

The Fundamentals of Meditation Practice

by Ting Chen
Translated by Dharma Master Lok To



E-mail: bdea@buddhanet.net
Web site: www.buddhanet.net

Buddha Dharma Education Association Inc.

The Fundamentals of Meditation Practice

by Ting Chen

智者大師



**Translated by Dharma Master Lok To
Edited by Sam Landberg & Dr. Frank G. French**

Transfer-of-Merit Vow (Parinamana) For All Donors

May all the merit and grace gained from adorning Buddha's Pure Land, from loving our parents, from serving our country and from respecting all sentient beings be transformed and transferred for the benefit and salvation of all suffering sentient beings on the three evil paths. Furthermore, may we who read and hear this Buddhadharma and, thereafter, generate our Bodhi Minds be reborn, at the end of our lives, in the Pure Land.

Sutra Translation Committee of the United States and Canada,
1999 — website: http://www.ymba.org/freebooks_main.html □ □

Acknowledgments We respectfully acknowledge the assistance, support and cooperation of the following advisors, without whom this book could not have been produced: Dayi Shi; Chuanbai Shi; Dr. John Chen; Amado Li; Cherry Li; Hoi-Sang Yu; Tsai Ping Chiang; Vera Man; Way Zen; Jack Lin; Tony Aromando; and Ling Wang.

They are all to be thanked for editing and clarifying the text, sharpening the translation and preparing the manuscript for publication. Their devotion to and concentration on the completion of this project, on a voluntary basis, are highly appreciated.

Contents

- Translator’s Introduction..... 5
- The Foundation of Meditation Practice.. 9
- The Levels of Buddhist Discipline..... 16
- Preparing For Meditation 19
- Regulating The Mind..... 56
- Counting The Breath 74
- Varieties of Ch’an 81
- Glossary..... 89

Translator's Introduction

[| content | next |](#)

Originally, one's own mind and nature are pure, and there is nothing to accept and nothing to refuse; there is neither existence nor non-existence; there is only clear understanding without attachment and with no dwelling. One who wants to know the no-attachment, no-dwelling mind can find it through meditation, because it is only then that the mind does not think of right and wrong, of good and evil or of self and others.

If this seems obscure, then consider the following: The past is already gone; when you do not think of it, the thought of the past is gone, too. Then, there is no past nor any thought of the past. Furthermore, the future has yet not arrived. If you do not wish for nor seek after it, the thought regarding the future vanishes. Then, there is no future nor any thought about the future. Finally, the present is already present. Without grasping at it or dwelling upon it and without there being any thought about it, the thought of the present disappears, and there is no present nor any thought of the present. The mind that does not dwell on anything whatsoever is known as the True Mind or Original Nature.

The non-dwelling mind is the mind of the Buddha, it is the mind of liberation, it is the mind of Bodhi, and it is the mind of non-birth. So, if you really want meditation to come about, sit properly erect and close your eyes. Then purify your mind, lay down everything and think of neither good nor evil. Just observe your thoughts. As you look for their place of origin, you discover that they suddenly rise up and just as suddenly disappear, and that this process goes on and on. Be patient and continue to observe them, and you will, in time, know the thoughts to be devoid of any self-nature; also you will, thereby, know original emptiness. Do not attempt to follow the thoughts, to trace them in any way or have any intention of getting rid of them, and, in time, awareness will manifest as your mind illumines a thought. Then, there will suddenly be a stillness that becomes suchness. At some point, another thought will arise, and you will observe it in the same way.

Do this at least once a day, sitting from fifteen minutes to an hour. As your concentration deepens, your thoughts slow down and diminish in number, and your power of illumination increases until you eventually find out that not a single thought arises. Then, there is only stillness and voidness, for then the mind is clear

and pure. This is your self-nature as known directly through wisdom (Prajna).

The subject of wisdom is Prajna, and the opposite of Prajna is ignorance. Prajna illuminates the delusion that is ignorance. With continued exposure to Prajna, ignorance wears away bit by bit until there is a return to self-nature, or pure mind. It is in this situation that Right Thought manifests. There is no longer the duality of subject/object. This state is also known as no-thought or suchness and is also referred to as the inconceivable. When the mind is illumined and a thought, as one ordinarily knows it to be, arises, it dissolves instantly. Continue to practice in this way on a daily basis, and you will notice your self-nature getting steadily clearer and purer. Then there will be no longer any need to observe, nor will there be any purpose to observe. Indeed, there will be no longer any need of any kind. It will be realized that mind is no-mind, that no-mind is pure mind and that pure mind is the true mind. At that time, the sound of discussion and the role of thought will be finished. It cannot be expressed in words, and yet it is as simple as drinking water and knowing whether it is cold or warm. It is called Sudden Enlightenment.

It is my express wish that this guide, based on the meditation manual of Ting Chen, will prove helpful in imparting the Dharma to its readers. In helping me reach this goal, I wish to thank Sam Langberg and Dr. Frank G. French, without whose help regarding fine points in the translation and without whose editorial acuteness this task might have proved too difficult. May this work, then, help everyone to generate the Bodhi Mind and never to regress.

Dharma Master Lok To
Young Men's Buddhist Association of America
Bronx, New York
May 1999
(Buddhist Year: 2543)

The Foundation Of Meditation Practice

[| previous](#) | [content](#) | [next](#) |

Why Meditate?

When you are caught up in the emotional upheaval of greed, anger and delusion, you may find yourself succumbing to some very real physical ailments; and when you are ill, the world may seem to be a very dismal place. That is not to say, however, that all of our illnesses are due to extreme emotions. Exposure to substances to which you may be allergic can alter everything about you. It can cause violent mood swings, depression, hallucinations and all sorts of physical effects, including actual tissue damage. Whatever the cause, disease is most often accompanied by an assortment of disruptive emotions. Programs that have been designed to make therapeutic use of relaxation methods and meditation have proved to be effective in curbing both the physical effects and the emotions which accompany them. Yet, as beneficial as they may be, such methods can take one only so far.

In the Buddhist tradition, meditation is used to defuse the source of all the trouble—the illusion of self and other. In Ch’an (or Zen), the aim is to overcome thought and defilement. Having done this, and with thoughts no longer stirring, the real substance of mind becomes evident. Without thoughts and without the illusion of self and other, greed, anger and hatred have no place to arise; and the energy that was tied up by those illusions becomes available, helping to provide an overall improvement in health. That is why meditation is called The Fundamental Practice.

The Psychophysiological Effects Of Meditation

The Russian physiologist, Ivan Pavlov (1849-1936), emphasized the role that the cerebrum plays in physiology. At first glance, one might assume this to be merely a statement of fact, because that part of the brain is usually thought to involve little else other than thinking. Actually, it takes part in the production of many hormones, both directly and indirectly. Every aspect of a person is interrelated, and that is how and why thoughts and emotions can have such far-reaching effects. That is, however, also why meditation and calm-inducing thoughts can be so stabilizing and so healthy. One can safely assume, then, that most of

what contributes to proper functioning also contributes to good health.

Useful Hints For Better Practice And Better Health

As you progress in your practice, you are required to sit motionless for longer and longer periods of time at a stretch. It is then that some very important physical limitations may oblige you to make some adjustments in the way that you sit. Should you choose to ignore them, thinking that there is just one right way to practice, you may cause yourself needless pain and distraction (which means that you will not be able to concentrate); and you may possibly expose yourself to irreparable physical damage as well.

It is not unusual for people who have gone on retreats to return with painfully damaged knees, having held a position in spite of pain and having welcomed an ensuing numbness, simply because they have more trouble than they can remedy. To paraphrase **The Kalama Sutra**, “Do not do something because you have been instructed to do so, but try it and find out how it works for you.” Be always on guard for what doesn’t seem to be quite right, and see what might be done about it. There are many, many methods that can

be tried. There is no reason to have to submit to pain or outright debility, especially when nothing good can come of it.

The Relationship Between Mind And Meditation

The metaphor of the mirror, often referred to in Ch'an, is most suitable here in pointing out the most salient aspects of meditation as practiced in this tradition. The mirror-mind does not respond at all, and it is by this lack of agitation that all things are clearly known. This is how the mind is said to be when there is no clinging. The mind, to be like a mirror, must be passive, detached, uninterested and quiet. It is a time of rest, recuperation and of learning to be undefiled in the midst of what is normally defiling. When there is no perturbation in the mind, just as when there are no ripples on the surface of a lake, all things are mirrored clearly, leaving no trace. There are no intentions, and there is no action to be taken or not taken. There is no dependence upon anything that you do or do not do. Meditation just unfolds naturally as the mind grows tranquil.

Concentration

If you make the sun's rays converge, using a magnifying glass, and focus the resulting point of light onto a sheet of paper, you can easily burn a hole through it. Similarly, when you concentrate your thoughts, you are empowered in many ways. A lay Buddhist, Yang Jen San, once found a copy of **The Surangama Sutra** in an old bookstore. He was overjoyed. It was just what he had been looking for. He sat down and read and read in complete absorption, oblivious to his surroundings, until someone called him. Suddenly he noticed it had become dark and that if he wanted to continue, he would have to light a lamp. Wondrous things must happen in deep concentration, for he had been reading in the dark! A very famous writer of the Sung Dynasty, Su Dong Pu, recounted a similar experience in which he was so deeply engrossed in painting a picture that he was no longer aware of his person nor of anything else. It is as though where wholehearted application is directed, the whole world must step aside.

As your concentration strengthens, your breathing slows down and becomes subtle; areas of residual tension relax, perhaps after having existed there for a very long time, and there is no effort. A feeling of

well-being and ease ensues. Sustained, relaxed concentration of this type easily becomes meditation. Unfolding naturally, if allowed to continue, it improves one's health and vitality, as stultified emotions and their physical concomitants give way to healing. The health-enhancing benefits of meditation are now a matter of record, and numerous physicians include it in programs for their patients' recoveries.

The average person's mind is in turmoil. He or she is the product of deep-rooted patterns of thought resulting from karma accumulated since time immemorial, as well as being tortured by the illusion of self. To be enlightened is to be free of all of that. Concentration already reduces the turmoil by limiting one's attention to just one thing. Through this practice, the apparent hold that you have on your illusion of self and things gives way until there is meditation. Then, there is an absence of thought and an absence of words. Then, without the stress and the strain of delusion, a very deep sort of healing takes place.

Meditation And Dhyana

In Buddhism, the ordinary man is seen as leading a life steeped in suffering through the defilements of greed,

anger and delusion. It is only when he finds out, firsthand, that there is, indeed, nothing that he does that is free of defilement and suffering and that there is a way out of it all, that he may become sufficiently well-motivated to gain that freedom. This is traditionally likened to the discovery that the pretty, colored rope that one has found and treasures is actually a very poisonous snake. When that is your experience, you may have such a profound understanding of Buddhadharma that your life will turn around radically. You may realize beyond all doubt that, though the body may be strong and healthy, it still changes and grows old. You may realize deeply, by breaking off attachment to both body and mind, that birth, death, and defilement also no longer exist. In the Ch'an tradition, this is discovered through meditation.

Discipline (*sila*), and wisdom (*prajna*) are closely related to meditation (*dhyana*). Proper discipline leads to *dhyana*, and *dhyana* gives rise to *wisdom*. It is by means of discipline that the defilements are dispelled, and this eases the way for the cultivation of *dhyana* (established in the same region as *prajna*). The great *Ch'an Ting* (Chinese for *dhyana*-related meditative practice) is said to be secluded from defilement and suffering as the result of self-discipline. To free one-

self from defilements is the main purpose of the practice of pure discipline. By means of discipline, defilements are dispelled. Then, *dhyana* can become established; defined variously as voidness, the absence of subject and object, *Ch'an Ting*, or that which is not of the flow of suffering, it is the access route to wisdom (*prajna*).

The Levels Of Buddhist Discipline

[| previous](#) | [content](#) | [next](#) |

Also Known as Cumulative Discipline

Formally stated, the sevenfold assembly consists of the *upasaka* (male lay devotee), *upasika* (female lay devotee) *siksamana* (female candidate for novitiate), *sramanera* (novice monk), *sramanerika* (novice nun), (fully ordained monk), and *bhikhuni* (fully ordained nun). These terms designate levels of commitment to practice, starting with the basic five precepts, or training rules, for laity.

Not formally stated, but of equal importance, is the vow to do good and refrain from doing evil. One's

actions should always be for the benefit of all sentient beings. The thrust of Buddhist discipline is a blameless coexistence with the rest of the world, as well as improved mindfulness and inner peace. There are two ways to uphold the precepts. One is called *stop and hold*, which means that one should stop, or refrain from doing evil, and *hold* to the precepts. The second one is called *to do and to hold*. This simply means that you should do good and abide by the discipline. The discipline has the function of helping you avoid evil and do good, and upholding it enables you to purify your body and mind. While that is being accomplished, the outflow of impurities, or *asrava*, diminishes; and these conditions, in turn, facilitate *samadhi*.

Dhyana is absorption meditation at varying levels; when extended over long periods of time, it is sometimes referred to as *samadhi*. These levels (usually four) are accounted for in Ch'an practice, and there are, as well, several different kinds of Ch'an. There are, for example, mundane Ch'an, supra-mundane Ch'an, and the Ch'an of the highest Mahayana realization, to mention only three.

Meditation can be practiced while sitting, standing, walking or lying down and anywhere in between; but because our minds are ordinarily so very disorganized,

the best way to practice for most of us is to sit regularly in a quiet place. Having seated yourself, simply put everything else aside and concentrate on whatever your object of concentration may be. With your mind, speech and action already cooled down through discipline, there is occasion for natural and steady access to *samadhi*. When no thought arises, the pure substance of mind appears; and the state of stillness and illumination gradually manifests itself.

The quality of that stillness is undefinable, and yet it is not as if the sitter were a statue carved from stone. In this context, *illumination* is understood as awareness without subject-object duality. There is no longer someone being aware of *something*, and, consequently, there is no need for thought or verbalization.

The early sages emphasized that a moment of meditation honors Buddha more than building pagodas as numerous as the sandgrains in the Ganges River. The pagodas, it is argued, can be demolished, unlike the one-pointed mind that transcends time and space.

It cannot be repeated often enough that very little can be achieved without observing the precepts. Indeed, discipline dispels the attachment and the suffering that accompany it and leads to the passionless, pure path to

Nirvana. *Anasrava*, or passionless purity, is the opposite of *asrava*, the outflow of the passions and their filth. *Asrava* is further known as the discharge of mind-energy leading to the loss of truth. *Anasrava*, by definition, means the absence of outflow and seclusion from the stream of passion and, thus, from the stream of suffering.

Preparing For Meditation

[| previous](#) | [content](#) | [next](#) |

The Posture

Find an uncluttered, well-ventilated (non-drafty), quiet place where you can sit undisturbed on a regular schedule. You may use a cover to protect yourself from the cold.

In the beginning, let comfort be your guide. Make sure you set up a schedule you can live with, and then keep to it faithfully. Adjust your sittings so that there is no excess of discomfort or pain, which includes finding a posture you can hold for a period of time that you will

gradually extend. Learn to relax completely; do not try to control anything, and do not expect anything.

Make sure the garments you wear are comfortable and loose, and wear as few of them as circumstances permit. Loosen your belt or whatever might be binding or distracting, such as a wristwatch, jewelry or scent. There is actually no need for adornments, and their use during meditation should be avoided.

The Legs

If, and only if, you can manage it, sit on the full-lotus, which is the traditional position considered most stable. For those who might want to try the full-lotus position, do as follows. First, sit on the floor or a low cushion and fold your right leg in front of you, pulling it in close to your groin. Next, fold your left leg over it, with your left foot resting, sole upward, on your right thigh and close to your groin. Finally, lift your right foot, sole up, onto your left thigh, bringing it in close to your groin. You may be able to maintain this position for a short time at first, but, as you grow accustomed to it, you may find it contributing greatly to a sense of quiet, tranquillity and stability.

Sitting in the half-lotus position does not provide as firm a base because only one knee is weighted down by the opposite leg. To compensate for this, switch the position of your legs, if you can, with each sitting. If you find that this proves too difficult to do immediately, set aside time to gently lengthen the muscles of your legs, hips and groin; but beware that you don't pull a muscle or injure yourself in your eagerness, or you may have to take weeks to recuperate. Gradual, steady practice is advised and works for most people if they are loving, understanding and patient with themselves and, above all, if they are relaxed. Do not ever force yourself into a position or hold it when it brings on intense pain. It is not uncommon for misalignments to develop by twisting at the waist in order to have both knees touch the floor.

An effective way to help loosen the muscles that keep your legs from settling down on either side of you, so that they easily rest on the floor, can be done while sitting in a meditation seat. Sit on the very edge of your meditation seat with your feet placed shoulder-width apart and with your knees positioned directly over your ankles. Then lift one leg and rest the ankle of that leg on the thigh of the other, allowing the knee of the raised leg to descend out to the side as far as it can

comfortably go, supporting it with your hands and then lifting it and lowering it over and over again. Each time you lower it, think that leg is relaxing more. Then set it again, and let go even more, trying to feel what may be necessary to have this happen. Be sure your hips remain level the whole time and that your legs sink lower and lower on either side. Be aware of and be mindful of everything that is happening in terms of your thoughts and deeds during this simple exercise. If, after your efforts, you cannot manage to sit comfortably in the full- or the half-lotus position, then you may wish to try the “free” position.

Should pain develop, stay with it for awhile. Observe it, rather than lamenting your lot or wishing you were elsewhere, squirming, trying to escape or braving it out while gritting your teeth. Staying with your pain, you will soon clearly see how to succeed in your effort by the way you sit, the way you breathe and/or by the way you view the situation.

Borrowing from another source, we can take this advice: “Be still and know.” Whatever comes, allow it to happen. Do not avoid or reject, but take in whatever is happening, including your way of coping. Even if your reaction is to get out of the situation, providing you become fully aware of what is happening, you are

no longer so thoroughly caught up in it. Be mindful of what is happening in the present, for only *you* are in touch with the events, their causes and conditions.

It may be beneficial for you to explore your response when sending loving-kindness to yourself. It may feel embarrassing, silly or unbecoming; you may even find yourself inexplicably crying. As practiced in the Theravada tradition, in combination with *vipasyana*, the meditation on loving-kindness is simple and profound, yet very effective, in reaching the sources of our deep suffering. It is Dharma at its purest, inasmuch as it addresses compassion as well as being intimate with pain. Do you experience pain as if it were an *object* outside of you, an intruder? This approach can generate meaningful insights into the workings of your mind and should be explored.

However, you should let discretion be your guide. Do not submit to pain for the sake of absolving yourself of a sense of guilt or to prove how well-intentioned or how willing you are to endure torture. Consider it, rather, to be an act of loving-kindness or as mindfulness practice. Either way, it is expedient. However, if you find the pain too distracting, stretch out your legs mindfully, take a rest and return to sitting. If you can simply sit and not be involved in *sitting correctly* in

order to achieve something, you will find yourself becoming increasingly quiet, your breath becoming more subtle and your muscles becoming more relaxed; then meditation ensues quite naturally.

