confidence and faith in the practice or faith in the Triple Gem may decline.) It is important to have **faith** in the way of practice. Without it, a yogi will regress from his work in meditation.

Now you have already seen (and learned) some milestones of breath on the path to concentration. You understand that in the transitional phases sagacious approach, strong patience and faith are required to overcome them. But you may still need to convince sometimes (in the transitional phases) yourself that the object (mass of breath or breath) is always at your proper focus area. You should reflect that:

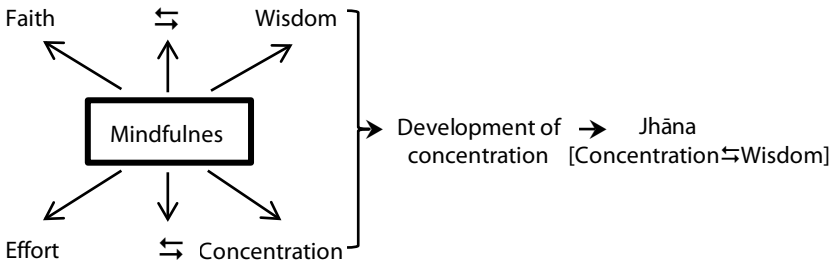
- Since the breath is present throughout the life, the mind (wisdom) can cognize it (without any delay).
- The mind can see it (when it becomes apparent and visible in the light of concentration and understanding). (Knowing leads to Seeing.)
- ‘Knowing is Seeing.’

Then, you will gradually gain strong understanding of the condition (transitional phases) and confidence. So in these transitional phases without strong understanding (*Paññā*) of the fundamental principle of practice it is difficult for yogis to restore confidence and faith in the practice.

After cognizing the mass of breath, the meditator focuses on the object, intending to see the object clearly. The meditator mindfully reflects on the nature of the conceptual breath-object

(mass of breath) and then cognizes the object. By the mindful and repetitive process of cognizing the object (the sequence of reflection and cognizance of the object— the sequence of *sati* and *Paññā*) at an appropriate rate, the object (mass of breath) will become increasingly identified. At the same time mindfulness can adjust the strength of effort (*Vīriya*) to attain the optimum through which the mass of breath is clearly cognized and concentrated (Samādhi).

- + Faith faculty should be strong enough to maintain the wisdom faculty on the breath object (mass of breath), and vice versa.
Consciousnesses with either excessive or insufficient effort cannot stably concentrate on the breath object. Effort should be just sufficient to cognize the breath object.
To balance faith with wisdom, and concentration with effort, is praised by the wise.
- + Jhāna is based primarily on concentration. Only when concentration and wisdom are fully balanced can Jhānas arise.



Here, we should mention one facet in the higher the phase to concentration: the softer and subtler breath. Softer and subtler breath (actual breath) requires more mindfulness, stronger

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understanding, better focusing skills and buckets of confidence to perceive the conceptual breath (mass of breath) vividly.

‘Non-distraction as unification of mind through renunciation is concentration.’ (Nekkhammasena cittassa ekaggatā avikkhepo samādhi.)

Mindfulness is always necessary to develop concentration. When mindfulness is weak, you will make little or no effort to discern the breath. If unwise attention arises, hindrances or defilements (such as attachment, conceit, and anger) will certainly follow; they are unwholesome dhammas. Those unwholesome dhammas hinder concentration and your progress will be difficult. Defilements (wondering thoughts) can overwhelm you and lead up to the diminishing of your concentration, because mindfulness is very weak.

Here, we should know about the Four Protective meditations (*caturāraṅga-bhāvanā*)¹²⁶ that protect the meditators from various defilements (and dangers).

