



静心学堂丛书

The Mindful Peace Academy Collection

中英双语 Chinese-English Edition

正念禅修的要领

The Essentials of Mindfulness Practice



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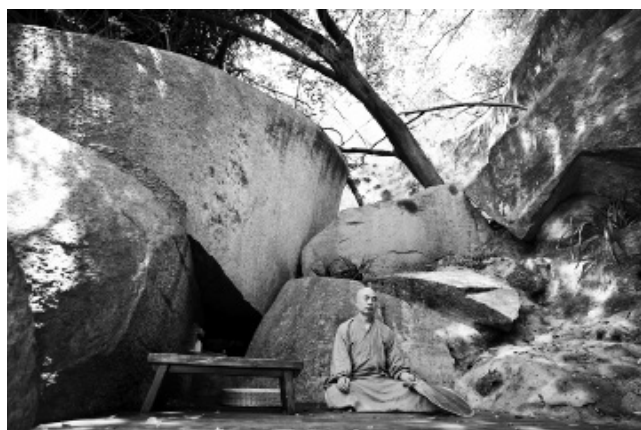
2021年秋甘露别院禅修开示

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三级课程建设的前期，我们已在系统修学上打下了良好基础。目前不少人正进入《辨修对治品》，即三十七道品的学习，对禅修跃跃欲试。虽然我们还没开始规范引导，但正念禅修和三级修学的关系已经讲了不少。尤其是去年以来，我一直带着大家正念经行，相关开示有两百多讲。

近几十年来，正念禅修风靡世界。这种正念虽源自于佛教，但在实践中主要是作为一种技术，如正念减压疗法、正念认知疗法等，运用于医疗、科研、教育、企业管理等方面，以此解决当代人的身心问题，更多是属于医疗和养生范畴。而佛教所说的正念，目的是导向解脱，导向觉醒，这就需要与整个修行体系

相联系。

在作为修行常道的八正道中，正念是其中一个环节，此外还有正见、正思维、正语、正业、正命、正精进、正定。这种正念就不是单纯的技术，而是贯穿整个修行，既有作为基础的正念训练，也有禅宗抵达的无念层面。从某种意义上说，无念才是最高的正念。

我们知道，禅宗在唐宋盛行一时，龙象辈出。仅《景德传灯录》中，就记载了一千七百多位禅师的传承法系，他们都是通过修禅开悟的。遗憾的是，禅门到宋元明清之后一路衰微。因为禅宗强调直指人心，让学人直接体悟觉性。这是修行的核心所在，但对根机的要求极高，同时要有明眼师长引导。这两点正是现代人缺乏的，一是根机不利，二是师长难觅，所以对禅宗提供的向上一着，其实是够不着的。怎么办？需要架一个梯子，以次第渐修奠定基础，改善根机。

众生平等，皆有佛性，为什么根机会有利钝之别？关键在于遮蔽心性的尘垢有多少。渐修的作用就是扫尘除垢，让心灵的云层越来越薄，最终云开雾散，彻见本来。所以根机利钝并不是固定的，比

如一把很钝的剑，磨着磨着就能变成利器，根机也是同样。三级修学正是通过有效的训练，引导大家从钝根转为利根。

禅宗修行的难点还在于，不知从何处下手，即祖师所说的“蚊子叮铁牛，不得其门”。所以修行要有方法，有次第，教理层面是强化皈依、发心、正见，实修层面是训练专注、觉知、观照。这样才能以见导修，学修并重。如果没有方法，知道目标所在，却不知如何抵达，开悟见性就会流于口头禅。我们前期的教理闻思，包括八步三禅的方法，不仅可以解决粗重烦恼，也可以和正念禅修相结合，成为通达空性的方便。

下面，简单向大家介绍一下正念禅修的要领，以及未来修学需要重视的方面。



一、调身

虽然禅修不局限于打坐
但打坐本身是不可或缺的基础
通过身的安住
可以令心安定
进而增长定力，开启智慧

禅修的重点不外乎调身和调心，这就离不开打坐。有些人受禅宗影响，认为行亦禅坐亦禅，搬柴运水皆是禅，对打坐不太重视。这是极大的误解。虽然禅修不局限于打坐，但打坐本身是不可或缺的基础。通过身的安住，可以令心安定，进而增长定力，开启智慧。

打坐初期，不少人会遇到身体带来的困扰，腰酸腿疼，不能久坐。这往往和坐姿不当有关。传统中，正确姿势为毗卢七支坐，是关于身体的七个要求。调整到位的话，不仅可以畅通气血，解决身体障碍，心也容易平静，所谓身安则道隆。

第一是跏趺而坐。

佛教修行中，最理想的坐姿是双跏趺。跏趺指脚背，即脚背交叉叠放在大腿上，也叫双盘。但这不是谁都能坐得了，且难以持久。如果身体柔韧性不够，可以单盘。右足在左腿上，为金刚坐；左足在右腿上，为如意坐。如果单盘都困难，还可以散盘。因为每个人的缘起不同，身体状况有别，不必强求。原则是身正且舒服，这样才能循序渐进。坐垫要软硬适中，太软易塌陷，太硬则硌腿。此外还可加个上垫，有利于膝盖着地，使双腿形成稳定的三角式。尤其对初坐的人，上垫的帮助很大，否则容易后仰。对长期打坐且能双盘的，可根据自己的习惯选择。

第二是手结定印。

双手环放在身前，右手叠放在左手上，拇指微微相抵，位置在脐下。此外，也可以把手轻搭在膝盖上。

第三是脊梁正直。

古人说坐如钟，就是像钟一样中正稳定。但这种

直不是刻意绷紧身体，也不是平时所说的昂首挺胸，否则会使身体处于紧张状态。我们可以观想每节脊柱像积木那样，一块叠着一块，直立但没有具体的用力点。我们也可以通过深呼吸，把气缓缓送到丹田，感觉身体像打气般被撑起来。轮胎没气时会瘪下去，东倒西歪，充气后就会饱满端正。身体也要如此，不能前倾后仰，左右摇摆，也不能靠着什么。有人喜欢靠墙打坐，觉得靠着比较舒服，但靠着靠着就睡着了，那是休息而不是打坐。身正不仅体现了生命的庄严，也会使气血畅通，易于心的安定。

第四是两肩平展。

不要往前卷，也不要高低不平，或前后倾斜，感觉是在一节节直立的脊柱上，安放了一根水平方向的横梁，挂住整个身体。

第五是头正颈立。

头是通过脖颈安放在肩上，脖颈首先要直，头本身也要端正，不能俯仰，也不能歪斜。我们可以观想天花板上有一根绳子，轻轻吊着头顶，使头微微提起，

这样头部自然是正的。同时下巴稍稍内敛，但不是刻意低头。

第六是双目下垂。

通常是微闭，留一点余光，落在眼前1-2米处，但不需要去看什么。这样不容易昏沉。如果感觉自己心比较乱，闭上眼更安静，更容易用心，也可以闭着。

第七是舌抵上颚。

舌头轻轻抵住上颚，即牙龈朝里一点。

这是调整坐姿的要点，尤其对初学者，上座后要检查一下身体各部位。就像运动员训练任何项目时，都要规范基本动作。只有把动作做到位，才能开发身体潜力，取得成绩。打坐也是同样，调身的重点就是纠正姿势。不论哪一支，原则都是松沉、自然、舒服，不必刻意用力，更不能僵硬。身体调对了，坐在那里就能稳如泰山，安住不动。然后持之以恒地训练，就会越来越自在，定力也会随之增长。



二、调心

调心有三个层次

一是选择对象

培养专注和觉察

二是将这份觉知带到生活中

时时保持，不断强化

三是放下觉知，体认无念



调身固然重要，但只是禅修的助缘，目的是为了调心，这才是修行的关键所在。调心有三个层次，一是选择对象，培养专注和觉察；二是将这份觉知带到生活中，时时保持，不断强化；三是放下觉知，体认无念。

