



## ***Breathing is the Buddha***

Buddha is otherwise named "***Tathagata***" meaning "Thus-Come." Also he is called "***Tathagate***" (Thus-Gone). What has actually come and gone with the Buddha? It is breathing that has actually come and gone. One who thus breathes in and thus breathes out is the Buddha. Thus-Breathing is the Buddha.

Breathing is prior to our consciousness. Breathing is not carried on by either our volition or desire or consciousness; but it is done by itself. Autonomous nerve system is doing this free from mental confusion and physical hazards. The involuntary muscles are doing it, uncontrolled by the mental distraction or negligence. Even we are sleeping, eating, working, talking, driving, making fun, sick of stomach upset, depressed, addicted to narcotic, totally indulged in gambling, panicky with fire or earthquake, totally obsessed of pride and vanity, still the respiratory system is carrying on this task, otherwise we'll die instantaneously. As the result, we have no idea about the importance and merit of practice of conscious breaths.

If breaths are prior to our volition and consciousness, it is sure that breaths have significant role in our supernormal consciousness and transcendental realization, cultivating and developing neglected ability, immaculate quality, precise knowledge, and mysterious enlightenment that help us to achieve true unity with nature, immortal, and divinity, thus maintain and retain the most stable and solid, blissful and peaceful condition of life that we call, "Celestial Abode" where there are neither isolation, frustration, confusion, or malfunction.

Breaths are the twilight zone to the unlimited and timeless space where all matter and phenomena perform and interact with one another to harmonize with eternal bliss and sacred comfort that we call nibbana.

When we breathe with clear consciousness, we become aware of that the soothing unity, balance, and harmony among our body – physical reality, inner respiration, and pure mental states have been achieved to create indescribable joy and ease.

First we become sure how we are breathing, whether our breaths are short, long, comfortable, uncomfortable, suppressing, panting, obscure, slacking, or stressful.

When we are under the good condition observing and following certain method and rules of practice, we can continually achieve higher and higher levels of breathing. That is described as, “Seeing Breaths.”

The clear, distinct, joyous, and comfortable breaths are called, “entire body pervasive breaths,” and this is the immediate and evident consequence of the practice.

This practice requires certain prerequisite conditions.

First of all a practitioner should have clear and urgent motivation which is the first priority in the life. This is the matter of, “right now.” This is the matter of “death or life.” This is the matter of “head burning,” the matter of “eye brow burning.”

If you wish to practice, you have to seclude yourself from all family, friends, relationship, duty, obligation, or anything at all.

You’ll go to forest, wildernesses, mountains, under-a-tree, cave, empty-house, monastery, temple, or meditation hall.

Do not take any friends, family, pets, books, jewelry, or decorative attires with you that are the objects of love and attachment.

Be just a mendicant monk or a true recluse.

Find a level and dry place to sit down.

Sit down on the floor with a stable and solid crossed-legs, half- or full-lotus posture.

Straighten your spine. Use a pillow or cushion that is proportioned to your physique.

Properly raising the buttocks, you can naturally yet thoroughly straighten the lower back that is indispensable for “belly breathing” or “entire body pervasive breathing.”

In full-lotus posture, you’ll place your right foot on your opposite femur; and your left foot on your right femur. Showing your soles upwards.

The anklebones should be exactly placed on the femurs.

The tips of the toes should be aligned with the outsides of the thighs.

The hands should not separate from the belly, meeting thumbs being exactly positioned against the navel, and the right hand is resting on the left heel (sole), in turn, left palm is resting on the right palm, which is pressing the right thigh.

The crossing of the legs should be deep enough that the anklebones of the opposite legs, are securely resting on the femurs.

If the crossings of the legs are not deep enough, maintaining the perfectly stretched lower back becomes very difficult, and the imperfect lower back position will fail the thorough breaths.

The hands should be combined in *mahamudra*, which requires precise positioning of each finger: the middle sections of the middle fingers should exactly overlap each other; the thumbs support each other; the tips of them slightly touch one another neither too tight nor apart. So that upon looking down you will not see the middle fingers.

This configuration of the hands and fingers is called “*mahamudra*” or “*jhanamudra*.” This is the sign of the perfect absorption. The meeting point of the thumbs are called “*ekaggata* (one-pointedness),” and which is the germ of *jhana* (absorption) that means there is *jhana* when it is existent, unless it is never germinated.

Close the lips and teeth together, keep the tongue up against the root of the upper teeth.

Eyes are naturally opened neither too narrow nor too wide; the eyesight is cast 45 degrees downward.

Thus set up mindfulness in front of you, as if you were watching yourself reflected on the mirror.

Breathe in and out, and notice your breaths are long if they are so.

Breathe in and out, and notice your breaths are short, if they are so.

Breathe in and out perceiving the entire body with pure sensation and bliss.

Breathe in and out calming down the breaths subtler and subtler.

Be blissful, while you are breathing in and out

Be comfortable, while you are breathing in and out.

Calm the breaths down subtler and subtler

Just perceive the sensations, as they are pain, neutral, comfort, hot, cold, warm, cool, neutral, while you are breathing in and out.

Perceive the mental states, as they are lethargy, greed, resentment, restlessness, confusion; while you are breathing in and out.

Gladden your mind by means of absorption, while you are breathing in and out.

Be absorbed deeper and deeper in your breaths, while you are breathing in and out.

Liberate your mind from all distractions while breathing in and out

Observe impermanence of all things, while you are breathing in and out.

Observe dispassion of all attachment, while you are breathing in and out.

Observe cessation of all matter, while you are breathing in and out.

Observe relinquishment of all things, while you are breathing in and out.

To achieve this meditation, the difficult points are pain and worries as they are so in our general life. Especially, sitting in full-lotus is more than torture, severing your leg bones and trying your patience at any instance.

The ancient people were very strong at this point, they were ready to die for practice crushing their bones, tearing their sinews and muscles, and drying out their blood and sweat.

However, it is not necessary to torture your self so much, because the practice could take four different postures: sitting, standing, walking, and lying down.

This is the breathing meditation; therefore, actually postures are not important. Breathing with clear consciousness is the point. If you could maintain clear breaths, you can stand up from your sitting posture; you can walk around the meditation floor quietly and slowly maintaining the precise observation of your breaths; you can also lie down on the floor, couch, or bed properly resting your tired spine and legs.

However, you should never be distracted to either good or bad ideas, emotions, or sensations.

Just realize that you are breathing; moreover, manifest it by yourself that what Buddha is, that Buddha is no more than "entire body pervasive breaths."

When we are obsessed of delusions and distractions to the ideas of good or bad, feelings of happiness or unhappiness, comfort or discomfort, we totally forget our breath, thus we are far fetched to the endless confusion losing original insight and comfort of life.

However, if we could just focus and attain the perfect unity, balance, and harmony among the three faculties of our life: body, breaths, and consciousness on this instance, we'll realize the highest bliss, comfort, knowledge, and life and which has no taste, no substance, no sensation, thus perfect beyond description.

We merge respiration itself without any gross consciousness; just as they are thus coming and thus going.

**Natsuo Shibuya**