Chest, Abdomen, Buttocks

Raise your chest a little, moving it forward, and sit so that the hollow part of your chest, the part that is at about the level of the base of your sternum (the den of your heart), permits your diaphragm to function unimpeded. Newcomers to meditation often experience obstruction and discomfort in the chest, and that is usually caused by the den of the heart not being low enough. Should that occur, focus your awareness on your abdomen and refrain from any effort; you should feel relief in a short time. Your buttocks should be protruding a little, and your back should be comfortably, easily erect. Sit relaxed and self-composed, settling into your lower abdomen. This practice has been found to be especially calming.

Hands

Sitting in the half-lotus position, make sure your right foot is on top of your left thigh. Your palms are turned

up, with the back of your right hand resting in the palm of your left, while the back of your left hand rests at about the level of your *tan-t'ien* (or the lower part of your abdomen).

In the full-lotus position, the legs are crossed a little above the ankles, with the left leg uppermost. Here, the back of your left hand is cradled at the place where your legs cross.

When these positions become natural and comfortable, there is usually an accompanying sense of ease, silence and tranquillity.

Natural Breathing

The abdomen relaxes and expands as you inhale and contracts as you exhale. This is, indeed, natural; for when you exhale, the diaphragm moves upward into the chest, while the abdomen simultaneously contracts. The contraction not only assists in evacuating the lungs, but also stimulates blood circulating through the organs contained in the abdominal cavity by compressing the viscera.

Right Breathing

The abdomen is contracted as you inhale, and it relaxes as you exhale. This sort of breathing has been used in China since ancient times as a kind of physical and mental hygiene. Try both methods to discover whatever advantages each seems to hold for you, the practitioner, lest you get caught up in having to have things happen in only a certain way.

Breathing Practice

While you are relaxed, it becomes profoundly evident that breathing simply goes on and that there is the knowing that it does. You can intentionally breathe in a certain way, but the need for doing so is based upon some external circumstances bringing about the need for the intention, so that the matter of choice seems somewhat obviated; thus, intention seems to come about almost capriciously, in spite of yourself, as it were. This paradox exists in everything that we do. Meditation takes place in the absence of thought, and yet we think that without thought there can be no meditation. Perhaps the answer to this conundrum lies in the sequence of two separate events rather than in what seems their apparent opposition. For example,

when you are actively paying attention to your breath, you cannot be calm; and so you are advised simply to relax so calm can ensue. Meditation is distinguished by absence of thought and a very characteristic sort of breathing, neither of which can be brought about at will. Control must first be relinquished. You circuitously bring that about by applying whatever you may have discovered about relaxation, and that is the full extent of exerting your will. The following rule holds true, whether you practice natural breathing or right breathing: *When you sit down to meditate, sit easily erect, breathing through your nose.*

At first, your breathing may be rapid and shallow. As you relax and have the attitude of neither accepting nor rejecting whatever arises, your breathing slows down and deepens until you find that you inhale and exhale, in a cycle, once every minute. Ease may be conceived of as the standard. At no time should anything feel forced or uncomfortable; rather, it should all just happen free of any concern on your part.

As you continue to sit, your breath grows finer and finer. You should devote, at the very least, five minutes each morning and each evening to this breathing-relaxation practice. Practice as often as you can during the rest of the day, wherever and whenever you happen

to think of it. As the breath slows and becomes increasingly subtle, the mind stabilizes and grows calm. As the mind goes, so goes the breath. To illustrate this, four kinds of breath are noted as evolving in the course of practice:

- The first is called *windy breath* to describe the sound that you make as you breathe.
- The second is known as *gasping breath*. Here, you no longer make any sound when you breathe but have the feeling that you cannot inhale enough.
- In the third type of breathing, the breath is even and silent and without any obstruction, but you have yet to feel calm. This is called *air breath*. These first three ways of breathing are still rough-hewn and still show signs of unrest.
- When there is neither sound nor obstruction, neither roughness nor softness, and in that very quiet time when you do not feel that you are breathing at all and breathing evokes no association of any kind, you have achieved the fourth kind of breath, *silent breath*.

It is the breath that harmonizes. If you find that you easily grow calm and that your breath quickly becomes

fine, this indicates that your mind is easily stabilized. With continued practice, it may take only a few moments for your breath to be regulated, and then the need to breathe will diminish and vanish; and, with that, you will no longer be disturbed by anything. Your mind, at this stage, is said to be quiet and stable. On the way to this trouble-free state, however, there is bound to be much discomfort and restlessness. If this persists, and to help to harmonize the breath, you can try the following methods, progressing from one to the next as you grow proficient. Very relaxedly and unconcernedly count from 1 to 10 in all of these exercises:

- Count your breaths, calling one exhalation and inhalation just one breath;
- Count only your inhalations;
- Count only your exhalations.

When you have reached ten, resume counting from number one. Gradually, as your skill develops, you will be able to count to one hundred in ten groups of ten, without having your mind wander and without dropping off to sleep. However, should that happen, you are required to return to one and start all over again. As you grow more at ease, your mind and breath

will, slowly and peacefully, become interdependent. Confusion and sleepiness decrease in all three breathing methods of concentration, and the mind is calmed as well.

When the goals of breath-counting have been reached, your next step will be to trace your breath. The mind, by this time, will be very calm and very concentrated. By tracing your breath, this calm and this concentration deepen until the breath is felt to enter and leave through all of your pores. As you continue in this way, you will come to experience yourself *dissipating like a cloud and melting away like a fog*, until there is nothing but voidness. When this happens, you find yourself freed of all sorts of illness, as the mind is established on a new, deeper level of quiet; and it is then that it is time to dispense with the method of tracing the breath.

Regulating the Mind

Meditation can improve your health, but its primary purpose is to enable you to be free of thought; because when this has occurred, wisdom shines brightly. With that aim in mind, then, we see that both *counting the breath and tracing the breath* are methods of regulating the breath and thereby the mind. If you are fully

concentrated in this way, your thoughts are no longer confused or disordered. That is why people who have racing minds or who are involved in emotional turmoil are assigned the simple task of counting their breaths. It calms them in body, breath and mind. In body, they grow relaxed and free of tension, the breathing slows and deepens, and the mind grows quiet, calm and unperturbed.

As one continues in this practice, all but the finer states of mind disappear. Then, it is time to regulate the mind, for now it has become much less erratic. There are many methods of approach, but the one most favored is to have one rest his or her attention on just one point, and to consider any thoughts that arise to be like actors that appear on a stage and then leave. This attitude of passivity, of taking part less and less in what is happening, leads to concentration. Therefore, when you have succeeded in concentrating on the point of your choice, you are also free of disturbing thoughts; and, with continued concentration, the practitioner finds, as well, that fewer disturbing thoughts arise for the rest of the day. So, concentrate upon or relaxedly be aware of the tip of your nose, your navel or the point an inch and a half below it, in an area known as the *tan t'ien*, because your mind needs

something to occupy it. Traditionally, in this practice the mind is said to be like a monkey that has been restricted to a small space, where it can no longer jump and skip about.

Two things plague you most when you are preparing the ground, as it were, from which meditation sprouts:

1. When you first sit down, your mind is restless and unstable. You are pulled in all directions, eager to succeed one moment and frustrated when things don't turn out the way you want the next. You may begin to ache, first in one place and then in another, so that all of your time is taken up trying to escape the pain or consoling yourself, or both. You may imagine yourself elsewhere, participating in events that have taken place in your life, or that events that are somehow important to you are taking place again. You may find yourself dozing off over and over again.

2. Through continuing practice, your mind becomes more settled, and discriminating thought diminishes; but there is still confusion, and you easily tire and doze off. It is to deal with these problems that you should sense the point an inch and a half below your navel and about an inch and a half in, which is in the area called the *tan t'ien*. This will not only correct your

disordered thought and keep you from drifting off in reverie, but it also has a recognized physiologically stabilizing effect that results in mental and physical health as well. Again, you have to find the point to concentrate on that works for you. It might be the tip of your nose, your navel or the point an inch and a half below it. Whatever you choose to do, however, stay with it for the duration of the time that you have set aside for sitting. Beginners, especially, should make their practice more successful by finding the time to meditate when they are most alert, by eliminating discomfort and distraction and, most of all, by understanding the purpose of it all.

Insight Meditation

The method of concentration described thus far, in which you are to return to your object of concentration when you discover that you are caught up in discriminating thought, is a shallow way to grow calm and to stop wandering thoughts, because it involves thinking about the thoughts that arise, which is like adding fuel to a fire. It is not really a means of reaching calm, then, and so you must eventually abandon that method and take one more step to *insight meditation*. Ordinarily, you use your eyes to look *outside*. In this approach,

you must literally put aside everything; close your eyes and observe and/or feel your discriminating thoughts. If you do, you will soon find you cannot hold onto them, dissolve them or send them away. Once this is deeply realized and you no longer struggle to hold onto them, dissolve them or send them away, you will know *original stillness* and *emptiness*. When this insight develops and you reflect in this way on a thought that arises, it quickly disappears and is replaced by voidness. This marks the creation of a radically new way in which the mind can work.

When you first set out to meditate, it may seem that your thought has lessened. After you have practiced for awhile, however, you will most likely feel that it has increased. What has actually increased is the realization of what has really been so right along, and this immediate and continuous source of suffering can serve as a lighthouse in the treacherous waters of *samsara*. This can be compared to not being aware of the dust rising in a room until a shaft of sunlight shines on it. In the same way, then, if you feel that you have too much thought, it is the first step toward enlightenment. Abandoning thought, persevering in the insight that permits this and delighting in this, usually over a long period of time, lead to a natural disappearance of

thought. There is, instead, stillness. As you continue in this way, the stillness becomes more profound, for it becomes a stillness in which *sudden enlightenment* can occur.

Reciting the Name of Amitabha Buddha

As you may have realized, it is not unusual for thoughts to assail you relentlessly when you sit down to practice. Usually it is beyond your control, and, even with the best of intentions, one might eventually feel that there is no way to begin to practice. If you find that is more the rule than not for you, you might try the Pure Land approach, which is simply to recite the name of *Amitabha Buddha* over and over again. It is a very simple practice and can be very effective, but it requires a deep faith and a strong vow to be able to carry it out. However, if you sincerely recite the name of *Amitabha*, so that there is no other thought in your mind, and do this for some time, *false thought* will diminish.

Ch'an Master Che-Wu said that when a pure pearl is put into turbid water, the turbid water becomes pure. Similarly, when Buddha's name is put into a confused mind, that mind becomes Buddha. Ideally, reciting

Amitabha Buddha should free you of defilements in this very lifetime and assure your rebirth in the Pure Land as a great, bright light in the Ocean of Suffering, meriting praise for the Mahayana sutras and all the patriarchs and Dharma Masters of the past. Should you have any reservations about this practice, it must be said that this simple act of reciting *Amitabha* is profoundly Buddhist, because it engages body, speech and mind in one concerted effort—the body by regulating the breath; the speech by confining it to a simple utterance; and the mind by a resolve which has been made and a vow which has been taken.

There are variations on this theme, as it were. You can recite aloud. You can recite silently. You can recite as you inhale. You can recite as you exhale. You can recite on both inhaling and exhaling. The rate at which you practice varies according to your particular needs and abilities, but this is true of any practice that you might engage in. The recitation should, in any event, proceed with the tranquillity that comes from mind and breath depending on one another. As you continue in this way, the mind grows calm and the breath becomes shapeless. Then, it is as though only your original intention or vow functions, the recitation continuing on its own without disturbance or confusion until first the

stage of *no-mind* is reached and then that of *no no-mind* is attained.

In **The Sutra of Ch'an Samadhi** it says that if a Bodhisattva meditates with nothing but the Buddha in mind, he obtains samadhi. This simple method of reciting the Buddha's name can rid you of discriminating thought, which is the *false thought* or the *thinking* that the common man is plagued with, and reward you with *Right Wisdom*; and because your breath is regulated, your health is improved too.

It might help you to count your recitations. Again, you can experiment to find out what works best for you. Count with each cycle of breathing in and out, preceding or following an exhalation; or just include it as part of each recitation. The count, here, can be anything that you decide upon, or you can simply continue to count from 1 to 10, as before, repeating it over and over. Or, again, you might even silently repeat your recitation ten times with each breath or as many times as you can. Any of the above approaches can help to bring about effective concentration, the object of them all being to provide you with something simple and repetitious to fully occupy your mind without disturbing it. You have to try it! You have to experiment with it! That is to say, now that you know the way to pre-

pare a delicious and nutritious meal, you have to actually prepare it, taste it, see whether it agrees with you, improve on it, if need be, and then eat it until your health improves. By analogy you must use this procedure in your practice until the practice proceeds on its own and becomes, therefore, no longer practice but an art that seemingly has a life of its own.

During the T'ang Dynasty, Master Fei-Hsi composed a sastra on **The Reciting Buddha's Name Samadhi Sutra**. In it, he said that people use rare jade, crystal, diamonds or other precious things to make beads to use in meditation but that he himself traces his inhalations and exhalations (as they use beads) while reciting Amitabha and that, furthermore, he can do it while standing, sitting, lying down and even while in deep slumber.

What To Be Mindful Of

Every moment of every day presents an opportunity for meditation. However, you may feel that you are too busy or that you need a structure. In that case, you might try it upon arising in the morning and/or just before retiring at night. If you can make the attempt only once a day, experiment to find out what the best

time for you is, not only in regard to availability but also in regard to the time when you feel most alert and responsive to practice. Look for quality in the short time set aside. In the beginning, especially, that time should be regarded as a time of rest, of relaxation or of unwinding. It is a time of not doing after all, a time of not being actively engaged in anything. From the start, then, find out how to let your practice proceed naturally, rather than seeking to make things happen through an act of determination. You might set aside ten minutes within which to practice and then extend the time a minute or two with each subsequent sitting, until you are sitting for thirty or forty minutes at a time; and you should find a place where you can be assured that you can continue to do so at the same time and place each day, because we are, very much, creatures of habit. In fact, when you wake up, and while you are still in bed, you should place your palms over your solar plexus and then guide them slowly down to your lower abdomen. Do this several times, and then go to the bathroom to relieve yourself, brush your teeth and bathe, and then sit down to practice. This routine can be used at other times during the day as well, and, when established, it becomes as natural as brushing your teeth. What is most important, however, is that

you make it a living experience, a time of discovery through relaxation and passive observation.

Eating is one of our earliest sources of conditioning, and so part of your practice is to regard food as medicine. This may seem to be a simple enough thing to do, but it can prove to be very trying. For many, this simple practice is thoroughly disruptive, producing feelings of deprivation and anxiety when they no longer have access to their private pacifiers or conditioning. One of its purposes, however, is to reveal those attachments, in order to discover the natural inclination to be a part of them, and then have that awareness evolve into freedom.

As to the procedure itself, do not eat directly before you sit, because it may make you sleepy. If you have eaten too much, you may be thoroughly distracted by the discomfort of feeling full, perhaps even to the point of finding it hard to breathe. However, not eating enough has its disadvantages, too, making you feel weak, have headaches and be incapable of concentration. You must learn to listen to your needs. You must be aware of what happens to you all the time, so that you can know the right food, the right amount of it to eat and, also, discover how long to wait after having eaten before sitting.

In this way, you may find that life takes on a sense of order, that you are not so involved in eating anymore, and, as a bonus perhaps, that you are losing weight. With only the most superficial observation, you may discover that eating as you do ordinarily may be followed by a plethora of such symptoms as vague feelings of unrest, headaches, depression, anxiety, stomachaches, muddled thinking, fatigue or itching. If you can detect what the causes are, you may be able to rid yourself of the symptoms. However, that may not prove to be as easy as it may seem. There are many kinds of addiction, but it is characteristic of them all, according to a current theory regarding what is involved in allergy, that you crave the very things that cause your problems. Sitting passively aware of everything that is transpiring, you relax. This not only serves to reduce your reactions overall, but also helps you to become less attached to things that have been troubling you. You become aware of how everything has happened, and, by not acting on it, come to tune in to an inner knowing that chimes in to help liberate you, as it were. It cannot be said too often that *you must find out what is best for you*. Some people require an empty stomach. Others prefer to shower and meditate an hour after eating lightly, and, to complicate matters, it may

not always work for them. It's all there before one to observe. *All it takes is being aware of what's happening all the time.*

Anyone who has missed a night or two of sleep and has had to work knows how miserable it can be just to stay awake, let alone concentrate and, perhaps, do physical labor as well. Sleeping too much can make you feel sluggish, and so neither too much nor too little sleep is good for meditation. So there it is again! It is up to you, the practitioner, to find out what is best. Then, once you have done that, you can work out a schedule. For example, you might sit from nine to ten in the evening, retiring directly afterwards. Arising at six in the morning, you can go about your morning ablutions and sit again before going out for the day. Should you awaken at night and find that you are not sleepy or that you have trouble falling asleep again, you can use that time as an opportunity to meditate. Sleep usually ensues as relaxation sets in. Should it not, however, then simply continue to sit. With practice, your need for sleep diminishes, and you may find that you can manage quite well on just four or five hours, or even less. In fact, there are meditators on record who no longer have any need to sleep but

meditate instead. This ability is not something that can be forced or even learned but develops naturally.

Perseverance

Beginners often find that sitting practice is very uncomfortable. In fact, some may even continue to feel that way long past the time that they qualify as beginners. What keeps them coming back is perseverance. To make progress you must persevere, and you must sit every day at the same time and in the same place, relaxed and gently erect, simply aware of whatever is happening or lightly engaged in concentration and free of any sense of coercion.

Results

Looking for results is counterproductive. Ideally, all thought falls away and is replaced by a natural state, which, incidentally, proves to be healthy because it is free of desire and, thus, relatively free of stress. Having no aim is refreshing but is seldom understood, as such, and difficult for most to come by. The desires to do, to excel and to succeed are at the heart of one's very being. To relinquish such inclinations would seem to be outside the scope of what one can do,

because it would take away the illusion of control. That is why a correct understanding of the Dharma is so important.

No Concern

Drop all cares! Put away all things during your practice and simply regulate your breath and mind. Then, even deluded thoughts are seen to come and go. Not caring about them, your mind grows calm. Close your eyes while sitting, and you won't see outside things. Sounds may still be evident, and you may feel that they are disturbing and that your practice is difficult; but in that very moment, if you are aware of what you are thinking as just thinking or of what you are hearing as just hearing, your problems, as such, drop away.

Habits

It is not really enough just to do sitting practice; and it is certainly not enough if you are doing so only twice a day. You must be attentive to your conduct and constantly be on guard against falling into the trap of habitual behavior. This means that you must recognize and then seek to control your greed, anger and delusion, that you should do good, take refuge in the Three

Treasures (Buddha, Dharma and Sangha), observe the five precepts (not to kill, steal, commit adultery, lie or ingest intoxicating substances), and that you should read, study and inquire to make clear what you understand of the Dharma to be able to set up and maintain Right Understanding and Right View. In this way, you can be more free of desire, be more able to concentrate, and, in time, have successful meditation take place.

