

Tranquillity and Insight in Early Buddhist Discourse

by Bhikkhu Anālayo

lecture 10

MĀ 81 – Discourse on Mindfulness of the Body

(Parallel to MN 119/ MN III 88)

In this way, dwelling in a secluded spot, with a mind free from indolence, practicing energetically, he removes any defilements from the mind and attains concentration of the mind. Having attained concentration of the mind, he knows [the body] as [described] above, as it really is. This is how a monk cultivates mindfulness of the body.

Again, a monk cultivates mindfulness of the body [as follows]. A monk completely drenches and pervades his body with rapture and pleasure born of seclusion [experienced in the first absorption], so that there is no part within his body that is not pervaded by rapture and pleasure born of seclusion.

It is just as a bath attendant, having filled a vessel with bathing powder, might mix it with water and knead it, so that there is no part [of the powder] that is not completely drenched and pervaded with water.

In the same way ... In this way a monk ... cultivates mindfulness of the body.

Again, a monk cultivates mindfulness of the body [as follows]. A monk completely drenches and pervades his body with rapture and pleasure born of concentration [experienced in the second absorption], so that there is no part within his body that is not pervaded by rapture and pleasure born of concentration.

It is just like a mountain spring that is full and overflowing with

clear, clean water so that water coming from any of the four directions cannot enter it, with the spring water welling up from the bottom on its own, flowing out and flooding the surroundings, completely drenching and pervading every part of the mountain.

In the same way ... In this way a monk ... cultivates mindfulness of the body.

Again, a monk cultivates mindfulness of the body [as follows]. A monk completely drenches and pervades his body with pleasure born of the absence of rapture [experienced in the third absorption], so that there is no part within his body that is not pervaded by pleasure born of the absence of rapture.

It is just as a blue, red, or white lotus that is born in the water and has come to full growth in the water, remains submerged in water, with every part of its roots, stem, flower, and leaves completely drenched and pervaded [by water], with no part that is not pervaded by it.

In the same way ... In this way a monk ... cultivates mindfulness of the body.

Again, a monk cultivates mindfulness of the body [as follows]. A monk mentally resolves to dwell having accomplished a complete pervasion of his body with mental purity [experienced in the fourth absorption], so that there is no part within his body that is not pervaded by mental purity.

It is just as a man might cover himself from head to foot with a cloth measuring seven or eight cubits, so that every part of his body is covered.

In the same way ... In this way a monk ... cultivates mindfulness of the body.

Again, a monk cultivates mindfulness of the body [as follows]. A monk is mindful of the perception of light (*ālokasaññā*), properly

taking hold of it, properly retaining it, and recollecting it properly with mindfulness, [so that] what is behind is like what is in front, what is in front is like what is behind, night is like day, day is like night, what is above is like what is below, and what is below is like what is above. In this way he develops an undistorted and undefiled state of mind that is bright and clear, a state of mind that is totally unobscured by impediments.

In this way a monk ... cultivates mindfulness of the body.

Again, a monk cultivates mindfulness of the body [as follows]. A monk properly grasps the reviewing sign (*paccavekkhaṇa nimitta*), recollecting it properly with mindfulness.

It is just as a person who is seated might contemplate another person who is lying down, or one who is lying down might contemplate another person who is seated.

In the same way ... In this way a monk ... cultivates mindfulness of the body.

Again, a monk cultivates mindfulness of the body [as follows]. A monk contemplates this body from head to foot, according to its position and according to its attractive and repulsive [qualities], as full of various kinds of impurities, [reflecting]:

'Within this body [of mine] there are head hair, body hair, nails, teeth, rough and smooth epidermis, skin, flesh, sinews, bones, heart, kidneys, liver, lungs, large intestine, small intestine, spleen, stomach, feces, brain and brain stem, tears, sweat, mucus, saliva, pus, blood, fat, marrow, phlegm, bile, urine.'

It is just as a person endowed with eyesight, on seeing a container full of various seeds, might clearly distinguish them all, identifying them as rice seeds, millet seeds, barley, wheat, hemp seeds, sesame seeds, beans, turnip seeds, and mustard seeds.

In the same way ... In this way a monk ... cultivates mindfulness of the body.

Again, a monk cultivates mindfulness of the body [as follows]. A monk contemplates the body [as made up of] elements: 'Within this body of mine there are the earth element, the water element, the fire element, the wind element, the space element, and the consciousness element'.