1. 选择所缘，培养专注和觉察

选择一个对象为目标，由此训练专注和觉察。比如我们经行时，把心安住在走路的动作上，对“抬腿、移动、落腿；抬腿、移动、落腿……”的每一个变化清清楚楚。比如修皈依时，可以将佛陀名号作为

所缘境，心中默念“佛陀、佛陀”，把心安住在名号上。在做事中修行也是如此，比如洗碗，洗碗是你的所缘；拔草，拔草是你的所缘。总之，选择没有副作用的目标即可。尤其在修行初期，所缘必须单纯，不易引起情绪变化。如果选择自己特别喜欢的，容易生起贪著；如果选择自己特别讨厌的，则会调动嗔心。

我们在座上禅修，可以将出入息作为所缘，保持自然的呼吸状态，然后专注于此。《大念处经》对此有详细阐述，呼吸长的时候，知道呼吸长；呼吸短的时候，知道呼吸短；微息时，知道这是微息；全息时，知道这是全息……总之，当下的呼吸是什么状态，你就觉知这是什么状态，不增不减，清清楚楚。如果在经行，就把心安住于走路的每一个动作；如果是做事，就把心安住于做的事情上。所谓定，就是让心持续、稳定地安住于所缘目标，使妄想不再有活动机会。

九住心讲到，要从内住、续住、安住、近住，到调伏、寂静、最极寂静、专注一境，最终达至等持。但禅修时，心不会那么听话。因为散乱本身就是心的习惯，不是一打坐就能平息妄想的，多数人都要经历

反反复复的训练。在此过程中，必须对治两大问题：一是散乱掉举，落入念头或情绪中，东想西想；一是昏沉迟钝，对当下的身心状态不知不觉。

如何解决这些问题？必须保持觉察。初期禅修的重点，不是去研究所缘对象，而是以此为目标，来训练心的安住和觉知。有了这个参照，当心偏离目标时，我们才会及时发现并调整，让心走出无明、昏沉、散乱掉举的状态。

2. 安住觉知，将此带入每个当下

我们在座上训练觉知后，还要将此带到生活的每一个当下。在菩提导航的心理检测中，需要检验自己的烦恼到了什么程度，究竟是轻度、中度还是重度？这取决于三个维度。第一，烦恼占据内心的时间有多长？是偶尔发生还是经常发生？第二，发生后是立刻觉察，还是很久才能觉察，或是根本觉察不到？

这一方面和无明的程度有关，一方面和正知正念的力量有关。如果无明的云层很厚，我们就会始终处

在不知不觉中，难以生起觉察。如果你训练有素，心灯已经亮到一定程度，甚至能心灯常亮，那么任何念头只要出现，就能立刻觉察。禅修就是去发展这种觉知力，让它的力量越来越强。

社会上的正念训练也讲觉知力，但仅仅停留于此。从佛法修行来说，正念还蕴含着智慧的成分，这就离不开正见和正思维。所以光有觉知是不够的，必须在智慧基础上建立的觉知，才会把我们导向解脱。

禅修过程中，我们不仅要对所缘目标保持觉知，还要对禅修时的心理活动保持觉知。禅修时的心理活动，和现实生活中的心理活动一样不一样？可以说一样，也可以说不一样。虽然它的显现千差万别，但都没有离开我们的心，都是心的作用。生活中会有美妙的觉受，也有痛苦的经历，还有种种妄想，甚至是匪夷所思的妄想，禅修也是同样。

如果没有经过训练，我们可能会带着轮回的串习和认知模式去处理这些念头。轮回的认知模式就是贪嗔痴，对喜欢的贪著、享受、留恋，对不喜欢的嗔恨、痛苦、排斥。我们要对所有这一切保持觉察，清楚

楚地知道当下在发生什么。但只是知道，并不进入评判系统，不刻意地思维分别。也就是内观禅修所说的不贪著，不留恋，不评判，不拒绝。

这点和禅宗修行有相通之处。三祖的《信心铭》中，开篇即是“至道无难，唯嫌拣择。但莫憎爱，洞然明白。毫厘有差，天地悬隔”。至道，即最高的道。真理其实没那么难，因为它本来就在那里，每个人都具足认识的潜能。但只要开始分别拣择，难免会落入二元对立、是非评判，落入意识的分别系统，就和真理背道而驰了。

如果我们已经体认大道，其实分别也没关系，那是差别智的作用。正如《维摩经》所说：“能善分别诸法相，于第一义而不动。”安住在空性层面，是知分别而离分别的。而凡夫的分别往往带着强烈的执著，就会卡在二元对立的世界，无法体悟清净本心。

为什么禅宗重视生活中的修行？因为禅修就是一种心法，是让我们认识心的本来面目，然后把这样的正念带入生活，面对每个人、每件事都能带着觉察，保有清明的状态。这种觉察使我们不会陷入所缘，因

为它和境界是有距离的，不会落入执著，也不会被分别所干扰。进一步，这种内在观照还能平息外境和念头带来的困扰。

禅修面对的问题无非是两类，一是内心呈现的影像，一是种种心念活动，包括烦恼、情绪等。其实人都是活在影像和念头中，因为看不清，就会被卡在对影像和念头的执著中，无法走出。事实上，这些影像和念头有多大力量，和我们的在乎程度有关。你越是在乎的，在内心累积的情绪力量就越大，产生的干扰也越大。

中国历史上，《金刚经》《心经》之所以会成为民众喜闻乐见的经典，就在于其中传达的空性正见。当人们了解到“一切有为法，如梦幻泡影，如露亦如电，应作如是观”，就能在不同程度上化解外境和内心带来的困扰。

3. 放下觉知，体认无念

觉知有两个层面，一是意识的层面，一是超越意识的层面。通过一定的禅修训练后，我们还要放下种种设定、目标、追求，去体会虚空般的心。

空和明，是心的两个特质。在修习皈依时，我会引导大家去看一看，自己的心到底是什么样子？有没有颜色，有没有形状？我们通过审视会发现，心是无形无相的。这时就能体会到它空的一面、了不可得的一面。但这种空不是什么都没有，同时还具有了了明知的作用。所以真正高明的修行并不需要做什么，当你不再陷入迷惑、烦恼、颠倒妄想时，就能见到心的本来面目。这个清净心一直就在那里，不生不灭，不垢不净，不增不减。

禅修的三个层次中，首先是选择所缘，以此训练专注和觉察。其次安住觉知，将此带入每个当下，这是修行的重点所在。我们对世界的认识，包含能和所两方面。能是心理，所是对象。我们面对任何对象，都会产生一系列的心理。所以我们不仅要觉察对象，还要觉察各种心理，看看心进入了什么状态，是贪心，

还是嗔心、嫉妒、我慢？包括禅修中产生的各种觉受，我们贪著了没有？排斥了没有？都要清清楚楚。

当专注和觉察训练到一定程度，感觉心过于紧绷时，可以做一些放下的修行。没有任何目标，没有任何设定，心彻底地放下一切。但这种放下不是不知不觉，而是对周边一切和身心活动保持全然的觉知。用佛教的话说，就是心如明镜。仿佛一面巨大的镜子，可以朗照万物，但没有任何粘著，不会喜欢，也不会讨厌。

在中秋茶会时，我让大家学会不刻意地做任何事，再去体会这个不做任何事的心。当然心可能还会有念头，我们也不排斥。因为硬让自己什么都不想是有难度的，可能是更大的妄想。其实想也没关系，关键是能觉察到，也就是禅宗所说的“识得不为过”。

这种修行需要有一定基础，才能超越一切概念，把禅修、开悟、解脱统统放掉。事实上，所有这些都是帮助我们体悟清净心的方便。在清净心的层面，并没有这些东西。但佛陀为了引导众生，所以才针对我们的执著、烦恼、生死，施設这么多法门。