Experiences Likely to Arise

Do not be upset if, while practicing, you suddenly grow very hot, perspire profusely, shake, perhaps even violently, hear what seems like all-pervading sound, find yourself assuming various positions without intending to and, possibly, see apparitions. Do not attempt to suppress any of these manifestations! However, most practitioners never have any such experiences, but, on the contrary, practice successfully and have the benefit of improved health as well. One might wax mysterious and say that it is due to karma, although that is really no more than saying that it is what it is. It should suffice to say that meditation can sometimes be attended by mental, emotional and physical effects that are transient, as long as there is no attempt

to stop them. Should they upset you, just understand that everything is void and that even what seems to exist changes constantly. Keep in mind that nothing is real because nothing has any inherent nature; and so there is nothing to crave or to reject. It is with such a view that you may be free of grasping, and it is then that concentration should easily ensue. Without such a view, however, you are in danger of being trapped by whatever may seem important to you.

Dharma Master Tao-Yuan, in describing his style of practice, said that one who has *prajna* (wisdom) should arouse great compassion and make a great vow to attain samadhi, to convert sentient beings widely, and not to seek salvation for himself. He must also abandon all conditions, or, in other words, simply stop doing anything at all, neither differentiating body and mind nor motion and stillness. He should eat and sleep just enough to sustain health, and he should set aside a time and place to meditate each day, sitting in either the full- or half-lotus position. Should he choose to sit in the full-lotus, he should place his left foot on top of his right thigh and his right foot on top of his left thigh. Respectively, he should then place the back of his right hand in the palm of his left and then put the back of his left hand on his left foot in the half-lotus, or on his two

upturned feet in the full-lotus, touching his thumbs together ever so lightly.

Having established a stable and comfortable base, he should then lean forward and backward and sway from right to left, slowly, diminishing the swings until he finds a place of balance, where he feels that he is sitting easily and without strain. To assure himself that this is so, he can check to see if his ears are directly over his shoulders and whether his nose is in line with his navel. He should, however, not force himself to assume and maintain a position that is not natural for him. Should he want, eventually, to be able to sit erectly, he should devote time to doing just that, as a separate daily practice.

When he is then able to sit in that way without any thought having to be given to it, he can incorporate it into his concentration-practice time. He should then touch the tip of his tongue to his palate, just behind his upper front teeth and maintain this contact throughout the entire time that he is sitting. To keep from falling asleep, he has his eyes slightly open, directing his gaze downward through the space permitted by his lowered eyelids. Having so arranged himself, he sits, thinking of neither good nor evil. Should any such thoughts

arise, however, he should be aware of them as simply thoughts.

Practicing in this fashion over a period of time, he naturally comes to be of *one mind* (a mind no longer occupied with objects). When this stage has been arrived at, the four elements — earth, water, fire, and air — are said to be automatically at ease, and he has reached the level of bliss. Becoming skilled in these ways, he attains to what is described as *great satisfaction*. If he is not so skilled, however, he is advised to concentrate on the one mind until he is successful in obtaining this *satisfaction*. When his practice period is over and he is ready to get up, he moves slowly. Thus, when he stands up, he does not disturb his deep concentration and can, in time, continue to maintain it at all times and in all places, *holding* it as though it were a small baby. As he continues in this way, the complete strength of dhyana should eventually become available to him.

It is easy to look for a pearl in calm water, but it is very hard to do so when there are large waves. The pearl of Mind appears, then, in the *clear water* of dhyana. In **The Complete Enlightenment Sutra**, it is written that *Ch'an Ting* (dhyana) gives rise to clear wisdom that is free of all obstruction, that is beyond

everything, and that comes about more readily in the calm of meditation.

A question in **The Great Sastra** asks why the Buddha advises that one use only the lotus (or half-lotus) position. His reply was that, of all the methods that have been tried in meditation, the lotus position was found to be the most secure and stable, enabling the practitioner to sit for a long time without tiring; and so it is ideal for practicing Ch'an. It has a way of putting one's mind in order, too, just as it arranges one physically. Of the four mind avenues of practice-sitting, walking, standing and lying down-the lotus position is supreme, contributing to the most proper demeanor for practice.

There are heterodox practitioners who raise their feet, stand up often or bare their feet. Such conceited fellows exhibit unrest and cannot quiet their minds. This, then, is another reason why one should sit in the lotus position. Furthermore, sitting in this manner, it is easier for one to develop correct thought and correct concentration which can then lead to *oneness of mind*. Elsewhere in **The Great Sastra**, it is also advised that one who would learn to meditate should concentrate on one point, which should be either between the eyebrows or in the middle of the forehead.

The great T'ien-T'ai master, Chih-I, who taught Chih-Kuan and methods of practice in Ch'an, described in great detail how one should regulate one's diet to be fit to enter the Tao. Simply put, he said that if you eat too much at one time, your stomach will be so full that you will be unable to breath properly. This, in turn, will cause your psychic centers to be blocked and your mind to be obstructed, making it extremely difficult, if not impossible, for you to practice. If, on the other hand, you have not eaten enough, this can cause your mind to be unsteady for want of energy. Naturally, these extreme conditions are to be avoided, and they suggest just two reasons why one should practice the Middle Way.

Regarding your diet, avoid food that only you can know is unsuitable for your practice, can keep the elements in disharmony and can lead to illness. This is a way of pointing out the practicality of being ever mindful, for it is through such observation that you can ultimately learn what is appropriate for you. It is not unheard of that certain foods cannot only make one feel out of sorts or ill, but also may cause one to have sudden mood swings or even hallucinations. Hence, the sutra says that if you are physically at ease, the Tao can prosper, and that if food and drink are properly

regulated, happiness can be enjoyed in quiet and the still mind can make a great show of zeal.

Regulating Sleep

It is said that overindulgence in sleep results from ignorance, clouds the mind, and should be discouraged. He who sleeps too much will soon not only cast aside his practice of Dharma but will also quickly lose his ability to practice, as his mind becomes confused and all his good roots come to no avail. Therefore, one should awaken to the impermanence of life and regulate one's sleep in order to keep one's spirit high and one's mind clear for the purpose of abiding in the state that leads to the manifestation of imperturbable stillness. Hence, it is further said that self-cultivation should always go on and that excessive sleep should not be allowed to cause one's time to pass aimlessly. One should think of the destructive fire of impermanence that scorches the whole world and strive to be liberated from it as soon as possible, instead of indulging oneself in excessive sleep.

Regulating Body, Breath and Mind

Body, breath and mind are all interdependent and are sometimes conceived of as being aspects of the same thing. In Buddhism, there are practices that have been devised to work with these aspects. Also, there are methods that are designed to take you through preliminary, intermediate, and final practices. These methods and practices are employed to prepare you to enter into and to come out of, some say, the heart of it all- meditation.

Your everyday activity must have a gentle quality. If there is any roughness to it, your breath is made rough as well; and when your breath is rough, your mind is unsettled, so that when you attempt to sit, you become perplexed and uneasy. To remedy this, simply visualize yourself as being already physically relaxed and sitting at ease before you actually sit down to practice. When the beneficial effects of this simple procedure have manifested and you feel warm and relaxed and gently present, you can arrange yourself in your chosen sitting position.

What follows are directions for sitting in the half-lotus position, as described by yet another teacher. Arrange your cushions so that you can sit comfortably for a

long time. Then, position yourself in the half-lotus position. To do this, sit upright with your knees out to either side and your legs crossed at your ankles. Then place your left lower limb on top of your right thigh and slide your left lower leg in close to your lower belly, so that the sole of your left foot is turned up and the toes of your left foot are parallel to your right thigh. The toes of your right foot are also arranged so that they are parallel to your left thigh.

Should you want to sit in the full-lotus position, observe the above procedure; and then place your right lower leg on your left, turning the sole of your right foot up and drawing it in close to your lower belly. Once settled, loosen your belt just enough to keep it from slipping and then loosen anything else that might be even slightly binding, like a wristwatch or a snug collar. When you have done that, lay the back of your left hand in the upturned palm of your right, and rest the back of your right hand on the upturned soles of your feet. Then check to see if you are leaning, slumping or straining, and, having made whatever adjustments you need, shake your limbs seven or eight times to relax them. Then check again to see how you are sitting, making sure that you are not slumped down or sitting rigidly upright but are easily erect. Your head

should not jut forward or lean to one side or the other, and your chin should not be vigorously pulled in. You should feel that you are just sitting naturally. Then, slowly and continuously exhale through your mouth, while imagining that all the waste and impurities that might be in your psychic centers are being expelled along with your breath. Close your mouth, so that your upper lip and teeth meet your lower ones and your tongue touches your palate, and then close your eyes and inhale *clean air* through your nostrils. Now, imagine that you are a mountain, settled and immobile. Sitting in this way, you can avoid both strain and slackness.

Regulating The Breath

For meditation successfully to take place, the breath must first be regulated. There are, traditionally, four kinds of breath: *audible*, *gasping*, *coarse* and *restful*. The first three are considered to be somewhat disruptive. If you can hear your breath, it is said to be *audible*. If it is not audible, and is also obstructed or not free, it is called *gasping breath*. If the breath is neither *audible* nor fine, it is said to be *coarse*. When it is neither *audible* nor *gasping* nor *coarse*, but continuous, being barely perceptible and so fine that it is

almost imperceptible and also accompanied by comfort and ease, it is called *restful breath*. An *audible breath* scatters your composure; a *gasping breath* ties you up; a *coarse breath* tires you; but a *restful breath* indicates a quiet mind. If any of the first three ways of breathing is present, it means that your breath is not yet regulated.

Regulating the Breath: a Summary

There are three notable phases that take place during the course of this practice:

- Concentrating properly, you relax.
- Your mind grows calm as you relax more and more.
- You have the experience of breathing through all your pores.

Regulating The Mind

[| previous](#) | [content](#) | [next](#) |

Entering Meditation

The purpose or goal, is to reduce confusion and thinking, to keep your attention from wandering and to stabilize the mind when it starts sinking, floating, straining or becoming too diffuse.

Sinking mind is dull, confused and untraceable. Even dozing may occur. Therefore, to remedy this, you are advised to fix your attention on the tip of your nose.

Floating mind drifts; you feel uneasy and are concerned about externals. Therefore, you are advised to fix your attention on your navel because this has been found to keep thoughts from arising. This accomplished, the mind is said to be stabilized and is calmed easily. It then becomes a *regulated mind*.

Sustained Meditation

Meditation ultimately is simply awareness without intention. However, you are encouraged to be constantly aware and to know whether your body, breath

and mind are properly regulated. If, after having regulated your body and having sat for awhile, you notice that your sitting has become strained or loose, that you are inclined to one side, drooping, holding your shoulders up or pulling them backward or forward, or that you are somehow not just right, you should make the proper adjustments in order to maintain a *regulated mind*. It might be possible, however, that even though your body is regulated, your breath is not, even after you have already dealt with various unregulated aspects of the breath, which may be audible, gasping or coarse. It may also happen that, even though the body and breath are regulated, the mind is either floating, sinking, loose, strained or unsettled, in which case the methods mentioned earlier should then be used to regulate the mind. Although these methods are to be used expediently, rather than in succession, they may, nevertheless, seem very willful. Actually, it is a little like learning to ride a bicycle; once learned, it takes care of itself.

Coming Out of Meditation

Before your meditation session is over, you should, in a manner of speaking, put it aside and exhale, using your mouth while visualizing the air leaving your

psychic centers. Then gently rotate your shoulders, arms, hands, head and neck; next wiggle your toes to relax them. Having done this, rub your body with your hands, and then rub your palms together and put them over your eyes, cupping them for a while. Finally when you feel that you have cooled down sufficiently, you can leave your seat. To come out of meditation abruptly, even though everything may have been stabilized while you were sitting, can cause headaches and all sorts of illness.

The Practice of Chih-Kuan in Relation to Coarse and Distracted Mind

When a beginner sits down to practice, his or her mind is usually coarse and unsettled. Practicing *Chih* is conducive to mind control, but, failing that, one can switch to *Kuan*. Let us see what it all means.

The first approach, called *Chih*, has three components, as follows:

1. According to the sutra, a fixed mind that cannot stray is like a bound monkey. As applied to practice, it means fixing your attention on the tip of your nose, on your navel, or an inch and a half below it.

2. The sutra further says that the five sense organs are controlled by the mind. To stop a wandering mind, you restrain it through observation as it moves.
3. Understanding is of primary importance. Referring to the sutra again, we find that the causes that create phenomena are ownerless and empty. Whoever calms his/her mind, has the foundation for monastic practice. Stopping all arising causes and ensures the attainment of Absolute Reality by means of the realization that all things (dharmas) arise from the mind, that their existence is due to circumstantial causes and that they are devoid of separate self. If this is understood, the mind will not grasp at anything, and its stirred-up condition will simply come to a complete stop. The term Chih means just that – *stopping*.

The second approach, called Kuan, has two components, as follows:

1. If you find yourself caught in sexual desire, for example, you should cultivate the opposite view, seeing sex as dirty and ugly. When you are consumed with anger, you have to find a way to express compassion instead. The opposite of an at-

tachment to the ego's concerns would be to call to mind how everything is an illusion. When you are deluged with thoughts, you count your breaths. The effect of this strategy is, ultimately, to call a halt to discrimination.

2. This consists of looking into the nature of things and seeing that they have no inherent existence and that their apparent existence is dependent upon apparent causes, which, in turn, are dependent upon past experiences and what is presumed to be present circumstances. In other words, causes, also, have no inherent nature; and so they are actually identical with the undifferentiated reality from which they seemingly arise. Since the objects, thus contemplated, are unreal, it then follows that the mind which contemplated them will cease to arise.

The Chih-Kuan Dharma Gate

To recapitulate, remember that in order to prepare for meditation you should sit properly and regulate your breath to stabilize and control your mind. This requires a great deal of patience for most practitioners because the mind is, ordinarily, quite unruly. Not succeeding at it should not keep you from doing *Chih-Kuan*, how-

ever; nor does it mean that you should quit your practice of regulating your body, speech and mind. As it is, you soon discover that the mind's activity is like a monkey, never stopping for an instant. The advice that is traditionally given is to limit this monkey's movement. The *Chih*, in *Chih-Kuan* means *stopping* and refers to stopping the false or misleading activity of the mind. To do this — i.e., to tether the *monkey mind* by practicing *Chih* — the first step is to fix the mind on a single object to keep it from wandering from one object to another. Having accomplished this, you *look within* to contemplate your thoughts. There, you discover anew that they arise in great number and often without any relatedness, appearing, for the most part, randomly. You also realize that future thoughts have not yet come. When you ask yourself which of these thoughts is your mind, you realize that your *false mind* rises and falls and is, thus, also devoid of reality. If you continue in this way, you become familiar with this unreality, and your false mind comes to an end by itself; and with the *false mind* at an end, reality is evident.

When you first sit down to practice, your mind is often unsettled. This is appropriately called *unsettled mind*, and to set it at rest, *stopping*, or *Chih*, is used. If it is

stopped again and again, the thinking process gradually comes to an end. While meditating, you may find yourself getting drowsy. This is called *sinking mind* and the way to awaken it is by contemplation, or Kuan, which involves closing your eyes and looking inward, as it were, to the source of your thoughts. There are three kinds of Kuan, or contemplation: contemplation of the void; contemplation of the unreal; and contemplation of the mean.

Contemplation of the Void

You look into all things within the universe, from the largest—including the earth, mountains and rivers — to the smallest — including your body and mind. Doing so, you perceive that everything changes in every instant and is non-existent and void; and when your mind looks into this voidness, that is called *contemplation of the void*.

Contemplation of the Unreal

When you are familiar with this *contemplation of the void*, you look into your mind or the place, as it were, from which thoughts arise, and you find that each thought has its object. You then realize that every

phenomenon owes its existence to a union of an inner cause and an outer concurring circumstance. For instance, a grain of rice sprouts because of the union of an inner direct cause, which is the seed, with an outer concurring condition, in the form of the water and mud that moisten and nourish it. If the grain of rice is not sown and is left in the warehouse, it will never sprout because there is only an inner, direct cause without an outer condition. Also, if there are only water and mud, without the seed being sown, they, alone, cannot produce the sprout because there has been no union with an original cause—namely, the seed. Every phenomenon in the world is created by the union of direct and circumstantial causes and vanishes as soon as they are separated. This includes thoughts that arise and disappear in the mind and that cannot be grasped. Such contemplation is called looking into the unreal.

Contemplation of the Mean

There are two contrasting attitudes connected with *contemplation of the void*, on the one hand, and *looking into the unreal*, on the other. When you reach this stage, your achievement is still incomplete. Having succeeded with *contemplation of the void*, do not cling to the void; and when you have achieved contempla-

tion of the unreal, do not grasp at the unreal. When you succeed in keeping from the extremes of the void and the unreal, your non-relying and non-clinging mind will be extraordinarily clear, and this stage is called, *contemplation of the mean*.

At first glance, the *Chih-Kuan* Dharma Gate seems to imply diverse or successive stages. In practice, the use of either *Chih* or *Kuan* depends solely on the inclinations of the mind during meditation. As a matter of fact, the purpose of *Chih* is to return all thoughts to one, *the one mind*, and that of *Kuan* is to attain clear insight into the truth, which is to be free of illusion. When *stopping*, or *Chih*, is practiced, it should not stray from *stopping*. Do not cling to the printed word, but practice intelligently, according to the circumstances.

The breath is the source of life. When the breath stops, the body is just an inanimate corpse. With the nervous system no longer functioning, the mind vanishes and life comes to an end. That is why life is said to be preserved by the breath, which links the body with the mind. Thus, we see that a human being is composed of body, breath and mind and that the breath plays the important role of uniting the other two components.

The T'ien T'ai meditation manual, entitled **The Six Profound Dharma Gates (T'ung Meng Chih-Kuan)**, focuses on breathing as a comprehensive practice that may be preceded by training in the *Chih-Kuan* method, or it can be used independently of it. The consecutive stages are as follows:

1. Counting the breath
2. Following the breath
3. Stopping (*Chih*)
4. Contemplation (*Kuan*)
5. Returning
6. Purification

The Method of Counting the Breath

The breath-counting method offers two possibilities, as follows: After you have regulated your breath, so that it is neither too tight nor too loose, count slowly from one to ten on *either* your inhalation or exhalation. Do not count on both. For example, breathing in, count one; then exhale and upon inhaling again, count two, and so on. Your mind soon becomes fixed on the activity and does not wander as readily. If it wanders off before you have reached the count of ten, return

gently and without further thought to one, and resume counting as described above. This is the method of meditation known as *Breath-Counting*.

Realization Attained Through Breath-Counting

As you grow accustomed to the method just described, your breath becomes finer and finer, until it seems to be non-existent. This stage is called *Realization By Breath-Counting*.

The Method of Following the Breath

This method is both easy and simple: Just focus on your breath and follow it mindfully, holding on gently, until it is no longer an issue. Then mind and breath become one.

