

中英合訂本  
CH-EN Version

Concentration of the  
Mindfulness of  
Breathing  
(ānāpānassatisamādhi)

安  
般  
念  
三  
摩  
地

講述——開印阿闍梨  
整理——開仁長老

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# 安般念三摩地

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## 一、引言

據了解，佛教在西歐、北美洲等西方國家已逐漸傳播開來，南、北、藏傳佛教皆有，不過真能接引西方人士（洋人）學佛的，我們漢語系佛教還是遠不及南傳和藏傳佛教的，原因有多方面，我以為，語言障礙及指導老師的不足是主要因素吧！

中國佛教發展一、兩千年，不少優良

傳統幾經十年文革的洗劫後，經驗傳承已元氣大傷，所幸出家僧團留存至今。

近數十年來，漢語系佛教弘法人員熱衷於推展法務，鑽研教義，可說交出了一些漂亮成績。不過，於止觀禪修上仍然有待努力。部份有心人，不少已前往南傳佛教如緬甸、泰國、錫蘭學禪，也有去印度、西藏、青海。我們知道，佛教的止觀經驗接軌，總比理論知識的復興來得艱難，也正因此，我常聽到一些重振禪風的呼籲，一般說來有二種反應：

**一、出外參學，遠到南傳、藏傳佛教環境裡學習，當然所學的，就不再拘限在中國佛教傳統了。**

**二、埋首於中國佛教的既有傳統上而**

一門深入。

您是屬哪一種呢？

21 世紀，是地球村佛教的來臨。我以為，對世界佛教應有知己知彼的一點常識，懂得欣賞與學習別人的優點，截長補短，也深悉和避免重蹈前人的錯誤與缺失。

總之，有交流對佛教、對個人還是利多於弊吧！

## 二、止觀經驗

出家之人，要有魄力將佛法知識轉換成切身經驗，為自己、為佛教、為眾生，釐出一條安身立命之道來，否則「**既非道人，又非白衣，無所名也**」。

有人說，研究佛學即是慧學。實際上，智慧須依戒、定為基礎，若只有少許的聞慧，或只是一些文獻上考證、排比、整合，或某一思想的探索，怎能說是「**增上慧學**」？我總覺得，還是有著一段的距離。

印度佛教許多大德，窮其一生地著書立論，有的量縱使不多，但質卻豐富得很，在字裡行間所流露的經驗之談，讀者是可以感受到的。現在佛學研究方法進步，文獻得來容易，電腦檢索更為方便，再加上一點個人專長與才華，著書立說，產量也相當驚人。有的讀起來，就是少了一層切身經驗的法味，是否同感？

在《阿含經》裡，世尊叮囑出家之人

應以「**法住者**」自許，內心寂止，安住止觀，並非光說不練。振興中國佛教的方法有多種，我想止觀禪修應是重要的一環吧！

### 三、安般念入門

我們選擇以安那般那念（或稱「出入息念」）為方法，因為這是一種止觀兼具（前為奢摩他，後是毗婆舍那）的禪法。

首先調身，我們採用七支坐法，也就是禪坐時肢體的七種姿式。在《阿含經》，世尊在說安般念修習方法時，也約略提到要「**結跏趺坐，正直其身，置念面前**」的簡短句子；盤腿趺坐，適當調身，

有助於攝心，因為如果身體某一部份發生疼痛時，極可能影響禪修者的專注，所以《清淨道論》說：「**彼等（苦痛）不生之時，則心得專一，不退失業處，且得增長而至圓滿。**」安般念的所緣（目標）較為細微，身體疼痛（觸受）比所緣強烈時會影響專注力。

禪七前的兩三天，同學不免感到腿痛、腰痛等，如果腿痛的話可改換坐姿，或改用站禪的方式。站禪宜兩腳與肩同寬，若不平衡，眼睛可以微微張開。站禪時，依然專注鼻端的出入息，方法與坐禪一樣。

我們先將渙散在外的亂心收攝回來，由外而內，由粗而細，由動而靜，留意自

己動作，慢慢調適。出靜時，則恰好相反，由靜而動，由細而粗，由內而外。

七支是身體的七種支撐姿式：一、結伽趺坐（腿足支），二、挺腰含胸（腰脊支），三、雙手平放（手肘支），四、雙肩放鬆（肩胛支），五、下巴內收（頭頸支），六、舌舐上顎（舌顎支），七、雙簾下垂（眼目支）。



依上述七個步驟調好姿勢後，再慢慢左右搖擺，前後搖擺，找一個不偏左、不偏右，不仰後、不俯前的中心位置。

入座時，由大至小幅度緩緩轉動，一旦定位，身體就要寂止不動，接著從頭到腳一個部份、一個部分地逐漸放鬆，直到遍全身的每一部位都進入自然、放鬆與舒適的狀態。坐姿好，影響禪修品質的穩定性，可以持久地、舒適地專心專注於入出息。接下來，就是方法的把握了。

### （一）把取所緣

對所緣的「**把取**」（pariggahita，擁有、佔有），不外乎從見、聞、觸入手。有些業處以見取所緣，有的用聞，例如慈心觀是以見、聞二取，安般念則以觸取。

如契經中說，「**結跏趺坐，正直其身**」之後，緊接就是要「**置念面前**」

（*parimukham satim upatṭhapatevā*）。什麼是置念面前？《無礙解道》「大品 3·入出息論」說：「置，是遍攝，面前，是出發，念，是伺候。」念，有伺候、不使流失、忘失的作用，就像侍候主人一樣，寸步不離。《清淨道論》也同樣依此而解說為：「置念在業處的面前」或「遍攝發動而伺候。」因此，凡要用功的人須摒除外緣，讓心處在高度敏捷狀態下清楚了知，攝於一境，不令流失。

「相、出息、入息，不是一心的所緣。當知道那三法時的人獲得〔成功安般念三摩地的〕修習。」

修習此業處時，不能只取出息或只取入息為所緣，或只是注意在鼻端的接觸點

（範圍）上。

如果只專注在出息入息，離開了相（接觸範圍），沒有一個固定的所緣，心則易亂，不能一境。倘若只停滯於接觸範圍，而又不去察覺出息入息，則不成出入息念的修習。

如果離開了氣息，只專注在「觸」，可能會引發四界的反應。如果不念長息，只念一點（或一個範圍），全身任何的一個部位也可成為專注的所緣。三者分離，就「**不是一心的所緣**」，正確是出息或入息與接觸之處同時操作。

鼻端下、嘴唇上的人中，正是氣息進出的明顯接觸之處，有人感覺像一個點，有的是一個範圍，範圍大小，因人而異，

關鍵是禪修者要把心安置（āropeti 穿上、放在）在一個固定所緣上，這就是「尋」心所的作用。

我們藉著深呼吸的進出，留意上嘴唇與鼻端部分有空氣掃過的地方，可能是一個點或是一個接觸範圍，安般念（入出息念）業處的所緣就在這裡。

每一業處都有其所緣（目標），不同業處，有不同所緣，安般念業處有安般念的所緣，這一點，必須強調及牢記住的。安般念是依「觸」（身門）攝心，當「相」（禪相）成就時，自然轉至以「相」（意門）攝心。

心專注在所緣，不浮動，是「正念」；在接觸範圍上清楚覺知氣息的進

出，是「正知」。

在《相應部》裡，世尊說：「諸比丘！我不說失念及不正知的人是安般念的修習者。」「念」（sati）就是深切的注意、深切的記憶，「正知」屬慧（paññā）心所，它擁有洞察、判斷的能力。由於念與慧，於入息、於出息心能一境性、不散亂而了知者，被稱為「有念者」（satokārī），護法論師在《清淨道論》疏鈔的《第一義寶函》裡說：「『具念行者』：即成為具念後，就以念執行應行之事的人，或有〔念〕行為習慣的人」（satokārīti sato eva hutvā, satiyā eva vā kātabbassa kattā, karaṇasīlo vā）。

隨著安般念的不斷作意，不斷修習，所緣將變得愈是微細，甚至到達接觸範圍

也不明顯的境地。因此，這時候禪修者必須具備強而有力的念與慧。

## （二）安般念業處的殊勝

根據《清淨道論》記載，業處計有四十種，但多屬純「止業處」。但有兩種例外，是止觀兼具的業處，那就是安般念及四界分別觀。四界分別觀不是這次禪七的主修方法，故不說。至於安般念業處的殊勝、修法及步驟，現就為大家做些說明。

安般業處有什麼特色？詳說多種，概要來講有兩點：

第一、寂靜殊勝。安般念的寂靜殊勝，是所緣與通達時皆寂靜殊勝。如不淨業處的所緣並不寂靜（蟲聚等粗故），也

不殊勝（厭惡故），唯在證得禪那的所緣（相）才說它寂靜殊勝。還有在四十業處中，安般念與四界分別觀雖然同是止觀兼具，但此安般念的定力比四界分別觀強大，安般念可修至第四禪，四界分別觀只有近行定（或剎那定）。

第二、隨時可修。它不像其他業處須事前多做準備，如不淨觀，須特別找來一具尸體為取相所緣，十遍中的地遍等也一樣要特製曼陀羅等。出入息呢？只要活著，與生俱來有鼻孔、有上嘴唇、有呼吸，就可隨時隨地做為所緣了。其他業處，你可以說忘了攜帶曼陀羅等工具，但不會忘了帶鼻孔或呼吸出門吧？這是它的第二種殊勝處。

### （三）空閑獨處

這是說明比丘們修習安般念三摩地的適當場所，「**阿蘭若，或去樹下，或去空閑處**」，無非是為了遠離色、聲等五欲雜緣干擾。凡夫俗子很難不為往昔的欲習牽動，由於眾生在輪迴界流轉成習已久，喜縱五根，這剛好與攝念一境的要求剛好背馳。

禪修者為了奢摩他（止）有所成就，先捨五欲，見其患，暫時遠離，不受牽引，心才能在一個所緣上安住下來。因此世尊指示比丘們去適宜禪修的環境，那就是阿蘭若、樹下、空閑處。