当我们学会什么都不做的时候，就能直接体会这个赤裸的、没有包装过的心。《楞严经》说：“狂心顿歇，歇即菩提。”当心真正歇下来，是空空荡荡、清清净净，同时又了了明知的。这个心看似平常，但正是一切修行所要体悟的。然后要不断地熟悉它，让这样的状态贯穿一切时、一切处。这是需要努力的，因为我们的无明、烦恼、尘垢和串习太强了。

我们可以把三个层次结合起来，以前两步为基础，适当地修习第三种。觉得力量不足时，再回到前两步去训练。尘垢被剥到一定时候，又可以接着修第三种。最后就有能力彻底地放松，放空，放下，体会到虚空般的心。这就是《坛经》所说的“无念为宗，无相为体，无住为本”。无念，是超越念头的心；无相，是说心如虚空般无形无相，不以任何形象存在；无住，是说心朗照无住，不以万法为侣，所谓“百花丛中过，片叶不沾身”。



附

正念与无念

Mindfulness and No-thought

2023年春讲于泰宁甘露别院

这次回来，正遇上丁香花开，想着来跟大家一起坐坐，喝喝茶，赏赏花。

去年，也是丁香茶会，也是在这里，那是初级茶会的泡茶、喝茶。时间过得很快，又是一年丁香花开，茶会也升到了中级。中级茶会已经研讨了好一段时间，这样正式的演绎，煮茶、喝茶，我也是第一次参加。

一、听茗？观心？

我们坐在这里
只是单纯地坐着
虽然所缘微弱，没做什么
但这个没做什么的心
并没有失去作用
我们的心是有感知的，不是木头
虽然只是轻闲地坐着
但我们可以感受万物的存在
同时，也能听到煮茶的声音

刚才大家一起，止语，听茶汤逐渐沸腾。这个环节，是初级茶会静茶七式的第三式“煮水听茗”——后来我把它改为“煮水观心”——的升级版。既然中级茶会把煮水换成了煮茶，那这一式就叫“煮茶观心”。

煮茶观心，中级茶课把它演绎得很到位。这一段时间完全留白，茶在炭炉上煮着，不紧不慢；人在蒲团上坐着，不声不响。大家都安安静静，各闲各的。丁香时节，我们在这里，只是坐着，没什么特别的事情要做……

刚才煮茶的环节，不知道大家是在观心，还是在等着什么？是无可期待，还是期待落空？煮在那里的茶，都喝上了没有？

这个过程，我们坐在这里，只是单纯地坐着。虽然所缘微弱，没做什么，但这个没做什么的心，并没有失去作用。我们的心是有感知的，不是木头；我们有一颗能感知的心，不是泥塑木雕的菩萨。虽然只是轻闲地坐着，但我们可以感受天地的空旷，感受春天的气息，感受生命的复苏，感受万物的存在。同时，我们也能听到煮茶的声音。这一切的一切，都清清楚楚，了了明知。

除了外在的世界，我们也感受自己的内心。此时此刻的心，是什么状态？有没有焦虑、期待、好奇、无聊、无所事事？还是很安静、很开心？其实，心是什么状态并不重要，我们也不一定要让心呈现出某种特别的状态。此刻，没有要求，没有期待，没有设定。

我们要做的，只是清清楚楚地感受当下的一切，心无所住，就像天地，那么空旷，那么无限；就像万物，就在那里，没有造作；就像茶汤，该沸就沸，自自然然；就像丁香，一年一度，花开花落。

此时此刻，当心不再有焦点，就能感受到心的空旷。

二、正念？无念？

放下造作，就只是去觉知
觉知当下发生的一切
觉知大自然一切的发生
也觉知内心发生的一切
知道，就可以了
无念禅修有一个特点
是认出念头，体妄即真
只要认出念头
这个念头就会回归觉性的海洋

正念禅修，是培养心的两种力量。一种是专注力，喝茶，就专心地喝茶；一种是觉知力，喝茶时，对过程保持清清楚楚。这种清清楚楚，是我们内心本具的清明的力量。

正念禅修是有造作的，而无念的禅修，则是放下所缘，放下造作。

放下所缘，就是让心不必有焦点，不必专注在一个点上。

放下造作，就只是去觉知——觉知当下发生的一切，觉知大自然一切的发生，也觉知内心发生的一切。知道，就可以了。无念禅修有一个特点，是“认出念头，体妄即真”。只要认出念头，这个念头就会回归

觉性的海洋，就像所有波浪本质上都是水一样。

心能觉知，是因为每个人原本具备清明的心。清明的心，就像一潭清澈的湖水，又如明镜，具有了了明知的作用。这种力量，是不需要通过造作获得的。

当然，刚开始还是需要培养专注力和觉知力，以开启觉知。所以，我们在三级正念禅修中，初级到中级禅修是开启觉知，到高级禅修就要放下觉知，体认无念。

无念的心，就是当下清明的、没有造作的心。

三、有修？无修？

禅修，有个什么可修吗
禅修，要做个什么吗
其实，对心的体认是不需要做什么的
但突破串习，却需要用力去修
打坐时浑身酸痛，念头不绝如缕
昏沉用不起功来，凡此种种
都是凡夫心的呈现
佛陀讲八万四千法门，讲戒定慧
就是要帮助我们走出串习的瀑流

我们坐在这里煮茶、喝茶、观心，其实并不需要做什么。此时此刻，只是坐着，就是修行。

因为修行有两个不同层级，一个是有修，一个是无修。有修，是有造作的修行；无修，是没有造作的修行，直接去体会清明的心。它原本具足，无需造作。

在初级和中级正念禅修的阶段，我们还是需要练习有造作的修行。这是因为，当清明的心不能发挥作用时，我们还是活在不明妄识的系统。心在昏沉和散乱中，就走不出轮回串习的瀑流。串习的瀑流会遮蔽清净心，必须通过精进造作、努力用心，才能走出瀑流，回归清明。

过去的禅师们经常讲，禅修，有个什么可修吗？

禅修，要做个什么吗？其实，对心的体认是不需要做什么的。但突破串习，却需要用力去修。打坐时浑身酸痛，念头不绝如缕，昏沉用不起功来，凡此种种，都是凡夫心的呈现。佛陀讲八万四千法门，讲戒定慧，就是要帮助我们走出串习的瀑流。正念禅修，正是其中的关键。

在正念禅修中，修止，培养专注力，是让心静下来；修观，是在专注的基础上，开启内心的观照力、觉知力。通过止观的禅修，让心慢慢静下来，就能逐渐体会到内在无造作的清明。如果遇到特定因缘的加持，妄心也能空掉。

去年的中秋茶会，我告诉大家，试着体会心的不造作的能力，就像今天这样，安安静静地坐着，像一朵丁香落在草地上，不做什么，也不为什么，这就是无作的能力。

不做什么，好像很傻很轻松。无作，还是一种能力吗？其实，无作的修行，要做到并不容易。我们学《百法》，前九十四种都是有为法，后六种才是无为法。什么叫有为？就是有造作。什么叫无为？就是没有造



作。没有造作的心，需要通过禅修去体悟。

可能有人会说，那我就让心彻底不造作，任何念头都不生。你管得住自己的心吗？管不住。你想它不生念头就能不生吗？做不到。

无造作的心，并非不能动念头，而是不去刻意做什么。无作的禅修要体会的，就是这个没有造作的心。我们要做的，一方面，是心不造作，另一方面，是去体会不造作的心。

我们不是木头，还带着轮回的串习，造作在所难免。念头东跑西窜，有没有关系？既有关系，也

没关系。

说它有关系，是说如果心跟着念头跑了，掉进去、陷进去了，那就有关系；或者对念头产生抗拒、讨厌，那也有关系。禅宗讲不迎不拒，正念禅修讲不评判，都在告诉我们，“至道无难，唯嫌拣择”。念头起来了，你去分辨好念头坏念头，就有关系。