Realization Attained Through Following the Breath

As it follows the breath, your mind becomes increasingly subtle. You may notice, at first, the length of your breath; but as it gets more refined it becomes almost undetectable, and at that point it feels as though it is occurring through the pores of your skin. The effect on your mind is stilling or calming. At this stage

of practice, you may wish to cultivate your breath further. Your next step will be the practice of *stopping*, also consisting of two phases: *Chih* and *Kuan*.

The Practice of Stopping, or Chih

Focus lightly on the tip of your nose; it leads to *stopping*. In the course of this simple practice, you may suddenly feel as if your body and mind have vanished; you will, thereby, enter a state of stillness called *dhyana*.

Realization Attained Through the Practice of Chih

At this stage, clarity develops through awareness. You feel no longer attached to anything, and there is no longer a sense of subject and object while sitting; then you proceed to the stage called *Kuan*.

The Practice of Contemplation, or Kuan

This practice consists of a gentle, passive observation of your refined breathing, regarding it as a movement in a void that has no reality of its own.

Realization Attained Through the Practice of Kuan

This is a further refinement of practice in which you come to feel as though you are breathing through the pores of your skin. To a bystander, you may appear as if you are not breathing. When you reach this stage, *Chih* and *Kuan* become indistinguishable. As a point of interest, the *Samatha Vipasyana* for beginners differs from *Chih-Kuan* in intent, in that the former develops mindfulness, while the latter develops absorption. An extended session of contemplation should be followed by *Returning*.

The Method of Returning

Contemplating your breath, you may realize that there is an apparently subjective mind that contemplates an apparently objective breath and that these very clearly constitute the two poles, the essence, of duality. However, they are to be returned, as it were, to the one, fundamental Mind.

Realization Attained Through the Method of Returning

This method develops the awareness of the *knower* that contemplates the breath as rising and falling with the mind. This rising and falling mind is experienced to be

like the waves that rise and fall in the sea, and this leads to a realization of the illusory nature of it all. The waves are not the water, the fundamental face of which can be seen only after the waves have subsided. Similarly, the mind that rises and falls, like the waves in the water, is not the True Mind. Now look into this True Mind, which is uncreated. Because it is uncreated, it is beyond is and is *not*; and it is, therefore, void. Because it is void, it follows that there is no subjective mind that contemplates. Because there is no contemplating mind, it follows that there is no object contemplated; and because knowledge and its object vanish, this is called *The-Realization-of-Returning Method*. Following that realization, the idea of returning remains; to relinquish it, one should meditate on purity.

Realization of the State of Purity

The practice of purification consists of contemplation on discriminating views. When the mind is still like calm water and there is an absence of false thinking, the Real Mind, which does not exist apart from false thinking, manifests. This water-without-waves sort of Mind is called *The Realization of Purity*.

These *Six Profound Dharma Gates* may be seen as consisting of a preliminary set of methods, involving *counting* and *following* the breath, the two main practices of *Chih* and *Kuan*, and the concluding practices of *returning* and *purifying*. More specifically, stopping (*Chih*) is the chief practice, while contemplation (*Kuan*) is its support, until perception is realized, which means that one is no longer involved in making distinctions or having attachments. This reference to perception refers to the *five skandhas*, wherein it is seen that distinctions are made at the level of conception. Thus, no longer being at that level is to be at the more subtle level of *perceptions* (again relating to the *five skandhas*).

To realize Great Dhyana and Great Prajna, the mind must be at ease. *The-Six-Profound-Dharma-Gates* process contains methods that are designed to regulate the mind, enabling it to relax. This is paramount, for if you do not know how to relax, you cannot even begin to practice. Having learned to relax, then, and with mind and breath regulated, meditation can take place. It is then that you can practice *The Six Profound Dharma Gates* of counting, following, stopping, contemplating, returning and purifying, going through all of them over and over again, slowly and patiently,

putting your mind ever more at ease as you let go more and more. To follow any strict order of practice at this time is counterproductive. If you find that counting the breath goes well for you, count your breath. If the purifying method seems called for and works well for you, do that. Then, in only a few days, you may be able to understand your mind easily as never before.

Meditation and Ch'an Ting

Suffice it to say that there are many approaches to meditation in Buddhadharma that are to be found under the headings of *Ch'an* and *Ch'an Ting*. *Ch'an Ting* alone is an umbrella name for many methods: the Four Dhyanas, the Four Infinities, the Four-Void Worldly Ch'an, the Nine Observations, the Samadhi of Nine Degrees (supramundane), the Ch'an of Self-Nature and the Ch'an Ting. These approaches can lead one to deep dhyana, where real wisdom is to be found; and with real wisdom, there can be self-enlightenment, enlightenment of others and the Ultimate Perfect Enlightenment.

It has been suggested that to sit alone in a forest or on some remote mountainside to meditate would seem to abnegate the Bodhisattva vow of saving all sentient

beings. In answer to that, consider that even a Bodhisattva who is far away from all sentient beings still retains them in his mind. Therefore, it is in this way, when you meditate in the quiet *place* of *Ch'an Ting* and have acquired real Wisdom, that you can *truly* help sentient beings. If you are still curious as to why you must practice in solitude, consider this analogy. It is somewhat like trying to light a lamp in a strong wind, as opposed to taking it to a room where the air is still. Just as it is so very difficult, if not impossible, to light a lamp in a storm, it is equally hard to find wisdom in a disordered mind. Thus, even Bodhisattvas live apart from sentient beings and stay in quiet places, so that they can practice *Ch'an Ting* and develop and purify their wisdom.

You have to concentrate or focus your attention on whatever you do in the everyday world, if you want to do it properly. The same applies to the quiet inner world, as well, although not in quite the same way. To make another analogy, let us say that you have a lamp that is in good working order and that all the surrounding conditions contribute to its producing a good, bright light. It is only then that you will have a good, bright light. However, the practice of Buddhadharma assuredly is far more subtle than the act of lighting a

lamp. The mind of confusion is much lighter than even the lightest feather and moves so swiftly that it is gone before anything can be done about it. It cannot be controlled, because any such attempt is, in itself, an act of confusion. As quickly as lightning, the objects of the mind appear and disappear, and this frenetic activity does not stop. Indeed, it cannot stop! The only way out of this tangle is made possible through meditation.

In **The Commentary on the Dhyana Paramita**, it is written that a Bodhisattva must abandon his family and all his worldly possessions, be ready to give up his very life, and then stay in a quiet place to prepare his mind for dhyana by remaining still and calm in body and mind. When he is free of thought, there is no way for evil to arise. In preparing for dhyana, one must endure whatever happens, never tiring, always persevering. When confronted with evil (an obstacle to samadhi), he must exercise great patience in not responding with the defilement of anger. This is accomplished by not discriminating and by neither grasping at nor rejecting anything. In his quest for dhyana, he concentrates on the one Mind (the one mind being no-mind). Nothing sways him from his course. He sits, never lying down, sits even though tired, never resting; and, though seemingly gaining nothing by his apparent

efforts, he, thereby shows, indeed, his great progress. A Bodhisattva practices and completes all of the Six Paramitas, concentrates on the one Mind, which is no-mind, and can finally understand all the aspects of birth and death in the world through Prajna.

Counting the Breath

[| previous](#) | [content](#) | [next](#) |

All of the Six Wonderful and Profound Dharma Gates can produce many kinds of dhyana. The first of these is attained by the practice of counting the breath, because, in this way, you will arrive at the Four Dhyanas of Form, the Four Immeasurable Minds and the Four Formless Dhyanas. When you have attained the last stage of *Neither Thinking Nor Not Thinking is Not Nirvana*, you have only attained *The Way of The Three Vehicles*, because this worldly *Ch'an Ting* is not yet real, still having some defilement. Using The Wonderful Dharma Gate of counting the breath and neither discriminating nor grasping, you can attain all three Vehicles at the level of Hinayana.

Following The Breath

By this second practice, you can produce the Sixteen Special Dharmas:

1. When inhaling, knowing that you are inhaling;
2. When exhaling, knowing that you are exhaling;
3. Knowing when you are breathing a long or a short breath;
4. Knowing the whole body as the breath;
5. Knowing the movement of the body;
6. Knowing the delight of the mind;
7. Knowing the happiness of the mind;
8. Knowing mind activity;
9. Knowing comfort of the mind;
10. Knowing concentration of the mind;
11. Knowing freedom of mind;
12. Knowing impermanence;
13. Knowing all things (dharmas) as dispersed;
14. Knowing desirelessness;
15. Knowing nothingness or the property of vanishing;
16. Knowing what it is to abandon and give up everything.

Stopping

If you practice *stopping*, you can obtain five kinds of dhyana, as follows:

1. Earth-Wheel Samadhi (which is not yet to have arrived at the *tenth stage*);
2. Water-Wheel Samadhi (which enables you to have good conditions for all kinds of dhyanas);
3. Space-Wheel Samadhi (which consists of five expedient ways of dhyana practice, whereby you come to understand space as being without any nature);
4. The Wheel-of-Golden-Sand Samadhi (which frees you from misleading views, so that you no longer grasp after right wisdom);
5. The Wheel-of-Diamond Samadhi (which is also known as *The Completely-Without-Obstacles Tao*, a practice that lets you sever your bondage to the three realms of desire, form and formlessness forever).

Furthermore, by *stopping*, you can attain Birthless Wisdom, whereby you can gain entrance to Nirvana.

Contemplation

Through contemplation, you can take part in the Nine Thinkings, the Eight Lines of Thought, the Freedom From Eight Forms, the Eight Stages of Mental Concentration, the Ten Universals, the Samadhi of the Nine Degrees, the Samadhi of the Powerful Lion's Roar, the Transcendental Samadhi, the Practice of Ch'an, the Fourteen Transmutations of Mind, the Triple Bright Samadhi, the Six Transcendental Powers, and the Eight Liberations, all of which enable you to acquire the Samadhi of No-Sensation and No-Thought.

Returning

The meditator, through Prajna, is freed of defilements by returning to the void of the Original Source, which is no source and in which there is nothing but void-without form and with non-action-indicating an absence of self-nature. Without any self-nature, there is no longer a subject or an object, and distinctions are no longer made because there is no one to make them and nothing to make them about.

In this way, the thirty-seven conditions leading to Bodhi are satisfied, as well as those contained in the Four Noble Truths, the Twelve Nidanas and in the

Right Contemplation of the Middle Way, whereby Nirvana can be attained.

Purification

If a meditator knows, through Prajna, that all Dharmas are originally pure, he can acquire the Dhyana of Self-Nature because he has attained what is known as Hinayana Nirvana, or Two-Vehicles Nirvana. If a Bodhisattva can enter the stage of the Iron-Wheel King, has completed the Ten Grades of Bodhisattva Faith and continues to practice, he can produce the following nine kinds of Great Dhyana:

1. Self-Nature Dhyana
2. All Kinds of Dhyana
3. Difficult Dhyana
4. All-Kinds-of-Doors Dhyana
5. Good-Person Dhyana
6. All-Active Dhyana
7. Rid-of-Defilement Dhyana
8. The-Joy-of-This-Life-and-The-Next-Life Dhyana
9. Pure-and-Clean Dhyana (Since a Bodhisattva depends on this kind of Dhyana, he can attain The Fruit-of-Great-Bodhi Nirvana)

In Sudden Enlightenment, the nature of mind is realized as being originally pure. Dharmas are neither grasped at nor rejected; there is neither being nor non-being; there is neither birth nor death; there is neither this nor that; and there is neither void nor existence. Then, there is the knowing afforded by the awareness of non-duality, where nothing is grasped, there being neither someone to grasp nor anything to grasp at. If Original Substance is known, there is freedom from attachment to the objects of the sense organs. Once there is no longer any illusion of the existence of a permanent self, there are no longer any encumbrances. There is no grasping at the void and no holding to stillness; there is simply whatever is, without defining or choosing. Short of this, there might still be a somewhat encumbered level of awareness where there is a recognition of still being in the midst of causes and conditions, without attachment; but it is to be understood that even this recognition is a kind of grasping.

The Sastra of Entering The Tao of Sudden Enlightenment, by Ch'an Master Hui Hai of the T'ang Dynasty, asks what method should be used to understand Original Dharma. The reply is that one need only to practice dhyana. Referring to **The Sutra of the Ch'an Door**, one reads that if you seek the wisdom of the

Buddha, you need *Ch'an-Ting*; for without it, you will have a great abundance of false thoughts and will be in danger of destroying your good roots. To understand this more clearly, *Ch'an-Ting* is defined as follows: When there are no false thoughts, that is *Ch'an*; and to see one's Original Nature is *Ting*. Original Nature is also known as Non-Birth, or Unborn Mind, where there is no longer any *one* to be moved by the eight winds of gain, loss, defamation, fame, praise, ridicule, sorrow and joy. Thus, even if one is worldly but attains *Ting*, he already approaches being a Buddha.

Elsewhere it is written that if you are free of attachment and if you no longer think of things (dharmas) during meditation nor discriminate between good and evil, then past things are past. If you do not think of them, the mind of the past vanishes. This is called *no past*. Furthermore, the future has not yet arrived; and when it is not necessary to wish to obtain it, the mind of the future is no more. This is called *no future*. Finally, the present is already present, and there is no need to grasp at anything. When you are free of thoughts, there is no longer any grasping. Without grasping, the mind of the present vanishes. This is called *no present*. Then your mind dwells on nothing, and this is Original Mind and Original Nature. This

Mind that dwells on nothing is the Mind of the Buddha, the Mind of liberation and the Mind of no-birth. Ch'an Master Kuei-Feng said that *True Nature* is neither pure nor impure and that there is no difference between the holy and the worldly.

Varieties of Ch'an

[| previous](#) | [content](#) |

Master Kuei-Feng, also, said that when shallow and deep stages of Ch'an are referred to and that when a person chooses to practice the deep ones because he looks down on the *shallow* stages and then finds a way to do so, what he engages in is called heterodox Ch'an. Holding to cause and effect and practicing with like and dislike are known as Worldly-People Ch'an. However, when only the illusion of the personal self has been eliminated through Enlightenment but not that of the self-nature of dharmas (things), this is called Hinayana Ch'an. On the other hand, when the ego and all dharmas are enlightened, this is called Mahayana Ch'an. Here, the self-nature of one's self and the self-nature of everything else, or all dharmas, are known to be unreal. If one's own mind is suddenly enlightened,

it is in its original purity, free of defilement and not outside the stream. This mind is the Buddha, and practicing in this manner is called Supreme Ch'an.

The Sixth Patriarch, Hui-Neng, described *sitting Ch'an* by stating that being without obstacles in the Dharma and being beyond all ideas of good and evil, without a single thought arising, is called *sitting*, whereas seeing into the stillness of one's Original Nature is called *Ch'an*. Regarding *Ch'an-Ting*, he said that the absence of external form (i.e., no object) is *Ch'an*, and to be free of the confusion of thought (i.e., no subject) is *Ting*. Furthermore, he said that if one grasps the forms (the apparent objects outside), this is evidence of a confused mind and adds to the confusion of what the mind conceives of as being inside. If one is no longer attached to objects and to there being an outside, then there is no longer any such confusion of mind. Original Nature is pure and still, but is disturbed by thinking and, it follows, by objects. When there are no things, no outside and no confusion in the mind, that is real *Ting*. **The Sutra of Bodhisattva Discipline** is a bit more succinct. There, it simply says that originally your own nature is clean and pure.

Observing The Mind

We are ordinarily concerned with things that are conceived of as being outside of us, or, essentially, the objects of our thoughts; and we never think of observing the place within, as it were, whence thoughts seem to arise. By looking inward at the source of thought, the workings of your mind are still evident but are no longer so commanding, and a more and more passive sort of observation develops that reduces false thought and can help to reveal your own True Nature. In all Mahayana sutras, it can be seen that Prajna (Wisdom) must be accompanied by Universal Illumination. In one such sutra entitled *Observing the Ground of the Mind*, it is stated that one who observes the mind can be liberated but that one who does not is always bound by birth and death. Along somewhat similar lines, one finds in **The Sutra of Nirvana** that Supreme Dhyana is described as observing the nature of the mind. *Chih-Kuan*, in Buddhadharmā, is translated as either *Dhyana* and *Wisdom (Ting-Hui)* or *Stillness* and *Illumination*. In **The Maha-Chih-Kuan** the stillness of Dharma Nature is called *Chih*, and stillness with illumination is called *Kuan*; and it concludes, therefore, that *Chih-Kuan* is the supreme method for purifying the mind. There are, however, many ways to practice *Chih-*

Kuan. Just to mention a few, there are *Deep and Shallow*, *Sudden and Gradual*, *Cultivation and Principles* and *Complete and Incomplete*; and to complicate matters even further, there are three different categories of *Chih-Kuan* in the T'ien T'ai tradition: gradual, unfixed and perfect.

Gradual Chih-Kuan

In **The Commentary on the Dhyana Paramita of Gradual Chih-Kuan**, practice is described as being shallow at first and deep later, which implies a gradual development. Understanding, however, is said to come suddenly.

Unfixed Chih-Kuan

Unfixed Chih-Kuan, also known as *The Six Wonderful Dharma Gates*, is sometimes described as the *step-by-step* method leading to sudden understanding. Here, practice is gradual at first and then sudden.

Perfect Chih-Kuan

In **The Maha-Chih-Kuan**, it says that in Perfect and Sudden Chih-Kuan, all conditions and reality are merely three contemplations in one mind, and that there is only sudden understanding and action, with no

distinction as to when it began or as to how it progressed thereafter.

The practices of The Maha-Chih-Kuan method are thorough, assuredly, but are too subtle to be done without the aid of an accomplished teacher. However, until such time as the reader may discover such a teacher, he might practice the following effective method of observing the mind. Sit comfortably in the lotus position or in any other position that is suitable for you. Lay down all things, and even give up the thought of laying everything down. In this way, thinking of neither good nor evil, close your eyes gently and lightly observe where your thoughts seem to issue from. This permits you passively to be aware of your false thoughts as they suddenly come and just as suddenly go, neither grasping at them nor driving them away; thus, in time, you can come to understand profoundly that false thought has no self-nature (is empty) and that it is originally void. When false thought is then illuminated by your mind, a stillness becomes evident, which then becomes *suchness*. Then if another thought suddenly arises, using the same approach, just observe lightly to see where the thought seems to come from. Do this at least once a day for at least half an hour.

If you continue to reinforce your knowledge of Buddhadharma, as well, through reading and finding people who are inclined to hear what you might have to say about Buddhism or practice, then, over a period of time, this meditation can help reduce false thought (known as *using wisdom to support Ting*) and increase the power of illumination (known as *using Ting to beget wisdom*). If you continue in this way, you will, eventually, be able to sit without a single thought arising. When there is awareness, with no dwelling and no grasping, the source of mind is void and still. Then, Wisdom (Prajna) and Original Nature respond as one from moment to moment. In **The Hand-Flower Sutra**, it states that when you observe the mind, you see the birth and death of thought after thought as having the quality of being magical and unreal. The subject of Wisdom is Prajna, which is like saying that Prajna is Wisdom, while its object is ignorance (confusion or false thought). The perfume of Prajna is then said to permeate ignorance more and more until there is just Prajna and a return to Original Nature. Whether walking, sitting or lying down, one should always be aware of the Substance (stillness) of Original Nature.

