

## **Lin Kok Collection** ⑤

### Bodhidharma's Teaching

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# The Lin Kok Collection

In 1935, the late Lady Ho Tung founded Tung Lin Kok Yuen in Hong Kong with the objective of fostering Buddhist education and training people to be knowledgeable in Buddhism.

At that time, the Yuen published a Buddhist magazine, “The Light of Humanity”, which was distributed locally as well as overseas. It included many outstanding articles.

Now, with the purpose of carrying on Lady Ho Tung’s mission of spreading Buddhism to humankind, Members of the Yuen have published “The Lin Kok Collection”. The Lin Kok Collection is a compilation of writings by learned authors, at home and abroad, with expert knowledge of Buddhism, and bound into a book; so that others may be able to study and reflect on the true meaning of Life.

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## *Bodhidharma's Teaching (I)*

**Venerable Eshin Godfrey**

Bodhidharma was born around the year 440 in Kanchi, the capital of the southern Indian kingdom of Pallava. He was a Brahman by birth and the third son of King Simhavarman. When he was young he was converted to Buddhism and later received instruction in the Dharma from Prajnatarā, whom his father had invited from the ancient Buddhist heartland of Magadha. Prajnatarā was a master in the Dhyana school of Buddhism which was later transliterated to Ch'an in Chinese, Zen in Japanese and Son in Korean. It was Prajnatarā who told Bodhidharma to go to China. Bodhidharma arrived in China about 475, traveled around for a few years and finally settled at Shaolin temple.

Bodhidharma had only a few disciples, including laypeople, both men and women. His was the first teaching of the Dhyana school outside of India. It was in China,

Korea and Japan that this school would flourish. Bodhidharma's teachings were recorded. Seventh and eighth century copies have been discovered earlier this century in the TunHuang caves. His best known sermon is 'Outline of Practice'.

### **Outline of Practice**

'Many roads lead to the Way, but basically there are only two: reason and practice. To enter by reason means to realize the essence through instruction and to believe all living things share the same true nature, which isn't apparent because it's shrouded by sensation and delusion. Those who turn from delusion back to reality, who meditate on walls, the absence of self and other, the oneness of mortal and sage, and who remain unmoved even by sutras are completely in accord and unspoken agreement with reason. Without moving, without effort, they enter, we say, by reason'.

'Way' or Tao is used to translate Dharma and Bodhi when Buddhism was introduced to China.

"Reason and practice' complement each other. One must practice what one understands and learns, and one must understand one's practice otherwise it may become misguided.

'Same true nature' is Buddha Nature or True Self.

We all know our individual selves, our 'me' self. This is a limited and unclear self, one that we have developed unknowingly through our upbringing and conditioning. Buddhism points out that we can access or develop our realized self, called Buddha Nature.

'Isn't apparent' refers to the inherent Buddha Nature that is hidden by our mistaken functioning of mind. We sense objects through our sense organs. Our mind then separates from these objects, becomes dualistic, and all sorts of dualistic comparing, liking and disliking, attachment and avoidance, love and hate, arise. Buddhism strongly points out it is the dualistic separating of inside/outside, subject and object, man and woman, person and surroundings, that is the root of all our suffering. It is not simply the polarities, man and woman, person and surrounding, or subject and object, in themselves. It is when the two polarities are taken as fundamentally separate and dualistic that suffering begins.

'Turn back to reality' is Bodhidharma clear instruction to regain our original Buddha Nature, before our mind became dualistic, when we are at home with ourselves and our life and everything/one in it. 'Turn back' is certainly true expression. We can remember or see in babies a mind that is very non-dualistic and with a small sense of 'my' self. As children 'our' selves became stronger and more

autonomic yet still have the original pure, clear mind. Somehow, as we became adults, we became unbalanced towards 'my' self and the original mind became forgotten. 'Turn back' is acknowledging that our true self has always been with us, it's just that we have lost touch with it.

'Meditate' is the way of Dhyana. Today meditate often means to gain a subjective sense of peace or happiness. However, Dhyana is more like contemplation, the clear contemplation of the workings of our mind. The contemplative process is described in a very detailed way in Buddhism. Buddhism describes the many stages, styles and levels in the contemplation process that leads to, and in fact is, the realization of our true selves.

'Absence of self and other' is the first and third of Buddhism's Three Marks of Existence. These are Anitya or impermanence and Anatman or no-fixed-self. This phrase also indicates the lack of dualistic separation between ourselves and others. This is the basis of compassion. Others are equally worthy of respect and concern because fundamentally others are ourselves, strange as it may seem at first.

'Oneness of mortal and sage' is Bodhidharma pointing to the fact that even Shakyamuni was a human, he was not divine. The potential of enlightenment is within all of us. Through practice and understanding we can also

progress through the stages of Bodhisattvahood, right to Buddhahood.

'Unmoved even by sutras' is to abide in samadhi or the mind of oneness and non-duality. In samadhi we are 'at one with' and not reacting to the sutras. To be 'at one with' is the mind of compassion and here we are closely in accord with the sutras.

'Without moving, without effort, they enter, we say, by reason'. Here Bodhidharma is summarizing his comments on the way of reason. The way or state of Buddha Nature is entered by becoming one with the instructions and teachings. We do not have to go to another place or time to gain our Buddha Nature. It has always been with us, we cannot fundamentally lose it, it is losing touch with it that happens. To realize the teachings is to be enlightened by reason.

Next time Bodhidharma's comments on practice will be investigated. He starts by stating 'To enter by practice refers to four all-inclusive practices: suffering in justice,

## *Bodhidharma's Teaching (II)*

Venerable Eshin Godfrey

In the last issue Bodhidharma's teaching on 'reason' was examined. Bodhidharma explained that one could enter the Way or Path by realizing through instruction. He succinctly outlined the basic theory of the Dhyana school. This theory was to be studied and then realized.

Here is the continuation of his 'Outline of Practice' -

'Many roads lead to the Way, but basically there are only two: reason and practice.

To enter by practise refers to four all-inclusive practices: suffering injustice, adapting to conditions, seeking nothing, and practising the Dharma.'

Bodhidharma is referring to Shakyamuni's first teaching, which is the Four Noble Truths. Namely, all existence is marked by suffering; suffering has a cause; the cause can be brought to an end; the way to bring it to an end is the Eightfold Noble Path of right views, right

thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort/devotion, right mindfulness, right Zen.

‘First, suffering injustice. When those who search for a path encounter adversity, they should think to themselves ‘In countless ages gone by I’ve turned from the essential to the trivial and wandered through all manner of existences, often angry without cause and guilty of numberless transgressions. Now, though I do no wrong, I’m punished by my past. Neither gods nor men can foresee when an evil deed will bear it’s fruit. I accept it with an open heart and without complaint of injustice’. The sutra says ‘When you meet with adversity don’t be upset, because it makes sense’. With such understanding you’re in harmony with reason. And by suffering injustice you enter the path.’

The first Noble Truth is often explained by enumerating all the types of suffering that occur. However, Bodhidharma indicates how not to be bent out of shape by them. First he points out that these sufferings appear as adversities. Secondly he emphasizes how to accept and embrace them, thus ceasing any resistance to them. This is done by understanding that it is our karma that gives rise to our circumstances and state of being. By patiently accepting these results from the past we are no longer emotionally reacting to them. We come to accept injustices

as part of life. This provides a calmer state of being, one that is more able to practise the Dharma.

‘Second, adapting to conditions. As mortals we’re ruled by conditions not by ourselves. All the suffering and joy we experience depend on conditions. If we should be blessed by some great reward, such as fame or fortune, it’s the fruit of a seed planted by us in the past. When conditions change, it ends. Why delight in its existence? But while success and failure depend on conditions, the mind neither waxes nor wanes. Those who remain unmoved by the wind of joy silently follow the path.’

Before meeting the Dharma people live by reacting to circumstances. Grasping what seems pleasurable, avoiding what seems unpleasant, people strive to hold on to dependent pleasure and happiness. However, circumstances are impermanent and there is no way people can make circumstances always, eternally, provide their happiness.

Bodhidharma asks people to keep a steady mind, one that are not swayed by circumstances. This way one remains centred no matter what is occurring.

‘Third, seeking nothing. People of this world are deluded. They’re always longing for something - always, in a word, seeking. But the wise wake up. They choose reason over custom. They fix their minds on the sublime

and let their bodies change with the seasons. All phenomena are empty. They contain nothing worth desiring. 'Calamity forever alternates with Prosperity'. To dwell in the three realms is to dwell in a burning house. To have a body is to suffer. Does anyone with a body know peace? Those who understand this detach themselves from all that exists and stop imaging or seeking anything. The sutra says 'To seek is to suffer. To seek nothing is bliss'. When you seek nothing, you're on the path.'

One starts by seeking. Looking for enlightenment, peace, happiness, etc. Bodhidharma says it is only when we stop seeking outside that we can find the treasures of our mind and life. When we get attached to phenomena then our mind is buffeted by bad and good fortune. Bodhidharma uses the phrase 'Calamity forever alternates with Prosperity' referring to the two goddesses responsible for these in the Nirvana sutra. The three realms, with many sub realms, are states of confusion. These states are likened to a 'burning house' in the Lotus sutra. Confused attachment to phenomena is what Bodhidharma calls 'custom' and today we may say conditioning.

Seeking appears worthwhile at first. As we seek and gain insights we come to realize that by not looking outside for satisfaction we become open to true peace and steadiness.

'Fourth, practising the Dharma. The Dharma is the truth that all natures are pure. By this truth, all appearances are empty. Defilement and attachment, subject and object don't exist. The sutra says ' The Dharma includes no being because it's free from the impurity of being, and the Dharma includes no self because it's free from the impurity of self'. Those wise enough to believe and understand these truth are bound to practise according to the Dharma. And since that which is real includes nothing that is worth begrudging, they give their body, life, and property in charity, without regret, without the vanity of the giver, gift, or recipient, and without bias or attachment. And to eliminate impurity they teach others, but without being attached to form. Thus, through their own practise they're able to help others and glorify the Way of Enlightenment. And as with charity, they also practise the other virtues to eliminate delusion, they practise nothing at all. This is what's meant by practising the Dharma.'

Bodhidharma is showing the essence of Zen. When the mind is no longer dualistic it is in accord with circumstances. The mind that is apart from things is the mind that likes and dislikes, grasps or rejects, loves and hates, goes this way and that looking for peace. This is the mind that suffers. This is the mind that is self-centred.

By practising 'at one with' the suffering mind is gone. Our self and our life are still there but there is a harmony between inside and outside, self and other, subject and object. In fact, the sense of being separate has gone. Thus Bodhidharma can say there is no (impure) being, no (separate) self. This state is often called true self or Buddha Nature.

Buddha Nature naturally and spontaneously practices the Sila or Purities. Sila are not external precepts but the wholesome outpourings of an awakened being. For example, an awakened being is not caught up with thoughts of stealing or not stealing, but effortlessly leads a life of spotless integrity. Giving and charity are done without any thought of 'myself' that is giving. Awakened beings help others but without any concept of helping, thus there is the natural arising of compassion.

Bodhidharma ends by referring to the virtues or Paramitas. The practise of charity or generosity, morality or discipline, patience, energy or devotion, concentration or meditation, and wisdom are done without any concept of 'myself' doing them. Without any sense of 'myself' practising the Paramitas Bodhidharma can say 'they practise nothing at all. This is what's meant by practising the Dharma.' It is the natural and spontaneous outpouring of Bohhicitta.

## *Four Noble Truths*

**Venerable Eshin Godfrey**

All of us, I think, have a wish or urge to be happy, to fulfill ourselves, to be at peace in our life situation. This seems a very deep and natural desire we have. However, as we've grown up we've found difficulties in doing this. Our efforts to be happy haven't worked, certainly not for long. When we've relied on things or people for our happiness we've ended up being dependent for our happiness. We find our self-fulfillment stunted by situations, people, or our own doubting. We find it impossible to be at ease with our life situation when we perceive others thwarting or troubling us, or when things don't turn out the way we wish.

Without fully realizing it, we've ended up living in a limited or restricted way. At the same time we've found our potential limited we've lapsed into a set, rigid, and conditioned way of dealing with life.

To gain true happiness, peace and ease requires more than a personal 'me only' liberation. We must become liberated in the spiritual dimension as well. Buddhism is not a religion or philosophy, although it covers both areas. It is simply a collection of teachings, meditations, techniques, and ceremonies for us to become liberated of the tyranny of our conventional, unthinking standpoint.

Buddhism's founder, Shakyamuni, spent six years investigating spiritual liberation and salvation. He then gained deep realization in the fullest human and spiritual sense. He gave his first teaching to help his old spiritual friends at Deer Park. This teaching has come to be known as the Four Noble Truths. In ancient India medical knowledge was in the form of 1. Disease 2. Diagnosis 3. Cure 4. Treatment. The Four Noble Truths seem to be modeled on this, but apply to our spiritual wellbeing. The Four Noble truths are -

1. Dukha (Suffering)
2. Trishna/Raga (Origin of suffering - Craving)
3. Nirvana (Cessation of suffering)
4. Path that leads to the cessation of suffering (Noble Eightfold Path)

Dukha refers to conditioned things, things that arise and pass. It is not just physical pain or emotional suffering but includes subtle forms of discontent.

Some people think Buddhism is pessimistic on hearing the first truth, but :-

- a. this is only the first truth
- b. if it were the last then it would be egotistical.
- c. it is not the opposite of happiness.

Trishna (Craving) is thirst or desire. We need to understand suffering, and how it arises from looking outside for peace and fulfillment. We tend to look for satisfaction outside, to a partner, wealth, possessions, climate/location, etc. We eventually find these are not sustaining our fulfillment in the long run. We then tend to then look for more. It's like a boy getting his desired toy, quickly getting bored and then wanting another.

Causes of suffering cover -

1. Raga (Desire), desiring objects (including loved ones) for permanent solace.
2. Doshā (Ill-will), avoiding objects that does not satisfy us.
3. Avidya (Ignorance), not seeing things as they are and so wanting otherwise.

Ignorance is not just in the Western sense of being related to education and book knowledge. Ignorance means to be confused or deluded on how things truly are. When we see things as separate, we give rise to judging, liking/disliking, and this gives rise to suffering. A rigid, self-

centred self is the root of spiritual ignorance.

Nirvana is not a place like heaven. To end suffering is not to get something and then feel happy and peaceful. Nirvana cannot be explained, it must be experienced; for example, explaining chocolate is totally different from tasting it! The experience of the end of suffering is to end craving and ignorance. Nirvana, or the originally pure and clear universal self, then becomes manifest.

To be in this world, but without suffering, is result of practicing the Noble Eightfold Path.

Faith in our Buddha Nature is needed, not in a divine person or God. Therefore, it is up to us, to practise in a way that results in liberation for ourselves and all others.

#### Noble Eightfold Path

1. Right Understanding/View
2. Right Thought
3. Right Speech
4. Right Action
5. Right Livelihood
6. Right Effort
7. Right Mindfulness
8. Right Concentration

1 - 2 result in Wisdom/Prajna, which is true insight, intellect, and study from correct understanding.

3 - 5 are Sila/Good Conduct, which result in equality,

reciprocity, and wholesome karma.

6 - 8 are Samadhi/Mental Development.

Mahayana view of the eightfold path -

1) Right View - The complete insight into the Dharmakaya of the Tathagata.

2) Right Aspiration - Detachment from representational thinking.

3) Right Speech - Realization of the insubstantiality of all categories thus overcoming disputes.

4) Right Conduct - Comprehending the emptiness of all things, to dispassionately act, speak, and think.

5) Right Livelihood - To live as if things were illusory, having no reality.

6) Right Effort - Not to commit oneself to physical practices realizing that physical action and skill are unproductive.

7) Right Mindfulness - Not to differentiate between being and nonbeings, realizing that such states, according to the intelligent intellect, are fundamentally insubstantial.

8) Right Contemplation - Not to accept any conclusion without arriving at self-evident seeing, thus accomplishing the end of all things.

We practise to wake up to the fullness of this moment and the fullness of our life. This is exactly the same thing as dropping our false views, limiting habits, resis-

tance and avoidance of life, being overly full of ourselves, not being attentive to what we are doing - all the ways we all, each in our own way, have restricted the potentiality of ourselves. To glimpse what Buddhism calls emptiness is to let drop away the small, limited self. It is to glimpse the fullness of human potential. When there is no small self to get attached to itself or to emptiness, then we have become empty of emptiness. This is also the state of true or spiritual love, beyond our personal or sentimental love.

In other words, the problems we have are not caused by others or by the circumstances of our life. It is we that must grow and develop in a way so that can clearly and vitally be engaged in our lives. Develop in a way that lets our fullness unfold without causing harm to others or to our environment.

Cause and effect can be seen in the Four Noble Truths. The first two Truths are the cycle of cause and effect. Craving creates more suffering. Suffering causes more grasping. The fourth Truth is a cause to creating certain effects which are not suffering. On one side it is Karma that has resulted in how we are, in how our circumstances are. On the other side it is how and what we are now doing that will create who we become and how life becomes.

## *Six Realms*

**Venerable Eshin Godfrey**

Buddhism teaches that we cycle through samsara. Samsara means 'journeying' or the 'cycle of existences', a succession of rebirths that a being goes through within the various modes of existence until nirvana is reached. In the Mahayana tradition samsara refers to the phenomenal world and is considered to be essentially identical with nirvana. The essential unity of samsara and nirvana is based on the view that everything is a mental representation, thus samsara and nirvana are nothing other than labels without real substance, that is, they are empty.

In other words our existence is real, along with our world. However it has no permanent and enduring characteristics but is always in a state of change and inter-connectedness. All inter-connected, changing beings are forever cycling within existence. This cycling is not done

by a soul, a permanent entity. It is not reincarnation which implies a soul transmigrates. It is rebirth. An example is a flame on a match which lights a candle. It is not the same flame, but one causes the other.

The cycle of death and rebirth is understood as occurring both physically and mentally. Rebirth is a continual becoming, both physically and mentally. Where are we reborn? Buddhism says we are reborn in the six realms, or *gati* in Sanskrit. The results of karma appear within the six realms, appearing and lasting either in the long term or short term. We should learn from karma that there are benefits by changing our actions and producing beneficial results. We continually cycle through the various realms, staying in each until that karma is consumed, continually creating conditions for rebirth in various realms.

The six realms are sometimes described in a more complex structure with many sub-levels. The following is a description of the simple structure of six realms. This explanation is only for our understanding of ourselves and our lives so that we can gain insight and bring benefits. The realms are most helpfully seen as mental states that we cycle through.

The six realms are in a spectrum ranging from extreme pleasure of the Deva realm to the extreme

suffering of the Niraya realm. In the middle is the human realm with both pleasure and suffering but not in an extreme way.

The Deva realm or god realm. This realm has the qualities of sensual and spiritual pleasure, and of tranquility. This realm is very pleasurable and usually one wants to stay here a long time. One arrives here from wholesome deeds such as spiritual practice, precepts and meditation. However, it is impermanent and when god karma ends there is much pain in moving to lower realms. It is the pain of grasping pleasure and avoiding the difficulties of life.

The tone of the Deva realm is pride.

The antidote to the Deva realm is to help others.

The Asura realm or realm of the titans, demons, evil spirits. This realm has qualities of physical powerfulness and intelligence; jealousy and conflict. Traditionally the Asuras are seen at the base of the Deva realm and are jealous of the gods.

The tone of the Asura realm is anger, envy, and jealousy.

The antidote to the Asura realm is generosity.

The Manushya realm or human realm. This realm is most favoured as it's possible to find and study the Dharma. It is in this realm that beings can become enlightened.

Happiness and suffering are not extreme and both occur. It is a realm not blinded by happiness or distracted by pain and suffering. This realm is arrived at from good conduct and this is not often achieved in the cycling through the realms. Further Dharma practice leads to freedom from suffering in cycling through the realms.

The tone of the Manushya realm is a reflectiveness and ability to contemplate.

