

BREATHING

the natural way to meditate



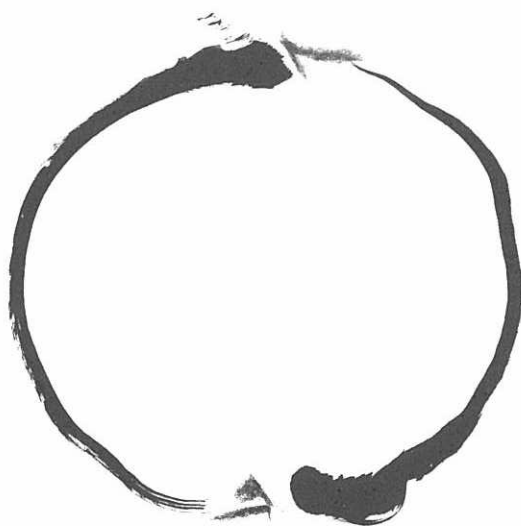
Tarchin Hearn

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BREATHING

the natural way to meditate

Revised Edition



Tarchin Hearn

Writings by Tarchin Hearn

Natural Awakening: the way of the heart

Growth & Unfolding: our human birthright

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Foundations of Mindfulness: A Manual for Meditators

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for everyone

Breathing - the natural way to meditate
Revised Edition

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Foreword to the second edition

Breathing is warm and moist and sensual. Its continuous rhythm, along with the beat of our heart, is the most obvious demonstration of our aliveness. In breathing, delicate innermost tissues meet and mingle with exhalations of all the other living breathing beings in the world. Breathing is a doorway, a threshold of arriving and parting, a gateway of mystery which is available to any who care to flower in trust and sensitivity and wide-awakeness.

As I type these words, I am sitting in the bright sunlight of Western Australia, fingers resting on the keyboard, appreciating the fine muscular movements of my own breathing. In my imagination, I can see you the reader, holding a book and pausing as you read these words to feel the smooth rhythms of your own somatic song. Sometimes, I think music is a better medium than words to describe this living mystery. The music of our breathing sings with the music of the world. In breathing, molecu-

Mastering the
music of living

lar and cellular processes, weaving together the living tap-
estries of our bodies, meet and merge with the rhythms of
surrounding environments in an eternally creative sym-
phony. Every minute of every day we are the stanzas and
bars of this self-arising chorus of awakening.

In Herman Hesse's book, *The Glass Bead Game*, the
teacher of the main character is a music master. What
could it mean to be a master of this music of living? To be
able to hear each individual instrument. To understand
how one affects the others and to appreciate the combi-
nations of all of them together. To know the secret arts
whereby each instrument was fashioned. To hold the
magical key that unlocks the heartstrings of each musi-
cian so that their entire being pours out through their
instrument in a cascade of loving intimacy that calls eve-
ryone to awaken their own unique treasury of compas-
sion and deep understanding. This is the music of medi-
tation, the universe musing on and within itself. It has
been sounding for as long as we have existed. It is closer
than hands and feet. Can we glimpse it again with a little
more understanding and in doing so take a few steps in
the direction of mastery?

Refinement is a
never ending
process

The contemplations outlined in the following pages
have been part of my life for more than thirty years, both
in terms of personal exploration and in terms of teaching
and leading retreats. Throughout this time, experience
continues to blossom and refine. I suspect this is a never
ending process. When the first edition came out in 1991,
it was mostly written for people who were new to
meditation practice. In the intervening years I've met a
growing number of people who can appreciate a deeper

exposition and so this edition has been quite extensively revised and added to, especially in the third and fourth tetrads.

Rewriting *Breathing*, has provided an opportunity to draw together in a single volume, what have been some major sources of inspiration in my own life and to present them as a path of awakening that, hopefully, can inspire beings at any stage of their journey. Although techniques are given, much more important is the flavour of meditation, the attitude we bring to each moment of living. The Buddha's teaching on mindfulness of breathing is often associated with the Theravadin traditions of Southeast Asia particularly Thailand, Burma and Sri Lanka. In this book I would like to present it from a Tibetan Mahamudra/ Dzogchen perspective. I suspect that for some practicing Buddhists, this will be a novel approach. If, however, you are not familiar with Buddhist teaching but have explored other meditative or spiritual traditions, my hope is that the ideas in these pages will spark many moments of recognition and refreshed understanding. If you consider yourself new to meditation and the path of awakening, I hope that this book will help you touch the essence of the work in a sensible and practical way.

Breathing combines a do-it-yourself working manual with splashes of poetic inspiration. Although it is short in length, it hints at many layers of meaning and understanding. To read it without practising may intellectually inspire you but this would be a bit like reading a book on cooking without actually preparing the food or eating the meal. Study and practice go hand in hand. Study clarifies the practice. Practice makes the old and familiar fresh and new. With this in mind, you may find that reading the book and then practising, and then

rereading it and practising again, and so on, will gradually lead you into deeper understanding and experience.

Due to technical difficulties with fonts and formatting, we have decided to leave out the diacritical marks in the Pali and Sanskrit words that are used in the main body of the text. A glossary at the end, has the correct spelling for those who are interested. In addition, there is an extensive appendix with more detailed instructions on a number of specific points.

Acknowledgements

It is a pleasure to acknowledge some of the beings who have contributed to this second edition. All my myriad teachers are in these pages. Without you, this book would never have come into being. To each of you I offer up a prayer of gratitude. Especially I want to acknowledge the late Venerable Namgyal Rinpoché, whose respect for, and skill in, so many diverse schools and paths of liberation has implanted in me a willingness to value all paths of awakening and to not get sidetracked into sectarian politics. I feel this is a particular blessing at this time in human history.

The work of producing even a small book, such as this, takes an immense amount of effort. I am grateful to all the beings who, over the years, have supported the activities of Wangapeka Books, freely contributing their talents. Especially I want to thank Mary Jenkins, Silananda, Phil Dyer, Dominique de Borrekens, Bev Askam, Michael MacKinnon, Sian Robertson, Leander Kane, Dawa Rowley and Punyasri for their generous contributions to this edition. May your kind efforts flower in many dimensions for the sake of many beings.



Introduction to the first edition

Frequently, at the very end of a public talk, someone has come up and asked to be taught to meditate and I know it's unlikely we will cross paths again. Although it is possible to give a few bare bones instructions at a time like this, it is not so easy to convey the spirit of meditation. One of the most common difficulties in developing the meditative mind is the tendency to forget the advice you received precisely at the time you most need it! Ideally you should be taught meditation orally, with plenty of opportunity for follow-up dialogue after you have experimented a bit on your own. This way you can straighten out any misunderstandings before they become internalized in the form of new habit patterns.

This book combines the step by step detail of an instruction manual with an overview to meditation and the process of awakening which can be usefully applied to any type of contemplative practice. It is not a theoretical treatise. It was written for people who really want to

How to use this
book

meditate and who actually do meditate. It was written for those people who asked at the end of the class and also for those that have studied with me but might still benefit from a reminder or two. Hopefully this book will be of use to those questioning beings who have never had any teaching in meditation but are ripe and ready to begin.

If you are new to meditation, I suggest you read up to the end of the first tetrad (p.65). Then come back to the beginning and try out each exercise or suggestion on its own. That way, you will get a feel for the various stages. Don't be in a hurry. Gradually you will see how one section flows naturally into the next. After you are familiar with the first tetrad, then study further as you see fit. Some of your questions may be answered through reading. All of them can be answered through actually meditating.

I have quoted from parts of the *Anapanasati Sutta*, a Buddhist text on breathing meditation. It was originally taught to monks 2500 years ago and it uses the pronoun 'he'. I trust that readers will realize that this text addresses any person interested in studying and practising the path of awakening and not get derailed by male/female debates. I have largely avoided the problem in my own writing by addressing you directly.



The Spirit of Meditation

*Oh meditators ...
Are you sure you are meditating?
Have you become the great ocean
Receiving all the rivers
the tributaries of being?*

Interest in life

The natural way to meditate has little to do with technique. It begins through being interested in life. Feel the stirring of curiosity in the cells of your being. Allow this yearning to understand and experience more fully, to express itself. I want to know, cries the beat of the heart. I want to open the doors of life. What is this marvel we call the body? What is this mystery called speech and communication? What is this wonder called mind? When we are interested and engaged, even so called negatives can be seen as extraordinary. How did the growth of this planet, the flow of evolution, the history of the human race and its interactions with the environment, give rise to this situation that I call a difficulty, an illness or a neurotic pattern? Where are the negatives now?

Entering the
wonder

The next time there is a clear night, go outside and look at the stars. Then look at your hand and contemplate how the atoms of your hand were formed billions of years ago in the nuclear furnaces of distant stars. Consider the immense journey they have taken participating in countless forms, until now they are here, manifesting as a human hand. After you've thought about it a bit, going back and forth from star to hand and hand to star, then really feel your hand. At the same time focus on your breathing. In this moment of stillness, while tracking the tides of breath flowing in and out, can you sense the wonder of it all?

We usually measure our age from when we were born. Occasionally, we feel that older people have more wisdom and knowledge due to their greater experience. The material of our bodies was born about fifteen billion years ago. Perhaps there's some wisdom here! Consider this patterning of atoms brought together in a solar system complete with jewel like planets. It took fifteen billion years to build this body, fifteen billion years of intelligent shaping. What an awesome and wondrous story is life.

The worship of
technique

Future generations, reflecting on the 20th and 21st centuries, may call it an age of technology, a time when beings worshipped techniques. We sell them and barter them and teach them in the classrooms. We franchise them and, when backed up by religious mana, we even bestow them with great pomp and ceremony. We spend the first third of our lives learning them. We often feel lost and confused without them. And yet, isn't it a bit meaningless to talk about techniques when we're considering the big questions of life? What techniques were used to build the universe? What techniques does a foetus use to grow?

Not only are we addicted to techniques, we are also lost in a jungle of words and concepts. Many people do have moments of profound question, but for most beings a question nearly always demands an answer and an answer is usually expected in words. At conception when the egg and sperm came together, that was a kind of question. There was a type of organism expectation, a gestating potential. What will be the future of this union? The answer didn't depend on words. The foetus took shape without words. The cells danced and divided as they streamed through intricate geometries of space and time, seeking their right place, developing their form and function. All this without words. You navigated the birth canal, miraculously transforming from a fish being, swimming in the amnion, to a terrestrial creature. You were born without words. Your circulation changed, lungs opened, and gravity gripped the body. The senses took a quantum leap, awakening to increasing light, sound, touch, smell and taste. All of this was done without words. You journeyed on, seeking the breast, seeking a vast array of nutriment that would transform into the living you. At this very moment your biochemistry is pulsing with the energy fields of the sun and the moon and the biospheres of the planet. All of this without words. Perhaps it is possible to probe and question without words. When consciously immersed in this process of seeking and growing without words you are really meditating.

Let me illustrate this further. What would you think of a person that asks you a question and then, before you could reply, sticks his fingers tightly in his ears and shuts his eyes? It's not enough to verbally ask a question. You also have to be open for response. Imagine you are in a field of wild flowers and want to know which ones the

A state of
question

bees prefer. Without speaking but with your senses open and alert, carefully observing bees and flowers, we could say that you were in a state of question. Basically, the state of question is a state of open receptivity. It is a state where the body and mind are vitally alert and fully engaged in the present moment. It includes a willingness to be continuously transformed through experience. In a way, this too is meditation.

We emerge from the womb; a living organism, a reaching out to know. We are children not only of our mothers but of society, of nature, of the universe, of an awesome intelligent shaping beyond any simple theory or understanding. Much of our early life was spent fabricating an identity, a sense of self. Gradually the emphasis shifted to protecting it. Our families, society and the education system have reinforced this so that we have become experts at recognizing and manipulating identity. We are so busy trying to know who we are, we rarely experience what we are.

The purpose of
meditation

Meditation cuts right across this habit stream. It reawakens question into the wholeness of being. It is not merely for dealing with problems, or for relieving stress, or for giving you more control over your life. It is to awaken to the universal and multidimensional story of what you are. This is the real path of health. The fundamental tool of meditation is curiosity. The field of exploration is nature. Nature exploring nature. Go to it!

Good meditation has the feeling of a calm, focused, investigation punctuated with the quiet joy of discovery. It has a very clear, crystal quality; a stillness and a groundedness that is also bright and alert and probing.

The traditional picture of a religious hermit renouncing the world of delusion is both misleading and out of date. Meditation needs to have more the feel of a scientist, a seeker of truth, exploring in the laboratory of living experience. It really has little, if anything, to do with religion though it can lead to states of reverence, awe and universal love.

Meditation is not
penance

Often, we associate meditation with going on retreat, which to some looks very much like escape. This is a pity. Instead of retreats it would be more useful to think of advances or at least treats to be had again and again. It's a treat to feel vitally alive and to make new discoveries. Too often, people meditate as if they were undergoing a heavy penance for past sins. The whole exercise is a colossal struggle which they hope will somehow be good for them. They imagine that if they keep slugging away at their practice, if they could just get rid of their various distractions, eventually the light would dawn and bingo; the end of their problems. Oh that life were so simple! Trying to meditate with this attitude keeps us out of touch with the very qualities that nurture us; a sense of spaciousness, and an ongoing involvement with growth and discovery.

Nowfulness

We are buoyed up and carried along by an enormous river of life. Everything that happened in the past has played a part in shaping the present moment. From stars to planets, to life forms, to human history, to grandparents, to childhood, to adolescence, to reading these lines. Just as the past has led to the present, so the present is the seed of the future. But past and future are mental concepts that can be very misleading. Actually, what we call the past is just an idea, a thought happening now at this very moment. The future is also a thought happening

now. Everything we think, feel and experience happens only in the now. In this book we will see meditation as a process of entering ever more deeply into the fullness of now. It is frequently referred to as the practice of mindfulness but perhaps we should call it an exploration of nowfulness.



True fulfillment

Many people yearn for a sense of fulfillment. True fulfillment is registered in the cells and juices of the body. It's not found in the mirror of parental opinion. You feel fulfilled when you feel vitally alive, when the moment is filled to the full and is flowing harmoniously. Christ spoke of having life and that more abundantly.* It's from fullness that the overflow of abundance takes place. This present moment is always available to us but we are usually so busy trying to be someone, or trying to achieve something that we don't have the time or the openness to experience the fullness and richness of now. The truth is, our lives can be cluttered without being abundant. We are so busy.

* John 10:10

Places to go. People to see. Things to do. Full of fear. Full of expectation but not filled to the full – the fullness of now, an unfolding universe knowing and appreciating itself.

The ultimate meditation instruction in the Christian tradition is this, “Be still and know that thou art God.” In the Tibetan tradition of Mahamudra* it is said, “Give up all clinging and the essence will at once emerge.” How wonderfully simple but, in actual practice, few are able to follow these guidelines. They find themselves looking for more specific instructions. What exactly should I be doing? Over the years, teachers have made innumerable suggestions to help people approach this natural state of pure and total presence. Many of these suggestions came to be transmitted as techniques and methods so that today we have a large number of meditation schools and teachings.

Once in Toronto, Canada, I saw a spiritual ‘yellow pages’ that had two or three hundred different schools and traditions listed. Each of them had their own bundle of techniques. There’s no shortage of teachers and teachings to tell you what to do, yet it seems that even though many people faithfully follow instructions step by step, few discover the natural mind of meditation.

* *Mahamudra* is to know and experience the union of the true nature of being and non-clinging bliss/joy. Another way of expressing this is, the innate union of wisdom and compassion. More technically, mahamudra is to dwell in the inseparable union of true *samatha* and true *vipassana*.

The term mahamudra is used to indicate both a state of realisation and the path one walks to realize it. The Karma Kagyu tradition of Tibetan Buddhism was, and still is, well known for its preservation and practice of this teaching.

Types of Meditation

There are a vast array of meditation techniques which according to the ancient teachings can be divided into seven major categories. Each one can potentially support a path of curiosity and investigation that, when followed, will lead us ever more deeply into the fullness of now.

Breathing

The first and most widely practised category uses observation of breathing as a support. Of all the types of meditation, this is perhaps the most natural. It could be thought of as the natural way to meditate. It is simple, straightforward and in theory, given the initial instructions, one could experience the entire path of awakening, discovering the various stages of breathing meditation without any further guidance from a teacher. Each stage flows naturally and seamlessly into the next.

Point

The second category is meditation that focuses on a point either inside, or outside the body. Outside points are good for initial work. These would involve meditating on objects such as a candle or a spot on the floor. Inside points require a greater degree of emotional stability and detachment. When points inside the body are used (these are sometimes called chakras), the neuroendocrine system can be affected sometimes giving rise to strong shifts in the play of physical sensations, emotions and mental activity. When this happens you need to be able to rest in the experience dispassionately, without getting carried away by emotional reaction.

Visualisation

The third category uses visualisation as a support. This involves focusing on an image held in the mind's eye. These are often archetypal or universal images, skillfully chosen to balance the energies and to lead the meditator into new dimensions of experience. Disciplined creative imagination work would come in this section.

Sound

Sound is the fourth category or support. This is usually called mantra meditation. *Mantra* derives from *mano* meaning mind and *tra* which has a sense of fixing or stabilizing or making firm. *Tra* also invokes the idea of a tool. So a mantra is a tool to fix or make firm the mind.

These meditations usually begin with making sounds out loud. If you chant or speak and at the same time listen carefully to the sound of your voice, you'll find there is little attention left for wandering thoughts.

Working with single syllables, especially broad vowel sounds, will actually massage the interior of the organism. It's a bit like tuning a scientific instrument. Imagine your body is a sensitive receiver which you fine-tune so that it can respond sympathetically to all the sound vibrations within and around you. Gradually mantra work shifts from making sounds out loud to deep sensitive listening.

Movement

The fifth category of meditation involves physical movement as a path into the mystery of now. Disciplines such as Tai Chi, Aikido, Kum Nye and Feldenkrais, as well as sacred dance, for example Sufi Dervish turning, could be included here. Less exotic exercises that focus on posture, walking, and general movement are the most fundamental of this class.

Devotion

The sixth category includes all devotional practices. These are the ceremonial aspects of religion. They harness the power of emotion, for example, the yearning for freedom, for God, or for the development of compassion and wisdom. Prayer would come in this category.

These first six categories of meditation are often thought of as calm abiding practices or *samatha* meditations (pronounced *sah-mah-tah*). They are basically meditations that, when skillfully developed, can encourage a deepening sense of tranquility and calm; an easeful resting with whatever is arising.

Insight

The seventh category has a slightly different emphasis. It's called *vipassana* or insight meditation (pronounced *vi-pah-sah-nah*). It will naturally arise from a calm clear state of samatha. Vipassana is deep seeing/understanding into the nature and workings of life. In terms of activity, vipassana is the aspect of enquiry, investigation and question. It has a quality that is probing, exploring and naturally curious. In essence, it is the clear knowing aspect of each moment. When samatha and vipassana arise harmoniously together, this is the true dawning of freedom.

Breathing the natural way to meditate



In general, there are two major approaches to breathing meditation. One involves controlling the breath in order to encourage particular states of body, energy and mind. Pranayama yoga, kundalini yoga and vase breathing are examples of this type of meditation. The other approach is quite different. Here, any effort to control the breathing is abandoned. Using the observation of breathing as a basic support while investigating the current state of your body, energies and mind, you simply study the natural rhythms and processes that are arising in the moment. This is the type of meditation we will be concerned with throughout the rest of the book.