说它没关系，是说念头来了，就去认出念头。刚才讲到“认出念头，体妄即真”，每个念头都有两个层面，就是明和无明。选择明的一面，还是随顺无明的一面，是禅修的用心关键。如果带着轮回的串习面对念头，它就会成为轮回的增上缘；如果带着觉知去面对，当下就能把每个念头带回到觉性的海洋。因为念头的本质既是觉性，也不离觉性。

所以，禅修并非要把念头赶尽杀绝，而是学会带着觉知去面对每一个念头。

没有造作的心，有空、明、寂静的特点。

空，就是心像虚空一样空旷。我们的心到底有多大？有多空旷？《楞严经》告诉我们：虚空在我们的心里，就像几片云彩一样。无造作的心，是如此宽广、

空旷、无际无涯。当心没有陷入念头，就能体会到这个虚空般空旷的心。一旦陷入念头，念头就是我们的整个世界，自然见不到空旷的心。

明，就是了了明知。大家坐在这里，什么也没做，心能对一切了了明知。茶汤微沸，丁香花落，往事来访……从外在的一切动静，到内心的一切动静，都能清清楚楚。

寂静，就是安住在空明不二的心上时，我们能感受到，此刻的心是寂静的。寂静也不是一定要不动一念。当安住于空明不二的心，不管有没有念头，内心的安静都在那里，所谓“长空不碍白云飞”。彩霞满天也好，浓云翻滚也罢，都不会妨碍虚空的存在。念头也是同样，不会影响心的寂静。

四、抓紧？放松？

放松就是把心松开
彻底松开这些执著
当心从对世界和自己的执著中松开时
就能回归心的本来状态
完成一件事情，身心松绑的喜悦
是放松自带的欢喜
它根植于生命之内，来自心的本源

正念禅修和无念的禅修，可以结合起来。

初学禅修的人，要以正念禅修为主，适当学一学无念的禅修。

比如，当长时间专注于一个所缘，会觉得很累，这时就可以放下所缘，放下造作，尝试安住在觉知上，安住在内心的清明上。这个时候，心其实不会散乱。如果进入无明的状态，心就会散掉。

就像举办一个很重要的活动，需要完成很多准备工作。当我们投入所有的时间、精力、体力，忙到天昏地暗，内心一直紧绷、焦虑、担忧，最后成功办完，终于可以歇下来时，会是什么感觉？整个人松了口气，一下子彻底地放松、放下了。这时就

能体会到，心中一空的当下，放松的喜悦自然会生起。可见，带着执著做事，就像被绑定在一个地方，身心都很辛苦。事情一做完，把自己从执著中解放出来，心一下就松开了。

放松，在禅修中非常重要。

要放松的是什么？这个问题的实质是：修行要解决的问题是什么？

修行，最重要的是解决两种执著，即对自我的执著和对世界的执著。凡夫总是对这个世界有很多想法、很多设定、很多期待；对自己也会有很多想法、很多设定、很多期待。所有这些都会形成内心的执著。我们活在哪里？其实就活在内心对种种想法、设定、期待的执著中。

放松就是把心松开，彻底松开这些执著。当心从对世界和自己的执著中松开时，就能回归心的本来状态。

完成一件事情，身心松绑的喜悦，是放松自带的欢喜，它根植于生命之内，来自心的本源。

修习正念的同时，可以适当尝试无念的修行，放

下所缘，带上觉知，去感受外在世界的一切，感受内心世界的一切。时不时静下心来，放下手头的东西，放下心中的谋划，安安静静地坐一会儿，让自己什么都不干，就这么闲坐着，带着一份清明的心，去感受当下发生的一切。

进入无念的修行，需要一定的禅修基础。如果心很散乱，无明就像厚重的云层，没有所缘的锚点作为抓手，心就会混沌沌沌，要么东想西想，要么百无聊赖，紧接着就会冒出各种问题。

打好正念禅修的基础，适当体验无念的心，无念的禅修就能做得起来。进一步，随着修行的提升，内心空、明的力量增长了，念头变少了，就可以更多地练习无念的禅修。

五、是茶？非茶？

禅的心是什么心
就是当下这个清明、没有造作的心
这个心我们人人都有
在凡不减，在圣不增
修行要做的，就是去认识它，熟悉它
识得本心，就是修行
喝茶，可以观心、识心
生活中的每一件事，每一个当下
也可以观心、识心

以茶作为禅修题材，是佛门的优良传统。

《五灯会元》《指月录》等各种灯录，及《敕修百丈清规》等丛林清规中，记载着大量在茶事、茶务中修行的史实。在查阅资料时，我发现，以茶入禅的传统做法主要有两类，一类是散装的，一类是套装的。

散装的，就是禅者随时通过喝茶来指点学人，这在禅宗公案中比比皆是。没有固定仪轨，不拘特殊形式。就像赵州的“吃茶去”，就一句话。这一声“吃茶去”，不是叫你去分辨茶叶的品种名气、贵贱高低，而是去体会能喝茶的心是什么，去认识当下纯净的、正在喝茶的心。这个心可深可浅，亦庄亦谐。能喝好这杯茶，三藏十二部典籍尽在其中。

套装的，就是要严格按照清规礼制，组织缜密、仪轨完备、威仪端严、细行恭谨地喝茶，以茶摄心，借茶见性。丛林清规中，关于喝茶的规制、礼仪、流程，融进大小事务，在在处处，无所不见。

在丛林喝茶，是禅者们的日常生活，也是指点学人、接引大众的一部分。喝茶，在禅林的影响和作用，早已超越供佛、解渴、待客、养生、提神等功用。喝茶观心，是禅者的生活常课，也是遍一切时的正念禅修。

禅不是一种形式，而是一种用心。再进一步，是你用什么心。

禅的心是什么心？就是当下这个清明、没有造作的心。这个心我们人人都有，在凡不减，在圣不增，修行要做的，就是去认识它，熟悉它。

识得本心，就是修行。

喝茶，可以观心、识心；生活中的每一件事，每一个当下，也可以观心、识心。我们今天的修行，同样不只是喝茶。大家现在践行的正念生活日记，就是把禅带到生活的方方面面，真正去体会“行亦禅，坐

亦禅，语默动静体安然”。

所以大家要做的，就是从“正念生活日记”开始，老实实在地践行。

禅的心，就在那里，离我们并不遥远。大家好好努力，体会到清明、没有造作的心，也不会遥远。





THE ESSENTIALS OF MINDFULNESS PRACTICE

Master Jiqun

Translated by MPI Translation Center

**Meditation Teachings at Amrita Retreat Center
in the Autumn of 2021**

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In the early stage of developing the Mindful Peace Academy Program, we have laid a solid foundation in structured study. Currently, many students are entering into the study of the chapter on *Discussion of the Cultivation of Antidotes*, i.e. the Thirty-Seven Aids to Enlightenment, and are very keen to try meditation. Although we have not yet begun formal guidance, we have already discussed the relationship between mindfulness meditation and the Mindful Peace Academy Program extensively. In particular, since last year, I have been guiding you here in mindful walking, with over 200 related discourses.

Over the past few decades, mindfulness meditation has become popular worldwide. Although mindfulness originates from Buddhism, in practice, it is primarily used as a technique, such as mindfulness-based stress reduction and mindfulness-based cognitive therapy, etc., which are adopted in healthcare, science research, education, and corporate management to address the physical and mental issues of modern people. Such a technique is mainly used for medical treatment and health preservation. However, the right mindfulness described in Buddhism aims at liberation and awakening, which requires a connection with the entire Buddhist cultivation system.

In the Noble Eightfold Path, which serves as a common practice in Buddhism, Right Mindfulness is one component, along with Right View, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, and Right Concentration. This Right Mindfulness is not simply a technique; it permeates the entire practice, encompassing both the foundational mindfulness training and the aspect of no-thought attained in Chan practice.

In a sense, no-thought represents the highest form of Right Mindfulness.