The Tiryak realm or animals realm. This realm is filled with fear and pain from killing and eating one another. One is forced to work.

The tone of the Tiryak realm is ignorance, impulsiveness, blind pursuit of animal like desires (eating, sleeping, sex).

The antidote to the Tiryak realm is cultivation of virtue.

The Preta realm or hungry ghost realm. This realm is characterized by hunger and thirst; heat and cold. The pretas are separated from what they desire. This can be considered as a realm of emotionally neediness.

The tone of the Preta realm is avarice (greed) and miserliness.

The antidote to the Preta realm is giving and practising kindness.

Traditionally this realm is shown by the story of

Pretas eating in a hall filled with wonderful, lavish food. Each Preta had a big spoon at the end of their arm, not a hand, enabling them to scoop large quantities of food. However, their arms can not bend and so they are unable to put the food into their mouths. Their suffering comes from this. To escape this realm the Pretas have to learn to scoop up some food and put it in their neighbours mouth. In this way all of them would be well fed and become satisfied.

The Niraya realm or hell realm. This realm has much pain, unbearable pain. One remains here until unwholesome karma is used up.

The tone of the Niraya realm is cruelty, violent ill-will, and extreme anger.

The antidote to the Niraya realm is kindness.

From the teaching of the six realms we can see that becoming too consumed in emotion, whether pleasurable or painful, clouds our minds. There is too much emotion for a reflective, balanced mind which is represented by the human state. It is the human state that can see, understand, practise, and realize the Dharma.

The antidotes can be applied both to ourselves and to others. In cultivating the human state we can become clear on the Buddhist practise to enlightenment.

# *Breathing Meditation*

**Venerable Eshin Godfrey**

There are many types of meditation methods within Buddhism. They are all effective and of benefit. Breathing meditation is one of the most basic methods. Within breathing meditation there are several different methods.

One first settles the physical body. It is said traditionally that full lotus is best. However this is not easy for most people and one can sit half lotus, kneeling, or even in a chair. The back should be straight and be supporting itself, not leaning against something. Head is straight on the body, not tipping forwards or backwards. The hands form a mudra against one's abdomen. Old habits make one want to bend a little and aches occur. In time more energy is generated and this will naturally help a straighter posture.

The eyes should be open looking down past ones nose to the floor with a soft gaze. With most people there is a

strong tendency to close ones eyes, especially when starting meditation. If the eyes are closed there is a tendency to become too internal and even sleepy. If a strong effort is made to keep them open then often the external object is held too tightly. It takes some time to cultivate the mind that can balance internal and external with a gentle ease.

Attention is given to the breath cycle, breathing in and breathing out. As one becomes more aware of the breath the mind slowly settles. Many people without a meditation method will have scattered mental energy. This results in random and bubbly thoughts arising. Focusing on the breath also focuses the mind and the mental scattered-ness subsides. Often at first this is difficult because the mind is accustomed to stimulus from the outer sense worlds and reacts to them with thought patterns. As one becomes less involved with ones surroundings and also focuses more fully on the breath then a natural inner stability, a comfortable lodging so to speak, develops.

Breathe naturally without forcing the breath. Breath from the stomach or abdomen. Sometimes the breath is deep, sometimes shallow. It will change by itself over time. Inhale and exhale normally mindful that 'I am inhaling and exhaling normally'. Continue for a few breaths then extend the in-breath and the out-breath being mindful of 'I am breathing out a long exhalation, I am breathing in a

long inhalation'. Continue for a few more breaths. Now follow ones breath carefully, aware of every movement in ones body. In this way a settling or coming home to ones mind, body and breath will occur. Do not try to be aware of breathing from just one perspective. In time the awareness of breath may change. Often an awareness of the physical breath is noticed first. Sometimes awareness of a breath energy cycling throughout ones body may be noticed. In deep meditation it is as if one is being breathed rather than one is breathing. Thoughts, feelings and body sensations do not stop. It is that one is not attached and caught up in them. Not being caught up in them means not to give rise to strong and inappropriate emotions, speech and actions.

As a stability develops within oneself one should practise becoming more aware of ones surroundings while retaining a centered stability. Awareness of the surroundings occurs through the five sense organs. The surroundings are, in fact, the sense objects - that which one is aware of. The mind has many old habits that distort how the sense objects, ones surroundings, are perceived. It is common to stare when gazing down at the floor. In extreme cases mind shapes are seen in the pattern of the floor.

In time the eye mind relaxes and one sees naturally,

clearly, all the time, without attaching tightly onto one sense object. The same occurs with the hearing, tasting, smelling and touching sense organs and sense minds. Eventually one develops the mind that is at home both with oneself and ones surroundings.

This is to develop an inner peace and a clarity of the outside situation. A balance develops between inner and outer and a natural harmony arises. Here the breath is cycling and embracing both inside and outside. A deeper intimacy of oneself and surroundings develops.

Breathing practice facilitates the awakening of ones consciousness to the original nature of things. Ones ordinary, conventional, perspective is based on a mistaken but unnoticed assumption - the mind takes the data of the senses to create an objective reality - because the tree is over there and 'I' am over here, therefore, it is other than me. When I touch the table, it is over there and I am here. One becomes stuck in a fixed notion of ones identity in relation to the external. This mistake is called ignorance and it is the undoing of this mistake that constitutes awakening.

The mind has been conventionally educated to think on the basis of this mistake. How many question the assumption 'I am so-and-so'? One creates all kinds of delusions both of the inside and of the outside. If one had a

machine that attached to the brain that projected thoughts onto a large screen how many could bear the disclosure? If everyone could see inside all the minds one may run shrieking from the room or else quickly become humble!

If one gains sufficient stability with meditation it becomes possible to contemplate the nature of things more deeply. One can notice that the world revealed by the senses is not an objective, independently existing reality. Every sense experience, at its source, is a union of subject and object, of the sense organs, their objects and the mind that senses. The tree over there comes into being with the observer, it is not separately other, even though appearing in the sense world as other. From the meditative perspective, when the subject is emptied of self, the object and subject unite. Every thing that one experiences, at any time, arises from this deep mind.

During the initial stages when the mind is overly active, continually return ones awareness to the body and breathing with full feeling. When the mind calms, meditation becomes more effortless and clear. Everything that is experienced as ones meditation.

In deeper meditation there is no longer a distinction of subject and object as being separate. Every touch and taste, every sight and sound is the radiance appearing as object to a subject that is empty of true being. Right where

ones foot touches the ground is an entryway to ones true self.

Posture and breathing are practised to calm the mind. As the mind calms one becomes more stable and one can better investigate the true nature of oneself. Mental energy and thoughts are scattered at first. Focusing on the breath reduces the scatteredness and brings calmness. One must be careful not to just sit quietly. To sit quietly produces a subjective sense of peace but is not deep enough. For example, if a neighbour makes a loud noise or the phone rings the sense of peace can be lost. A feeling of disturbance occurs. Thus it was just a subjective feeling.

Real peace and calmness appears when we keep conscious of the surroundings through the five sense organs. Sense object, sense organ and sense mind come into balance. Inside and outside are in harmony. When inside and outside are in balance there are no disturbances as one is constantly coming into contact with what is arising. This is peace in action. It is keeping with the flow and change of circumstances.

Cultivating peace and calmness comes by not being pulled out of balance on either side. Master Hakujo said 'By paying attention to the events in life without repressing/denying on one hand and not indulging/attaching on the other hand is the path to Liberation'. On one side awareness

must be maintained. This is awareness of the outside through the five sense organs and awareness of the inside through the sixth sense organ, the mind. The tendency to space out, get lost in thoughts, and becoming distracted are overcome through practising awareness. On the other side indulging or becoming attached to what appears through the sense organs causes imbalance. The imbalance arises because the flow of events is stopped by holding onto something. As something is noticed one practises not starting thoughts about it. As thoughts arise do not become attached to them. There are natural thoughts. These are the first, direct thoughts. There is a tendency from old habits of then thinking about these first thoughts. Master LinChi called this 'putting a head on top of the one you already have'.

As calmness and peacefulness develop a deeper introspection can occur. Inbreathing and outbreathing is more closely observed. Sometimes a moment of 'nothing', or a gap, occurs at the end of the inbreath and/or the end of the outbreath. This gap is a letting go of the conventional consciousness. The conventional consciousness is a consciousness that sees the world and everything in it as objects. This is the consciousness that works and deals with all the ordinary, everyday events of life. The gaps or breaks in this allow the experience of a consciousness that is not

personal. It has been called samadhi, 'zero', 'still-point'. Sometimes this is called stopping the mind. In fact it is stopping the conventional small mind which then allows the appearance of big mind. With further practise of breathing meditation and a careful awareness and investigation in ordinary life these gaps increase in length, frequency and depth. One old Master described them as 'the ten thousand things advancing'. The ten thousand things is an old expression for everything, all things. It is a consciousness that lacks the sense of personal, the sense of 'I am'. This consciousness is of things just as they are. In this consciousness everything appears in its simple clarity and radiance. After experiencing this the conventional, personal consciousness then develops by noticing more things and becoming sensitive of the world it is in. At this time the sense that all beings are inter-related and inter-mingled arises.

In continuing practise there comes times when there are bursts of radiance and illumination. Here the conventional consciousness is starting to be infused with the universal consciousness. It is also the bursting forth of true, unconditioned love. The conventional consciousness gains the wisdom that's it arises from the universal - this is its true ground or source. The arising of this wisdom has as its other side ones selfishness and self-centredness

falling away. Breathing becomes fuller, deeper. Mind and body become integrated. In this stage of practise the conventional consciousness, the universal consciousness and illumination occur at times.

Over a long period of practise conventional and universal consciousness merge more and more fully. The wisdom that 'everything is my child', 'all people are my brothers and sisters', 'pregnant with the whole world' are words used by some contemporary Masters to describe this. Self and no-self/other have merged, life and death have merged. This is called the activity of silent illumination, true self, Buddha Nature. Natural goodness and wholesomeness unselfconsciously flows out to all. Breathing becomes the alternation of expansion to embrace all things (the skin having become porous) and contracting all things down to the smallest point in the belly.

It is common these days to be too satisfied with understanding or to stop at understanding. In olden times practitioners would absorb a teaching and contemplate it over a long time, over years in some cases. Gradually the wisdom of these teachings would be internalized, be digested. This is the way to practise to gain deep, enduring results.

If we keep some awareness of breathing at all times then we keep touch/remain aware of what is happening

moment by moment. When we get consumed and caught up by something, say a phone conversation, we literally stop breathing. As office work place for taking company orders where people worked both with computers and phones had small 'breathe' signs stuck on the computers. The workers had to deal with customers on the phone, who were sometimes irate or confused, plus operate the computers at same time in order to obtain information. It was quite a stressful environment. It was natural to tense up, become overwhelmed and stop breathing with the result the workers could not function well and the business suffered. By remembering to breathing the workers did not become so tense and could deal with one thing at a time.

This principle of remembering to be aware of breathing somewhere in the background of our consciousness prevents us becoming attached, stuck, tense and overwhelmed. Being mindful of our changing surroundings and mind does the same thing. IN fact, noticing a changing awareness is our mind being breathed. We do not become attached and caught up in one particular thing. We can flow with things, one thing at a time.

There is a Zen story of the great Master Chao Chou being asked by a monk for instruction. 'Have you eaten breakfast?' asked Master Chao Chou. 'Yes' replied the

monk. 'Then wash out your bowl' answered Master Chao Chou.

This exchange likely occurred after breakfast one day at Master Chao Chou's temple. Master Chao Chou pointed out to the monk what he had just done, that is, have breakfast. Then he pointed out what to do next, namely to clean the monk had eaten with. The story sounds almost too simple. The lesson here is that although we all understand that we must be responsible and take care of thing one step at a time, how many of us do this consistently time and time again. If we're honest recognize we forget at times, become confused or tight at time, space out at times, and so miss this straightforward way of practising life.

Master Chao Chou was not chastising the monk but pointing out how to practise ones life. The lesson is very simple but to put it into practise requires us to try, try and again. Little by little, one step at a time, we become better and better. We become clearer and more straightforward as we continue this method. We are better able to deal to deal with life's situations in ways that are beneficial for both others and ourselves. However, if we just practise in responding to outer circumstances we will get only so far. This will be the practise of the famous Buddhist saying 'Do good, do not do evil'.

The clarity is not just what is on the outside but also

what occurs within our mind. We must become clearer and more mindful of our thoughts and feelings. Our minds must become purified not just our actions. It is necessary to discover and practise our minds intent as it responds to events in our lives. The practise of awareness and breathing brings us to see the way the mind works. At first we just acknowledge what arises in our mind. It may be a wholesome thought, an unwholesome thought, a negative feeling, or a positive feeling. Whatever arises in our minds is simply acknowledged. Just doing this is of great help as it means we are not acting out or externalizing our minds' actions. For example, if we have a feeling of anger it is not acted outwards by expressing anger to someone or as a response to a situation. Also the feeling of anger is not rationalized into an exterior story, a story about someone or something. It is simply felt and acknowledged, nothing more. In this way it passes or is let go of. Eventually we come to 'own' our minds. They are not lost in blind and irrational reactions to people and circumstances.

At this point we are calming the mind. This does not mean the mind becomes blank or inactive. It means the mind is not lost in blind un-centred reactions. The dualities of grasping / avoiding, love /hate, attaching /avoiding are not longer engaged in. These dualities are the cause of suffering as stated in Buddha's Second Noble Truth.

Feelings and thoughts no longer trouble us. We return to our original mind. We can also say we have bought the mind home.

Here ourselves and what we do are the same thing. When we drink a cup of tea the drinker, the cup and the drinking are all just one thing. When walking the walker, walking and where we walk are all just one thing. There is a Buddhist image of a lake. When the water ripples settle- when our mind settles- then the depths of the lake are seen- we clearly recognize our situation. Our thoughts, feelings, speech, and actions can become harmonized with our circumstances. This is now what we practice. The mind of compassion is practised. Our thoughts and feelings are a compassionate response to the circumstances we find ourselves in. Following our mental impulses actions and speech come forth as compassionate practise

## *The Way of Bodhisattva*

Venerable Eshin Godfrey

The teaching and practices of Buddhism go back 2,500 years to the enlightenment of Shakyamuni Buddha. Many others before and after have awakened to enlightenment. Shakyamuni was born into a royal family in North India. The story tells of a person kept in luxury and pleasure within the palace for twenty-nine years. Finally, on trips outside the palace, he became aware of sickness, old age, and death, the conditions that affect all of us. He escaped from the palace and his protective father, and started a search for the end of this suffering.

For six years he practiced an extreme form of asceticism and denial. This did not remove his suffering. Eventually he found a middle way between indulgence and denial. This middle way led to his enlightenment, removing all his suffering. He spent the remaining forty-five years of his life helping others.

His teaching was made suitable for the many types of people and many type of suffering. Awakened beings who lived after Buddha has brought Buddhist teachings to accord with the changing times and cultures that Buddhism has entered. The many, many teachings, practices, schools, and sects have arisen from Shakyamuni's original varied teachings.

The Buddhist teachings point to the fact that our essential, fundamental nature is pure, clear, and complete. It is full of wisdom and compassion. This fundamental nature has become obscured by defilement and afflictions of the mind. Even so, these defilement do not remove or affect our essential natures. All Buddhist practices, methods, and teachings are to remove the obscurations and make manifest our essentially pure nature. If we are sincere and diligent in our practice, our essential nature begins to manifest itself. It is then possible to see this pure nature mirrored in others. We then relate to other people's pure nature in a way that helps them to have faith in it themselves. Before this, when we see only our defilement, we see the world in the same way, projecting our inner reality on the outer reality.

When we have contacted and are manifesting our true nature, we relate and reflect the same in other people, in our situations, in the way we view the world. We are now

unselfconsciously helping the world. Buddhism calls this the way of the bodhisattva.

Here is a definition of a bodhisattva from the Shambala Buddhist dictionary. "Bodhisattva (literally, 'enlightened being') is a being who seeks Buddhahood through the systematic practice of the perfect virtues (paramitas) but renounces complete entry into nirvana until all beings are saved. The determining factor for their action is compassion (karuna), supported by the highest insight and wisdom (prajna). A bodhisattva provides active help, is ready to take upon themselves the suffering of all other beings, and to transfer their own karmic merit to other beings. The way of the bodhisattva begins with arousing the thought for enlightenment (bodhicitta) and taking the bodhisattva vow (pranidhana). The career of the bodhisattva is divided into ten stages (bhumi)."

There are many bodhisattvas in Buddhism. Some are well known, such as Manjushri 'S/he who is noble and wise,' Avalokiteshvan 'The lord who looks down' or 'S/he who hears the sounds/outcries of the world' depending on how the Sanskrit is taken. The Lotus Sutra talks of many more bodhisattvas.

Manjushri is usually depicted with a book of the Prajnaparamita literature and a sword of insight. These attributes stand for the wisdom (prajna) embodied by

Manjushri, which dispels the darkness of ignorance.

Avalokiteshvara embodies compassion (karuna) and is often depicted with a thousand arms and eyes, and eleven faces. The thousand eyes and arms are to see and help all sentient beings. The heads are a crown of the nine bodhisattvas and Amitabha Buddha on top.

With training and practice it is possible for us to become these bodhisattvas. The differing schools of Buddhism have differing approaches. In Pure Land, one first hears of the bodhisattva and gains faith that they will help oneself become a bodhisattva. Faith in the bodhisattva helps as one trains to benefit the world. In Ch'an/Zen, the seed of the bodhisattva is considered to be already, within oneself. Training and practice are needed to make manifest and mature this seed.

Avalokiteshvara is a male in India. In coming to China as Kuan-yin, a female image appeared, often depicted as mother pouring soothing water on the troubles of the world. In fact, many statues, on close inspection, show neither male nor female but something beyond both. Here, when wisdom and compassion are united, there is the realization that we are all sentient beings, before distinctions of like/dislike, male/female, right/wrong. This is where things are seen as they are, in true sauciness. Here the bodhisattva trains not to help themselves, not to help

others, but to train and practise for its own sake.

The way of the bodhisattva occurs in lay life, not just for the ordained. When a man and a woman come together they form a unit which is more than either one of them alone. As a mother and father they together provide a family dynamic for the children that is very difficult for just one to do. As bodhisattvahood matures the ordinary, everyday life is simply practised for its own sake. As a bodhisattva practice, then unselfconscious help is made to everything and everyone in our lives.

## *Essential Teaching of the Transmission of Mind (I)*

**Venerable Eshin Godfrey**

The 'Essential Teaching of the Transmission of Mind' is a Ch'an/Zen text from about the year 870. Ch'an/Zen starts with the legend of Maha Kashyapa being enlightened and receiving transmission when Shakymuni held up a flower in front of his disciples. In India there was a succession of twenty eight masters and then Bodhidharma traveled to China. There were six Chinese masters before Ch'an/Zen began its great flourishing in the eighth to tenth centuries. Master Ma-tsu Tao-i (709-788) first started a style of teaching that used 'shock tactics' to awaken his disciples. The basis of this style is a single vision of Buddhist training; One's own mind, just as it is and without any qualification whatsoever, is the Buddha. To be a Buddha is to act in constant recognition of that fact, without

generating any extra thoughts, intentions, or inclinations based on selfish, dualistic conceptualization. The 'Essential Teaching of the Transmission of Mind' continually reiterates that the one and only task of this style of practise is to simply cease discriminating between Buddha and unenlightened beings.

This is the same as realizing that when we relax deeply we are putting aside our vexations and neuroses. We are becoming whole again. In a sense, we are always whole but have lost touch with this state. When we feel a deep sense of peace we are at ease and connected with our surroundings and people in them.

It is when we have the sense that we are in some way outside of our experience, that we are separate, then suffering arises. This is something everyone must check out for themselves. We suffer when we lose touch with the moment and everything in it. Then all the afflictions that are detailed by Buddhism can appear in us; grasping, clinging, aversion, etc.