Earliest teaching

The oldest recorded teaching on breathing meditation was given by the Buddha, 2500 years ago. Over the course of forty years of teaching he presented many discourses

on this topic which were preserved in a number of different Buddhist texts. Perhaps the clearest and most succinct is found in the 118th discourse of the *Majjima Nikaya*, the collection of middle length sayings. It is called the *Anapanasati Sutta*.*

Sutta is a Pali[†] word which means oral teaching. The equivalent word in Sanskrit is *sutra*. *Sutta* or *sutra* literally means 'that which was heard'. *Sati* means to remember but it is most often translated as mindfulness or awareness. *Pana* in Pali, or *prana* in Sanskrit, is usually associated with breathing; although it refers more to energy. Ultimately, *anapanasati* is much more than merely observing the breathing. It is a path of awakening through studying the comings and goings of energy that support each moment of life. You begin with the ebb and flow of breathing but this gradually leads to awareness of much vaster realms of experience.

The Anapanasati Sutta reads like this.

And how developed, bhikkhus, how repeatedly practised, is respiration-mindfulness of great fruit, of great benefit?

Here bhikkhus, a bhikkhu, gone to the forest, or to the root of a tree, or to an empty place, sits down; having folded

*The complete text can be found in the booklet, *Mindfulness of Breathing* translated by Bhikkhu Nanamoli, Buddhist Publication Society, 1952. I have quoted in italics a part of the introduction plus the four tetrads. A more recent translation was done by Bhikkhu Bodhi and is found in *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha*, Wisdom Publications, 1995.

† Pali was the language of the earliest Buddhist texts. These were recorded in Sri Lanka roughly 400 years after the Buddha lived. Just as Latin was the ecclesiastical language of the Catholic Church, so today, Pali remains as the ecclesiastical language of the Buddhists of Burma, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

his legs crosswise, set his body erect, established mindfulness in front of him, ever mindful he breathes in, mindful he breathes out.

Free to ask
question

The word *Bhikkhu* is usually translated as ‘monk’, but it also means ‘homeless one’ or ‘wanderer.’ The Tibetan equivalent of *bhikkhu* is *gelong* which has the additional meaning of ‘one who is free to ask questions’, ‘one who can question and investigate, unconstrained by defensive hopes and fears.’ In this sense you too are potentially a *bhikkhu*. You have arisen in the universe from you know not where. You wander through life and hopefully wonder about life. Stopping here, and now there, pausing for a while before moving on again. You’re really a nomad with only temporary homes. The less you limit yourself with views of what you should be and what you ought to do, the more free you will be to ask questions and to exercise your innate curiosity. This question/investigation/natural curiosity, this *bhikkhu*-ing, can lead to seeing that life is very different from what you’ve been taught to think it is.

A supportive
environment

The first part of the sutta describes preparing for meditation. Ideally you should choose a place for meditation that is clean, spacious and resonates naturalness. A location with fresh air will help to keep you alert. An uncluttered environment will encourage less distractions. Although it is good to meditate outside in natural surroundings, if you live in a city, you may end up doing most of your meditation indoors. If this is the case you can support your explorations by having a place, even if it is a very small place, that is tucked away from the bustle of activity. If you can, set aside a room or corner of a room for meditation. You might have one or two objects of

beauty and inspiration to remind you of qualities of life that are important to you. Be a bit 'Japanese' about this and keep the place clean and simple. Eventually you will associate this niche with quiet introspective work and it will become a very special spot.

Places for
meditation

Gone to the forest, or to the root of a tree, or to an empty place is not just referring to an outer location. Although meditating in a forest or at the root of a tree or in an empty place can be very supportive, the text is also hinting at an inner mental space that will readily support the work of awakening.

A forest of
becoming

A forest is composed of branches, leaves, trunks, roots, rain, earth, sunlight and myriad creatures, all interacting as one cohesive ecosystem. *Gone to the forest* means that you begin meditation in a mental space that is sensitive to the rich interconnectedness of life. Thoughts are influencing feelings, shaping physiology, determining activity, moulding intentions, giving birth to emotions, and so forth. You go to the centre of this forest of becoming, a vast webbing of time and space that supports the fullness of now, and begin your exploration here.

The root of a tree

Sitting at the root of a tree points to the source, the fount of creation. Here the text suggests you begin meditating at the very root of your being, the central heart of the matter, the place where the visible tree and its roots, the conscious and unconscious, seamlessly meet. This is a subtle, grounded space, balanced on the threshold of knowing and not knowing. It requires courage and honesty to dwell here and it can be an immensely fruitful space in which to meditate.

An empty space

An empty place indicates the heart/mind is clear, spacious and open; not engaged in story making and general

mental chatter. Here, there is an alertness, a fresh sense of openness without any expectation.

The Buddha suggests that you begin your exploration in one of these three places, whichever one most readily draws you. Keeping in mind that the outer environment supports and shapes the inner environment, choose your place accordingly.



Having hinted at a suitable place in which to meditate, the text then refers to posture and using the breath as a point of focus: “... *having folded his legs crosswise, set his body erect, established mindfulness in front of him, ever mindful he breathes in, mindful he breathes out*”. Before continuing further with the Anapanasati Sutta, we will take a slight detour to look at some general guidelines for meditation that will help to support and deepen any contemplative work.

General Guidelines

A session of meditation can be divided into seven steps. As a beginner you may wish to spend a fair bit of time exploring each step individually. As you gradually become more familiar with them, the steps will flow together and you will see that they are different parts of a single, natural process. Once this has happened, feel free to craft the guidelines to fit your present state of energies.

Notice that they're called guidelines. They are based on 2500 years of tradition and have worked well for hundreds of thousands of meditators. Nevertheless, each being is unique and, depending on circumstances, you may need to emphasize some parts more than others. Remember, the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. Meditation techniques are taught in order to help free people, not to get them to meditate the 'right' way.

While appreciating the experience of those who have gone before, don't become a slave to the method. Add to it some sensitivity and all your innate intelligence and learn to craft a method that will work well for you.

1 Physical Exercise

Begin fresh
and alert

To explore deeply, you want to encourage a loose, open mind of investigation. The first and most obvious step towards this is to make sure your body is relaxed and energized. When the body feels fresh, open and alert, the mind does too. Check the state of your body before beginning to meditate. If it feels tired and lethargic, or

alternately, tense, upright, agitated or restless, then do some vigorous exercise followed by some stretching. This is so obvious one feels a bit ridiculous even mentioning it. People know that physical exercise can make them feel better but they are often too lazy to do it, especially when they most need it.

Meditation is like a magnifying glass. It will expand and clarify the qualities that are already present. If you start out feeling dull, you will often just have a dull meditation. If the weather is hot, take a shower and put on clean clothes before sitting so that you feel fresh and awake. Remember you are meditating in order to wake up, to know life more fully. Support this by beginning in as fresh, energized and awake a state as possible.

2 *Posture and Centering*

There are four main postures for meditation; sitting, standing, walking and lying down.* In retreat you learn to work with all of them. If you have only a limited amount of time each day to meditate, experiment with these four and then use whichever one best supports your exploration.

Essence of good
posture

Take up a posture that feels both relaxed and alert. Many people raised in a culture where chairs are the normal way of sitting will probably find it best to use a chair. Do you want to look like a yogi or do you want a posture that actually supports exploration? The most important consideration in sitting is to have your back upright without straining the muscles. This way the abdominal area will be open and the breathing can flow without obstruction.

* See the appendix *Posture* (p.122) for more details.

Try grasping some hair at the crown of your head and gently pull it up while letting the hair slide between your fingers. Imagine that there is a fine thread extending from your head far into the sky. It gently guides you up. You'll find that when you do this your spine will straighten as if you are being lifted and your chin will tend to come slightly in toward your chest. Then let your shoulders hang loosely and your abdomen relax. Have the eyes half open and looking ahead.*

It's interesting to explore how we communicate with others through body language but have you realized that your body posture is also communicating to you? A dull depressed body will encourage a dull depressed mind just as an agitated body will encourage an agitated mind. In a similar way, a happy body will help support a happy mind.

Listen to the
body

Once you have taken up a posture then, with a great deal of sensitivity, mentally feel your way into the body. Listen to what it is saying. Is this posture likely to support a balance of relaxation and alertness? If you have too much relaxation there may be a tendency to go to sleep. On the other hand, if there is too much alertness, this will increase the likelihood of mental chatter. After you've scanned through the body, if the posture doesn't feel good then shift it. After that, go inside and check it out again. You may not be able to come up with the perfect posture but you can use your sensitivity to find the best one possible at this time.

After you have established your posture, with open eyes, become aware of what is in front of you. Note the various

* See the appendix *Eye Position* (p.125) for further suggestions.

Centered and
spacious

objects and then imagine you can look right through and beyond them. For example, if you are sitting in a room, you might see the wall and then, as if it became transparent, the street on the other side of the wall, and the houses across the street, and the trees behind them, and the beach and the sky and so on. Extend the sense of space in front as far as your imagination will allow. The point is not so much to 'see' all the things in front but to develop a tangible feeling of vast space in front of you.

Then physically look behind you and go through the same process. Extend the feeling of spaciousness as far as you can. Combine it with the space in front so that you feel held in a sandwich of space. Now do the same process with the right direction and then with the left. Explore the sense of being at the centre of an infinitely large wheel of space. Next, become aware of the space above you. Extend it up, through the roof and out to the stars. Finally add the awareness of the space below, the floor, the ground, the bedrock and possibly right out the other side of the planet until you realise there are myriad stars below you. Once you have established all of these directions; front, back, right, left, up, and down, then allow some time to settle into the feeling of sitting relaxed and alert in the centre of a vast sphere of space.

You'll find that practising this centering exercise is a very worthwhile experience on its own. Take it into your daily life. Try it at times when you are not meditating. Eventually you will be able to contact the feeling of being spaciouly centered in just a matter of seconds.

Energise the
organism

3 Deep Breathing

Once you have established a good posture and a sense of being spaciouly centered then put some sparkle into the energy field by doing some deep breathing. Take four or five full inhalations and exhalations and then focus your attention on the sensations of breathing in the area of the nostrils. Stay with this until your energies feel bright and settled.

A more powerful way to energize and balance the organism is to do the *Breath of Nine Blowings*. This is described in the appendix (p.126).

Clarify your
intent

4 Aspiration/Determination

It's important to be clear about why you are meditating. You've stretched the body, established a good posture and energized the organism with breathing. Now, consider your aspiration. In Pali, this is called *adhitthana* (pronounced *aday-ta-na*). Why are you meditating? What are you trying to achieve? What are the steps in the method that you are using? For good meditation you need to be very clear about these things.

Too often people sit down to meditate and just aimlessly drift about with no clear sense of what they are doing. Compared to the busy-ness of their lives, a floaty spaced out calm, can feel quite relaxing. One Tibetan lama named this type of meditation, stupidity meditation, because if you practise it a lot you will gradually become more and more stupefied. I think of it as hibernation meditation or as one of my teachers, Kalu

Meditation is for
exploration

Rinpoché, called it, 'marmot meditation'.* If your practice becomes a kind of hibernation, after a while it will likely feel a bit repetitive and boring and you'll probably end up abandoning it. Either that, or you'll become an accomplished sleeping yogi! A good rest can be very wonderful. It is sometimes just what we need, but a life of awakening is not only about resting. You also need alertness and a sense of discovery. Remind yourself that meditation is a tool for exploration and growth. In this particular session of meditation, what do you intend to explore and why? In Zen it is said the greater the question, the greater the awakening. No question, no awakening! We could just as well say, the greater the alert, engaged, interest, the greater the awakening. Absence of alert, engaged interest is moving to 'asleepening'!

Two fold
aspiration/intent

Your statement of aspiration or intent could be two fold; one large and embrative and the other more specific to this moment in your life. For example, the embrative one may go something like this. 'Through this practice may I develop wisdom and compassion for the sake of all beings.' Or, 'during this session may I meet everything that arises with kindness and interest'. The more specific aspiration for someone just beginning meditation may involve reviewing the instructions or strengthening their determination to stay with the object of meditation and not to get lost in mental escape manoeuvres.

Ask yourself; what do I want from this practice? Then turn the answer into a statement of intent that gives direction to the meditation. Feel this aspiration in your

*Marmots are a type of rodent that live in Tibet and hibernate during the winters.

Tapping an ocean
of intuitive
wisdom

body. Perhaps a stirring, a quickening of the cells, a quiet determination to discover and enter new dimensions of experience and understanding. Life's too short to dawdle in negative patterns. I'm reminded of a cartoon character named Toby Tyler. He used to say, "them that don't goes forwards, goes backwards!"

Not only will the aspiration help you go forward but gradually you will discover that reminding yourself of the important questions and themes that really interest you, before beginning a session of meditation, is a way of tapping into an ocean of intuitive wisdom. You state the question/intent and feel it working strongly throughout your being. Then let go of the verbal question and absorb yourself in the meditation exercise. When you emerge from a state of deep, calm absorption, you will find that the mind will often return to the question previously asked and present some new insight in that area.

5 *Main Practice*

Having prepared for meditation, then settle into whatever is your main practice which, in this book is breathing meditation. Anapanasati (breathing meditation) has sixteen stages of development which are divided into four sets of four, or four tetrads. Before exploring them further, we will finish speaking about the general format for meditation and return to consider the main practice in the next chapter.

6 *Review*

Harvest the
insights

At the end of each session, it's very valuable to develop the habit of reviewing the meditation. Allow about five minutes for this. You scan through the session while holding the question; what have I learned or, what have I experienced that is new or fresh? People often neglect to review. It's a bit like a farmer who does all the work to prepare the field and sow the seed. He weeds and waters and looks after the crop until it is full grown. Then suddenly he walks off, not bothering to bring in the harvest. Many people put a lot of good effort into their meditation only to rush off, neglecting to harvest the insights.

Review means simply to view it again. It is not an analysis or a critique. Go back to the beginning and recall the session with as much freshness and immediacy as you can. Just bring it into the conscious mind and allow it to have its effect on you.

Bring experiences
clearly into the
consciousness

I'm sure you've had the experience of waking up with a dream clearly in the mind. You don't bother to review it or write it down because it's so clear and then, three or four minutes later, it has completely evaporated. It's as if there is a threshold between the dream state and the awake state that you need to draw the dream across, in order to make it accessible to the waking mind. Meditation review is sometimes like this. In the meditation session the mind is often very calm, and subtle experiences can arise that are rarely noticed when one is busy. Before the busy habit mind re-emerges and covers over these subtle experiences, review them and bring them clearly into the realm of consciousness.

When I first began to meditate under the guidance of Namgyal Rinpoché, we students had to give weekly reports. At the time, I had all sorts of ideas about meditation and what it was supposed to do. Compared to my expectations, my practice always seemed to fall short of the mark. One week Rinpoché asked me what was happening in the meditation and I said “Nothing”. He instantly replied, “Don’t brag!” He paused, letting that sink in. “Did you feel your body? Did you have any sensations? Were there any thoughts?” Well, that set me thinking!

The review often surprises people. Where they thought that nothing much was happening in the meditation, they suddenly recognise that a whole complex weaving of life is taking place. This discovery gives encouragement to continue the practice. It also raises more questions that may become part of the statement of aspiration/intent for the next session.

Four Foundations of Mindfulness

If you are new to meditation it will help to review using *The Four Foundations of Mindfulness** as a guideline. These are the four most fundamental areas in which to develop awareness: body, feelings, mind states and phenomena. To fully wake up as a human being, you need to come to the point where there is a fairly continuous awareness of these four in your daily life, not just in the meditation sessions.

Body

Review what happened in your body (*kaya* in Pali). This would include itchings and tensions and jumpings and loosening, temperature shifts and pressure changes

* For a more complete understanding of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, see *Foundations of Mindfulness: A Manual for Meditators* by Tarchin Hearn, Wangapeka Books 2000

and so forth. Realise that the body is a dynamic, living, constantly changing phenomenon, complete with senses and that in a brief sitting, much is taking place.

Review what arose in the realm of feelings. In Pali this is called *vedana* pronounced (*way-da-nah*). Here we are not referring to emotions. These come under states of mind. By feelings we are referring to the process of evaluation. For example, you meet someone for the first time and get a feeling about them. There's an instant liking of them, or a disliking or a neutrality. A healthy feeling function is necessary for the survival of the organism. It operates all the time, constantly checking out all incoming experience. The functioning of the auto-immune system is one aspect of this process. Is this supportive to life? Is this life threatening? Is this neutral? Vedana arises with every moment of experience both inner and outer. It happens so fast that you usually act on it before you even realize the evaluation has been made.

Because the feeling function operates so quickly, at this stage, you will probably notice only generalized summations of the process. Perhaps the first ten minutes of meditation felt pretty good. Then there was a period that felt very unpleasant and the rest was rather neutral. Individual moments of vedana are so fleeting that you may not notice them directly. It is more likely you will see their footprints. You feel yourself moving towards aspects of experience or being repelled from them without recognizing the actual moment of decision.

Unfortunately, in many people, it seems as if the feeling function has been hijacked by the ego. Situations become judged on the basis of what supports or threatens

States of Mind

the ego image rather than on what is good for the whole organism. This often leads to very unhealthy decisions. Only by being more aware of the continuous stream of feeling/evaluation can we pause before we leap blindly into activities. A tremendous amount of freedom can be gained at this moment.

Review the states of mind that were present during the session. States of mind (in Pali, *citta*, pronounced *chita*) refer to the overall emotional flavour or quality of mind, not the content of mind. A state of mind can act like a pair of coloured glasses. While you are wearing them they tint everything you experience with a particular colour or tone. Dull, sharp, calm, soft, agitated, heavy, blissful, jealous, greedy, resentful, open, focused, angry, prideful, and so forth. In *Abhidhamma*, the deep psychology of Buddhism, it is interesting to note that of 121 different states of mind which are described, only twelve are considered to be unwholesome. The rest are either neutral or wholesome. This is quite different from the average modern being's perception of their mind states or emotions. We have many words to describe different shades of negativity. However, when it comes to naming the wholesome flavours, our vocabulary seems all too lean. People are often reduced to clichés; good, great, nice, cool, awesome, not bad. By reviewing the states of mind you will increase your discrimination and realise that you are supported by many more wholesome moments than you might think.

Through reviewing the first three foundations of mindfulness: physical happenings, the process of feeling/evaluation and the mind states, you will come to a much clearer understanding of how your overall organism func-

tions. These three colour the experiences of living. When you are unaware of them you often unconsciously project them onto the outer situation. An obvious example of this is how you respond to the same object or situation in totally different ways depending on whether you are feeling happy and energised or feeling dull and morose.

Phenomena

Dharma is the last area to review. Dharma means 'principle' or 'phenomena'. This is an infinitely vast category that may include insights, visions, inner sensings, memories, signs or symbols arising on the inner plane, understandings and so forth. In reviewing, most people are only looking for exotic dharmas; the big wow! carry-you-away profundities. They often overlook the small dharmas, the little insights, not to mention the other three areas of body, feelings and mind states. Be humble and accept what you find. It takes many little footsteps to complete a journey.

