

Being an Island Unto Myself

Being an island unto myself.

As an island unto myself.

Buddha is my mindfulness.

Shining near, shining far.

Dharma is my breathing, guarding body and mind.

I am free.

Being an island unto myself.

As an island unto myself.

Sangha is my skandhas, working in harmony.

Taking refuge in myself.

Coming back to myself.

I am free.

This practice brings us home. The Buddha said that there is an island in each of us, and when we go home to ourselves, we are on that safe island. There, we touch the energy of the Buddha, which sheds its light on any situation, enabling us to see near and far and to know what to do. We touch the living Dharma on that island by practicing mindful breathing. Mindful breathing and mindfulness practice are the living Dharma. They generate energy and protect our bodies and minds.

You can touch the energy of the Sangha within yourself in your Five Skandhas: body, feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness. Through mindful breathing,

these elements come together to work in harmony. Unhappiness, sorrow, fear, and conflict are transformed onto harmony. When we touch the energy of the Buddha, the negative energy of confusion, despair, and panic, Returning to our island and practicing mindful breathing helps tremendously.

I always practice this gatha at the most difficult times. If I were in an airplane and thought it was going to crash, I would practice breathing in and out. It is the best thing to do. Please cherish this practice, it has saved many lives, It is a Dharma treasure. You can memorize this gatha and practice it while driving, making breakfast, or having lunch. Dwelling in the island of self, you chew each morsel of food with this gatha in mind. You will feel as though you are surrounded by the Sangha and are absorbing its energy. You are also producing energy and offering it to the Sangha at the same time.

From 'Awakening of the Heart' by Thich Nhat Hanh pages 79-80