

**達磨禪的安心法
與
禪的基本實習**

Bodhidharma's Meditation for Settling the Mind

With a hands-on manual for beginners

智海長老主講

From the lecture series of Master Chi Hoi

Translated by his disciples Hui-deng and Hui-ye

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1339-38th Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94122
www.bwlh.org

Translator's Preface

The ancient Zen ideal of settling the mind has never been as crucial as it is in today's frenzied world. While many in the West may be familiar with elements of Japanese Zen, contributions from the vast Chinese tradition have been comparatively rare. The Venerable Master Chi Hoi, a Mahayana scholar and practitioner of both the Pure Land school and the Tien-t'ai school, approaches Chinese Buddhism from an uncommonly modern and liberal perspective. As a sample of his work, the principal lecture here focuses on Bodhidharma's Meditation -- the meditative methods taught by the twenty-eighth patriarch of the Indian dhyana lineage, who became the first patriarch of the Chinese Ch'an school and who is revered in Japan as Bodhidharuma. Though Bodhidharma's principle of sudden enlightenment is indeed a part of mainstream East Asian Buddhism, his teachings and instructions for practice are slightly less known, likely because many of them are recorded only in the Chinese Buddhist tradition. The present work is an endeavor to share some of this valuable knowledge with Western readers.

"Bodhidharma's Meditation" begins by introducing the concepts of "mind" and "meditation" from a Buddhist perspective and follows with explorations of specific mental states as defined by the Ideas-only school. After a brief history of the transmission of Theravada meditation and an overview on the evolution of Mahayana meditation, the lecture provides a detailed explanation of the four methods espoused by Bodhidharma. Sprinkled throughout, too, are anecdotes from

Bodhidharma's considerable personal legend and references to sutras from many different schools of Buddhism. The second lecture is a hands-on manual for people eager to practice "sitting meditation". Drawing upon vast literary resources from the Indian and Chinese Buddhist traditions, Master Chi Hoi composes twelve fundamental techniques to help the everyday practitioner settle both mind and body. With precise instructions for and tangible achievements at each step, this discreet approach provides a balanced complement to Bodhidharma's work. Hopefully these lectures will spark further interest in and anticipation for future translations of Master Chi Hoi's lecture series.

Master Chi Hoi's lectures were originally given in Mandarin; his diction and references to sutras are all adopted from the Chinese Buddhist tradition. In translating Chinese characters, the *Japanese/English Buddhist Dictionary* by Hisao Inagaki has been used given its wide recognition by Western Buddhist scholars. For adherence to mainstream vocabulary, attempts were made in some instances to conform to the Buddhist diction used by Rupert Gethin in *The Foundations of Buddhism* and Nyanaponika Thera in *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation*. An apology is in order here for Master Chi Hoi if this translation does not do full credit to his original speech.

Hui-deng and Hui-yee

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The Author

The Honorable Master Chi Hoi (“Ocean of Wisdom”) was born in 1926 in a village near Beijing. At the age of seventeen he was initiated at Chi Fu Monastery about thirty miles north of Beijing in the Hong Rou Mountains. The abbot of this temple was the Honorable Master Tsou Wu who later became the twelfth patriarch of China’s Pure Land school. For three years, Chi Hoi learned the teachings of the Pure Land school and practiced the “recitation of Amita Buddha.” In 1944 he entered a Buddhist academy in Beijing to study literature, history and logic in addition to religion. From 1948, Chi Hoi studied under the thirteenth patriarch of the Pure Land school, the Honorable Master In Kwong, at Mount Lin Yan Monastery in Suzhou. Chi Hoi then learned the precepts of the Tien-t’ai school of Buddhism from the Honorable Master Tan Shu in Hong Kong between 1952 and 1962. He was later appointed the forty-fifth dharma successor of the Tien-t’ai school. Chi Hoi’s philosophical perspective is based on the fundamental principles of both the Pure Land and Tien-t’ai schools; his approach to enlightenment likewise combines the faith and devotion to Amita Buddha espoused by the former and the one vehicle teachings and emphasis on meditation from the latter. For those who aspire to reach the Pure Land, he promotes the simultaneous practice of meditation and the recitation of Amita Buddha’s name.