The function of illumination is Enlightenment, which is sometimes referred to as *right thought about reality*.

It is like a pearl that emits light and, thereby, also illuminates the substance of the pearl. If a false thought arises in an illuminated mind, it vanishes as quickly as a snowflake in a blazing furnace. Then, even strong habits no longer present any obstacles. With such practice, your Original Nature appears stronger and stronger. There should be no *need* or *intention* to have illumination, because need and intention stand in the way of its ever coming about. When there is real illumination, there is no longer any involvement with words. Then, mind is no-mind. Then, there is simply *Suchness*. Without thought, there are no conditions; and Original Nature, known directly, *is* reality. However, even if you can concentrate on one thought and observe the mind for just a moment or two, you still have benefited by knowing Prajna, and have, thereby, planted the seed of Bodhi. In **The Lankavatara Sutra**, it says that you should rely fully on the teachings and then find a quiet place where, practicing free of all doubt, there can be Enlightenment. In **The Sutra of Complete Enlightenment**, it says that all Tathagatas arise from the ground cause of correct practice; and so, again and again, proper understanding and right practice are advised.

Conclusion

We have seen that there are many ways to bring about meditation in the Buddhist tradition and that they can bestow upon a practitioner all-around emotional, mental and physical health, enabling him to gain Enlightenment and, thereby, benefiting both himself and others. There is the proviso, however, that even though sitting practice can promote good health, health is beneficial only temporarily; because, no matter how long you live, you must finally die. In **The Sutra of Complete Enlightenment**, it says that since time without beginning, all sentient beings have been mired in ignorance. In their confusion they have mistaken the four elements (earth, water, fire, air) for their bodies and the shadows of the data of their six conditioned senses for their minds. The aim, then, is to be free of those delusions, going from confusion to Enlightenment. To keep that aim alive, it is important to use sutras and anything else that helps to clarify Buddhadharma and to continue to practice discipline and concentration in order to develop expert meditation so that Prajna can arise.

[| content |](#)

Buddhism Glossary

A

[A](#) | [B](#) | [C](#) | [D](#) | [E](#) | [F](#) | [G](#) | [H](#) | [I](#) | [J](#) | [K](#) | [L](#) | [M](#) |
[N](#) | [O](#) | [P](#) | [Q](#) | [R](#) | [S](#) | [T](#) | [U](#) | [V](#) | [W](#) | [X](#) | [Y](#) | [Z](#) |

Agadas

adj.: healthy; n.: antidote, panacea, universal remedy.

Agamas

Generic term applied to a collection of traditional doctrines and precepts; also means the home or collecting-place of the law or truth; the peerless law; the ultimate absolute truth. The Four Agamas are as follows: (1) Dirghagama, “law treatises on cosmogony; (2) Madhyamagama, “middle” treatises on metaphysics; (3) Samyuktagama, “miscellaneous” treatises on abstract contemplation; (4) Edottaragama, “numerical” treatises on subjects treated numerically. The sutras of Theravada are referred to at times as the Agamas.

Agara

House, dwelling, receptacle; also, used in the sense of a Bodily organ, e.g., the ear for sound, etc.

Agaru/Aguru

Sandalwood incense.

Alaya Consciousness

The fundamental consciousness of all sentient beings. As defined by the Yogacara School, Alaya means the “storehouse”, implying that this consciousness contains and preserves all past memories and potential psychic energy within its fold; it is the reservoir of all ideas, memories and desires and is also the fundamental cause of both Samsara and Nirvana.

Almsgiving

see charity.

Amitabha (Amida, Amita, Amitayus)

Amitabha is the most commonly used name for the Buddha of Infinite Light and Infinite Life. A trans-historical Buddha venerated by all Mahayana schools (T'ien T'ai, Esoteric, Zen...) and, particularly, Pure Land. Presides over the Western Pure Land (Land of

Ultimate Bliss), where anyone can be reborn through utterly sincere recitation of His name, particularly at the time of death.

Amitabha Buddha at the highest or noumenon level represents the True Mind, the Self-Nature common to the Buddhas and sentient beings — all-encompassing and all-inclusive. This deeper understanding provides the rationale for the harmonization of Zen and Pure Land, two of the most popular schools of Mahayana Buddhism. See also “Buddha Recitation,” “Mind,” “Pure Land.”

Amitabha Sutra

See “Three Pure land Sutras.”

Anasrava

(Skt.) Opposite of asrava.

Anuttara-Samayak-Sambodhi

The incomparably, completely and fully awakened mind; it is the attribute of buddhas.

Apaya-bhumi

States of woe: the three realms of existence characterized by extreme discomfort and delusion – i.e., hell-states, animal-birth and the hungry ghosts, or pretas.

Arhat

Arhatship is the highest rank attained by Sravakas. An Arhat is a Buddhist saint who has attained liberation from the cycle of Birth and Death, generally through living a monastic life in accordance with the Buddhas' teachings. This is the goal of Theravadin practice, as contrasted with Bodhisattvahood in Mahayana practice. (A Dictionary of Buddhism.) The stage is preceded by three others: 1. Stream Winner, 2. Once-Returner, 3. Non-Returner. See also "Sravakas."

Arthakrtya

One of the Four All-Embracing Virtues: performance of conduct profitable to others in order to lead them toward the truth.

Arya

Any individual ennobled by his/her own continuing effort on the path to enlightenment.

Asamkhiya (kalpa)

Term related to the Buddhist metaphysics of time. Each of the periodic manifestations and dissolutions of universes which go on eternally has four parts, called asamkhiya kalpas.

Asrava

(Skt.) Pain causing impurity, defilement.

Asura

Titanic demons, enemies of the gods, with whom – especially Indra – they wage war.

Attachment

In the Four Noble truths, Buddha Shakyamuni taught that attachment to self is the root cause of suffering:

From craving [attachment] springs grief, from craving springs fear; For him who is wholly free from craving, there is no grief, much less fear. (Dhammapada Sutra. In Narada Maha Thera, The Buddha and His Teachings.)

If you don't have attachments, naturally you're liberated... In ancient times, there was an old cultivator who asked for instructions from a monk, "Great Monk,

let me ask you, how can I attain liberation?” The Great monk said, “Who tied you up?” This old cultivator answered, “Nobody tied me up.” The monk said, “Then why do you seek liberation?” (Hsuan Hua, tr., Flower Adornment Sutra, “Pure Conduct,” chap. 11.)

For the seasoned practitioner, even the Dharma must not become an attachment. As an analogy, to clean one’s shirt, it is necessary to use soap. However, if the soap is not then rinsed out, the garment will not be truly clean. Similarly, the practitioner’s mind will not be fully liberated until he severs attachment to everything, including the Dharma itself.

Avalokitesvara

The name is a compound of Ishwara, meaning Lord, and avalokita, looked upon or seen, and is usually translated as the Lord Who Observes (the cries of the world); the Buddhist embodiment of compassion as formulated in the Mahayana Dharma. Also called Kuan Yin, the Bodhisattva of Compassion. Guan Yin is one of the triad of Amitabha Buddha, represented on his left, Usually recognizable by the small Buddha adorning Her crown. Guan Yin can transform into many different forms in order to cross over to the

beings. Guan Yin is one of the most popular Bodhisattva in China.

Avatamsaka (Flower Ornament) Sutra

The basic text of the Avatamsaka School. It is one of the longest sutras in the Buddhist Canon and records the highest teaching of Buddha Shakyamuni, immediately after Enlightenment. It is traditionally believed that the Sutra was taught to the Bodhisattvas and other high spiritual beings while the Buddha was in samadhi. The Sutra has been described as the “epitome of Buddhist thought, Buddhist sentiment and Buddhist experience” and is quoted by all schools of Mahayana Buddhism, in particular, Pure Land and Zen.

Awakening vs. Enlightenment

A clear distinction should be made between awakening to the Way (Great Awakening) and attaining the Way (attaining Enlightenment). (Note: There are many degrees of Awakening and Enlightenment. Attaining the Enlightenment of the Arhats, Pratyeka Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, etc. is different from attaining Supreme Enlightenment, i.e., Buddhahood.)

To experience a Great Awakening is to achieve (through Zen meditation, Buddha Recitation, etc.) a

complete and deep realization of what it means to be a Buddha and how to reach Buddhahood. It is to see one's Nature, comprehend the True Nature of things, the Truth. However, only after becoming a Buddha can one be said to have truly attained Supreme Enlightenment (attained the Way). A metaphor appearing in the sutras is that of a glass of water containing sediments. As long as the glass is undisturbed, the sediments remain at the bottom and the water is clear. However, as soon as the glass is shaken, the water becomes turbid. Likewise, when a practitioner experiences a Great Awakening (awakens to the Way), his afflictions (greed, anger and delusion) are temporarily suppressed but not yet eliminated. To achieve Supreme Enlightenment (i.e., to be rid of all afflictions, to discard all sediments) is the ultimate goal. Only then can he completely trust his mind and actions. Before then, he should adhere to the precepts, keep a close watch on his mind and thoughts, like a cat stalking a mouse, ready to pounce on evil thoughts as soon as they arise. To do otherwise is to court certain failure, as stories upon stories of errant monks, roshis and gurus demonstrate.

Awakening of the Faith (Treatise)

A major commentary by the Patriarch Asvaghosha (1st/2nd cent.), which presents the fundamental principles of Mahayana Buddhism. Several translations exist in English.

B

A| B| C| D| E| F| G| H| I| J| K| L| M|
N| O| P| Q| R| S| T| U| V| W| X| Y| Z|

Ban T'o

Suddhidanthaka in Sanskrit. Ban T'o was a disciple of Buddha, and he was very forgetful; for when the Buddha taught him the second sentence of a gatha of a sutra he would forget the first one, and when he was taught the third one he would forget the second one. Ultimately, however, with persistence he became an Arhat.

Bardo

The intermediate existence between death and reincarnation – a stage varying from seven to forty-nine

days, after which the Karmic body from previous lives will certainly be reborn.

Bhiksu

Religious mendicant; Buddhist fully ordained monk. Bhiksuni is the equivalent term designating a woman.

Bhadanta

“Most virtuous”; honorific title applied to a Buddha.

Bhaisajyaguru

Sanskrit word, the Buddha of Medicine, who quells all diseases and lengthens life. His is the Buddha in the Pure Land of the Paradise of the East.

Bhutatahata

The true character of reality. The real as thus, always or eternally so. True Suchness.

Bodhi

Sanskrit for Enlightenment. Also Perfect knowledge or wisdom by which a person becomes a Buddha.

Bodhi-Tao

Bodhi-path: The way or path to the Supreme Enlightenment of Buddhahood.

Bodhi Mind (Bodhicitta, Great Mind)

The spirit of Enlightenment, the aspiration to achieve it, the Mind set on Enlightenment. It involves two parallel aspects: i) the determination to achieve Buddhahood and ii) the aspiration to rescue all sentient beings.

Bodhimandala

Truth-plot, holy sits, place of Enlightenment, the place where the Buddha attained Enlightenment.

Bodhisattvas

Those who aspire to Supreme Enlightenment and Buddhahood for themselves and all beings. The word Bodhisattva can therefore stand for a realized being such as Avalokitesvara or Samantabhadra but also for anyone who has developed the Bodhi Mind, the aspiration to save oneself and others.

Bodhisattva-Tao

The way of the practitioner of Mahayana Buddhism. One following this path aspires to the attainment of Enlightenment for the sake and benefit of all sentient beings.

Brahma Net Sutra (Brahmajala Sutra)

This is a sutra of major significance in Mahayana Buddhism. In addition to containing the ten major precepts of Mahayana (not to kill, steal, lie, etc.) the Sutra also contains forty-eight less important injunctions. These fifty-eight major and minor precepts constitute the Bodhisattva Precepts, taken by most Mahayana monks and nuns and certain advanced lay practitioners.

Brahmacarya

Lit., Brahma or purified life, usually connoting the practice of celibacy.

Brahmajala

Or Indra's net, characterized by holding a luminous gem in every one of its eyes. (Hindu mythology).

Brahmin

The highest of the four Castes in Hinduism. They served Brahma, his offering, the keepers of the Vedas, i.e. priestly.

Buddha

Lit., the Awakened One; one who through aeons of spiritual development has attained Anuttara-Samyak-Sambodhi. This epithet usually refers to Sakyamuni Buddha, who lived and taught in India some 2,600 years ago.

Buddha Nature

The following terms refer to the same thing: Self-Nature, True Nature, Original Nature, Dharma Nature, True Mark, True Mind, True Emptiness, True Thusness, Dharma Body, Original Face, Emptiness, Prajna, Nirvana, etc.

According to the Mahayana view, [buddha-nature] is the true, immutable, and eternal nature of all beings. Since all beings possess buddha-nature, it is possible for them to attain enlightenment and become a buddha, regardless of what level of existence they occupy... The answer to the question whether buddha-nature is immanent in beings is an essential determining factor

for the association of a given school with Theravada or Mahayana, the two great currents within Buddhism. In Theravada this notion is unknown; here the potential to become a buddha is not ascribed to every being. By contrast the Mahayana sees the attainment of buddhahood as the highest goal; it can be attained through the inherent buddha-nature of every being through appropriate spiritual practice. (The Shambhala Dictionary of Buddhism and Zen.)

See also “Dharma Nature.”

Buddha Recitation

See “Buddha-Remembrance”.

Buddha-Remembrance

General term for a number of practices, such as
i) oral recitation of Amitabha Buddha’s name and
ii) visualization/contemplation of His auspicious marks and those of the Pure Land.

In reciting the buddha-name you use your own mind to be mindful of your own true self: how could this be considered seeking outside yourself?

Reciting the buddha-name proceeds from the mind. The mind remembers Buddha and does not forget.

That's why it is called buddha remembrance, or reciting the buddha-name mindfully.

The most common Pure Land technique is recitation of Amitabha Buddha's name. See also "Amitabha," "Pure Land."

Buddhadharma

Lit., Teaching of Enlightenment. Originally applied to designate the teaching of Shakyamuni Buddha; supplanted by the term "Buddhism" in its later historical development.

Buddharupa

A statue or Image of the Buddha, used for devotional purposes.

Bhutatahata

The Real as thus, always or eternally so; i.e., Reality as contrasted with unreality.

C

A | B | **C** | D | E | F | G | H | I | J | K | L | M |
N | O | P | Q | R | **S** | T | U | V | W | X | Y | Z |

Caitya

Tumulus, a mausoleum; a place where the relics of Buddha were collected; hence, a place where the sutras or images are placed.

Cakravala

The nine cakravala or concentric mountain ranges or continents, separated by eight seas, of a universe.

Candana

White candana, or white sandalwood.

Chan

See Zen.

Ch'an-Ting

Lit., mind still and quiet: the Chinese translation of the Sanskrit terms Dhyana-Samadhi, meaning deep contemplative practice or yogic absorption.

Charity

or almsgiving, the first Paramitas. There are three kinds of charity in terms of goods, teaching (Dharma) and courage (fearlessness). Out of the three, the merits and virtues of the teaching of the Buddha Dharma is the most surpassing. Charity done for no reward here and hereafter is called pure or unsullied, while the sullied charity is done for the purpose of personal benefits. In Buddhism, the merits and virtues of pure charity is the best.

Chilocosm

Countless Universes.

Chih-Kuan

In practice there are three contemplations; seeing such abstractions: (1) by fixing the mind on the nose, navel, etc. (2) by stopping every thought as it arises; (3) by dwelling on the thought that no thing exists of itself, but from a preceding cause.

Chung Yin Shen

See Bardo.

Cintamani

The talismanic pearl, a symbol of bestowing fortune and capable of fulfilling every wish.

Citta

Mind or heart. the two terms being synonymous in Asian religious philosophy.

Conditioned (compounded)

Describes all the various phenomena in the world - made up of separate, discrete elements, “with outflows,” with no intrinsic nature of their own. Conditioned merits and virtues lead to rebirth within samsara, whereas unconditioned merits and virtues are the causes of liberation from Birth and Death. See also “Unconditioned.”

D

A | B | C | **D** | E | F | G | H | I | J | K | L | M |
N | O | P | Q | R | S | T | U | V | W | X | Y | Z |

Dana

The practice of generosity or charity: one of the Paramitas as well as one of the All-Embracing Virtues, where it means, in the latter, giving others what they want just to lead them towards the truth.

Dedication of Merit

See “Transference of Merit.”

Delusion (Ignorance)

“Delusion refers to belief in something that contradicts reality. In Buddhism, delusion is... a lack of awareness of the true nature or Buddha nature of things, or of the true meaning of existence. “According to the Buddhist outlook, we are deluded by our senses – among which intellect (discriminating, discursive thought) is included as a sixth sense. Consciousness, attached to the senses, leads us into error by causing us to take the world of appearances for the world of reality, whereas

in fact it is only a limited and fleeting aspect of reality.”
(The Shambhala Dictionary of Buddhism and Zen.)

Demons

Evil influences which hinder cultivation. These can take an infinite number of forms, including evil beings or hallucinations. Disease and death, as well as the three poisons of greed, anger and delusion are also equated to demons, as they disturb the mind.

The Nirvana Sutra lists four types of demon: i) greed, anger and delusion; ii) the five skandas, or obstructions caused by physical and mental functions; iii) death; iv) the demon of the Sixth Heaven (Realm of Desire).

The Self-Nature has been described in Mahayana sutras as a house full of gold and jewelry. To preserve the riches, i.e., to keep the mind calm, empty and still, we should shut the doors to the three thieves of greed, anger and delusion. Letting the mind wander opens the house to “demons,” that is, hallucinations and harm. Thus, Zen practitioners are taught that, while in meditation, “Encountering demons, kill the demons, encountering Buddhas, kill the Buddhas.” Both demons and Buddhas are mind-made, Mind-Only.

For a detailed discussion of demons, see Master Thich Thien Tam, *Buddhism of Wisdom and Faith*, sect. 51.

Devakanya

Goddess in general attendance on the regents of the sun and moon.

Deva

Lit., “A shining one”. An inhabitant of the heavenly realms, which is characterized by long life, joyous surroundings and blissful states of mind. In the Buddhist tradition, these states are understood to be impermanent, not eternal.

Deva King

The four Deva Kings in the first, or lowest, Devaloka on its four sides are the following: East-Dhrtarastra; South-Virodhaka; West-Viropaksa; North-Dhanada, or Vaisravana.

Dharani

Extended mantra used in esoteric branch of Buddhism to focus and expand the mind. Its words, or sounds, should not communicate any recognizable meaning.

Dharma

a) The teachings of the Buddhas (generally capitalized in English); b) duty, law, doctrine; c) things, events, phenomena, everything.

Dharma-dhatu

The Law-doctrine that is the reality behind being and non-being. It is interpenetrative and all-inclusive, just as the rotation of the earth holds both night and day.