Learning to review all four categories each time you meditate is an effective way to develop sharpness of observation and a deeper appreciation of what is occurring moment by moment.

Evaluating your progress

In spite of all the urging to let go of expectation and enter fully into the present arising moment, we are living at a time when most people are success driven. How do I know if my meditation is making progress? If this is one of your ongoing concerns then here are five points to check.

Your meditation is making progress if;

- There is more joy present.
- There is greater clarity present.

- There is an increasing feeling of oneness with the meditation object.
- The level of verbalisation decreases.
- The breathing slows down and sometimes may even seem to stop.

A more subtle review

After you have established a good facility for recall using The Four Foundations of Mindfulness, you may want to shift the emphasis from reviewing the objects or events that happened in the meditation, to reviewing the qualities of consciousness that are developing. This will evolve quite naturally as you go deeper into the work. When this begins to happen it will be very useful to review in the light of The Seven Factors of Awakening. These are mentioned in the third tetrad and covered in the appendix (p.131).

At the deepest levels of meditation practice the process of reviewing is abandoned as the emphasis is then on a continuum of awareness and there is no pausing to look back. However, until you reach this stage, it's an excellent practice to review.

7 *Sharing the Merit*

Meditating for the benefit of others

After the review, finish the meditation session by mentally aspiring that any growth, discoveries, or goodness emerging in your being through doing this work, be of benefit to others. This is much more than a bit of pious religiosity. As your sensitivity to the fullness of now matures, and the interconnectedness of everything be-

comes more and more apparent, you will realise that, in a way, we are all part of a single organism called life. Every positive step of growth that you have is growth for all life. By regularly sharing the merit, your awareness of this experience will become ever more real.

Merit is a common translation of *punya* which means power or wholesome energy. It is especially valuable to reflect on sharing the merit if you have had a difficult session. This will remind you that even though you have struggled and perhaps feel your meditation didn't go anywhere, your aspiration to grow and unfold is itself a wholesome arising in the world and hence of benefit to others. Recognizing this can redeem a difficult session and encourage you to continue.



These seven general guidelines will help give structure and direction to your practice. To review them again, a complete session of meditation practice will contain:

- Some physical exercise.
- Good posture that supports easefulness and alertness and a sense of being centred and spacious.

- A few deep inhalations and exhalations to energise the organism.
- Reflection on your aspiration or intent.
- The main practice.
- Reviewing the session.
- Sharing the merit.

Now we'll go back to step 5 of the general guidelines (Main Practice) and consider anapanasati meditation itself. You have found a good place to meditate, done some exercise and stretched the body so that you feel loose and awake. You have taken up a posture that supports a sense of relaxation and alertness. You have energised the system with some form of deep breathing. You have reflected briefly on your aspiration. Now you are ready to plunge into the meditation.



First Tetrad Embodiment

*I enter the holoverse through the trapdoor of my body
Rivers of trembling lighting the streamings
Stardusting swirlings of lifetiming notes
Fields pulsing softly yet powerful and fast
Crisscrossing oceans of endlessly sparkling
Visions of all times
 radiating vast implications
 in simple points of infinite complexity
I enter the holoverse through the trapdoor of my body
The holoverse bodily enters through me.**

Breathing is a
physical activity

In the first tetrad of Anapanasati the sensations of our
own living breathing body become a deepening
pathway into the richness of now. We aren't meditating
on the 'idea' of breathing. We are not thinking about
breathing. Breathing is a physical activity. It is tangible

*Excerpt from a poem Tarchin wrote in 1986 and dedicated to the physicist David Bohm. Bohm used the hologram to illustrate the undivided wholeness of the universe, hence, 'holoverse'.

and intimate and always present. Any interruption in our breathing for more than a moment can trigger panic. Awareness of breathing is really awareness of the continuously changing, rhythmic weaving of touch sensation that is part of every inhalation and exhalation.

The sutta continues:

(i) Breathing in long, he knows, I breathe in long; or breathing out long, he knows, I breathe out long.

(ii) Breathing in short, he knows, I breathe in short; or breathing out short, he knows, I breathe out short.

Focus at nostrils
or area of chest

Savour the
sensations

Allowing the breath to flow with its own natural rhythm, become aware of the physical sensations arising and passing in the area of your nostrils. Alternately, you may find it easier to focus on the sensations of breathing in the area of your chest. Wherever you do focus, be very attentive. Imagine you are a wine connoisseur attempting to identify a particular vintage by smell and texture alone, only this time the wine is an elixir called air. With exquisite sensitivity you draw the air in through the nostrils, savouring the physical sensations of inhaling. Then, remaining very still and attentive, study the sensations of exhaling. Do this again and again. Be clearly aware of when you are inhaling and when you are exhaling. It can sometimes help to mentally say, 'in' on the in-breath, and 'out' on the out-breath.

If you keep practising this way, you will gradually begin to feel a settling, as if you were a smooth pebble sinking into a pool of crystal clear water. In this deepening

Study the breath

calm, notice how each breath is different in texture, strength and rhythm. For example there may be a long inhalation followed by a short, rapid exhalation. There may be a short inhalation followed by a pause and then an exhalation that is long and pulsing. Whatever the breath does, be aware of it. This is what the text essentially means when it says, "*Breathing in long, he knows, I breathe in long.*"

Noticing any wandering

When you are new to meditation, the biggest problem you will encounter is the tendency for your attention to wander off to other things. You will inevitably experience moments of being hijacked by thoughts and memories, by feelings and associations. When this happens, simply note the fact that your attention has wandered and patiently bring the focus back to the sensations of breathing. It sometimes helps to mentally say 'wandering'. There's no point in getting frustrated or irritated about this. Your power of attentiveness is very much a factor of habit.

Interest and absorption lead to bliss

Today many people have extremely short attention spans. It's not remarkable considering how much our lives are chopped up into time slots; appointments, classes, TV commercial breaks, telephone interruptions and so forth. People can get so used to this start/stop, on/off living, that when there are no interruptions they feel bored or 'antsy' and their attention begins to wander off, actively seeking out new distractions! Unfortunately this pattern of attention supports unpleasant feelings of being scattered, rushed and generally unsettled. In contrast, when you are deeply absorbed in something interesting and the attention is effortlessly concentrated, there is always some

amount of blissful feeling present. Have you noticed this? If 'distraction' arises in the meditation, patiently recognise this has happened and come back to the breath. You are in training; training your powers of attention and focus. But attentiveness doesn't mean forcing your mind not to wander. Attention and focus arise effortlessly and naturally whenever there is interest and curiosity.

Meditation is an investigation

It's not unusual for people to find breathing meditation incredibly boring and in a way, who could blame them? What a crazy thing just sitting motionless, trying to glue your attention to the breath while fighting off wandering thoughts. If you find your meditation is becoming like this, remind yourself that it is really supposed to be an investigation, a study. First of all investigate the different breathing patterns. Actually, no two breaths are exactly the same. Then study the relationship between the sensations arising in your body and the breath. Eventually you will begin to notice that feelings and mind states also have their corresponding breathing patterns. To support this investigating mind, strengthen your aspiration before sitting. Then, with exquisite sensitivity, relax and begin to observe and study the breath. In the review, at the end of the meditation session, note what you've learned.

Drawing the breath

It can help, as part of the review, to try drawing the shapes of the breath. This will clarify your appreciation of the finer detail of what's happening. Invent your own method. You can use an italic pen or a Chinese ink brush. The end result may look like Tibetan music script, or Chinese or Japanese calligraphy.



Length of a
meditation
session

If you are new to meditation, make your sessions short and frequent rather than long, drawn out and sporadic. It is sometimes suggested that you meditate for between twenty and fifty-five minutes. For some, even twenty minutes may be too long to start with. Put a good effort into the preparation; the exercise, posture, breathing and aspiration. This will go a long way towards calming the busy energies. Then sit and study/observe the breathing for ten to fifteen minutes. It is important to set up your work so that it feels interesting and draws you on. Ten minutes of good focus practised six times a day will be of far more benefit to you than one hour of struggle meditation in which you finish with a feeling that the session was a waste of time.

(iii) Experiencing the whole body (of breath), I shall breathe in, thus he trains himself; experiencing the whole body, I shall breathe out, thus he trains himself.

As you explore the preceding sections (the amount of time spent doing this will vary from person to person) you will gradually feel more and more at home in the sensations of your body. Unfortunately this is a bit rare. People in today's hi-tech consumer-oriented culture are more often centered in their thoughts. We have come to

value cerebral and verbal skills to the point of forgetting that our bodies are literally ‘embodiments’ of billions of years of intelligent shaping. They are expressions of vast ripening wisdom.

Out of the head
and into the body

Most beginner meditators spend most of their time operating from their heads. For them, meditation has more a sense of ‘thinking’ about the breath and its implications rather than directly and sensitively feeling the breath. As you relax more and more into the breathing process, and you contact a deepening sense of calm, you might feel that the place from which you are focussing is dropping down into the body. This is very natural. Instead of being ‘in the head’, you may feel you are experiencing from the heart or the abdomen. When this happens, you know it is time to work with step (iii). Actually, you’re already working with it.

Becoming more
active

In section (iii), there is a change from the first two sections. In those two, you simply watched the breath and acknowledged it after it happened. For example you won’t know the breath is long until after it has finished. You may have the feeling of sitting at the nostrils and noting the breathing just after it happens. You are very much the spectator. In section (iii) and all the remaining sections a quality of will, or decision comes into play. The text says, “experiencing the whole body I shall breathe in”. The meditation is becoming more active. There is a sense of engagement, as if you are almost encouraging experience to happen.

The body of
the breath

At this stage you become aware of the entire body of the breath. Remember the image of the scientist in the laboratory? Focus with even greater sensitivity and study

One cohesive
breathing
organism

the whole process of breathing. Note that each breath has a beginning, a middle and an end. For example; beginning of inhalation, middle of inhalation, end of inhalation; beginning of exhalation, middle of exhalation, end of exhalation. You will gradually experience much more definition in the shape and rhythm of the breath as you follow it through every part of its cycle.

In addition to studying the body of the breath, you are increasingly aware of the shifts and changes throughout the entire physical body as it engages in this activity we call breathing. The meditation is entering a richer level of experience. Awareness spreads into the chest and abdomen and there is a deepening sense that your body is one cohesive breathing organism. Now, continuing to use the breathing as a focus, you begin to explore, in increasing detail, the myriad physical changes of muscle tension, temperature and pressure which altogether are the sensations of this living, breathing body. If you become very still, you might feel in the soles of your feet some kind of rhythmic change which seems to correspond to the rhythms of breathing. It's as if you can feel the sensations of breathing in your feet. Give attention to the palms of your hands, to your thighs, to your back, to your arm pits, to your neck. Breathing is a muscular activity that involves your entire organism. Every shift in muscle tone and tension is accompanied by responsive shifts in all the other muscles. Explore this.

In some versions of the Anapanasati Sutta this section is translated, "Experiencing the bodily formations, I shall breathe in. Experiencing the bodily formations, I shall breathe out." Notice all the details, all the different bodily

formations working beautifully together in ways that both reveal and shape the process of breathing.

Temple of the
'wholy' spirit

Jesus talked about our bodies as being 'cities of revelation' and 'temples of the holy spirit'. The Buddha once said, "Within this fathom long body, subject as it is to decay and death, I show you the arising and the passing away of the universe." Section (iii) invites us into an immense exploration; to plunge with awareness into the mystery of a living, breathing body; to investigate and explore this temple of the 'wholy' spirit.

Relationship
between body
and breath

As the exploration deepens you will notice an intimate relationship between the overall state of the body and the shape and texture of the breath. When the breathing is smooth and flowing, the body feels smooth and flowing. When the breathing is fast and ragged, the body is often tight and anxious. Sometimes it seems that the breath is forming the body. Sometimes the body seems to be shaping the breath. Actually this tapestry of interweaving breath/energy (*prana*) is the body while simultaneously, the physical body is channeling or guiding the breath/energy. In section (iii) you are beginning to experience this directly. Body and breath are perfectly matched in an intimate sensual dance.

Releasing old
patterns

At this stage, it is not unusual to experience spontaneous shaking or trembling in the body. We used to call it the shake, rock and roll stage! Your body may go through all sorts of twitches, spasms and jerks. Don't be worried. This is a natural process of the organism releasing tension. Just allow it to happen. As awareness deepens, tensions that were not noticed before, gradually reveal themselves. Experiencing the body formations, breathing in.

Experiencing the body formations, breathing out. Experiencing the body in process of formation, breathing in. Experiencing the body in process of formation, breathing out.

Tensions are
maintained by
habit and
ignorance

As you become more aware of the vast dharma and sometimes drama that is your body, many difficulties may seem to get worse. Verbalising can increase. Tensions, pain and bodily distractions seem to increase. These things are not actually worsening. What is happening is that you are becoming more acutely aware of patterns that have been there all the time. The mind is getting sharper and noticing them whereas before they were ignored. It helps to have some faith tempered with understanding here. Try to stay with the experience. Rest with it as easefully as you can. This can take a bit of courage. Strengthen your curiosity and gently feel your way into the centre of the difficulty with as much patience, forgiveness and love as you can muster. Bodily tensions tie up energy that could be available for creative living. Since these tensions are basically maintained by habit and ignorance, we often don't even realize they are there. Once they become apparent, the process of letting go begins immediately.

In meditation, this appearance of getting worse is a prelude to getting better. I remember my teacher saying, "The worst has already happened." Intensify your aspiration and continue with the study. Learn how the body and the energies mutually shape each other and in the process allow healing to take place.



Flag and wind

Picture a flag blowing in the wind. Imagine that the flag is the body and the wind is prana. You can't see the wind, you can only see the movement of the flag. In the same way when a person begins meditating, they can often see the body but they don't know how to find or identify the energies. In this first tetrad, you study the flag and get to know about the wind. By experientially studying the state and movement of both the physical body and the body of breath, you will come to a deepening appreciation of how the body formations are continuously arising and passing, forming and transforming; a dynamic weaving of macro and micro, inner and outer, that is the miracle of form. In the course of this study there will be moments of profound calm where you sense you can somehow 'see' further. Recognizing that there is a relationship between the depth of calm and the degree of seeing, it is natural to move to the next stage.

(iv) Calming the bodily-formation, I shall breathe in, thus he trains himself; calming the bodily-formation, I shall breathe out, thus he trains himself.

Meditation as training

Notice the phrase 'thus he trains himself'. You are in training. You are actively participating in your own growth. This kind of meditation is not merely fishing to find some right answer. This is meditating in order to see and experience and understand more clearly; to become

more alive and responsive. Through this training the whole quality of mind-energy will gradually be transformed. This in turn leads to clearer seeing which brings about further transformation and so on.

Making friends
with difficulty

As you meet with difficult body experiences you can use this fourth section to help you. Calming the bodily formations I breathe in. This doesn't mean forcing them to be quiet or trying to suppress them. It doesn't mean trying to ignore them or stoically accepting them while all the time wishing they would go away. This stage has more a sense of making friends with the body, just as you find it. If it helps, you can silently think the words of the sutta as you breathe. "Calming the bodily formation I shall breathe in ..." Alternately you could feel the pain in your knee, or whatever the discomfort is, and instead of rejecting it you could mentally say on the inhalation, "pain" ... and on the exhalation, "it's okay to be this way." Or, on the inhalation, "pain" ... and on the exhalation, "I'm here for you". As you breathe in this way, gently invite the area of difficulty to soften.

Calming leads to
subtlety

In your meditation you may find yourself going back and forth between the third and fourth sections. Experiencing the whole body or the bodily formations. Calming the bodily formation. Gradually your experience of this living breathing body will become more and more subtle until it seems to encompass the entire organism. Sometimes you may even have the sense that you are being breathed instead of you doing the breathing. Calming the bodily-formation, or making friends with the body-forming-process I breathe in and so forth. As you go deeper and directly feel the body formation or formations,

you may simply use the word calming or peace or friendship. Eventually all words drop away and there is simply a continuum flow of gentle, all pervading, appreciative awareness. Practising this way you will experience a great relaxing and centering in the physical body. The quality of the mind becomes very smooth and at times you may hardly be able to distinguish where the physical body ends off and the energy body begins.

Resting in the gap

Sometimes the breathing may come almost to a halt so that there is a very long gap between breaths. If this happens just rest into the centre of the gap and let the awareness settle on the subtle qualities of the stillness while you wait for the next breath.

Some Common Difficulties

In the course of learning to meditate, you will inevitably experience some difficulties. It would be ideal to learn meditation through face to face dialogue with a teacher. This way you would have the opportunity to ask questions arising from your experience. Dialogue, however, is not really possible in book form so I will mention some of the more common difficulties and hopefully this will be of help to you. Actually it would be better to think of them as challenges rather than difficulties. This would give a more positive dimension to the experience.

Common
problems

Listen to these observations.

- I have so much verbalising. I can't keep my attention on the breath.
- How does one deal with anger?
- I feel extremely frustrated.
- As soon as I sit down to meditate I feel so tired I can hardly keep my eyes open.
- My body feels itchy and I can't sit still.
- Perhaps this is not the right meditation for me. Could you suggest another?

We could go on for some time in this vein. Do you recognise any of them? Instead of treating these as separate unrelated experiences we will look at them as a single cycle of energy. They are really just different chapters of a very common story.

In the Buddhist Tradition, there are five classical hindrances to meditation. Together they are called the *Nivarana*, (pronounced *ni - wa - rah - na*).

1 *Desire for sensing - Kama Chanda*

Dissatisfaction
with the moment

In meditation *kama chanda* (pronounced *kah - ma chun - da*) arises as desire for something to happen. It's nearly always accompanied by verbalisation. This interior dialogue is a sure sign of dissatisfaction. The present moment is not good enough or interesting enough or is not matching up to your expectations. The dissatisfaction triggers desire for something different and the desire stimulates inner dialogue and fantasy as a way of filling in the gap. At a non-verbal level it can feel as if the senses are reaching out for stimulation. Taste buds craving to drink or eat. Skin yearning to be touched. Eyes needing to engage.

All of this comes down to desire for something other than what is happening. If this desire is not immediately recognised for what it is, before you become engulfed in fantasy and verbalisation, you will be carried far away from the subject of meditation, in this case the study of a living breathing body. What happened to the investigation? If you run off in pursuit of the desire you end up leaving the meditation. If you stay with the exercise but keep fantasizing on the desire, you will inevitably begin to feel frustration. This frustration can lead you straight into the second hindrance.

2 Ill-will – *Vyapada*

Illwill is painful
tension projected
out

The second hindrance is the state of ill-will or anger. It's interesting to note that *vyapada* (pronounced *wee - ah - pa - dah*) literally means energy fields gone astray. This is the actual state of being angry. The energy fields, or subtle bodily processes, become tied up in patterns of conflicting tension which feel uncomfortable or even painful. Can you remember the physical experience of intense desire? There is a sense of almost reaching towards whatever it is you are wanting, a kind of psychic yearning that can be felt throughout your kinesthetic body. If this yearning isn't satisfied, a frustrating tension builds in the organism which eventually affects the muscles and posture.

