

Introduction to Anapanasati

Starting point of Chan Cultivation

Spiritual cultivation has three stages. The first stage is what we are going to teach today, called Anapanasati. The second stage is called the Stabilization stage, where you are finally getting to a proper state. And the third stage is called Superior Advancement.

Let's talk about the first stage, Anapanasati. The Chinese counterpart of the Anapanasati Sutta was translated by An Shigao, a master of sutra translator in Buddhism. However, people who came after him probably misunderstood what he meant by Anapanasati (安般守意). Anapan (安般) is the Chinese short term of Anapanasati 安那般那. People traditionally think that Ana (安那) means counting breath, which was wrong! What Ana (安那) means is to refine breath (or Pranayama), which generates 般那 Prana. That is why we phrase these parts as Anapana 安那般那. To suit the Chinese language, An Shigao simplified the word 安那般那 (Anapana) as 安般 (Anapan).

Traditionally, the master Zhi Yi (智者大师), taught Anapana (安那般那) as the Contemplation of Breath. This way of teaching has a big hit in history and even is used today. In the year 2000, I dropped this particular way of teaching because I found that it didn't suit people in the modern world. The Contemplation of Breath nowadays is not the Contemplation of Breath taught by Zhi Yi. Nowadays, people would practice counting breath first, then following the breath without counting, lastly letting go of the following and staying with stillness. However, this method does not work well. In Zhi Yi's time, he healed his brother's illness and prolonged his life by 20 more years with just this method alone. This effect is impossible to reach in modern days. That is why we use the phrase 調息法 "Refine Breath" (Pranayama) instead.

Before Breath Refinement, there is Body Refinement. Only after the body is properly adjusted that you can adjust your breath. That is why we phrase 安那 as Breath Refinement. The result of this refinement will create 般那 Prana (Sanskrit). There is a whole lot about all these! If you want to learn it, you'd have

to study it deeply. You'd have to learn these things in the Dharma hall, not in the Chan hall. In the Chan hall, it is where we'd teach you to just do it and practice.

Sati (守意) of Anapanasati is another project, which means to be able to encapsulate the illusive mind and not let it wander. You can call Sati as Dhyana, but we define it as Inner-observing, the observing part (觀) of contemplation. The Chan part of contemplation belongs to 安那般那 (Anapana).

Anapana is the object while Sati is the enabler. **Enabler and object** are a pair and perform simultaneously, which is why we'd call them Concurrence of Meditation and Wisdom (定慧等持) and it is later part of the Chan cultivation. The early part of the cultivation in Sanskrit is Samāhita (三摩呬多). Concurrence of Meditation and Wisdom (定慧等持) is Samapatti while the Great Dhyana is Samadhi (等至). That is why you should know what you are trying to learn. In Huayen Chan hall, our lineage and school of teaching is Eastern Mountain School Teaching system. The above mentioned is what the system teaches. Can you do it? Will you be able to learn how to do it? Why is this way of Chan's teaching different from other types of teaching?

Because it is to teach one move directly into the practice of the part of contemplation from here.

So Anapanasati is the first standard you'd have to meet. You won't be able to move further without it.

First, what we are going to talk about is after the Body Refinement, you'd need to sit in the style of the Seven Points Meditation Posture Of Vairocana:

1. Legged crossed. Please do follow the teacher's instructions.
2. The three point support system includes two legs and the butt.
3. Your hands need to be in the proper meditation posture. However, your hands now are wrong. The thumbs should be toward each other.
4. Head should be upright. Is yours upright? Do it proper now.
5. Spine should be straight. Shoulder levels.
6. Eyes looking forward, opening and closing naturally. Keep them 1/3 way open.
7. Tongue going up to the upper jaw, which will produce saliva naturally.

8. Push inward your jaw so that the top of your head is upright.

When the two bottoms of the feet, the two palms of the hands and the top of your head are all facing upward toward the sky, it is called 5 Uprights to Supremes, a term used in Vajrayana Buddhism (**Esoteric Buddhism**). You'd have to sit properly with this basic style. It is the foundation you'd have to do well. If you can't sit well, how can you practice Chan?

This sitting style is the first part of sitting meditation. If you cannot do this, then you'd have to go back, learn and practice the prerequisite (ie. the Purification Chan). You need to refine your body well until you can sit in this style. The reason your head is upright and jaw is pushed inward, is to make the crown chakra and the base chakra stay in a straight upright line. This line means Heaven, Earth, and you becoming one. I have explained this pretty clearly. So this particular sitting position talks about the body being stabilized, breathing lightly, and the mind is free from worries. In this way, one could stay still over a kalpa (a very long unit of time in Buddhism). That is why we have the saying "If one meditates for only a split of a second, it would be like for eternity. If one could collect one's mind in this way, one could realize Buddha-nature soon." Chan starts from this sitting style. No negotiation, no matter what. So don't wiggle your body. The prerequisite of sitting training is the moving meditation of body refinement training, however, this part does not allow movement. Once you sit down, you should be like a nail nailed to the ground.

Now secondly, let's discuss Breath Refinement. When we refine our breathing, it should be after body refinement is done. To refine your breathing when you are sitting upright in the right sitting style. Right now, we are sitting upright in the right sitting style. If you don't want to sit like this, it's your problem. But I do require you to do so. That is why we say cultivation is up to the individual and it is your own decision about what to do with your life on liberation. I am not the one who will benefit from your practice. If you don't want to, then why are you here? Let's be clear about that.

Breath Refinement has three stages. When refining your breathing, focus on the one-pointed position which is a very important requirement. At the first stage, pay attention to the wind gate and breathe naturally. Actually we already teach you this during Body Refinement training (Purification Chan training) when we

teach you how to breathe properly. If you are not in the right state, you should go back and get it right first. We can not teach you Body Refinement in sitting meditation training if you are not willing to put in effort, as we are not a karate shop. So how to refine your breath to a proper normal breathing, this part is taught during the Body Refinement Training.

The second stage is the stable and correct breathing state, also called long breathing or deep breathing. It has to be very stable. For some of you who practice Cundi mantra in the Vajrayana Buddhism practice, it is actually refining breathing. However, what you are doing can only help to calm, stabilize the mind frequency and it won't guarantee to achieve enlightenment.

The third stage is when you can clearly observe the state of the four phases of breathing and when slight body adjustment starts. From this point, we then need to discuss Anapanan (安南般那). We can not teach you Chan cultivation yet if you have not reached here and you are not even close to Samahita yet. Samahita is to refine breathing when you are in the Sitting Down training and your body has slight change. This is where you need to pay attention. We start the teaching after your body begins to slightly adjust, which is still a prequalification. Are you meeting the Body Refinement standards? If not, we can not help you in this level of teaching. We do not provide exams and we only teach the way to practice. Can you do it? After this, what we need to do is to work on Samahita which we also call it Concurrence of Meditation and Wisdom - the Samei method(三昧門). This is where we teach Anapanan (安南般那) with three phases - Samahita training, afterwards is the formal training Samapatti and Samadhi which is the attainment phase, that has six phases and each of them is a huge and complex project.

Samapatti has three worthy levels, and ten sagehood stages among which, all the way to the stage of the Seventh Ground of the Bodhisattva belongs to Samapatti. After the stage of the Eighth Ground Bodhisattva (the eighth, the ninth and tenth ground bodhisattva), it reached the eminent status only which belonged to Samadhi and Samadhi has six phases. We say that it must follow through step by step. Do not try to be too smart.

Because what we are discussing is the Concurrence project (定慧等持), therefore you will need the Concurrence project training, which is Anapanasati. What we will teach and practice is Anapanasati.