Dharma Door

The doctrines or wisdom of Buddha regarded as the doorway to Enlightenment; a method. Just as the living have 84,000 delusions, so the Buddha provides 84,000 methods (Dharma-Doors) to deal with them.

Dharma-Ending Age, Degenerate Age, Last Age.

The present spiritually degenerate era, twenty-six centuries after the demise of Shakyamuni Buddha. The concept of decline, dissension and schism within the Dharma after the passing of the Buddha is a general teaching of Buddhism and a corollary to the Truth of Impermanence. See, for example, the Diamond Sutra (sect. 6 in the translation by A.F. Price and Wong Mou-lam). The time following Buddha Shakyamuni's

demise is divided into three periods: i) the Perfect Age of the Dharma, lasting 500 years, when the Buddha's teaching (usually meditation) was correctly practiced and Enlightenment often attained; ii) the Dharma Semblance Age, lasting about 1,000 years, when a form of the teaching was practiced but Enlightenment seldom attained; iii) the Dharma-Ending Age, lasting some ten thousand years, when a diluted form of the teaching exists and Enlightenment is rarely attained.

Dharma Gate

See "Dharma Door."

Dharma Nature

The intrinsic nature of all things. Used interchangeably with "emptiness," "reality." See also "Buddha Nature."

Dharmakara

The Bodhisattva who later became Amitabha Buddha, as related in the Longer Amitabha Sutra. The Bodhisattva Dharmakara is famous for forty-eight Vows, particularly the eighteenth, which promises rebirth in the Pure Land to anyone who recites His name with utmost sincerity and faith at the time of death.

Dharmakaya

See “Three bodies of the Buddha.”

Dasabhumi

The “Ten Stages” in the fifty-two sections of the development of a Bodhisattva into a Buddha.

Dhyana

The practice of concentration – i.e., meditation. Also, more specifically, the four form concentrations and the four formless concentrations.

Diamond Sutra

“An independent part of the Prajnaparamita Sutra, which attained great importance, particularly in East Asia. It shows that all phenomenal appearances are not ultimate reality but rather illusions, projections of one’s own mind... The work is called Diamond Sutra because it is ‘sharp like a diamond that cuts away all unnecessary conceptualizations and brings one to the further shore of enlightenment.’” (The Shambhala Dictionary of Buddhism and Zen.)

Difficult Path of Practice (Path of the Sages, Self-Power Path)

According to Pure Land teaching, all conventional Buddhist ways of practice and cultivation (Zen, Theravada, the Vinaya School...), which emphasize self-power and self-reliance. This is contrasted to the Easy Path of Practice, that is, the Pure Land method, which relies on both self-power and other-power (the power and assistance of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas).

Duskrta

Wrongdoing, evil action, misdeed, sin; external sins of the body and the mouth; a light sin.

Dusts (Worldly Dusts)

A metaphor for all the mundane things that can cloud our bright Self-Nature. These include form, sound, scent, taste, touch, dharmas (external opinions and views). These dusts correspond to the five senses and the discriminating, everyday mind (the sixth sense, in Buddhism).

Dviyana

Lit., two vehicles. The two vehicles or practice paths of Sravakayana and Pratyekabuddhayana.

Dwo-Shih

An unusual term indicating one who has practiced the Tao with great diligence and blessing during his lifetime and who, after his death, does not want to enter just any womb, but prefers to wait for some auspicious condition, usurping such a good position from another, less highly developed spirit.

E

**A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I | J | K | L | M |
N | O | P | Q | R | S | T | U | V | W | X | Y | Z |**

Easy Path of Practice

Refers to Pure Land practice. The Easy Path involves reliance on the power of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, in particular Buddha Amitabha (“other-power”) in addition to one’s own cultivation (“self-power”). Usually contrasted with primary reliance on self-power (Difficult Path of Practice), taught in other Buddhist schools. Equal reliance on self-power and other-power distinguishes the Pure Land School from most other

schools of Buddhism. The distinction is, however, a matter of emphasis, as all schools of Buddhism rely, to a greater or lesser extent, on both self-power and other-power. See also “Other-power”.

Eight Divisions of Gods and Dragons

Devas (gods), Nagas (Dragons) and others of eight divisions (classes): deva, nagas, yakas, ganharvas, asuras, gaudas, kinaras, mahoragas.

Eight Sufferings

(1) Suffering of Birth; (2) Suffering of Old Age; (3) Suffering of Sickness; (4) Suffering of Death; (5) Suffering of being apart from the loved ones; (6) Suffering being together with the despised ones; (7) Suffering of not getting what one wants; (8) Suffering of the flourishing of the Five Skandhas.

Eight Winds

Winds of Eight Directions. Most people are usually moved by the winds of the eight directions: (1) Praise; (2) Ridicule; (3) Suffering; (4) Happiness; (5) Benefit; (6) Destruction; (7) Gain; (8) Loss.

Eightfold Path

The eight right ways leading to the cessation of sufferings. (1) Right View; (2) Right Thought; (3) Right Speech; (4) Right Action; (5) Right Livelihood; (6) Right Effort; (7) Right Remembrance; (8) Right Concentration.

Endurance (World)

See “Saha World.”

Enlightenment

See “Awakening vs. Enlightenment.”

Evil Paths

The paths of hells, hungry ghosts, animality. These paths can be taken as states of mind; i.e., when someone has a vicious thought of maiming or killing another, he is effectively reborn, for that moment, in the hells.

Expedient means (Skillful means, Skill-in-means, Upaya)

Refers to strategies, methods, devices, targetted to the capacities, circumstances, likes and dislikes of each sentient being, so as to rescue him and lead him to

Enlightenment. “Thus, all particular formulations of the Teaching are just provisional expedients to communicate the Truth (Dharma) in specific contexts.” (J.C. Cleary.) “The Buddha’s words were medicines for a given sickness at a given time,” always infinitely adaptable to the conditions of the audience.

Externalists

Literally, followers of non-Buddhist paths. This term is generally used by Buddhists with reference to followers of other religions.

F

**A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I | J | K | L | M |
N | O | P | Q | R | S | T | U | V | W | X | Y | Z |**

Five Bhikshus

The first five of Buddha’s converts: Ajnata-Kaundinya, Asvajit, Bhadraka, Dasabala-Kasyapa, and Mahanama-Kulika. They were the first five disciples that Shakyamuni preached when he became Buddha.

Five Corruptions

See “Five Turbidities.”

Five Desires (Five Sensual Pleasures)

Desires connected with the five senses, i.e., form, sound, aroma, taste and touch.

Five Eyes

1. human eye; 2. devine eye; 3. dharma eye; 4. wisdom eye; 5. Buddha eye.

Five Fundamental Conditions of Passions and Delusions

1. Wrong views which are common to triloka; 2. Clinging or attachment in the desire realm; 3. Clinging or attachment in the form realm; 4. Clinging or attachment in the formless realm which is still mortal; 5. The state of unenlightenment which is the root-cause of all distressful delusion.

Five Natures

The natures of (1) Bodhisattvas, (2) Sravakas and Pratyekabuddhas, (3) ordinary good people, (4) agnostics, (5) heretics.

Five Offenses

The five rebellious acts or deadly sins: (1) parricide; (2) matricide; (3) killing an arhat; (4) shedding the blood of a Buddha; (5) destroying the harmony of the sangha, or fraternity.

Five Precepts

The precepts taken by lay Buddhists, prohibiting i) killing, ii) stealing iii) lying, iv) sexual misconduct, v) ingesting intoxicants. See also “Ten Precepts.”

Five Skandhas

The five groups of elements (Dharmas) into which all existences are classified in early Buddhism. The five are: Rupa (matter), Vedana (feeling), Sanjna (idea-tion); Samskara (forces or drives) Vijnana (consciousness or sensation). Group, heap, aggregate; the five constituents of the personality; form, feeling, perception, impulses, consciousness; the five factors constituting the individual person.

Five Turbidities (Corruptions, Defilements, Depravities, Filths, Impurities)

They are. 1. the defilement of views, when incorrect, perverse thoughts and ideas are predominant; 2. the

defilement of passions, when all kinds of transgressions are exalted; 3. the defilement of the human condition, when people are usually dissatisfied and unhappy; 4. the defilement of the life-span, when the human life-span as a whole decreases; 5. the defilement of the world-age, when war and natural disasters are rife. These conditions, viewed from a Buddhist angle, however, can constitute aids to Enlightenment, as they may spur practitioners to more earnest cultivation.

Flower Store World

The entire cosmos, consisting of worlds upon worlds ad infinitum, as described in the Avatamsaka Sutra. It is the realm of Vairocana Buddha, the transcendental aspect of Buddha Shakyamuni and of all Buddhas. The Saha World, the Western Pure Land and, for that matter, all lands and realms are within the Flower Store World.

Four Aspects (of Buddha Dharma)

(1) the teaching; (2) the principle; (3) the practice; (4) the fruit/reward/result.

Four Elements

All matters are formed and are composed by four conditioned causes : (1) earth, which is characterized by solidity and durability; (2) water, which is characterized by liquid/fluid and moisture; (3) fire, which is characterized by energy and warmth; (4) wind, which is characterized by gas/air movement.

Four Fruits of the Arhat

See under Arhat entry.

Four Great Bodhisattva

They represent the four major characters of Bodhisattva:

1. Manjusri - Universal Great Wisdom Bodhisattva;
2. Samantabhadra - Universal Worthy Great Conduct Bodhisattva;
3. Ksitigarbha - Earth Store King Great Vow Bodhisattva;
4. Avalokitesvara - Guan Shr Yin Great Compassion Bodhisattva.

Four Great Vows (Four Universal Vows)

The four vows held by all Bodhisattvas. These vows are called great because of the wondrous and inconceivable compassion involved in fulfilling them. They are as follows: *Sentient beings without number we vow to enlighten; Vexations without end we vow to eradicate; Limitless approaches to Dharma we vow to master; The Supreme Awakening we vow to achieve.*

Four Noble Truths

1) Sufferings; 2) Cause of Sufferings; 3) Cessation of sufferings; 4) The Path leading to the cessation of sufferings.

Four Pure Lands

A classification by the Pure Land and T'ien T'ai schools of the pure realms subsumed under the Land of Amitabha Buddha, as described in the sutras. They are:

i) the Land of Common Residence of Beings and Saints (Land Where Saints and Ordinary Beings Dwell Together), where all beings, from the six lower worlds (hells, hungry ghosts...) to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, live together (further divided into two, the Common Residence Pure Land and Common Residence Impure Land);

- ii) the Land of Expediency (Land of Expedient Liberation), inhabited by Arhats and lesser Bodhisattvas;
- iii) the Land of Real Reward, inhabited by the highest Bodhisattvas;
- iv) the Land of Eternally Quiescent Light, in which the Buddhas dwell.

These distinctions are at the phenomenal level. At the noumenon level, there is, of course, no difference among them.

Four Reliance (to learning Buddhist Dharma)

The four standards of Right Dharma which buddhist should rely on or abide by:

- (1) to abide by the Dharma, not the person;
- (2) to abide by the sutras of ultimate truth, not the sutras of incomplete truth;
- (3) to abide by the meaning, not the word;
- (4) to abide by the wisdom, not the consciousness.

Four Unlimited Mind

The mind of Bodhisattva: 1. Kindness; 2. Compassion; 3. Delight; 4. Renunciation.

Four Virtues

The four Nirvanic virtues: (1) Eternity or permanence; (2) Joy; (3) Personality; (4) Purity. These four important virtues are affirmed by the sutra in the transcendental or nirvana-realm.

Four Ways (of learning Buddhist Dharma)

(1) Belief/faith; (2) Interpretation/discernment; (3) Practice/performance; (4) Verification/assurance. These are the cyclic process in learning a truth.

Four Wisdom

The forms of wisdom of a Buddha. (1) the Great-Mirror wisdom of Aksobhya; (2) the Universal Wisdom of Ratnaketu; (3) the Profound Observing Wisdom of Amitabha; (4) the Perfecting Wisdom of Amoghsiddhi.

Fourfold Assembly

Or the Four Varga (groups) are bhiksu, bhiksuni, upasaka and upasika, i.e. monks, nuns, male and female devotees.

G

A| B| C| D| E| F| **G**| H| I| J| K| L| M|
N| O| P| Q| R| S| T| U| V| W| X| Y| Z|

Good Spiritual Advisor

Guru, virtuous friend, wise person, Bodhisattva, Buddha – anyone (even an evil being!) who can help the practitioner progress along the path to Enlightenment. This notwithstanding, wisdom should be the primary factor in the selection of such an advisor: the advisor must have wisdom, and both advisor and practitioner must exercise wisdom in selecting one another.

Great Awakening

See “Awakening vs. Enlightenment.”

Great Vehicle

See Mahayana.

H

A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I | J | K | L | M |
N | O | P | Q | R | S | T | U | V | W | X | Y | Z |

Hua T'ou

Lit., ante word. The reality prior to the arising of thought.

Heaven of the Thirty-Three

A heaven in the Realm of Desire, with thirty-two god-kings presided over by Indra, thus totaling thirty-three, located at the summit of Mt. Sumeru (G.C.C. Chang).

Heretical views

The sutras usually refer to sixty-two such views. They are the externalist (non-Buddhist) views prevalent in Buddha Shakyamuni's time.

Hinayana

The Lesser Vehicle; a term applied by the Mahayana to those schools of Buddhism that practice to attain the fruits of Sravakayana and Pratyekabuddhayana and do

not attempt to attain the Anuttara-Samyak-Sambodhi of Buddha.

Holy One

Holy or Saintly One; One who has started on the path to Nirvana.

I

A| B| C| D| E| F| G| H| I| J| K| L| M|
N| O| P| Q| R| S| T| U| V| W| X| Y| Z|

Icchantika

One who has no interest in the path to Awakening, or one whose good roots are completely covered.

J

A| B| C| D| E| F| G| H| I| J| K| L| M|
N| O| P| Q| R| S| T| U| V| W| X| Y| Z|

Jambunada-suvarna

Jambu River gold; the golden sand of the Jambu river.

Jetavana

A park near the city of Sravasti, said to have been obtained from Prince Jeta by Anathapindika, in which monasterial buildings were erected; the favorite resort of Sakyamuni.

Jewel Net of Indra

This is a net said to hang in the palace of Indra, the king of the gods. At each interstice of the net is a reflecting jewel, which mirrors not only the adjacent jewels but the multiple images reflected in them. This famous image is meant to describe the unimpeded interpenetration of all and everything.

K

A| B| C| D| E| F| G| H| I| J| **K**| L| M|
N| O| P| Q| R| S| T| U| V| W| X| Y| Z|

Kalpa

Periodic manifestations and dissolutions of universes which go on eternally. Great kalpas consist of four asamkhiya kalpas corresponding to childhood, maturity, old age and the death of the universe.

Karma

Volition, volitional or intentional activity. Karma is always followed by its fruit, Vipaka. Karma and Vipaka are oftentimes referred to as the law of causality, a cardinal concern in the Teaching of the Buddha.

Common karma: the difference between personal and common karma can be seen in the following example: Suppose a country goes to war to gain certain economic advantages and in the process, numerous soldiers and civilians are killed or maimed. If a particular

citizen volunteers for military service and actually participates in the carnage, he commits a personal karma of killing. Other citizens, however, even if opposed to the war, may benefit directly or indirectly (e.g., through economic gain). They are thus said to share in the common karma of killing of their country.

Fixed karma: in principle, all karma is subject to change. Fixed karma, however, is karma which can only be changed in extraordinary circumstances, because it derives from an evil act committed simultaneously with mind, speech and body. An example of fixed karma would be a premeditated crime (versus a crime of passion).

Kaliraja

A king of Magadha noted for his violence; it is said that in a former incarnation he cut off the ears, nose and hands of the Buddha, who bore it all unmoved.

Kasaya

The monk's robe, or cassock.

Klesa

Passion, desire, impulse, instinctive desires, including 1) craving; 2) hatred; and 3) ignorance. Defiling

forces, passions, instinctive cravings, drives, defilements, desires; that which binds one in samsara.

Ksana

An inconceivably short mind-moment.

Ksanti

Patience or forbearance, one of the Six Paramitas.

Ksantyrsi

The Rsi who patiently suffered insult; i.e., Sakyamuni, in a former life, suffering mutilation in order to convert Kaliraja.

Ksatriya

The second of the four Hindi Castes at the time of Shakyamuni, they were the royal caste, the noble landlord, the warriors and the ruling castes.

L

A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I | J | K | L | M |
N | O | P | Q | R | S | T | U | V | W | X | Y | Z |

Laksana

A distinctive mark, sign, indication, characteristic or designation. A Buddha is recognized by his thirty-two characteristic physiological marks.

Lankavatara Sutra

The only sutra recommended by Bodhidharma, the First Zen Patriarch in China. It is a key Zen text, along with the Diamond Sutra (recommended by the Sixth Patriarch), the Surangama Sutra, the Vimalakirti Sutra, the Avatamsaka Sutra... The last four sutras are referred to frequently in Pure Land commentaries.

Last Age

See “Dharma-Ending Age.”

Law of Interdependent Causation

It states that all phenomena arise depending upon a number of casual factors. In other word, a phenomenon

exists in condition that the other exist; it has in condition that others have; it extinguishes in condition that others extinguish; it has not in condition that others have not. For existence, there are twelve links in the chain:

- Ignorance is the condition for karmic activity;
- Karmic activity is the condition for consciousness;
- Consciousness is the condition for the name and form;
- Name and form is the condition for the six sense organs;
- Six sense organs are the condition for contact;
- Contact is the condition for feeling;
- Feeling is the condition for emotional love/craving;
- Emotional love/craving is the condition for grasping;
- Grasping is the condition for existing;
- Existing is the condition for birth;
- Birth is the condition for old age and death;
- Old age and death is the condition for ignorance; and so on.

Lesser Vehicle

The early Buddhism. A term coined by Mahayanists to distinguish this school of Buddhism [whose modern descendent is Theravada] from Mahayana. It is so called because the teaching of this school puts emphasis on one's own liberation, whereas the teaching of Mahayana stresses the attainment of Buddhahood for all sentient beings. Theravada is now prevalent in southeast Asia, while Mahayana has spread over the northern area (China, Vietnam, Korea, Japan...) (G.C.C. Chang).

Lotus Grades

The nine possible degrees of rebirth in the Western Pure Land. The more merits and virtues the practitioner accumulates, the higher the grade.

Lotus Sect

A Buddhist sect founded by the great Master Hui Yuan about 390 A.D. at his monastery on Mount Lu in Kiangsi Province in China. The Lotus Sect believes in and honors Amitabha Buddha and declares that, through the chanting of his name and by purifying and finally ridding oneself of desire, one can be reborn in the Pure Land. There one is born of a lotus, and, de-

pending on one's degree of purification and practice, one is born into one of the nine grades of the lotus: upper superior, middle superior, lower superior, etc.