In 1967 the Honorable Master Chi Hoi was invited to the United States to preach Buddhism. He served as a director of both the American Buddhist Association and the Buddhist Association of North America. In 1972, he founded the Buddhist Wisdom Lecture Hall of Fo Shan Monastery in San Francisco. Since then he has been giving weekly lectures and discussion sessions at the Lecture Hall. Chi Hoi devotes his time not only to writing Buddhist literature, but also to traveling around the world to lecture on various sutras as well as Buddhist philosophy. With a keen intellect and a quick wit, he is well known for his funny and interesting speeches. His special gift is his ability to communicate Buddhist ideals through revealing, yet witty analogies. Perhaps a little less orthodox than others, Chi Hoi is also a firm believer in the merits of debate and discussion in understanding Buddhism. Despite his reputation as a scholar, Chi Hoi has always held a strong sense of compassion and admiration for the wisdom of simple, less-educated believers; time and time again, he emphasizes the importance of both faith and prajna. Master Chi Hoi wishes to introduce Buddhism to all, and to bring harmony and serenity to the modern mind.

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Part One

Bodhidharma's Meditation for Settling the Mind

1. Mind and Meditation

Our topic today is the Buddhist meditation method introduced by the Indian master Bodhidharma, who taught this as a way to settle our minds and guide us toward enlightenment. To begin with, we shall focus on the words “mind” and “meditation” from a Buddhist perspective.

Every human being has a mind; all sentient beings have minds. Anyone or anything with a mind has the potential to become a Buddha, so why have we not all attained Buddhahood yet? Why are we still suffering and indulging ourselves as sentient beings in this Saha world? It is because we are unable to peacefully settle our minds. Why is that? The simple reason is that, as human beings, we are unable to forgo daily needs such as food, clothing, housing, and transportation. As we strive to fulfill these needs, our minds become preoccupied by those endeavors. Would our minds become free and settled once those basic needs have been satisfied? Perhaps not, as the mind, instead of settling down, may push one to succeed further in the professional, social, or political arenas. As long as there is no end to such desires, there is no way for the mind to be completely at peace.

Each of us is endowed with a functioning mind, but though that mind should be here with us, it often seems to wander far away. This is because we have not been able to calm our minds. In this world, people must engage in a variety of trades and professions to provide for the essentials of our existence and support the workings of our society. As everyone devotes their energy and attention to these occupations, their minds stray until they no longer recognize their true direction. Therefore, we have to think of ways to

restore the mind to a settled state. How do we return our minds to peace? In order to achieve that goal, both the Mahayana and Theravada traditions offer different methods of meditation. Bodhidharma's method of meditation belongs to the Mahayana tradition and focuses on mastering the mind. In Buddhist theory there is an alternative vocabulary for the mental discipline of settling the mind -- "hsiu chih, hsiu kuan", that is, "cultivating calm (samatha) and insight (vipasyana)". In other words, just as meditation describes a way to settle the mind, so does the practice of calm and insight.

What is "calm?" Calm is containing the mind and fixing it on one object; it is letting the mind be concentrated and not distracted. What is "insight?" Insight is illuminating and understanding the mind in its present state of one-pointedness (fixed on one object). It is neither distracted nor idle. That is to say, a still mind is one that is clear but not asleep. Some believe meditation consists merely of sitting and thinking about nothing. In actuality, that is not meditation; that is just letting the mind have a rest. Though it is better than having a restless and distracted mind, to think this is meditation is a little precocious. When practicing meditation, the mind is completely clear and lucid; it is not unaware or unthinking. This is the same mental state achieved by the practice of insight. "Insight" means wisdom and pertains to "*prajna*," the Sanskrit word for transcendental wisdom, or the highest, most wonderful form of wisdom.

In the Mahayana tradition, there are two techniques to settle the mind. The first is by means of the Buddha, which is through the recitation of the Buddha's name ("Namo Amita Buddha"). The second is by means of the Dharma, which means following the essential meditative techniques found in Buddhist Dharma. In practicing the first method,

Buddha is analogous to enlightenment. Reciting “Namo Amita Buddha” is like reciting enlightenment, and in particular, “infinite light enlightenment” and “infinite life enlightenment.” Thus, the illumination from the Buddha’s enlightenment serves as illumination for our own minds as we try to move from delusion to enlightenment. Most of us who recite the name of the Buddha have not yet reached enlightenment; we are still practicing to cultivate our minds in a world of karmic causality. Amita Buddha is a Buddha transcending all karmic relationships and represents enlightenment beyond karma. In other words, the method of recitation of the Buddha’s name relies on the enlightenment of the Buddha to enlighten our own mind. If we recite “Namo Amita Buddha” with this in mind, our practice is very close to meditation. Therefore there is no discrepancy in adopting both the technique of reciting the Buddha’s name and that of meditation.