或許有人會以為，大乘行者也到「**空閑處**」去就很不妥，因為這樣的話菩薩道

行者不就如同聲聞人「當捨己眾、他眾，空閒獨處」離開人群，做起了自了漢來了嗎？

這一點，隋代智者大師《釋禪波羅蜜》曾如此述，他說：「菩薩之法，正以度眾生為事，何故獨處空山，棄捨眾生，閑居自善？答曰：菩薩身雖捨離，而心不捨。如人有病，將身服藥，暫息事業，病差則修業如故。」這一段文字應從《大智度論》「禪波羅蜜」中引來。菩薩雖然身在空閒獨處，暫離眾生，而心卻常憐愍不捨，為強自身，好比服藥，在治病期間要暫息家務，等待氣力恢復之後，再繼續利生事業則無妨。

其實，制五根、戒瞋恚、捨驕慢、離

諂曲，少欲知足，遠離憤鬧，精勤於不忘念，善修禪定都是為了「**心在定故，能知世間生滅法相。**」

止觀是三乘共法，聲聞道、菩薩道都應該具備的。

有的人喜歡誇口說什麼「**十字路口好參禪**」，也許用上功夫了的老修行，別說十字路頭，就算百花叢裡過也一樣片葉不沾身。但我們應時時「**忖己德行**」，自問行嗎？若不行，那還是乖乖把基礎紮好，切莫老是亂心戲論、欺誑妄語了！

## 四、安般念的修習步驟

接下來，要講解怎樣修習安般念的業

處。

從契經（阿含）可以證明，安般念三摩地是止、觀兼具的禪修法，如說：「**茲有比丘**」。這一「茲」字，顯示依此業處生起安般念三摩地的教法，是外道（異教）所無、所未曾見的，因此世尊說：「**比丘！茲有（第一）沙門……乃至（第四）沙門，有其他教派實無此等沙門。**」

世親論師的《阿毗達磨俱舍論》也說：安般念唯有「**正法有情方能修習，外道無有，無說者故，自不能覺微細法故。**」這是止觀兼具、不共外道的證明。

《清淨道論》將安般念的修習業處，以四念處，分十六個階次。

我們這一次的禪七，就以數、隨、

觸、止、觀、還、淨的禪修法為主題。

數息為進路的安般念修習法，也出現在其他論典，如《俱舍論》、天臺《六妙門》等，六妙門與《清淨道論》所說的，差別在「**隨**」與「**止**」中間多了一個「**觸**」。

按照《清淨道論》的分類，從「**數**」到「**止**」是奢摩他，「**止**」是安止成就，「**觀**」屬毗婆舍那，「**還**」是道智，「**淨**」為果智。說一切有部論師們也有另一套的分類法，此不贅述。

## （一）止的修習

### 數

第一，「**數**」（gaṇeti 計算）。根據契

經（阿含），安般念的修習法中原無「數息」這一項，應是後期論著或註解書時代才出現。數息，目的是為了心能專注於所緣。數，不宜少過五，也不應取超過十以上的數目，中不脫數、不中斷。

記得多年前，我到北緬曼德里摩谷禪院參訪，那裡的住持法師告訴我，當年列迪論師曾指導修習安般念，是數一至七，「七」表示七覺支，現今南緬帕奧禪林的禪修者，習慣是數至八，「八」數字，代表八正道。

那我們現在究竟應數多少？按照論典教法，只要在五至十的數目之內，選擇一個數目即可。如果選用八，那從頭到尾不論多少遍都一直使用八，不要一會兒八、

待會兒又六等，不斷改變數字，也不容易培養好專注力。

修習安般念時氣息吸進和呼出要自然，勿故意造作，令其快慢，或使它變粗變細，愈自然愈好。不過，若是心散或正在掉舉時，可試採用快速的數，一道氣息的進或出，以一、二、三、四、五……，不拘多少，直到氣息出完或進完為止。您也可以進出，然後數一，進出，然後數二，以快速方法計數。這些權宜方法只能暫時性使用，久了養成習慣反而不好。包括有些人因難於掌握出入息的接觸點，因此用力呼吸，我們擔心他養成了要有強力所緣才能專注的習慣後，一旦恢復平靜時，反而不能專注了。

還有常被人提起的一個問題，即：數息要數多久？我發現《清淨道論》的回答很好，它說：「**直至不數，亦能住立其念於出息入息的所緣為止。**」數到所緣確立之後，即能轉修「**隨逐**」。數息的目的，只是為了斷絕過多外攀的「**尋**」（雜念），《俱舍論》也說：「**從一至十，不減不增，恐心於境極聚散故。**」數息，是為了斷絕散亂的外緣，讓心安住所緣。若是有人一開始就能夠建立其所緣，還需要數息嗎？不數亦可，有人不數息也可直接以出入息用功，未嘗不可。

在數的過程中，有時不免會摻雜一些妄念進來，如果數字間中被妄想打斷而脫落了，就必須重新再來，一遍又一遍，周

而復始，直到方法熟練及心可安住為止。

數息法雖在出息入息上計數，不過，禪修者須知道：重點是在「正知出息及入息」，清楚了知氣息的進和出，並非只為記取數目。

將心安住在所緣不漂浮是「正念」，清楚知道及分辨氣息的進出、長短等全部過程的修習，即「正知」。

## 隨

第二，「隨逐」（*anubandhanā* 連接、跟隨、追）。放棄了計算數字，進而以念注意「觸」（*phusanā*）範圍上的入出息，不隨氣息的進或出，更不隨氣息從鼻端進到心臟、肚臍等。

隨逐，相當契經說的出入、長短及遍身的三段修法。

## 觸

第三、「觸」(phusanā)。《清淨道論》說是「有觸到的地方」(phuṭṭha-tṭhāna 已觸到處)，是「觸」(phusati)的過去分詞。安般念業處是以「觸」把取所緣，不論「數」或「隨逐」都不離「觸」，如果沒有觸，我們如何得知是出息，還是入息呢？所以，在數息階段的人，就在出入息「有觸到的地方」不斷的數，隨、止等的方法也一樣。

有觸到的範圍大小因人而異，有人覺得是一個小點，有人感受到範圍較大。總

之，禪行者不要故意改變它，或玩弄它，只須將心扣緊於「所緣」上覺知氣息的進和出就行了。

當禪修者專注於出入氣息約三十分鐘都不被中斷，且自覺穩定後，即可進而修習長短息。這裡所謂的「長」或「短」，是指氣息經過接觸範圍的時間有多久，切勿比較前後息的誰長誰短，一旦落入了分別計較，心就有可能散亂了。因此，《清淨道論》說：「**當知那（出入息的）長短是依時間的。**」只需專注於當下息氣經過的時間，如此就可以了。

再來，就是遍身息。這裡講的「**身**」（kāya），不是指一般身體，而是指「**出入息的身**」，身有堆、聚等意思。當我們

說遍身息的時候，也即是指氣息經過接觸範圍的全部過程，所有過程都清楚覺知，毫無遺漏。

禪修者心中默念氣息的進，或氣息的出，但不念有跳動或節奏的「進、進、進」或「出、出、出」，也不去默念氣息的「是初、是中、是後」（初、中、後是指氣息從開始到結束過程中的三階段。）

禪修者只要在接觸範圍上覺知氣息的入出，每一細節都有正念正知，扣緊所緣（制心一處）及清楚知道當下所發生的事。

「正念」的特相是照顧所緣念念分明而不流失，讓心穩住在所緣，正如同一塊大石頭沉住在水中，不像葫蘆般的漂浮，

這 **apilāpana**（非漂浮的）是正念所發揮的作用。若具有相當綿密的專注力與觀察力時，妄念根本就無法乘虛侵入。

## 止

第四、「安住（止）」（**ṭhapanā** 安置、留住）。這裡有需要做一點說明「安住」（**ṭhapanā**）與「安息」（**passambhayam**）的不同。

經典中說的「止身行」或「安息身行」（**passambhayam kāya-saṅkharam** 身行的鎮靜），註釋書指未修前的喘息粗心到第四禪成就的止息細心，中間的過程都可視為安息（**passambhayam** 鎮靜），次第是漸進式的，愈上愈細。

但「安止」（*appaṇā* 入定），就不一樣。一般是使用在證得安止定，如初禪、第二禪乃至第四禪，意義就變得沒有「安息」（從粗心至細心的整個鎮靜過程）來的廣泛，解說有差，這是需要特別留意的。

這種安息（止）的作用，是因禪修者把取了業處時所產生的效果，好比未修習安般念業處之前是粗心，已修習後身行變得愈來愈細，似有似無，甚至到達了難以辨別狀態。好比身心熱惱的時候，起了很粗糙的出入息，當身心沒有熱惱的時候，它開始平靜微細。

值得注意，《清淨道論》還將止身行分類為：奢摩他（止）的止身行，以及毗

婆舍那（觀）的止身行。它們都有一共同點，即愈後面，就愈微細，止也如此，觀也如此，但成就內容是不一樣的。

根據大寺派所傳，雜部師、長部師和中部師持有不同意見。雜、長部二師眾認為奢摩他的止身行，是：安般念業處修習前的身行粗，成就初禪近行定時的身行細；初禪安止成就時，比初禪近行的身行細；第二禪安止成就時比初禪、第二禪近行的身行細，以此類推，到達了第四禪安止定時最微細，甚至不起出入息。如《阿毗達磨大毗婆沙論》說的：「**止身行者，謂令息風漸漸微細，乃至不生。**」

在「**未把取時**」（apariggahitakale，未擁有時、未佔有時）所起的身行粗，已把

取時則身行安息（細），從開始至結尾，是漸漸微細。

禪修者專注於氣息的全部過程，漸漸的，心將與所緣結為一體。原來安般念業處的入門，是把取身門的「觸」為所緣，現已經過不斷修習成定，由較粗的身「觸」所緣，轉於意門更微細的法所緣——「相」（nimitta 禪相）。

