

# 2007-11-09 Anapanasati - Physicality of the Breath 4 of 9

Fri, 7/31 6:54PM • 27:31

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

breathing, breath, exhale, body, happening, stopped, breathe, experience, tetrad, sitting, belly, sense, meditation, thoughts, mind, point, focus, meditation practice, letting, world

## SPEAKERS

Gil Fronsda

The first tetrad, the first four of these 16 steps has to do with the body mind and the body staying with the bodily experience what's happening in the body to a great extent. And you know, you can go really far in practice by just staying very simple and it was physical with the breath entering into the physicality of breathing, calming the physicality of breathing. And, and perhaps, I can't believe it, but you know, perhaps just doing that practices, these first four steps, it can be a once whole was only practicing, doesn't have person doesn't have to go any further than that. And one of the reasons I say that is that the human being is such an interconnected system. That if you kind of really go deep into one area of it, it'll affect the other areas as well. So if you really go into the body of concentrated you focus on the breath within the bar and breathing within the body, it's going to affect your mind, it's gonna affect what you see and what you understand. It's gonna be real shifts. The first really significant kind of opening experience that I had in meditation practice happen when I gave myself over as much as I could completely kind of to be with the breath. I was gonna be with every single breath was gonna miss one breath, one in breath and out breath. I didn't care if it looked and meditative. I was just gonna I was just so frustrated and nothing's gonna stay with my breath. That I just was not gonna like one breath, get out of get out of sight. And so I just kind of hung in there, that's all I got. My whole focus was on that. And, and, and the bell rang and the sitting. And I said, Oh, that's so much for that. We didn't think I didn't think much of it. But then a couple of minutes later the experience I had was everything stopped. I mean, you can computer systems dramatic stopping, even though they were still kind of things happening in the sense. The there was some thoughts, there's a variety of things happening. The inner sense was the whole universe, it just stopped. And that caught my attention. There was a degree of peace and well being and freedom from that stopping it was nothing, nothing like I had experienced before. And I understood that, that there was that complete absorption in the breath that I had. That sort of set the stage for the mind to be so still open or relaxed or not cut up and juggle things that allow somebody to give away when I wasn't trying. And so I just use the breath just entering a world and then there's a lot of understanding and come come along as well. If you kind of understand how the breathing is so connected with your inner psychological life, and then as you begin, if you kind of, it'll happen naturally as you focus on the breath, but I think it's a nice safeguard that you if you have some sense of tuning into or being sensitive to the calming effect of the breathing or trying to calm the breath, free the breathing as you as you breathe, that I think that helps the absorption process, getting getting engaged and involved. last, last, I guess, but absorbed in the whole experience of breathing I remember once when I was in relatively meditator the first year or two getting really involved in my breath is kind of nice. Somehow I got absorbed just breath was breathing itself I was the breathing, just bear with the breath. And the breath got calmer and calmer and more more still quite subtle and more

subtler. into Finally I had an exhale that lasted a long time. And there was no inhale coming. And after a while of this, I went I'm gonna die. Because you know you're supposed to breathe.

And it took me a while to learn that it's okay to stop breathing and meditation. But it comes from it doesn't come doesn't come from holding your breath. It comes because the mind is so still so focus are concentrated. I don't think you need to breathe into, you know. So just a breath by itself, the physicality of breath, the physical world of breath, the calming of that physical world of breathing is a whole practice in its own right. And that's the first tetrad. Yes.

Stop, stop. Sit on.

You said on in the story about not letting a single breath get away. And after the bell had rung A few minutes later, you became aware that the universe had stopped. Do you mean that the universe had stopped Then or you became aware that it has stopped during that period, when you were keeping track of every breath

did it stop in or a few minutes later?

It was such a dramatic shift, like something gonna drop, you know, something, something released something. So that moment was so dramatic. And I wouldn't say it was there before. But probably it was, you know that, you know, I was so involved in this breath thing, that there was no very little space in my mind to get involved in thoughts and ideas and being self conscious and wondering all kinds of other things I might be concerned about. So all that stuff kind of, you know, kind of fell away for a while, even though I wasn't thinking about letting it fall away. It wasn't just involved in that. And so I think there was a kind of a cleric clearing out of the mind that happened. And when the bell rang, you know, I didn't, didn't I didn't feel so different. Exactly. didn't feel like I was deeply meditative. But then I in my mind, just kind of, I think my mind was still quite relaxed and quite clear. And but I wasn't making that intense effort anymore. So that combination of letting go of the intense willful effort and having the mind being quite cleaned out in a sense then what happened was that they serve tea in the zendo and so I went to you know, so I picked up the cup of tea to drink it and i think i think that concentration I had probably went into that you know, just completely there with a tea. It wasn't it wasn't gonna that's what was going on. I kind of it was my mind wasn't concerned by anything else has kind of been cleaned out. And so then I I picked up a cup of tea. And as as the water touched my lips, everything stopped

And then I got my attention. I didn't know you took it, you know, I wish I had no I didn't. I knew so little about meditation practice of Buddhism at the time. I didn't go tell anyone. I didn't get any perspective on it. And so I kind of actually went off on some strange tangents. Explore explore some strange tangent as a result of that. Didn't really kind of take into significance at the time.