The human being is wonderfully intolerant of pain and so will often project it right out of the body onto something or someone who is then seen as the cause of the pain. Ill-will or anger is really painful tension in the body projected out. Think about it. Have you ever expe-

rienced being angry while at the same time being totally relaxed? This tension gobbles up a lot of energy that could otherwise be available for creative living. If it is not dissolved then the third hindrance arises.

3 *Tiredness and Lethargy - Thīna-Middha*

Tension gobbles
up energy

With so much energy being tied up in tension there is not enough to operate with and so the third hindrance is physical tiredness and mental lethargy, *thīna-middha* (pronounced *tin - a mid - ha*). The body feels heavy and dull. The mind feels slow and turgid. Do you know this state? What started as a momentary tension is now becoming a real block.

4 *Restlessness and Worry - Uddhacca-Kukkucca*

Agitation and
itchiness

Arising out of the tiredness comes a chaotic flood of restlessness and worry, *uddhacca-kukkucca* (pronounced *u - da - cha ku - ku - cha*). You can't sit still for a moment. The body feels itchy and restless and the mind rushes all over the place in a whirl of agitation and worry. In a way you could think of this as a sign of life, a last ditch attempt to clear the blocks. Imagine the healthy life energy pushing against the tension-block, like water against a dam. It's really trying to break through the hindrance. The dam begins to tremble. This is experienced in the body as restlessness and in the mind as worry. If the tension still does not release, and it rarely does at this stage, then the fifth hindrance will soon appear.

5 *Skeptical doubt - Vicikiccha*

No curiosity or
question

After failing to clear the block, the energies collapse and there is nothing left to animate the being. There is no energy for curiosity or question. There is not even the energy to help oneself. One falls into a state of apathetic skepticism. In tenacious forms it can manifest as deep depression. *Kiccha* means to function. *Vici* has the sense of inability. The word seems to be indicating that the healthy functioning of our being can be gauged by the degree of our curiosity and interest in the world within and around us. With *vicikiccha* (pronounced *we - chee - kee - chah*) you become totally skeptical. Not in the healthy sense of active enquiry but in a negative sense that you have already made up your mind so that you feel it's not worth looking any further.

In meditation you become convinced the technique is not the right one for you or for your particular situation. You lose faith in the teaching and the teacher and think you should try something else. The meditation seems pointless and you no longer see why you are doing it. In daily life people get out of this when a friend says something like; "Hey cheer up why don't we go to a party? Why don't we go shopping?" They dangle a delectable *kama chanda* carrot suitable for that particular donkey mind state and off you go again on another cycle of hindrances.

Ending the cycle

Try to recognise these energy states whenever they arise in your experience. To free yourself from this cycle you must stop the blind reactions and begin to investigate the situation and its underlying causes. Behind the depres-

sion, find the restlessness and worry. Behind the restlessness and worry, recognise the tiredness and lethargy. Behind the tiredness and lethargy, sense the anger. Behind the anger, know the frustration. And behind the frustration, discover the unacknowledged desire for something other than what is happening. Eventually you will come face to face with the big question, what do I really want?

Ultimately you want to function well; spacious, clear and responsive in every moment and every situation; calm, loving, creatively awake and fully engaged. In this state you would no longer be so vulnerable to being hijacked by dysfunctional defensive stances. Wonderful!

Antidotes

For many beings, once the cycle of hindrances begins, it often seems to run its course. The only real way to end it is through insight and understanding.* However, if insight is not arising, the next best thing is to recognise the hindrance and stop it before it even gets started. Here are a few helpful antidotes.

Verbalisation and Desire for Sensing

Label the wandering

- Verbalising is different from the arising of thoughts. Thoughts will always come and go. That doesn't need to be a problem. Verbalising is when we begin to spin a story out of the thoughts which then becomes so engrossing we eventually lose awareness of what is actually happening and end up being carried away by our own story. When verbalising or desiring arises, try labeling it

*See Appendix *Working with Difficult States* (p. 135)

‘wandering’ and come back to the breath. Don’t even give it a chance to get going. It doesn’t matter what the story is about. ‘Whether angels appear to you or devils appear to you, be ye not moved.’ From the point of view of investigating the fullness of now it’s all just wandering.

Straighten the posture

- If, having tried the above, you find yourself still wandering off, then check your posture and make sure that you are sitting straight. It can even help to lean forward a little. An upright posture will suggest a bit more will power or positive intention.

Open eyes

- Open your eyes and gaze straight ahead. You may notice that when your eyes are closed the tendency to wander is stronger so open them and anchor yourself in the visual present.*

One breath at a time

- Strengthen your *adhitthana*, in this case your determination to stay with the breath. Try to note the beginning, the middle, and the end of each inhalation and exhalation as if you were treating each cycle of breath as a separate meditation. Surely with focus and sensitivity you could study one cycle of breathing without wandering. Then do another cycle and another. Do two hundred of these short meditations back to back.

If the above suggestions still don’t help then try using what Namgyal Rinpoché called the *sword and stream* technique.

*See Appendix 4: *Eye Position* (p. 125).

Sword and stream

First apply the sword. You sit upright, chin tucked in and tongue curled upward applying pressure against the roof of your mouth. Open your eyes and look straight ahead. You might feel like Bodhidharma, the fierce Zen monk staring at the wall. With great energy, focus intently on all the sensations of breathing.

Eventually this extra effort will become a strain, possibly to the point of trembling. Now you let go into the stream. Completely relax. Relax your posture. Let your head come slightly back. Let the tongue rest easily in the mouth. Lower your eyes a bit and let them be half closed. Allow any thoughts to come and go as they will, making absolutely no effort to control what is happening. Stay with this until the mind feels so spread out and diffused that it seems there is no more meditation.

Then bring down the sword. Alternating back and forth like this, sword to stream and stream to sword, will eventually lead to a very still mind.

Strengthen your
aspiration

Basically, wandering thoughts and desire for sensing come down to a lack of focus and a lack of interest in what is occurring. If you're not very clear about what you are investigating in the meditation you will inevitably get bored and then wander off in fantasy. In these situations it's important to strengthen your aspiration. Begin each session really knowing why you are meditating and what you are focusing on.

Frustration or Anger

Relax

- Recognise the state as soon as it arises. Mentally label it 'frustration' or 'anger' and come back to the breath.
- If it continues, sensitively feel your way down into the body looking for areas of tension. Sometimes through merely becoming aware of a tension it will release. If it doesn't easily release then stay with the breathing and especially on the exhalation, invite the area to soften.*

Tiredness and Lethargy

Freshen-up

- Label the state. Come back to the meditation.
- In general eat less. Take cold showers. Wear lighter clothes and make sure there is lots of fresh air in the room.

Restlessness and Worry

Warmth and
nourishment

- Put more energy into physical exercise before meditating and burn off some of the nervous energy.
- Eat richer and more nourishing food. Wear warmer clothes. Be sure to get enough sleep at night.

*Anger can be a difficult state to work with. If these two suggestions aren't enough for you, see the section on *Afflictive Emotions* (p.82) and the Appendix; *Working With Difficult States* (p.135).

Engage in
wholesome
activity

Skeptical Doubt

If skeptical doubt comes up there is not much you can do about it. Recognise the state and try to come to understand how it arose. Then end the meditation with review and sharing the merit. After that, do something that makes you feel good. Later, when the energy and interest is flowing, come back to the meditation and give it another go.

If you are new to meditation, please read the rest of the book in order to satisfy your curiosity but in terms of actual practice, I suggest you put your main effort into what has been taught up to this point. After a while, re-read the book from the beginning through to this section and then do some more practice. Repeat this a number of times, reading and practising, until you are so familiar with both the stages and the spirit of the meditation, that you no longer need to refer to the book. At that point you will have a good foundation for exploring the remaining tetrads.



Second Tetrad Mental Processes

*Looking -
the knowing fills itself
contentedly.*

Many teachings delineate different levels of objective reality such as physical, energetic, mental and spiritual. They seem to suggest that the yogi or pilgrim should progress from gross levels of being, towards more ethereal or spiritual levels, as if ascending a ladder or hierarchy of attainment. In extreme expressions of this approach, material levels are seen as less developed and even tainted while spiritual levels are seen as pure and in some fundamental way, more real. I question whether there is any useful truth in these views. They seem much too simplistic. We are living in a uni-verse; in a vast integrated happening in which everything is connected with everything else. Bodies, feelings and knowings of

A vast cosmic
ecology

innumerable beings are weaving together this present moment. How can we say some aspects are crude and unimportant while others are refined and elevated, when all are simultaneously and mutually shaping each other? Open your mind to the possibility that every one of us is the universe expressing itself; immeasurable ecologies of being interacting with other ecologies of being, giving rise to the unique and wondrous phenomena called you and me. These so called levels of reality or levels of being are really just different ways of viewing what physicist David Bohm* called 'the unbroken wholeness of totality'.

Imagine a multifaceted diamond. As you look into each facet a different view is revealed, different play of light, different inclusions, different reflections, but it is still the same diamond. The difficulty with this 'unbroken-wholeness-of-totality-diamond' is that it's so vast that while you are looking into one facet, you not only lose sight of the other facets but you often forget they exist.

Calm and
question

There are two factors that ultimately determine the richness of meditation experience. One is the degree of calm or easeful presence and the other is the quality of question or engaged interest. When you are calm and easefully present, the mind is like a still pool of crystal clear water. If you were to take a grain of sand and drop it into this pool you would see perfectly formed concentric ripples moving out from the centre. A question is like the sand grain. You drop it into the pool of the lucid mind and a pattern is revealed. This is all very poetic but imagine that problems in your life are blowing over the surface of the pool, stirring it up and causing choppy waves. You

See the introduction of David Bohm's *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*. First published 1980 by Routledge & Kegan Paul

might not have to imagine too hard. Let's try this mental experiment again. You drop in a very subtle sand grain sized question, perhaps concerning the nature of consciousness, or about energies and mind, or the nature of time and space, but the answer, the pattern, is completely obscured in the turbulence of your thoughts and feelings. You may even begin to wonder if there is any pattern at all.

Seeing the
patterns of life

The process of awakening is inseparable from clearly and compassionately seeing/understanding the patterns of life. So, from the standpoint of meditation, it seems you have a choice. You can either calm the waters of your life so that the subtle patterns can reveal themselves or, you can leave the turbulence as it is and throw in a bigger question. In a way, your life involvements are the questions. Unfortunately some lives are so turbulent that they need a question-boulder the size of a house to make any effect at all. Modern society seems to be moving in this direction. We have more activity, more appointments, more rushing around and so we need ever louder stimuli to notice any effects. This seems to be an unhealthy trend. The more unpleasant the environment, the more we shut down and the louder we have to make the radios and the commercial breaks, and the brighter the lights have to be, in order to get our attention. This often contributes to a break down of the organism through stress related disease.

Learning to take
the hint

Good meditation work moves in the opposite direction. By deepening the calm you respond to softer and more subtle stimuli. You learn how to take the hint. It's not necessary to have a house fall on you to feel something. Where at the beginning it took a big shock to the

ego to get your attention; for example, your partner suddenly wants a divorce, or your job is 'rationalized' and you are made redundant, or you discover you have major illness; now, through the awareness of your body, you pick up intimations long before they develop into gross outer phenomena. Where earlier you needed very concrete physical sensations to feel something is happening, now you begin to sense a more subtle flow of energies.

It is useful to recognise that the words body and energy are not referring to different realms or levels of experience. They are simply pointing to different ways of perceiving the same uni-verse. A lumpy mind perceives a universe of colliding or interacting lump-like objects. A subtle mind senses an unbroken, complex weaving of mutually responsive processes. Awareness of these refined weavings is what is meant by awareness of energies. With practice, meditation will progress, not from one realm of being to another but from a coarse, almost lumpy or granular quality of awareness, towards a more refined and subtle, knowing/understanding/appreciation.

The first tetrad invites us to begin the practice of meditation by studying the body – the body of the breath and the body of the body. As calm becomes more established and awareness becomes more refined and discerning, the body reveals itself as a doorway into the whole of being. You will find yourself more responsive to intimation and can now begin to explore a more fluid universe of energy and mental phenomena.

(v) Experiencing rapture (piti), I shall breathe in, thus he trains himself; experiencing rapture, I shall breathe out, thus he trains himself.

Physical joy
and bliss

Rapture is not a particularly good translation for *piti*. *Piti* (pronounced *pee - tee*) is a term referring to generally pleasurable physical sensations. It can range from the feeling of insects crawling on your skin, to mildly pleasurable tinglings, to warm streamings throughout the body. It may even go to blissful raptures that feel so strong you might think you are about to melt or to disappear. It can sometimes feel as if your hair, not only on your head but all over your body, is quivering on end. Perhaps you've seen the Star Trek films. You will get a hint at the feeling of this state in the parts where they are 'beamed up' and the bodies turn into shimmering force fields of dancing light particles. *Piti* often has a thrilling quality to it. It is definitely a physical sensation. Physical joy, physical bliss. It is a very positive experience of being more alive. Although it is a bit of a mouthful, *piti* could be said to be 'the thrill of knowing the aliveness of the body'.

An easeful body
opens into *piti*

When speaking about an orderly approach to awakening, the Buddha said, "first calm the bodily-formations." In other words, learn to be easeful with the vast range of changing bodily sensations. To go deeply into meditation it is necessary to feel at home in your body, to be intimately familiar and present with it, however it is manifesting. It is not a foreign or a dangerous place. As your awareness broadens and deepens you will begin to experience shiverings and shimmerings of *piti* spontaneously arising in different parts of the body. When this happens try to remain centered and continue with the practice.

Allow it to
happen without
augmenting or
diminishing

Experiencing piti, I shall breathe in, thus I train myself. Sometimes it may feel as if the whole universe is breathing. You have become a flower, opening and closing; energy fields within energy fields. Fine branchings and networkings, a single poem, a uni-verse, flowing, and alive.

The range of piti is immense. Allow yourself to enjoy it. Settle into it and bathe in it. You could think of piti as a washing and a cleansing, a releasing from the small tight self into a looser more fluid way of being. Of course, some people, having tasted the more positive aspects of piti, find themselves meditating with the conscious or unconscious purpose of experiencing more piti. They become a kind of piti addict. This is quite understandable since it can give you a feeling of being so much more connected, both within yourself and to the world around you. Ideally though, without trying to either augment or diminish the piti, allow it to happen and study its process. Eventually, you will become very familiar with this type of experience. After all, it's only life doing what it is designed to do! Subtle bodily energies have been dancing like this all along. It's just that the pool was too turbulent to notice them. Gradually as you focus even more deeply with the breathing, the physical quality of the experience will soften until you can't tell if it's physical body or energy body or mental body. At this point there begins to arise a deep pervasive mental happiness and profound sense of well-being.

Deep mental
happiness

(vi) Experiencing bliss (sukha), I shall breathe in, thus he trains himself; experiencing bliss, I shall breathe out, thus he trains himself.

Su is a syllable associated with goodness. *Kha* is the sound of the crow and is one of the oldest words for space. So *sukha* (pronounced *soo - ka*) literally means a good space. Where *piti* is decidedly tactile in nature, *sukha* is more of a mental quality. It is a feeling of deep rounded satisfaction. With *sukha* the moment feels complete and whole; feeling at one with the one. *Piti* is sometimes compared to the shiver of expectation that comes when a hungry person smells delicious cooking and then enjoys the meal. *Sukha* is more the satisfied glow that follows after you have eaten exactly the right amount and have retired to a comfortable chair or settee. There is a rich spacious quality which is smooth and utterly tranquil. The moment is absolutely perfect. As the experience moves from *piti* to *sukha*, deep healing takes place in the organism. You would be happy to rest in this state for ever.

(vii) Experiencing the mental formation, I shall breathe in, thus he trains himself; experiencing the mental formation, I shall breathe out, thus he trains himself.

The arising of
thoughts

Against the background of this feeling of bliss/union, various mental formations will arise. Thoughts, feelings, memories, perceptions and so forth; textures of mental activity which agitate or disturb the blissful quality. Imagine a thought or a mental formation as if it were a fish. It swims up from the depths, cruises near to the surface

and then dives back down. In this case you don't see the fish clearly. It's still in the unconscious, below the surface. Another fish comes up, just breaking the surface, sending out ripples and splashing sounds before it disappears into the deep. This might be perceived as a stirring of a feeling or an 'almost thought' which doesn't become clear enough to label. A third fish jumps clear out of the water into your boat and you have your hands full. Mental formations are a bit like this. Most people are so busy, they don't notice the arising until it's suddenly splashing around in their hands.

You might think of thoughts as the activity of mental formation, something in the process of forming and unforming. In the calm clear *sukha* state you can feel the birth of these movements. The rate of thought formation seems to have slowed down or, another way of understanding it is that the awareness has sped up enormously so that you can experience the process, something like a slow motion film. More moments of awareness per second slows the action right down so that you can sense the beginning of a feeling or a thought, even before you clearly identify it. A sort of pre-thought ruffles the blissful state.

Dukkha

When you notice this, you could label it *dukkha* (pronounced *doo - ka*), which technically means an unpleasant space. Compared to *sukha*, any arising is *dukkha*. Namgyal Rinpoché used to point out that *dukkha* has a double k, *duk - kha*, a kind of stutter or stumble which is found at the core of all difficult states.* Having labelled it, let go of it and resettle in the *sukha*. If, however, you

**Dukkha* is often translated as 'suffering' but this doesn't always convey the meaning. Other possible translations could be unsatisfactoriness, conflict, a state of friction, or a tendency towards fragmentation.

do hang on to this new arising and allow it to develop further, you will feel something forming, a kind of thickening or 'densening' in this subtle state. Eventually, the sukha is gone and you are totally involved with a stream of emotions, feelings, memories or thoughts, which is the process of mental 'formationing'.

Alert like a cat

At this stage, you could learn a bit about meditation by observing a cat waiting for a mouse. The cat is a most wonderful teacher. It can be totally relaxed and at the same time extraordinarily alert. Good meditation is like this. You are totally relaxed in the sukha and then bang, like the cat, you recognise the thought-mouse, as soon as it appears. Feel its earliest stirrings. With bright attentiveness, observe how a mental formation comes into being and then rest back into the sukha.

Don't declare war
on thoughts

Although the analogy of a cat waiting for a mouse can nicely illustrate the need for alertness inseparable from relaxation, it can also mislead many meditators. Instead of patiently studying the mystery of thought formations, they come to see mental activity as an enemy or a distraction from good meditation. This yearning for the sukha, or at least the piti, whilst at the same time getting frustrated with thoughts, becomes a set-up for suffering. The great yogi Tilopa once said to Naropa, "In Mahamudra there are no distractions, because no war against distractions has ever been declared."^{*} Don't make the mistake of declaring war against thoughts.

Because of its tactile quality, you could think of piti as being half way between a bodily formation and a mental

^{*} *Tilopa's Song to Naropa*, paraphrased by Lex Hixon in *Mother of the Buddhas*, Quest Books, 1993

Experiencing is
not just passive
registering

formation. By the time you have sukha, you are definitely in the realm of mental formation. Experiencing the mental formation, I shall breathe in. 'Experiencing' is not just a passive registering. It carries within it the sense of investigating, studying or carefully examining. What is a thought? What is an emotion? How does it come into being? Where does a mental formation come from and what has triggered it? Does it happen inside the body? Does it happen outside the body? What factors sustain it? Does it have a fundamental boundary, an identifiable beginning or end? Where does it go to when it disappears or is it even meaningful to talk of a mental formation coming from somewhere and going to somewhere? You need to examine the process of mental formation again and again and again until some clarity and understanding begins to emerge. "And the word took on flesh." But before the word, before the vibration in the texture of mind, what was there? You may spend a considerable amount of time fruitfully exploring in this section. Realistically, some meditators spend months and years studying it.