They are:

- 1) Lovingkindness (*metta*)
- 2) Buddha Recollection (*Buddh-Ānussati*)
- 3) Foulness meditation (*asubhā-bhāvanā*)
- 4) Death Recollection (*maraṇ-ānussati*)

‡ Ill-will & Lovingkindness

– ‘*mettā bhāvetabbā byāpādassa pahānāya*’

For the removal of ill-will, loving-kindness should be developed;

– *Apanataṃ cittaṃ byāpādānupatitaṃ – samādhissa paripantho. (Paṭisambhidāmaggaṃ; Mahāvagga; Upakkilesāṅṅaniddeso 156)*

¹²⁶ *Meghiya’ sutta and ‘Girimananda’ sutta in the Aṅguttara-Nikāya*

Repelled cognizance is attacked by ill-will and is an obstruction to concentration.

‡ Slack faith & Buddha Recollection

- Buddha Recollection (*Buddh-Ānussati*) should be developed when faith in meditation slackens, and the mind is dull.
- If faith (& wisdom) is weak, it demoralizes the person and cannot keep his mind from straying off the path of samatha (tranquillity).

‡ Lust & Foulness

- If you take a corpse as object, and see it as repulsive, it is called ‘foulness of a lifeless body’. To take the thirty-two parts of the body of a being, and see them as repulsive is called ‘foulness of a living body’. Both these forms of foulness meditation are weapons for removing lust. Foulness meditation should be developed for the removal of lust and desire.
- Proper development of the perception of foulness (*asubha-saññā*) counters thoughts of sexual intercourse (*methuna-dhamma*);
- When a meditator’s mind is familiar with the perception of foulness, even beautiful and sensuous objects do not tempt his mind to greed.
- *Abhinataṃ cittaṃ rāgānupatitaṃ – samādhissa paripantho.*

Enticed cognizance is attacked by greed and is an obstruction to concentration.

‡ Laziness & Death Recollection

- Slack cognizance (*līnaṃ citta*) is attacked by indolence and is an obstruction to concentration. Indolence (*kosajja*) is usually a weak unwholesome dhamma associated with greed or hatred, etc.

With insufficient effort the mind will fall away from the object of meditation.

- Death Recollection is to fire you with a sense of urgency (*sam vega*) and therefore to protect you against laziness in meditation.
- With mindfulness of death, thinking, “I have got to die,” a meditator gives up improper thoughts / wandering thoughts (for example, lustful) and with a growing sense of urgency he comes to meditate without attachment.
- Indolence occurs because of unwise attention. If a person’s unwise attention is changed to and replaced with wise attention, then he may succeed in his meditation.
- Proper development of the perception of death (*maraṇa-saññā*) counters attachment to life (*jīvita-nikanti*).
- When you are bored with striving in meditation, the best weapon is death recollection.

‡ Defilements & Perception of impermanence

We should know another way of practice that protects *ānāpānasati* practice:

“All formations are perishing things”¹²⁷. They are always impermanent. They are not mine.¹²⁸

¹²⁷ All mentality-materiality and their causes are called formations (*saṅkhāra*), because they are produced by their respective causes. Those dhammas perish as soon as they arise, so they are impermanent. They are oppressed by constant arising and perishing, so they are suffering. In those dhammas there is no soul, nothing is stable, permanent and immortal, so they are non-self. This clarity is a great benefit coming from *samatha*. (See footnote 5.)

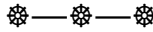
With deep, strong and powerful concentration, you can see clearly the impermanent, suffering, and non-self nature of mentality-materiality and their causes. Discernment of the impermanent, suffering, and non-self nature of

It is the development of the perception of impermanence (anicca-sañña)¹²⁹ that counters defilements of the mind.

Perception of impermanence is aroused through seeing the continual alteration of young leaves.

When the tender leaves are seen
Bright red at first, then turning green,
And then to yellow as they fall.

Sometimes you can use that practice to counteract defilements of the mind (lust, hatred, and delusion) that weaken wisdom, and then switch back to your meditation subject by which you develop concentration.



mentality-materiality, and their causes and effects, is called vipassana meditation.