I'm really not understanding what you mean when you say everything. Stop. I'm not getting

what you mean by that. Yeah, I don't have to explain it. It makes no sense to me. We'll get it sorry.

Perhaps

You know, still activity around you know, and there's still some very simple thoughts happening. But it was as if the, the normal, maybe maybe, you know, one way of maybe understanding it is that the normal sense of self normal activity of self selfing self concerned way of thinking about the world engaged connecting, just wasn't there anymore just stopped. And so the link between the world and the

self phenomena is just falling away. And so part of the equation and completely still distraught. And something I'm sure it wasn't the end of the world was doing that always does. And, by the way, this feeling of emptiness, the feeling was the sense was The idea was well, I think that would start with some kind of claims in the holding some submit something, some activity in the unimog in the mind, that stopped. Because it with it with experience at the time was a very, also very clear sense that what was happening in the moment was not I wasn't doing it that was really dramatic isn't happening. But it was happening. completely independent of any normal sense of self, to the self stuff, sense of self stuff. That's the best way of saying I didn't want to get involved in that it was not that important thing. not that important. don't measure yourself against this thing that I had. What I was trying to say was, for me, it was a splitting experience. And the point I was trying to make was that directly It's happening because I was doing. I was just I was just absorbed in the breath is doing the breath work. That's the best the point I'm trying to get across to you. Don't go home with this stuff, big thing. Go home with this. Yeah. So you can use the breath individually, you can just do this one thing. Just do the physicality into the world of the breath. And then the variety of things might happen. But I want to give you a lot of confidence that it's a really significant thing. Just this this first tetra, this first thing, just going into the breath of being with a breath, in and of itself is so significant. Yeah.

When you talk about breathing with the entire body, or just following the breath, perhaps at the belly, do you typically try to do or suggest doing both at the same time? Or is it one or the other.

So feeling the breath and the whole body is feeling the whole body,

feeling the breath and the whole body. So the whole Body seems to be breathing, breathing in and breathing out. And sometimes I'm focusing on the belly, a spot in the belly. And I'm following the breath there, the beginning of the breath, in the middle of the breath, the end of the breath.

would you advise normally when you go to the full body doing both, at once, always trying to retain that sense of it in the belly or the nostrils, wherever that might be? Excuse me.

My question makes sense for you.

For the whole body includes the whole body, right? So then the question is, where is the center of gravity. And perhaps the diaphragm with the belly could be the center of gravity, from which everything arises and passes comes and goes. So it can be the center of the whole body. And so there is a kind of center in place. So for me often I'm not aware of the whole body, the center of the whole experience is often very alive or full. Somewhere in the area around my diaphragm, my belly.

And your sense of freezing would be the whole body expanding and contracting. Yeah.

Sometimes Sometimes it's like if they get in begins down here in my belly, and then that's where the whole experience begins and then expands out from there towards like a wave a ripple goes out, into and then do an exhale, it comes back in again here.

Other questions or comments? What did you discover when you went for a walk, be able to stay in touch with your breath enough to see the changes and shifts in your breathing? Maybe notice.

Ironically, one thing I noticed was when the sitting the first sitting ended, my breathing relax I mean, rather than the birtherism holding, striving, something going on during meditation that once once the

sitting ended I was able to actually relax more my breathing became calmer, more comfortable at that point.

Yeah, I can as well understandable that sometimes you know, the challenge of sitting still for a period of time into the bodies that comfortable and maybe trying to accomplish something. And so finally, you know, develop silicon and then pushing or trying to let go and then and you settle into a deeper place.

I noticed

as I was walking when my eyes fell on something that I liked Like a leaf, I exhale. And then my mind started to want to make something out of that

make out of that realization that's sitting at the exhale.

Yes, that it started wondering whether I would

whether clinging was associated with exhaling and aversion was associated with inhaling because earlier in the sitting, I was really having a feeling that I was breathing in so desperately,

really needing the breath. And

then, you know, toward the end of the sitting,

I had the thought that the universe or the air and the trees were breathing me instead of me breathing, and it relaxed, everything a lot,

right. But exhales often associated with pleasure and with release. If you saw something you liked, maybe just enjoyed it. So yeah

I this morning I caught myself thinking my breathing and thinking my body and not just be there and feel it but kind of think it through. It's I can't really explain it but it doesn't feel like being connected to my breathing. It just feels like totally focusing on it and really thinking it through like from top to bottom. And then in the first sitting, I have this. I really like pelicans. And I like their eyes. They're so beautiful. I rescued a few and I could see their eyes. They're so gorgeous. And

I had this before but this time I really

can kind of suddenly looked at this. I or I saw it I threw it I don't know. But it sounds so relaxing and so soothing. Although, yesterday I had this really sad memory it was at the beach and I rescued a few birds. And there was one pallet cannon was dead. And I just sat there and it was really sad and but during the sitting I saw this iron was just Sunday I could let go of everything. And then I went outside, I was actually on the phone with my husband. And my husband means a lot to me, so do the pelicans. While I was walking, I realized how I was still connected to this commerce without paying attention to it and how I was still feeling this calmness without really paying attention to it, but I felt it throughout my entire body, although I was on the phone. And I was really, it made me really happy. Because this morning I was so sad and so on the second sitting Just found some light and get so grounded. It was very nice. It was like this development. No more thinking it through.