Examine the
process

(viii) Calming the mental-formation, I shall breathe in, thus he trains himself; calming the mental-formation, I shall breathe out, thus he trains himself.

Now there is an active letting go. Calming the mental formation means relaxing in the presence of a mental formation without needing to reach out for it, hang onto it, or push it away. Through this work you will come to realise just how habitual and conditioned the mental processes are. At this stage, it is not unusual for worry or fear

The mind door

or other negative states to seemingly pop out of nowhere. This 'nowhere', the ancients called the mind door. It is as if with the bliss of sukha your overall being is now sufficiently relaxed and confident to risk having some of the more difficult buried states coming to the surface. Don't be carried away in your reactions to what is happening. Just 'watch and be ye not moved'. Even better, begin to make friends with whatever is coming up. Through careful observation, you will come to appreciate the uniqueness of each arising. This is lovingkindness in action. Allow both negatives and positives to make their statements. Observe them, study them, wonder about them and then watch them dissolve back to where they came from.

If you have a particularly difficult state arising, use the same method you used with calming the bodily formations. On the inhalation, name the mental formation and on the exhalation mentally say, 'I'm here for you' or 'It's okay to be this way.' This will help you to remain with the investigation.

Putting It All Together

A lot of dharma teaching, especially in written form, suggests that there are a series of orderly steps that must be followed in order to awaken. This can be a skilful teaching device to help students learn the methods of practice and to understand what needs to be done and why. However, in the laboratory of your own unique life, experience rarely, if ever, arises in such a well behaved step by

step fashion. Life is much more dynamic, complex and messy. You will have mental formations popping up while you practise the first tetrad. The five hindrances are mental formations. Piti can arise very quickly only to dissipate into barely being able to know whether you are having an in-breath or an out-breath. Awareness of physical sensations are mixed up with mental formations. Calming the bodily formations can lead into sukha. Sukha can highlight the dance of mental formations. Any combination is possible.

Investigate
whatever is
happening

It is a good idea to abandon thinking that you are in this tetrad or that tetrad. Actually, you are always exactly where you are and what you are, and what you are is multidimensional and never stays the same for an instant. Trying to cling to any fixed view about yourself or your position in the world or your level in the four tetrads is nearly always a recipe for suffering. Instead, allow this teaching to invite you into active investigation of whatever is happening, moment by moment by moment.

Each step is
a doorway

Each one of the steps outlined in this sutta can be a skilful tool to deepen your awareness, appreciation and understanding of what is arising right now. In a way, each step is a doorway into the same place, a richer, more engaged present arising. The door you 'should' be walking through is the door that, at this moment, you 'can' most readily walk through. As your practice matures you will be able to skilfully use all sixteen doorways to feed and ripen your compassionate engagement with whatever is happening. To do this well however, you will have to take these explorations beyond your meditation cushion.

The learning
process

You might begin investigating your own breathing body by using the classical eight steps outlined in the first two tetrads. Like any other learning process there will inevitably be times of struggle and times of feeling you're getting it. As you become more familiar with the basics, gradually the confidence will arise to really make the practice your own. When this happens, extend the investigation so that you are studying the dharmas of breathing in the midst of every posture. In other words not only when you are sitting but also when you are walking, or standing still, or lying down. Try to carry your exploration of this living breathing organism in the midst of whatever activity you are doing; getting dressed, driving the car, eating, going to the toilet, having a conversation, waiting for your internet dialup to happen. Don't fall into the trap of being too holy or serious about meditation. Smile and enjoy this living breathing body/mind which is studying itself living and breathing.

Investigating the
internal physical
structure

Once you begin to experience a greater continuum of awareness, extend your investigation to include the internal workings of your body. Breathing is something that touches every cell. When you are very centered and clear, feel your entire body breathing as if it has become translucent and you can sense the internal structures participating in this miracle: heart beating, blood circulating, the process of digestion and elimination, muscles contracting and loosening as they maintain tone, cells replicating, oxygen being absorbed, carbon dioxide being given off. Study some anatomy and physiology and become more aware of the physical functioning of your body and let this intellectual knowledge inspire your direct experience.* *(This footnote is at the bottom of the next page.)*

As the internal structure of this breathing body becomes more vividly alive and present for you, begin to investigate how it is linked into the environment; embedded or rooted in an endless ecology of being. Your body is a fountain of earth; elements of the soil migrating through the food chain and now momentarily building a living sculpture in the form of a human body. The oxygen that you breathe has been released into the atmosphere by green plants and the carbon dioxide you exhale is taken up in plants. The juices of your body, mostly water, were once rain and snowfields and the tears of a stranger and will eventually be part of the ocean. The energy that warms you and allows your body to move and operate ultimately streamed in from the sun. We are interconnected with everything. Breath by breath we breathe with the world. Our interbeingness is an expression of all times and places.[†]

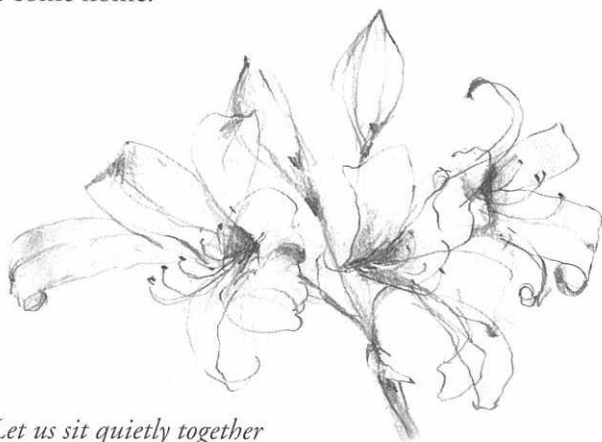
In the midst of this dance of physical transformation, there is a continuous flow of mental activity in the form of evaluations. This is good. This is bad. I like this. I don't like that. States of mind arise and pass, clothing the evaluations in layers of emotion and leaving a wake of reaction and response behind them. Thoughts appear and disappear along with memories, fantasies, dreams and so forth. Mental phenomena trigger responses in your body and physical phenomena trigger responses in your thinking and feeling. Internal changes affect the way you behave in the world. Changes in the external environment

*There are many methods of meditation that can deepen your awareness of the internal body. For two such methods, see chapter 12 of *Natural Awakening* by Tarchin Hearn, Wangapeka Books, 1995

[†] See chapters 2 and 17 of *Natural Awakening*

lead to changes in your body and mind, and throughout all of this you are breathing! Ah!

Open the doors of curiosity and interest. Soften the boundaries and learn to welcome the world. Settle in a calm, clear, vibrantly responsive state of being and attentively engage with all experience, inner and outer, however it arises. Get used to living this way. Learn to extend it into a wider and wider range of circumstances until this rich quality of awareness is with you more or less continuously. This is the natural way to meditate and when you find it you will know with deep confidence that you have come home.



*Let us sit quietly together
To sink deep into the mystery of now
Let us touch the ocean
the ocean of becoming
Birthing and Dying
Joy and Grief
The rainbowed stories of our lives*

More Common Difficulties

A question often asked is how do I know when it's time to move from one section to the next?

A natural progression of awareness

The teaching of anapanasati follows a natural progression from lumpy-gross quality awareness to more subtle awareness. Each time you sit down to meditate, even if you've been working at it for a while, it's good to begin with section (i). You may find that you rapidly move through a few sections and then come to rest at a point that reflects the overall quality of your body, energy and mind at that particular moment. It's not a matter of having done section (v) ten times it is then time to move on to section (vi). Abandon this society's obsessive concern about success and progress. Don't think of these stages as beginner or advanced, better or worse, but simply use the appropriate section as an aid to help you deeply investigate the ever fresh mystery of now.

Technique must feel relevant

If at any time you feel you are losing contact with the meditation then go back to the preceding section. If you still can't work there, then keep going back until you find a section that feels relevant. This also applies to the very first section. If you can't study the different patterns of breathing without getting lost in verbalisation or some form of negativity, then go back and focus on the preparation work, the exercise, posture, aspiration and so forth.

These first two tetrads are particularly for the development of tranquillity. With practise the waves of reactivity will become calmed so that one can experience a deep, crystal clear sense of presence while appreciating, with increasing understanding, the subtle weaving process of

life. In the path of Mahamudra, this work is called 'calm abiding meditation', *shi-ne* in Tibetan and *samatha* in Sanskrit.

There are three common difficulties that can arise in calm abiding meditation; afflictive emotions, mental excitement and mental sinking. Review your experience and see if you can recognise any of them.

1 Afflictive Emotions

Working with emotions

Afflictive emotions are when you get carried away by emotional states to the point of losing the thread of the meditation. These states are often peppered with mental chatter; accusations, justifications, rationalisation and pure story telling fantasy. Thinking tangles with unworkable energies and painful sensations in ways that hijack us from the exploration. Any of the five hindrances (*nivarana*) could arise here. With afflictive emotions you end up really floundering, if not being swept completely away. In order to deepen the path of meditation you must learn to recognise when this happens. Only then can you do something about it.

First option: note it and continue the practice

There are three basic ways of working with difficult states and they go in order. The first way is to simply acknowledge the difficulty, and then come straight back to the exercise. It's as simple as that. Note what is arising. If it helps you could name it. Wish it well. Let go of it and continue exploring the breath or whatever is the focus of your meditation.

Sometimes of course, the difficulty has such a grip on us that simply acknowledging it and letting go of it seems impossible to do. In this case you move to the second

Second option:
explore the
emotion

option. Make a clear statement to yourself that you are setting aside the breathing meditation and are going to explore this emotional state. Then, non-verbally, feel your way even deeper into this present difficult moment. Rest with it as easefully as you can. Don't reject it or try to run away from it but allow yourself to experience it even more fully. Explore the texture, the rhythm and vibration of this state while holding the background question, 'what is it?' Forget about intellectual theories and speculations. Feel the overall quality of body-mind in a very tactile way. Where is the emotion in the body? Is it static or does it move? Touch it with friendliness and interest. Study it as something you are seeing for the very first time. Don't get caught on any specific aspect, but actively explore the overall feeling-tone quality of this moment. What are the various factors of body, energies and mind that give rise to and support this state? Throughout all this exploration, stay with your breathing. With practice, your awareness of breathing will become a steady anchor for you.

Look into the interbeingness, the vast interconnectedness of this arising. Body, feelings, mental states, inner phenomena and outer phenomena, micro realms and macro realms, are collectively weaving together this present arising. Try to experience this afflictive emotion in a fresh way, without preconceived opinions. Then, as if you were cradling the entire complex arising with your awareness, see if you can name the present overall state with one single word. This is ... ! When you are able to name it well, it is common for the state to shift somewhat and sometimes even transform into something else. Then you can explore the new state in a similar way. Eventually the thought will arise that perhaps you should return to

your original meditation exercise. When this happens, obviously the afflictive emotion is no longer afflictive so drop the exploration and return to the original exercise.

People occasionally ask how they can know the difference between exploring a difficulty and just lolling in it. If through the exploration, the problem vanishes, that's exploring. If it doesn't disappear but you do gain some fresh insight into it, that's exploring. If you don't get any insight but you have a sense that, in some unknown manner, the exploration is still worth doing then that's exploring. If, however, it doesn't resolve, you get no insights, and it doesn't even feel worth doing, that's lolling and you need to move on to the third method.

Third option:
leave the practice
and do something
positive

When you are unable to just drop it, or explore it, then the wisest thing is to get up from your meditation and do something that tends to make you feel good or that nourishes you in a positive way. Paraphrasing an old saying, wise is he or she who runs away and lives to explore another day.

2 *Mental Excitement*

If you have meditated for any length of time you will surely understand this one. The mind is beautifully settled and suddenly a mental image appears in front. You get excited and immediately reach for it. 'Wow, something is happening.' And it disappears. The faster you grab, the quicker it slips through your fingers. This is the mental formation of stage (vii) without the calming of stage (viii). Try to recognise this tendency to get excited about what is arising, before it carries you away. Most people go through this many times before they begin to

Don't grab at
experience

abandon the compulsive grabbing. Up and down, up and down. The more downs you have, the more you need the ups to compensate. Hours of dull meditation and then wow, and riding on the back of some degree of mania, you're out of the meditation. It's a hungry mind that grabs at anything offered. With more experience, you will realise that your mind is an endless source of jewels so relax. You don't have to grab at everything that appears.

Often the mental excitation can be quite seductive in that for a short while you may feel more bright and awake and buzzing with a new understanding but gradually you will recognise that this type of brightness is usually a prelude to a restless dissipated energy state. After enough upping and downing one develops a taste for serenity and the grasping gradually dies away.

3 *Mental Sinking*

Frozen ice
practice

This one is more subtle and hard to catch. The Seven Factors of Awakening* may all be present but the quality of the mind loses its brightness and the meditation falls into a kind of dull pervasive calm that's very weak in question. The Christian Mystics called this the 'sin of quietism'. The Mahamudra tradition calls it 'frozen ice practice'. Be alert for this one. If you find it occurring, adjust your posture. Make it a little straighter and brighten your senses. Merely being aware of this sinking will often correct the state.

* See Appendix: *The Seven Factors of Awakening* (p. 131)



Third Tetrad Mind

*Refuge is vast yet intimately near,
utterly dependable yet refreshingly new,
transcendent yet continuously manifest,
ungraspable yet thoroughly knowable.
Refuge is exactly what you are.*

The first tetrad involved exploring the world of physical phenomena. For most people beginning meditation, the body is tangible and relatively easy to contact and so is a clear object of investigation. With increasing calm and more discriminating awareness, the possibility of studying and deeply appreciating the fleeting dance of becoming we call feelings and thoughts, will gradually come more clearly into focus. This is the domain of the second tetrad. In the third tetrad, as the quality of calm abiding deepens even further, the intimate interconnectedness of body and mind, inner and outer, micro and macro becomes more and more evident. In

The basic ground
of phenomena

the midst of this rich dimension of experience many profound questions will arise such as, who and what am I? Where do I begin and end off? What is it that knows? Where does the knowing take place? What is it that is questioning? In Zen these realms of enquiry coalesced into the famous question, what is the essence or nature of mind?*

In the modern world, the question of what is mind frequently leads to confusion. Mind is often associated with brain or is seen in opposition to heart or sometimes even matter. Even within Buddhism, mind is not so easy to define. One Sanskrit word for mind, *citta*, can also be translated as 'heart'. Heart in this sense is obviously not referring to the organ in your chest but to something that is pithy, central and important. The heart of the matter might turn out to be the mind of the matter or the matter of mind or the minding of matter. Namgyal Rinpoché once semi-seriously said, "What is mind? Doesn't matter. What is matter? Never mind." If we find the idea of the nature of mind to be a bit vague and confusing, perhaps it would help to enquire into the nature of heart? But that's enough philosophical word play. The words heart, mind and essence are three attempts to point towards the basic or fundamental ground of phenomena, a ground that is

* Mastery of the third and fourth tetrads requires an immense degree of calm and clarity, coupled with an intimate, experiential knowing of the interdependency of everything. Without this foundation of direct, living experience, the remainder of the book may be a source of wonderful intellectual speculation but it is unlikely that it will manifest as actual liberation in your life. I suggest you read the text to satisfy your curiosity but then concentrate your efforts on the first two tetrads until the themes of exploration, outlined in the third tetrad, become spontaneously vivid and engaging. Then begin to actively work with them.

ultimately un-pin-down-able with words and concepts and yet is absolutely central to all experience.

True samatha

To meditatively explore life and how it functions, you need the steady tranquillity of calm abiding. For many people, this can become the goal of the entire path. If only I could find deep abiding peace, then I would be happy. The first two tetrads can definitely help us in this direction but in this teaching, calm abiding is only part of the story. In buddha dharma there are many different approaches to awakening, but at the core, all traditions are saying similar things. The first step on the path is to establish the calm of true *samatha*, a sense of easeful dynamic presence in the midst of whatever is happening. The second step is to brighten the alertness in the middle of this calm presence without losing the calm. In this crystal clear state, one then carefully investigates the heart/mind essence which is really none other than the calm wakefulness itself. This bright, alert, wakeful, investigating aspect of experience, is the true *vipassana*.

True vipassana

It is common to think of the mind in terms of thoughts but as we discovered in the last section, thoughts are more the contents of mind. There is a Zen koan that asks, "When you return the bones to your father and the flesh to your mother, where are you then?" When the mind is not making thoughts, where is it then?

Mind is that
which knows

So again we return to the question what is mind? One of my teachers, the meditation master Kalu Rinpoché, used to say, "mind is that which knows". He might just as well have said mind is that which is asking the question. In attempting to understand the dharma I have often

Everything is
supporting this
moment of
knowing

found it useful to become quite simple and to approach an exploration in a rather literal, childlike manner. We could say that mind is a word that refers to what is doing the knowing or the thinking or the experiencing ... but what exactly is it? Surely that which knows or experiences must be composed of everything that is needed for the knowing. To illustrate this, consider a few factors that have contributed to your experience of reading this book, factors that if they were different or if they hadn't happened would mean that this moment of knowing, called reading a book, would also be different or not even existent. The light from the sun is part of this reading. The photons are streaming into your eyes. In the past, they also helped to grow the tree that became the paper you are holding in your hands. The ink, the author, the printing presses and the merchants and manufacturers are all part of this process. Your parents and parent's parents, going endlessly back in time, are intrinsically part of this moment, as are my parents and teachers. As you read the book you are breathing and the oxygen that you inhale was released into the atmosphere through the photosynthesis taking place in green plants. The words only make sense in the context of your culture and language, which is intimately linked with the way your neurons connect and communicate. There is a vast ocean of becoming that is supporting the present knowing called, 'you reading this book'.

So again the question, what is mind? What is that which knows? It seems, intellectually at least, that everything in the universe is contributing to our present knowing which is our present experience. In this sense we might think that mind is composed of everything and if we were to look into any detail of this everything, that particular

Who is doing the knowing?

detail too would reveal itself to be composed of everything else. So who is doing the knowing? If everything is doing the knowing then who am I and who are you?

The first time you glimpse the un-pin-down-able-ness of this beginningless endless mind can be a bit of a shock. Many people feel a sense of mental vertigo, a kind of disequilibrium, as if the familiar ground of self and other, that they had so taken for granted, had been pulled out from under them. This vast process of knowing challenges the idea that mind is fundamentally different from matter. It challenges the commonsense perception that subject is separate from and independent of object or whatever it is that is being viewed. I'm reminded of some of Escher's drawings which loop back on themselves. One of them depicts a hand holding a pencil, which is sketching an almost identical second hand also holding a pencil, which is busy sketching the first hand. Looking at this drawing for the first time triggers a sense of shock or disbelief and then wonder. It evokes a feeling of somehow gazing into a profound mystery.