We know that Chan Buddhism flourished during the Tang and Song dynasties, with many eminent masters emerging. *The Record of the Transmission of the Lamp* alone documents the lineages of over 1,700 Chan masters who attained enlightenment through meditation practice. Unfortunately, Chan Buddhism declined since the Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties. Chan emphasizes “pointing directly to the original mind” and seeks to enable practitioners to directly realize their originally enlightened nature. This is the very heart of the practice, but it requires a very sharp spiritual aptitude and the guidance of an insightful master, both of which are generally lacking in modern people. They don’t have a sharp spiritual aptitude, and an insightful master is hard to find. Therefore, the “essential step” provided by Chan Buddhism is actually beyond their reach. What can be done? We need to construct a ladder, establishing a foundation to improve spiritual aptitude through gradual and

progressive practice.

All sentient beings are equal and possess Buddha-nature, so why is there a disparity in spiritual aptitude? The key lies in the degree to which the mind is obscured by defilements. The purpose of gradual cultivation is to sweep away these defilements, gradually thinning the clouds of the mind until they disperse, allowing one to directly perceive their true nature. Therefore, spiritual aptitude is not fixed; just as a dull sword can be sharpened through grinding, spiritual aptitude can also be transformed. The Mindful Peace Academy Program is designed to guide individuals through effective training, shifting from dull spiritual aptitude to sharp spiritual aptitude.

The difficulty in Chan practice also lies in not knowing where to start, as the ancient masters said, “A mosquito bites an iron bull and cannot find its way through.” Therefore, the practice requires a method and a sequence. On the level of doctrine, it emphasizes strengthening taking refuge, generating bodhicitta, and cultivating the Right

View; on the level of actual practice, it involves training in concentration, mindfulness, and contemplation. Only in this way can doctrine guide cultivation, thus achieving synergy between the two. Without a method, one might know the goal but not the path to reach it, leading to mere lip service about enlightenment. The preliminary doctrinal learning and contemplation, including the methods of the Eight Steps and Three Meditations, not only help to resolve coarse afflictions but can also be combined with right mindfulness meditation to become an expedient means of realizing emptiness.

Next, I'll briefly introduce the essentials of right mindfulness meditation and the aspects that need to be emphasized in future study and practice.

I

ADJUSTING THE BODY

The focus of Chan meditation revolves around regulating the body and the mind, which is inseparable from sitting meditation. Influenced by Chan Buddhism, some believe that walking is Chan, sitting is Chan, and even mundane tasks like carrying firewood and fetching water are Chan, leading them to undervalue sitting meditation. This is a significant misunderstanding. Although Chan meditation is not limited to sitting, sitting meditation is an indispensable foundation. Through physical stillness, one can achieve mental stability, thereby enhancing concentration and unlocking wisdom.

In the early stages of sitting meditation, many people may experience physical discomfort, such as back or leg pain, and may find it difficult to sit for long periods of time. This is often related to improper posture. In the traditional approach, the correct posture is the *Seven-Point Postures of Vairochana*, which consists of seven requirements for the body. When properly adjusted, it can not only facilitate the flow of qi and blood, thus removing physical obstacles, but it can also help calm the mind. As the saying goes, “When the body is at ease, cultivation flourishes.”

First, sit cross-legged.

In Buddhist practice, the ideal sitting posture is the “full-lotus position,” where both insteps of the feet are placed on the opposite thighs, also known as the “cross-legged position.” However, not everyone can sit in this position, and it may be difficult to sustain for a long time. If the body is not flexible enough, one can opt for a “half-lotus position.” The right foot can rest on the left

thigh (Vajra position), or the left foot on the right thigh (Easy pose). If even the “half-lotus position” is challenging, an “easy pose” can be adopted. Due to individual differences in physical conditions, there’s no need to force yourself into a specific position. The key principle is to sit with a comfortable and upright posture, allowing for gradual progress. The cushion should be of moderate firmness – too soft can cause sinking, while too hard can cause leg pain. In addition, a cushion under the hips can help the knees touch the floor, stabilizing the legs in a triangular shape. This is especially helpful for beginners, as it prevents them from leaning backward. Those who can maintain the full-lotus position for longer periods of time can choose according to their own preferences based on their long-term sitting experience.

Second, form a Dhyana Mudra with the hands.

Place both hands in front of the body, with the right hand resting on top of the left, and the thumbs lightly touching, positioned below the navel. Alternatively, the hands

can be gently placed on the knees.

Third, maintain an upright spine.

The ancients likened the sitting posture to a bell, signifying a state of centered stability. However, this uprightness is not achieved through deliberately tensing the body, nor is it the same as the common notion of “chest out and chin up,” which can lead to physical tension. One can visualize each vertebrae stacking up as a building block, each one resting on the other, standing straight but without a specific point of exertion. Deep breathing can also help guide the breath down to the dantian (the center of the body, one inch below the navel), creating a sense of the body being inflated, much like pumping air into a tire to make it round and full. Unlike a deflated tire which slumps and tilts, an inflated tire appears firm and upright. The body should not lean forward or backward, sway from side to side, or rely on any support. While some may prefer to meditate leaning against a wall for comfort, doing so may lead to drowsiness, turning the practice into rest rather

than meditation. A proper posture not only reflects the dignity of life but also promotes the unimpeded circulation of qi and blood, contributing to a calm mind.

Fourth, keep the shoulders level.

They should neither hunch forward nor be uneven in height. Avoid slouching or leaning forward or backward. Instead, imagine a horizontal beam across the upright spine, evenly supporting the entire body.

Fifth, keep the head upright and the neck straight.

The head should be positioned on the shoulders through the neck, which should be held straight. The head itself should also be upright, neither leaning forward nor backward, nor tilting to the side. One can visualize a gentle string hanging from the ceiling, lifting the crown of the head slightly, naturally aligning the head. At the same time, the chin should be slightly tucked in, but not in a deliberate manner.

Sixth, lower the eyes.

Usually, the eyes are slightly closed, allowing a bit of light to filter through and rest on a point about one to two meters in front of you, without focusing on anything specific. This helps prevent drowsiness. If you find your mind to be rather agitated and that closing your eyes brings more tranquility and makes it easier to concentrate, then you can keep them closed.

Seventh, place the tongue against the roof of the mouth.

Lightly touch the palate just behind the front teeth.

These are the key points for adjusting the sitting posture, particularly for beginners. After assuming the posture, it's important to check each part of the body. As we can see, athletes need to standardize their basic movements in any training regimen. Only by getting the posture right can one develop their physical potential and achieve results. It is the same case with sitting meditation. The focus of

postural adjustment is to correct the posture. Whatever posture one takes, the principles are relaxation, naturalness, and comfort; there is no need to exert deliberate force or become stiff. With the body properly adjusted, one can sit steadily and calmly. Then, through consistent training, one will become increasingly at ease, and their power of concentration will also grow.

II

ADJUSTING THE MIND

Adjusting the body is important, but it is only a supportive condition for meditation. The purpose of meditation is to adjust the mind, which is the key to practice. There are three levels of adjusting the mind: first, selecting an object to cultivate concentration and awareness; second, bringing this awareness into daily life, staying with it constantly, and continuously strengthening it; and third, letting go of awareness to realize a state of no-thought.

1. Choosing an Object of Focus to Cultivate Concentration and Awareness

Choose an object as the target to train concentration and awareness. For example, when walking in meditation, settle your mind on the action of walking, being clearly aware of each change with “foot lifting, stepping forward, foot landing; foot lifting, stepping forward, foot landing.” During the practice of taking refuge, we can take the name of Buddha as the object of focus, silently repeating “Buddha, Buddha,” and keeping the mind centered on the name. The same principle applies to activities like washing dishes or weeding; the activity itself becomes the meditation object. In short, choose a target that does not produce side effects. Especially in the early stages of practice, the meditation object must be simple and not likely to provoke emotional responses. Choosing something you particularly like can lead to attachment, while choosing something you dislike can stir up aversion.