相的產生，離前五識，在五識不起作用之下現起於意門。如果禪修者看到、聽到、嗅到、嚐到，或接觸等五識還有發生作用，則已離開意門專注，也即是不在定中。南傳阿毗達磨解說，這稱為禪那心的心及心所，只生起在意門的速行心裡，《俱舍論》也向來主張：「正在定中無五

識。」所以，入定唯在意門，沒有前五門的作用。

有些禪修者覺得相晃動，忽而移動，有的是相在人中，或是下巴，或像全身呼吸。《阿毗達磨大毗婆沙論》有說：「**息念未成，觀入出息從鼻入出；息念成已，觀身毛孔猶如藕根，息風周遍於中入出。**」是描述這一種定境上的反應。

出定後，每人對相的描述與形容未必一致。有人說它好像月輪、如花環、如煙、如雲等，這是「想」所生，以想為因，以想為根，種種異想，現起了種種異相。記得中國的永明延壽在《宗鏡錄》曾這麼說：「**依觀門，觀心似現前境，雖權立假相，悉從心變，如《觀經》中立日**

觀、水觀等十六觀門。」在事觀上，這是想所施設，「**悉從心變**」，什麼名稱、影象及概念不是那麼重要，總之，它可以做為禪修者安心的所緣（目標）就是了。

安般念是由觸入門，後修轉成意門中的相，轉換過程，有些禪修者發覺氣息或相忽隱忽現，若有若無。如果您覺察不到氣息或接觸範圍的時候，不要故意弄粗氣息，也不要離開了氣息接觸範圍之外，另找所緣。事實上，相不離氣息或接觸範圍，正確的話，應該是專注於氣息時也就專注於相，專注相時也就專注氣息，達到息相結合，可以維持半小時至一、兩小時，甚或更久，當相穩定後，禪修者就可把注意力完全專注在相上了。

相現起了，此時此刻更需要加強自己的正念和正知。有七種保護相的方法，猶如小心翼翼的在保護轉輪聖王的母胎一樣。

七種護相方法，即：於住所、行境、談話、人、食物、時節及四威儀中，時時刻刻留意與保護，使相愈加堅固穩定，直到安止定成就為止。中國以前的禪宗祖師也有開悟後就住林下水邊「保養聖胎」的例子。

奢摩他（止）初習成時，有所謂「幼稚定」（*taruṇo samādhi* 幼嫩定），毗婆舍那初習成就時，也有所謂「幼稚觀」（*taruṇa vipassanā* 幼嫩觀）。這兩種現象，對禪修者而言都同樣處於「幼嫩經驗」階

段，需要特別的保護，少了這一層保任功夫，對禪修者或有不利。

當相現起的時候，不要去理會相的顏色，或是辨別它的四大特相，只要單純的將心安住在相上就可以了。

「單純」兩個字，其實真正用起功來還不簡單，本來禪修生活應該就是愈單純愈好才對，可惜這種「單純」並非多數人開始就能適應得來，習性所成，不甘寂寞，欲多則喜愛攀附外緣，無論是內、是外，是過去、現在或未來的所緣。總之，想蘊發達而不斷更換所緣（目標），就是靜不下來的現象。制心一處，談何容易啊？！

以近行定等持於心，鎮伏五蓋，相得

成就。如果想要相更加穩定，禪修者可以多練習十種的安止善巧及五自在。自在，在《成實論》中也有說到，不過只是三自在。

## （二）觀的修習

數、隨、觸、止是屬於奢摩他（止），觀、還、淨屬毗婆舍那（觀）及其結果。

《清淨道論》的觀修習，完全以慧體的五種清淨說明，即一、見清淨，二、度疑清淨，三、道非道智見清淨，四、行道智見清淨，及五、智見清淨。五種慧體之前的戒、定二清淨是慧根。

慧體是依於慧根生長，慧根又必須依

附慧地才能生長、萌芽，乃至開花結果。慧地，就是對蘊、處、界、根、諦、緣起等聞所成慧——「**遍問熟知**」。在安般念的遍問（paripucchā 詢問）應詢問有關安般念業處的問題，故為安般念業處者的五節之一，順序是：受持、遍問、現起、安止及相，廣說如《清淨道論》。

聞慧，是實修（戒定慧）前的基礎，經由詢問，從善知識處得來的指示，掌握了有關即將修學的業處要義，「譬如象行腳跡，易尋不迷正路，得道、得禪亦復如是。何以故？易指示故。」這是漢譯《善見律》中說的，同樣的譬喻在《清淨道論》教授業處文中出現，且有詳加說明。「**遍問熟知**」並不限安般念業處，實通一切，

可資參考。

## 觀察

上面已介紹過「安住」，現接下來是「觀察」（sallakkhaṇā）。sallakkhaṇā 有識別、洞察的意思，屬毗婆舍那（vi+passanā）。「毗」（vi）有分別、推求義，「婆舍那」（passanā）是觀察、看見。相傳馬鳴的《大乘起信論》有說：「所言觀者，謂分別因緣生滅相，隨順毗婆舍那觀義故。」《大乘義章》也以為：「外國名毗婆舍那，此翻名觀；於法推求、簡擇名觀。」毗婆舍那大概就有分別、推求、簡擇、觀察等意思了。

佛教有主張以定修觀基礎，也有主張

不必修止，可以直接修觀的，如一類缺乏禪定水滋潤的「**乾觀者**」（sukkhavipassaka）。不過，乾觀者在毗婆舍那（觀）成就後的道、果智，也是止觀結合的，相當於初禪。

不過，根據印度佛教聲聞、大乘經論等的記載，以及不少歷代祖師的語錄或論著顯示，如天臺智者大師、西藏宗喀巴大師等則認為須先修止而後觀的。

現在，我們是根據南傳《清淨道論》來解說。修習毗婆舍那第一階段的「**見清淨**」，也是必須以定為基礎的，即從三摩鉢底出來後，才能作名色的觀察。《俱舍論》云：「**契經說，此為增上心學故，心清淨最勝即四靜慮故。依何義故，立靜慮**

名？由此寂靜能審慮故，審慮即是實了知義，如說心在定能如實了知。」羅什譯《佛遺教經》亦說：「心在定故，能知世間生滅法相。」其實，都是出自契經的，如南傳《相應部》裡世尊告諸比丘：「諸比丘！汝應修定，諸比丘！得定的比丘如實知。」這段引文，在《清淨道論》出現多次。禪定為毗婆舍那的足處，源自契經，後更散見於諸論裡。

## 名色與緣起

名色與緣起的把握，在修習毗婆舍那（觀）的成敗上有著舉足輕重的地位。

《攝阿毗達磨義論》「第九攝業處分別品·觀的業處」，對於「見清淨」及

「度疑清淨」下了定義，它說：「以特相、作用、現起、近因而把握名色，名為見清淨。把握等名色之緣，名為度疑清淨。」

《清淨道論》說：「精確看見名色為見清淨。」修習毗婆舍那者必須「精確看見」（yāthāva-dassanam）心、心所，四大及其所造色的特相、作用（味）、現起及足處。

《俱舍論》中說：「身、受、心、法各別自性，名為自相。一切有為皆非常性，一切有漏皆是苦性，及一切法空非我性，名為共相。」

護法論師的《長部疏》有說：「真實法的相有兩種：自相、共相。這裡的覺知

自相就是現量智，覺知共相則為比量智。」在世間三遍智中，觀察諸法各別自相而轉起的慧為「知遍智」（*ñāta-pariññā*），見清淨、度疑清淨就屬知遍智，是現量智。

如實知見名色及緣起，是轉起生滅隨觀智的必備基礎。禪修者對色法或名法的現起，即能辨別其相、作用、現狀及近因，這是如實見（見清淨）。若進而了知此法的因果關係，則為如實智（度疑清淨）。因此可謂：不知自相，難了共相。不能憑空想像而統觀一切為無常、苦、無我（共相），凡是勝解的、假想的，雖暫時性的鎮伏了煩惱而終究不得根治。

猶如一名醫生不知病源，也不從其

（自）相診斷而推求病因，就以為凡所有病皆是空、無常，感冒無常，心臟病無常，愛滋病也無常，站在共相上看好像沒錯，但到底病因、病相有別。病因不同，如果一味視共相為自相，於是乎，開出同一處方，以同出一徹手法治百病，行得通嗎？一名訓練有素的好醫師，應先從病相上診斷，知曉病因之後才對症下藥。四聖諦中的集諦，即能針對說明每一法現起之近因，知因從何而集起，從因地上，就地解決。

我再多一個舉例來說明好了。好比一棟房子發現有異味，原來因為有隻死老鼠，幾天下來，結果腐尸散發出極噁心臭味，若要解決這臭味，您會怎麼處理？我

想，您會先找出原因吧？臭是果，果必有因，因是一隻發臭的死老鼠。反之，如果只知其理：這是無常、是苦、是無我，沒去找出關鍵問題出在哪裡，連根拔除，光坐在那兒憑空想像——這臭味：是無常、是苦、是無我。請問：臭味會因您的「假想」因此而消失不見嗎？不會的。因未解決，臭味（果）猶存。「果」是從某一特定的「因」所生，但不是任何「因」都可以生長出某一特定的「果」，如一棵芒果樹是果，它是從芒果的「因」而來，果從因生。

同理，非任何的「因」都發出這股難聞的果（死老鼠臭味），臭味既然是果，它就有特定的因——如死老鼠。因此，我

們就得先找出正因把它處理掉，如果再予香料、香水類薰之，臭味很快就沒了。

### 見清淨與度疑清淨的成就

當禪修者確定了名色，捨棄有情、補特伽羅等「**世間想**」（loka-samañña），超越對有情的痴迷，置心於沒有痴迷之境，確定「只是名色，沒有有情及補特伽羅」，這時候沒有你也沒有我。

譬如諸多零件的結集而成，我們說它為「**車**」；因有了諸蘊的集成，故假名之為「**人**」、「**有情**」或「**補特伽羅**」等，這都是一些名言上的假施設。依第一義說，沒有你、沒有我，沒有人，沒有有情，沒有補特伽羅，只見如蘆葦相束互依