Lotus Sutra

Or Saddharma-pundarika, Dharma Flower, or "The Lotus of the True Law." The sutra is the basis for the Lotus sect (T'ien-t'ai in Chinese). Among the sutras of the Mahayana canon.

One of the earliest and most richly descriptive of the Mahayana sutras of Indian origin. It became important for the shaping of the Buddhist tradition in East Asia, in particular because of its teaching of the One Vehicle under which are subsumed the usual Hinayana [Theravada] and Mahayana divisions. It is the main text of the Tendai [T'ien T'ai] school. (Joji Okazaki.)

This School has a historically close relationship with the Pure Land School. Thus, Master T'ai Hsu taught that the Lotus Sutra and the Amitabha Sutras were closely connected, differing only in length.

Lotus Treasury World

See "Ocean-Wide Lotus Assembly."

M

A| B| C| D| E| F| G| H| I| J| K| L| M|
N| O| P| Q| R| S| T| U| V| W| X| Y| Z|

Maha-Bodhisattva

Also, Mahasattva; a great Bodhisattva who has reached the advanced stage of Enlightenment.

Mahakaruna

Great compassion.

Mahakasyapa

Also, Kasyapa; one of Buddha's disciples. The Ch'an Sect, according to its tradition, claims him as its first patriarch.

Maharaja

A great or superior king.

Mahayama

The mother of Shakaymuni. She was a Koliyan Princess and married to Suddhodana.

Mahayana

Lit., great vehicle; the dominant Buddhist tradition of East Asia. Special characteristics of Mahayana are 1. Emphasis on bodhisattva ideal, 2. The accession of the Buddha to a superhuman status, 3. The development of extensive philosophical inquiry to counter Brahmanical and other scholarly argument, 4. The development of elaborate devotional practice.

Mahasattva

See Maha-Bodhisattva.

Mahasthamaprapta (Shih Chih, Seishi)

One of the three sages in Pure Land Buddhism, recognizable by the water jar (jeweled pitcher) adorning Her crown. Usually represented in female form in East Asian iconography. Amitabha Buddha is frequently depicted standing between the Bodhisattvas Avalokitesvara and Mahasthamaprapta.

Maitreya

Sanskrit word, literally means friendly and benevolent. He will be the next Buddha in our world. He is now preaching in Tusita Heaven. In China, he is usually represented as the fat laughing Buddha.

Maitri

Loving-kindness.

Manas

The name of the seventh of the eight consciousnesses. It refers to the faculty of thought, the intellectual function of consciousness.

Mani

A jewel, gem, precious stone; especially a pearl bead or other globular ornament.

Mantra

A syllable, word or verse which has been revealed to a seer in meditation, embodiment in sound of a deity; spell or incantation.

Mara

Death; the slayer and foe of what is skillful and wholesome. The Buddhist “Tempter”; the personification of all evil and passion, whose baits and snares are the sensory pleasures. Sometimes identified with the five skandhas and with what is impermanent, suffering and not-self; Devil, the Evil One, the Great Tempter; the

Demon King, who attempted to destroy Buddha and Buddhism.

Marks

Characteristics, forms, physiognomy. Marks are contrasted with essence, in the same way that phenomena are contrasted with noumenon. True Mark stands for True Form, True Nature, Buddha Nature, always unchanging. The True Mark of all phenomena is like space: always existing but really empty; although empty, really existing. The True Mark of the Triple World is No-Birth/No-Death, not existent/not non-existent, not like this/not like that. True Mark is also called “Self-Nature,” “Dharma Body,” the “Unconditioned,” “True Thusness,” “Nirvana,” “Dharma Realm.”¹¹ See also “Noumenon/Phenomena.”

Meditation Sutra

One of the three core sutras of the Pure Land school. It teaches sixteen methods of visualizing Amitabha Buddha, the Bodhisattvas and the Pure Land. This sutra stresses the element of meditation in Pure Land. See also “Three Pure Land Sutras,” “Vaidehi,” “Visualization.”

Merit and Virtue

These two terms are sometimes used interchangeably. However, there is a crucial difference: merits are the blessings (wealth, intelligence, etc.) of the human and celestial realms; therefore, they are temporary and subject to Birth and Death. Virtues, on the other hand, transcend Birth and Death and lead to Buddhahood. Four virtues are mentioned in Pure Land Buddhism: eternity; happiness; True Self; purity. An identical action (e.g., charity) can lead either to merit or virtue, depending on the mind of the practitioner, that is, on whether he is seeking mundane rewards (merit) or transcendence (virtue). Thus, the Pure Land cultivator should not seek merits for by doing so, he would, in effect, be choosing to remain within samsara. This would be counter to his very wish to escape Birth and Death.

Middle Vehicle

Also called Middle Doctrine School or Madhyarnika; one of the two main schools of Mahayana thought; it upholds the Void as the only really real or independent, unconditioned Reality.

Mind

Key concept in all Buddhist teaching.

Frequent term in Zen, used in two senses: (1) the mind-ground, the One Mind... the buddha-mind, the mind of thusness... (2) false mind, the ordinary mind dominated by conditioning, desire, aversion, ignorance, and false sense of self, the mind of delusion... (J.C. Cleary, *A Buddha from Korea*.)

The ordinary, deluded mind (thought) includes feelings, impressions, conceptions, consciousness, etc. The Self-Nature True Mind is the fundamental nature, the Original Face, reality, etc. As an analogy, the Self-Nature True Mind is to mind what water is to waves – the two cannot be dissociated. They are the same but they are also different. To approach the sutras “making discriminations and nurturing attachments is no different from the Zen allegory of a person attempting to lift a chair while seated on it. If he would only get off the chair, he could raise it easily. Similarly, the practitioner truly understands the Dharma only to the extent that he “suspends the operation of the discriminating intellect, the faculty of the internal dialogue through which people from moment to moment define and perpetuate their customary world of perception.” (See this book, Introduction.)

See also the following passage:

The mind... “creates” the world in the sense that it invests the phenomenal world with value. The remedy to this situation, according to Buddhism, is to still the mind, to stop it from making discriminations and nurturing attachments toward certain phenomena and feelings of aversion toward others. When this state of calmness of mind is achieved, the darkness of ignorance and passion will be dispelled and the mind can perceive the underlying unity of the absolute. The individual will then have achieved the state of enlightenment and will be freed from the cycle of birth and death, because such a person is now totally indifferent to them both. (Burton Watson, *The Zen Teachings of Master Lin-Chi.*)

Mindfulness of the Buddha

Synonymous with Buddha Recitation. See “Buddha Recitation.”

Mount Sumeru

The central mountain of every universe. Also called Wonderful Height, Wonderful Brilliancy, etc.

N

A| B| C| D| E| F| G| H| I| J| K| L| M|

N| O| P| Q| R| S| T| U| V| W| X| Y| Z|

Nagarjuna (2nd/3rd cent.)

“One of the most important philosophers of Buddhism and the founder of the Madhyamika school. Nagarjuna’s major accomplishment was his systematization of the teaching presented in the Prajnaparamita Sutras. Nagarjuna’s methodological approach of rejecting all opposites is the basis of the Middle Way (Shambhala Dictionary of Buddhism and Zen.)

Narayana

Name of a deva, a strong, manly hero having divine power.

Nirmanakaya

See “Three bodies of the Buddha.”

Nirvana

The deathless; the cessation of all suffering. The very opposite of the Wheel of Birth-and-Death; it is what those in the Buddhist tradition aspire to experience. The Absolute, which transcends designation and mundane characterization.

Nirvana Sutra

The last of the sutras in the Mahayana canon. It emphasizes the importance of Buddha-nature, which is the same as Self-Nature.

Non-Birth (No-Birth)

“A term used to describe the nature of Nirvana. In Mahayana Buddhism generally, No-Birth signifies the ‘extinction’ of the discursive thinking by which we conceive of things as arising and perishing, forming attachments to them.” (Ryukoku University.) See also “Tolerance of Non-Birth.”

O

A| B| C| D| E| F| G| H| I| J| K| L| M|
N| O| P| Q| R| S| T| U| V| W| X| Y| Z|

Ocean-Wide Lotus Assembly

The Lotus Assembly represents the gathering of Buddha Amitabha, the Bodhisattvas, the sages and saints and all other superior beings in the Land of Ultimate Bliss. This Assembly is “Ocean-Wide” as the participants are infinite in number – spreading as far and wide as the ocean. The term Ocean-Wide Assembly is generally associated with the Avatamsaka Sutra, a text particularly prized by the Pure Land and Zen schools alike.

Once-returner

A sage who has only one rebirth left before reaching Arhatship and escaping birth and death.

One-Life Bodhisattva

A Bodhisattva who is one lifetime away from Buddhahood. The best known example is the Bodhisattva Maitreya.

One-Vehicle Dharma

The one Yana, the vehicle of Oneness. The one Buddhayana, the One Vehicle, i.e., Mahayana, which contains the final or complete Law of the Buddha and not merely a part, or preliminary stage, as in Hinayana.

Other-Power

The issue of other-power (Buddhas' power) is often misunderstood and glossed over by many Buddhists. However, it must be pointed out that, in Buddhism, other-power is absolutely necessary if a Bodhisattva is to attain Ultimate Enlightenment. The Lankavatara Sutra (the only sutra recommended by Bodhidharma) and the Avatamsaka Sutra (described by D.T. Suzuki as the epitome of Buddhist thought) are emphatically clear on this point:

As long as [conversion] is an experience and not mere understanding, it is evident that self-discipline plays an important role in the Buddhist life... but... we must not forget the fact that the Lanka [Lankavatara Sutra] also emphasizes the necessity of the Buddha's power being added to the Bodhisattvas', in their upward course of spiritual development and in the accomplishment of their great task of world salvation.

(Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki, tr., *The Lankavatara Sutra*, p. xviii.)

The Avatamsaka Sutra states:

Having purified wisdom and means in the seventh stage...

The great sages attain acceptance of non-origination...

On the basis of their previous resolution, the buddhas further exhort them...:

“Though you have extinguished the burning of the fire of affliction,

Having seen the world still afflicted, remember your past vows;

Having thought of the welfare of the world, work in quest

Of the cause of knowledge, for the liberation of the world.”

(T. Cleary, tr., *The Flower Ornament Sutra*, Vol II, p. 86)

See also “Easy Path of Practice.”

P

A| B| C| D| E| F| G| H| I| J| K| L| M|
N| O| P| Q| R| S| T| U| V| W| X| Y| Z|

Parajika

Lit., defeat or the conditions leading to the defeat of the Bodhicitta. Also. the conditions leading to the defeat of the Bhiksu's life.

Paramita

: Refers to the six practices, the perfection of which ferries one beyond the sea of suffering and mortality to Nirvana. The six Paramitas are the following: (1) Dana, charity or giving, including the bestowing of truth on others; (2) Sila, keeping the discipline; (3) Ksanti, patience under suffering and insult; (4) Virya, zeal and progress; (5) Dhyana, meditation or contemplation; (6) Prajna, wisdom, the power to discern reality or truth. It is the perfection of the last one – Prajna – that ferries sentient beings across the ocean of Samsara (the sea of incarnate life) to the shores of Nirvana.

Parinirvana

The Buddha's final Nirvana, entered by him at the time of death.

Polar Mountain

In Buddhist cosmology, the universe is composed of worlds upon worlds – ad infinitum. (Our earth is only a small part of one of these worlds). The Polar Mountain is the central mountain of each world.

Polaris

The North Star, polestar; star of the second magnitude, standing alone and forming the end of the tail of the constellation Ursa Minor; it marks very nearly the position of the north celestial pole.

Prajna

True or transcendental wisdom. Last of the paramitas. One of the highest attainments of Buddhist practice.

Pratyeka Buddha

A solitary Buddha; one who has achieved Awakening through insight into the dependent origination of mind and body. Pratyekabuddhas lead only solitary lives,

and they do not teach the Dharma to others nor do they have any desire to do so.

Pretas

Hungry ghosts. who are tormented by continual and unsatisfied cravings. The preta-realm is one of the three states of woe (apaya-bhumi) and one of the six realms of existence.

Priyavacana

Lit., loving or affectionate speech. This beautiful and affectionate speech is one of the Four All- Embracing Virtues and is used to lead sentient beings toward the truth.

Pure Land

Generic term for the realms of the Buddhas. In this text it denotes the Land of Ultimate Bliss or Western Land of Amitabha Buddha. It is not a realm of enjoyment, but rather an ideal place of cultivation, beyond the Triple Realm and samsara, where those who are reborn are no longer subject to retrogression. This is the key distinction between the Western Pure Land and such realms as the Tusita Heaven. There are two conceptions of the Pure Land: as different and apart from the

Saha World and as one with and the same as the Saha World. When the mind is pure and undefiled, any land or environment becomes a pure land (Vimalakirti, Avatamsaka Sutras...). See also “Triple Realm.”

Pure Land School

When Mahayana Buddhism spread to China, Pure Land ideas found fertile ground for development. In the fourth century, the movement crystallized with the formation of the Lotus Society, founded by Master Hui Yuan (334-416), the first Pure Land Patriarch. The school was formalized under the Patriarchs T’an Luan (Donran) and Shan Tao (Zendo). Master Shan Tao’s teachings, in particular, greatly influenced the development of Japanese Pure Land, associated with Honen Shonin (Jodo school) and his disciple, Shinran Shonin (Jodo Shinshu school) in the 12th and 13th centuries. Jodo Shinshu, or Shin Buddhism, places overwhelming emphasis on the element of faith.

[Pure Land comprises the schools] of East Asia which emphasize aspects of Mahayana Buddhism stressing faith in Amida, meditation on and recitation of his name, and the religious goal of being reborn in his “Pure Land” or “Western Paradise.” (Keith Crim.)

Note: An early form of Buddha Recitation can be found in the Nikayas of the Pali Canon:

In the Nikayas, the Buddha... advised his disciples to think of him and his virtues as if they saw his body before their eyes, whereby they would be enabled to accumulate merit and attain Nirvana or be saved from transmigrating in the evil paths... (D.T. Suzuki, *The Eastern Buddhist*, Vol.3, No.4, p.317.)

Pure Land Sutras

See “Three Pure Land Sutras.”

Q

A| B| C| D| E| F| G| H| I| J| K| L| M|
N| O| P| Q| R| S| T| U| V| W| X| Y| Z|

R

A| B| C| D| E| F| G| H| I| J| K| L| M|
N| O| P| Q| R| S| T| U| V| W| X| Y| Z|

S

A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I | J | K | L | M |
N | O | P | Q | R | S | T | U | V | W | X | Y | Z |

Saddharma-pundarika

See entry under Lotus Sutra.

Saha World

World of Endurance. Refers to this world of ours, filled with suffering and afflictions, yet gladly endured by its inhabitants.

Sakra

God of the sky who fights the demons with his vajra, or thunderbolt.

Sage

A wise and virtuous person, an accomplished one who is second in rank to a saint.

Sala

Or Salavana, the grove of sal(teak) trees near Kusinagara, the place of the Buddha's death.

Samadhi

Deep concentration: the state of one-pointedness of mind characterized by peace and imperturbability. Samadhi is also one of the Paramitas and is indispensable on the path to Bodhi.

Samanarthata

Cooperation with and adaptation to others for the sake of leading them towards the truth. Samanarthata is one of the Four All-Embracing Virtues. Samantabhadra Also called Universal Worthy or, in Japanese, Fugen. A major Bodhisattva, who personifies the transcendental practices and vows of the Buddhas (as compared to the Bodhisattva Manjusri, who represents transcendental wisdom). Usually depicted seated on an elephant with six tusks (six paramitas). Best known for his “Ten Great Vows.”

Samatha

Quiet, tranquillity, calmness of mind, absence of mind.

Sambhogakaya

See “Three bodies of the Buddha.”

Samsara

Cycle of rebirths; realms of Birth and Death.

Samyak Sambodhi

Correct universal intelligence; correct, equal or universal Enlightenment.

Sangha

Lit., harmonious community. In the Buddhadharma, Sangha means the order of Bhiksus, Bhiksunis, Sramaneras and Sramanerikas. Another meaning is the Arya Sangha, made up of those individuals, lay or monastic, who have attained one of the four stages of sanctity. Also, the Bodhisattva Sangha.

Sangharama Body

A monastery with its garden or grove, a universal body.

Sanskrit

Learned language of India. Canonical texts of Mahayana Buddhism in its Indian stage were written in Sanskrit.

Sariputra

Major disciple of Shakyamuni Buddha, foremost in wisdom among His Arhat disciples.

Sastra

Commentary; the commentaries constitute one of the three parts of the Buddhist canonical scriptures.

Self-Nature

One's own Original Nature, one's own Buddha Nature.

Self-Power

See "Difficult Path of Practice."

Seven Treasures

Gold, silver, lapis lazuli, crystal, agate, red pearl and carnelian. They represent the seven powers of faith, perseverance, sense of shame, avoidance of wrongdoing, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom.

Siddham

Blessed, endowed with supernatural faculties. This same term refers to the Sankrit alphabet also and is, likewise, transliterated as Hsi-ta in Chinese.

Siddhanta

The four siddhanta. The Buddha taught by (1) mundane of ordinary modes of expression; (2) individual treatment, adapting his teaching to the capacity of his hearers; (3) diagnostic treatment of their moral diseases; and (4) the perfect and highest truth.

Siksamana

A lay-disciple who maintains the eight precepts, either temporarily or as preparation for leaving home.

Sila

Moral precepts. These number 5,8,10,250 or 350. Also, one of the Paramitas.

Six Directions

North, South, East, West, above and below, i.e., all directions. In the Avatamsaka Sutra, they are expanded to include points of the compass in between and are referred to as the Ten Directions.

Six Dusts

See “Dusts.”

Six Organs

The six indriyas, or sense organs: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind.

Six Paramitas

See “Paramita”

Six Planes of Existence (Six Paths)

The paths within the realm of Birth and Death. Includes the three Evil Paths (hells, hungry ghosts, animality) and the paths of humans, asuras and celestials. These paths can be understood as states of mind. See also “Evil Paths.”

Sixth Patriarch

Hui Neng (638-713), the Sixth Patriarch of the Chinese Zen school and author of the Platform Sutra.

Skandhas

As taught by the Buddha, the skandhas are the components of the human so-called entity that is constantly changing. They are: 1. Name/form; 2. Feeling; 3. Conception; 4. Impulse; 5. Consciousness.

Skillful Means

See “Expedient Means.”

Small Vehicle

See entry under Hinayana.

Spiritual power

Also called miraculous power. Includes, inter alia, the ability to see all forms (deva eye), to hear all sounds (deva ear), to know the thoughts of others, to be anywhere and do anything at will.

Sramana

Lit., laborer; applied to those who wholeheartedly practice toward enlightenment; root word of the designation for novice monk.

Sramanera

A novice monk holding the 10 precepts.

Sramanerika

A novice nun holding the 10 precepts.

Sravakas

“Lit., ‘voice-hearers’: those who follow [Theravada] and eventually become arhats as a result of listening to the buddhas and following their teachings” (A. Buzo and T. Prince.) See also “Arhat.”