¹²⁸ 'This is not mine' is a reflection on impermanence. (See explanation of the commentary to the '*Chann-Ovāda-Suttaini*' ('The Advice-to-Channa Sutta'), M.III.v.2)

¹²⁹ See also the four types of perception (sañña) in A.VII.v.6 '*Dutiya-Sañña-Suttaini*' ('The Second Perception Sutta') and M.I.v.10 '*Māra-Tajjanīya-Suttaini*' ('The Blameable-Māra Sutta').

Conclusion

‘Although any meditation subject, no matter what is successful only in one who is mindful and fully aware, yet any meditation subject other than this one gets more evident as he goes on giving it his attention.’¹³⁰ In this condition, *ānāpānasati* practice is significantly different from other meditation subjects.

But as the skills (and concentration) improve, a meditator can cognize the still conceptual breath-object (mass of breath) without delay, even as breathing gets a little fast or gross while walking. To focus on the still conceptual breath (wisdom breath), a meditator needs not wait for the breath to become very subtle. By applying the technique skilfully and following the rules, a meditator can manage to maintain the still conceptual breath throughout the practice of *ānāpānasati* although there may be changes of colour as well as brightness of the breath object (mass of breath).

Ānāpānasati meditation is really profound. Strong wisdom is necessary to develop meditation.

As concentration becomes developed and deepened gradually, the external focusing style sometimes seems not consistent in detail from phase to phase. Especially when the still conceptual breath-object (mass of breath) becomes transparent and three dimensional, the sense of direction will become weaker — the sense of distance between mental eye and object will be (almost) lost when a meditator fixes his mind (wisdom and mindfulness) firmly on the focus-object. The external focusing approach (used in the early stage and middle stage (penetrative phases) of practice) is no longer applicable when the meditator can focus and concentrate on the transparent mass of breath. How’s that? The meditator’s mind (wisdom eye) can focus somewhere within the transparent mass of breath. Thereafter,

¹³⁰ Visuddhimagga viii.

they feel as if sinking into this clear homogeneous object and the previous focusing style (focusing direction and distance between the wisdom eye and focus-object, target) is no longer obvious. Sometimes we refer to such type of focusing within the transparent mass of breath as **'Internal Focusing Approach'**. Concentration on the transparent mass of breath through the internal focusing approach will become stronger and deeper, thereby lessening the distracting thoughts. With continued practice, (after passing some sinking phases or stages,) it (soon) becomes apparent to meditator that the mass of breath changes its manifestation, and it appears as a more purified image, like the moon's disk, like a mirror disk drawn from its case, like a mother-of-pearl dish well washed.¹³¹ And then he or she is able to discern the jhāna factors.¹³² At this stage a yogi will reach either access concentration or absorption concentration.

Both these types of concentration have the stable, vivid breath-object. There are bright and radiant lights of wisdom. The difference between them is that in access concentration the jhāna factors are not fully developed. For this reason bhavaṅgas still occur, and a yogi can fall into bhavaṅgas (life-continuum consciousness).¹³³ When access has arisen, the mind now makes the sign its object and now re-enters the life-continuum.

¹³¹ Purified image of breath is herein used to refer to counterpart sign of concentration (*paṭibhāga-nimitta*).

¹³² In the case of ānāpānasati, the five jhāna factors are: 1) Application (*vitakka*): directing and placing the mind on the counterpart sign of concentration. 2) Sustainment (*vicāra*): maintaining the mind on the counterpart sign of concentration. 3) Joy (*pīti*): liking for the counterpart sign of concentration. 4) Bliss (*sukha*): happiness about the counterpart sign of concentration. 5) One-pointedness (*ekaggatā*): one-pointedness of mind on the counterpart sign of concentration.

See footnote 8, 95, 112.

¹³³ The yogi will say that everything stopped, and may even think it is Nibbāna. In reality the consciousness has not stopped, but the yogi is just not sufficiently skilled to discern this, because the bhavaṅgas are very subtle.