Two fundamental dharmas

The investigation of interconnectedness can bring us to a theoretical understanding of two fundamental dharmas that are inseparable from awakening. One is the understanding that everything is an interbeing of everything else. Or, another way of putting it, everything arises dependent on everything else. The second great dharma, is the understanding that everything you experience arises in your own knowing. In fact, it is your knowing.

Once you have a good understanding of these two dharmas, that everything is an interbeing of everything else and that all your experience arises in your own knowing, then, using the first two tetrads as a support

A flowing
holomovement

and guide, set aside all intellectual speculation and go back to your meditation practice. Intimately and directly explore the universe of your current experience. Open up to a tremendously sensitive knowing of the dance of phenomena that are your body and mental processes and surrounding environment, collectively weaving together and bringing forth this very moment. Body, energy and mental processes are naming different aspects or perceptions of one integrated happening – an unbroken wholeness of totality – a flowing holomovement. Inner and outer, micro and macro, subject and object, self and other, all are mutually shaping each other in a never pausing dance of manifestation. Gradually your experience will come to a point where you feel a deepening confidence that there is no fundamental separation between you and whatever it is you are experiencing. Learn to rest in this continuously fresh ground of becoming. In time you will begin to glimpse an increasing sense of spacious openness, a clarity of perception and a flow of unimpeded responsiveness; a wonderful sense of engagement. When this happens, the third tetrad will become an extraordinarily useful tool for further exploration.



(ix) Experiencing the mind, I shall breathe in, thus he trains himself; experiencing the mind, I shall breathe out, thus he trains himself.

Other names for
the essence

This is experiencing the essence. Other names for it are the basic ground of phenomena, the realm of union, the total field of all events and meanings, the mind of ongoing non-grasping serenity, the spacious openness of interbeing, or the full mystery of that which knows. There is a boundless quality, completely free of anyone thinking, though not necessarily free of thoughts. Even sukha is let go of. The mind is experienced more as texture; dull, bright, agitated, still, heavy, light, quick, mechanical and so forth, rather than in terms of specific content.

*In the clear calm
Mind,
Like water rolling in a vast ocean
Heaves and undulates
Responding to the infinite other.
Watching,
It wells up and quietens down
But always is moving.
Where is the non-moving?*

Look into the
mind

Although there is profound calm and serenity, when you open to the full experience of mind, you will realize that it is not at all static. There is a subtle texture of movement which reveals a direction and volition expressed as a continuous flow of creativity. This is the decision mind; deep and vast in extent. It is sometimes referred to as

bodhicitta or *bodhi cetana** · Go into it and become familiar with its qualities. Here it is possible to gain insight into the great mysteries of “My will be done” and “Thy will be done”. What is it and who is it, that is meditating?

*Shapings of oneness
Awesome the play
The infinite variety
Tireless dance
Motionless.*

* *Bodhicitta* is often translated as ‘heart of awakening’ or ‘mind of awakening’. *Bodhi* means ‘awakening’ or ‘enlightenment’. *Citta* means both ‘heart’ and ‘mind’. Traditionally *bodhicitta* is explained from two different perspectives, an ultimate or absolute stance and a relative stance.

From the absolute point of view, *bodhicitta* is the experience of *sunyata* (pronounced *shoon ya ta*). *Sunyata* is usually translated as ‘emptiness’ but it is really pointing to the spacious open quality that reveals itself when we enter an experiential understanding of the interconnectedness of everything. *Sunyata* is the un-pin-down-able-ness of any object or situation.

From the standpoint of relativity, in other words, subject relative to object and so forth, *bodhicitta* is experienced as compassion, the aspiration or energy to awaken speedily for the sake of all beings. When *bodhicitta* is used without reference to relative or absolute it implies the union of both.

The *citta* part of *bodhicitta* is related to *cetana* (pronounced *chae ta nah*) which means ‘volition’, ‘intention’, ‘purpose’ or ‘will’. This is the will or volition or movement to awakening. *Bodhicitta* refers to both the process of awakening and that which is awakening.

The next three sections (x, xi, xii) may be experienced in different sequences depending on the gifts of the meditator. Eventually all three must be developed. In the teachings of Mahamudra, once the natural mind of pristine calm has been tasted and this experience becomes somewhat stabilised, the meditator is then instructed to look into this mind, to discern more closely any qualities it may seem to have. Three main aspects appear; bliss, illumination and non-distinction or non-separation.

Bliss

Bliss refers to a quality of vast, easeful, spacious openness; a beginningless, endless way of being where everything functions effortlessly and unimpededly. This is the spacious open aspect of each moment.

Illumination

Illumination can be of two types, the lesser and the greater. The lesser illumination refers to any manifestation of light. It can appear with form, as in visions and dreams, or it may appear as boundless fields of light or radiance. Wonderful as these phenomena may be they can become subtle hindrances to insight if you latch on to them thinking that you have seen the light! The greater illumination has nothing to do with visible light. It is simply the clear cognising, knowing aspect, of each moment.

Non-distinction

Non-distinction or non-separation is essentially pointing to the state of utter non-clinging. It means not clinging to value judgment distinctions, such as good and bad, like it and don't like it. There will always be discrimination, that's the illumination part, but the mind itself, that which knows, is absolutely serene, unimpeded and uninterrupted, with a capacity to embrace and support anything and everything, just as it is. The non-distinction quality is often equated with unimpededness. This is the

Realms
interpenetrating
realms

fact that any given moment is the summation of a multitude of interpenetrating understandings and experiences without a shred of conflict. The *Avatamsaka* or Flower Ornament Sutra describes this with the phrase, 'realms interpenetrating realms without obstruction'.

At this stage in the third tetrad, when you review your meditation practice it will be helpful to check these three; bliss, illumination and non-separation, and recognise to what degree you are experiencing them.

(x) Gladdening the mind, I shall breathe in, thus he trains himself; gladdening the mind, I shall breathe out, thus he trains himself.

Brahma Vihara

As the absorption deepens, the mind is filled with happiness. 'Gladdening the mind' is a way of further energising the mind and bringing a quality of blissfulness to the moment. One way of working with this section is to actively flood the entire field of present arising experience with what are called in Buddhism, the *Brahma Vihara*: lovingkindness, compassion, empathic joy and serene engagement or equanimity.* Using whichever of the brahma vihara is most meaningful to you at the time, discover how to suffuse with love, or compassion, or joy,

*The Brahma Vihara are sometimes referred to as 'the Four Divine Abidings' or 'The Four Immeasurables'. The cultivation of lovingkindness, compassion, sympathetic or empathic joy, and equanimity or serene engagement, are immeasurable when we can hold every being without exception in this warm embrace. Another way of putting this is that when we can look deeply into anyone or anything with eyes of interbeing, when we can appreciate the vastness of what they are, we will understand that they are truly immeasurable.

Saturate the
moment with
loving
engagement

or equanimity, whatever knowing is presently arising. Flood the object with love. Flood the subject with love. Flood both subject and object with love. Flood the experience of neither object nor subject with love. Whatever arises, allow it to manifest in the open embrace of love, compassion, joy, and serenity.

Gladdening the mind will counterbalance any tendency to view the preceding section (ix), in an overly detached way. Experiencing the mind, 'that which knows', the unbroken wholeness of totality, doesn't imply that there is now withdrawal and non-engagement. It is not a passive disengaged serenity. It is a spacious, open, blissful, energized, creative, serenity. Gladdening the mind is to saturate the moment with the juice of loving, caring, engagement; to appreciate the vastness of the universe manifesting in the form of a unique living being and, at the same time, seeing each individual being as a beginningless endless un-pin-down-able mystery. As the work of gladdening the mind deepens, it will lead you seamlessly into the next section – concentrating the mind.



(xi) *Concentrating the mind, I shall breathe in, thus he trains himself; concentrating the mind, I shall breathe out, thus he trains himself.*

Completely
centered

You might gain a fresh understanding of this section by pronouncing 'concentrating' with the emphasis on 'centrate'. *Con* means with, and *centrate* is to make centered. Concentrate literally means, with centre. In this stage we strengthen the sense of being tremendously stable, grounded, alert and bright, in the midst of whatever is arising. Your senses will already be quite alert but see if you can discover how to brighten them even more. Each one of the sense doors, seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, touching and conceptualising is vividly awake and fully functioning. In this settled but awake state, there is an ability to respond appropriately without a shred of expectation.

What is the secret of being centered? Imagine you are walking on a tightrope stretched over a deep canyon. You have in your hands a long pole which you use to keep your balance. As you walk there is a continuous flow of bright clear knowing that is informing your muscles exactly how to tighten and loosen in order to keep you centered. Your senses are extraordinarily alert. Interior communication systems, neurons, hormones, peptides and so forth are functioning beautifully. All of this, seamlessly operating together, is the knowing of the moment. If this clear knowing is not strongly present you will fall off the rope.

Strengthen the
quality of clarity

Concentrating the mind is to nourish and strengthen the quality of clarity/cognizance, a bright wakefulness through every aspect of body, speech and mind. This is

the illumination factor waking up the mind, enlivening the mind, clearing the mind. With more experience you may begin to realise that this clarity/cognizance is always present, that every moment of consciousness is imbued with concentration (*samadhi*). The knowing is completely centered and at rest within itself. Where else could it be?

(xii) Liberating the mind, I shall breathe in, thus he trains himself; liberating the mind, I shall breathe out, thus he trains himself.

A state of utter
non-clinging

A pith instruction from the Mahamudra is, "Give up all clinging and the essence will at once emerge." To liberate the mind is to dwell in a state of utter non-clinging. In the increasingly clear knowing/experiencing of interdependence, all limitations, such as the beginnings and ends of things and events are seen as arbitrary though useful fictions, but not universally solid or durable. Experiencing this is to hover on the edge of a great mystery.

Mind self-
liberates

Actually it is the nature of mind to self-liberate. Experience appears and disappears in the measureless space of awareness without any one thing making it happen. An image that is common in the Dzogchen* tradition is that of using your finger to draw a picture on the surface of still water. It disappears as fast as you draw it. It self-liberates.

* *Dzogchen* (pronounced *zog-chen*) means 'natural great perfection' or 'great completion' or 'great completeness'. This tradition is common to all the schools of Tibetan Buddhism but is especially associated with the Nyingma lineage. It is the equivalent of 'Essence Mahamudra' as taught in Karma Kagyu.

Non-clinging
is effortless
letting be

When the teaching speaks of non-clinging many people think that this means that they shouldn't cling to or hold on to things. They end up making tremendous efforts to not grasp, while failing to recognise that the effort itself is just another expression of clinging. Inevitably this leads to frustration and then confusion. Essentially, the heart of non-clinging has something to do with easeful relaxation and effortless letting be.

Mind functioning well is gladdening by nature. It is blissfully spacious. Like the open sky accommodating any shape of cloud, the open space of knowing supports any shape of experience. Just rest in awareness of this and let it happen.

Mind functioning well is bright, clear and centered by nature. You may doubt this when you feel dull and confused but look again at your dullness and confusion. Are you having a confused experience of clarity or are you having an unmistakably clear experience of confusion. Ah-ha! There is no question about it, this is pristine confusion arising in all its glory! Every moment of experience is bright, clear and centered in itself, exactly as it is. Just rest in awareness of this and let it happen.

Mind functioning well self-liberates. Anything you observe reveals itself to be an interbeing of myriad other things. Non-clinging awareness is the very expression of mind. If you grasp at experience it will just slip through your fingers. If you grasp at yourself, the experiencer, that too will slip through your fingers. Just relax in deepening confidence and allow the mind to function freely.

Investigate the
subject

The great teacher and yogi Longchenpa once said, “Do not go against what you do”*. If you feel you are clinging, don’t bother trying to not cling. Instead, carefully and methodically investigate what is it that is clinging. Alternately, you could investigate what it is that is trying to not cling. Essentially this means to investigate yourself, – you the clinger. As Thich Nhat Hanh nicely put it, you are composed of non-you elements. You are composed of earth, air, water, and solar energy. You are composed of your mother and father and patterns of ancestral conditioning. You are composed of all your life experiences and all the people and creatures that contributed to these experiences. What it is that is clinging, is actually an interbeing of the entire universe, in which each component element is itself an interbeing of everything else.

Investigate the
object

After having investigated the subject that is clinging then, in a similar way, investigate the object or what is being clung to. You will discover that the object is made of non-object elements. Then investigate the clinging itself; what is it that connects the two, you the subject and the object? You will find that clinging is made of non-clinging elements. If you investigate this way, all experience will reveal itself as a play of spacious openness; a dance of interbecoming. Resting in this spacious, open, investigating presence is to experience the mind liberating itself.

Investigate the
clinging

Compared to the lumpy object oriented explorations of the first two tetrads, this third tetrad is much more

* Longchen Rabjam, *You Are the Eyes of the World* a translation of the *Jeweled Ship*, Lotsawa 1987

Patience,
attentiveness
and courage

subtle and fluid. Now, instead of using The Four Foundations of Mindfulness as a basis for reviewing a session of meditation, you will probably find it more useful to use The Seven Factors of Awakening. These are described in the Appendix.

Initially you may have only very brief tastes of mind and its qualities before returning to the familiar experience of yourself as a distinctly separate subject interacting with distinctly separate objects. It requires a great deal of patience, tremendous attentiveness and a certain degree of courageous determination, to cut through the habit patterns of clinging. If you lose the essence of spacious presence, go back to the second tetrad and re-establish the *piti* and *sukha*. Study the mental formations and calm them. Relax with easeful exploratory wakefulness in whatever is arising until you again recognise mind and its qualities.

In Zen it is said that mind is like something round and slippery and slick. If you try to grab on to it, it only slips away. Think of how you might grasp something round and slippery and slick. You would have to approach it very smoothly without making any sudden movements. It's as if you were to spread the net of awareness through every dimension of being so that you very gently and sensitively embrace its entirety, from all sides at once. In the third tetrad, although it can sometimes feel that your mind is simultaneously both everywhere and nowhere, there must be a great clarity about what you are doing.

Experiencing the mind, gladdening the mind, concentrating the mind, and liberating the mind. The goal is certainly not to be spaced out. A vibrant experience of this tetrad is far from merely floating around in some

vague undefined spacious fogginess. Stay alert and present and, with practice, learn to dwell in this blissful, clear, non-clinging bright awakeness until it becomes utterly familiar.

Higher Defilements

At this stage of the path, a vast range of wonderful experiences can arise. If they had arisen during the earlier stages, you may have thought you had arrived at a great realisation or attainment. It is important to recognise that, marvelous as they may be, if you cling to these experiences, the clinging will prevent further deepening of insight. The classical meditation texts list ten of these *upakkilesas* (pronounced *oo - pa - ki - lay - sas*) or higher defilements.

- 1 Illumination: This refers to all manifestations of light appearing either internally or externally.
- 2 Knowledge: Many kinds of knowledges or understandings may come.
- 3 Rapturous happiness
- 4 Tranquillity
- 5 Bliss
- 6 Resolution: This is the arising of tremendous determination and strength of will.
- 7 Exertion: This is a capacity for great effort.
- 8 Confidence

9 Equanimity

- 10 Attachment: This is referring particularly to attachment to positive experiences. The Buddha once said, "You have to learn to go beyond the good not to mention the bad."

Abiding where
there is no
abiding

Many a religious or philosophical teaching has been based on one of these higher defilements. The founder failed to recognise their experience as an upakkilesa and assumed that they had realised some kind of enlightenment. Many years ago my teacher accused us of being oceanographers spending too much of our lives studying the myriad manifestations in the sea while ignoring the water. All manifestations have arisen from and in the ocean of mind. They are supported by mind. They are not separate from mind. If phenomena arise in meditation, even tremendously profound phenomena, just notice them. This is the play of knowing. Breathe with them and allow them to self-liberate and walk on in unshakable confidence. Surely this is what the ancient mystics were referring to when they used the phrase, 'abiding where there is no abiding'.



Fourth Tetrad Freedom

Rest easefully.

Let go of everything.

Do not reject even the tiniest thing.

This is the lotus of true refuge.

Taste of freedom
needs to be
stabilized

The first three tetrads when fully developed will bring the meditator to experience the natural mind; blissful, cognizant, inclusive, and utterly non-clinging. Many people have had momentary tastes of this way of being only to lose themselves yet again in the familiar world of subject/object separation – ‘reality’ as it’s commonly called. Here the old habit patterns of defence and acquisition are still alive and well, and as disturbing as ever. It is understandable that the meditator might develop a preference for the apparently blissful, spacious freedom mind, the effortless natural state, while at the same time

Ingrained habits
of stickiness

nourishing an aversion to the struggle of daily life. Wondrous as the meditation experiences may have been, there is still this painful duality. The taste of freedom has yet to be stabilised and recognised in every life situation.

In the third tetrad you have glimpsed the nature of mind itself. Now in the fourth tetrad you use this understanding to root out any remaining tendrils of clinging. Supported by the qualities of bliss, clarity and non-separation, continue to investigate the formation of mental objects. You will begin to see how the mind has developed deeply ingrained habits of stickiness. It's as if water has run down a channel so many times and has so grooved itself in, that it is unlikely to find another way to flow. Similarly, years of interacting internal and external events have grooved in preferences for activity, particularly ways of grabbing after objects or of running away from them, based on likes and dislikes. Resting in the nature of mind itself while investigating these tendencies, there will be a fading away of desire and aversion and confusion with regards to objects. Gradually, an inherent knowing of vast freedom will emerge.

(xiii) Contemplating impermanence, I shall breathe in, thus he trains himself; contemplating impermanence, I shall breathe out, thus he trains himself.

Simply relax into
the process

In this section simply relax and experience the arising and passing of objects. Let this process happen without interfering in any way. The Buddha said; "Suffering arises from trying to make permanent, that which is impermanent." Notice how when an object appears it often has a feeling tone associated with it. It seems desirable or horrible or intriguing and so forth. Examine the object in

minute detail. It doesn't matter whether it is an inner object or an outer object, physical or mental, it is still an object appearing in your knowing. How does it come into being? How is it maintained? How does it pass away? What is the interbeingness of this situation?

Examine your
responses

Examine your physical and mental responses to the object. It's in your responses that you will find the feelings of liking or disliking. Responses in your body, speech and mind are triggered by the object while simultaneously these responses are shaping your perception and understanding of the object. It is a continuous feedback loop.

When you join the mind of tranquil abiding to the mind of interest/question and then investigate the reality of arising objects, you will see that everything about them is transient. There is no abiding thing; no thing there to hang on to; just continuously changing, interacting patterns of becoming. When, in a similar way, you examine yourself the meditator, you will realise that here too there is no abiding thing. Both subject and object reveal themselves to be a dance of interdependence, an unbroken fluidity of interbecoming. There is nothing here to grasp. There isn't even anything to be impermanent!

Look again and
again and again

First of all see the fact of impermanence in every level of experience. Look into the habit patterns of body, speech and mind coming from your childhood, patterns coming from your parents, from your grandparents, from your culture and religion. Having thoroughly looked, then look again and again and again. As you experience and understand everything as a dance of interbeing, you will gradually notice a fading of the grip that the objects and events seem to have on you. This is the birthing of true detachment.