We find some things that we dislike and want to avoid, other things that we like and want to continue. To have a preference is not itself a problem, but we go beyond mere preference, we affirm, attach and identify with our desires. We tend to move from awareness of preference to assertion of judgment. This is the creation of human suffering.

When we are attached to a desire we cannot satisfy, we suffer. Being attached to our standpoint, we fixate, we separate from our experience. Once we fixate and separate, we suffer.

The 'Essential Teaching of the Transmission of Mind' teaches a wholly different basis of being in relationship. What we must sincerely and strongly practise is the state of the underlying unity with experience. We emanate from oneness along with our life situation. Our origin and destination are the same: this moment's activity. The critical response is to return to this inherent relationship. The fifth Chinese master Hung-jen (600-674) gave the image of an eternally radiant sun whose illumination is not destroyed but only adventitiously covered by the clouds and mists of this world. Just as the sun is always in the sky, even on cloudy and stormy days, so is Buddha-Nature always present with us.

This doesn't mean that we cannot respond to circumstances. We can get up and close the window if cold. We can settle a dispute between children when they intrude on us. We can bring fresh energy to our efforts in practice when we become dull. What is critical is that we move back into relationship, in response to our momentary perception, without attachment to our view or attitude. We again enter a new present moment and realize com-

pleteness with this new moment's Dharma.

The stronger our attachment to our self-centered views and values, the stronger our attachment to ourselves and the harder it is to wholeheartedly re-enter the flow of the moment. In its extreme, when we are completely full with ourselves, we are simultaneously separate from our surroundings. On the other side, when we completely re-enter our lives we can find the peace and contentment of a child.

Therefore, if we want a simple guide and practise for how we should proceed in the midst of our ordinary life and events, then as soon as we notice our separateness, we can dissolve immediately back into relationship. Peace of mind will not be found by dwelling in separateness. Peace of mind will only be found by living in relationship with this moment's wholeness.

By vainly clinging to our view in the midst of circumstances, we lose our inherent wholeness. The price is loss of peace of mind. The peace that transcends life and death is only realized within complete relationship. The more we dwell in our concepts, views, opinions and values, the more we cling to our sense of separateness. When we have strong perceptions and feelings towards a situation we must bring them into relationship with the situation, not attempt to impose them on the situation be-

cause “we know better.” Bringing them into relationship means that they become part of the wholeness of the moment, subject to change and development along with everything else.

The ‘Essential Teaching of the Transmission of Mind’ says-

‘Just do not generate conceptual interpretations on the basis of those perceptive faculties, do not activate thoughts on the basis of those perceptive faculties, do not look for a mind apart from the perceptive faculties, and do not reject the perceptive faculties in order to grasp the Dharma’.

The essential teaching of this text covers topics such as Mind is Buddha, No-mind, Fundamentally Pure Mind, and This Mind is Buddha Hopefully these can be looked at in a following article.

## *Essential Teaching of the Transmission of Mind (II)*

**Venerable Eshin Godfrey**

This text continually reiterates that the one and only task of this style of practise is to simply cease discriminating between Buddha and unenlightened beings. Its vision of Buddhist training is focused; One's own mind, just as it is and without any qualification whatsoever, is the Buddha. To be a Buddha is to act in constant recognition of that fact, without generating any extra thoughts, intentions, or inclinations based on selfish, dualistic conceptualization.

The text is set out with several themes. These are Mind is Buddha, No-mind, Pure Mind, and This Mind is Buddha.

## **Mind is Buddha**

It is only this one mind that is Buddha. There is no Buddha outside of our mind. Of course there was the historical Buddha, but Buddha in the meaning of our Buddha Nature is to be found nowhere else but as our mind. To hold that Buddha nature is some thing outside of ourselves and this present moment is to hold dualistic views.

If we seek Buddha nature we become even further from it. This may seem strange at first. It is true that at first we do want to attain Buddha nature. When we see that it is the 'quality' of our mind then we see that it is something that is cultivated moment by moment. It is not something that will suddenly appear in the future. In this sense we always have had Buddha Nature, and always will. The task is to cultivate Buddha nature, not to wonder where it is! When suitable conditions occur one gives forth ones spiritual charity, in other conditions one maintains an inner peace and silence.

This mind is bright and pure. In this state there is no tendency to characterize this and that. Even the differentiation of Buddhas and sentient beings is lacking. As mentioned in the previous article Buddha Nature is like the sun or space. Clouds of confusion or dualistic thoughts may appear to obscure it. However, the sun is always illuminating whether there are clouds or not. The 'Essential

Teaching of the Transmission of Mind' sees it as a mistake to set the sun and clouds opposed to each other. Likewise, when the sun sets darkness appears. However space itself does not darken, the nature of space is always expansive. We are warned not to set up Buddha as having characteristics of purity, brilliance and emancipation; while sentient beings have characteristics of impurity, darkness, and samsara. Both Buddhas and sentient beings have Buddha Nature, the difference is that one has realized this and one has not yet.

### **No-mind**

This very mind is the mind of no-mind and transcends differences and characterizations. When emptiness is glimpsed then form is no longer seen as so fixed and permanent. Everything is seen with both the quality of existence and of no-existence, and is thus beyond this dualism. The Heart Sutra points out that emptiness is form and form is emptiness. The text encourages us to gain a glimpse of no-mind. However, there is fast and slow in gaining this mind. Some, like Hui Neng the sixth Ch'an/Zen ancestor, attained in seconds after hearing the teachings; while many of us must practise over long periods of time. In spite of the length of time it takes to attain,

once no-mind is resided in then there is nothing more to be cultivated or realized.

Manjusi, the bodhisattva of wisdom, stands for principle; Samantabhadra, He Who is All Pervading Good, stands for practise. The principle is of unhindered true emptiness, while practise is transcending the inexhaustible characteristics. Avalokitesvara is compassion, Mahastamparata is great power. Vimalakirti is 'pure name'. Pure is essential nature, name is characteristic. Vimalakirti is named for the non-differentiation of true nature and characteristic. Thus the bodhisattvas and great Buddhist beings represent the two aspects of no-mind.

This mind is the fundamentally pure Buddha, which is possessed by both the Buddhas and sentient beings. These and all the plants, insects, birds, etc, are identical in mind. It is only through false thoughts and discrimination that sentient beings create various kinds of karma. It is this dualistic mind that thinks of good and evil. There is a famous saying in Buddhism 'Do good, do not do evil.' In the conventional sense this is most certainly true. It is most important. My teacher has pointed out to me that the characters can also be read as 'There is only good, there is no evil'. He says this is the understanding of no-mind or pure mind.

## **Pure Mind**

The text points out that this fundamental Buddha is transparent, serene, brilliantly wondrous and at ease. Perfect and sufficient, nothing is lacking. This fundamentally pure mind is always bright and uniformly radiant. Most people of the world, not being enlightened, only recognize their perceptive faculties as mind. This is the mind that has inside and outside, me and you, this and that. These perceptive faculties obscure people understanding and so they do not witness the pure and bright fundamental essence. If one can, right now, achieve no-mind, the fundamental essence will appear of itself.

The solution is not to try to cut off the perceptive faculties. This would negate ourselves and the world we live in. Then we would have no path to enlightenment. We should simply recognize the fundamental pure mind within these perceptive faculties. Although pure mind does not belong to those perceptive faculties, neither is it separate from them. The practise is to not generate conceptual interpretations on the basis of these perceptive faculties, not to activate thoughts on the basis of these perceptive faculties, not to look for mind apart from these perceptive faculties, and not to reject perceptive faculties in order to grasp enlightenment.

In other words we awaken or become enlightened

within this world. This is done by Buddhist practise. In Ch'an/Zen we say 'Sudden Enlightenment' and 'Gradual Practise'. When there is pure mind there is only pure mind without distinctions, and so pure mind is no-mind. However, clouds appear in the sky and so it is necessary to go though the gradual path of practise. Nirvana is found in samsara, strange as it may sound at first.

### **This Mind is Buddha**

Some teachings of Buddhism analyze the mind as being made up of the five Skandhas; the six senses, the six sensory data, the six sense consciousness and the body as made up of the four elements. The 'Essential Teaching of the Transmission of Mind' asks us to understand that these are real from a dualistic viewpoint, but empty of fixed existence in the fundamental mind, which is expansive and pure.

Holding fixed views goes against the way. Our practise is to let go of our hindrances and defilement allowing Buddha Nature to resume its radiance.

There is a Buddhist story of consciousness eating and wisdom eating. To nourish the body as appropriate, without generating greed, desire of attachment, is called wisdom eating. To willfully grasp at flavours, falsely generate discrimination, seeking to please the palate, never be-

ing detached is called consciousness eating.

Fundamental mind is none other than this very mind reading this. The 'Essential Teaching of the Transmission of Mind' says if we can comprehend that our own mind is fundamentally Buddha then this moment of reading is complete and there is nothing else to attain.

# *Bodhicitta*

**Venerable Eshin Godfrey**

First, I would like to express my appreciation and gratitude to the Tung Lin Kok Yuen Society for helping to extend the Buddha Dharma to Canada. There is an increasing interest among westerners but we need guidance to obtain a true understanding and practice. I believe the establishment of the temple and its activities and programs will do much to provide this.

Next are a few comments for western newcomers to orientate themselves to Buddhism. It is natural to approach Buddhism from the current western cultural mind-set. After all, this is how we have been educated to see things. However, this will not provide a true appreciation of Buddhism. In the west we say Buddhism, implying it is a religion or a philosophy. Buddhism is not an ...ism. Not some category like physics or medicine. A

better term may be Buddha Dharma or fundamental way. Dharma means the principle or law of existence and the teaching of this. Buddha Dharma is Buddha's or Shakymuni's understanding of Dharma. Buddhism is not part of existence, but Buddha Dharma. Buddhism is not part of existence, but Buddha Dharma is existence. Of course, as an organization Buddha Dharma can be seen as one way among many in this world, yet the deep principle of the Dharma underlies all activity. The Buddha Dharma includes many, many teachings and methods to make clear our self, our mind and the way we respond and contribute to life.

Now to a fundamental view of the Buddha Dharma, one of the fundamental teachings. At the core of ourselves is awakened mind called Bodhicitta, a mind or self that clearly aware and awake to all things and is free or liberated to respond to situations appropriately. There are teachings and methods to examine how we loose touch with this mind. We are taught that when we separate form objects, when we see objects outside of ourselves, we start a chain of reactions. Having seen an object as outside of ourselves we name it and then give value or judgements to it. Then we like or dislike it, we say it is good or bad based on a subjective feeling. From this we tend to grasp or become attached to what we like. We tend to avoid what

we dislike. Living this way we suffer from having a self-concerned view-point, a narrow selfish standpoint.

Buddha Dharma teaches us to recognize and to let go of this standpoint. When we see, hear, smell, taste, touch something we should practice embracing that thing without separation, without duality. This is true love. A very natural form of this is the relation between parents and children, especially the mother with her baby. The baby's concerns are also the mothers concern. The wellbeing of the children are also the parents wellbeing. My teacher talks of producing a spacious mind where all things can equally exist. Where all things equally exist then mutual respect and harmony can arise. This is the awakening of Bodhicitta. It is where experiencing someone else's happiness is also our own happiness. To only be concerned with our own happiness is the worldly view. The spiritual or Bodhisattva view is to experience others sadness or happiness as our own.

This is not to take a narrow view of ourselves. A view we feel miserable because we deny our desire for pleasure. It is natural to want to feel happy and experience pleasure, to enjoy life. We need to see our practice of the Buddha Dharma as a way to turn and transform these desires from a selfish standpoint to the Bodhisattva's viewpoint. It is not to deny pleasure and happiness. We can first gain an

understanding of Bodhicitta, awakened mind, and then carefully and consistently practice it. This way we keep our pleasures and happiness but these have become pleasure and happiness at others well-being.

# *The Original Teacher*

## *Shakyamuni Buddha*

**Venerable Guren Martin**

Shakyamuni Buddha was born in India over 2,500 years ago. He was the son of a king, the crown prince. Accordingly, he received a good education. As he grew up, however, he became aware of the sufferings or hardships of birth, old age, sickness, and death. Deeply troubled by these sufferings, he left his palace in order to seek a solution to these problems of life. Leaving the palace, he met with religious teachers and he practised and studied with them. But he did not reach a solution to these problems of birth, old age, sickness, and death. So he went away from these teachers, and sitting alone, on December 8 he looked up into the sky, and seeing the morning star, he attained enlightenment. He was thirty-five years of age.

Following his enlightenment, Shakyamuni Buddha widely helped people. For the sake of sentient beings living in delusion, and due to his great compassion, widely he taught people. At that time, Shakyamuni spoke of the Four Noble Truths.

The Truth of Suffering

The Truth of the Cause of Suffering

The Truth of the Termination of Suffering, and

The Truth of the Way.

Shakyamuni Buddha spoke of the Eightfold Noble Path. He spoke of the Way, for the sake of all living beings. The Eightfold Noble Path is Right View, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Behaviour, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration.

Right View means to thoroughly understand the Four Noble Truths, to believe in Cause and Effect, and not to be deceived by appearances and desires.

Right Thought means to resolve not to be carried away unreasonably by desires, not to be greedy, not to be angry, and not to do harmful deeds.

Right Speech means to avoid lying words, idle words,

abusive words, and deceit.

Right Behaviour means not to destroy any life, not to steal, and not to engage in improper sexual conduct.

Right Livelihood means to avoid any life that would bring one shame.

Right Effort means to try to do one's best diligently in a right direction.

Right Mindfulness means to maintain a pure and thoughtful mind.

Right Concentration means to keep the mind right and quiet for its concentration, seeking to realize the mind's pure essence.

Shakyamuni Buddha spoke of the Eightfold Noble Path in order to help sentient beings. And he spoke of the Way so that all people could practise the Buddhist Way in their daily lives. Buddhism is not just a matter of memorizing words. Buddhism is a matter of putting the teachings into practice in one's everyday life, so that one will not go astray. It is not just an easy matter to exist in this world.

Shakyamuni Buddha taught that people should be careful with their lives. Taking good care of themselves.

One Patriarch of the Buddhist Way in later years said that this body, which is called the Dharma body, is the best temple. This body itself is the best temple, so it should be respected. Thus, we should avoid unreasonable danger, as far as it is possible.

And the Shakyamuni Buddha transmitted his teaching, he transmitted the Dharma to his disciple Mahakasyapa. And Mahakasyapa also taught a disciple named Ananda, transmitting the Dharma to Ananda. Like this, from Master to disciple, the Buddha Dharma has certainly been transmitted for over 2,500 years through various countries. From India, to China, Tibet, Korea, Japan, to various countries in Asia, and now to the Western world. Owing to the constant practice and great compassion of the Buddhas and Patriarchs, the Buddhist Way has been transmitted to us in the present day.

At present, some people here certainly have studied and practised the Buddhist Way. And some people likewise, have had little affinity to the Buddha Dharma. Due to this fact, they do not know the Buddhist Way. It appears that the Way of Wisdom, the Way of Diligent Progress, the Way of Forbearance, the Way of Precepts, the Way of Offering, and the Way of Meditation are unknown to some people.

Once again the Buddhist precepts for laypeople are

Do not Kill

Do not Steal

Do not engage in improper sexual relations

Do not lie

Do not indulge in intoxicating substances

Pitifully, and unfortunately it appears that people not knowing the Buddhist precepts, and not having affinity to the Buddha Dharma are causing themselves unnecessary hardships and suffering in life. Hardships on top of the hardships of life.

Fortunately, for people who have affinity to the Buddha Dharma and the Buddhist Way, they realize the great merit of the Three Treasures. The Three Treasures refer to the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. And these people know the merit and great benefit of the Buddhist Way, which has been transmitted for over 2,500 years to the present day.

Transmitted together with the Buddhist Way is the Buddhist robe, the kasaya r kesa. Since ancient times the Kasaya is called the robe of liberation. It is also known as

the symbol of a Buddhist disciple. Shakyamuni Buddha once spoke to the monk Chiko concerning the Kasaya.

Shakyamuni Buddha said, "Chiko, listen carefully.

The kasaya has ten excellent merits.

A layperson's clothing may increase our desires,

The robe of the Tathagata does not.

Buddhist robes cause feelings of repentance and cause well-being.

The robe protects us from cold and heat, and from poisonous insects.

It strengthens our Buddha-seeking mind,

leading us to enlightenment.

The robe gives us the appearance of monks,

and frees us from greed.

It cut off the five mistaken views,

and promotes true practice.

To respectfully venerate the kasaya, the symbol of enlightenment, causes King Brahma to rejoice.

My disciple, consider your kasaya as you would a stupa

For it brings good fortune, frees the mind of evil  
and saves both celestials and humans.

A true monk is diligent and respectful

For his actions are not subject to worldly delusion.

All the Buddhas praise the kasaya as being like a fertile rice-field.

The best of all things that brings well-being to people.

The kasaya is endowed with wonderful powers

For it can plant the seed of enlightenment.

It helps the sprout of the Buddha-seeking mind to grow

Like a spring plant in a fertile rice-field.

The results of Buddhist practice being like the harvested crop in autumn.

Like armour made of diamond, the robe protects us from being injured by the arrow of delusion."

This is the teaching (excerpt) of Shakyamuni Buddha

to his disciple Chiko concerning the Kasaya.

It is my sincere wish that the Buddha Dharma which benefits peoples lives will continue and spread widely.

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# *Arising Through Causal Condition*

**Venerable Guren Martin**

In Buddhism there is the fundamental teaching, 'Arising Through Causal Condition.' This is an important teaching or truth in Buddhism, 'Arising through causal condition.' All phenomena arise through causal condition. ' Some people perhaps have not heard about, or do not understand causal condition. For this reason, it is important to make an explanation here. The meaning of causal condition is explained using the following example.

A plant is produced from a seed. And due to the influence of various causal conditions; the sun, the rain, the soil, the seasons, a seed may develop into a plant. Various causal conditions act upon the seed, and the seed grows into a plant. Causal condition also refers to sounds,

sights, smells, tastes, thoughts, and feelings, the six sense-objects. Sometimes the word causal condition is also translated as relation, and affinity. The world that we live in is a vast concurrence or coming together of causal conditions.

There is a poem about causal conditions that I would like to introduce to you.

*'A caterpillar on a willow branch,  
The wind blows, the caterpillar rolls off.  
A butterfly on a pear flower,  
Rain falls, the butterfly flies off.'*

This poem is about our life. It is about each and every one of us. It is about the coming together of causal conditions. The various causal conditions that influence our life, or which can move us in life. In the poem, 'The wind blows' and 'rain falls' can mean gain or loss. It also can mean favourable conditions, or unfavourable conditions. Doubts or problems also are causal conditions. It is not uncommon that people may think of a problem as a bad thing. However, problems also are the working of enlightenment. That is, in cause and effect, problems can be the seeds of solutions.

We should understand, however, that life is not

instant, like instant food. Opening the lid, adding boiling water, and in two to three minutes everything is ready and complete. It is not that in two to three minutes our problems in life may all be solved. For this reason, the Buddhas and Patriarchs who have clarified life and death, have taught forbearance (patience), and perseverance as important virtues. And it is taught that we should be grateful for small gains, persevering in the Way in life. Day by day, being diligent, and not wasting time, we make our world.

Furthermore, it is taught that we should endeavour to be one with causal conditions. Being one with causal conditions. For some people, this may be difficult to understand, perhaps. For example, in the morning when the alarm clock rings to wake us, being one with this condition (the ringing), we wake up. Then we wash our face, we take our breakfast. Then we dress appropriately for our work. And in Buddhism it is said that we should wear clothing that is decent, or respectable; putting on clothing which is good. Then we go to work, and earnestly we perform our daily activities. A baker would earnestly bake bread, doing one's best. And of course the baker should make a profit. A student would earnestly study. Studying sincerely for a future occupation, not wasting time. Similarly, if we have an illness, when there is the condition

of sickness, we wholeheartedly make an effort to recover as soon as is possible. This is being one with causal conditions. Like this our life will teach us, all things will teach us. All things are important. There are the words, 'All the earth is medicine. The Universe is the highway, vast and wide.' So sincerely, carefully, politely, and energetically we should live our lives. And we should go straight ahead.