For the second method, the Sanskrit word “dhyana” commonly translates to meditation. In Chinese, it translates phonetically to “Ch’an” or “tranquil contemplation”. “Tranquil” which means still or concentrated, describes the same mental state involved in the practice of calm. “Contemplation” corresponds to the practice of insight. Thoughts that arise in meditation are neither illusory nor distracted thoughts, but concentrated thoughts—the result of contemplation carried out when the mind is in a state of clarity and stillness. In the Buddhist tradition, the mind is often compared to a bowl of water. When the water is unruffled, it is a mind that is tranquil. When the water surface is still, it reflects light; anything outside will be reflected in the water. This function of reflection is analogous to contemplating because this act of contemplation does not discern or

discriminate things. Like a mirror it merely possesses the natural efficacy of reflection.

Try the following during meditation:

“Contemplate the mind being a bowl of still water.

Investigate this bowl of still water.

Have we ruffled it?

Are there any ripples?

Has any dust fallen in there?

Observe our mind, has it wandered off?”

When the mind becomes distracted or deluded, it is like a bowl of water that is ruffled or muddied. Greedy or angry thoughts are like dust. A mind clouded by ripples or dust no longer reflects like a mirror. Needless to say, it would be nowhere close to a state of concentration or contemplation.

Therefore, making an effort to meditate is an effort to completely settle and cultivate the mind. Of course, this is easier said than done. We often speak of the virtues of forbearance and perseverance towards others quoting the well known saying “by backing down one step, one may see the ocean is that much wider and the sky that much higher,” yet how come so many of us are not able to put these words into action? An old Chinese idiom captures this quite aptly: “when thirsty, dig a well.” If one only starts digging when one becomes thirsty, would the water come in time to quench his thirst? So if one expects to drink water, he had better dig a well in advance. The analogy is that if we wish to be forbearing and persevering towards others, to have the self-control to step back in any situation, we should practice meditation in our daily life. Only with regular practice will

the merits of meditation come in handy in any circumstance we may encounter. Such mental discipline will only be accomplished through continual effort. Without constancy and fortitude in practicing meditation, we could not expect to master our mind even if we wished to. In order to settle the mind, we must follow the way, and the way to do that is meditation.

2. Mental States

The Buddha speaks of many ways to help sentient beings settle their minds. If the minds of sentient beings were already at peace, the Buddha would have no need to teach so many ways. According to the *Diamond Sutra*, the Buddha has nothing to teach -- “The Tathagata has no teaching to enunciate.” If there is no method to teach, then why does the Buddha speak of all these ways? It is because sentient beings do not have peace of mind and they need to calm their minds. The Buddha embodies the greatest wisdom and compassion and as such, he still teaches, in spite of there being essentially nothing to teach. A sage from former times recorded the following stanza:

“Buddha teaches all ways,
To master all minds;
Without all minds,
Why do we need all ways?”

What are “all minds”? What are “all ways”? We have but one mind, so where do all minds come from? If the Buddha really has nothing to teach, why do we again talk about all ways? Each sentient being alone has all minds, each of which needs restoration. If sentient beings do not have all minds, then there will be no need for all ways, for there would be no use for them.

In order to understand how to return “all minds” to peace, we should first clarify the various mental states and then discuss how to settle each of these states. Buddhist sutras mention various names for all minds; in particular, the *Mind-only* or *Ideas-only* School

offers a variety of definitions for these mental states. The overall cognitive functions of one's consciousness are referred to as the *mind kings*, and the distinctive mental functions belonging to each *mind king* are referred to as the *elements possessed by the mind*. When we say "all minds," we mean principally these mental states: the illusory mind, the associating mind, the attaching or grasping mind and the disturbed or deluded mind. None of these minds are the true mind; neither are clear or pure. We shall explain these definitions beginning with the illusory mind.

