

Mindfulness of Breathing (42) Delighting the Mind

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SUMMARY KEYWORDS

mind, settled, wholeness, satisfaction, delight, inner wealth, sense, pleasure, tamed, consciousness, pleasing, satisfying, gladdening, delighting, *citta*, *ānāpānasati*

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Today we're going to touch into the tenth step of *ānāpānasati*:

Breathing in, one delights the mind. Breathing out, one delights the mind.

The word 'mind,' *citta*, appears in steps eight, nine and ten. In step eight, it's: "Calming the activities of the mind." In step nine: "Experiencing the mind." In step ten: "Delighting the mind."

The Pali word I'm translating as 'delight' can sometimes be translated as 'pleasing' the mind, or 'satisfying' the mind. Rather than thinking of it as an active verb – what we're doing – we might understand it as recognizing or allowing for a certain sense of deep satisfaction and pleasure, a deep sense of gladness in the mind that comes from meditation practice.

There are many ways of understanding and experiencing it. One of the classic ways from the tradition is: "Finally, the mind is no longer out of control." Or to say it differently: "Finally, the mind doesn't have a mind of its own." We're not being led around. We're not jumping around, agitated, or thrashing about in the mind with our thoughts. Rather we feel as if we've really come home. We're settled back in ourselves.

The mind is under control. The mind is not doing whatever it wants – wandering around, picking up or chasing thoughts. We're really settled here. We've come home to ourselves. The mind is settled and present.

A word often used in the ancient tradition is 'tamed' – the mind is now tamed. I suspect that a lot of us here in the modern West don't really like the idea of taming ourselves. Having a tame mind doesn't really inspire us. But the opposite of that – having a mind that's no longer untamed or out of control – may feel better. We can appreciate and value that.

One of the metaphors for an out-of-control mind in the ancient world is that of a fish thrashing about in a very shallow puddle of water – flopping around. Sometimes the mind flaps around doing its own thing. It jumps around, chasing one thought after the other. We have no control or say over the mind.

But if we get mental activities to quiet down and settle, we can feel that we're not going to wander off into the past or the future anymore. We're not going to be lost in thought. We're now really here. We have a sense that it's deeply satisfying to start feeling connected – at peace and settled here.

There's the satisfaction of not having agitation – the energies of the mind jumping around, moving out, going here and there. It allows the mind to start becoming peaceful and being at deep rest. It's just here. It can feel very solid and centered.

The mind is in the present moment. Any tendency to leave that present moment by going off into thought doesn't go very far. It hardly goes anywhere at all. It's like having a rubber band attached to our thoughts. They get pulled right back to the present. Or we say: "No, why bother? It's really good to be here."

Experiencing the mind in this way is a movement toward wholeness – becoming more whole. And this is only possible if we're in the present moment. By definition, if we're lost in the future or caught up in past concerns, we are only partially here. We're involved in and focused on the future or the past, and we're not really connected to what's here.

Or, if we're involved in fantasy – no matter how wonderful the fantasy might feel – it's only a small part of who we are. There's a disconnect – maybe even a dissociation in its extreme forms – with our body, mind states, and what's really happening.

As we start settling and are able to be here in the present moment in a rooted and grounded way, it begins to allow for a process of feeling whole. Sharp boundaries between time and space begin to fall away: sharp boundaries between body and mind, or between the edges of our body and the space around us.

The sense of wholeness starts moving into what some people would call altered states of consciousness. But, somehow, that suggests those states are not normal. Perhaps they're not so normal because we don't often go into them. But, in meditation, we start feeling settled in the present moment and opening up to a feeling of the wholeness of being here. It starts feeling like: "*This* is natural. This is a homecoming. This is what should be ordinary."

Ordinary states of consciousness and mind are fragmented, narrow, limited, bounded, and frazzled. They might be familiar, and in that sense, comfortable for us. But, when we really experience a feeling of settled wholeness, we say: "*This* is health. This is a healthy mind." It's the altered states of mind – our daily mind states – that are strange and preoccupied. But a settled feeling of wholeness feels good.

Some people, when they meditate, are struggling with a distractible mind. They're caught in the hindrances – in desires and aversions of all kinds. They're coming back, coming back, and working with that.

To finally have the hindrances quiet down and the mind able to be present, it's as if the mind has found itself. It provides deep satisfaction, delight, joy, and pleasure. This is what we're talking about in this tenth step of "delighting the mind," "pleasing the mind," or "gladdening the mind." We're allowing the mind to feel deep satisfaction.

I offer these various words because people will find that different words speak to their own flavor of what this might be in meditation. The important thing here is that we're allowed to feel the goodness of this. We're allowed to feel the delight, joy, and satisfaction of it. Certainly, we do not cling to, hold onto, or congratulate ourselves in some egotistical way. But we're not supposed to ignore the joy, happiness, well-being, pleasure, or satisfaction of meditation.

In fact, feeling and experiencing this goodness allows us to continue the process of settling in, quieting the mind, and expanding a sense of wholeness as we move into it. In so doing, we open up to states and qualities of mind that are coterminous with, and intimately part of, a feeling of wholeness, broad awareness, centeredness, clear knowing, and clarity of mind.

These states of mind are considered to be a form of wealth. For the Buddha, the greatest wealth a person can have is the sense of wholeness that comes from a settled, clear, and open mind.

The Seven Factors of Awakening, which I mentioned yesterday – mindfulness, investigation, effort, joy, tranquility, *samādhī*, and equanimity – belong to the realm of settled wholeness that comes as awareness and attention become full and complete.

It isn't as if we're losing something by settling down, letting go of the distracted mind, and really being present. We gain so much. It's called "inner wealth."

If you want to be wealthy, develop your inner life. It qualifies as wealth because it provides some of the greatest pleasure, safety, and happiness available to us. Certainly, it provides greater happiness than any material wealth can ever produce.

Breathing in, delighting the mind. Breathing out, delighting the mind.

You can't do it too early. You can't just sit down and decide to do this. It comes when meditation has really settled down. Remember, we're now talking about the tenth of the sixteen steps.

But, when you start feeling inklings of this kind of delight, satisfaction, and pleasure – being pleased by what's happening and deep satisfaction – open to it. Allow for it. Let it spread widely and broadly throughout your being. Be nourished by it. Let it be something you appreciate and enjoy.

That sets the stage for the next step of *ānāpānasati* – a practice we won't do for a couple of weeks: *samādhi*, unification and concentration of the mind. Until then, we will spend next week with the Seven Factors of Awakening. Spending some time with the awakening factors may support experiencing the mind and delighting the mind. They will also serve the eleventh step of *ānāpānasati*: *samādhi*.