There is an old story of a person who once saw a fine house with a splendid top floor. The upper storey of the house had large windows, a fine roof, and a grand balcony all around. And there was a fine view of the surrounding mountain scenery and nature. Truly a beautiful place in which to live. So this person seeing the house with the splendid upper storey wanted the same for their own. The person then spoke to a construction company, and asked them to build this fine upper storey on his own land. Accordingly, the construction company began work. First, laying the foundations for the house, and then starting to firmly build the lower floors. However, upon seeing the foundations being laid and the work being done on the lower floors, the person became upset and said, 'I did not ask for foundations and the lower floors to be built, I just want the top floor.'

Of course, this is foolishness. This story serves to point out that often in life it is not possible that immediately, or instantly, we have things the way that we want them to be. Or that things in life will immediately or instantly turn out just as we would like them to. Fortunately, the Buddhas and Patriarchs have taught the Way for the benefit of sentient beings. With our feet firmly in the Buddhist Way, our life can improve. And our life will be a life that is worth living. And we will never abandon ourselves to a feeling of hopelessness which may occur due to various causal conditions coming together.

Owing to the great compassion, self-sacrifice, and constant practice of the successive Buddhas and Patriarchs, today we are able to know the Buddhist Way which benefits both self and others equally.

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# *The Three Seals of The Dharma*

**Venerable Guren Martin**

The Three Seals of the Dharma are Impermanence, Non-Substantiality (or Non-Ego), and Nirvana is Quiescence. The Three Seals of the Dharma are essential teachings of Buddhism. The first of the Three Seals of the Dharma is Impermanence. Impermanence comes from the Sanskrit word ANITYA. Impermanence means that all existence and phenomena are constantly changing. Things do not remain the same. Concerning this constant change there is the teaching of the Cycle of Change. The Cycle of Change refers to Formation, Continuation, Destruction, and Disintegration. The Cycle of Change shows the reality of things in this world that we live in. First, things are formed, things come together through causal condition. Then,

things that are formed continue. Things have their life. Then, things perish, things are destroyed. And then there is disintegration. Things that were formed disintegrate.

Human beings also accord to the Cycle of Change. For this reason, the Buddhas and Patriarchs have spoken about gratitude. We should be grateful for our life, and esteem each day. And so we should live a life of diligence, using time, and doing our best each day.

The second Seal of the Dharma is Non-Substantiality (Non-Ego). In the Sanskrit language the word is ANATMAN. This means that things do not have a permanent, unchanging substance. Non-Ego means that there is no permanent, unchanging ego-self. The teaching of Non-Substantiality or Non-Ego perhaps may be difficult for some people to understand. However, in order to clarify this teaching there is Buddhist practice and enlightenment. And the successive Buddhas and Patriarchs have spoken of the Buddha-Nature to help people clarify the truth of Non-Ego. The Buddha-Nature is the functions, the sense-functions. Seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling, and thinking. Each and every person is endowed with the Buddha-Nature. However, due to greed, anger, and ignorance, and attachments, people can go astray, causing themselves hardships and suffering.

As there is no ego-self, often in life things do not go as

we want them to. Although we would like things to happen in such a manner, quite often they turn out rather differently. These are terms of the world that we live in. For this reason we can be grateful for the Buddhist Way which can help people clarify life and death.

The Buddhas and Patriarchs have spoken of diligent progress for the benefit of all sentient beings. Each day there is a new you. Each day we can begin anew. Whether we wake up in the morning feeling good, or whether we wake up feeling not good; if we are in favourable conditions, or unfavourable conditions; in gain, or in loss; each day is a new day. So we should be diligent each day, using time. We should make our world. What we do now in the present will condition the future. This is cause and effect, the law of cause and effect. We should not waste time or be negligent. Being diligent, doing our best each day, and using our wits, surely our life can improve.

The Third Seal of the Dharma is Nirvana is Quiescence. Nirvana is the Sanskrit word meaning extinction, or literally 'to blow off'. Nirvana originally refers to the state of enlightenment attained by Shakyamuni. Nirvana refers to the state where the delusion of ego/self is extinguished. Quiescence means a quiet condition. To quietly work, to quietly rest. And it is to be content with one's circumstances. And content with the fact that life is

a struggle. And it is to understand the world that we live in. Knowing that this is a world of causal conditions, various causal conditions coming together. Knowing this we can be one with our existence. For example, when the alarm rings to wake us in the mornings, we get up. We wash our face, and take our breakfast. If we are a student attending school, we would go to school and earnestly, wholeheartedly study. If a student studies with diligence, this will bring it's effect. If a student would neglect their studies, this will also bring it's effect. And for people working in the world it is the same. Going to work each day, and wholeheartedly, earnestly doing one's work. When we are busy, really being busy. This is the Way. And it is also to be careful with one's life. As it a world of cause and effect, it is necessary to be careful with one's life. Living and practising like this, we can know well-being in the present.

These are the teachings of the Three Seals of the Dharma. Impermanence, Non-Substantiality (Non-ego), and Nirvana is Quiescence. These teachings were first spoken by the Original Teacher Shakyamuni Buddha. They have been transmitted over 2,500 years to the present day in order to benefit all sentient beings.

## *Six Realms*

**Venerable Guren Martin**

Buddhism teaches that we cycle through samsara. Samsara means 'journeying' or the 'cycle of existences', a succession of rebirths that a being goes through within the various modes of existence until nirvana is reached. In the Mahayana tradition samsara refers to the phenomenal world and is considered to be essentially identical with nirvana. The essential unity of samsara and nirvana is based on the view that everything is a mental representation, thus samsara and nirvana are nothing other than labels without real substance, that is, they are empty.

In other words our existence is real, along with our world. However it has no permanent and enduring char-

acteristics but is always in a state of change and inter-connectedness. All inter-connected, changing beings are forever cycling within existence. This cycling is not done by a soul, a permanent entity. It is not reincarnation which implies a soul transmigrates. It is rebirth. An example is a flame on a match which lights a candle. It is not the same flame, but one causes the other.

The cycle of death and rebirth is understood as occurring both physically and mentally. Rebirth is a continual becoming, both physically and mentally. Where are we reborn? Buddhism says we are reborn in the six realms, or gati in Sanskrit. The results of karma appear within the six realms, appearing and lasting either in the long term or short term. We should learn from karma that there are benefits by changing our actions and producing beneficial results. We continually cycle through the various realms, staying in each until that karma is consumed, continually creating conditions for rebirth in various realms.

The six realms are sometimes described in a more complex structure with many sub-levels. The following is a description of the simple structure of six realms. This explanation is only for our understanding of ourselves and our lives so that we can gain insight and bring benefits. The realms are most helpfully seen as mental states that we cycle through.

The six realms are in a spectrum ranging from extreme pleasure of the Deva realm to the extreme suffering of the Niraya realm. In the middle is the human realm with both pleasure and suffering but not in an extreme way.

The Deva realm or god realm. This realm has the qualities of sensual and spiritual pleasure, and of tranquility. This realm is very pleasurable and usually one wants to stay here a long time. One arrives here from wholesome deeds such as spiritual practice, precepts and meditation. However, it is impermanent and when god karma ends there is much pain in moving to lower realms. It is the pain of grasping pleasure and avoiding the difficulties of life.

The tone of the Deva realm is pride.

The antidote to the Deva realm is to help others.

The Asura realm or realm of the titans, demons, evil spirits. This realm has qualities of physical powerfulness and intelligence; jealousy and conflict. Traditionally the Asuras are seen at the base of the Deva realm and are jealous of the gods.

The tone of the Asura realm is anger, envy, and jealousy.

The antidote to the Asura realm is generosity.

The Manushya realm or human realm. This realm is most favoured as it's possible to find and study the Dharma. It is in this realm that beings can become enlightened. Happiness and suffering are not extreme and both occur. It is a realm not blinded by happiness or distracted by pain and suffering. This realm is arrived at from good conduct and this is not often achieved in the cycling through the realms. Further Dharma practice leads to freedom from suffering in cycling through the realms.

The tone of the Manushya realm is a reflectiveness and ability to contemplate.

The Tiryak realm or animals realm. This realm is filled with fear and pain from killing and eating one another. One is forced to work.

The tone of the Tiryak realm is ignorance, impulsiveness, blind pursuit of animal like desires (eating, sleeping, sex).

The antidote to the Tiryak realm is cultivation of virtue.

The Preta realm or hungry ghost realm. This realm is characterized by hunger and thirst; heat and cold. The pretas are separated from what they desire. This can be considered as a realm of emotional neediness.

The tone of the Preta realm is avarice (greed) and

miserliness.

The antidote to the Preta realm is giving and practising kindness.

Traditionally this realm is shown by the story of Pretas eating in a hall filled with wonderful, lavish food. Each Preta had a big spoon at the end of their arm, not a hand, enabling them to scoop large quantities of food. However, their arms can not bend and so they are unable to put the food into their mouths. Their suffering comes from this. To escape this realm the Pretas have to learn to scoop up some food and put it in their neighbours mouth. In this way all of them would be well fed and become satisfied.

The Niraya realm or hell realm. This realm has much pain, unbearable pain. One remains here until unwholesome karma is used up.

The tone of the Niraya realm is cruelty, violent ill-will, and extreme anger.

The antidote to the Niraya realm is kindness.

From the teaching of the six realms we can see that becoming too consumed in emotion, whether pleasurable or painful, clouds our minds. There is too much emotion for a reflective, balanced mind which is represented by the human state. It is the human state that can see, understand, practise, and realize the Dharma.

The antidotes can be applied both to ourselves and to others. In cultivating the human state we can become clear on the Buddhist practise to enlightenment.

# *The Meaning of Practice and Enlightenment*

Venerable Guren Martin

## **Making the Vow to Benefit Life (People)**

The Four Wisdoms – Offering, Tenderness (Kind Speech), Benevolence, and Sympathy (Identification) – are the ways that we can help others, and these are the practices of a bodhisattva.

Offering means not to covet. Although it is true that, in essence, nothing belongs to self, this does not prevent us from giving offerings. The size of the offering is of no concern, it is the sincerity with which it is given that is important. Therefore, one should be willing to share even a phrase or a verse of the teaching, for this becomes a seed of good in both this life and the next. Similarly, the offering of a single coin or a blade of grass can cause the arising of

good, for the teaching itself is the treasure, and the true treasure is the teaching. There have been people who, willingly gave their help to others seeking no reward. Supplying a ferry and building a bridge are both acts of offering. And all forms of industry are offerings if they benefit others.

To behold all beings with the eye of compassion, and to speak to them kindly is the meaning of tenderness. If one would understand tenderness, one must speak to others thinking that all living beings are one's own children. By praising people who are virtuous, and feeling sorry for people who are not virtuous, our enemies become our friends. And people who are our friends have their friendship strengthened. This is all through the power of tenderness. Whenever one speaks kindly to another, their face brightens and their heart is warmed. An even deeper impression is made when hearing kind words spoken about oneself in one's absence. Tenderness can have a revolutionary impact on others.

Benevolence means to devise ways of benefiting others, no matter what their social position. Those who aided the helpless tortoise or the injured sparrow did not expect any reward for their assistance. They simply acted out of their feelings of benevolence. Foolish people believe that their own interests will suffer if they put the benefit of

others first. But this is untrue. Benevolence is all-encompassing, equally benefiting oneself and others.

Sympathy (Identification) means non-differentiation, to make no distinction between self and others. Take for example, the fact that the Buddha appeared in the human world in the form of a human being. Sympathy does not distinguish between self and others. Sympathy is like the sea in that it never refuses water from whatever source it may come, all waters may gather and form the sea. Quietly reflect on the fact that these teachings are the practices of a Bodhisattva. Do not treat them lightly. Venerate and respect their merit, which is able to save all beings, enabling them to cross over to the other shore.<sup>1</sup>

There are the words, "Each and every person is abundantly endowed with the Dharma (Truth). However, without practice it will not be manifested. Without enlightenment it will not be obtained." These are the words of Zen Master Eihei Dogen. Each and every person, that is self and others, are abundantly endowed with the Truth. Earnestly practising the Way, this can be clarified. Self and others abundantly endowed with Truth, this can be realized.

The Way has been explained as the Way of Wisdom. This is to learn from one's life. Being careful and sincere in one's daily life. Learning from one's daily life and endeavouring not to make the same mistake twice. It is

also to try and live each year without regret.

The Way of Diligent Progress. This is to be diligent in our life, making effort in a right direction. It is to use time. We live in a world of cause and effect. Cause, condition, and effect. Past cause has created our present result, our present condition. Present cause will create our future result, our future condition. Accordingly, we should be diligent, living wisely in the present, carefully, quietly, and not wasting time. We have to make our life.

The Way of Forbearance. Quite often in life things do not turn out just as we would like them to. Apart from our own ideas, different from our own opinions. These are the terms of the world that we live in. Things as they are. So, it is necessary that we be flexible in mind, resilient, and that we have our feet firmly planted in the Way of Forbearance. It is said that forbearance is the root of existence.

The Way of Concentration of Mind, or Meditation. This is when we are working, we sincerely work. Being one with the activity. Sincerely, carefully, and quietly living our life. And in times of quiet, to be one with the quiet. It has also been explained as quietly thinking.

The Way of Offering. To give oneself in service, in our work, in our daily life. Earnestly doing our best. Concerning doing our best, there is a case of a monk named Banzan. Banzan once went to the market-place, to the butcher's

shop. The butcher was asked for some good meat, his best meat. The butcher replied, "It is all good meat." All the meat was good meat. All the meat was his best meat. This case is pointing to doing one's best. Always doing one's best. Whether we are an adult earnestly making a living, or if we are a student whole-heartedly studying.

The Way of Precepts. We live in this world with other people. There are conventions in society, and there are laws and regulations so that people can live together peacefully, and which prevent selfishness or selfish behaviour. We should not unnecessarily cause disturbance or cause trouble for other people. In Zen we have precepts. Do not kill. Do not steal. Do not engage in improper sexual conduct. Do not lie. Do not indulge in intoxicating substances. Do not speak ill of others. Do not be proud of yourself and devalue others. Do not covet. Do not give way to anger. Do not defame the Three Treasures.

These six Ways can be guiding principles for our lives. Some principles are necessary in life.

A central teaching in Zen Buddhism is that all phenomena arise through causation, through causal condition. Causal condition has been explained using the example of a seed. A seed is planted, and through the agency of various causal conditions, the sun, the rain, the soil, the wind, the seed grows into a plant. The world we live in is a

concurrency of causal conditions. A combination or coming together of causal conditions. And things are always changing. We should endeavour to be one with causal conditions. For example, in the morning when the alarm rings to wake us, being at one with this condition we wake up. Then we wash our face, we take our breakfast, and earnestly we perform our daily activities. A baker would earnestly bake bread, a student would earnestly study for a future occupation. Similarly, when there is illness, the condition of illness, being one with illness, we make effort to recover. And if we have a doubt, we can be one with doubt. If we have a problem, we can be one with the problem. Sincerely, carefully, and quietly be one with the problem. Problems can be the seeds of solutions. Cause and effect. It is not to be rash or careless. Living like this, all things will teach us. All things will enlighten us. All things are important.

There are the words, "All the earth is medicine. The universe is the highway, vast and wide." So, sincerely, carefully, and politely we should live our lives. And we should go straight ahead.<sup>1</sup>

And we should understand that in life there are seasons. There are cold times in life. That is, there are times of hardship, times of adversity in life. And they may continue for years. The important thing with adversity is

not to lose to adversity. Fortunately, in Canada, I hear the words, 'Winning formula.' Formula for winning. We should not lose to adversity, and during times of hardship we should endeavour to keep in the right way and not go astray. Even if we have to grit our teeth each morning upon rising. Gritting our teeth each morning in order to continue, we should do our best each day and refrain from being negligent

There are the words in Zen, concerning our life, 'To lose our most precious thing.' It happens in life that people will lose their most precious thing. However, when losing one's most precious thing, we have to continue earnestly, doing the best that we can. We have to be shrewd and diligent to exist in this world. On the other hand, we also have to be able to laugh and be a bit of a fool when things do not go as we would like them to.

A monk named Bokushu once said, "The real universe will give you thirty blows." Thirty blows. In Zen monasteries, in order to encourage people in their practice, in their life, people may receive blows with the awakening stick, while sitting. Moderate blows with a light stick on the soft of the shoulder for encouragement. 'The real universe will give you thirty blows.' It is not an easy matter to exist in this world. We do things at the risk of our lives. Our lives depend upon what we do in each moment.

There is a poem concerning adversity. The poem is –

*'The rain falls, the soil becomes firm.'*

Here 'the rain' refers to adversity, hardship in life. 'The soil' refers to us, people. 'Becomes firm' means to mature, to develop. So, the poem is saying that through hardship people mature. It may not be easy to accept adversity, to accept years of hardship. But it is necessary to endure these difficult times in life, diligently doing our best, and working in a right direction. Even if we are in an impasse. A situation which we seemingly cannot get out of. An impasse. Some people may be familiar with this condition, with these circumstances, being in an impasse. In relation to being in an impasse, there are the words of Zen Master Engo. Master Engo said, "When you have not penetrated it, it is like silver mountains and iron cliffs. When you have penetrated it, you find that you yourself are the silver mountains and iron cliffs." <sup>2</sup> This is interesting, silver mountains and iron cliffs. An impasse.

Meeting an impasse, it is necessary to be one with this condition. Being this difficult circumstance, and while forbearing, doing the best that we can, diligence. Like this we will learn and we will mature during a cold season in life. And, there may be mistakes. We may make mistakes.

Although there may be small mistakes, we should be careful not to make big mistakes. We have to learn from our mistakes. And we should endeavour to maintain our integrity according to time, place, and our position, or function.

In this world we live in, there are both good things and bad things. Of course, we should refrain from doing bad things. However, if we think that all bad things or all bad conditions will disappear and only good things remain, this will not be possible. This may not be the case. There are both good things and bad things. Good conditions and bad conditions, and we should be able to learn from them both.

Finally, there is a poem by the Zen priest, Ryokan –

*'With no-mind the flower invites the butterfly.  
With no-mind the butterfly reaches the flower.  
The flower does not know, and neither does the  
butterfly.  
Not knowing, no knowing.  
Fulfilling the law of the universe.'*

This poem is about our life. Whether we understand or do not understand. A baker earnestly baking bread. A bus-driver earnestly driving a bus. A student earnestly

studying. Fulfilling the law of the universe.

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## *Buddhist Meditation*

**Venerable Guren Martin**

The Original Teacher Shakyamuni Buddha left his home to seek a solution to the problems of birth, old age, sickness, and death. He studied and practised with several teachers, and engaged in religious practice for six long years. However, unable to attain liberation, he abandoned his former practice, and sat quietly in meditation. Upon seeing the morning star on December 8, he finally attained enlightenment. From the enlightenment of the Original Teacher Shakysamuni Buddha in India over 2,500 years ago, Buddhist meditation practice has been transmitted through the centuries to the present day. Transmitted by Shakyamuni Buddha and the successive Patriarchs of the Buddhist Way, meditation practice is the fundamental practice of Buddhism.

Nowadays, people begin to seek the Buddhist Way and begin to practise meditation for various reasons. Some people are searching for peace in their lives. Other people begin to practise meditation after meeting with hardship or adversity. And some people begin to practise after recognizing greed, anger, and ignorance.