Sudhana (Good Wealth)

The main protagonist in the next-to-last and longest chapter of the Avatamsaka Sutra. Seeking Enlightenment, he visited and studied with fifty-three spiritual advisors and became the equal of the Buddhas in one lifetime. Both his first advisor and his last advisor (Samantabhadra) taught him the Pure Land path.

Suddhodana

Pure Rice King, the father of Shakyamuni, ruled over the Sakyans at Kapilavatthu on the Nepalese border.

Sudra

The lowest of the four Hindi Castes at the time of Shakyamuni. They were peasants, slaves and serfs.

Sumeru

Lit., exalted, excellent; the mythical “world mountain” that rises through the center of a Buddhist universe.

Surangama Sutra

Also called Heroic Gate Sutra.

The “Sutra of the Heroic One” exercised a great influence on the development of Mahayana Buddhism in China [and neighboring countries]. It emphasizes the power of samadhi, through which enlightenment can be attained, and explains the various methods of emptiness meditation through the practice of which everyone... can realize... enlightenment (Shambhala Dictionary of Buddhism and Zen.)

Sutra

An aphorism; a thread of suggestive words or phrases summarizing religious and philosophical instruction. In buddhism, it refers to a discourse by the Buddha or one of his major disciples. The Sutra collection is one of the three divisions of the Buddhist scriptures.

T

A| B| C| D| E| F| G| H| I| J| K| L| M|
N| O| P| Q| R| S| T| U| V| W| X| Y| Z|

Tao

Path or Way. The Sanskrit equivalent to this Chinese term is marga.

Tathagata

Usually translated as “Thus Come One.” He who came as did all Buddhas, who took the absolute way of cause and effect, and attained to perfect wisdom; one of the highest titles of a Buddha (Charles Luk).

Ten Directions

North, South. East, West; N-F, N-W, S-F, S-W, Zenith and Nadir.

Ten Evil Acts (Ten Evil Deeds, Ten Sins)

1. Killing; 2. stealing; 3. sexual misconduct; 4. lying; 5. slander; 6. coarse language; 7. empty chatter; 8. covetousness; 9. angry speech; 10. wrong views. See also “Ten Precepts.”

Ten Great Vows

The famous vows of the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra in the Avatamsaka Sutra. These vows represent the quintessence of this Sutra and are the basis of all Mahayana practice. Studying the vows and putting them into practice is tantamount to studying the Avatamsaka Sutra and practicing its teachings. See also “Samantabhadra.”

Ten Precepts

Include an expanded version of the Five Precepts of body and mouth (not to kill, steal, engage in illicit sex, lie, or take intoxicants) with the addition of the virtues of the mind (elimination of greed, anger and delusion). See also “Five Precepts,” “Ten Evil Acts.”

Ten Stages of a Bodhisattva’s Progress

They are the following: (1) Joy at having overcome former difficulties and at now entering the path to Buddhahood; (2) Freedom from all possible defilement, the stage of purity; (3) The stage of further enlightenment; (4) Glowing wisdom; (5) Mastery of the utmost or final difficulties; (6) The open way of wisdom that is beyond purity and impurity; (7) Proceeding afar, above the concept of “self” in order to

save others; (8) Attainment of calm imperturbability; (9) Achievement of the finest discriminatory wisdom; knowing, expediently, where and how to save; possessing the ten powers; (10) Attainment of the fertilizing powers of the Law Cloud.

Ten Virtues

The virtuous modes of behavior, which are the positive counterparts to the Five Precepts. The Grades of Bodhisattva Faith 1) The stage of Bodhisattva faith; 2) The stage of remembrance or unforgetfulness; 3) The stage of zealous progress; 4) The stage of wisdom; 5) The stage of Dhyana; 6) The stage of non-retrogression; 7) The stage of protection of the Dharma; 8) The stage of reflective powers; 9) The stage of discipline (sila); 10) The stage of the mind of high resolve.

The Stages Before Attainment

1) The purposive stage; 2) The stage of control of the mind-ground; 3) the stage of Bodhisattva practice; 4) The stage of noble birth; 5) The stage of all-in-readiness for Enlightenment; 6) The stage of the whole mind becoming Buddha-like; 7) The stage of non-retrogression; 8) The stage of Bodhi in its infancy;

- 9) The stage of the heir to the King of the Law;
- 10) The stage of investiture.

Theravada

Lit., the School of the Elders; one of the two main forms of Buddhism known in the world today; practiced chiefly in south-east Asia; has the Pali Canon for textual foundation; this tradition advocates the Arhantship.

Third Lifetime

In the first lifetime, the practitioner engages in mundane good deeds which bring ephemeral worldly blessings (wealth, power, authority, etc.) in the second lifetime. Since power tends to corrupt, he is likely to create evil karma, resulting in retribution in the third lifetime. Thus, good deeds in the first lifetime are potential “enemies” of the third lifetime. To ensure that mundane good deeds do not become “enemies the practitioner should dedicate all merits to a transcendental goal, i.e., to become Bodhisattvas or Buddhas or, in Pure Land teaching, to achieve rebirth in the Pure Land – a Buddha land beyond Birth and Death.

In a mundane context, these three lifetimes can be conceived of as three generations. Thus, the patriarch

of a prominent family, through work and luck, amasses great power, fortune and influence (first lifetime). His children are then able to enjoy a leisurely, and, too often, dissipated life (second lifetime). By the generation of the grandchildren, the family's fortune and good reputation have all but disappeared (third lifetime).

Thirty-seven Limbs of Enlightenment

These are: a. the four mindfulnesses; b. the four right efforts; c. the four bases of miraculous powers; d. the five roots; e. the five powers; f. the seven factors of enlightenment; and g. the eightfold noble path (G.C.C. Chang).

Thirty-two Laksanas

The physical marks of a Cakravarti (Wheel-King), especially of the Buddha.

Three bodies of the Buddha (Skt. trikaya)

1. Dharmakaya: The Dharma-body, or the "body of reality", which is formless, unchanging, transcendental, and inconceivable. Synonymous with suchness, or emptiness.

2. Sambhogakaya: the “body of enjoyment”, the celestial body of the Buddha. Personification of eternal perfection in its ultimate sense. It “resides” in the Pure Land and never manifests itself in the mundane world, but only in the celestial spheres, accompanied by enlightened Bodhisattvas.

3. Nirmanakaya: the “incarnated body” of the Buddha. In order to benefit certain sentient beings, a Buddha incarnates himself into an appropriate visible body, such as that of Sakyamuni Buddha.

The incarnated body of the Buddha should not be confused with a magically produced Buddha. The former is a real, tangible human body which has a definite life span, The latter is an illusory Buddha-form which is produced with miraculous powers and can be withdrawn with miraculous powers (G.C.C. Chang).

Three Evil Paths

See “Evil Paths.”

Three Jewels (Three Precious Ones, Three Treasures)

In Sanskrit, Rathatraya. Buddha, Dharma and Sangha; sometimes referred to as the Teacher, the Teaching and the Taught.

Three Karmas

The three conditions, inheritances or karmas, of which there are several groups, including the karmas of deeds, words and thoughts.

Three Poisons

Craving, aversion and delusion; also, these are termed the three root-stains or the three roots of unskillfulness.

Three Pure Land Sutras

Pure Land Buddhism is based on three basic sutras:

- a) Amitabha Sutra (or Shorter Amitabha Sutra, or Smaller Sukhavati-Vyuha, or the Sutra of Amida);
- b) Longer Amitabha Sutra (or Longer Sukhavati-Vyuha, or the Teaching of Infinite Life);
- c) Meditation Sutra (or the Meditation on the Buddha of Infinite Life, or the Amitayus Dhyana Sutra).

Sometimes the last chapter of the Avatamsaka Sutra (“The Practices and Vows of the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra”) is considered the fourth basic sutra of the Pure Land tradition. Note: in Pure Land, the Longer Amitabha Sutra is considered a shorter form of the Lotus Sutra.

Three Realms (Triple Realm, Three Worlds)

The realms of desire (our world), form (realms of the lesser deities) and formlessness (realms of the higher deities). The Western Pure Land is outside the Triple Realm, beyond samsara and retrogression. See also “Pure Land.”

Three Refuges

Taking refuge and possessing confidence in the Buddha’s Awakening, in his Teaching and in the Sangha of enlightened disciples.

Three Vehicles

The yanas of Sravakas, Pratyekabuddhas and Bodhisattvas.

T’ien T’ai (Tendai) School

A major school that takes the Lotus Sutra as its principal text. Historically, it has had a close relationship with Pure Land. See also “Lotus Sutra.”

Tolerance of Non-Birth

“Tolerance” (insight) that comes from the knowledge that all phenomena are unborn. Sometimes translated

as “insight into the non-origination of all existence/non-origination of the dharmas.”

A Mahayana Buddhist term for the insight into emptiness, the non-origination or birthlessness of things or beings realized by Bodhisattvas who have attained the eighth Stage [Ground] of the path to Buddhahood. When a Bodhisattva realizes this insight he has attained the stage of non-retrogression. (Ryukoku University.)

The Pure Land School teaches that anyone reborn in the Pure Land attains the Tolerance of Non-Birth and reaches the stage of non-retrogression, never to fall back into samsara. See also “Non-Birth.”

Transference of Merit

The concept of merit transference, or sharing one’s own merits and virtues with others, is reflected in the following passage:

Some of us may ask whether the effect of [evil] karma can be... [changed] by repeating the name of Kuan-Yin. This question is tied up with that of rebirth in Sukhavati [the Pure Land] and it may be answered by saying that invocation of Kuan-Yin’s name forms another cause which will right away offset the previous

karma. We know, for example) that if there is a dark, heavy cloud above, the chances are that it will rain. But we also know that if a strong wind should blow, the cloud will be carried away somewhere else and we will not feel the rain. Similarly, the addition of one big factor can alter the whole course of karma.

It is only by accepting the idea of life as one whole that both Theravadins and Mahayanists can advocate the practice of transference of merit to others. With the case of Kuan-Yin then, by calling on Her name we identify ourselves with Her and as a result of this identification, Her merits flow over to us. These merits which are now ours then counterbalance our bad karma and save us from calamity. The law of cause and effect still stands good. All that has happened is that a powerful and immensely good karma has overshadowed the weaker one. (Lecture on Kuan-Yin by Tech Eng Soon - Penang Buddhist Association, c. 1960. Pamphlet.)

Triloka or Trailoka

See “Three Realms.”

Tripitaka

Lit., three baskets: The earliest Buddhist canonical text consisting of three sections: 1. Buddha’s discourses

(sutras), 2 Rules of Discipline (Vinaya), 3. Analytical and explanatory texts or commentaries (sastras); usually referred to as the Pali canon.

Triple Jewel

See “Three Treasures.”

Twelve Nidanas

The twelve links in the chain of existence or causation; they are as follows: 1) Avidya, ignorance or unenlightenment; 2) Samskara, action, activity, conception, “dispositions”; 3) Vijnana, consciousness; 4) Nama-rupa, name and form; 5) Sadayatana, the six sense organs, i.e., eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind; 6) Sparsa, contact, touch; 7) Vedana, sensation, feeling; 8) Trsna, thirst, desire, existing; 9) Upadana, laying hold of, grasping; 10) Bhava, being, existing; 11) Jati, birth; 12) Jaramarana, old age and death.

Two Truths

1) Relative or conventional, everyday truth of the mundane world subject to delusion and dichotomies and 2) the Ultimate Truth, transcending dichotomies, as taught by the Buddhas.

According to Buddhism, there are two kinds of Truth, the Absolute and the Relative. The Absolute Truth (of the Void) manifests “illumination but is always still,” and this is absolutely inexplicable. On the other hand, the Relative Truth (of the Unreal) manifests “stillness but is always illuminating,” which means that it is immanent in everything. (Hsu Heng Chi/P.H. Wei).

Pure Land thinkers such as the Patriarch Tao Ch’o accepted “the legitimacy of Conventional Truth as an expression of Ultimate Truth and as a vehicle to reach Ultimate Truth. Even though all form is nonform, it is acceptable and necessary to use form within the limits of causality, because its use is an expedient means of saving others out of one’s compassion for them and because, even for the unenlightened, the use of form can lead to the revelation of form as nonform” (David Chappell). Thus to reach Buddhahood, which is formless, the cultivator can practice the Pure Land method based on form.

Tzung

A term originally used to mean “sect”, but later appropriated by the intuitional school known as Ch’an (Japanese, Zen) for use in special contexts.

U

A| B| C| D| E| F| G| H| I| J| K| L| M|
N| O| P| Q| R| S| T| U| V| W| X| Y| Z|

Unconditioned (Transcendental)

Anything “without outflows,” i.e., free of the three marks of greed, anger and delusion. See also “Conditioned.”

Upasaka/Upasika

Buddhist lay disciple (man/woman), who formally received five precepts or rules of conduct.

V

A| B| C| D| E| F| G| H| I| J| K| L| M|
N| O| P| Q| R| S| T| U| V| W| X| Y| Z|

Vaidehi

The Queen of King Bimbisara of Magadha, India. It was in response to her entreaties that Buddha Shakyamuni preached the Meditation Sutra, which teaches a series of sixteen visualizations (of Amitabha Buddha, the Pure Land...) leading to rebirth. in the Land of Ultimate Bliss.

Vaidurya

A precious substance, perhaps lapis lazuli or beryl.

Vairocana

The main Buddha in the Avatamsaka Sutra. Represents the Dharma Body of Buddha Shakyaniuni and all Buddhas. His Pure Land is the Flower Store World, i.e., the entire cosmos.

Vaisravana

One of the four maharaja-deva guardians of the first or lowest devaloka on its four sides. Vaisravana guards the north.

Vaisya

The third of the four Hindi Castes at the time of Shakyamuni. They were merchant, entrepreneurs, traders, farmers, manufacturers, etc., but not well-educated.

Varuna

God of the sea and of the waters; guardian of the western quarter of the compass.

Veda

True or sacred knowledge or lore; name of celebrated works which constitute the basis of the first period of the Hindu religion.

Vimalakirti Sutra

Also called Vimalakirti Nirdeśa Sutra. A key Mahayana sutra particularly popular with Zen and to a lesser extent Pure Land followers. The main protagonist is a layman named Vimalakirti who is the equal of many

Bodhisattvas in wisdom, eloquence, etc. He explained the teaching of Emptiness in terms of non-duality... “The true nature of things is beyond the limiting concepts imposed by words.” Thus, when asked by Manjusri to define the non-dual Truth, Vimalakirti simply remained silent.

Vinaya

Disciplined conduct, referring specifically to the monastic rules for the disciples who have left home; also, one of the three divisions of the Buddhist scriptures.

Vipasyana

Discernment; also, insight, correct perception or view.

Virtue

See “Merit and Virtue.”

Virya: Energy

The energy necessary to maintain and progress in spiritual development. Also, one of the Paramitas.

Visualization

See Meditation Sutra for explanation.

The visualizations [in the Meditation Sutra] are distinguished into sixteen kinds [shifting from earthly scenes to Pure Land scenes at the third Visualization]: (1) visualization of the sun, (2) visualization of water, (3) visualization of the ground [in the Pure Land], (4) visualization of the trees, (5) visualization of the lake[s], (6) unified visualization of the [50 billion] storied-pavilions, trees, lakes, and so forth, (7) visualization of the [lotus throne of Amitabha Buddha], (8) visualization of the images of the Buddha [Amitabha] and Bodhisattvas [Avalokitesvara and Mahasthamaprapta], (9) visualization of the [Reward body of Amitabha Buddha, i.e., the form in which He appears in the Pure Land], (10) visualization of Avalokitesvara, (11) visualization of Mahasthamaprapta, (12) visualization of one's own rebirth, (13) [see below], (14) visualization of the rebirth of the highest grades, (15) visualization of the rebirth of the middle grades and (16) visualization of the rebirth of the lowest grades. (K.K. Tanaka, *The Dawn of Chinese Pure Land Doctrine*.)

The 13th Visualization has been summarized as follows:

If one cannot visualize the [Reward body of Amitabha Buddha], focus on the small body, which is sixteen

cubits high (the traditional height of Shakyamuni while he dwelt on earth); contemplate an intermingling of the [Reward] and small bodies. (Ioji Okazaki, p.52.)

Visualizations 14-16 refer to the nine lotus grades (of rebirth), divided into three sets of three grades each.

W

**A| B| C| D| E| F| G| H| I| J| K| L| M|
N| O| P| Q| R| S| T| U| V| W| X| Y| Z|**

Way (Path, Tao)

The path leading to Supreme Enlightenment, to Buddhahood.

Wisdom-life

The life of a Buddha or Bodhisattva, which is sustained by wisdom, just as the life of an ordinary being is sustained by food.

X

A| B| C| D| E| F| G| H| I| J| K| L| M|
N| O| P| Q| R| S| T| U| V| W| X| Y| Z|

Y

A| B| C| D| E| F| G| H| I| J| K| L| M|
N| O| P| Q| R| S| T| U| V| W| X| Y| Z|

Yama

In the Vedas, the god of the dead.

Yana

Sanskrit term, commonly translated as vehicle; means spiritual vehicle, path or career.

Yasodhara

The wife of Siddhartha Goutama. Later became a nun.

Yogacara School.

Another name for the Mind-Only school, founded in the fourth century by the brothers Asanga and Vasubandhu.

Z

A| B| C| D| E| F| G| H| I| J| K| L| M|
N| O| P| Q| R| S| T| U| V| W| X| Y| Z|

Zen

A major school of Mahayana Buddhism, with several branches. One of its most popular techniques is meditation on koans, which leads to the generation of the Great Doubt. According to this method:

The master gives the student a koan to think about, resolve, and then report back on to the master. Concentration intensifies as the student first tries to solve the koan intellectually. This initial effort proves impossible, however, for a koan cannot be solved rationally. Indeed, it is a kind of spoof on the human intellect. Concentration and irrationality – these two elements constitute the characteristic psychic situation that engulfs the student wrestling with a koan. As this

persistent effort to concentrate intellectually becomes unbearable, anxiety sets in. The entirety of one's consciousness and psychic life is now filled with one thought. The exertion of the search is like wrestling with a deadly enemy or trying to make one's way through a ring of flames. Such assaults on the fortress of human reason inevitably give rise to a distrust of all rational perception. This gnawing doubt [Great Doubt], combined with a futile search for a way out, creates a state of extreme and intense yearning for deliverance. The state may persist for days, weeks or even years; eventually the tension has to break. (Dumoulin, Zen Buddhism, Vol. I, p.253.)

An interesting koan is the koan of Buddha Recitation. Unlike other koans, it works in two ways. First of all, if a cultivator succeeds in his meditation through this koan, he can achieve awakening as with other koans. However, if he does not succeed, and experience shows that many cultivators do not, then the meditation on the Buddha's name helps him to achieve rebirth in the Pure Land. This is so provided he believes (as most practitioners in Asia do) in Amitabha and the expedient Pure Land. Thus, the Buddha Recitation koan provides a safety net, and demonstrates the underlying unity of Zen and Pure Land.