

正念的藝術（一）

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正念的禪觀藝術

禪觀正念是一種藝術，也是一種修行功夫，能帶來心的清明（定）和看清「事物本性」的智慧。不論是藏傳的大手印、禪宗的坐禪，還是上座部（南傳）的內觀，正念可以說是佛教所有禪修法門的共同點。禪修不離正念，這可以從一個禪宗故事中看出來。有一位僧人問他的師父：「什麼是佛教的根本教義？」師父答道：「正念。」這位弟子卻不滿意這樣的回答，說：「我不是問正念的事，我是問佛教的根本教義。」那位師父回答：「正念，正念，正念。」所以，我們要明白，佛教修行的根本，不出「正念」兩個字！

然而，要怎樣做到正念？要怎樣修行正念？對一位禪修初學者說「要觀照」，「要專注」，未免太過籠統，用意雖好，實際幫助卻不大。這就像赫胥黎烏托邦小說《島嶼》裡的統治者，教鳥兒不斷地叫「專心」，希望這樣，鳥兒就會專心起來，結果當然是徒勞無功。如果能認知到我們大多數人都做不到正念分明，因而虛度生命，就會明白依師學習、如法降伏妄心的必要了。

正念修行成功以後，就可以發現萬物的真相。「主要的」注意力讓人看到念頭的內容，進而透視心的生滅。當看清身心現象的本來面目時，身心特質就可以不受干擾地顯露出來。這種「觀照而不分別的」正念，就是每當身心經驗生起時，只記錄最主要的現象，不迎不拒，純粹是一種見證。換言之，只記錄或注意現象（不論是覺受、聲音、思想或心境）的生滅，卻不做任何反應。然而，如果在觀照中，心起了反應（這是未經訓練的心再自然不過的事），那就連反應也要注意。用這種方法去看萬事萬物，便可發現萬事萬物的本性，因而獲得不反應、不受制約的覺知，生起自在解脫的智慧。

定位六根門

正念是活潑的修行，不只限於盤腿坐著，而是要專注在任何姿勢或情境中的所作所為。這種讓心有所定位的修行，意思是「回到六根上」。換句話說，就是意識分明地定位在前五根和第六根（意）上。六根門是眼、耳、鼻、舌、身等五色根和第六意根（眼識、耳識、鼻識、舌識、身識等五識的集合）。所以，修行正念就是觀照六根門。譬如，守護眼根就是注意眼根接觸色塵的結果與心理反應。如此定位在任何根門上，便能覺知根門上正在發生的觸，並偵察到隨後產生的受和意識。

正念的真正含意是「專注」、「安住當下」。保持正念就能培養「安住當下」的心。雖然專注有不同的程度（少到完全不專注），但大體上可以分成兩種：一種是自然的專注（自動生起的專注），另一種是刻意「培養」的專注，這是在「禪觀的專注」中發展出來的。

培養的專注又分消極和積極兩種。消極的專注是「純粹的專注」，也就是說，只以接收的心境記錄現象的生滅，不作反應。積極的專注則應用在一個動作、行為

完成之後，包括積極地思維所觀的現象。

定位在根門上的練習

檢查！當下你的注意力在哪裡？現在最明顯的觸是哪一個？是在讀這頁文章的眼根？還是被聲音吸引的耳根？或者是坐在椅子上的身觸？「當下」是練習安住根門和注意覺受生起的好時機。

選擇一個根門，然後注意那個根門上所發生的一切。現在的受是什麼？那個受的品質又是什麼？是好的受，是壞的受，還是不好不壞的受？這個受引起什麼念頭？特別注意其中的變化。養成觀照日常作息的習慣，幫助會很大：現在我用哪個根門？那個根門發生什麼事？隨後產生的受又是什麼？

緣起

安住當下某一根門的修行，離不開「緣起」的實際應用和研究。在經驗一連串的因果現象時，可以在六入緣觸、觸緣受的過程中截斷。如此，將可解脫大多數人不自覺深陷其中的惑業苦輪迴。

「緣起法」十分深奧，是佛法的根本，從佛陀和侍者阿難的對話可見一斑。有一次，阿難隨口提到，緣起法不難瞭解。佛陀指正道：「不，阿難，絕對不可以這樣說。一般人不瞭解緣起，沒辦法通達緣起，所以心就迷糊起來了。如一團糾纏不清的線球，眾生糾纏在輪迴、苦、地獄、罪惡之中，無法脫身。」

