

# 2008-01-25 Anapanasati 1 of 8

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

practice, monks, mindfulness, unfolds, buddha, breathing, devoted, month, sit, begins, monastics, rains, beautiful, discourse, foundations, established, liberated, people, liberation, cultivated

## SPEAKERS

Gil Fronsdal

So welcome back to our anapanasati. Practice days. And

I kind of hope that it rains a lot today. Because for me, there's something very helpful about heavy rain when I'm meditating inside where it's dry. Something about the sound of it outside, I feel much more like I'm here that kind of contained and held and kind of feels kind of, kind of often a contempt feeling. Peaceful co feeling often feel very close, kind of physical embodied a wonderful kind of support need. So, hopefully we have, you know, some good rain. And so we're gonna continue today with mindfulness of breathing and for those of you who haven't been here before they overall frame for the these months, focusing on the mindfulness of breathing is a discourse by the Buddha called this discourse on mindfulness of breathing, where he which is in this big heavy book, which gives 16 stages to focus of using the breath meditation, all the way from being a beginner, in a sense, all the way step by step to until becoming liberated through the practice of breathing. And the 16 stages can be taken linearly kind of sequentially, or people who are familiar with them, then kind of you kind of flow in and out of them and out of sequence just as your practice deepens and moves you get a sense of terrain, the territory of what might happen, what goes on in practice, so you can kind of adjust or practice accordingly. And, and I think, I suspect that for a lot of people It's more of a sense that it's familiarity to how the mind practice and the breath kind of unfolds. That is helpful. So you know how to meet it your practice in different times. That's more useful than the idea that I could follow the step by step by step that some people like a step by step approach, it seems to work very well. And

so there's this course, on mindful breathing is begins in a very unusual way in all the discourses that the preserves of Buddhist teachings. And it begins by recounting that it was the end of the rains, rain rains season. The rains is a time when the Buddhist monks need to step foot. There's a rule that for three months every year, they stay in one place. nerja practice that wander around. And so it's quite common that the amongst, you're kind of supposed to also be together as a group. So isn't isn't that you go off and be a hermit during that time but you gather together with other monks, you stay put in one place. And so this this course begins at the end of this three month period, where a large gathering of monks have gathered around the Buddha for the three month period. And some of his most senior disciples, people who are fully realized in their own way, were there as well. And they're there and each of these different senior disciples is there teaching other monks younger monks, newer monks in the practice. And so you have this beautiful scene. of, of and the rain is the rains so called rains, ends with a full moon of some usually october november time. And, and so you have this beautiful scene of the full moon night With this large gathering of woods in the forest is a place where the large gathering of monastics are sitting there practicing and being taught by the senior disciples, different groups, you may be in the forest in the woods, you have these different groupings of people, groups of 10 groups of 20 to 30. It says, and, and so the Buddha kind of surveys, what's going on. And he says, that it feels

pleased in heart, he's happy and what he sees. And he said, he kind of praises what he sees, he's happy with the progress people are making these happy with their practice. And so we can, it's very unusual for the Buddha kind of to have this passage where the Buddha has this warm kind of happy kind of feeling, but what he sees in the progress and expresses that quite explicitly. So when I read this, maybe you don't, so obvious in the kind of stilted kind of weight comes across in translation or, but the what you get is this kind of circle I get this kind of beautiful kind of serene kind of environment, the setting all these people kind of involved with three months of practice. If you ever if you've ever gone to it walked in stumbled in on a three month retreat, or even a 10 day retreat in the middle or the end. It's like a force field you come into of stillness of silence and really feel there's something really powerful going on there. So here's after three months of this, and the Buddha looks around, he says how pleased he is happy and heart and what he sees. And then he says, Well, this is great. And you should apply even more effort, practices and more diligently now he's done really well. You have a good foundation. And those of you who are not awakened, arouse more effort to practice. And I'm going to hang around here for another month. Often at the end of the rains, people, monks will just disperse and go wandering around. And so the Buddha says, I'm going to hang out here for another month. And I'm not going to leave so I just While you stay and keep practicing, and that's kind of how the discourse begins. So it has been has a very warm, nice beginning before it's going to talk about mindfulness of breathing. And then

