

Mindfulness of Breathing (22) Mind-Body Gladdening

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Last week, I talked about steps 5 and 6 of *ānāpānasati*.

Step 5 is:

Breathing in experiencing joy, breathing out experiencing joy.

Step 6 is:

Breathing in experiencing happiness, breathing out experiencing happiness.

The movement from joy to happiness is a move towards tranquility – the mind and the body becoming more tranquil. While the joy factor is a little more energetic, the happiness quality is a more settled, peaceful, tranquil sense of well-being.

The movement from something that's a little more energetic to something more tranquil characterizes the whole process of deepening meditation in Buddhism. We're going from coarser states to more refined, subtler states of being. We're moving away from more active ways of engaging. As the mind settles down, we're moving towards clarity, alertness, and peacefulness, where the mind becomes less active, more peaceful, softer. So quieting the mind, quieting the activity, settling, and settling deeper is the movement we're going for here. That's the principle of going from coarse to refined, or from more active to more tranquil states.

Tranquil doesn't mean that we are asleep or that we become dull. The movement is to tranquility that's quite alert and has a lot of clarity. But there's less activity. It's a fascinating process to see. And one of the things we start seeing is the relationship between the mind and the body.

The first tetrad – steps 1 through 4 – is about the body. But it's not the physical body in and of itself. It's more the body that we *experience*, where the experience is very much influenced by what's going on in the mind. There's a reciprocal relationship. As the body settles down, we get more focused on the body, and it relaxes more – the fourth step is to relax the body. That also has

a relaxing effect on the mind. There are other beneficial effects on the mind. It's reassuring for the mind. It brings the mind a sense of safety, peacefulness, settledness, and focus. It's easier to be in the present moment.

Then we go into the second tetrad with steps 5, 6, 7, and 8. Now we're beginning to enter into the world of the mind, which is not separated from the body. These two are interlinked. The qualities of joy and happiness are a bridge between them because joy and happiness are felt in an embodied way. But it's very much influenced by the concentration level, focus, and peacefulness of the mind. There's a reciprocal relationship. As more joy and happiness course through the body, that reassures the mind more. And a reassured mind will feel like it doesn't need to think and ruminate so much. It can get quieter.

This bridge of joy and happiness between the body and the mind is really worth lingering with and developing. I know it's a little hard oftentimes to feel joy and happiness on short notice – to just will it. But even if you don't feel that way in this stage of the practice, you can imagine it, develop an intuitive sense of it, or simply learn these teachings. Sooner or later, hopefully you'll recognize this meditative, embodied joy, happiness, and well-being, which can happen as we practice.

Some people are surprised or delighted that they're given permission to feel pleasure, joy, and happiness in meditation. Definitely, this is considered to be a very important foundation for moving forward.

In many places in the suttas, the Buddha actually describes a process of deepening practice. It is called the Gladness Sequence or the Gladness Pentad because there are five steps. These are about acquiring gladness in meditation. The description is very intransitive or passive. We're not doing the next steps. They just flow. As one step becomes mature, it flows into the next. We do our practice, and the practice begins practicing us. Something begins shifting and changing. We don't have to be so responsible, except to be really present for the experience.

So with gladness, there arises joy. When joy is mature, there arises tranquility of the body. With tranquility of the body, there arises happiness. With the maturity of happiness, there arises concentration, unification – being unified and feeling really whole here in the present moment. Here is this wonderful pattern, the Gladness Sequence:

gladness > joy > tranquility > happiness >
concentration (*samādhi*).

Today I want to emphasize the first step, which is feeling a sense of gladness. Gladness comes from being inspired by something. The Buddha really understands the value of becoming inspired, being gladdened, and being delighted by some aspects of what's happening in our practice or in our lives. That certain kind of gladness where we don't get lost in our thoughts and stories, imagining over and over again what happened. But we use our imagination just enough to have gladness begin settling us into the present moment more and more, settling us into the body.

This use of imagination – to inspire us rather than to make us wander away – is one of the supports for meditation practice. And that inspiration can be: not forced, not imaginary, not an avoidance of the present moment. But instead a support for connecting in a deeper, more honest way with what's really happening in our lives – what's really present. This is one of the great benefits of Dharma practice. To be able to be present even for difficult things with some form of well-being, some form of joy, delight, or gladness that holds it all. Not to be removed from the challenges and suffering of life, but to really be receptive to them in a deep way. Not to be a victim of them, or oppressed by them. But to have compassion and love as a possible response.

For the next couple of days, I'd like to talk a little more about the Buddha's use of imagination. To focus on teachings on imagination, both as what gets in our way of meditation – interferes with it – and what supports meditation. This seems like a very nice bridge between the mind and the body. In this part, we're talking about joy and happiness. And imagination has very much to do with the qualities of happiness and joy – and how to evoke gladness, joy, and happiness by thinking about what inspires us.

That's the topic. Hopefully you'll get a sense as we go through these teachings how it's useful in connecting you to steps 5 and 6 – joy and happiness. It creates a very good foundation for continued settling and becoming more tranquil – the mind becoming more peaceful. It's a preparation for that, so we can start looking more deeply at the mind itself. Quieting, settling, pacifying the mind, so that it becomes an instrument of awakening.

That's the introduction for this week, and I look forward to our time tomorrow. I'm delighted to share this time with you. Thank you.