透過「觀照根門」通達緣起，可以解結。現在的種種經驗，來自過去因緣所生起的一連串事件，因果相循，這稱為輪迴。

體會緣起法中的十一項連結，可幫助觀照。即使只是理論上的知識，都可以指引正確的方向，究竟解脫：

1. 無明緣行；2. 行緣識；3. 識緣名色；4. 名色緣六入；5. 六入緣觸；6. 觸緣受；7. 受緣愛；8. 愛緣取；9. 取緣有；10. 有緣生；11. 生緣老死憂悲苦惱。

以下是婆醯迦的證悟故事。婆醯迦，意思是穿樹皮的人。婆醯迦本來是商人，有一天他出海行商時遇上海難，雖然僥倖存活下來，但船毀了，身上的衣服也全被沖走。赤裸裸地，他被沖到岸上，就找樹皮裹身，又找到一個舊碗去乞食。當地的人看到他那樣子，以為他是苦行人，大為讚嘆，一傳十，十傳百，變得遠近馳名。有人為測試他，故意供養錦衣繡袍給他，但他知道這樣會破壞別人對自己的崇拜，所以拒絕了，繼續假扮苦行人。婆醯迦被安置到一座寺院裏當作阿羅漢來膜拜。時間一久，連他自己也相信自己已經證悟。

他的生活中規中矩，禪定功夫也日益精進。有一天在禪定中，一位前世是他親人的天神出現，告訴婆醯迦，說他尚未開悟，應該去向已證得阿羅漢果的佛陀請益。於是，婆醯迦千里迢迢地前往舍衛城去見佛陀。他到達時，佛陀正好要出去乞食，那不是請法的適當時間。他向佛陀請教了三次，佛陀才答應教導他。

佛陀給予簡潔扼要的開示：

「婆醯迦，你應該要照此修行：見的時候，就只是見；聞的時候，就只是聞；感覺（觸、嚐、嗅）的時候，就只是感覺；覺知的時候，就只是覺知。

「婆醯迦，你如果能夠做到只是見、聞、嗅、嚐、觸、知的時候，就可以不受束

縛。如此一來，婆醯迦，你就不會受六根所束縛，不會受六塵所束縛，也不會受六識所束縛。這就是苦的息滅。」

婆醯迦聽了，放下執著，當下證悟，成為阿羅漢。

佛陀離開不久，婆醯迦受到牛攻擊而過世。佛陀乞食回來，發現婆醯迦過世，就替婆醯迦安排火化和建塔。有人問婆醯迦會往生到哪裡，佛陀回答，因為婆醯迦在導師面前已經領悟禪修要領，又能如法修行，所以證得了究竟覺悟的般涅槃。

默念的技巧
將身心感受到的一切，在心中稱名或貼上標籤，有助禪觀正念的修行。運用得好，也是集中心思、保持正念的好方法。不論生起什麼身心經驗，都要重複默念，像是「聽」、「聽」，「想」、「想」，「觸」、「觸」等。這是培養正念的有力方法，尤其在修行之初，有系統地默念或貼上標籤，對於建立專注非常重要；否則很容易心思散漫，久久都沒有覺察。正念一旦建立，即使為時不長，要將「默念」的方法放下，尤其是當它變得機械化或笨拙到妨礙微細的正念時。學會怎麼用正念來偵察種種感受以後，只有在注意力減弱、消失或需要重建時，才需要回到「默念」的練習上。默念可以配合定位六根的方法練習，每當六根生起任何身心現象時，就在心中默念。切記不要對所觀境分析，只是記錄而不反應。v（未完待續）

The Art of Attention (I)

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The Meditative Art of Attention