the in this translations as I'm content with this progress and my discontent with this progress in my mind, my heart around still more energy to attain the unattained to achieve the unachieved to release to realize the unrealized wait here for another month. And so it was a word got out that he was going to hang out there for another month, so even more money amongst game. Most of the countryside heard this rumor spread and the new spread and so people need the more monks gathered there and And then a month later, the Buddha was seated in the open surrounded by the community of monastics and serving the silent community. He said, monks, this assembly is free from prattle. This assembly is free from chatter. I'm sure we can come up with English translations that give us a nicer feeling than prattle. But free from kind of idle chatter free from kind of. And then he says, It consists purely of heartwood. So kind of the heartwood it's like the heart the core, the essence of a tree. So the communities consists only of the essence. So healing means they've been meditating for four months at this time. And so it's beautiful feeling of the essence being there. And then he goes on and praise and praises assembly quite a bit. And then he describes who's in the assembly. And he says that there are monks here, who are fully liberated there amongst here who have reached a variety of different stages of liberation, not fully liberated partially. And then there are also amongst here who, who have not done it don't have any level of liberation, but are devoted to the four foundations of mindfulness. They're amongst the are devoted to other kinds of practices. They're amongst here who are devoted to cultivating loving kindness practice, devoted compassion to altruistic joy to equanimity. There are monks devoted to perception of impermanence. So it goes on. So it's quite One of the nice things also you can see right wide variety of what the monks are doing. And so it kind of suggests that it isn't just one practice. The Buddha taught it wasn't just one normative practices what you should do, but depending maybe on the personality or dispositions, or the conditions or the interest of the different monastics, the different practices, and they were all kind of acknowledged and accepted as being valid and important. But then he goes on and says, it ends by in description of the monks in this community, there are monks who abide devoted to the development of mindfulness of breathing. And then he's going to take off from there. And he says, When mindfulness of breathing is developed and cultivated, it is of great fruit and great benefit. So, this is the exam he's going to do with this cheerleading. You know, all these people practicing for a long time, and they had to choose one for practices. And now he's going to champion the cause. So the practice of Michael's of breathing. When mindfulness of breathing is developed and cultivated, it fulfills the four foundations of mindfulness when the four foundations of mindful lists are

developed and cultivated, they fulfill the seven, seven enlightenment factors. When the seven enlightenment factors are developed and cultivated, they fulfill true knowledge and deliverance. So in other words, if you engage yourself in the practice of mindfulness of breath, and develop that fully, then with that in the wake of that comes the four foundations of mindfulness, wake up that comes to the arising of what's his beautiful qualities called the seven factors of awakening, which are the factors that need to be awakened to really help person become liberated. And then with that comes liberation. And way I read this way, you can read some other passages in the discourses, it's almost like a natural flow, natural evolution or unfolding. It isn't like you have to kind of try to make all these things happen. But when you engage in this basic practice of mindfulness of breathing, there's a way in which practice also unfolds a little bit on its own, which is kind of two sides of practices, what you do what you offer to the practice, and then there's what unfolds as a result of your own And, and different people different times emphasize or need to emphasize different aspects of this, these two sides. Some people need to focus more on what they bring to practice that arouse himself more put more effort in. And because if you sit home reading books about Buddhism,

and that's all you do, you don't get very far. And you know, we read a book, so I'm just gonna wait and trust something beautiful is gonna happen, you have to apply something of your own as well. But sometimes, if you are engaged in practice in a good, healthy way, sometimes the emphasis is better put on getting out of the way and just letting something make space for something to unfold through you to move through you and to arouse and to happen. And if you're an engineer trying to engineer your practice too much, you interfere with the natural unfolding that can happen. So we're part of practices is negotiating these two sides, the side of it you have to offer and the side of allowing something to happen as well. giving up control as well. And then he says, and how is mindfulness of breathing developed and cultivated, so that it is of great fruit and great benefit. Here, monastic gone to the forest or to the root of a tree or an empty hut, empty building, sits down thumbing folded his legs crosswise sits with body erect and establishes mindfulness to the forefront. Ever mindful when breeze in every mindful when ways out. So my IMC qualifies as and it's an empty hut, empty building. It's a relatively empty. So you come here and sit and in me sat here, we establish our mindfulness. First, this expression established mindfulness forefront Bhikkhu Bodhi translates it as established mindfulness in front of children. ambiguous statement, but it basically means you kind of established mindfulness here and now in your own physical body, your own presence. And the word for front can also mean mouth, it can also mean chest it means what's here, kind of in the forefront. So that's what how it begins. And so I think that with that, I think we should start. And then as the day goes along, I'll pick up where we left off last time. And I think how it worked will work best today is that we'll do a variety of kind of practices around breathing, control the breathing and meditation in preparation for maybe in the afternoon. Going on to Step seven and eight, which is where we kind of left off last time. Those of you who are new I think, hopefully will follow along just fine. You don't necessarily know where what proceeded