In Buddhism there is quiet practice, or sitting meditation, and practice in activity. Together they form Buddhist meditation practice. Quiet practice, and practice in activity. During quiet practice, we may sit cross-legged on a cushion, or we may sit in a chair. The important point is to be able to sit firmly without moving about for a period of time. During sitting meditation we sit up straight. It is not necessary to put strength in any special part or place of our body. Sitting upright, eyes are slightly open and cast downward. Although there are various devices or methods used in meditation practice, one basic practice is to follow the natural breathing process. Normally, in our daily life we are not aware of the respiration. During sitting meditation, however, we focus our attention on the breathing. Inhalation. Exhalation. Focusing our attention on the Breathing. Many thoughts or emotions may arise during our sitting. We do not make a problem of the thoughts or emotions. And we should not make an object of the thoughts or emotions. Leave the various thoughts and emotions that arise, and focus our attention on the

breathing. We do not try to get rid of thoughts, nor should we be unreasonably carried away by thoughts. And we should realize that it is not the goal of meditation to create or attain to some special state of mind, or some special condition. In Buddhism it is said that each person is complete as they are. To sit in meditation is to become familiar with oneself, to know oneself. It is to assent to one's own condition. There is a Buddhist treatise called 'The Believing Mind', written by the Venerable Third Patriarch, Master Sosan. In 'The Believing Mind' there are the words, 'nothing lacking, nothing in excess'. Really it is like this. Nothing lacking, nothing in excess. There is nothing to seek for. Giving up the seeking mind, we sit quietly. It is taught that we should be content with our circumstances.

Once again, we should understand that Buddhist meditation is not a matter of creating a special state of mind, or to attain to some special state of mind. However, it is to be quiet. And once in life it is necessary to be free from various attachments.

For meditation, it is recommended that we make a time each day for sitting quietly. We may sit for 30 minutes, 20 minutes, even for 10 minutes if we are busy. Or if we are very busy with our daily occupation, then perhaps it may be possible to sit on the weekend. Sitting quietly when we have the time. And if we have questions concerning

our sitting practice., it is important to ask our questions and clarify our doubts in relation to our practice. It is important to speak with a master of the Buddhist Way concerning our practice. Clarifying our questions and doubts is essential to meditation practice. This will keep our practice free from error. And if we continue sincerely, it is possible to then forget the sitting practice. Forgetting the sitting practice, we will be able to live quietly, peacefully, actively, and wisely. Without especially thinking of a special practice, we will be able to live quietly, and we will be free from the practice itself. First, we practise, and then we forget the practice. This is the Way of practice in quiet.

For practice in activity, we really, sincerely perform the activity. In our daily life there are various activities. Waking in the morning, we wash our face, we make our breakfast, we eat, and we wash the dishes. We do a variety of work throughout the day. For practice in activity, we completely forget the sitting practice, and we carefully, earnestly, quietly perform the activity. Completely forgetting the sitting meditation, we really do things. Being one with the activity. If we are cleaning our residence, we carefully, quietly, diligently clean. We really clean. If we are working with a computer, we really work with the computer. Carefully, quietly, and sincerely. This is the Way of practice in activity. It is to really do things. Carefully,

diligently, earnestly, and quietly. Of course we should not be rash, or reckless, or behave impulsively. Continuing with practice in activity, and giving up the seeking mind, we will be able to work efficiently, peacefully, and diligently. And we will not be carried away unreasonably by things around us. This is the Way of Buddhist meditation practice. Practice in quiet, and practice in activity.

The Way of Meditation has been transmitted for over 2,500 years, from the time of Shakyamuni Buddha to the present day. The Way of Meditation has been transmitted in order that widely sentient beings may live peacefully, and know well-being in life.

# *The Three Essentials of Ch'an Practice*

**Venerable Guren Martin**

In Ch'an (Zen) Buddhism, there are the three essentials of Ch'an practice. The three essentials of Ch'an Buddhism are:

Studying with a teacher, questioning the Dharma,  
Ch'an practice,  
Observing the precepts.

The first essential studying with a teacher, questioning the Dharma. Studying with a teacher we are able to hear the teachings and to learn and know the Buddhist Way. Questioning the Dharma we are able to resolve our doubts and to clarify the Way. That is to clarify the Middle Way and to clarify oneself. Also we are able to know whether our practice is correct or not. In Ch'an

Buddhist temples and monasteries it is a tradition to meet and speak with the teacher, in order to resolve one's doubts, and clarify the Way. The second essential is Ch'an practice. The practice itself. One practice of sitting meditation is the Breathing Practice. We sit upright with the back straight, eyes case downward, eyes slightly open. Breathing naturally; Inhale, exhale. Inhale, exhale. We focus our attention on the breathing. Normally, during the various activities throughout the day, we are not aware of the breathing. During sitting meditation we focus our attention on the breathing. Be the breathing. Many thoughts may arise while sitting. However we leave the thoughts or emotions, without making a problem of them. Nor do we make an object of the thoughts. We do not try to get rid of thoughts or emotions, without making a problem of them.. We leave the various thoughts and emotions that arise, and we follow the breathing. This is the breathing practice.

Also there is Koan practice. There are many Koans in Ch'an Buddhism, recorded in various books, such as the Book of Serenity, or the Blue Cliff Records. Koans originally were used in the study and practice of the Buddhist Way. And the Koans are about us. The Koans are about each and every person. For example, one Koan is concerned with the dialogue that took place between the

monk Joshu, and his master, Ch'an Master Nansen.

Joshu asked, "What is the Way?" Master Nansen replied, "Ordinary mind is the Way."

Ordinary mind, this is a well-known Koan which we may study.

There is also 'Genjo Koan' which can refer to our own problem.

Being one with our own problem. Holding the problem consciousness, carefully and quietly. It is not to be rash or reckless, or to act impulsively.

In Ch'an Buddhism there are various practices, Koans or devices which we can use. It is important to ascertain whether our practice is correct or not.

The third essential is Observing the Precepts. In Buddhism there are five precepts for laypeople. The five precepts are; Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not engage in improper sexual conduct, Do not lie, and Do not indulge in intoxicants.

For people who are ordained as nuns and monks there are ten precepts.

Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not engage in improper sexual conduct, Do not lie, Do not indulge in intoxicating substances, Do not speak ill of others, Do not be proud of yourself and devalue others, Do not covet, Do not give way to anger, Do not defame the Three Treasures (Buddha,

Dharma, and Sangha).

These are the precepts. It is important to understand that the precepts are not something that we must memorize and maintain constantly to a fault. The precepts are guidelines for our practice. They serve to point out the Way, the Middle Way for us. And to keep people from going astray in their practice.

Once again, the three essentials of Ch'an practice are,  
Studying with a teacher, questioning the Dharma,  
Ch'an Practice,  
Observing the Precepts.

Practising the three essentials, it is possible to attain the Buddhist Way and to attain liberation.

# *Great Master Bodhidharma*

**Venerable Guren Martin**

The twenty-eighth Patriarch, Great Master Bodhidharma, was the first Patriarch of the Buddhist Way to go to China. He was sent to China by his Master, Venerable Hannya Tara. Travelling from India by sea, the difficult voyage took three years. Bodhidharma went to China due to his great compassion, and his wish to transmit the Buddha Dharma. Great Master Bodhidharma possessed the Eye Treasury of the True Dharma, and so he left his country in order to save people suffering in delusion.

Arriving in the year 520 A. D. Bodhidharma was welcomed by the Emperor Wu of Liang. Their meeting and the dialogue that took place between them was recorded

and forms the first case in the Blue Cliff Records, a well-known Buddhist text.

#### The Case

Emperor Wu of Liang asked Great Master Bodhidharma, "What is the first principle of the Buddha Dharma?"

Master Bodhidharma replied, "Emptiness, no holiness."

The Emperor asked again, "Who is this standing before me?"

Bodhidharma replied, "No knowing."

The Emperor did not understand the answer, Bodhidharma, realizing their minds did not harmonize, left the Emperor, travelling to the North, across the Yangtze River. Bodhidharma settled at the Shaolin temple.

The Emperor afterwards spoke of the meeting to the priest Shiko. Shiko said, "Do you know in fact who this person is?"

The Emperor said, "No knowing."

Shiko said, "This is the Bodhisattva Kuan Yin, (Kanzeon Bosatsu), the bearer of the Buddha-Mind seal. "The Emperor was full of regret and wanted to call Bodhidharma back. However Shiko said, "It is no use to send a messenger. Even if all the people went, Bodhidharma would not turn back."

This is the record of the well-known meeting of the First Patriarch of China and the Emperor Wu of Liang.

Great Master Bodhidharma was the twenty-eighth Patriarch of the Buddhist Way, descending from the Original Teacher Shakyamuni Buddha. In order to transmit the Dharma, Master Bodhidharma sat facing the wall for nine years. Owing to his constant practice, the Buddha Dharma has been transmitted for over 2500 years to the present day.

Concerning Great Master Bodhidharma there is a story of his teaching and the Buddha Nature. While Bodhidharma was still living in India there lived a king named Iken who criticized Buddhism. King Iken did not think highly of the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. Master Bodhidharma wanted to convert King Iken to Buddhism.

So Bodhidharma sent a disciple of his named Haradai as his envoy to preach the Dharma to the King. The monk Haradai met King Iken, and the King asked Haradai, "You speak of the Buddha Dharma or the Buddha. Will you please show me the Buddha?"

The monk Haradai replied, "Seeing into one's nature is Buddha."

King Iken asked, "Have you seen into your nature?"

Haradai replied, "Yes, surely, I have seen my Buddha

nature.”

Iken asked, “Where is the Buddha nature?”

Haradai replied, “The Buddha nature is the functions.”

King Iken asked, “What are the functions?”

Haradai said, “There are eight functions that appear,”

The King asked, “Please show them to me.”

Haradai spoke, “From the womb the body appears.

In the world it appears as a human being.

In the eye it is seeing.

In the ear it is hearing.

In the nose it is smelling.

In the mouth it is talking.

In the hand it is holding.

In the foot it is walking.”

This was the reply by the monk Haradai to the King Iken when asked about the Buddha nature. The King was an unbeliever. However, hearing these words concerning the Buddha nature, he was converted and thereafter he wholeheartedly supported Buddhism.

And from these teachings of the Buddha nature we can see that it is not something that is far away from us. The practice and study of the Buddhist Way is to make these teachings one’s own. Then one will realize that from the beginning there was nothing lacking and nothing in excess.

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## *Silver Mountains and Iron Cliffs*

**Venerable Guren Martin**

In Buddhism there is the study and practice of the Buddhist Way. In order to help people with their practice and study of the Way, there are the Records of the Buddhas and Patriarchs. These are the Buddhist teachings and words of the successive Patriarchs transmitted for our benefit.

The Blue Cliff Records is one collection of teachings (Koans), recorded for the sake of people studying and practising the Buddhist Way. The Blue Cliff Records was originally compiled by Master Hsueh-Tou Chung-Hsien (980-1052). Master Hsueh-Tou was in the Dharma lineage of the famous Master, Yun-Men. About one century later Master Yuan-Wu Ko-Chin (1063-

1135), wrote a short introduction to each of the one hundred cases of the Blue Cliff Records. Master Yuan-Wu was in the Dharma lineage of Master Lin-Chi. The work of Master Hsueh-Tou and Master Yuan-Wu together form the Blue Cliff Records.

In order to help people presently studying the Buddhist Way, I would like to introduce you to the teachings from these Masters. From one of the cases of this book there are the words of Master Yuan-Wu.

‘When you have not yet penetrated it, it is like silver mountains and iron cliffs. When you have penetrated it, you find that you yourself are the silver mountains and iron cliffs.’ These are interesting words, ‘Silver mountains and iron cliffs.’ Silver mountains and iron cliffs can refer to an impasse. I believe that some people may be familiar with these circumstances or this situation which arises in life. Coming to this place, an impasse. This is a situation or condition which seemingly does not improve or change, or go the way that we want it to. Here, Master Yuan-Wu is offering words for our benefit. Master Yuan-Wu is saying that when you have not yet penetrated it, it is like silver mountains and iron cliffs. That is, when you do not truly know the Way, or when you do not truly know your self, it is like silver mountains and iron cliffs. An impasse.

Master Yuan-Wu continues, 'When you have penetrated it, you find that you yourself are the silver mountains and iron cliffs.' What does this mean? Master Yuan-Wu is saying that when you have truly clarified the Way, you find that you yourself are the silver mountains and iron cliffs. You yourself are the impasse, with no separation. This is rather unexpected. And so meeting an impasse, it is necessary to be one with this condition, one with this situation. Being this difficult situation, and while forbearing what we should forbear, we should be diligent. Diligent Progress. Each and every day, not losing to, or being defeated by the impasse, but moving in a right direction. Being active and energetic, and not wasting time.

In this Case, following these words of Master Yuan-Wu, there is the teaching, 'The real Way is not difficult. It only abhors choice and attachment.' For people seeking the Buddhist Way, it is necessary to once be free from choice and attachment, and liberated from the ego-self. Sincerely, practising the Buddhist Way, and sincerely doing one's best in despite of the impasse, it is possible to realize liberation. Certainly, it is possible.

Following the main Case, in the Verse by Master Hsueh-Tou, are the words,

‘A cloth-covered drum that reaches the eaves.’

This cloth-covered drum that reaches to the eaves, this gigantic drum, can mean something which moves one to one’s wits end. Something very problematic, something which is very difficult to deal with. The gigantic drum. These words perhaps are pointing to the impasse. A very difficult situation, which has us at our wits end. It is at this point, or in this situation that we live our daily life. At our wits end. And so regardless of our circumstances, we should sincerely, carefully, continue. Diligently practising the Buddhist Way. Sincerely practising it is possible to overcome the hardship that arises from meeting with an impasse in life. We can overcome the hardship that arises from things which just will not go as we would like them to. Perseverance is a necessary virtue at these times. And our feet should be firmly in the Buddhist Way.

Concerning perseverance there is a story about a person trying to fill up a well with snow. The story is concerned with a well and a fool. It is also about our life. In former times people often took their water from a well. A well, dug into the ground. A water-well. In this story a fool is standing beside a well, shovelling snow into the well. This person, a fool, is trying to fill up the well. Shovelling and shovelling. However, the

snow just melts into water; yet, the fool continues shovelling.

Of course, in life, each person has to be shrewd, or smart to exist in this world. Taking care for our work, our employment. Taking care in human relations, relations with others. And taking care for our health and well-being. We have to be very smart or shrewd. We also, on the other hand, have to be somewhat like this person filling in the well with snow. Shovelling, shovelling, and shovelling. That is, each day getting up each morning, and earnestly doing our work each day. Sincerely continuing despite the various circumstances in life. Favourable conditions or unfavourable conditions. Each and every day continuing. Like the fool with his shovel. Being the fool and earnestly continuing. Like this, with our feet firmly in the Buddhist Way, our life can improve.

# *The Comparison of Buddhadharma and Philosophy*

Venerable Sik Yin Tak

## **1. The Differences and Similarities of Philosophy, Buddhadharma and Science.**

The saying “Buddhadharma is not philosophy but is philosophy” is hard to understand and may seem contradictory. As a matter of fact, this can be answered very simply – the spirit of Buddhadharma is not philosophy but its theories include philosophy. That is why it is not philosophy but is philosophy.

Philosophy is a Greek word which means ‘the love for wisdom’ and it stems from the desire to increase knowledge. Philosophy is to understand issues concerning one self and the universe. It places emphasis on comprehensive research. Science however places more emphasis on analytical

research in understanding the issues. The studies of philosophy and science differ in their levels of broadness and detail.

Although the goal for both eastern and western philosophy is to research issues that are beyond reality, western philosophy emphasizes on explanation. As long as it is logical, it is acceptable. This is 'thinking' philosophy. Eastern philosophy emphasizes on action and explanation and all findings are made through real experience. This is 'practical' or 'verified' philosophy.

## **2. The Scope of Philosophical Research**

Research centres on three different areas that deal with issues concerning (I) nature, (ii) knowledge and (iii) life. Nature deals with theories of the mind, things and gods. Knowledge centres around rationality and experience. Life concerns with value in our everyday life. Philosophy concerning nature includes Ontology and Cosmology. Knowledge philosophy includes theories of knowledge and logic while life philosophy includes the theory of worth and sociology. Ontology is the research that deals with the nature of being.

Cosmology treats the universe as one whole system. Different theories give rise to different streams of studies.

Epistemology is the research of the origin, basic

characteristics and effects of knowledge. In psychology, the broad sense refers to the obvious philosophical experience and emotion, such as feelings, senses, imagination, thinking, etc. In a narrower sense, this refers to knowing the condition of the other party. In the philosophy sense, this knowledge contains the ability to judge.

Logic researches the mind. Normally it is divided into the theory of principles and the theory of methods. It originates with Aristotle. In recent times, it includes theory of fulfillment and theory of form.

Theory of worth is looking at values from the philosophical perspective. The motive behind this consists of some kind of ideals or requirement in order to be used as basis for comparison. Value can be relative or absolute. Judgements made according to personal views are 'subjective value' while values that are not confined to any restrictions are commonly referred to as 'objective value'.

### **3. Comparison between Philosophy and Buddhadharma**

The original meaning of philosophy is the love for wisdom. Everything stems from the desire to learn more. Buddhadharma aims to find ways to release sentient beings from sufferings arising out the life and death. To find ways to be released from suffering, it is necessary to solve a lot of

philosophical questions first. For example, real vs unreal, confusion vs apprehension, vijnana vs the heart, nothing vs something, cause vs effect, spiritual vs physical, and worries vs wisdom. All important issues dealt with in philosophy have already been discussed in the Buddhadharma. That is why although the Buddhadharma is not itself philosophy, philosophy however forms a part of it. Buddhadharma does not believe in god but it believes in Buddha-nature. Buddha-nature is the fundamental element of the universe. It is the real truth, the origin of all goodness and the doctrine to release from suffering.

Buddha-nature is not only for a selected group of people or gods; it is inherent to all sentient beings. As said, Buddha-nature is equal, i.e. no superiority or inferiority. It does not change, i.e. it will not increase in the case of a scared person or decrease in the case of an ordinary being. It is permanent, i.e. not reborn or extinguished. It does not move, i.e. it will not come and go. It is plentiful and is everywhere. It is subtle and beyond comprehension. It is perfect and all goodness is complete. The principles and goals of Buddhadharma are to use the achievement derived from the discovery and development of Buddha-nature to release sentient beings from suffering, ignorance and to restore to their original nature. The spirit and vision of achieving this are different from ordinary religions and

philosophy. In the Buddadharmā, both Hinayana and Mahayana capture advanced philosophical theories. The issues raised in Epistemology and Ontology and those relating to moral as well as the question of good and bad are explained in detail in the Mahayana Sunya sect and Dharmalaksana sect. The Sautrantikah and Sarvastivadah of Hinayana also discuss the issues raised in Epistemology. The Buddhadharma doctrine of sunyata is something that western philosophy cannot match. Epistemology only reaches the level of the six vijñāna. Both eastern and western philosophy teach people to be good but cannot recommend a way to get rid of their bad roots. They only teach people to suppress their evil thoughts and to reduce worries. But if it is not clear about the origin of evil, how can that be discussed? Buddhadharma proposes to change the body and the mind completely and to find ways to turn confusion into apprehension and to turn an ordinary person into a sacred person. This can be achieved by improving one's wisdom through practice and to bring out all hidden abilities. Life and the universe will then look completely different. Although eastern and western philosophies are able to touch on these, the actual verification is not something ordinary philosophical discussions can achieve.

## *Inner Potential and Power*

**Venerable Sik Yin Tak**

There is a long lasting past in our continuously renewing life stream. All the present impressions and memories come from our past thoughts and actions that are accumulated in our mind. This becomes our inner potential. Once there are right opportunities and timing, this inner potential will react. This reaction will not only become the motivation of our life but also, it becomes the fundamental bases between wisdom and folly, fortune and misfortune.

The teachings of Buddha want us to develop the benevolent side of our inner potential in our daily life. It wants us to have a correct understanding and analysis of things and to be keen in our observation. For our

relationships with other people, the teachings tell us to demonstrate the inner potential of compassion and sympathy and to tolerate and respect the feeling of other people and thus become an important social attainment. The common saying of Cultivation of Blessing and Wisdom actually is to develop the benevolent side of our inner potential and to exemplify the true value of our life.