It is just as a butcher, on having slaughtered and skinned a cow, might divide it into six parts and spread them on the ground [for sale].

In the same way ... In this way a monk ... cultivates mindfulness of the body.

Again, a monk cultivates mindfulness of the body [as follows]. A monk contemplates a corpse dead for one, or two, or up to six or seven days, that is being pecked at by crows, devoured by jackals and wolves, burnt by fire, or buried in the earth, or that is completely rotten and decomposed.

Seeing this, he compares himself to it: 'This present body of mine is also like this. It is of the same nature and in the end cannot escape [this fate].'

In this way a monk ... cultivates mindfulness of the body.

Again ... Just as he has formerly seen it in a charnel ground, [so] a monk [recollects] a carcass of bluish color, decomposed and half eaten [by animals], with the bones lying on the ground still connected together.

Seeing this, he compares himself to it ... In this way a monk ... cultivates mindfulness of the body.

Again ... Just as he has formerly seen it in a charnel ground, [so] a

monk [recollects a skeleton] without skin, flesh, or blood, held together only by sinews. Seeing it, he compares himself to it ... In this way a monk ... cultivates mindfulness of the body.

Again ... Just as he has formerly seen them in a charnel ground, [so] a monk [recollects] disconnected bones scattered in all directions: foot bones, shin bones, thigh bones, a hip bone, vertebrae, shoulder bones, neck bones, and a skull, all in different places.

Seeing this, he compares himself to it ... In this way a monk ... cultivates mindfulness of the body.

Again ... Just as he has formerly seen them in a charnel ground, [so] a monk [recollects] bones white like shells, or bluish like the color of a pigeon, or red as if smeared with blood, rotting and decomposing, crumbling to dust.

Seeing this, he compares himself to it ... In this way a monk ... cultivates mindfulness of the body.

If mindfulness of the body is cultivated like this, made much of like this, then all wholesome states are comprised in it, that is, the states that pertain to awakening (*bodhipakkhiya*). Whatever state of mind he resolves on reaches completion.

It is comparable to the great ocean, [since] all small rivers are ultimately contained in the ocean ...

If there are renunciants and brahmins who have not properly established mindfulness of the body, who dwell with a narrow mind, then Māra the Evil One, on seeking an opportunity with them, will certainly get it. Why? Because those renunciants and brahmins are devoid of mindfulness of the body.

It is just as if there were an empty water-pot standing firmly upright on the ground, and someone were to bring water and pour it into the pot. What do you think, monks: under these circumstances, would

that pot accommodate the water?"

The monks replied: "Blessed One, it would accommodate it ...

"If there are renunciants and brahmins who have properly established mindfulness of the body, who dwell with a boundless mind, then Māra the Evil One, on seeking an opportunity with them, will in the end not get it. Why? Because those renunciants and brahmins are not devoid of mindfulness of the body.

It is just as if there were a water pot full of water, standing firmly upright on the ground, and someone were to bring water and pour it into the pot. What do you think, monks, under these circumstances, would that pot accommodate the [extra] water?"

The monks replied: "Blessed One, it would not...

"If there are renunciants and brahmins who have not properly established mindfulness of the body, who dwell with a narrow mind, then Māra the Evil One, on seeking an opportunity with them, will certainly get it. Why? Because those renunciants and brahmins are devoid of mindfulness of the body.

It is just as if a strong man were to throw a big heavy stone at a mass of wet mud. What do you think, monks, would the mud be penetrated by [that stone]?"

The monks replied: "It would be penetrated by it, Blessed One ...

"If there are renunciants and brahmins who have properly established mindfulness of the body, who dwell with a boundless mind, then Māra the Evil One, on seeking an opportunity with them, will in the end not get it. Why? Because those renunciants and brahmins are not devoid of mindfulness of the body.

It is just as if a strong man were to throw a light ball made of hair at a straight door. What do you think, monks, would [the door] be

penetrated by it?"

The monks replied: "It would not be penetrated by it, Blessed One. ...

"If there are renunciants and brahmins who have not properly established mindfulness of the body, who dwell with a narrow mind, then Māra the Evil One, on seeking an opportunity with them, will certainly get it. Why? Because those renunciants and brahmins are devoid of mindfulness of the body.