When sitting in meditation, we can take the breath as our object of meditation, maintaining a natural state of breathing, and then focus on it. The *Satipatthana Sutta* provides detailed instructions on this: being aware of long

breaths when they are long, short breaths when they are short, subtle breaths as subtle, and deep breaths as deep... In essence, be aware of the current state of the breath exactly as it is, without addition or subtraction, clearly and distinctly. If practicing while walking, anchor your mind on each step; if engaged in an activity, focus on the task at hand. “Concentration” here means to let the mind dwell continuously and stably on the chosen object of meditation, preventing the rise of distracting thoughts.

The Nine Stages of Training the Mind outlines a progression from placement of the mind, continuous placement, repeated placement, followed by close placement, taming the mind, pacifying the mind, and finally culminating in fully pacifying the mind, single-pointing, and balanced placement. However, in the practice of meditation, the mind is not always compliant. This is because distraction is a habitual state of the mind, and simply sitting in meditation does not immediately quell wandering thoughts; most people need to undergo repeated training. In this process, two major issues must be addressed: one is the

scattering and lifting of attention, getting lost in thoughts or emotions, wandering aimlessly; the other is dullness and lethargy, being unaware of the present physical and mental state.

How to solve these problems? It is necessary to maintain awareness. The emphasis of early-stage meditation is not to study the object of attention, but to use it as a focus for training the mind's stability and awareness. With this reference point, when the mind deviates from the focus, we can promptly realize it and restore our attention, allowing the mind to emerge from states of ignorance, dullness, distraction, and restlessness.

2. Abiding in Awareness and Bringing it into Every Moment

After training in awareness during seated meditation, we also need to bring it into every moment of our daily life. In the mind assessment section of the Bodhi Navigator App, we need to examine the extent of our afflictions in

three dimensions: mild, moderate, or severe. How long do afflictions linger in our minds? Do they occur occasionally or frequently? Once they arise, are we immediately aware of them, or does it take a long time to become aware, or do we not notice them at all?

This is related to the degree of ignorance on one hand, and the strength of right mindfulness and vigilance on the other. If the cloud of ignorance is thick, we will always remain unaware, finding it difficult to arouse awareness. However, if you are well-trained and the lamp of your mind has already been lit to a certain extent, or even if it remains constantly lit, then you can immediately become aware of any thoughts that arise. Meditation is about developing this power of awareness and making it increasingly stronger.

Mindfulness training in society also emphasizes the power of awareness, but it often stops there. From the perspective of Buddhist practice, mindfulness also encompasses elements of wisdom, which are inseparable from Right

View and Right Thought. Mere awareness is insufficient. Without wisdom, awareness alone cannot lead us towards liberation.

During the process of meditation, we need to keep being aware not only of the intended object but also of our mental activities during meditation. Are the mental activities during meditation different from those in real life? It can be said that they are both the same and different. Although their manifestations vary greatly, they all occur within our minds; they are all functions of the mind. In life, there are wonderful sensations, as well as painful experiences and various delusions, even unimaginable ones, and the same is true in meditation.

Without the discipline of mindfulness training, we may approach our thoughts with the ingrained habits and cognitive patterns of samsara. These samsaric patterns are characterized by the poisons of greed, hatred, and ignorance: clinging, indulging, and yearning for what pleases us; and aversion, suffering, and rejection towards what

displeases us. We must maintain awareness of all these phenomena, clearly recognizing what is unfolding in the present moment. Yet, this recognition should not lead us into a system of judgment, nor should it provoke deliberate conceptual discrimination. This aligns with the principles of Vipassana meditation, which advocates for equanimity, where there is neither attachment nor aversion, no judgment or rejection.

This resonates with the practice of Chan Buddhism. The opening lines of the *Faith in Mind* by the Third Chan Patriarch state, “The Way is not difficult, it only abhors picking and choosing. Without love or hate, everything becomes clear and undisguised. A hair’s breadth difference, and heaven and earth are set apart.” The Way refers to the highest truth. The truth itself is not difficult, for it is always there, and everyone possesses the potential to recognize it. However, the moment we start to discriminate and choose, we inevitably fall into the trap of duality and judgment, entering the system of mental discrimination, and thus stray from the truth.

If we have truly realized the Way, then distinctions themselves are not a problem; they are simply the function of discerning wisdom. As stated in the *Vimalakirti Sutra*, “One who can wisely discern the characteristics of all phenomena remains unmoved in the ultimate truth.” To abide in the realm of emptiness is to possess discriminative wisdom while transcending discrimination. However, the discriminations made by ordinary beings often come with strong attachments, trapping them in a world of duality, making it impossible for them to realize their pure, original nature.

Why does Chan Buddhism emphasize practice in daily life? It is because Chan practice is an exploration of the mind, a way for us to recognize the true nature of our mind. Through this, we can bring such mindfulness into our daily lives, facing everyone and everything with awareness and maintaining a state of clarity. This kind of awareness prevents us from getting caught up in external conditions because it helps us to keep a distance from them. We do not fall into clinging, nor are we disturbed

by distinctions. Furthermore, this inner observation can help calm the disturbances brought about by external circumstances and our own thoughts.

The problems faced in meditation are essentially twofold: the presentation of mental images, and various mental activities, including afflictions and emotions. People actually live in these mental images and thoughts. Because they cannot see clearly, they become ensnared in attachments to these mental images and thoughts, unable to break free. In fact, the power of these images and thoughts is related to how much we care about them. The more we care, the greater the emotional power accumulated in our minds, and consequently, the greater the disturbances produced.

In Chinese history, the *Diamond Sutra* and the *Heart Sutra* have become popular classics among the masses because of their profound right view of emptiness. When people come to understand that “all conditioned phenomena are like dreams, illusions, bubbles, shadows, dew, and lightning, and should be viewed as such,” they can, to

varying degrees, alleviate the disturbances brought about by external circumstances and internal states of mind.

3. Letting Go of Awareness to Realize No-thought

Awareness has two dimensions: one is the level of consciousness, and the other is the level that transcends consciousness. After a certain amount of meditation practice, we also need to let go of various setups, goals, and pursuits in order to experience a mind like the void.

Emptiness and luminosity are two qualities of the mind. During the practice of taking refuge, I guide everyone to see for themselves, what is the nature of their own mind? Does it have a color, does it have a shape? Through introspection, we will find that the mind is formless. At this point, we can experience its emptiness and ungraspable nature. However, this emptiness is not non-existence; it also possesses the function of luminous knowing. Therefore, truly advanced practice doesn't require doing anything. When you no longer become entangled in

confusion, afflictions, or delusions, you can see the original face of the mind. This pure mind has always been there, neither arising nor ceasing, neither defiled nor pure, neither increasing nor decreasing.

In the three levels of meditation, the first is to select the object of attention in order to train concentration and awareness. The second is to abide in awareness and bring it into each present moment, which is the focus of the practice. Our understanding of the world includes both the subjective and objective aspects. The subjective pertains to our mental state, while the objective refers to external phenomena. Whenever we face any object, a series of mental processes are triggered. Thus, we must not only be aware of the object but also be mindful of various mental states, observing what state the mind is in: is it greed, anger, jealousy, or pride? This includes being clearly aware of various sensations that arise during meditation – have we become attached to them or have we rejected them?

When concentration and awareness have been trained to

a certain level, and the mind feels overly tense, one can engage in the practice of letting go. Without any aim or intention, the mind completely releases everything. However, this kind of letting go is not unconscious; it is a thorough awareness of all surrounding phenomena and the activities of the body and mind. In Buddhist terms, the mind is like a clear mirror – a huge mirror that can reflect everything, yet without any attachment, without liking or disliking.