To develop the inner potential, one needs motivation and it is the force of life. Life is a combination of physical body and psychological needs. Many people only know how to take care of their physical body from the standpoint of hygiene, nutrition, exercise and medical needs. They ignore their psychological needs, thus forgetting that our physical body is affected by psychological feeling. Modern medical researches show that negative feelings and stress, if not properly controlled and addressed will cause a lot of illnesses, such as, hypertension, heart disease, duodenal ulcer, self seclusion, violent inclination...etc. Hence psychological health must be paid special attention to.

The habit of false imagination and foolish stubbornness become the obstacle in developing the benevolent side of our inner potential. Buddha guided us to cultivate the following five treasure powers in order to hasten our psychological health:

1. Power of Faith: First, we need to set a goal, avoid hesitation. An ideal example is to believe in the wisdom and good deeds of Buddha. Once we believe in the teachings of Buddha then we must follow and practice. More importantly, we must believe in ourselves that we have the capability to learn and reach the horizon of Buddha. We will encounter difficulties and obstacles in the long run, but we must not surrender. We must realize that we gain experience from those difficulties and obstacles so as to strengthen our faith.
2. Power of Perseverance: Persistent, always challenge ourselves. Obstacle appear in our way of life and we must live up to the challenge. We must complete not with other people but with ourselves. We must always improve ourselves. We must look back to see if we have improvement day after day and to find out whether we are having the best way to achieve our goal.
3. Power of Thoughtfulness: all our action and speech are guided by our thoughts. Hence we need to pay particular attention to the direction of our thoughts. There are four guidelines in the teachings of Buddha. First, since our body has its own metabolism, we do not need to be greedy for our body. Second, do not be bothered by our own feelings, we actually can master our happiness and sadness. Third, since our emotional

feeling is unstable, we need to contain them. Forth, since nothing is permanent, do not expect eternity. There is a Sutra saying, it is the correct virtue to only think what you should think and evil to think what you should not think. If we can hold the correct virtue, we can face the entire situation and not be moved. And we will not be influenced and tempted by the evil temptations.

4. Power of Concentration: The main obstacle is the wandering of our mind and heart; we need to depend on meditation in order to concentrate. We can just concentrate on one particular subject and practice the concept of End. Combined, the power of our mind and heart will become a powerful power of awakening and wipe out all the unproductive folly thinking.
5. Power of Wisdom: Meditation of the power of End can stop our delusions that disturb our mind. But just stopping it is not enough to exercise our wisdom, we need to uphold the true virtue and OBSERVE. Expand our observation into different things. Let the true virtue fill up our daily life. Let the truth virtue be our guild and upgrade our decisiveness. In case of problems in our personal understandings, in our work or family, under the guidance of wisdom, we can easily solve

them and differentiate what should do and what should not do.

The practice of the above five different power depends on our own, we need to maximize our capability to achieve maximum inner potential, and the amount of effort that we have exerted will become our future inner potentials, too.

Being a Buddhist, we need to treasure our good inner potential and we should not neglect the practice of the above precious five powers.

# *Benefits in Believing in Buddha and Reciting Buddha's Name*

**Venerable Sik Yin Tak**

*Translated by Ida Ho*

Sakyamuni was compassionate. For the sake of all living beings, he went through many difficulties and hardships in his practice. Finally while watching the bright stars under a bodhi tree, he attained Sambodhi. He used his experience to inspire in all living beings the truths of the universe and the truths of life. His goal was to liberate living beings from their suffering and lead them to happiness.

Each human life only lasts a few decades. No matter how well one's life is filled with material satisfaction, there

are moments when one still feels lost and alone. The best way to pursue spiritual comfort is to turn to and rely on the Triratna. Triratna is the bright light in a dark night which shines through our miseries and will show us the right path. It is also the benevolent boat in the ocean of miseries which saves human beings from suffering.

After turning to Triratna, according to Buddha's teaching, (a) do not do anything evil; only perform good deeds, control oneself physically and verbally, (b) do not do anything to harm others in order to benefit own self. Furthermore, always use gratitude, kindness and equality to cultivate blessing and wisdom, (c) do everything to benefit one self and others. Living a meaningful life like this, spiritual comfort is attained.

When one's life comes to an end, although there may be wealth, savings, spouse, children and relatives, none of this can be brought along. The only things that will accompany the person are the good and evil deeds done previously. There is an old saying: "Except for the deeds performed, everything will stay behind. No more gold, no more silver after death; no more spouse, no more children and no chance to meet again." This illustrates the fact that even after death, the good and evil deeds still follow the dead person. Depending on the deeds, if they are good, the dead person will go to heaven. If they are bad, the

person will go to hell or be reborn in the form of another animal and be returned to the ocean of misery. Transmigration in the six ways means the cycle of life and death continues over and over again, with no end.

In order to stop going through transmigration, Buddha taught us to recite 'Namah Amitabha' so that we can be born in the pure land.

To pray for a dead person, it should be done within 49 days. The dead person's spouse, children, brothers, sisters and relatives should participate to seek the mercy of Triratna and the meritorious power of Amitabha. This, together with everyone's sincerity, will enable the dead person to be born in a good place and not to fall into the three evil paths. This will benefit both the dead and those alive.

Things to note when praying for the dead:

1. The split second before a person died, Vijnana of the mind will be in an aimless and lonely state. The people praying should use a soft and kind voice to comfort and encourage the dead to leave things behind. 'After your death, everything will be looked after properly, so don't worry. It is important to concentrate on the praying so as to be born in the pure land to see Amitabha.'

2. The dead body should be left peacefully. Do not move or disturb it in anyway in the first 8-12 hours. This is to prevent the dead person from coming up with any bad thoughts which will obstruct the future life.
3. Master Yin Kuang said: "When praying for the dead, do not use the 'wooden fish'. Just use a soft and clear voice to recite 'Namah Amitabha'. Not too fast and not too slow. Every word should be said clearly and entered into the dead person's ears."
4. Those people who were not on good terms with the dead person should not see the person at this time. This is to prevent the dead person from having bad thoughts.
5. Those people praying, whether they are relatives or friends, should not cry and definitely should not shed any tears on the dead person's body. This is to keep the dead person from having any emotion.

1. Turning to Triratna

"Triratna" refers to Buddha, Dharma, Sangha. They are referred to as "Jewels" because they are invaluable and respectable.

**Buddha:** A saint who has achieved the three kinds of enlightenment and has many virtues.

**Dharma:** Doctrines personally given by Buddha.

**Sangha:** Buddha's followers or disciples.

All three are the benevolent boat in the ocean of miseries, the bright light on a dark night. Those people, who are determined to turn to and rely on Triratna and to practice, will benefit immensely. "To rely on Buddha, the person will not fall into hell. To rely on Dharma, the person will not become a starved ghost. To rely on Sangha, the person will not become an animal." This is to say, turning to Triratna we will derive spiritual comfort.

## 2. True Meaning of Buddhism

Buddha said " 'Arising from causation', 'Anitya', 'Anatman', 'Dukha', 'Sunya' are the truths of this life. The principle is to use equality, wisdom and kindness to release all living beings. Furthermore, to perceive that the 10 dharma-worlds (Buddhas, bodhisattvas, pratyeka-buddhas, sravakas, devas, men, asuras, animals, pretas, hells) are all creations of the mind. All good and evil come from the mind. A good thought is a cause to become a buddha, an evil thought is a seed for hell. Whether to become a buddha, to go through transmigration of the 6 ways, to achieve nirvana, or to go through the life and death cycle is a matter of the mind. Therefore the direction of the mind is very important.

### 3. Buddhism's Theory of Cause & Effect

Buddha said, "Things are the combination of a cause, the effect and sangha." A good cause will lead to good result and a bad cause will lead to bad result. That is to say, what you do is what you get. This theory holds true all the time.

The theory of cause and effect applies to past, present and future. If you want to know deeds made in your past life, look at your present condition. If you want to know what your future life will be, look at things you do today. Every deed will produce a corresponding effect and it is only a matter of time as to when that effect will take place.

### 4. There are 8 kinds of Vijnana:

- ◆ Vijnana of the Eye: With the help of the mano-vijnana, to distinguish different colours and images.
- ◆ Srotraivijnana (of the Ear) : With help of the mano-vijnana, to distinguish different sounds.
- ◆ Vijnana of the Nose: With the help of the mano-vijnana, to distinguish smells.
- ◆ Vijnana of the Tongue: With the help of the mano-vijnana, to distinguish different tastes.
- ◆ Kaya-vijnana (of the Body): With the help of the mano-vijnana, to distinguish different touches.
- ◆ Mano-vijnana (of the Mind): When exercised externally, it can help the vijnanas of the eye, ear, nose, tongue

and body to distinguish colour, sound, smell, taste and touch. If the mano-vijnana is used internally, it can distinguish direct mental perception. (There are 3 types of solitary mano-vijnana which happen in (a) day-dreaming, (b) dreams and (c) meditation.)

- ◆ Klista-mano-vijnana: This is the discriminating and construction sense.
- ◆ Alaya-vijnana: This is the storehouse or basis from which come all 'seeds' of consciousness.

## *On Significance of Observing Disciplinary Codes*

Venerable Sik Yin Tak

*Recorded by M. Lui*

The disciplinary codes or Vinaya, aiming at disciplining disciples' way of living as well as cultivation, are necessary guidelines set by Buddha consequent to a disciple's wrongdoing. Seeing a monk commit an improper act, Buddha would first warn him against repeating it. If he failed to comply, punishment would be administered according to the disciplinary codes. Rules that resulted were later collected into the basket of Vinaya and upheld as standards for monastic living.

Along with monastic regulations are rules for laity as well. Some of them are observed by both communities and others, specific for a group.

Disciplinary observance is the first step for every Buddhist along the path of cultivation, No matter what the approach is, perceptive adherence leads.

The Buddhist canon contains ample illustrations of how significant disciplinary rules are. Some of these will be cited later in this lecture.

An eminent master of the past had left this verse:

*The disciplinary rules-*

*The compassionate ferry across the ocean of suffering  
and*

*The source of hundreds of thousands of virtues-*

*Were honored by sages of the three yanas and*

*Handed down by generations of masters.*

In the ocean of suffering we drift without cease; in the ocean of samsara we go with currents of vexations and karma, intermittently floating and sinking. But aboard the safe ferry of compassion, that is, in upholding the disciplinary rules, we will leave suffering behind eventually. For preceptive observance is the forerunner of all virtues and the launching pad of all good. Without the precepts, good deeds will never be. Sages of the three yanas or vehicles, namely, sravaka, pratyekabuddha, and bodhisattva, and many patriarchs of past generations, all

reverentially and vigilantly abided by them in practice.

The Mahaparinirvana Sutra has this to say on the subject:

*To realize Buddha nature and  
To attain the great nirvana,  
The pure precepts must be cultivated and upheld  
wholeheartedly,  
Failure in keeping the precepts  
Makes a follower of mara's,  
Not a disciple of mine.*

Our goal of following the Buddhist path is solely to realize Buddha nature innate in everyone. In other words, to attain Buddhahood, to reach the state of neither birth nor death – nirvana. This is in the mind of every serious Buddhist, and firm commitment to the upholding of pure precepts is the key to it. Otherwise, inability to observe those precepts already received stands to exclude a practitioner from the company of Buddha's disciples, land him or her among ranks of evil, and shut himself or herself out of enlightenment.

The Sutra of Samadhi of the Light of Sun and Moon also states:

*One sharp and bright, erudite in all three collections*

*of Buddhist texts but wanting in preceptive wisdom due to the inability to observe the precepts, is still bestial.*

An individual may be both bright and learned in the Buddhist canon, but failure in preceptive observance prevents any gain of preceptive wisdom and sustains uncivilness.

The Avatamsaka Sutra, too, gives us a prompt about preceptive adherence.

Observance of the teaching of disciplinary codes ensures the right Dharma of Buddha be kept and the teaching undefied, the Triple Gem live on and the Dharma abide.

All Buddhists will pray for the three gems of Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha to last on earth, to teach, guide, help the living beings out of the ocean of suffering, and make liberation from samsara a possibility for all.

The Mahaprajnaparamita Sastra says:

*One who upholds the precepts will have no fear in mind at life's end.*

A good keeper of the precepts, clear in conscience, does not worry about future rebirth, but, if otherwise, may become apprehensive and fearful.

The Mahaprajnaparamita Sastra also lists five benefits from upholding the precepts:

1. *Preceptive codes affirmed;*
2. *Triumph over adversary;*
3. *Calmness before a crowd;*
4. *Doubts will resolved; and*
5. *The right Dharma to last.*

In unwavering observance, the preceptive codes received remain strong and impregnable, unaffected by external forces and unharmed by outside detriments. Through indebted to many and having made enemies in lives gone by, we earn protection from rigorous preceptive adherence. What is more, we will win them all over. Self-assured from the keeping of precepts are equipped with adequate wisdom, we are no longer afraid in the presence of a crowd. As for any doubts both our own and others' clarity in mind and force of concentration gained from upholding the precepts will generate wisdom and, subsequently, a solution. Contrarily, the mind scattered and wandering, the mental function will falter. Proper adherence to disciplinary codes will enable the right Dharma to carry on, untouched by evil or heretics. Observance by one land many will ensure a bright future for Buddhism and world peace at large.

*The Satayasiddhi Sastra says:  
The house of the Way  
Is pillared upon disciplinary codes;  
The mental fortress of meditation  
Is walled by precepts.*

Pillars are to a building as precepts are to the cultivation of the Buddhist way. Without such support, the whole practice collapses no matter how inept. Similarly, like the fortress guarding a city, precepts wall off external invasion against the meditative mind.

From the gains of keeping the precepts, we now move on to losses that may be incurred in their violation.

Depravation to the three undesirable planes of existences ensues failure to keep precepts already received. Such a fall is inevitable if the disciplinary codes are not complied with, good practice not carried out, and misdeeds committed.

The Brahma Net Sutra drawbacks as follows:

*A disciple of Buddha who renounces out of pure faith and receives the pure precepts of Buddha, then intentionally transgresses is unworthy of offerings from devotees, hence prohibited from walking the country's ground and forbidden to drink its water.*

*Five thousand devils shall thereafter block one's way,  
yelling big thief! When one visits homes, villages, and  
towns, the devils will sweep away one's footprints.  
Condemned as a thief in the Dharma and ostracized  
by all living beings, a preceptive transgressor differs  
not from an unwanted creature or a wooden stump.*

Monastics are often given offerings of all sorts precept,  
no offerings should be made because:

*A benefactor's offering of rice,  
Every grain as immense as Mount Sumeru,  
Must be paid back if the Way be unrealized,  
Whether one be furred or horned.*

A transgressor of the precepts is unfit to swallow any single grain of rice offered. For lay followers make offerings to monastics to facilitate their cultivation of the Buddhist path so that more living beings may be helped and teachings of Buddha promulgated. Transgression is an infinitely serious matter. The transgressor is thereby unfit to step on the lank or drink its water, that is to live there and claim rights of residence. A thief even to devils, one is guilty of stealing offerings from benefactors without paying the dues of observing the precepts and cultivating properly. The devils sweep away the footprints out of disgust, not

wanting to lay their eyes on such. Everyone else, equally irate, wants no more of the sight. A good keeper of the pure precepts, dignified and composed, is well regarded, but a transgressor, like a beast and a block of wood, earns no respect.

Preceptive violation causes five negative consequences:

1. *Harm to oneself;*
2. *Reproof by the wise;*
3. *Ill fame be cast to oneself;*
4. *Fear and regrets at life's end; and*
5. *Descent to the undesirable planes of existence after death in accordance with one's own negative karma.*

Precepts are initially received with the goal of cultivating and attaining enlightenment. Once violated, all efforts to have kept them are in vain. With personal growth and spiritual development in ruins, nobody suffers but oneself.

## *The 3 Meanings of July 15<sup>th</sup> — Self-Confession Day for Monks*

Venerable Sik Yin Tak

- 1. Why is the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the 7<sup>th</sup> moon a day for monks to confess their sins?**

According to Buddhist regulations, each summer during the 90 days from the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the 4<sup>th</sup> moon to the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the 7<sup>th</sup> moon, monks will not go out to convert. They will assemble together. During the summer retreat, they will follow the rules strictly, purify their acts, and concentrate on the right path. The last day is to dismiss the summer retreat.

On the last day, monks will confess their sins. First, they will evaluate whether they have committed any physical, verbal or mental sins. Secondly, they will invite other monks to comment on their opinion,

what they hear and what they doubt. Monks will then confess their sins at the assembly, correct their mistakes and restore to purity. This is how monks confess their sins.

The 15<sup>th</sup> day of the 7<sup>th</sup> moon is a day for monks to reflect and to accept other monks' comments or evaluation.

## 2. Why did Buddha implement the summer retreat?

### 1) What is the summer retreat?

This is held each year between the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the 4<sup>th</sup> moon and the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the 7<sup>th</sup> moon. During this 90 day period, monks will gather together to study and meditate in a tranquil dwelling.

### 2) Why did Buddha want his disciples to hold the summer retreat?

- ◆ Buddhist followers normally practise near the bottom of hills or forests or close to water. During the summer, flooding occurs frequently in India. For all followers' safety, Buddha implemented this regulation which requires monks to assemble together to spend the summer.
- ◆ Summers in India are humid. It is the season for snakes and insects to grow. The summer retreat will avoid monks from being hurt by these insects

and at the same time prevent the monks from hurting these insects, as they will not be going out.

- ◆ During the 90 days, Buddhist followers assemble and study together to encourage each other to achieve their goals.

### **3. What is dismissing of the summer retreat?**

After self-confession on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the 7<sup>th</sup> moon, the crowd will depart and individuals will return to their normal places of dwelling to continue with their practice and will be relieved of all restrictions observed during the summer retreat.

## **BUDDHA'S JOY DAY**

### **1. Why is Buddha joyful?**

Everything that Buddha did has the good intention of benefiting all human beings and relieving them of pain. Therefore, it is joyful for Buddha to see human beings becoming good rather than evil, understanding rather than superstitious, and being true rather than false.

## **2. Why is the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the 7<sup>th</sup> moon call Buddha's joy day?**

After self-confession, 3 things can make Buddha joyful:

- 1) Buddhist believers gather together to study and practice.
- 2) During self-confession, monks will reflect and evaluate their behaviour. They will report their sins and restore purity.
- 3) After dismissing the summer retreat, monks might attain the 4 kinds of Hinayana, i.e. early fruit, second fruit, third fruit and fourth fruit.

## **DAY TO OFFER ULLAMBANA**

### **1. The meaning of Ullambana**

Ullambana means to hang upside down. This is to describe those hungry spirits – their esophagus is as narrow as a needle, their belly is as big as a drum. They cannot eat nor drink and are always hungry. Even though there is food, it will turn into charcoal as soon as it is swallowed. The pain is similar to being hung upside down. 'Bana' is a vessel filled with offerings of food and it has the meaning of salvage. In other words, Ullambana means to save from being

hung upside down and to relieve of pain.

## 2. The origin of Ullambana

According to the Ullambanapatra-sutra, Mahamaudgalyayana used his deva-eye (i.e. divine sight & unlimited vision) saw his mother in the hungry spirits path. Her skin and bones were stuck together. She suffered from perpetual pain. Mahamaudgalyayana offered her a bowl of rice. Because of the bad deeds she did previously, the food turned into charcoal. Mahamaudgalyayana wanted to release her from her pain. He asked Buddha for his guidance. Buddha directed him to put food and drinks in the Ullambana on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the 7<sup>th</sup> moon and offered them to the 3 Gems. With the 3 Gems' divine power, he could remedy the sins committed by his parents during the past 7 lives. Mahamaudgalyayana followed the instructions and his mother was instantly released from pain. Buddha's saying to his follower: 'Buddhist followers, who are filial to their parents, should remember them all the time. On the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the 7<sup>th</sup> moon each year, they should offer Ullambana to Buddha and Sangha to thank their parents, including those for the past 7 lives, for their kindness and love.