的五蘊（名色）而已。這是見清淨成就，因此說，見清淨者具足「**如實見**」（yathā-bhūta-dassana）。

度疑清淨又如何呢？度疑清淨者，則能夠掌握名色之因緣，如實了知是什麼因，導致了什麼果，不會落入斷常、一異等見，即所謂「**此有故彼有**」等，斷除三世疑惑，這是「**遍知智**」（ñāta-pariññā），也是「**法住智**」、「**如實智**」、「**正見**」者。

有了遍知智，接著才開始從名色觀察中學習提起無常、苦及無我三（共）相觀訓練生滅隨觀智。如果今生能夠修習成就生滅隨觀智，接踵而至的壞隨觀智乃至行捨智，也就可以學習了。

有些過去世資糧（波羅蜜）佳者，今世即能證得道、果智成就。另外，還有一類禪修者，因過去世曾發願生生世世為佛弟子或行菩薩道者，今世證得行捨智後，是不取證道果的。修至行捨智，是南傳赤銅鑠部佛教的說法，北傳說一切有部是說「住頂不墮」。

## 五、自勉與共勉

七天禪七，終於要結束了。時間不算充裕，有關《清淨道論》的止觀內容，我也只能就所學知的止觀概念，做一點粗略講解而已。有興趣者或可依此按圖索驥，找到一個適合自己學習的方法。

修習止觀，須日積月累的數數修習變成習慣，如此才是最有效的辦法。末世眾生，要跟隨有經驗的理想善知識談何容易？不是自己住不下去，就是有其他因緣讓自己不能久留。現在，既然身在佛學院裡，這是重法義（聞思）的好環境，也是肥沃的「**慧地**」。趁這幾年，好好把佛法或止觀理論讀得爛熟，以後有機會全心投入於止觀操作時，即可避免許多不必要的冤枉路。

最後，我想以個人學習心得——「**參學五觀**」，與大家共勉：

一、**親近善知識，留意老師專長及其經驗傳承，掌握此一要領，必定受用無窮。**

二、滿招損，謙受益。既來參學，理應先放下主見，全心投入學習老師所授的方法。除非指導老師許可之前所學的，則另當別論。

三、有了好老師，學了新方法，有了更豐富的學習心得時，也不應隨意貶抑、毀謗自己以前的老師及其方法。此是學時，非「現」時。井蛙之見，所見不過圓蓋，不知謂不知，切莫擴大自己不知的範圍，而且學習除了是與非，對與錯之外，也不妨學習一些「保留」的心態，這是為了避免自己徒增參學的障礙，造諸口業，廣結惡緣。

四、保持客觀，儘量避免「唯一化」。學習要專，切忌在唯，莫將自己崇

拜的老師和方法推向「唯一化」。否則，這條路極有可能愈走愈窄，愈走愈辛苦，流於感情，反使自己喪失諸多修學之良機。

五、參學生涯中，不妨多給自己留一些美好的回憶！凡事要有始有終，正似一篇文章，總不能老是些逗號、頓號，沒有句號，就草率了結掉。雷聲大，雨聲小，有頭沒尾，這都是參學時應避免的壞習慣。

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【案】此文經過開印阿闍黎調整順序、刪繁就簡、謄改和補充，特此致謝。



# **Concentration of the Mindfulness of Breathing (ānāpānassatisamādhī)**

Summary manual based on teachings given by  
Venerable Bhikkhu Kaiyin at a seven-day retreat,  
Fuyan Buddhist Institute, Hsinchu City, Taiwan,  
November 3–10, 2001.

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A Gift --- Not for Sale

## I. Introduction

It is understood that Buddhism has gradually spread in Western countries such as Western Europe and North America, with *Theravāda*, Northern, and Tibetan traditions all present. However, in genuinely attracting Westerners to learn Buddhism, the Chinese-speaking Buddhist tradition still falls far behind the *Theravāda* and Tibetan traditions. There are many reasons for this, but I believe the main ones are language barriers and the lack of qualified teachers.

Chinese Buddhism has developed over one or two thousand years. Many fine traditions, after suffering repeated devastation during the ten years of the Cultural Revolution, have had their continuity severely weakened. Fortunately, the monastic community has survived to the present.

In recent decades, Chinese-speaking Buddhist

communities have shown great enthusiasm in spreading the *Dhamma* and studying the teachings, achieving quite remarkable results. However, when it comes to the practice of *samatha* (serenity) and *vipassanā* (insight) meditation, there is still much room for improvement. Some motivated individuals have gone to Theravada Buddhist countries like Myanmar, Thailand, and Sri Lanka to learn meditation, while others have gone to India, Tibet, and Qinghai. We understand that reconnecting with the experiential aspects of Buddhist *samatha* and *vipassanā* is much more difficult than the revival of theoretical knowledge. Precisely because of this, I often hear calls for the revitalization of the meditation tradition.

Generally speaking, there are two types of responses to such calls:

1. Some go abroad to study and practice in *Ther-*

*avāda* or Tibetan Buddhist communities; naturally, what they learn is no longer limited to the Chinese Buddhist tradition.

2. Others devote themselves wholeheartedly to the existing Chinese Buddhist tradition, delving deeply into a single path of practice.

Which type do you belong to?

The 21<sup>st</sup> century marks the emergence of Buddhism in a global village. I believe it's important for us to have at least a basic understanding of world Buddhism—to know both ourselves and others, to appreciate and learn from others' strengths, to complement our own shortcomings, and to recognize and avoid repeating the mistakes of those who came before us.

In short, open exchange brings far more benefits than drawbacks, both for Buddhism as a whole

and for individual practitioners.

## II. Experience of *Samatha* and *Vipassanā*

Those who have gone forth must have the resolve to transform their knowledge of the *Dhamma* into direct personal experience, and to work out a path on which they can live and find their footing—for themselves, for the Buddhist community, and for all beings. Otherwise, “they are neither monastics nor laypeople, and cannot truly be called either.”<sup>i</sup>

Some say that studying Buddhist doctrine is the training of wisdom. In reality, wisdom must be grounded in virtue and concentration. If one has only a little wisdom born of hearing, or merely engages in textual research, comparison, compilation, or the exploration of a particular idea, can

that really be called “the training of higher wisdom”? I always feel there is still quite a gap.

Many great masters of Indian Buddhism devoted their entire lives to writing and expounding the *Dhamma*. Some may not have produced a large body of work, but the depth and richness of their insight are unmistakable—the lived experience behind their words can be felt by the reader. Today, methods of Buddhist studies have advanced: texts are easy to obtain, computer searches are convenient, and with a bit of personal talent and specialization, one can publish prolifically. Yet when we read much of this work, it often seems to lack the *Dhamma* flavor of personal experience. Don’t you feel the same?

In the *Āgama* scriptures, the Buddha advises those who have gone forth to expect themselves to be “dwellers in the Dhamma” (*dhammavihārī*), with

inner tranquility, dwelling in *samatha* and *vipassanā*, rather than merely speaking without practice. There are many ways to revitalize Chinese Buddhism, and I believe that the practice of *samatha* and *vipassanā* meditation should be an important aspect.

### **III. Introduction of Mindfulness of Breathing**

We have chosen the practice of mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasati*) because it is a meditation that integrates both *samatha* and *vipassanā* (the initial stages being *samatha* and the later stages being *vipassanā*).

We begin by adjusting the body, following the **Seven-point Sitting Posture**, which refers to seven aspects of proper sitting during meditation. In the *Āgama*, when the Blessed One described

the method of practicing mindfulness of breathing, he briefly instructed: “Sit cross-legged, keep the body upright, and establish mindfulness in front.” Sitting cross-legged and properly aligning the body helps to collect the mind. When there is physical pain in any part of the body, it can easily disturb concentration. Thus, the *Visuddhimagga* (The Path of Purification) states: “When these (pains) do not arise, the mind becomes concentrated, does not lose its meditation subject, and develops toward completion.” Mindfulness of breathing has a relatively subtle meditation object. When bodily pain (sensations) is more intense than the meditation object, it will affect concentration.

In the first two or three days of a seven-day meditation retreat, it is common for practitioners to experience leg or back pain. If your legs hurt, you

can adjust your posture or practice **standing meditation** instead. For standing meditation, place your feet shoulder-width apart; if maintaining balance is difficult, you may keep your eyes slightly open. While standing, maintain your attention on the breath at the tip of the nose, using the same method as in sitting meditation.

We first gather the scattered mind, drawing it inward from the outside, moving from the coarse to the subtle, from activity to stillness—paying careful attention to our movements and gradually adjusting them. Upon coming out of meditation, the process is reversed: from stillness to activity, from subtle to coarse, and from the inner state outward.

The seven points refer to seven supporting postures of the body:

1. Sit cross-legged (leg and foot support, *see Table 1*),

2. Straighten the waist and slightly tuck in the chest (spinal support),
3. Place both hands flat (elbow support),
4. Relax both shoulders (shoulder blade support),
5. Tuck in the chin (head and neck support),
6. Rest the tongue tip against the upper palate (tongue and palate support),
7. Lower the eyelids (eye support).

Table 1 Seated meditation postures



a. Full lotus



b. Half lotus



c. Simple cross-legged posture

After adjusting your posture according to the seven steps mentioned above, then slowly sway the body from side to side, and forward and backward, to find a central position that is neither leaning to the left nor to the right, neither tilting backward nor leaning forward.

When taking your seat, begin with larger movements and gradually reduce them until you settle into place. Once positioned, the body should remain still. Then, gradually relax each part of the body from head to toe, until every part reaches a natural, relaxed, and comfortable state. A good sitting posture supports the quality of meditation, allowing one to focus on the in-and-out breath comfortably and for an extended period. With the body properly settled, the next step is to master the method itself.

### **A. Taking hold of the meditation object**

“Grasping” (*pariggahita*, meaning possessed or acquired) the meditation object happens through nothing other than seeing, hearing, or touching. Some meditation subjects take the object through seeing, others through hearing; for example, the practice of loving-kindness meditation involves both seeing and hearing, whereas mindfulness of breathing takes the object through touch.