It is just as if someone who was in need of fire were to use dry wood as a base and to drill it with a dry drill. What do you think, monks, would that person get fire in this way?"

The monks replied: "He would get it, Blessed One ...

"If there are renunciants and brahmins who have properly established mindfulness of the body, who dwell with a boundless mind, then Māra the Evil One on seeking an opportunity with them, will in the end not get it. Why? Because those renunciants and brahmins are not devoid of mindfulness of the body.

It is just as if someone needing fire were to use moist wood as a base and to drill it with a moist drill. What do you think, monks, would that person get fire in this way?"

The monks replied: "He would not get it, Blessed One ...

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MĀ 81

- all rivers flow into ocean (1)
- pour water into empty jug (2)
- pour water into full jug (3)
- throw heavy ball at mud (4)
- throw light ball at panel (5)
- make fire with dry wood (6)

make fire with wet wood (7)

MN 119

all rivers flow into ocean (=1)
 throw heavy ball at mud (= 4)
 make fire with dry wood (= 6)
 pour water into empty jug (= 2)
 throw light ball at panel (= 5)
 make fire with wet wood (= 7)
 pour water into full jug (= 3)
 tip over full jug
 loosen embankment of pond
 drive chariot at one's wish

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MĀ 81

"Cultivating mindfulness of the body like this, making much of it like this, should be understood to bring eighteen benefits. What are the eighteen?"

A monk is able to bear hunger and thirst, cold and heat, mosquitoes, gadflies, flies, fleas, being assailed by wind and sun, being verbally abused and being beaten with sticks – he is able to endure it [all]. [Even if] the body suffers disease causing such extreme pain that his life is coming to its end – whatever is unpleasant, he is able to endure it all. This is reckoned the first benefit of cultivating mindfulness of the body like this, making much of it like this.

Again, a monk is able to tolerate discontent; if discontent arises, his mind does not become stuck in it. This is reckoned the second benefit ...

Again, a monk is able to tolerate fear; if fear arises, his mind does not become stuck in it. This is reckoned the third benefit ...

Again, in a monk the three [kinds of] unwholesome thoughts may arise – thoughts of desire, thoughts of anger, and thoughts of harming. If these three [kinds of] unwholesome thoughts arise, his mind does not become stuck in them. This is reckoned the fourth benefit ...

Again, separated from desires, separated from evil and unwholesome states ... *up to* a monk dwells having attained the fourth absorption. This is reckoned the fifth ... *up to* the eighth benefit ...

Again, a monk through the elimination of three fetters attains stream-entry. He will not fall into evil conditions and is assured of progress towards right awakening within at most seven existences. Having gone through [at most] seven existences in the heavens or among human beings, he will attain the ending of *dukkha*. This is reckoned the ninth benefit ...

Again, a monk who has eliminated the three fetters reduces sensual desire, anger, and ignorance, and attains once-returning. Having passed through one existence in a heavenly or human realm, he will attain the ending of *dukkha*. This is reckoned the tenth benefit ...

Again, a monk who has eliminated the five lower fetters will be reborn in another realm and there attain final Nirvana, having attained the condition of non-returning, not coming back to this world. This is reckoned the eleventh benefit ...

Again, a monk attains the peaceful liberations that are separated from form. Having attained the formless, he dwells having directly realized such concentrated states. This is reckoned the twelfth benefit ...

Again, a monk acquires the psychic powers, the divine ear, the knowledge of others' minds, the knowledge of former lives, and the knowledge of the birth and death [of beings]. [These are reckoned the thirteenth, fourteenth, fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth

benefits].

[Again, a monk,] by employing wisdom and insight, understands the influxes and eradicates them. Through having eradicated all the influxes, he attains the influxfree liberation of mind and liberation by wisdom, knowing and realizing it by himself here and now; and he dwells having accomplished self-realization, knowing as it really is: 'birth is ended, the holy life has been established, what was to be done has been done, there is no more of existence!'

This is reckoned the eighteenth benefit of cultivating mindfulness of the body like this, making much of it like this.

Cultivating mindfulness of the body like this, making much of it like this, should be understood to bring these eighteen benefits."

This is what the Buddha said. Having heard the Buddha's words, the monks were delighted and remembered them well.