(xiv) *Contemplating fading away, I shall breathe in, thus he trains himself; contemplating fading away, I shall breathe out, thus he trains himself.*

Fading away refers to the fading away of emotional reactions to the object, such as attraction, repulsion and confusion. You literally uncolour it.

Uncolouring
the object

The Pali word for fading away is *viraga* (pronounced *wi-ra-ga*). *Raga* means colour or hue and the *vi* part denotes negation. *Viraga* means the fading away of *raga*. Objects have been coloured by greed, hatred and confusion. These colours are added to the object by the defensive ego mind and prevent you from seeing the object in all its fullness. Desirable objects often exercise a fascination flavoured with lust, passion, greed, or jealousy. The juices and hormones start flowing. You are in the grip of unseen projection and think the desirableness is an inherent quality of the object. You go on auto-pilot and grab for whatever it is. Has this ever happened to you? The opposite can also occur. Many things seem threatening to people. The repulsiveness of snakes and creepy crawlies is a projection by frightened humans. Millions of creatures have been unnecessarily killed by people reacting this way. Ethnic and sectarian conflict is also rooted in these knee-jerk reactions.

Persistent, loving,
patience

Supported by bliss, clarity and non-clinging, and with deepening confidence that in fact there is nothing to cling to anyway, you will experience a gradual fading away of these ingrained patterns of reactivity. This is an effortless letting go, and it occurs according to its own mysterious timetable. You just need to give it the opportunity to happen. At this stage you definitely need some persist-

Meditation as
acclimatization

ent, loving, patience. It's not a matter of having one brilliant realisation after which everything is perfectly resolved. Kalu Rinpoché used to say that meditation was essentially a matter of acclimatization. It takes time to acclimatize to recognising the spacious clarity in the midst of situations that in the past pushed your buttons and triggered reactivity. Gradually there will be a fading away and you will come to experience objects as they really are without the distorting limitation of unconsciously projected reactions.

(xv) Contemplating cessation, I shall breathe in, thus he trains himself; contemplating cessation I shall breathe out, thus he trains himself.

Contemplating cessation is to abide in the cessation of greed, hatred and delusion. What remains is an unfathomable mystery, the spacious freedom mind, a creative dancing of wisdom and compassion.

Cessation of
greed, hatred and
delusion

Acceptance and rejection are themselves interdependent experiences arising in knowing. They are inherently impermanent with no abiding existence. As this knowing becomes more and more part of your ongoing experience you will come to realise that objects have less and less effect on you in terms of triggering unconscious reactivity. For example, touching something cold and slimy is just touching something cold and slimy or enjoying the smell of a rose is enjoying the smell of a rose; nothing more and nothing less. The Buddha said; "You have to come to see the pleasant for the pleasant and the unpleasant for the unpleasant."

Finding the
builder

After he awakened the Buddha said, "I have found you oh builder, you will build no more." Here you have found the defensive habit patterns of hoping, fearing and confused dullness that have coloured your universe. With clear seeing comes freedom. Now there is a confident knowing that you are free from clinging to objects including the object called self. The mind is functioning in all its vastness; a play of ever fresh awareness – interweaving waves of manifestation dancing in an ocean of clear serenity.

(xvi) Contemplating relinquishment, I shall breathe in, thus he trains himself; contemplating relinquishment, I shall breathe out, thus he trains himself.

Relax in faith
and trust

You might wonder how there can be anything beyond stage fifteen? Contemplating relinquishment is to dwell in the state of complete letting go, letting go of any preference for cessation, even letting go of any need to let go. To put this in a positive way, simply relax in a space of immense faith and trust and allow everything, even accepting and rejecting.

In Zen there is a famous verse:

In the beginning mountains are mountains
and streams are streams.

Then mountains are not mountains and
streams are not streams.

In the end, mountains are again mountains
and streams are streams.

Conventional
reality

In the context of the Anapanasati Sutta, the first two tetrads explore the stage where mountains are mountains and streams are streams. This is the world of conventional reality with subject and object, self and others, likes and dislikes and an almost continuous struggle driven by energies of greed, hatred and confusion.

Understanding is
turned inside out

In the third tetrad and most of the fourth, mountains are not mountains and streams are not streams. Here the conventional understanding of reality is turned inside out and upside down. Everything is revealed as a play of knowing, un-pin-down-able and empty of any intrinsic existence. In this mode of experience the yogi may have many fantastic and wonderful experiences and insights. Ah ... mountains are not mountains! It's all illusion! All things are possible! Compared with the painful limitations of mountains being merely conventional mountains, this spacious openness of interbeing seems to be the ultimate freedom. Subtly pervading this blissful state however, is sometimes a faint aversion for objects and activity. If we don't cling to the wonderful states but continue in faith and trust to deeply investigate whatever is arising, we finally break through even the limitation of having aversion for the conventional and preference for the 'not mountains'.

All seems possible

Total letting go
is freedom

Now, at the end of the journey, in this sixteenth stage, mountains are again mountains and streams are streams but this is very different from the way mountains were mountains at the beginning. In total relinquishment, total letting go, there is freedom to play in the unfolding drama of an awakening world, however it needs to be, just as it is, in all its vast ungraspable mystery.

The great Dzogchen yogi Longchenpa* wrote:

“What remains is naturally lucid, uninterrupted consciousness that is immediate and without bias. It is free even in arising, empty even in manifesting, and evanescent even in stirring. It “is” even as it “is not,” while it “is not” even as it “is”. It is nonexistent even in being present, while it is nonetheless present even in being nonexistent. It stirs even in abiding, while it abides even in stirring. What remains is meditative stability as the ongoing flow of natural, seamless consciousness.

You may meditate on it as existent, but it is impossible to affirm. You may meditate on it as nonexistent, but it is impossible to deny. You may view it as both existent and nonexistent, but it is not subject to such extremes. You may think of it as both or neither of these, but it is not subject to such bias. It may manifest as pleasure or pain, but these leave no trace in their wake. It exhibits a pristine quality as the true nature of phenomena, but ordinary consciousness does not ensue. There is uninterrupted freedom, but you do not maintain some fundamentally unconditioned state. What remains is unconstrained and unbiased consciousness that has free rein.

Let it exist, let it not exist. Let it manifest, let it be empty. Let it be, let it not be. Let it be good, let it be bad. Let it be realised, let it not be realised. What remains is a naturally pristine, naked state –

* Longchen Rabjam, *A Treasure Trove of Scriptural Transmission* Padma Publishing 2001; pages 202, 203

consciousness that is empty and evanescent, an all-embracing open dimension in which no traces remain.”

The creative
intelligence of the
universe

There is little more to be said. The creative intelligence of the universe, conventionally called you, continues on, exploring life, participating, and manifesting compassion wherever needed on the way; a heart/mind of equilibrium, relaxation and naturalness.

Namgyal Rinpoché once remarked that meditators are people who meditate. Now that you’ve read to the end of this book; go back to the beginning or to the section that most engages you and really work with these meditations. At the same time, cultivate an exquisite openness that will allow these explorations to work on you. Let your natural curiosity about life flower in everything that you do. Cultivate an attitude of kindness and friendly interest towards everything and everyone around you and explore.



Afterword

Oh meditators ...

Are you sure you are meditating?

Have you become the great ocean

Receiving all the rivers

the tributaries of being?

Or do you see yourself as a drip

trying oh so hard to get somewhere

to be somewhere

to become something?

Actually ...

The nature of drip is not different from ocean.

Most drips, unbeknownst to themselves are oceans,

vast worlds teeming with microscopic life.

Drips are on the run

guests who never remain.

never feeling quite at home.

isolated in their whirling separation.

gazing at faces in the concave surfaces

of shimmering silver.
lives in a bubble
unable to break out.

Oceans are hosts
welcoming all who drop in.
Vast loving,
open twenty-four hours per day.
This ... in all its wonder and vastness
and beautiful complexity ...
just as it is!
nothing less
and nothing more.

It seems so difficult being a drip!
A trickle running tentatively.
One single hand can block its way.
Problems looming all around
And yet ...
Imagine a single hand trying to
stop the flow of the Amazon
as it enters the sea.

Too often our meditation
becomes something to practise.
A further distancing of ourselves
from the true nature of being.
In the name of mindfulness we split ourselves
and become the 'watcher'
watching something else
oh so perilously close to the critic!
We think we are practising awareness when closer to truth
Awareness is what we are.

I wonder if Life feels it needs to practise living?
Though aspiring to awakening and
the cultivation of compassion,
how did we get so far off the track?

Pause with me a moment.
Imagine you are holding in your hands a beautiful bowl
filled with lustral waters
a nectar of knowing, a potion of caring.
Imagine the nectar is yourself, and
there you are ... resting in the bowl,
being mindful of your breathing.

What a strange existence!
You in the bowl.
Your breathing somewhere else
... not you ...
but being watched 'by' you.

Have you been there?

Now ...
gently, sensitively.
with a tremendous richness of awareness,
raise the bowl above your head.
Actually do it with your hands and
let your body teach you.

Now ...
tilting the bowl ...
Pour yourself back into yourself.

Ahhhhhh!!!!

Stay with it for a moment. Can you feel the difference?

Nectar cascading down
moistening every cell
aliveness, immediacy
breathing and knowing
intimately mingled
in this ocean of mystery.

We are all leaky vessels

cracked bowls, leaking all over the world,
leaving a trail of puddles behind us
more and more scattered,
more and more diffused,
until we begin to feel a bit empty and dried up.

A bit of mindless chatter runs out here.

A bit of planning next year dribbles out there.

A bit of envy, criticism, anger, confusion.

We're running away in all directions.

Can you pause and gather yourself back into the bowl.

The bowl is our remembering, our sati, our mindfulness.

It does little good collecting dust on the shrine

it's a tool ...

a bailing tin
to save a space borne ship.
Not to empty the vessel but
to pour the ocean into it
to sink it
to shipwreck this drip
into the origin of all Being.

Have courage.

Bail for your life
buckets of ocean
ballast to sink you to the depths of life fully lived.
Use it. Use it and Use it again.

Scoop yourself up. Bring back each escaped part. Use
your hands or a squeegee or a mop; anything that will
help you to remember the work
and then ...
pour yourself back into yourself
and continue in richness.

In time you will know that you can do this
and will know it to be good.

At that time then ...
gathering all that you are
one fluid whole,
pour yourself back into the world!

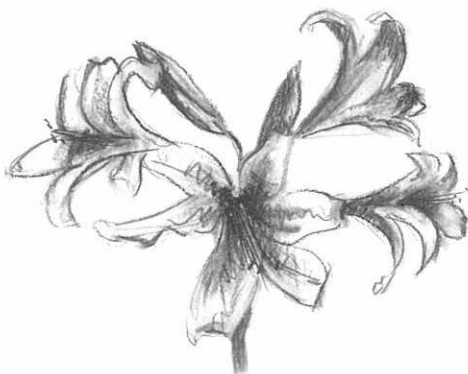
The drip returns to the sea.

The sea becomes Great Seeing
Compassion working wonderfully
A natural presence gifting itself
A rich dance of knowing
Your offering to the world.

There is a story about David Bohm the physicist. In order to clarify his understanding of relativity physics, he wrote a book that eventually became a standard university text on the subject. However, in concluding, he surmised that he still didn't fully understand relativity physics. He then went on to write a book on quantum mechanics which also became a standard university text and again he surmised he didn't fully understand quantum mechanics. In a similar way, *Breathing, The Natural Way to Meditate* was written partly for you but also partly to help clarify my own understanding and experience.

Although I have practised and pondered this teaching for many years, it continues to reveal deeper, more subtle and increasingly profound implications which highlight my own ignorance and partial experience. I can't really say that I'm hoping this will become a standard university text but I do aspire that it will help clarify your journey of awakening and that the ripples of wholesome discovery and understanding will move out in all directions – an ever widening mandala.

May all beings be blessed with the unending awakening of wisdom and compassion in whatever form their life circumstances allow.



Appendix

Root Text

The Anapanasati text used throughout this book is from *Mindfulness of Breathing*, translated by Bhikkhu Nanamoli, Buddhist Publication Society, 1952.

And how developed, bhikkhus, how repeatedly practised, is respiration-mindfulness of great fruit, of great benefit?

Here bhikkhus, a bhikkhu, gone to the forest, or to the root of a tree, or to an empty place, sits down; having folded his legs crosswise, set his body erect, established mindfulness in front of him, ever mindful he breathes in, mindful he breathes out.

(i) Breathing in long, he knows, I breathe in long; or breathing out long, he knows, I breathe out long.

(ii) Breathing in short, he knows, I breathe in short; or breathing out short, he knows, I breathe out short.

(iii) Experiencing the whole body (of breath), I shall breathe in, thus he trains himself; experiencing the whole body, I shall breathe out, thus he trains himself.

(iv) Calming the bodily formation, I shall breathe in, thus he trains himself; calming the bodily formation, I shall breathe out, thus he trains himself.

(v) Experiencing rapture (piti), I shall breathe in, thus he trains himself; experiencing rapture, I shall breathe out, thus he trains himself.

(vi) Experiencing bliss (sukha), I shall breathe in, thus he trains himself; experiencing bliss, I shall breathe out, thus he trains himself.

(vii) Experiencing the mental formation, I shall breathe in, thus he trains himself; experiencing the mental formation, I shall breathe out, thus he trains himself.

(viii) Calming the mental formation, I shall breathe in, thus he trains himself; calming the mental-formation, I shall breathe out, thus he trains himself.

(ix) Experiencing the mind, I shall breathe in, thus he trains himself; experiencing the mind, I shall breathe out, thus he trains himself.

(x) Gladdening the mind, I shall breathe in, thus he trains himself; gladdening the mind, I shall breathe out, thus he trains himself.

(xi) Concentrating the mind, I shall breathe in, thus he trains himself; concentrating the mind, I shall breathe out, thus he trains himself.

(xii) Liberating the mind, I shall breathe in, thus he trains himself; liberating the mind, I shall breathe out, thus he trains himself.

(xiii) Contemplating impermanence, I shall breathe in, thus he trains himself; contemplating impermanence, I shall breathe out, thus he trains himself.

(xiv) Contemplating fading away, I shall breathe in, thus he trains himself; contemplating fading away, I shall breathe out, thus he trains himself.

(xv) Contemplating cessation, I shall breathe in, thus he trains himself; contemplating cessation I shall breathe out, thus he trains himself.

(xvi) Contemplating relinquishment, I shall breathe in, thus he trains himself; contemplating relinquishment, I shall breathe out, thus he trains himself.

Posture

1 Sitting

Generally you will either sit cross legged or in a chair. If you use a chair choose something like a straight backed kitchen chair or an office chair. Sit with your knees apart; about the distance from your finger tips to the elbow. Women in this culture often sit with their knees together. This may be the polite thing to do but it restricts the flow of energy in the lower centres.

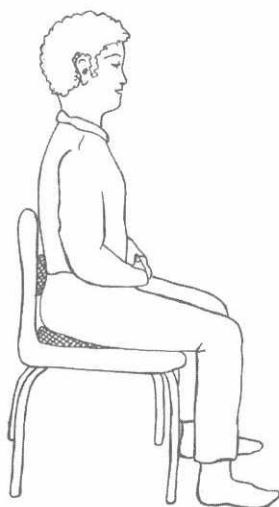
Begin by having the joints of the body, the ankles, knees, hips and so forth, at 90 degrees. In a subliminal way this will suggest orderliness and structure and will help deepen the relaxation. You may find it useful to have a firm wedge shaped cushion under your tail bone. This will tilt the pelvis forward and support your torso being upright without your muscles having to work so hard at it.

Place the back of your right hand in the palm of your left hand and settle them on your lap. You may find it helps to put a towel across your lap and you can rest the hands on that. Imagine a fine thread extending from the crown of your head, going high up into the sky. Feel it gently extending you upward. Allow your chin to tuck slightly in towards your chest and your shoulders to drop down. Just let them hang. Soften in the abdomen. Now check out the overall feeling of the posture.

If you develop a sore back, check that the wedge you are sitting on is high enough. You could also place a thin

cushion between the small of your back and the back of the chair.

If you sit cross legged, all the preceding suggestions apply, except that the geometry of the body is in triangles rather than right angles. This is a very stable posture and speaks of aspiration.



2 *Standing*

Stand with your feet about hip width. Again contact the thread guiding up from the crown of the head. This upward direction will counteract any tendency to slump. Feel your shoulders, abdomen, thighs and feet and encourage them to relax. Make sure your knees are

not locked and that the small of your back is not too sway-backed. Let your arms hang loose at the sides or, join your palms and fingertips together in the gesture of prayer in front of your heart. Let the eyes gaze easefully straight ahead.

3 *Walking*

For walking meditation it is ideal to have a fairly level area in which to practise. Begin with the standing posture. Grasp the right wrist with the left hand either in front of you or behind your back. Another way is to let both arms hang loosely by the sides. With the eyes gently focused on the ground, about two metres in front, slowly and mindfully begin to walk. At the end of the path come to a complete stop and take a moment to feel your whole body standing and breathing. Then mentally acknowledge, 'turning' and mindfully turn so that you face back in the direction from which you just came. Then acknowledge, 'walking' and continue back to where you started. While walking, give your full attention to the object of meditation, in this case the breath*.

4 *Lying horizontal*

This posture is very good for relaxation but not the most skilful way to practise after a tiring day at work. You might become disturbed by the snoring! Try it when you are feeling very awake. Lie flat on your back on a firm

* For extensive instruction in walking meditation see *Walking in Wisdom* by Tarchin Hearn, Wangapeka Books, 2003.

even surface. Have a minimum of pillow, just enough to let your head, neck and shoulders feel comfortable. Let your arms rest beside you and feel the weight of the body sinking into the bed or floor. Then focus on the object of meditation.

Eye Position

Keeping the eyes half open is sometimes difficult for people who are new to meditation. They often find the eyes flicker and twitch in a very distracting manner. If this is the case for you, begin with your eyes either softly closed or open and gazing straight ahead in a relaxed, natural way. For a short period each session meditate with your eyes half open. Eventually this will come to feel quite natural.

With more experience you will realise that the position of the eyes greatly influences the quality of the meditation. Closed or lowered eyes tend to encourage calming but can also support greater amounts of verbalisation. Looking straight ahead with the eyes at or above the horizontal brightens the mind and encourages question but can leave you feeling tense and open to visual distractions.

Ultimately meditation is more of an art than a technology, so rather than attempting to doggedly follow instructions, as if the whole exercise revolves around getting things right or doing things wrong, why don't you experiment. Explore how different eye positions support different states. Then choose the one that best supports

the mind of calm and clarity, given the circumstances and energies of your life on that particular day.

Breath of Nine Blowings

This is an excellent exercise for balancing the right and left hemispheres of the brain. It will leave you feeling calm, centered and energised. First learn the physical movements, then add the accompanying visualisation.

Physical Movements

- 1 Take up a good sitting posture.
- 2 Rest the right palm on the right thigh and the left palm on the left thigh with the thumb and fore-fingers touching and the other fingers extended.



- 3 Exhale completely.



4 With a long and full inhalation, mindfully raise the upper arm in an arc until it is as far up and back as possible. At the same time, the elbow bends and the forearm relaxes so that at the end of the movement the hand rests near the nose with the palm facing forward. This way of inhaling will help to open up the chest on the side of the arm movement. Traditionally men begin with the right arm and women with the left but I suggest you begin with whichever arm you wish.

