



## **Anapanasati Sutta**

Thich Nhat Hanh, *Breathe, You are Alive!*

### **Awareness of the body - Method 3**

*I am breathing in and am aware of my whole body.  
I am breathing out and am aware of my whole body.*

During the practice of meditation, body and mind become a unity. In the sitting, lying, standing, or walking position, we can practice awareness of our body, beginning by taking the different parts of our body one by one, and then taking the organism as a whole. We can start with our hair, and then go down to the tips of our toes. For example, when in the position of sitting meditation, after regulating your breathing, you begin by breathing out and you observe, "I am breathing out and am aware of the hair on my head." "I am breathing in and am aware of the contents of my skull."

You can continue like this until you reach the tips of your toes. In the process of the practice, feelings and considerations may arise. For example, I am passing my heart and suddenly I notice anxiety rising up in me with regard to a close friend's heart condition. I do not push this feeling away, I am cognizant of it: "I am breathing in and am aware that I am anxious about my friend's heart condition." Then you continue your journey of observation of your body under the supervision of the full awareness of breathing.

Here is another example: As I become aware of my digestive organs, I see millions of minutes living beings which are living along with me in my entrails. I do not push this perception away, I am simply cognizant of it: "I am breathing in and am aware of the minute organisms living along with me and in me." Your awareness of the symbiotic relationship with these organisms may strike you as a rich subject for meditation. Recognize it as such and make an appointment with yourself to return to this subject later, and then continue with your journey of observation through the rest of your body.

Generally, we give very little attention to the organs of our body. We are conscious of them only when they cause us pain and when we are starting to be ill. You can pass half your life seeking riches and fame without ever holding your little toe between your fingers in awakened awareness. Your little toe is very important. It has been very kind to you for many years. If one day in the future, there is a sign of cancer in it, what will you do?

Perhaps you think that to be aware of the body is not very important. But that is not true. Any physiological, psychological, or physical phenomenon can be a door which leads you to truth. You can meditate on your toe and reach the goal of realization. The secret of this practice is to concentrate our mind in order to observe each organ of our body in full awareness. If you practice in this way, one day (perhaps tomorrow or even this afternoon) you may see deep and wonderful things which can change your view and way of life.

The hair on your head seems very ordinary, but you should know that your hair is an ambassador of truth. Please receive the credentials of this hair. Observe them well and discover every message that every hair bears in itself. Are your eyes common physiological phenomena? They are the windows which open onto the miracle of reality. Do not neglect anything. Look deeply, and you will see. That is the practice of meditation.