Meditative attention is an art, or an acquired skill which brings clarity and an intelligence that sees the “true nature of things”. Among the variety of techniques in Buddhist meditation, the art of attention is the common thread underpinning all schools of Buddhist meditation: Mahamudra in the Tibetan tradition, Zazen in Zen Buddhism and Vipassana meditation in Theravada. Its ubiquitousness is illustrated by this Zen story: A monk once asked his teacher, “What is the fundamental teaching in Buddhism?” The Master replied “Attention”. The student, dissatisfied with the answer, said, “I wasn’t asking about attention, but was wanting to know the essential teaching in Buddhism.” The Master replied, “Attention, Attention, Attention.” So, it can be appreciated that the essence of Buddhist practice is to be found in the word--attention! But how to do it? What is the practice? Vague advice to an aspiring meditation, such as “be mindful” or “be attentive” while offered with good intention, is unlikely to be effective. It is like the rulers in Aldous Huxley’s utopian novel *Island* who taught mynah birds to repeat “attention” in the hope of training the island inhabitants to be

attentive--it just didn't work. To recognize the fact that most of us tend to function in a rather inattentive, unfocused way which results in a rather superficial experience of life is to see the necessity for training the errant attention in a systematic way under guidance.

This trained attention has the effect of uncovering, or laying bare, things as they really are. It is the "primary" attention that sees through the "content" of mind to the under-lying processes. In laying bare the reality of psychophysical phenomena, the salient characteristics are revealed without interfering with them. The art of this "bare" attention is to simply register the predominant object in one's experience as it arises without preference or interference, as a witness. That is, just registering or noting the changing phenomenon without reaction--be it sensation, sound, thought or a mind-state. However, if there is a reaction during the observation, as is natural for the untrained mind, then that too must be noted. This way of seeing has the potential to uncover the true nature of the phenomenon observed and thus a non-reactive, unconditioned aware-ness is acquired that brings liberating "inseeing" or insight knowledge.

An Orientation to the Six Sense Doors

Being attentive is not a practice that needs to be confined to a cross-legged posture. Meditative attention is a dynamic practice of paying close attention to what you are doing in whatever posture or situation you happen to be in. The way to orientate yourself in this practice is to literally "come to your senses". That is, a strategy of being fully aware of all your activities through a conscious orientation to the five senses and the "sixth sense"--the mind. The Six Sense Doors is the name for the five physical senses: eye, ear, nose, tongue and body and the sixth sense, which is a collective term for the five kinds of consciousness: eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, etc. So, the practice is to be consciously attentive at the predominant door or sense base. For example, being on guard at the eye-door allows you to notice the effects of the contact between the eye and the visible objects and how you are relating to them. This orientation to any sense door brings the awareness of what is happening during any sense impression, and, with it, the ability to monitor the associated feelings and consciousness that arise.

The actual meaning of "attention" indicates its practice: "to attend upon", "to be present with" By being attentive, "presence of mind" is developed. While there are degrees of attention (down to lack of attention), it can be said that there are two types: natural attention which is "automated attention" and the intentionally "deployed" attention that is developed in "meditative attention".

Deployed attention is either passive, or in the sense of being applied, active. The passive mode is "bare attention" that is just registering what is happening, in a

receptive state of mind, without reaction. The active mode of attention is applied when any kind of movement or action is done, including active and reflective thought on things observed.

Try This Exercise in Orienting to a Sense-Door

Check! Where is your attention at this present moment? What sense impression is predominant now? Is it the eye-door as you view the page, the ear-door attracted by sounds or the touch sensations of the body's contact on the chair you're sitting on? This moment is the time to establish the habit of being consciously present at a sense door, and to notice what is happening during a sense impression.

Choose a sense-door and be attentive to what is happening there. What feeling is present; what is the quality of that feeling; is it pleasant, unpleasant or neutral? What thoughts are associated with it? Take particular notice of the changes. It is useful to make a habit of checking yourself during your daily routine: what sense door am I at; what is happening there; what are the associated feelings that arise?

Dependent Origination

This strategy of being present at a sense-door ties in with the practical application and study of Dependent Origination, *Paticca Samupada*. As you experience the series of causal events, you can intercept them at the linkage of either consciousness, sense impression and/or feeling. The ability to do this gives you the potential to be free of the conditioned cycle of suffering that most people are unknowingly trapped in.

The Law of Dependent Origination is a profound subject. It is the very essence of the Buddha's Teachings, illustrated by a famous exchange between the Buddha and his personal attendant Ananda. Ananda casually remarked that he thought it was an easy thing to understand. The Buddha responded by saying, "Not so, Ananda. Don't ever say such a thing. It's because people do not understand dependent origination that they are not able to penetrate it, that their minds are befuddled. Just as a ball of twine becomes all tangled up and knotted, so are beings ensnared and unable to free themselves from the wheel of existence, the conditions of suffering and the states of hell and ruin." We can untangle the tangle by "insighting" into Dependent Origination through awareness at a sense door. What we are experiencing now is the result of a series of events that arose because of previous conditions and is linked as a causal chain of effects, i.e. as cyclic existence.