5 Using the tip of the fourth finger, gently close the nearest nostril by pushing on the side of the nose.

6 Hold the breath for a few moments.



7 Exhale long and gently through the open nostril. While this is happening the elbow will naturally come down and towards the end of the exhalation the palm returns to the thigh. At the end of the exhalation one is sitting straight with both palms on the thighs.



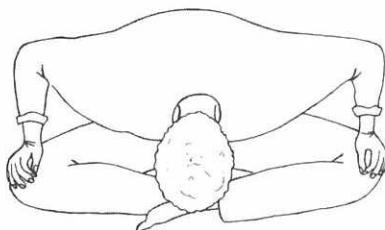
8 Raising the other arm, inhale long and full and repeat steps 4 through 7.

9 Repeat this process three times on each side, alternating arms. After six breaths you will be sitting with both hands resting on the thighs.

10 Inhale completely through both nostrils.

11 Hold briefly.

12 Exhale completely through both nostrils whilst bending forward from the waist so that the head comes down towards the floor.



13 Inhale through both nostrils while coming back to the original sitting position. Then hold the breath briefly.

14 Repeat 12 and 13 two more times. This makes a grand total of 9 'blowings'.

It's easiest to learn this breathing by having someone demonstrate it. If you are teaching yourself from these instructions, practise the above instructions a number of times to familiarize yourself with the movements before adding the visualisation.

Accompanying Visualisation

Inhaling:

The visualisation will depend a bit on your cultural and religious background. If you are a devout Buddhist you could imagine an infinite number of Buddhas throughout space and time, all radiating the light of wisdom and compassion. You imagine that this light enters your nostrils as you inhale and you feel it filling the whole of your being. If you are a devout Christian, you may imagine the unseen radiance of God, or the radiant love of Jesus Christ entering your nostrils and filling your entire being with light. If you were not of any particular religious persuasion you might imagine the light of divine intelligence or the goodness of the universe, entering your body in the form of light. Understand the principle and use something that works for you.

Holding:

Hold the breath for a short while and imagine, or better yet feel, the light as swirling energy moving all through the body.

Exhaling:

When exhaling, imagine all illness, unwholesome patterns, negative mind states and so forth exiting with the breath.

Basically, you inhale the good, rest in the good, and exhale the bad. When done correctly, this is a very powerful exercise. You should do it no more than once at the beginning of a meditation session. It is a very good tool to rapidly bring you into a clear focused state.

The Seven Factors of Awakening

In the areas of the first two tetrads, where you are mostly exploring physical and mental objects and processes, it can be very helpful to review a meditation session in the light of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. As your practice deepens and you become more familiar with states of non-separation or at least less separation between you the subject and the object of your contemplations, you'll find that it is more helpful to review in the light of the Seven Factors of Awakening.* A healthy human being who is abiding in a state of easeful presence and bright awakeness will have all seven active and balanced. There are three dynamic factors, three passive factors and one that balances active and passive.

<i>dynamic factors</i>	≈ AWARENESS ≈	<i>passive factors</i>
Investigation		Tranquillity
Joy		Absorption
Energy-effort		Equanimity

1 Awareness - Sati

(pronounced *sah - ti*)

Nowfulness

In reviewing, ask yourself, how much mindfulness, was present. Alternately you could ask how much heartfulness or nowfulness or basic attentiveness was present. In particular, to what degree were the Four Foundations of Mindfulness present (awareness of body, feelings, mind

* The Seven Factors of Awakening are also known as 'The Seven Factors of Enlightenment' or in Pali, *Sambojjhanga*

states and phenomena). Sati is the most important of the seven. If you don't have this one well established, you won't know if the others are present or not.

2 *Investigation - Dhammavicaya* (pronounced *dha - ma - wichai - a*)

Curiosity

Dhammavicaya means investigation of dharma. Here, dharma refers to 'truth', 'phenomena' or 'laws of nature'. This is the curiosity factor, the degree of question or engaged interest/exploration. To what degree was the active investigating mind present? This is not referring to a specific verbal question but to a quality of wide open, probing curious engagement. How strong was your question, or did you just float aimlessly through the session waiting for something to happen?

3 *Joy - Pīti* (pronounced *pee - tee*)

Flowing energies

In the process of awakening you will inevitably experience joy. *Pīti* is very physical, ranging from tinglings or prickings of the skin, to moments of pleasure in parts of the body, through to waves of carry-you-away ecstasy. This is really an awareness of the flowing energies of the organism. Flow always has a pleasurable flavour. Blocked energies always have a quality of dissatisfaction or even pain. In reviewing the meditation ask yourself how much joy or *pīti* was present.

4 *Energy-Effort - Viriya*

(pronounced *wi - ree - ya*)

There are four ways of applying energy or effort that are essential for awakening.

The Four Efforts

- Make effort to recognise and understand an unwholesome state when it is present. An unwholesome state is anything that takes you away from wholeness, in other words, towards fragmentation. This first effort is to recognise the fragmenting, the unwholesome trends in your being, at the very moment they arise.
- Make effort to drop them immediately or to bring them to an end. Through the first effort you will begin to understand the conditions that support an unwholesome state and will therefore be more able to avoid them in the future. An example of this in meditation is when you recognise verbalisation as an unwholesome trend. You know it will lead you into the path of the five hindrances so without indulging it, you immediately drop it and come back to the meditation object.
- Make effort to recognise a wholesome trend in your being when it is present. Wholesome is anything that moves you in the direction of wholeness. In our culture we seem to be quite accomplished in identifying a wide range of unwholesome states but not so good at acknowledging what supports our growth and happiness.

- Make effort to support wholesome states when they are present and to encourage their arising in the future.

When reviewing, ask yourself how well you worked with these four efforts.

5 *Tranquillity - Passadhi* (pronounced *pa - sah - dhi*)

Easeful presence

Review the degree of tranquillity, calm or easeful presence. For beginners this will usually correspond to the presence or lack of verbalisation. As the gross levels of verbalisation decrease there will be increasing discrimination as to the quality or texture of calm that is present throughout the entire body/mind.

6 *Concentration - Samadhi* (pronounced *sa - mah - dhi*)

Union,
absorption,
centeredness

It may surprise you to read that concentration is considered to be a passive factor, especially when you picture the furrowed brows and the serious grimace of the concentrating face. It's true that you might work hard, trying unsuccessfully to concentrate, but think of times when you are really concentrated. How much effort is there then? Recall some of the times you have been totally absorbed in a book or immersed in some craft work. The traffic is roaring by or someone comes in and speaks to you and you don't even hear them. How much effort did it take to do that? Concentrate means con (with) plus centrate (centre). In other words, you're centered. You are concentrated when you are with the centre, when you

are solid and grounded in the present moment. In reviewing ask yourself how much union, absorption, centeredness or groundedness was present.

7 *Equanimity - Upekkha*

(pronounced *oo - pek - ka*)

Mind of serenity

Other words for this are ‘evenmindedness’ or ‘serenity’. In this state one is not ruffled by the ‘eight worldly winds’ of concern about praise and blame, pleasure and pain, loss and gain, fame and notoriety. This mind of equanimity sits squarely in the centre of experience with all the senses open, seeing and appreciating the whole. In reviewing, ask yourself how much equanimity or evenmindedness or serenity was present.

Working With Difficult States

General Approach

There are three ways of working with any difficulty or distraction that arises in meditation. Try the first. If that doesn’t work, then try the second. If that doesn’t work, go to the third.

Acknowledge it

1. Simply acknowledge the distraction and stay with the meditation exercise. See the ‘distraction’ as part of the arising mandala of experience and continue the exploration in easefulness.

Explore it

2. If you are simply unable to stay with the exercise because the distraction is too strong, then, with clear intention, set aside the exercise and begin to explore the distraction itself.

Let go and do something positive

3. If the difficulty is so engulfing that you can't even explore it, leave the meditation and do something that makes you feel good. Wise is she or he who runs away and lives to love another day. You won't learn anything by wallowing in misery or frustration. It doesn't benefit yourself or anyone else. Have a break and come back to the exploration later when your energies are more balanced and functional.

Immediate First Aid

Tapping the chest

If a difficult state is present you could try this simple exercise of immediate first aid. Breathe in and out slowly and deeply 3 times while very lightly tapping your breast bone with your fingertips. While you are doing this, imagine that you are in a place of great beauty. As you breathe and tap and imagine, gently massage the upper palate of your mouth with your tongue. Although this method is unlikely to 'solve' any deep rooted problems, it will often help to shift the overall energy state in the direction of greater lightness and flow.

Exploring Difficult States

Holistic clearing work

One method of exploring difficult states is 'Holistic Clearing Work'. This is a meditation to help you discover greater clarity about the whole. The intention here, is not

to fix or get rid of a problem but to meet the entire mandala of present arising experience with greater empathy and understanding. This approach can lead to fresh clarity that in turn can give birth to a new situation and new possibilities.

Physical
loosening

1. Get yourself into a good space. Insight emerges from a wholesome space. Do some pleasurable physical stretching or movement, something that energises you and loosens you up. Prostrations, running, swimming, yoga, aikido, tai chi or simple stretching, are a few examples of what you might do here.

Posture

2. Settle into a comfortable posture, and rest for a while with awareness of the breathing. The posture should support a quality of alertness and easefulness.

Visualise a
beautiful scene

3. In your mind's eye, imagine a scene of great beauty. Allow sufficient time for this to work into your body. Then check out the overall quality of being that is present – a summation of physical sensations, feelings, and mental phenomena. See if you can name this quality. Of course, in order to name it well, you have to look into it – to feel it thoroughly. You could come up with any word. For example, 'this is ... spacious, happy, calm or easeful'. The word or phrase doesn't have to make psychological sense to anyone else. It is a verbal label you associate with this positive state. You are in a good state and you know it.

In this method, the feeling tone of your overall state needs to be uplifting or at least positively neutral before proceeding any further. This is important!

Aspiration for
fresh
understanding

4. Reflect on your aspiration for the meditation session. This can have two levels, a general and a specific aspiration. An example of a general life aspiration could be to become

free from suffering so that you are able to be more totally present with and for others. A more specific aspiration may be to come to a fresh understanding or a greater clarity about a particular problem.

Begin with a
memory

5. Having established a positive state and refreshed your aspiration, recall the person or situation or problem that you are struggling with. To do this you could imagine an actual situation that triggers the feeling or difficulty. Gently holding this in the mind's eye, carefully track how the sensations of your body begin to shift from the positive quality you recognized in #3 to something new.

Explore the
shifting body
states

Although working in your imagination is not likely to have the same impact as being face to face with the difficult situation, for the purpose of the meditation this will be sufficient to start the exploration. Without losing awareness of your breathing, track the shifts and changes taking place in your body as it moves into a new attitude or posture of being. At this point you completely let go of imagining or thinking about the situation/problem you used to initiate the meditation and instead, give all your attention to the sensations and experiences arising right now in your current embodied experience. Look deeply into the overall state that is present, right at this moment, and see if you can name it. If you are able to do this well, a shift or shimmer will often go through the body of experience. There will be some sort of feeling of movement, some change or release in response to this recognition.

If you get stuck ...

If the state feels a bit stuck, give even more attention to your breathing and at the same time gently hold the question, is there something behind this? Have there been other situations in my life where the overall feeling tone texture in my body has been the same or similar? Then

let go of the verbal questioning and speculation and feel your way deeply into the present arising experience. Be open for a response to come. Track the shifting bodily sensations as they change. If they settle into a more stable configuration, then sensitively explore your way into this configuration and try to name it. You may go through this process a number of times; tracking the state, exploring it, naming it, releasing, tracking, exploring, naming, releasing and so forth. Continue this way until the session comes to an end – either through lack of time or because you have done enough for now.

Review

6. Review the meditation. Go back to the beginning and recall the good state you began with in #3. Retrace the movements, the shifts and changes in the body of experience. It's as if you were to rewind the video of the meditation and then see/feel/sense it again. Don't try to analyse the experience. Just re-view it while at the same time being open for any new understandings or insights that might emerge.

Sharing the merit

7. End the session by sharing the merit. Sharing the merit is very important, especially when you are trying to explore difficult states. Essentially you aspire that any positivity or goodness that has arisen through doing this meditation will flower in many ways for the benefit of all beings.

Even if you didn't come to a resolution, the very fact that you tried to enlarge and clarify your understanding of a difficult situation is in itself a wholesome activity and you could share that positive effort and aspiration. Having shared the merit, get up and go about your day.

Seeing the Vast Mandala of Interbeing

A profound way to alleviate difficulty is to explore the interbeingness of the arising situation. If it is mostly a physical problem, explore the psychological factors that support it. If the problem seems more emotional or mental, study how the physical body is contributing to it. Consider how the outer factors are shaping the inner factors and vice versa. The following words might suggest a way of remembering the vast mandala of being that you are. Read through them slowly, phrase by phrase, and allow them to stimulate new understanding. Use your awareness of breathing as a constant support and allow yourself to deepen into new realms of experience.

Breathing in and breathing out, contemplate the essential interbeing of this difficult state. Recognise how each aspect of your existence; body, speech and mind, inner and outer, micro and macro is interweaving with everything else in the universe. Nothing stands independently on its own. Everything is created, sustained and supported by everything else. All arisings are mutually shaping.

With this understanding, where is this 'me' that so often seems apart from the rest of the universe? As awareness opens to the fullness of the present moment, the sense of a separate self is seen as empty and illusory. One feels clear, relaxed and vitally awake. Breathe with this for a while. All feelings, sounds and thoughts are like the wind blowing in space; spacious openness dancing in spacious openness.

Desperation - When Nothing Seems to Work

Ride the rapids

Occasionally you might find yourself asking, what can I do when there doesn't seem to be anything I can do about this situation? Well, you have already answered your question. The answer is nothing! Just ride the rapids! Hang on until you come out the other side then go for a walk and let things cool out. Strangely and wondrously, impermanence will always save us.

Pray for help

When you feel really stuck you might pray for help. In your imagination, feel the presence of the Buddha, Jesus, your root guru, or a trusted mentor, and ask for guidance. Come back to the practice that is most meaningful for you. This is why it is very valuable to develop a meditation to the point where it is so familiar, it feels like coming home. It's your life raft. However, the time to develop this raft is when things are going well, not in the rough times. In rough times all you have going for you are your habit patterns so it's a blessing to have wholesome habits to fall back on.

Learning in
the midst of
difficulty

Finally, it can sometimes help to remind yourself that you are being shaped and taught by the difficulty. For example, the sheer pain of the anger and the pain of seeing more clearly the effect anger has on yourself and others, is sometimes just what you need to bring you to the point of really valuing loving kindness and having the courage to bring it into your world.

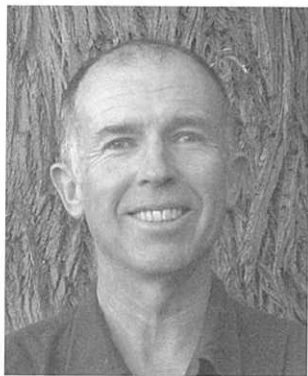
Glossary

(All words are Pali unless otherwise indicated.
Skt. indicates a Sanskrit word and Tib. indicates a
Tibetan word.)

- abhidhamma**; psycho/philosophical teaching of
Buddhism
adhiṭṭhāna; aspiration, intention
ānāpānasati; awareness of breathing
bhikkhu; Buddhist monk
brahma-vihāra; the meditations of loving kindness,
compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity
buddhadharma; teachings of the path of
awakening
citta; heart, mind
dhamma-vicaya; investigation of truth or phenomena
dharma (Skt); truth, phenomena, natural law, laws of
nature
dukkha; suffering, struggle
Dzogchen (Tib); Natural Great Perfection
gelong (Tib); Buddhist monk, one who is free to ask
question
hinayāna; small vehicle
kāma chanda; desire for sensing
kāya; body
Mahamudra; (literally) Great Gesture
mahāyāna; large vehicle
Majjhima Nikāya; Middle Length Discourses of the
Buddha

mantra (Skt); sound used as a focus of attention in meditation
nivaranā; hindrance
Pāli; the language of the earliest Buddhist scriptures
pāṇa; breath, energy
passaddhi; tranquility, calm
pīti; joy, physical bliss
prāṇa (Skt); breath, energy
puṇya (Skt); merit, power
rāgā; colour, hue
samādhi; concentration
samatha; tranquil abiding meditation
sambojjhanga; seven factors of awakening
sati; mindfulness
shiné (Tib); tranquil abiding meditation
sukha; serene all-pervading happiness
suññata; **śūnyatā** (Skt); emptiness
sutta; written teaching
sutra (Skt); written teaching
ṭhina-middha; sloth and torpor
uddacca-kukkucca; restlessness and worry
upakkilesa; higher defilements
upekkhā; equanimity, serenity
vajrayāna; diamond vehicle
vedanā; feelings, evaluation function
vicikicchā; skeptical doubt
vipassanā; insight meditation
virāgā; to uncolour
virīya; energy, effort
vyāpadā; ill will

About The Author



Tarchin Hearn was born in England and raised in Canada. He has more than 35 years of experience in Theravadin, Mahayana and Vajrayana schools of Buddhism and was ordained as a monk for 12 years in the Tibetan tradition. During these years he studied with such illuminating teachers as Namgyal Rinpoché who was his main Root Guru, Kalu Rinpoché, H.H. The 16th Karmapa, and U. Thila Wunta Sayadaw. He also received teachings and transmissions from H.H. The Dalai Lama, H.H. Sakya Trizin, H.E. Chobje Rinpoché, Kanjur Rinpoché, Karma Thinley Rinpoché, Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoché, Namkhai Norbu Rinpoché and Thich Nhat Hanh.

Since 1977 he has taught in many countries and helped establish a number of centres for study and practice. Since

1980, he has been a guiding teacher for The Wangapeka Study and Retreat Centre in New Zealand. Writer, artist, poet, traveller and inspiring teacher, Tarchin has at times described himself as a 'yogi of the natural world'. He has a great interest in blending the insights and understandings of science and ecology with Buddha Dharma and in particular the teachings of Mahamudra and Dzogchen. Though well trained in Buddhism, Tarchin's approach is thoroughly non-sectarian and universal in scope. Bringing together a wonderful balance of humour and seriousness, eclectic experimentation and classical tradition, his work has inspired a wide range of people, from those who are new to the spiritual life, all the way through to people who are themselves already competent teachers within their own backgrounds and traditions.





Awakening is as close as your own breath

Breathing, The Natural Way To Meditate is beautifully written, practical and uplifting. It invites us to couple our breathing with love and clear seeing and to meditatively explore the world within and around us.

Many clear and detailed techniques are given throughout, but in essence the natural way to meditate does not rely on technique. It flowers whenever we are interested in life. What is this marvel we call the body? What is this mystery called speech and communication? What is this wonder called mind? What could it mean to realise freedom while fully engaged in life? Thoroughly non-sectarian, this is a path of awakening that will speak to seekers from all traditions and backgrounds and stages of experience.

Tarchin Hearn is a poet, artist, traveller and innovative teacher with great interest in blending the insights and understandings of science and ecology with the teachings of Buddhadharma. His work has inspired a wide range of people in many different countries.

Revised Edition