### **3. How to arrange 'Ullambana'?**

If it is inside a temple, the container should be placed in front of Buddha. Food such as vegetables, fruits, noodles, biscuits, rice, oil, tea, etc. should be placed in the container. The container will then be offered to Buddha and Sangha.

# *The Practice of Meditation*

Susan Kong

*Translated by Shu Tung Yen*

To learn the Buddhist way is to discipline one's own mind according to Buddha's teachings, and to guide the mind in its proper functions by cleansing the mind of its bad habits and denying it of any opportunity to do evil. The mind has been disturbed and unbridled for a long time and to rid it of the accumulated bad habits, it is useless merely by listening to and understanding the doctrine or by reading, chanting and interpretation of the sutras. There must be actual practice to rein in the mind unceasingly before one can reap the real benefits of Buddhist practice.

In the Buddhist Sutras, no matter whether they be Eightfold Path and the Six Paramitas are not complete without Right Concentration and Dhyana, and this points

to the importance of meditation practice in the entire process.

The present text is based on "The Chapter on Discriminating Yoga in the Sandhinirmocana Sutra" and the "Sastra on the Six Stages in the teaching of Meditation Practice" by Bodhisattva Asanga. Reference is also made to "a Brief Treatise on the Progressive Stages of Bodhi" by Master Tson-Kha-Pa.

We now describe how to practice meditation under twelve headings:

1. The intention to practice meditation
2. The preparations before practicing meditation
3. The sitting posture during meditation
4. The phenomena and object for observation during meditation
5. The obstacles to meditation
6. The expulsion of obstacles to meditation
7. The stages over which the mind progresses
8. The mission of alertness
9. The preservation of states in meditation
10. The progress of states in meditation
11. The functions of meditation
12. The effects and benefits of meditation

## 1. The Intention to Practice Meditation

Generally speaking, people practice meditation hoping to strengthen their body and extend their life span or to seek extraordinary powers, but these are only the benefits obtainable on the temporal level.

For Buddhists learning to practice meditation, the goals are twofold:

1. To emancipate from the clutches of attachment;
2. To correct the wrongful views.

From time immemorial, many of the habitual delusions inherent in humankind such as greed, anger and ignorance, are stored in the Alaya (Store-Consciousness) and are with us the day we were born. They manifest themselves throughout our lives in our behavioral patterns of love and hate which in turn leave imprints in our minds and sow the seeds for fruition later on when conditions are ripe, if not in this lifetime then in future lifetimes. Hence the unceasing continuation of the life-and-death cycle.

By practicing meditation, we can control our wayward minds from wandering in diverse and confused thoughts, mainly of love and hate, stop the flow of our thoughts, and observe the state of reality, such as the five-fold procedures for quieting the mind, the four-fold stages of mindfulness or the sixteen mental activities of the Four Noble Truths (to be described in the following text). The

delusions of greed and anger must be exterminated and bad habits must be overcome. Then we can be happy in this lifetime without any afflictions. As we recognize the impermanence of worldly things as well as life itself, we sow no seeds of evil, and we are assured of freedom from transmigration in the future. In this way, we will reach our first goal by freeing us from the clutches of afflictions, the so-called obstruction of delusion as mentioned in the Buddhist Sutras.

Furthermore, we must understand the cognitive functions of our sense organs by continuously observing that what we know through seeing, hearing and feeling are all but images created by the sixth consciousness. When the mind is in a happy state, whatever we see, hear and feel are likable. When the mind is in an unhappy frame, whatever we see, hear and feel are disagreeable. The same external circumstance can be recognized very differently depending on each person's different intelligence level, state of mind, character, likes and dislikes etc.

By the practice of meditation, we observe that all phenomena are a manifestation of our own mind. We will stop from pursuing after the external circumstance and instead look inward into ourselves. The wise will attain the truth while the foolish will still hold on to attachment. When the mind is pure, you are in the Land of Ultimate Bliss.

When the mind is stained, you are in the Saha world of the Five Turbidities. When the mind is pure, all persons are your good teachers and friends. When the mind is stained, they become your opponents and enemies. If you can understand that everything arises only by your own consciousness, then you can reach the second goal by correcting wrongful views, the so-called obstruction of knowledge as stated in the Buddhist Sutras.

## **2. The Preparations before Practicing Meditation**

Although practicing meditation is a way to train the mind, it must be preceded by the acquisition of a broad base of knowledge and the right thinking process before one is assured of not going astray. The practice of meditation includes being engaged in the “stopping” and “observing” of one’s own thoughts. As thoughts follow one after the other continuously without break, all one could do is to “stop” its flow. How then do we practice “observing” to open up our wisdom depends on how much we know to make the right choice. Therefore, it is very important to hear more and think more, and in this respect, we must pay attention to three points:-

1. Follow a good teacher. No matter how smart you are, you still have to rely on an experienced person to guide

you. The social and cultural progress of our society relies solely on the transmission from person to person. As Buddhists take refuge in Buddha, and upon Buddha's entry into nirvana, they rely on generation after generation of saints and sages in the past who guided and transformed them with what they themselves learned and attained, which is subject to changes of the times. Although you can benefit from reading on your own, but by following a good teacher, you can easily have your doubts removed and problems solved. In selecting a good teacher, you must be very careful, otherwise it will be a sheer waste to you in both time and effort. Hence choose only those who are well qualified in the following five aspects:-

1. Extensive knowledge,
2. Understanding attitude,
3. Adept in explaining,
4. Teaching without let-up, and
5. Possessing proper rules of conduct.

II. Believe in the teaching and put into practice. If you have already located a good teacher, you should have no doubts whatsoever about what your teacher has spoken, and practice accordingly. Study deeper into what you have heard and do not be easily swayed by heretical views from the outside. Have deep faith in seeking the Right Dharma

and you will attain different levels of enlightenment in the course of your meditation practice.

III. Always keep watch over your thoughts and follow the teacher to receive the dharma. You should always have memories of the teacher and the dharma that he/she preached to you. Imitate and follow the way your teacher conducts himself/herself. Remember that in our practice, we not only have to learn the way but to acquire virtues as well. This is what is called teaching and cultivation. Therefore, we must always be alert and watchful in order to conform to the Buddhist doctrine as well as the mind of the teacher. To be alert is to train and supervise our inner thoughts. To be ready with the above three preparations means to be ready to practice meditation under the right-ful conditions.

### **3. The Sitting Posture during Meditation**

To practice meditation is to fix the mind on one object or phenomenon. Therefore, for beginners, a quiet place away from noisy surrounding is of paramount importance to shield your mind from outside disturbance. While sitting, the following eight rules must be observed.

1. Feet - Sit cross-legged or just sit comfortably. No need to sit cross-legged fashion. You can sit on a

- stool and when your feet hang down, make sure the height of the stool is level with your knee.
2. Eyes - Half open, looking down to the tip of the nose. This will avoid the sensation of total darkness which induces sleepiness. You may also close your eyes completely.
  3. Body - Sit upright, not reclining and not curled up; make sure the spine is straight.
  4. Shoulders - The two shoulders should be on the same level.
  5. Head - Not drooping, not looking up, hold position as if carrying something on top of the head.
  6. Lips and Teeth - Natural, not unduly open or close. Upper jaw to touch lower jaw lightly.
  7. Tongue - Tip of Tongue to be pressed lightly against palate.
  8. Breathing - Lightly (inhale and exhale through the nose inaudibly). Slowly (breathe in and out softly without shortness of breath). Protractedly (hold each breath - for a long duration).

Note: There are two forms of sitting cross-legged fashion, the full version and semi-version. The full cross-legged version is further divided into the demon-conquering posture and the auspicious posture.

Demon-conquering posture - First place the right leg

on the left thigh and pulled it to the side of the body. Then place the left leg on the right thigh and pull it towards the body. Place the left hand in the palm of the right hand.

Auspicious posture - First place the left leg on the right thigh and pull it towards the body. Then place the right leg on the left thigh and also pull it towards the body. Place the right hand in the palm of the left hand.

#### **4. The Phenomena and Objects for Observation during Meditation**

Meditation embraces both the functions of “stopping” and “observing”. “Stopping” means to dwell the mind on one place to stop it from flitting around, that is to observe just one phenomenon to control the mind. The “Sandhi-Nirmocana Sutra” stated that the twelve divisions of the Buddha’s teachings should be used as the objects for observation. The “Heart Sutra” also stated that in the course of the deep practice of prajna-paramita, it was observed that the five skandhas (components of a sentient being) were void. To sum up from the initial practice of meditation to the stage where some success has been achieved, there is nothing outside the following three objects:

- 1. External Objects:** For beginners, their minds are filled with desire, anger, ignorance, arrogance

and waywardness, and they cannot stop their own flow of thoughts. They should engage in self-scrutiny to find out which delusion gravitates most in their minds and then select an object or sphere for observation to counteract the thought. Like the "five meditations" for settling the mind, where desires abound, practice the observation of the vileness of everything; where anger abounds, practice the observation of compassion and pity for all; where ignorance abounds, practice the observation of causality; where arrogance abounds, practice the observation of right discrimination; where waywardness abounds, practice the observation of counting your breath. These are all the preliminary antidotes to counteract the afflictions.

- 2. Aspiring Objects:** If the mind can settle down like a tamed wild horse, then work your way from the temporal to the supra-mundane level by observing the sixteen mental activities of the Four Noble Truths. First, observe the four aspects of impermanence, suffering, emptiness and non-existence of self under the truth of "suffering". Then, observe the four aspects of cause accumulation, giving rise to and cooperating with

conditions under the truth of “accumulation of suffering”. Further, observe the four aspects of annihilation, stillness, comfort and freedom under the truth of “extinction of suffering”. Lastly, observe the four aspects of the right path, reality, practice and way out under the truth of the “path leading to attainment”. The ultimate object of the exercise is to depart from the worldly cycle of causality and to land on the eternal bliss of nirvana.

- 3. Internal Object:** It is to observe that nothing is outside the sphere of the mind. Afflictions arise from the mind and should be removed by the mind from the mind. Birth and death are wrought by the karma of the mind and by destroying the desire to do evil, one can be freed from the wheel of transmigration.

Further observe that even objective spheres are images of the mind. The objective spheres that everyone sees are discriminating images created in their own respective consciousness. Although everyone sees the same object which appears identical and considers it to be a real thing, yet in reality, it is not identical but rather look alike, because similar karma gives rise to similar life form and our consciousness gives rise to a resembling image of the same

objective sphere. However, due to everyone's different personalities and likes and dislikes, the images that arise in one's mind and one's perception of them are somewhat different. The Buddhist sutras teach people not to be deluded by images aroused within our own consciousness so that they will not give rise to desire, anger and ignorance in our minds, and our speech and behavior will not attract corresponding retribution.

If we understand that everything is a reflection of the state of our mind, and we know that even our feelings of suffering and happiness are illusions of the mind, then we are fearless and trouble-free even in times of adversity. Our physical frame lives on in this world but our mind goes beyond the worldly realm. Therefore, Bodhisattvas find it far more superior to transform sentient beings than enter into nirvana because while living in this world of Five Turbidities, they are not troubled by the Five Turbidities.

Meditation practitioners should therefore select their own objective spheres, just like a shooter aiming at a target before he can shoot his arrow.

## **5. The Obstacles to Meditation**

The main obstacles to meditation are torpid-mindedness, agitation, forgetfulness, non-discernment, and distraction.

**[Torpid-mindedness]** - Due to inappropriate amount of sleep, the practitioner cannot hold on to the sphere of observation, becomes wayward and non-alert, and even falls into darkness like a person who cannot see when he enters a dark room. He may be in low spirits, idly passing time without being aware of it. He may even grow tired of the sphere of observation and lose the impetus to attain samadhi. Therefore, torpid-mindedness is an obstacle to proper observation.

**[Agitation]** - This happens when the mind wanders outward and cannot concentrate on the sphere of observation. The practitioner is in an unstable state of mind and cannot settle down. He may be excited by coming into contact with likable sounds and forms; he may be recounting the past and cling onto his intimate and loved ones, thereby arousing intertwined feelings of love and hate, suffering and happiness. These belong to agitation of the mind. When the body is restless and cannot remain in a seated position, this belongs to agitation of the body. No matter whether it be agitation of the mind or of the body, the practitioner cannot carry on with the proper observation of his chosen objective spheres and this will be an obstacle to his "stopping" effort.

**[Forgetfulness]** - When the practitioner cannot clearly remember the objective spheres that he has selected

to observe resulting in discontinuation of the flow of thoughts, then, confusion reigns. This can be an obstacle to right mindfulness.

**[Non-discernment]** - When the mind becomes torpid or is about to become torpid, or when the mind becomes agitated or is about to become agitated, it cannot raise its level of alertness in time and is unable to lead the mind in uninterrupted observation. In the state of meditation where the mind fails to tame pleasant and obnoxious thoughts, it should discern what is proper and give it encouragement and discern what is improper and put a stop to it. All these can be obstacles to right understanding.

**[Distraction]** - The constant interchange between agitation, forgetfulness and non-discernment affecting the mind can bring about distraction and hence is an obstacle to right concentration.

The difference between agitation and distraction lies in the fact that for the former, the observing mind is unstable while for the latter, the objective spheres frequently shift about.

## **6. How to counter obstacles to meditation**

Where obstacles exist in meditation, one cannot hope to progress any further and has to employ techniques to remove them:

1. **To counter Torpid-mindedness** - When the mind is torpid and spiritless, the practitioner should bring to mind the merits of meditation, thereby arousing the feeling of joy. He may focus his mind on the Buddha, the Dharma, the Sangha and the Vinaya (Precepts) to spur him on or he may observe the bright rays emanating from the top of Buddha's head, the sun and the moon, or even observe and explore deeper into the meaning of the sutras known to him. These will help him to concentrate. He should not for the time being observe spheres that are disgusting to the mind, like the meditation on the uncleanness of the human body, etc. If torpid-mindedness continues unabated, discontinue meditation and try to wash your face with cold water before resuming meditation.
2. **To counter Agitation** - When the mind is unsettled and cannot focus on its object of observation, then at first try to keep your mind fixated on one point or sphere, and double your will power to stick to it and prevent it from flitting about. If the mind is frequently reminiscent of past pleasant memories as in playful pleasure-seeking experiences, then meditate on the inevi-

tability of impermanence. If the mind encounters likable events and becomes overexcited, then it should meditate on the illusory nature of gain and loss. If his fondness of relatives and friends brings to mind their images, then he should meditate on the clustering and disbandment of the causes of affinity. If the mind develops a love for the self and experiences feelings of joy and sorrow, then it should meditate on the egolessness of the self as being the cooperating functions of the organs, the objective spheres, and corresponding consciousness.

- 3. To counter Forgetfulness** - In practicing meditation, thoughts must follow one after another uninterruptedly on one point or sphere. If there is any degree of relaxation of this stance the mind will wander and you should immediately recall to mind the very first thoughts when you begin your practice and let your mind sustain in these thoughts continuously without fail. Owing to the continuity of your thoughts, you will be able to observe clearly the objective spheres. Even though there may be some interruption, you can still resume the continuity of your thoughts and your progress will thus not

be hindered.

4. **To counter Non-discernment** - Before you practice meditation, you should hear more and read profusely to gain a proper understanding as a safeguard. If you see an illusion and consider it meritorious, you give rise to a feeling of joy, then you are easy prey to the Maras (the Evil One). You should recognize that the saints teach us to stay away from attachment and to seek stillness and quiet. When the mind is about to become torpid or agitated, heighten your attention and counter them with appropriate measures. When your ego rears its head or when your mind is distracted, think of the demerits of losing your concentration and the possible loss of mental comfort and relaxation. When you are tired of Bodhisattva practices, think of the merits of the Mahayana. When you transition your meditation practice from that of a Hearer to that of the Mahayana, though your mind aspires for higher ground, yet you do not relinquish this effort and instead give it encouragement. Thus it takes right knowledge to decide which should be retained and which should be discarded.
5. **To counter Distraction** - When you are able to

counter the above mentioned four obstacles, there will be no distraction.

## **7. The Stages over which the mind progresses**

Make the right preparations before you commence your meditation practice, like hearing more and understanding more and also knowing the ways to remove the obstacles to meditation. However, our minds, the consciousness itself, are accustomed to waywardness and confusion and cannot be tamed in a short space of time. Therefore, it takes considerable time and effort to settle the mind and the process can be briefly summarized in nine stages.

- 1. Staying Inward** - The mind is accustomed to clinging to outward objects and spheres. When you hear the proper teachings and give rise to a pure faith, you show a willingness to practice meditation. First of all, you turn your mind inward to observe the objects or spheres of your choice. Your inward contemplation may not be on the proper track at first, and tends to drag itself outward. You have to make an effort to keep the mind seeking inward. This requires the "power of hearing".
- 2. Staying Continuously** - When the mind is gradually made to turn inward, there are times

when you lose hold of previous thoughts and forget the sphere of your observation, then you should immediately bring your mind back and resume continuity of your flow of thoughts on the target object or sphere, ensuring no interruption thereto even for a moment. This requires the “power of contemplation”.

3. **Staying Securely** - If there are outward stimuli resulting in torpid-mindedness and agitation, and an unclear mind, you should quickly turn your mind around to stay securely in the observation of your previous target object or sphere.
4. **Staying Close** - When your observation advances from the coarse level to the delicate level, your mind is gradually collected from outward ramblings, and you only feel that your mind is calm and clear like a pool of water. For the above-mentioned two stages, it requires the “power of mindfulness”.
5. **Staying Tame** - When the mind can stay calm in the face of agreeable circumstances but is upset in the face of disagreeable circumstances, it will bring on a feeling of disgust to your meditation practice. Try to overcome this feeling at once by observing the merits arising from your medi-

tation practice, and arousing a feeling of joy towards your meditation practice.

6. **Staying Still** - If there is a feeling of the mind's concentration being relaxed you should be aware of it instantly and try to bring the mind back to a stage of concentration. By doing so, if you think that you have a way of guarding your mind and thus give rise to a feeling of joy, you should immediately counter this which is also a source of delusion. For these two staying powers there need be the "power of correct understanding".
7. **Staying Extremely Still** - At this very juncture, watch carefully to counter the very minute discriminative delusions, whether they have arisen or not. Be sure to extinguish all desires of love and greed, or even the feeling of getting accustomed and tired.
8. **Staying on One-Pointedness of mind** - When all the minute delusions like torpid-mindedness, agitation, desire, anger have ceased to function, the mind can remain in samadhi continuously and is aware of its originally pure nature. With further efforts in this direction, the mind will dwell in samadhi for a much prolonged period of time. For these two staying powers, there need

be the “power of zeal and progress”.

9. **Staying in State of Concentration Effortlessly and Naturally** - Due to the continuous practice of meditation, and with the accumulation of experience, the practice becomes so natural that it requires no conscious effort and the mind can remain still and in a state of samadhi. At that time it can be said that you have accomplished in the practice of “stopping”. This requires the “power of continuous practice”.

## 8. The Mission of Alertness or Attention

That you can control your mind from waywardness and make it seek inward and concentrate without wavering is due to the power of alertness or attention. It helps to bring on right thoughts and keep them without stopping. As there are different stages in calming the mind, there are four kinds of alertness or attention:

1. **Enforced Attention** - When you begin to practice meditation your mind is unsettled like running water and unrestrained like a wild horse. This Attention is responsible for firmly holding on to your mind’s “stopping” function to bring it to rest, though only barely at first. The first two stages of staying the mind as described under

Topic 7 are dependent on this Attention.