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MĀ 81

bear cold, heat, hunger, thirst, etc. (1)

endure discontent (2)

endure fear (3)

not be overwhelmed by unwholesome thoughts (4)

4 *jhānas* (5-8)

stream-entry (9)

once-return (10)

non-return (11)

immaterial attainments (12)

supernormal powers (13)

divine ear (14)

know others' minds (15)

recollect past lives (16)

know re-arising of beings (17)

destroy influxes (18)

MN 119

conquer discontent (= 2)

conquer fear (= 3)

bear cold, heat, hunger, thirst, etc. (= 1)

four *jhānas* (= 5-8)

supernormal powers (= 13)

divine ear (= 14)

know others' minds (= 15)

recollect past lives (= 16)

divine eye (= 17)

destruction of influxes (= 18)

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main point:

- mindfulness of the body as a foundational practice for tranquillity and insight

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MĀ 82 – Discourse on [Hearing the Sound of] Crickets (Parallel to AN 6.60/ AN III 392)

Then, the monk Citta Hatthisāriputta kept interrupting while many monks were discussing the Dharma and the Vinaya, the teachings of the Buddha, without waiting until these monks had finished what they were saying, being neither respectful nor discreet in questioning the elder monks.

At that time the venerable Mahākoṭṭhita was among the assembly. Then the venerable Mahākoṭṭhita said to the monk Citta Hatthisāriputta: "Venerable friend, you should know that when many monks are talking about the Dharma and Vinaya, the teachings of the Buddha, you should not interrupt. If the monks have completed what they have to say, only then can you speak. You should be respectful

and discreet in questioning the elder monks; do not be disrespectful or indiscreet in questioning the elder monks."

At that time, all the close friends of the monk Citta Hatthisāriputta were among the assembly. Then the friends of the monk Citta Hatthisāriputta said to the venerable Mahākoṭṭhita: "Venerable Mahākoṭṭhita, you should not reprimand the monk Citta Hatthisāriputta so strongly. Why? The monk Citta Hatthisāriputta is virtuous and learned. He may appear indolent, but he is not conceited. Venerable Mahākoṭṭhita, the monk Citta Hatthisāriputta is able to assist the other monks from time to time [in their discussions]."

At this the venerable Mahākoṭṭhita said to the friends of the monk Citta Hatthisāriputta: "Venerable friends, one who does not possess the knowledge of other minds cannot judge what is falsehood. Why? There may be a person who, while he is in the presence of the Blessed One and elder companions in the holy life, acts with humility, in a manner that is endearing and reverential, being well restrained and well controlled. At a later time, however, when he has left the presence of the Blessed One and elder companions in the holy life, he abandons acting with humility and in a manner that is endearing and reverential.

"He associates much with lay disciples, makes fun, is conceited, and engages in all sorts of noisy talk. As he associates much with lay disciples, makes fun, is conceited, and engages in all sorts of noisy talk, desire arises in his mind. Desire having arisen in his mind, the body and the mind become passionate. The body and mind being passionate, he abandons the moral precepts and stops [practicing] the path.

"Venerable friends, he is just like an ox that has entered another's field. The guardian of the field catches it and ties it up with a rope or puts it inside a fence. Venerable friends, if someone were to say: 'This ox will not again enter another's field,' would that be correctly spoken?"

They replied: "No. Why not? That ox might break or undo the rope with which it is bound, or it might break or get out of the fence within which it is kept and again enter another's field, just as before.

... "Again, venerable friends, there may be a person who attains the first absorption. Having attained the first absorption, he dwells at peace in himself and does not strive further with a wish to attain what has not yet been attained, to gain what has not been gained, to realize what has not been realized.

"At a later time he associates much with lay disciples, makes fun ... he abandons the moral precepts and stops [practicing] the path.

"Venerable friends, it is just as, at a time of much rain, a village pond is full of water. Earlier one could see sand, stones, vegetation, beetles, fish, turtles, toads, and all kinds of water-dwelling creatures, as they went back and forth, moved about or remained still. Later, when it is full of water, one can no longer see them.

"Venerable friends, if someone were to say: 'In this lake one will never again see sand, stones, vegetation, beetles, fish, turtles, toads, and all kinds of water-dwelling creatures as they go back and forth, move about, or remain still', would that be correctly spoken?"