During the Mid-Autumn Tea Ceremony, I encouraged everyone to learn how to naturally refrain from intentionally doing anything and to experience the state of not doing anything. Of course, thoughts may still arise in the mind, and we don't reject them either. It can be challenging to force ourselves not to think at all, and doing so may even lead to greater delusion. In fact, it's okay to have thoughts. The key is to be aware of them, as the Chan tradition teaches, "Being aware leads to no fault."

This kind of practice requires a certain foundation to

transcend all concepts and let go of everything, including meditation, enlightenment, and liberation. In fact, all these are merely expedient means to help us realize the pure mind. In the pure mind dimension, none of those things exist. However, in order to guide sentient beings, the Buddha provided so many Dharma Gates specifically targeting our attachments, afflictions, and the cycle of birth and death.

When we learn to do nothing, we can directly experience the raw, unadorned mind. As the *Surangama Sutra* states, “When the mad mind ceases, cessation is enlightenment.” When the mind truly comes to rest, it becomes empty and pure, yet at the same time, clear and aware. This mind may seem ordinary, but it is precisely what all cultivation aims to realize. Then, we need to continuously familiarize ourselves with it, allowing this state to permeate every moment and every situation. This requires effort because our ignorance, afflictions, defilements, and habitual patterns are deeply ingrained.

We can integrate these three steps and, based on the foundation of the first two steps, practice the third step appropriately. When we feel insufficient strength, we can return to the previous two steps for training. Once the defilements have been stripped away to a certain extent, we can move on to practice the third step. Eventually, we will develop the ability to completely relax, let go, and experience a mind like the void. This is what the *Platform Sutra* refers to as “no-thought as the principle, no-form as the essence, and no-abidance as the basis.” No-thought means the mind that transcends conceptual thought; no-form means the mind that is like the void, devoid of any form or image; no-abidance refers to the mind’s illumination, not dwelling and not clinging to any phenomena. This state is like the saying that goes, “Passing through a thicket of flowers, not a single leaf adheres.”

————— Appendix: —————

**MINDFULNESS AND
NO-THOUGHT**

**2023 Spring Lecture
at Amrita Retreat Center, Taining**

This time when I came back, I coincidentally caught the lilacs in full bloom. I thought of sitting down with everyone, having some tea, and enjoying the flowers together.

Last year, we also had a Lilac Tea Ceremony here. That was a beginner tea ceremony, focusing on brewing and drinking tea. Time flies, and now it's another year of lilac blossoms, and the tea ceremony has advanced to the intermediate level. The intermediate tea ceremony has been in discussion for quite some time, and this is my first time

participating in such a formal rendition, brewing and drinking tea.

I

LISTENING TO TEA, OBSERVING THE MIND

Just now, everyone sat together in silence, listening to the tea gradually boiling. This segment is the third step of the beginner tea ceremony “Seven Steps to Mindful Tea” — “Boiling Water, Listening to Tea” — which I later renamed “Boiling Water, Observing the Mind.” Since the intermediate tea ceremony replaced boiling water with brewing tea, this step is now called “Brewing Tea, Observing the Mind.”

In the intermediate tea courses, “Brewing Tea, Observing the Mind” is performed very well. This entire period

is completely blank. The tea is brewing on the charcoal stove, neither hurried nor slow; people are sitting on meditation cushions, silent and still. Everyone is quietly idle, each in their own way. During the lilac season, we are here, just sitting, with nothing special to do...

During the tea-brewing session just now, I wonder if everyone was observing their mind or waiting for something. Was there nothing to expect, or was your expectation dashed? Did everyone drink the tea that was brewing?

During this process, we are just sitting here, simply sitting. Even though the object of focus is weak and nothing is done, this mind that does nothing has not lost its effect. Our mind has awareness, not like wood; we have a mind that can perceive, not a clay or wooden statue of a bodhisattva. Although we are just sitting leisurely, we can feel the vastness of the universe, the breath of spring, the revival of life, and the presence of all things. At the same time, we can also hear the sound of tea brewing. All of this is clear and vividly known.

Besides the external world, we also feel our inner self. What is the state of our mind at this moment? Is there anxiety, expectation, curiosity, boredom? Doing nothing? Or is it very quiet and joyful? In fact, the state of mind is not important, and we do not necessarily need our mind to be in a particular state. At this moment, there are no requirements, no expectations, no settings.

What we need to do is to clearly feel everything in the present, with the mind dwelling nowhere, like the universe, so vast and infinite; like all things, just there, without contrivance; like the tea, brewing when it should, naturally; like the lilacs, blooming and falling year after year.

At this moment, when the mind no longer has a focal point, one can feel the vastness of the mind.

II

MINDFULNESS AND NO-THOUGHT

In mindfulness meditation, two types of mental powers are cultivated. One is concentration: when drinking tea, one focuses solely on drinking tea. The other is awareness: while drinking tea, one maintains a clear awareness of the process. This clarity is the inherent clear power of our mind.

Mindfulness meditation involves intentional effort, whereas no-thought meditation involves letting go of the object of focus and letting go of intentional effort.

Letting go of the object of focus means allowing the mind

to have no focal point and not needing to concentrate on one point.

Letting go of intentional effort means simply being aware — aware of everything happening in the present moment, aware of everything occurring in nature, and also aware of everything happening within the mind. Just knowing is enough. No-thought meditation has a characteristic: “See the nature of thoughts and realize their emptiness.” As long as you recognize the thought, it will return to the ocean of awakening, just as all waves are essentially water.

The mind can be aware because everyone inherently possesses a clear and pure mind. The clear and pure mind is like a clear lake, and also like a bright mirror, having the function of clear knowing. This power does not need to be obtained through intentional effort.

Of course, in the beginning, it is still necessary to cultivate concentration and awareness to initiate awareness. Therefore, in the three levels of mindfulness meditation, from

beginner to intermediate meditation, we initiate awareness. In advanced meditation, we let go of awareness and realize no-thought.

No-thought is the clear, uncontrived mind in the present moment.

III

CONTRIVED AND UNCONTRIVED

As we sit here brewing tea, drinking tea, and observing the mind, we actually don't need to do anything. At this moment, just sitting here is practice.

This is because there are two different levels of practice: one is contrived, and the other is uncontrived. Contrived practice involves intentional actions; uncontrived practice is experiencing the clear and pure mind directly, which is inherently complete and requires no effort.

In the beginning and intermediate stages of mindfulness meditation, we still need to practice with effort. This is

because when the clear and pure mind cannot function, we still live within the system of deluded thoughts. When the mind is drowsy and scattered, it cannot escape the torrent of habitual patterns. The torrent of habitual patterns obscures the pure mind, and only through diligent effort and mindful practice can we escape the torrent and return to clarity.

Chan masters of the past often said, “Is there something to practice in meditation? Is there something to do in meditation?” Actually, realizing the mind does not require doing anything. But breaking through habitual patterns requires effort. When sitting in meditation, feeling bodily aches, having continuous thoughts, and struggling with drowsiness are all manifestations of the ordinary mind. The Buddha taught 84,000 Dharma gates and spoke of precepts, concentration, and wisdom to help us break through the torrent of habitual patterns. Mindfulness meditation is a key practice among them.

In mindfulness meditation, practicing Samatha cultivates

concentration, which quiets the mind. Practicing Vipassana on the basis of concentration awakens the inner power of observation and awareness. Through the meditation of Samatha and Vipassana, the mind gradually quiets down, allowing us to slowly experience inner clarity without contrived efforts. With the support of certain conditions, even deluded thoughts can become empty.

At last year's Mid-Autumn Tea Ceremony, I told everyone to try to experience the mind's uncontrived capacity. Just like today, sitting quietly, like a lilac falling on the grass, doing nothing and for no reason — this is the power of being uncontrived.

Doing nothing might seem foolish and easy. Is being uncontrived still a kind of capacity? Actually, achieving uncontrived practice is not easy. When we study the *Treatise on the Hundred Dharmas*, the first ninety-four are contrived phenomena, and the last six are uncontrived phenomena. What does “contrived” mean? It means intentional actions. What does “uncontrived” mean? It means

no intentional actions. The uncontrived mind needs to be realized through meditation.