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When he reaches jhāna, his mind will know the stable, vivid breath [mass] object without interruption. Here he needs to learn how to develop mastery (*vasī-bhāva*) of the jhāna and develop them. Meditators can learn how to develop mastery of the jhāna in the suttas and ‘Knowing and Seeing’ taught by the Venerable Pa-Auk Tawya Sayadaw.

Now we would like to stop our discussion on *ānāpānasati* practice. Before we finish this discussion, we would like to remind you again that the technique mentioned is intended for beginning and improving meditators who have yet to attain concentration. In fact, as we have already discussed the principle, some of the rules and conditions of *ānāpānasati* practice, by learning these well, not only will it be really helpful for yogis to understand **‘the lower phases of concentration (beginning stage of practice, early stage of practice and middle stage of practice)’** but also it will provide a foundation for breaking through each phase in higher stages of concentration.

Now at the end of this discussion you already understand that it is not easy for trivial persons to grasp the principle of *ānāpānasati* throughout the course of practice. There are many more details that you can learn by practising with a proper teacher. Herein, we would like to quote some notes mentioned in the texts.

“This *ānāpānasati* as a meditation subject—is foremost among the various meditation subjects of all Buddhas, (some) Pacceka Buddhas and (some) Buddhas’ disciples as a basis for attaining distinction and abiding in bliss here and now.”¹³⁴

“But this *ānāpānasati* is difficult, difficult to develop, a field in which only the minds of Buddhas, Pacceka Buddhas, and Buddhas’ sons are at home. It is no trivial matter, nor can it be cultivated by trivial persons. In proportion as continued attention

¹³⁴ Aṅguttara-Nikāya.v, 135 and Visuddhimagga viii.

is given to it, it becomes more peaceful and subtler. So, strong mindfulness and wisdom are necessary here.”¹³⁵

The numerous obstacles that are on your way can be understood using one key: — The principle of *ānāpānasati* practice— “Focus on the nostril area and then on the mass of breath. And cognize it.” Anyway, it is better for meditators who are developing concentration to practise under the close guidance of a competent teacher.

May you succeed in *ānāpānasati* meditation.
May you be well and happy.

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¹³⁵ Visuddhimagga viii.

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Ānāpānasati Sutta, Majjhima-Nikāya :

- ▶ *Ānāpānasati, bhikkhave, bhāvitā bahulīkatā maha-pphalā hoti mahānisaṁsā.*
- ▶ *Ānāpānasati, bhikkhus, when developed and cultivated, is of great fruit and great benefit.*
- ▶ *Ānāpānasati, para bhikkhu, ketika dikembangkan, akan menghasilkan buah dan manfaat yang besar.*

- *Ānāpānasati, bhikkhave, bhāvitā bahulīkatā cattāro sati-paṭṭhāne paripūreti.*
- *Ānāpānasati, bhikkhus, when developed and cultivated, fulfils the four foundations of mindfulness.*
- *Ānāpānasati, para bhikkhu, ketika dikembangkan, akan menyempurnakan empat landasan perhatian.*

- *Cattāro sati-paṭṭhāne bhāvitā bahulīkatā satta bojjhaṅge paripūrenti.*
- *The four foundations of mindfulness, when developed and cultivated, fulfil the seven enlightenment factors.*
- *Empat landasan perhatian, ketika dikembangkan, akan menyempurnakan tujuh faktor pencerahan.*

- ▶ *Satta bojjhaṅgā bhāvitā bahulīkatā vijjā-vimuttiṁ paripūrenti.*
- ▶ *The seven enlightenment factors, when developed and cultivated, fulfil True Knowledge and Liberation.*
- ▶ *Tujuh faktor pencerahan, ketika dikembangkan, akan Pengetahuan Kebenaran dan Pembebasan Tertinggi Nibbāna...*