They replied: "No. Why not? Elephants might drink from the water of that pond; or horses, camels, cows, donkeys, pigs, deer, or water buffalo might drink from it. People might take water from it for their use, the wind might blow on it and the sun dry it up. Even if one did not earlier see sand, stones, vegetation, beetles, fish, turtles, toads, and all kinds of water-dwelling creatures, as they went back and forth, moved about or remained still, later, when the water has become diminished, one sees them again, just as before."

... "Again, venerable friends, there may be a person who attains the second absorption ...

"Venerable friends, it is just as, at a time of much rain, all of the dust at a crossroads becomes mud. Venerable friends, if someone were to say: 'The mud at this crossroads will never dry out; it will not become dust again', would that be correctly spoken?"

They replied: "No. Why not? Elephants may cross this crossroads, or horses, camels, cows, donkeys, pigs, deer, water buffalo, or people may cross this crossroads; the wind will blow on it and the sun will dry it out. The mud at the crossroads having dried up, will again become dust."

... "Again, venerable friends, there may be a person who attains the third absorption ...

"Venerable friends, it is just like a lake [fed by] water from a mountain spring, which is clear and pure, with level shores, still, without fluctuation and without waves. Venerable friends, if someone were to say: 'That lake [fed by] water from a mountain spring will never again fluctuate, will not have any waves', would that be correctly spoken?"

They replied: "No. Why not? A great wind may suddenly come from the eastern direction and blow on the water of that lake, stirring up waves. In the same way a great wind may suddenly come from the southern direction, from the western direction, or from the northern direction and blow on the water of that lake, stirring up waves."

... "Again, venerable friends, there may be a person who attains the fourth absorption ...

"Venerable friends, it is just as a householder or a householder's son eats delicious food until he has had his fill. Earlier he wanted to eat, but now he does not want to eat any more. Venerable friends, if someone were to say: 'That householder or householder's son will never again want to get food', would that be correctly spoken?"

They replied: "No. Why not? That householder or householder's son will become hungry again overnight. If he earlier had no use for food, later he will again want to get it."

... "Again, venerable friends, there may be a person who attains signless concentration of the mind (*animitta cetosamādhi*) ...

"Venerable friends, it is just as in a forest one may hear the sound of crickets. If the king or the king's great ministers stay overnight in that forest, then there will be the sound of elephants, horses, chariots, people walking, conchs, drums, slim-waisted drums, side drums, dancing, singing, lutes, drinking, and eating. The sound of crickets that could earlier be heard can no longer be heard. Venerable friends, if one were to say: 'In this forest one will never again hear the sound of crickets', would that be correctly spoken?"

They replied: "No. Why not? Having stayed overnight, at dawn the king and the king's great ministers will each return to his place. The sounds that one could hear of elephants, horses, chariots, people walking, conchs, drums, slim-waisted drums, side drums, dancing, singing, lutes, drinking, and eating, because of which one could not hear the sound of crickets, will have disappeared and one will hear [the crickets] again, just as earlier.

... At a later time, it was found out that the monk Citta Hatthisāriputta had abandoned the moral precepts and stopped [practicing] the path. The friends of the monk Citta Hatthisāriputta, having heard that the monk Citta Hatthisāriputta had abandoned the moral precepts and stopped [practicing] the path, went to the venerable Mahākoṭṭhita. Having reached him, they said: "Venerable Mahākoṭṭhita, did you have knowledge of the mind of the monk Citta Hatthisāriputta or was your knowledge based on something else. Why [do we ask]? The monk Citta Hatthisāriputta has just abandoned the moral precepts and stopped [practicing] the path."

The venerable Mahākoṭṭhita said to those friends [of the monk Citta Hatthisāriputta]: "Venerable friends, it was bound to happen just like

this. Why? Because he does not know [things] as they really are, does not see [things] as they really are. Why? Just because of not knowing things as they really are, not seeing [things] as they really are."

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similes in MĀ 82

well behaved: ox bound (1)
 1st jhāna: village pond (2)
 2nd jhāna: dust (3)
 3rd jhāna: mountain lake (4)
 4th jhāna: meal (5)
 signless: crickets (6)

similes in AN 6.60

well behaved: ox bound (= 1)
 1st jhāna: dust (= 3)
 2nd jhāna: village pond (= 2)
 3rd jhāna: meal (= 5)
 4th jhāna: mountain lake (= 4)
 signless: crickets (= 6)

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main point:

- use any attainment of tranquillity for progress to full liberation