As stated in the suttas, after “Sit cross-legged, keep the body upright,” the next step is to “establish mindfulness in front” (*parimukhaṃ satim upaṭṭhapetvā*). What does it mean to establish mindfulness in front? The *Paṭisambhidāmagga* (The Path of Discrimination), in the “Great Chapter 3: Discourse on In- and Out-Breathing,” explains: “Establishing means encompassing; in front means the starting point; mindfulness means

attending.” Mindfulness has the function of attending, of preventing drifting and forgetting, like a servant attending to their master, never leaving their side. The *Visuddhimagga*, explains this in a similar way, saying: “Establish mindfulness in front of the meditation subject” or “encompass, initiate, and attend.” Therefore, for anyone who is practicing diligently, it is essential to set aside external distractions, keeping the mind fully alert and clearly aware, staying focused without letting it wander.

“Sign, out-breath, in-breath, Are not the objects of a single consciousness, And yet for one who knows these three things, [Successful] development [of concentration of mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānassatisamādhi*)] is obtained.”

In practicing this meditation subject, one should not use only the in-breath or the out-breath as the object, nor limit attention merely to the point (the

area) of contact at the tip of the nose. If one attends only to the in-and-out breath while ignoring the sign—the area of contact—there is no fixed object for the mind to settle on; the mind will easily become scattered and fail to stay unified. If, on the other hand, one remains only with the area of contact without being aware of the in-and-out breathing, then it is no longer the practice of mindfulness of breathing.

If you drop the breath and focus only on the tactile sensation, it can stir up the four elements in the body. If you do not stay with the long breath but only one point (or an area), then any single part of the body can become the object of attention. When these three are separated, it is “not the [unified] object of a single consciousness.” The correct practice is to work with both the in-breath or out-breath and the point of contact simultaneously.

Below the tip of the nose, on the philtrum above

the upper lip, is the distinct place of contact where the breath goes in and out. Some people perceive it as a single point, while for others it is an area, the size of which varies from person to person. The key is that the meditator must place (*āropeti*—to put on or to place upon) the mind on a fixed object. This is the function of the mental factor, “*vitakka*” (initial application of mind or thought).

Through deep inhalation and exhalation, we pay attention to the area around the tip of the nose and the upper lip where the air passes—this may be a single point or an area of contact. This is the object of meditation in the practice of mindfulness of breathing.

Every meditation subject has its own meditation object; different subjects have different objects. The method of mindfulness of breathing has its

own specific object, and this point must be emphasized and firmly remembered. Mindfulness of breathing directs the mind through contact (the bodily door). When the sign (*nimitta*) is fully developed, the practice naturally shifts to gathering the mind through the “sign” (by way of the mind door).

When the mind is focused on the object without wavering, this is right mindfulness; when one clearly perceives the in-and-out movement of the breath at the point of contact, this is clear comprehension.

In the *Samyutta Nikāya* (The Connected Discourses of the Buddha), the Blessed One says: “Monks, I do not consider one who lacks mindfulness or clear comprehension to be a practitioner of mindfulness of breathing”. “Mindfulness” (*sati*) means deep attention and deep recollection. “Clear comprehension” (*sampajañña*) belongs to

the mental factor of wisdom (*paññā*); it possesses the ability to discern and judge.

Because mindfulness and wisdom allow the mind to remain unified and undistracted while knowing the in-breath and out-breath, one is called a “mindful practitioner” (*satokārī*). The commentator *Ācariya Dhammapāla* says in *Paramatthamañjūsa* (The Jewel Casket of Ultimate Meaning), a sub-commentary on the *Visuddhimagga*: “A ‘mindful practitioner’ is one who, having become mindful, one carries out what should be done with mindfulness, or who has the habit of acting mindfully.” (*satokārīti sato eva hutvā, satiyā eva vā kātabbassa kattā, karaṇasīlo vā*) °

Through continuous attention and practice of mindfulness of breathing, the meditation object becomes increasingly subtle—sometimes to the

point where the area of contact is barely perceptible. At this stage, the meditator must possess strong and powerful mindfulness and wisdom.

### **B. The Excellence of Mindfulness of Breathing as a Meditation Subject**

According to the *Visuddhimagga*, there are forty types of meditation subjects, most of which are purely for developing *samatha*. However, there are two exceptions—meditation subjects that cultivate both *samatha* and *vipassanā*: mindfulness of breathing and the contemplation of the four elements (*catudhātu vavatthāna*). Since the contemplation of the four elements is not the primary method for this seven-day meditation retreat, it will not be discussed here. As for the excellence, methods, and stages of practicing mindfulness of breathing, I will now offer some explanation.

What is distinctive about mindfulness of breathing as a meditation subject? Many could be mentioned, but they can be summarized in two main points:

**1.Exceptional tranquility.** The tranquility of mindfulness of breathing is superior because both its meditation object and the attainment of the practice are tranquil. By contrast, objects of the meditation on foulness (*asubha*) are not tranquil (being coarse, such as a heap of worms) , and they are not considered excellent (being repulsive). Only upon attaining *jhāna* (meditative absorption) does its object (sign) be described as tranquil and excellent. Furthermore, among the forty meditation subjects, although both mindfulness of breathing and the contemplation of the four elements are practices that cultivate both *samatha* and *vipassanā*, the concentration developed through mindfulness of breathing is stronger.

Mindfulness of breathing can be developed up to the fourth *jhāna*, whereas the contemplation of the four elements achieves only access concentration (*upacāra samādhi*), or momentary concentration (*khaṇika samādhi*).

**2. Can be practiced anytime.** Unlike other meditation subjects, which often require extensive preparation—for example, the meditation on foulness requires finding a corpse for contemplation, or the earth *kaṣiṇa* in the Ten *Kaṣiṇa*, which requires the making of a special *maṇḍala*—mindfulness of breathing requires nothing extra. As long as a person is alive, with nostrils, an upper lip, and the ability to breathe, one can take it as the meditation object anywhere, anytime. With other meditation subjects, you might say you forget to bring tools for making *maṇḍalas* etc., but surely you won't forget your nostrils or your breath when leaving the house. This is its second distinctive

excellence.

### C. Seclusion and Solitude

This explains the suitable places for bhikkhus to practice the concentration of mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasati samādhi*): “[Here a monk, having] gone to the forest, or to the root of a tree, or to an empty (solitary) place<sup>ii</sup>.” It is to be staying away from the disturbances of the five sense pleasures, such as sights and sounds. Ordinary wordlings find it difficult not to be swayed by their habitual desires for sense pleasures, as beings have long been wandering in *saṃsāra*, becoming deeply conditioned to indulging the five sense faculties. This tendency runs directly counter to the requirement of gathering thoughts into unified concentration.

For a meditator to achieve success in *samatha* (serenity), one must first abandon the five sensual

pleasures, recognize their dangers, and temporarily distance oneself from them. Only when the mind is no longer pulled by sensual attractions can it settle and abide on a single meditation object. Therefore, the Blessed One instructed the bhikkhus to seek out environments suitable for meditation practice—namely, the forest (*arañña*), the foot of a tree, or an empty, quiet place.

Some may think it inappropriate for a *Mahāyāna* practitioner to also go to a “secluded place”. Wouldn’t that make a bodhisattva practitioner just like a *sāvaka* (hearer) disciple, who “let go of both one’s own circle and others, living alone in seclusion”, leaving people behind to seek only personal liberation?

The great master Zhiyi of the Sui dynasty addressed this very question in his *Dhyānapāramitā* (Explanation of the Perfection of Meditation), stated thus: “The bodhisattva’s way is precisely to

liberate living beings. Why, then, would one dwell alone in a remote mountain, seemingly forsaking others to cultivate one's own good?

The answer is: though the bodhisattva's **body** withdraws, the **mind** does not abandon beings. It is like a person who, when ill, temporarily ceases work to take medicine and rest. Once recovered, that person resumes their work as before.”

This passage is likely drawn from the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Śāstra* (Treatise on the Perfection of Wisdom), in the section on *Dhyānapāramitā*. A bodhisattva, though physically in solitude and temporarily apart from beings, always remains compassionate and does not forsake them. The purpose of solitude is to strengthen oneself—just like taking medicine. During treatment, one must momentarily set aside household affairs, but once strength is restored, one continues the work of benefiting others. It is

permissible.

Actually, restraining the five sense faculties, abstaining from anger, abandoning arrogance, avoiding deceit and flattery, having few desires and being content, distancing oneself from disturbance and bustle, diligently maintaining mindfulness, and skillfully developing meditative concentration—so that “when the mind is in concentration, it can discern the arising and passing away of phenomena in the world.”

***Samatha*** and ***vipassanā*** are practices common to all three vehicles; they are essential both on the *sāvaka* path and the *bodhisattva* path.

Some people like to boast, saying things like “The crossroads are a good place for Chan meditation.” Perhaps for seasoned practitioners who have put in deep effort, that may indeed be so—such a per-

son could walk through a field of a hundred flowers and not have a single petal cling to him. But we should always reflect on our own virtue and conduct, and ask ourselves honestly: Can I really do that? If not, it is better to humbly lay a solid foundation and not keep letting the mind run wild in idle talk, deceit, and false speech!

#### **IV. The Steps of Practicing Mindfulness of Breathing**

Next, I will explain how to practice mindfulness of breathing as a meditation subject.

It can be proven from the suttas that the concentration of mindfulness of breathing is a meditation practice that includes both *samatha* and *vipassanā*. As stated in the *Visuddhimagga*: “Here a monk” —the word “here” (*idaṃ*) indicates that the teaching of developing the concentration of

mindfulness of breathing through this meditation subject is something unknown and unseen among non-Buddhist traditions. Therefore, the Blessed One said: “Bhikkhus, only here is there an ascetic, here a second ascetic, here a third ascetic, here a fourth ascetic; other dispensations are devoid of ascetics.”<sup>iii</sup>

The commentator, *Vasubandhu*, in his *Abhidharma-kośa* also states: Mindfulness of breathing “can be cultivated only by beings within the true Dhamma; outsiders (non-Buddhists) do not have this, for without a teacher, they are incapable of discovering the subtle dhamma themselves.”