Some might say, “Then I’ll just let my mind be completely without effort, without any thoughts arising.” Can you control your mind? No, you can’t. Can you make it stop generating thoughts just because you want it to? It’s not possible.

The uncontrived mind does not mean it cannot have thoughts; it means not deliberately doing anything. The essence of uncontrived meditation is to experience this uncontrived mind. What we need to do is, on one hand, not to exert effort in the mind, and on the other, to experience the uncontrived mind.

We are not like wood; we still carry the habitual patterns of samsara, and intentional actions are inevitable. Do thoughts running around matter? Both yes and no.

Saying it matters means that if the mind follows the

thoughts, falling into them and getting entangled, then it matters. Or if there is resistance and dislike towards the thoughts, it also matters. Chan Buddhism talks about not welcoming or rejecting, and mindfulness meditation speaks of non-judgment, both telling us, “The Way is not difficult, it only abhors picking and choosing.” When thoughts arise and you distinguish good thoughts from bad thoughts, then it matters.

Saying it doesn’t matter means that when thoughts arise, just recognize them. As mentioned earlier, “See the nature of thoughts and realize their emptiness.” Every thought has two aspects: clarity and delusion. Choosing the aspect of clarity or following the aspect of delusion is the key to meditation practice. If we face thoughts with habitual patterns of samsara, they will become the conditions for further samsara. If we face them with awareness, each thought can return to the ocean of awakening in the present moment, because the nature of thoughts is awakening and inseparable from awareness.

Therefore, meditation is not about eliminating thoughts completely but learning to face each thought with awareness.

The uncontrived mind has the characteristics of emptiness, clarity, and stillness.

Emptiness means the mind is as vast as the void. How big is our mind? How vast is it? The *Surangama Sutra* tells us that the void is within our mind, like a few clouds. The uncontrived mind is so broad, vast, and boundless. When the mind is not caught in thoughts, it can experience this void-like vastness. Once caught in thoughts, thoughts become our entire world, and naturally, we can not see the vast mind.

Clarity means clearly knowing. As everyone sits here doing nothing, the mind can clearly know everything. The slight boiling of tea, the falling of the lilac flowers, the visit of past events... from all external movements to all internal movements, everything can be perceived clearly.

Stillness means that when resting in the non-dual mind of emptiness and clarity, we can feel that the mind at this moment is still. Stillness does not necessarily mean the absence of all thoughts. When resting in the non-dual mind of emptiness and clarity, whether there are thoughts or not, the inner peace remains. As it is said, “The vast sky does not hinder the flying white clouds.” Whether the sky is full of rosy clouds or rolling dark clouds, they do not obstruct the existence of the void. Similarly, thoughts do not affect the stillness of the mind.

IV

GRASPING OR RELAXING

Mindfulness meditation and no-thought meditation can be combined.

For beginners in meditation, mindfulness meditation should be the primary focus, with an appropriate amount of no-thought meditation practice.

For example, when concentrating on an object for a long time, one may feel very tired. At this point, you can let go of the object, let go of the effort, and try to rest in awareness and clarity of the mind. During this time, the mind actually won't be scattered. If you enter a state of

ignorance, the mind will scatter.

It's like organizing a very important event that requires a lot of preparation. When we invest all our time, energy, and physical strength into it, working tirelessly with constant tension, anxiety, and worry until it is finally successfully completed, what kind of feeling do we experience when we can finally rest? We feel a big sigh of relief, a complete relaxation and release. At this moment, we can realize that when the mind is emptied, the joy of relaxation naturally arises. It shows that doing things with attachment is like being bound to a place, making both body and mind suffer. Once the task is completed and we liberate ourselves from attachment, the mind immediately relaxes.

Relaxation is very important in meditation.

What should we relax? The essence of this question is: what problems does practice aim to solve?

The most important aspect of practice is to resolve two types of attachment, namely the attachment to self and the attachment to the world. Ordinary people always have many thoughts, many assumptions, and many expectations about this world; likewise, they have many thoughts, many assumptions, and many expectations about themselves. All these form internal attachments. Where do we live? In fact, we live in the attachments of our minds to various thoughts, assumptions, and expectations.

Relaxation means loosening the mind, completely letting go of these attachments. When the mind lets go of its attachments to the world and the self, it returns to its original state.

The joy of physical and mental relaxation that comes after completing a task is the inherent joy of relaxation; it is rooted within life and comes from the source of the mind.

While practicing mindfulness, you can appropriately try no-thought practice: let go of the object, bring awareness,

and feel everything in the external world and the inner world. Occasionally, calm the mind, let go of the tasks at hand, let go of the plans in the mind, and sit quietly for a while, doing nothing, just sitting idly with a clear and pure mind, feeling everything happening in the present moment.

Entering no-thought practice requires a certain foundation in meditation. If the mind is very scattered, ignorance is like a thick layer of clouds. Without an anchor of focus to hold on, the mind will be muddled, either thinking about this and that or feeling utterly bored, and various problems will arise immediately.

Laying a good foundation in mindfulness meditation and appropriately experiencing the state of no-thought will make no-thought meditation achievable. Further, as the practice deepens, the power of emptiness and clarity in the mind increases, and thoughts decrease, making it possible to practice no-thought meditation more extensively.

V

TEA OR CHAN

Using tea as a theme for meditation is a fine tradition in Buddhism.

The Record of the Source Mirror of the Five Lamps, the *Records of Pointing at the Moon*, and various other lamp records, as well as the monastic regulations like the *Regulations of the Baizhang Monastery Rewritten by Imperial Decree*, document a wealth of historical facts about practicing meditation through tea activities. In my research, I discovered that the traditional methods of incorporating tea into meditation mainly fall into two categories: loose and structured.

Loose practices refer to Chan practitioners using tea drinking to guide students at any time, which is common in Chan koans. There are no fixed rituals or special forms. It's like Zhaozhou's "Go drink tea," just one sentence. This "Go drink tea" is not asking you to distinguish the variety, reputation, or value of the tea but to experience the mind that can drink tea, to recognize the pure mind of the present moment that is drinking tea. This mind can be deep or shallow, earnest or humorous. If you can truly drink this cup of tea, the essence of the entire Buddhist canon is within it.

Structured practices involve following strict monastic regulations and ceremonies, drinking tea with meticulous organization, complete rituals, dignified demeanor, and respectful conduct, using tea to focus the mind and perceive one's nature. In monastic regulations, the rules, etiquette, and procedures for drinking tea are integrated into various activities and are ubiquitous.

In monasteries, drinking tea is part of the daily life of

Chan practitioners and also a means of guiding students and the public. The influence and role of drinking tea in Chan monasteries have long surpassed its functions of offering to the Buddha, quenching thirst, hosting guests, promoting health, and refreshing the mind. Observing the mind while drinking tea is a regular practice for Chan practitioners and a form of mindfulness meditation throughout all times.

Chan is not a form but a way of using the mind. Further, it's about what kind of mind you use.

What is the mind of Chan? It is the present, clear, and uncontrived mind. Everyone has this mind; it does not diminish in the ordinary person nor increase in the sage. The goal of practice is to recognize it and become familiar with it.

To recognize the true mind is to practice.

Drinking tea can be a way to observe and recognize the

mind, and every activity and moment in life can also be an opportunity to observe and recognize the mind. Our practice today is not limited to drinking tea. The mindfulness daily journal that everyone is practicing now is about bringing Chan into all aspects of life, truly experiencing “Walking is Chan. Sitting is Chan. In speech, silence, movement, and stillness, one is always at ease.”

So, what everyone needs to do is to honestly practice starting with the mindfulness daily journal.

The mind of Chan is right there, not far from us. If you make a good effort, experiencing the clear and uncontrived mind will not be far away either.

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