Thank you, I think take a while. And I'm curious how many of you had some sense of suitability to see, I noticed how your breathing had been affected by your inner life by your thoughts, your momentum of the past or anyone that's accessible to people. And what did you realize what did you see when you saw that? letter? Yeah, pass it back.

I just noticed a correlation in focusing on the breath, and then becoming calm and then maybe a powdered and go into story and then

By myself in store in store and then look back at the breath and see how the tone of it was. And it would change because it sort of ebb and flow between different states. I can't really say one thing or another, but they would change. And it was very interesting. Thank you. Maybe this is

two themes came up.

One is who's in charge here, really, who's going to be doing the breathing. And now taking that deep breath and then letting it go and trust that I don't have to be in charge, and I can sit back and enjoy my breath. wherever it goes, however deep it goes. trust my body to do that.

So So,

so those are the themes who's in charge here and trust that I don't have to be in charge.

Nice. That's nice. And so when you're in charge, how does that influence your breathing?

I take over the body

and what happened, what happens to your breathing then

it's very controlled and rigid and precise and it takes so long to take an in breath and so long to take an out breath. And when I let go of the control and my body breathe me, there may be a short breath, followed by a long exhalation. It has a variety of experiences I have. I have a variety of experiences of my body. Breathe They mean

and there's no set pattern to

beautiful and you have any information that it may be possible let go of the control and let the breath breathe itself. But then somehow part of you very gently sends a intention, not a control but an intention to let the sink soften, you're more relaxed even more like organ more.

Do you think the, that may not the intention is that I've experienced is to observe where my body goes.

Because they're,

at this point to observe, that's my intention. It's a great it's a great one,

but and from my go be good for a long time. But there might be some kind of middle ground at some point where you don't have to just simply be somewhat passive observer and you don't have to be the controller. But there is some way in between there where, without any strong sense of self or self

attachment, but there's a little bit of directing or choices you can make or softening or intentionality that operates as well. But it's not coming from the usual place of self self self control.

That, excuse me that experience happen seems to be in, not in not controlling my body, but allowing the breath to go where it wants to go. The back thought is, well, that's not deep enough, that's not going to get that top lobe of the lung. So and observe in letting go of holding my body in some way to allow the breath to go wherever it wants to seems to be somewhat of maybe the intention episode. That's great. Thank you. I found that I was exceedingly calm during the meditation and when a thought would arise, I could feel my abdomen just slightly tightening and I never realized before, how much thoughts probably influenced the mind to that extent. That was real big awareness for me.

So once you saw that it will tighten up, what do you do next?

And they just took

some deep breaths and just let the fight go and went back to the breath again, the breaths that did breath and relax as well. Yeah, very definitely. Any other observations of your breathing? Mary in the back?

Well, I sat right down and I'm in the very first sitting and was starting to breathe and just felt so much edge in my chest but so much way edge is like, really there's a lot going on and just just doing what you described without realizing it, this sort of massaging against it. It just like released all kinds of stuff. And so I lot of tears, and then the breathing really, really changed after that. It was much easier to breathe. It was really hard at first it just you know, like, again, breathing it felt like hitting a wall. And so I don't know, to me the experiences, just noticing that released something and then through the releasing process, the whole breathing changed and throughout this morning it's been kind of ebbing and flowing through that process. Thank you

I start to realize how I

I slowly Connect

certain breathing to certain feeling tones or feelings. And the good thing about it is once I am aware of a certain breathing pattern, I know that usually now I start to panic on now I start to whatever. And this is very helpful. So I usually pick up on my breathing before I understand what mood I'll be in

Yeah, that's very helpful as early warning system.

doesn't always work. But

yeah. It's really good.

So

So primarily today. So then to kind of focus back on this first group of first tetra, and we've done that now in the second or third time, right? Certainly, sir meeting. Yeah. So third time that we kind of focus a little bit on that in different points of view. So hoping to get a sense of how this fourth his first four steps work in different ways that might work and how it might be useful for you. And it's a great thing to

explore the breath just in and of itself and get to know it deeper. And then, after lunch, we'll shift now to the second tetrad which is as a whole is considered to be the mindfulness of feeling or what's in Pali called *vedana*. Feeling tone, they have some people called the hedonic tone of experience. And, and we, we, we started there a little bit last time when we, when we talked about experience of joy and happiness that can come with meditation. And so we'll pick up there with that in the afternoon and I'll try to cover next for the with this idea of feeling tone.