This serves as evidence that mindfulness of breathing is a **meditation method combining both *samatha* and *vipassanā*** and is **not shared with external traditions.**

The *Visuddhimagga* organizes the practice of

mindfulness of breathing into sixteen stages, according to the four foundations of mindfulness.

In this retreat, we will focus on the practice methods of counting [the breath], following [the breath], contact, fixing [the mind], observing, turning away and purification.

The practice of counting the breath as an entryway into mindfulness of breathing is also found in other treatises, such as the *Abhidharmakośa* and Tiantai's *Six Wonderful Gates*. The difference between the *Six Wonderful Gates* and the *Visud-dhimagga* lies in the addition of “contact” between “following” and “fixing”.

According to the classification in the *Visud-dhimagga*, the stages from “counting” to “fixing” belongs to *samatha*; “fixing” represents the attainment of meditative absorption. “Observing” belongs to *vipassanā*; “cessation” corresponds to

the knowledge of the path, and “purification” to the knowledge of fruition. The *Sarvāstivāda* masters have another system of classification, which I will not elaborate on here.

## **A. The Practice of *Samatha***

### **Counting**

**First, “Counting” (*gaṇeti*, to count).** According to the *nikāya* (or *āgama*), the original method of mindfulness of breathing did not include counting the breaths; this practice likely appeared later in the period of commentaries and sub-commentaries. The purpose of counting is to help the mind stay focused on its meditation object. The number used for counting should not be fewer than five, nor more than ten, and the count should be continuous and unbroken.

I recall that many years ago, when I visited the

Mandalay Mogok Monastery in Northern Myanmar, the abbot told me that the *Sayadaw Ledi* once instructed practitioners of mindfulness of breathing to count from one to seven — the number seven symbolizing the seven factors of enlightenment. In present-day Southern Myanmar, meditators at the Pa-Auk Forest Monastery usually count to eight, representing the Noble Eightfold Path.

So how should we count? According to the commentarial teachings, any number between five and ten is fine. If you choose eight, then use eight consistently from beginning to end, no matter how many rounds you go through. Don't switch between eight, then six, and so on. Constantly changing the number makes it harder to develop good concentration.

When practicing mindfulness of breathing, the breath—both inhalation and exhalation—should

be natural. Do not deliberately control or manipulate the breath to make it faster or slower, coarser or subtler. The more natural it is, the better. However, if the mind becomes scattered or restless, you may try a faster style of counting — for example, counting quickly “one, two, three, four, five...” for the duration of a single in-breath or out-breath, without worrying about the total number. Or you may breathe in and out once, then count “one”; breathe in and out again, then count “two”, using a quicker way of counting. These expedient methods are only for temporary use; if you rely on them too long, they can become a habit and be unhelpful. Some people, unable to clearly feel the touch of the breath, start breathing forcefully. Our concern is that if they become accustomed to needing a strong and pronounced object to sustain concentration, they may no longer be able to remain focused once the breath naturally settles.

Another question often asked is: How long should one continue counting the breaths?

I find the answer in the *Visuddhimagga* very appropriate. It says: “Count until you can maintain mindfulness on the object of the in-breath and out-breath without counting.” Once mindfulness of the object is firmly established through counting, you can then proceed to the next stage—“following” (*anupassanā*). The purpose of counting is simply to cut off the mind’s excessive outward seeking (distracting thoughts) - its *vitakka*. As the *Abhidharmakośa* also states: “Count from one to ten, neither fewer nor more, so that the mind neither becomes too concentrated on nor too dispersed from the object.” Thus, counting the breaths is only a skillful means to steady the mind and establish it firmly upon its meditation object. If someone can establish mindfulness of the object right from the beginning, is counting still necessary? Not necessarily—some people can directly

work with the in- and out-breath without counting, and that's perfectly fine.

During the counting process, stray thoughts may sometimes slip in. If a number is lost or interrupted by distraction, you should start over again and again until the method becomes familiar and the mind can remain settled.

Although the method of counting the breath involves keeping track of the in-breath and out-breath by numbers, the practitioner must understand that the point is “clearly comprehending the in-breaths and out-breaths.” It is not merely about remembering the numbers.”

Keeping the mind steadily placed on the meditation object without drifting is *right mindfulness*, while clearly knowing and discerning the entire process of breathing—in, out, long, or short—is clear comprehension (*sampajañña*).

## Following

**Second, “following” (*anubandhanā* – connection, following, pursuing).** Having set aside counting, one then attends to the in- and out-breath by noting the contact (*phusanā*) within the range of in- and out-breathing —without following the breath as it goes in or out, and certainly without tracing it from the nostrils down to the heart or the navel.

This practice of following corresponds to the three phases of training mentioned in the suttas: knowing the in- and out-breath, the long and short, and the whole [breath] body. Because these three phases are closely related to contact, they will be explained together in the following section.

## Contact

**Third, contact (*phusanā*).** According to the

*Visuddhimagga*, this refers to “the place that is touched” (*phutṭha-phutṭhāna*, the place already touched), which is the past participle of “to touch” (*phusati*). The mindfulness of breathing takes its meditation object through contact. Whether one is counting or following the breath, neither is apart from contact. Without contact, how could we know whether it is an in-breath or an out-breath? Thus, during the stage of counting, the meditator continues counting at the point where the in- and out-breath is felt. The same applies to the later stages of following and fixing.

The size of the area where the breath makes contact varies from person to person — some feel it as a small point, while others sense a broader range. In any case, the meditator should neither try to change it nor play around with it. Simply keep the mind closely connected to the meditation object, being aware of the in- and out-breath.

When one can stay focused on the breathing continuously for about thirty minutes without interruption and feels that the mind has become steady, one may then proceed to practice long and short breaths. Here, “long” and “short” refer to the duration the breath takes to pass through the contact area. One should not compare whether the previous or the next breath is longer or shorter—once such comparisons arise, the mind can easily become distracted. Thus, the *Visuddhimagga* says: “One should know that the length of the breath depends on time.” Simply focus on the duration of the current breath as it passes through [the place touched], and that is sufficient.

Next is the Entire Body of the Breath. Here, the “body” (*kāya*) does not refer to the physical body in general, but to the “body of the in-breath and out-breath”. “Body” here carries the meaning of “accumulation” or “aggregate”. When we speak

of “the entire body of breath”, it means being clearly aware of the entire process of the breath as it moves through the area of contact, without missing any part of it.

The meditator mentally notes the in-breath or the out-breath, but does not repeat words rhythmically such as “in, in, in” or “out, out, out,” nor mentally label the breath as “beginning, middle, or end.” (“Beginning, middle, and end” refer to the three stages of each breath—from its start to its completion.)

The meditator simply remains aware of the in- and out-breath within the area of contact, with mindfulness and clear comprehension present in every detail—keeping the mind firmly on its object (fixing the mind on a single place) and knowing clearly what is happening in the present moment.

The characteristic of **right mindfulness** is to attend to the meditation object with clear awareness in every moment, without losing it—keeping the mind steady, like a heavy stone settled at the bottom of the water, not floating like a gourd. This *apilāpana* (non-floating) is the function mindfulness performs. If one’s concentration and clear comprehension are well refined and continuous, deluded thoughts will have no chance to slip in.

### **Fixing**

**Fourth, “abiding (fixing)”** (*thapanā*, **setting in place, keeping**). A brief clarification is needed here regarding the difference between “abiding” (*thapanā*) and “tranquilizing” (*passambhayaṃ*).

The suttas speak of “stilling the bodily formation” or “tranquilizing the bodily formation” (*passambhayaṃ kāya-saṅkharaṃ*). The commentaries clarify that the entire process—from the labored

breathing and coarse mind before training, up to the cessation [of breathing] and subtle mind upon achieving the fourth *jhāna*—can be viewed as tranquilizing (*passambhayaṃ*). The development is a gradual, step-by-step process, becoming progressively finer the further one advances.

However, “absorption” (*appaṇā*, attaining concentration) is different. It generally refers to the attainment of absorption concentration, such as the first *jhāna*, second *jhāna*, and even the fourth *jhāna*. Its meaning is not as broad as “tranquilizing” (the entire process of calming from coarse to subtle states of mind). This distinction is something that requires special attention.

This effect of this tranquilization (stilling) is the result of the meditator taking hold of the meditation subject. For example, before practicing mindfulness of breathing, the mind is coarse. After

practicing, the bodily formation becomes increasingly subtle, almost imperceptible, sometimes even difficult to discern. Just as when the body and mind are agitated, the in-and-out breaths are coarse; as agitation subsides, it gradually becomes calm and refined.

It is worth noting that the *Visuddhimagga* also classifies the stilling of bodily formations into two types: the stilling of bodily formations in ***samatha*** (serenity), and the stilling of bodily formations in ***vipassanā*** (insight). Both share a common point—namely, the later stages are increasingly subtle, be it ***samatha*** or ***vipassanā***. However, the attainment from each differs.

According to the *Mahāvihāra* tradition, the teachers of *Saṃyutta Nikāya*, *Dīgha Nikāya* and *Majjhima Nikāya* held different views. The *Saṃyutta* and *Dīgha* teachers maintain that the stilling of bodily formations in ***samatha*** practice

is: before practicing mindfulness of breathing as a meditation subject, the bodily formations are coarse; when one attains access concentration to the first *jhāna*, the bodily formations become subtle. When the absorption of the first *jhāna* is attained, the bodily formations are subtler than those in the access concentration to the first *jhāna*. In the second-*jhāna* absorption, it is even finer than first *jhāna* and the access concentrations to the second *jhāna*, and so on. By the time the absorption concentration of the fourth *jhāna* is attained, the bodily activity is subtlest, even the in-and-out breath do not arise. As stated in the *Abhidharma Mahāvibhāṣā Śāstra*: “To still bodily formations means that the breath-winds are made gradually more and more subtle, until they no longer arise.”