It is useful to have a working knowledge of the eleven links in the cycle of Dependent Origination. Even such theoretical knowledge will point you in the right direction and the potential to be free of the conditioning it causes:

1. With Ignorance as a condition Karmic Formations or Volitional Actions arise;
2. With Volitional Actions as a condition Consciousness arises;
3. With Consciousness as a condition Mentality/Materiality arises;

4. With Mentality/Materiality as a condition the Six Sense Bases arise;
5. With The Six Sense Bases as a condition Contact (sense impressions) arise;
6. With Sense Impressions as a condition Feelings (vedana) arise;
7. With Feelings as a condition Grasping arises;
8. With Grasping as a condition Clinging arises;
9. With Clinging as a condition Attachment arises;
10. With Attachment as a condition Becoming arises;
11. With Becoming as a condition, Pain, Old Age and Death arise, i.e. conditioned suffering.

Here is the enlightenment story of Bahiya, the wooden robed one, who was able to practise in this way. Bahiya, originally a merchant, was traveling at sea with all his merchandise and was shipwrecked and cast ashore naked. He found bark to cover himself and an old bowl, and he went searching for alms-food. The local people were impressed by his seeming austerities, and his reputation as an ascetic grew. He was tested when people offered him fine robes, but knowing that they would lose faith in him if he accepted, he refused, keeping up the deception. Bahiya was installed in a temple and worshipped as an Arahant (an Enlightened One) so that in time he came to believe that he was actually an enlightened being.

He lived impeccably and gained good concentration powers. Sitting in meditation one day, it is said that a deva, who was a former blood-relation, was able to persuade Bahiya that he wasn't really enlightened at all and that he should go and see the Buddha, an Arahant who could help him.

Bahiya made a long journey to visit the Buddha at Savatti, and reached the monastery just as the Buddha was about to go on the daily alms-round. Bahiy asked the Buddha three times to teach him the Dharma before the Buddha agreed to teach at such an inopportune time.

The Buddha then gave these brief instructions:

"Bahiya, you should train yourself in this way:

"With the seen, there will be just the seen; with the heard, there will be just the heard; with the sensed (touched, tasted, smelt) there will be just the sensed; with the cognized, there will be just the cognized.

"When for you, Bahiya, there is merely the seen, heard, sensed and cognized, then you will not be therein. Then you, Bahiya, will be neither here nor there nor within both--this is itself the end of suffering." Through this brief instruction, Bahiya was immediately enlightened --through non-clinging--thus becoming an Arahant.

Not long after the Buddha had departed, Bahiya was fatally gored by a cow. When the Buddha returned from his alms-round, and found Bahiya, he arranged for his cremation and for a stupa to be built for him. When asked what the destiny of Bahiya

was, the Buddha said that because he had grasped the meditation subject in the teacher's presence, and practiced as instructed according to the Dharma, Bahiya had attained Parinibbana, final Enlightenment.

The Technique of Mental Noting

A useful device to support meditative attention is naming or labeling the various objects during the observation of your own body and mind. Used judiciously, it is a very useful tool for focusing and sustaining the attention. The noting is done by repeatedly making a mental note of whatever arises in your body/mind experience. For example, "hearing", "hearing", "thinking", "thinking", "touching", "touching" etc. This is a powerful aid to help establish bare attention, especially at the beginning of the practice, when it is vital to systematically note or label as much as possible to establish the attention. Otherwise, you are likely to get lost in unnoticed wanderings with long periods of inattention. Having succeeded, even partially, in sustaining the attention, then the mental noting can be dropped, especially if the noting has become mechanical or is so clumsy that it is interfering with the subtle attention. Having acquired the ability to monitor your experience with just bare attention, you will need to return to the mental noting only when the attention weakens, is lost or needs to be re-established. The mental noting can be combined with the practice of orientating to your sense impressions by the naming of the physical and mental objects as they arise at the six sense doors. Be careful not to analyse what is being observed, just register or note it without reaction. (To be continued)