2. **Intermittent Enforced Attention** - If you can forcibly keep the mind on the object of observation, there are still times when your mind loses its grip. You must be alert and try to bring it back. If there is an interval of break-off, try to keep the mind continuously focused. When the feeling of getting tired arises, try to evoke the pleasures associated with meditation. When desire abounds, try to keep the mind unattached. Although this may not be always the case, this Attention is not to be relaxed. The third to seventh stages of staying the mind are dependent on this Attention.
3. **Enforced Attention with Effort** - To remove the obstacles to meditation and render the mind fixated on one object or sphere uninterruptedly depends on this Enforced Attention with Effort. Always observe the Three Jewels, contemplate on the merits of the Precepts, know that there is progress so the mind is not timid. The eighth stage relies on this attention.
4. **Enforced Attention Without Effort** - When you reach a stage where control of your mind comes naturally and you can freely attain

samadhi without any intermittent confusion or waywardness, you can maintain your deep concentration without any safeguard, then you will experience a sense of bodily comfort and mental elatedness. The ninth stage relies on this attention.

## **9. AIDS to the Preservation of States in Meditation**

Although you possess the resources for meditation practice, and have made sufficient preparation work, removed the obstacles to meditation and rendered your mind well under control, there still needs to be aids to its preservation to ensure the progress. This is the observation of the Precepts.

The observation of the Precepts is a must condition for both monastic and laymen alike. It helps to regulate your daily life and you should heed the following four points:

- 1. Be untainted in what you see and hear** - The practitioner contemplates on the dharma that he hears and tries to understand its meaning. He then practices accordingly, and this is termed "practice according to dharma." If, however, the practitioner does not understand the meaning of the dharma that he hears but relies on other

people's instructions or interpretations, and practices accordingly, this is termed "practice according to faith." If he sees and hears the true dharma, seeks instructions from true masters, he will certainly benefit immensely. If he sees and hears too diversely, engages in playful amusements, or seeks instructions from heathen masters or religions, he will easily fall prey to heterodox views and practices. He will not attain the proper samadhi and even if he manages to obtain it, he will easily go astray. Therefore, for the meditation practitioner, he must be careful not to be unduly tainted by heterodox views and ideas.

2. **Drink and eat at the right time and in the right amounts** - You have to eat and drink to sustain your body. All you seek is sufficient nutrition, so do not indulge in gratification of your gastronomical instincts. The amounts of intake vary with the individual and any excess or deficiency will affect his practice.
3. **No excessive sleep** - Sleep only at midnight and you can regain your physical strength. If you sleep too much, you can give rise to torpid-mindedness. Be always alert, make good use of

your time to practice meditation.

- 4. Be conscious of your deportment** - Whether walking, standing, sitting, or lying, be always mindful that your body never transgresses and your mind never wanders. When alone, be like in a company, and watch your speech and behavior.

## **10. The Progress of states in Meditation**

Meditation means silent contemplation, that is, when you stop the flow of your thoughts, you can then start to observe. If you can control your mind by stopping your thoughts, you should start to practice observing.

There are three stages in the process, that is reflection with investigation, no reflection but with investigation, no reflection and no investigation. In terms of the feeling and perception, there are also four grades and they constitute what is known as the Four Dhyanas.

In the initial stage, you contemplate on the sphere of observation in a coarse manner. You have a rough understanding of all things and you begin to contemplate on that premise. This is "reflection with investigation". You will begin to experience a sense of comfort in both body and mind and this represents your riddance of the more coarse form of delusions. It is equivalent to the first state of dhyana

where "joy arise out of departure from delusions".

Later on, you begin to contemplate on the meaning of all the dharma that you have already understood, hoping to seek the way out, and there you turn from the coarse to the more refined contemplation, and this is "no reflection but with investigation". When you turn from the more refined to the attainment of the formlessness, then this is "no reflection and no investigation". You will experience a markedly significant sense of comfort and ease in body and mind. It is equivalent to the second state of dhyana where "joy arise out of deep meditation".

One step further, you do not contemplate individually on everything but rather cluster them in groups. You observe that they are directional, that is, they lead to specific targets, e.g., Real Suchness, Bodhi, Nirvana, etc. This may be termed the observation of a general picture of conditioning causes. You will experience a dwindled sense of comfort being replaced by a feeling of freedom from delusions and total sovereignty of the mind. It is equivalent to the third state of dhyana where the "exquisite pleasures arise out of departure form joy".

Lastly, when you expand the sphere of observation of a general picture of conditioning causes, you contemplate on the teachings and the written word of countless Buddhas, and you are not attached to any form of exist-

ence or the voidness thereof. In your feelings, you do not distinguish between joy and pleasure. It is equivalent to the fourth state of dhyana where purity prevails over the forfeiture of any thought form.

### **11. The Functions of Meditation**

The functions of practicing meditation are threefold:

1. To practice "stopping", focus on non-discriminative images.
2. To practice "observing", focus on discriminative images.
3. To practice "stopping" and "observing" simultaneously by focusing on marginal images and conditions leading to ultimate attainment.

#### **To Practice "Stopping"**

To hear the doctrines expounded in the Tripitaka and practice accordingly. When seated in a solitary place try to control your mind from within and when the mind is settled, there will arise "non-discriminative images", and you will not infer or react when confronted with any circumstance.

### **To Practice "Observing"**

When the mind is at rest or in a state of stillness, or before it has reached that stage, try to contemplate on the doctrines that you have heard or read in six aspects:

1. For speech and the written word, seek their "meaning".
2. For the object of observation, find out whether it is inside or outside your mind, an internal or external business, and contemplate on the "business".
3. For discriminative images or similar images contemplate on their "forms".
4. For good or evil karma, merit or demerit, contemplate on its "category".
5. For the past present or the future, contemplate on its "time".
6. For the secular or the transcendent, the body or its function, the form or its theory, contemplate on its "theory". Give rise to discriminative images until the delusions are destroyed.

### **To Practice "Stopping" and "Observing" Simultaneously**

When both "stopping" and "observing" are practiced to perfection (resulting in the ninth stage of staying the

mind and operating naturally and focusing on pure dharma), you understand that everything is but a reflection of the mind and you attain the transcendent view of all discriminative and non-discriminative images. You then achieve the harmony between all active and passive phenomena. You will realize the resembling picture of the sphere of your observation when you close your eyes just like what you perceive when you open your eyes. This is called "marginal images and conditions".

After going through the above-mentioned three kinds of images, you now see everything without obstruction. After you get rid of the heavy bondage of life and death, you further get rid of the bondage of knowledge . You surpass the limits of the images and train your mind in such a way that you can attain complete abandonment of everything and gain an inward freedom of the mind, which is termed "ultimate attainment". You then obtain four kinds of benefits: complete departure from all evil, deep fondness of all good karma, the mind staying where it should stay, and do whatever should be done.

## **12. The effects and Benefits of Meditation**

If you have practiced "stopping" and "observing" simultaneously to perfection, and can operate freely at will, you will reap the four kinds of benefits as mentioned above.

The benefits to be derived can be divided into three levels:

- 1. The joy of Samadhi at the secular level** - Although you have not yet departed from the Three Realms, you can already keep your delusions at bay by practicing the five meditations and the fourfold stage of mindfulness, thereby realizing the joys of samadhi. If living in the secular world you observe and understand to a point of no reflection and no investigation, then even though you live in the Desire Realm, you already possess the Four Dhyanas of the Form Realm. By abandoning both suffering and happiness you obtain the thought of purity.
- 2. The emancipation from the life-and-death cycle** - If you practice meditation focused on emancipation, and observe the sixteen aspects of the Four Noble Truths, you know the fruits of suffering in the secular world and you therefore cut off at the root of suffering and practice the way of salvation and eventually attain nirvana.
- 3. The culmination of blessedness and wisdom** - If you practice the Bodhisattva way, you understand the consciousness only teachings, and you practice meditation accordingly and know that all phenomena are the work of the mind. In this

way, you break away from attachment to an ego and you realize that all dharma have their dependent originating causes. You are thus not afraid of the suffering of samsara and you do not enter into nirvana. Instead, motivated by your vows of great pity, you enter samsara to transform other beings and practice the six paramitas while still retaining the thought of purity until you attain Buddhahood.

The first chapter of the text entitled “The Intention to Practice Meditation” is meant to relieve you of the heavy bondage of delusions. It also connects some of the mistaken views you might have on the external circumstances. If you practice meditation according to the stages as set out in the foregoing, you will certainly satisfy your intention.

## *The Buddhist Doctrine*

Susan Kong

*Translated by C.Y. YEN*

The Buddhist Doctrine can be divided mainly into two aspects: the emancipation of one's own mind from attachment on the one hand and the guiding of others from misery to happiness on the other.

The founder of Buddhism is not the creator of fortune or calamity, but rather someone who teaches people how to seek blessings and avoid calamity.

Fortune and calamity conform to the law of cause and effect which is wrought upon oneself by oneself alone through the time factor of past, present and future.

Each person thinks by himself and whether he puts his thoughts to action or not, he is bound to leave traces in his mind. His speech and action will also leave imprints

in other people's minds depending on how they take to them. These impressions, whether they be good or bad will accumulate to be a force which will trigger future action, and this is called karma.

At present, people get on their lives in different environments all due to their past thoughts and action – the result of their past good or bad karma. Human relationships could fare for better or worse depending on the emotional involvement of one's past action and how it reacted in other people's minds at that time and a corresponding effect is thereby aroused.

Since the environment and one's encounters in life are all the result of one's own doing, so one has to accept whatever comes to him, whether it be good or bad. If his karma is such that he has to suffer in this life before his karma is exhausted, it is impossible for him to cut short his suffering by seeking a premature death. Every cause has its effect and it is only a matter of time. There is no place to escape to and no Buddha land to accommodate him.

One must realize that the future is in our own hands. If opportunities exist right now, one must make the most use by doing good deeds, to leave good impressions on others and to foster a good relationship with others. Then the future will be filled with blessings and happiness

because those who have benefited from your action will seek to return the favour.

Life and death are also governed by the law of cause and effect. All sentient beings do not live just one life but continues on like running water in a stream, with an endless past and endless future. The law of cause and effect not only extends through time, but also covers a very wide field. Apart from human beings and the animals domain, it also reached the devas in the heavens above and hungry ghosts and hell beings in the hades below, a total of six states of beings. Humans are born from these six sources and when they die, they head for these six states.

The life and death of beings are governed by their karma. Those who have done good deeds will be reborn in heaven as celestial beings or in humans as the most fortunate among men. Those who have done bad deeds will be reborn in humans as the unfortunate suffering masses, or in the hades as ghosts and hell beings or in the animals state. Those who are reborn in the heavens will be their blessings exhausted some day and if their previous bad karma has ripened, they may head straight to the states of woe to begin their suffering. Likewise, those who suffer in the states of woe and have exhausted their sufferings and their good karma has ripened, they will be

reborn among the humans and devas. All being transmigrate among the six states of being and this is collective retribution.

In each state of being, the type, degree, and intensity of good or bad karma vary from individual to individual hence the diversities of rich and poor, longevity and short life, and this is individual retribution.

The law of cause and effect is fair to all. Those who know the workings of this law will be responsible for their own actions. They will accept reality, be tolerant and alert, and engage in good deeds all the time.

For the beginners on the Buddhist path, the most important prerequisite is not to commit bad deeds so as to avoid degeneration into the states of woe. One step further and you learn to control your desires and stay away from selfishness. However, the mind is accustomed to clinging to delusions and it is not easy to calm down and it depends on the practice of meditation to rid oneself of impure thoughts and to achieve a state of perpetual tranquility.

To tread the Buddhist path, you must not seek your own salvation alone, but those of others. The practitioner who is not subject to transmigration through his own effects may, by the power of his vows, be reborn in different states of being to teach the beings to be relieved of suffering and attain happiness. This is what is known as Bodhisattvas.

Bodhisattvas have the innate disposition to help others, nurture the love kindness and compassion to give, teach, and save beings in distress at any time and place, and to any people of whatever clan or race.

Those who practise the Buddhist way and can at the same time transform others to it are the real Buddhists.

# *External/Worldly Success and Internal/Spiritual Achievement*

Susan Kong

## **External/Worldly Success**

Ordinary people spend their time and energy in their lives pursuing money, personal relationship, fame and position. They think these things will bring about happiness, financial security and good living environments. Whenever they have achieved something, they are considered to be successful and have attained well-being. However, do they really feel the well-being and truly believe that they should be admired ?

Human beings have a lot of contradictions psychologically. Some people regard the goal in life is to pursue happiness unrelentingly. It is true that money, personal relationship and position are important in life.

The question is how to handle them so that there will not be any counter-effect. In personal relationship, love can be turned into hatred by a twist of thought. It can also be changed by emotion or lost due to mistakes in handling. Such changes or loss will result in some psychological complex which is difficult to resolve.

When people come to money, they may be too miserly to spend what they have got. The result is the same as someone who is poor and wants to spend but without the money. Sometimes people worry all the time to keep the wealth or to get richer. For fame and position, some people may not enjoy the contentment of achievement but instead suffer from the fear of losing them one day. In all these situations, although the goal is to pursue happiness, the result is always troubles and worries. But even so, people are still pursuing unyieldingly. This is a big contradiction.

People are always at loss because they know that they have to die one day. Death is something equal to all forms of lives. Whether you are rich or poor, of high ranking or low ranking, you will die one day. Everyone has to go through such roadblock eventually. Everyone will see that whatever obtained in life are all vanities. What we have in this life cannot be brought to the future life. When one dies, everything will be reset to zero and will start all over again. When one encounters death, there is a sense of

frustration, bewilderment and despair.

In other words, the external/worldly success is simply vanity. It is not realistic and cannot bring about real well-being.

### **Internal/Spiritual Achievement**

Pointing out the unreality of the worldly success does not advocate living in depression, or giving up work and initiation. Understanding the impermanence of life does not teach people to be fearful, dispirited and passive. The real objective is to point out that the real well-being comes from the internal/spiritual achievement. The Buddha taught us to use wisdom to understand truth, to cultivate blessings in practice, and to use the blessings to accomplish internal and spiritual achievement.

Under the influence of Buddhism, people can understand the natural phenomena through internal wisdom and that time is just an endless flow. In the flow of a life, there is a past life, a present life and a future life. Everything has to be accomplished with the help of supplementary conditions, and everything will vanish in time. In particular, one has to understand that inter-personal relationship is determined by the law of cause and effect. Therefore one should not indulge in greediness or relentlessly pursue after endless desires. The most important

thing is to clearly identify your goal in life and to properly handle your state of mind.

The goal in life is to develop one's potential to the fullest, to be faithful and responsible to the present life, to study, research, understand, work, and be nice to other people. According to the law of cause and effect, everything done will not end up in no effect. If there is an immediate good effect, one should feel good about it. But if there is no immediate effect, one should continue to work hard. Any success needs some form of supplementary conditions. However, not everyone has such supplementary conditions at all times because different people have different past. However, one should not be disappointed because of losses. When the present is over, there will be future. If we can look ahead, we will be more positive. We should cultivate the blessings and seize the opportunity to succeed in future.

One who has wisdom will not pursue something that is beyond his/her ability. If the outcome is not up to expectation, he/she will reflect on whether he/she has tried the best. He/she realizes that things are governed by the law of cause and effect and that one cannot ask for something that is beyond the result of the past causes. In this way, one will always feel good and follow whatever the supplementary conditions will allow.

Buddhism teaches people that the best method to cul-

tivate blessings is to get rid of selfishness. Selfishness can damage blessing and make people lonely. A selfish person only expects others to be good to him/her, and is very parsimonious in being good to others. As a result, no one will be good to him/her. It is the case in the present life and will be the same in the future life.

Those who follow Buddhism always think of others' well-being when dealing with other people. They have the mentality of a Bodhisattva and always try to make others happy. An arrogant and selfish person will be abandoned by other people, while a humble and good-natured person will be respected.

If one feels satisfied, is happy with what he/she has, and understands what he/she has is the result of the hard work of his/her endeavor, then one is rich internally. If one can always work hard and be nice to others, then one will be respected, then one will have better future than any other person. If one can be benevolent and kind to others, then one will be well-regarded by the people around. This is the real internal/spiritual achievement.

Such achievement will not be constrained by time and can be brought to the future lives. It is the real achievement that can bring about real blessings. That is why we say that the external/worldly success is nothing close to the internal/spiritual achievement.

## *Commentary on the reported mass Suicide in America*

(A translated reprint from the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of the Lin Kok Buddhist Journal.)

Susan Kong

*Translated by Ruby Khoo*

In late March this year, there was a report on a mass suicide of members of a cult, known as 'Heaven's Gates, in San Diego. Most of the victims, 21 women and 18 men, were in there 40s.

Recently, the cult stated through their web site on the Internet, "The Hale-Bopp comet's approach is our long-awaited sign. We are happy in preparing ourselves to leave this world." Many of reported suicide victims were computer specialists. They believed that they could follow the

comet to reach their ideal world.

Judging from the background of the alleged suicide victims, one could conclude that their action was not because of materialistic deprivation. Rather, their hasty departure from this world was due to a sense of insecurity and misguided leadership.

Humankind is fragile and in order to survive needs a social environment. At a tender age, we need to be nurtured by our parents, guidance from our teachers, and mutual encouragement among fellow students. If deprived of a caring environment, a gloomy shadow will be cast over our lives. And, when we venture forth into society, we depend even more on mutual assistance among friends. Everyone has a different life experience. When we are downhearted, we need to seek help and support from others. However, we become depressed if a sense of inferiority prevents us from seeking help and we hide our anxiety and agony within ourselves. When we are successful, we consider ourselves a cut above the crowd and do not bother to be friendly with others. Therefore, we can easily drive ourselves to isolation and alienation through inferiority or superiority complex. Today, many young people can quickly sink into loneliness and despair. This could

transform their lives into a state of depression or frustration, and provoke them to pursue a fantasy of a different world. It is natural that this mind-set can lead to a strong desire for a religion. If, at that point in their lives, they are exposed to a religion with a high standard of morality, they could become enthusiastic saviours of our society.

However, if unfortunately they should encounter an eccentric with charismatic leadership, who on the one hand ingratiate himself with their pessimistic views of life, and on the other pander to their fantasy with vivid description of the existence of another world, such a leader, by presenting himself as a father-figure and using sweet language and honeyed words, could attract a following whose aims in life are in confusion and despair. Firstly, by exploiting their blind faith, then by 'carrot-and-stick' strategies, the followers were persuaded to end their lives as a short-cut lead to their world, resulting in the tragedy of the reported mass suicide. This has caused great grief to many families and instability in our society. This trend must not be encouraged. Thus, a religion must be chosen with great caution.

Buddhism teaches us how to avoid suffering and at-

tain happiness. In the realities of life, Buddhism show us the way to change our attitude for the better in order to achieve the ideal of "Happiness begets happiness, and relief of own suffering sparing other's suffering."

Firstly, an attitude of love is the basis for "Happiness begets happiness." Being pro-active is always more successful than being passive. Although it is fortunate to be loved, we cannot force others to give us love or material goods. Also, being able to show love is a blessing. To show love towards others is an expression of our beneficence. Our life will be one of fulfillment and happiness. Helping others will make our life even more meaningful and precious.

Secondly, compassion can be used as guidance for "Relief of own suffering sparing other's suffering". The precept of "not to kill" is applied not only to human beings, but also includes all living creatures. Moreover, one must not commit suicide. Life is governed by the law of Cause and Effect and serves as a vehicle for punishment or reward for deeds committed during one's previous life. It also provides an opportunity to create a future life for ourselves. If, a person cannot tolerate his present life or is impatient for change for a better environment, and he com-

mits suicide before fulfilling his obligations in life, he will attract a negative impact by his action. Because, by committing suicide and urging others to follow, thereby planting additional seeds of criminal behaviour, he will be reborn in an even more unfavourable environment. Apart from having to continue to exhaust his outstanding retribution, he will have lost the opportunity to create for himself a bright future.

In fact, in the field of interpersonal relationship, one can often find happiness if one goes through life in a spirit of peaceful coexistence. There is no reason to shorten one's life. If we should perform as much good deeds as possible now, we will be reborn in good places.

In Buddhism, liberation refers to liberation of the mind and not to being liberated from one's body.

People who live in loneliness and despair, and long to elevate the value of their lives, should study the true teaching of Buddhism and learn the ways to relieve oneself from suffering and attain happiness. Do not waste this life.