When “[the object is] not yet grasped” (*apariggahitakāle*—when it has not yet been

taken up or possessed), the bodily formation is coarse; once it has been grasped, the bodily formation becomes calmed (subtle). From the beginning to the end, it gradually becomes subtler.

By focusing attention on the entire process of the breath, the meditator's mind gradually unites with the object. Originally, the entry point for mindfulness of breathing is to take the bodily "contact" as the object. Once concentration has been developed through repeated practice, the object shifts from the coarser bodily "contact" to a subtler mental object through the mind-door—namely the "sign" (*nimitta*, the meditation sign).

The arising of the sign occurs apart from the five sense consciousnesses; it manifests only at the mind-door when the five senses are no longer functioning. If the meditator still sees, hears, smells, tastes, or physically contacts anything—meaning the five sense consciousnesses are still

active—then they have already departed from mind-door concentration and are no longer in absorption. According to the *Abhidhamma* explanations of the *Theravāda* tradition, this is described as the *jhāna* consciousness and its associated mental factors, which arise solely in the mind-door as impulsion consciousness (*javana citta*). The *Abhidharmakośa* has always maintained that “There are no five sense consciousnesses operating during absorption”. Therefore, absorption occurs exclusively in the mind-door, with no operation of the five sense doors.

Some meditators feel that the sign wavers or suddenly shifts its position. For some, the sign appears at the philtrum (the area between the nose and upper lip), for others at the chin, or it may seem as if the entire body is breathing. The *Abhidharma Mahāvibhāṣā Śāstra* describes this type

of meditative experience, stating: “When mindfulness of the breath is not yet fully developed, one observes the in-and-out breath as entering and exiting through the nose. Once mindfulness of the breath is fully developed, one perceives the pores of the body, as if like the holes in a lotus root, with the breath circulating and moving in and out through them.” This describes this kind of reactions in meditative absorption.

After emerging from absorption, each person’s depiction and description of the sign may differ. Some say it resembles a full moon, a garland of flowers, smoke, or clouds etc. These are all born from perception, with perception as their cause and root. Various differing perceptions give rise to various differing signs. I remember that Master Yongming Yanshou of China once said in the *Zongjing Lu* (Record of the Source Mirror, 《宗

鏡錄》 in Chinese) that “In terms of the contemplative method, the mind views objects as though they were physically present. Although these are provisionally established as illusory forms, they are all manifestations generated by the mind. This is exemplified by the sixteen methods of contemplation established in the *Amitāyus Contemplation Sūtra* (《觀經》 in Chinese), such as the visualization of the sun and the visualization of water.” In terms of the actual contemplative practice, these are conceptual constructions created by perception—“they are all manifestations generated by the mind.” Therefore, the names, images, and concepts are not that important. What matters is that they serve as a meditation object for the meditator’s mind to rest upon.

Mindfulness of breathing begins with contact as its entry point. Through further practice, it transforms into the sign within the mind-door. During

this process of transition, some meditators may notice that the breath or the sign appears and disappears intermittently, sometimes seeming present, sometimes absent. If you find yourself unable to perceive the breath or the contact area, do not deliberately make the breath coarse, and do not abandon the contact area to search for another meditation object. In fact, the sign is not separate from the breath or the area of contact. If the practice is correct, being mindful of the breath is simultaneously being mindful of the sign; being mindful of the sign is also being mindful of the breath. When the breath and the sign become unified, it can be sustained for half an hour, one or two hours, or even longer. When the sign becomes stable, the meditator can then direct their attention entirely to the sign.

As the sign arises, that very moment calls for even greater cultivation of one's mindfulness and clear

comprehension. There are seven methods to protect the sign, just as one would carefully safeguard the womb of a mother bearing a Wheel-Turning Monarch.

The seven methods of protecting the sign are: being mindful and protective at all times in one's dwelling, one's sphere of activity, conversations, people [one associates with], food, climate, and the four modes of deportment, to make the sign increasingly firm and stable, until attaining absorption concentration (*appanā samādhi*). In ancient China, there were also examples of Chan patriarchs who, after awakening, lived in forests and by water to “nurture the sacred embryo.”

When *samatha* (serenity) is initially developed and achieved, there is what is called “immature concentration” (*taruṇo samādhi*, tender or young concentration). Similarly, when *vipassanā* (insight) is first developed and achieved, there is also

what is known as “immature insight” (*taruṇa vipassanā*, tender or young insight). Both stages represent a “young and immature experience” for the meditator, requiring special protection. Without this layer of careful guarding and sustaining, it may be unfavorable to the practitioner.

When the sign appears, do not pay attention to its color, or try to distinguish the characteristics of its four great elements. Simply settle the mind steadily on the sign itself.

The word “simply” is anything but simple in practice. A meditative life should ideally be as simple as possible, but unfortunately, most people cannot adapt to this kind of “simplicity” right away. Due to ingrained habits, they are unwilling to be alone, and driven by excessive desires, they tend to cling to external objects, whether inner or outer, past, present, or future. In short, when the perception aggregate flourish and one constantly changes the

object [of attention], this is exactly a sign of restlessness. How difficult it is to fix the mind on one place!

By stabilizing the mind with access concentration, one subdues the five hindrances, and the sign is accomplished. If one wishes the sign to be even more stable, the meditator can practice the ten skillful means of absorption and the five masteries. Mastery is also mentioned in the *Satyasiddhi Śāstra* (True Attainment Treatise), although there it is presented as only three masteries.

## **B. Practice of *Vipassanā***

Counting, following, contact, and fixing [the mind], belong to *samatha* (serenity), while observing, turning away, and purifying belong to *vipassanā* (insight) and its results.

The cultivation of *vipassanā* in the *Visud-dhimagga* is entirely explained through the five purifications which is the body of wisdom, namely, 1) purification of view, 2) purification by overcoming doubt, 3) purification by knowledge and vision of path and not path, 4) purification by knowledge and vision of the way, and 5) purification by knowledge and vision. The two purifications of morality and concentration, which precede the five purifications of the body of wisdom, are the roots of the body of wisdom.

The body of wisdom grows in dependence on the root of wisdom, and the root of wisdom must, in turn, depend on the soil of wisdom in order to grow, sprout, and eventually blossom and bear fruit. The soil of wisdom refers to the wisdom gained through hearing—the “thoroughly inquire and become well-acquainted” —regarding the aggregates, sense bases, elements, faculties, truths,

and dependent origination. In the practice of mindfulness of breathing, such thorough inquiry (*paripucchā*) means asking questions concerning the meditation subject of mindfulness of breathing. Therefore, it is one of the five sections for one practicing mindfulness of breathing, which are: undertaking, thorough inquiry, establishing, absorption, and characteristic. These are explained in detail in the *Visuddhimagga*.

Wisdom gained through hearing serves as the foundation for actual practice (morality, concentration, and wisdom). It is acquired through inquiry and by receiving guidance from a good teacher, allowing one to grasp the essential points of the meditation subjects one is about to practice. As the Chinese translation of the *Saman-tapāsādikā* [Buddhaghosa's commentary on the Vinaya Piṭaka ] says: “Just as the tracks of an elephant are easy to follow, preventing one from

straying from the right path, it is similar for attaining the path or attaining *jhāna*. Why so? For such a practitioner follows clear instructions.” The same analogy appears in the *Visuddhimagga* within the section on meditation subjects, where it is explained in greater detail. This “thoroughly inquire and become well-acquainted” is not limited to mindfulness of breathing as a meditation subject—it applies universally and can serve as a valuable reference.

## Observing

The previous section has explained “abiding” . We now come to “observing” (*sallakkhaṇā*). *Sallakkhaṇā* carries the meaning of discerning and penetrating. It belongs to *vipassanā* (*vi+passanā*). The prefix “*vi-*” signifies differentiation and analysis, while “*passanā*” means observing or seeing. In the transmitted version of *Aśvaghōṣa’s Mahāyāna śraddhotpada śāstra* (Awakening of

Faith in the *Mahāyāna*), it states: “That which is called observing refers to the discrimination of the arising and passing away of phenomena due to conditions, which accords with the meaning of *vipassanā*.” *The Treatise on the Meaning of Mahāyāna* also states:

“The foreign term is *vipassanā*, which is translated as ‘observation’ here; to investigate and discern phenomena is called ‘observation’.” So, generally speaking, *vipassanā* encompasses meanings such as discrimination, investigation, discernment, and observation.

In Buddhism, some advocate using concentration as the foundation for *vipassanā*, while others hold that *samatha* is not necessary, and one can practice *vipassanā* directly, such as a type of practitioner known as “dry insight meditators” (*sukkhavipassaka*), who lack the “moisture” of meditative

absorption. However, once such a meditator attains the path and fruition knowledge after the accomplishment of *vipassanā* (insight), [that realization] still involves the combination of ***samatha and vipassanā***, [with *samatha* attainment] equivalent to the first *jhāna*.

However, according to the records found in Indian Buddhist *Śrāvakayāna* and *Mahāyāna sūtras* and treatises, as well as in the writings and discourses of many great masters throughout history—such as Master Zhiyi of the Tiantai school and Master Tsongkhapa of Tibet etc.—it is generally held that one should first cultivate concentration, followed by *vipassanā*.

Now, our explanation follows the *Visuddhimagga* of the *Theravāda* Tradition. The first stage of cultivating *vipassanā*, “purification of view” (*ditṭhivissuddhi*) also requires concentration as its foundation, meaning that the contemplation of name-

and-form can only be done after emerging from attainment (*samāpatti*). The *Abhidharmakośa* says: “The sūtras say this pertains to the higher training of the mind, for the supreme purity of mind is the four absorptions (*dhyānas*). Why is it called absorptions? It is because through this ***samatha***, one is able to contemplate. To contemplate is to truly know, just as it is said that when the mind is in concentration, it can know things as they really are.”

*Kumārajīva*’s translation of the *Buddha’s Last Teaching Sūtra* likewise states:

“Because the mind is in concentration, it is able to comprehend the phenomena of arising and passing away in the world.” In fact, these teachings all come from scriptures. As the Blessed One said to the monks in the *Samyutta Nikāya* of the *Theravāda* tradition: “Bhikkhus! You should cultivate

concentration! Bhikkhus! A bhikkhu who has attained concentration knows things as they really are.” This quoted passage appears multiple times in the *Visuddhimagga*. That concentration is the foundation for *vipassanā* is taught in the scriptures and is later widely found in various commentaries.

### **Name-and-form and Dependent Origination**

The grasp of name-and-form and dependent origination plays a crucial role in the success or failure of practicing *vipassanā*.

In the *Compendium of Abhidhamma*, “Chapter 9: Compendium of Meditation Subjects for *Vipassanā*” provides a definition for “purification of view” and “purification by overcoming doubt.” It states: “Grasping name-and-form through their individual characteristics, functions, manifestation, and proximate causes is called purification of

view. Grasping the conditions of name-and-form is called purification by overcoming doubt.”

The *Visuddhimagga* states: “Seeing name-and-form accurately is Purification of View.” A practitioner of *vipassanā* must “see accurately” (*yāthāva-dassanaṃ*) the individual characteristics, functions (taste), manifestation, and proximate conditions of the mind, mental factors, the four great elements, and the derived matter.

In the *Abhidharmakośa*, it is said: “The individual intrinsic nature of body, feeling, mind, and phenomena are called individual characteristics. That all conditioned things are impermanent, all defiled things are suffering, and all phenomena are empty and non-self are called universal characteristics.”

The commentator *Dharmapāla*, in his commentary on the *Dīgha Nikāya* [*Sumaṅgalavilāsinī-*

*īkā*], states: “The characteristics of ultimate realities [*paramattha-dhamma*] are of two kinds: individual characteristics and universal characteristics. Understanding of individual characteristics is knowledge through direct experience, while understanding of universal characteristics is knowledge through inference.”

Understanding and seeing name-and-form and dependent origination as they really are is the essential foundation for the arising of the knowledge of arising and passing away. When a meditator can discern the characteristics, functions, manifestations, and proximate causes of material phenomena (*rūpa*) or mental phenomena (*nāma*) as they arise, this is seeing as it really is (purification of view). If one further understands the causal relationships of these phenomena, then this is knowledge as it really is (purification of overcoming doubt). Thus, it can be said: “Without knowing

the individual characteristics, it is difficult to understand the universal characteristics.” One cannot simply imagine and generalize that everything is impermanent, suffering, and non-self (universal characteristics). Any conceptual thinking or assumption may temporarily suppress defilements, but it cannot eventually eradicate them at their root.

It is like a doctor who does not know the source of a disease, nor does he diagnose it based on its (individual) characteristics to look for its cause, yet he assumes that all illnesses are empty and impermanent. A cold is impermanent, heart disease is impermanent, and AIDS is also impermanent. From the perspective of universal characteristics, this may seem correct, but the causes and symptoms of the diseases are after all different. The causes of diseases are different, so if one indiscriminately treats the universal characteristics as

the individual characteristics, and applies the same prescription with the same method for all diseases, will it work?

A well-trained good doctor should first diagnose based on the symptoms. Only after understanding the cause of the illness, he prescribes the appropriate remedy. The truth of the origin of suffering in the four noble truths, addresses and explains the proximate causes for the manifestation of each phenomenon, understanding from where the causes originate. It resolves the causes on the spot where they arise.

It's like noticing a bad odor in a house and later discovering that a dead rat is the cause. After a few days, the decaying carcass produces an unbearable stench. How would you deal with it? I imagine you would start by finding the cause, right? The smell is the effect; every effect has a cause—and the cause, in this case, is a rotting dead rat.

But if instead you only know the principle—‘this is impermanent, this is suffering, this is non-self’—and never look for the real problem or remove it at the root, and simply sit there imagining, ‘this smell is impermanent, is suffering, is non-self,’ let me ask you: will the odor vanish just because you “imagine” it away?” It will not. Since the cause has not been addressed, the odor (the effect) remains. An “effect” arises from a specific “cause”, but not every “cause” can produce a particular “effect”. For example, a mango is the fruit of a mango tree—it arises from the mango’s specific cause; the fruit comes from its cause.

Similarly, not just any cause can produce that foul odor (the smell of a dead rat). Since the odor is an effect, it must have a specific cause—the dead rat. Therefore, we must first identify the proper cause and deal with it. If we then use fragrances or perfumes to fumigate the space, the odor will quickly

disappear.

### **Accomplishment of Purification of View and Purification by Overcoming Doubt**

When a meditator has ascertained name-and-form and relinquished “worldly conceptions” (*loka-sa-maññaya*) such as sentient beings and persons, transcending the delusion regarding sentient beings, and placing the mind on a state free from delusion, he is certain that “there is only name-and-form, no sentient being or persons.” At that moment, there is neither you nor me.

Just as many parts come together to form what we call a “car,” the aggregation of the five aggregates gives rise to the conventional names “human being,” “sentient being,” or “person.” These are all nominal designations. According to the ultimate truth, there is neither you nor I, no human being, no sentient being, no person. One sees only the

five aggregates (*nāma-rūpa*), like bundled reeds leaning on each other. This is the accomplishment of the purification of view, and thus one who has attained purification of view possesses “seeing things as they really are” (*yathā-bhūta-dassana*).

And how about purification of overcoming doubt? One who has achieved purification by overcoming doubt is able to grasp the causal conditions of name-and-form, truly understanding what cause brings about what effect. One no longer falls into views of annihilation, eternalism, or views of oneness or other-ness, etc. This is what is meant by “when this exists, that exists,” and so on. One cuts off doubts concerning the three periods of time. This is “full knowledge of the known” (*ñāta-pariññā*), also known as “the knowledge of the stability of Dhamma,” “knowledge of things as they really are,” and “right view.”

Once one has attained the knowledge of full understanding, one then begins to practice the insight knowledge of arising and passing away (*udayabbayānupassanā-ñāṇa*) through observing impermanence, suffering, and non-self, the three common characteristics, in his observation of name-and-form. If this knowledge of arising and passing away is cultivated and accomplished in this life, the subsequent insight knowledges, such as the knowledge of dissolution (*bhaṅgānupassanā-ñāṇa*) up to the knowledge of equanimity regarding formations (*saṅkhārupekkhā-ñāṇa*) can also be learned.

Those with good past-life accumulations [of merit] (*pāramīs*) can achieve path and fruition knowledge (*magga-phala-ñāṇa*) in this very life. Alternatively, there are also meditators who, having in past lives made the vow to be the Buddha's disciples for countless lifetimes, or to follow the

*bodhisattva* path, do not attain the path and fruition after achieving the knowledge of equanimity regarding formations (*saṅkhārupekkhā-ñāṇa*). Cultivating to the knowledge of equanimity regarding formations (*saṅkhārupekkhā-ñāṇa*) is the description of the *Tambapaṇṇi* School in the *Theravāda* tradition, while the *Sarvāstivāda* School of the northern tradition refers to this state as “dwelling at the peak without falling.”

## V. Words of Encouragement

The seven-day meditation retreat is finally drawing to a close. Time has been short, so I can only give a general and brief explanation, based on what I have learned, on the concepts of *samatha* and *vipassanā* from the *Visuddhimagga*. Those who are interested can use this as a starting point to explore and discover a method that works best for them.

Practicing *samatha* and *vipassanā* requires continuous and repeated practice over time until it becomes a habit. This is the most effective approach. It is not easy for people of the Later Period of the *Dharma* to follow an experienced and ideal teacher—either one cannot bear to live there anymore or there are other conditions that prevent one from staying for long. Now, since you are in a Buddhist institute, this is a good environment for studying the *Dharma* (for listening and reflecting), a fertile “field of wisdom.” Make the most of these years to thoroughly study the teaching of the Buddha or the theory of *samatha* and *vipassanā*. Later, when you have the opportunity to fully devote yourself to the practice of *samatha* and *vipassanā*, you will be able to avoid many unnecessary detours.

Finally, I would like to share my personal reflections on learning—“Five Contemplations for the

Journey of Learning ”— as encouragement for everyone:

1. Associate with good teachers, pay attention to their expertise and the transmission of their experience. Mastering this principle will be endlessly beneficial.

2. Pride invites loss, while humility brings gain. When attending a teacher’s instruction, one should put aside personal opinions and devote oneself fully to learning the methods being taught. Unless explicitly permitted by the teacher, previous practices or methods are a separate matter.

3. When you have found a good teacher, learned new methods, and gained a richer insight into learning experiences, you should not casually belittle or slander your previous teachers and their methods. It is a time for learning, not a time for “showing off.” The view of the frog in the well

sees no more than the circle above; if you don't know something, admit you don't know it, and never expand the scope of your ignorance. Furthermore, learning is not just about right and wrong, true and false. It is also worthwhile to learn to adopt a 'reserved' attitude. This is to avoid creating unnecessary obstacles in your pursuit of learning, committing unwholesome speech, and forming harmful karmic connections.

4. Maintain objectivity and avoid "exclusivity" as much as possible. Dedication in study is essential, yet exclusivity is a mistake. Do not treat the teacher or method you admire as the sole path. Otherwise, the path is very likely to become narrower and more difficult the further you go, being carried away by emotions, and causing you to lose many opportunities for learning and practice.

5. In your journey of learning, you might as well create beautiful memories for yourself! Everything should have a beginning and an end, just like an article. It cannot just be one with a series of commas and pauses and ends sloppily without a period. Making a lot of noise like thunder but producing little rain—these are all bad habits to avoid during your journey of learning.

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- <sup>i</sup> Sutra of Buddha's Bequeathed Teaching 佛遺教經.
- <sup>ii</sup> Walshe, Maurice. *Dīgha Nikāya 22, Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. Boston, Wisdom Publications, 1995.
- <sup>iii</sup> Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli. *Visuddhimagga (The Path of Purification)*, Chapter VIII, No. 152. Kandy, Sri Lanka, Buddhist Publication Society, 2010.

# 安般念三摩地

## Concentration of the Mindfulness of Breathing (ānāpānassatisamādhi)

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～ 《相應部》 (54. 13) 《第一阿難經》