In what mental state is a mind subject to illusory thoughts? The Chinese character for "thought" provides a simple analogy. It is composed of the character for "image" on top of the character for "mind." When an image enters the mind, it becomes a thought. When the mind is engaged with that image, it begins to think. Think of what? Think of that particular image. Is that image a real entity? No. It is unreal. Yet we use an illusory mind to discern an illusory image. For example, suppose our mind is subject to an illusory thought; this thought must center on some object. What is this object? Is it a man? A woman? Is it red? White? This object is the image. Is this image a real entity? No. It is false. Why is it false? Because it is not a permanent reality. It does not exist in the absolute sense. It is only a result of conditional arising. It is a temporary image. Yet we keep thinking about it, dragging our minds to exhaustion. When I was a disciple of Master Tan-shu, the old master once instructed us thus: "You let your mind be exhausted by illusory thought from morning till night. Is it not a shame? Your mind may be used like a slave, yet upon its demise, it may not know who enslaves it and continues to be attracted to it." This is how we are cheated and misled by illusory thoughts.

Now, meditation is a savior for our mind. It tells the mind to have a rest, to stop following illusory images. These images are false, temporary, and unreal, and the mind should not discern or discriminate them. However, where do they come from? Why is it that in spite of recognizing their nature, we sometimes cannot help but to think such thoughts to the point where we cannot fall asleep? This can be compared to stopping a car moving at high speed on the highway. If one suddenly steps on the brakes while driving at fast speeds, the car may tip over. It is better to slow down gradually. At times when we keep having illusory thoughts and are unable to sleep, we must exert our effort to meditate. Even as beginners of meditation without the skills to expect immediate results, we are still able to benefit from the practice. Just as when we drive a car, as long as we stop accelerating, the car may still move, but left alone and after some distance it will slow to a stop. Therefore, when illusory thoughts keep us from sleep, we must practice meditation. Even though our mind may still have illusory thoughts during meditation, we must ignore them and continue to meditate. Given time, slowly the illusory thoughts will naturally come to a stop. The point is that practicing meditation to master the mind requires a lot of time. It cannot be rushed.

Now, let us try to understand where the illusory thoughts come from. The *Ideas-only* school views the mental states as eight *mind kings* and fifty-one *elements possessed by the mind*. The *mind kings* are the kings of the mind, the over all cognitive functions of the mind also referred to as the determining factors. The *elements possessed by the mind* are the distinctive mental functions belonging to each *mind king*. These elements are used by the mind king as subordinates. Now, according to these definitions, which of the mind

kings acts as the illusory mind? It is the “sixth-consciousness mind king.” All kinds of illusory thoughts come from this mind king. When the sixth-consciousness mind king and all the elements possessed by it interact with one another, illusory thoughts will continue, unable to stop. Why is it so difficult for the illusory thoughts to cease? The reason is that the mind always associates. This so-called associating mind is expressed by two characters in Chinese: the first is the verb meaning to hold and climb; the second is the noun meaning object of perception. Together they imply that the mind holds and climbs onto different objects of perception, hence conveying the meaning of associating mind. An analogy would be to compare the mind to a monkey climbing a tree. With arms and legs holding on to a branch hither and a branch thither, the monkey goes up a tree with the ease of us walking on the ground. However, at all times, it has to hang on to some branch, or else it will fall off. Therefore, by holding on here and there, the monkey continues to move. His motion does not halt. In the same way, our minds are unable to stop moving. This constitutes the first part of the saying, “mind like monkey, thought like horse.” Just like the monkey, the associating mind always strives to hold on to some object.

For example, suppose after this lecture on meditation, we sit and meditate for an hour. There may be a little difficulty. While I am speaking, it is easier for your mind to focus. You can at least listen with your associating mind. This is how the associating mind works: here is the sound of my voice, your sense of hearing picks up the sound and forwards it to your mind. My voice is the object of perception to your associating mind. Your mind holds on to it, grips it like the monkey holds the branch. Now if we are meditating, your mind will have nothing to climb from and nothing to hold onto. It will be

like an empty handed person with nothing to do. Your mind probably will feel restless and impatient. And it will feel rather empty. Speaking of emptiness, if our mind could really continue to sustain a state of void, eventually there would be achievement. Masters of old have instructed, “In order to practice meditation till the state of void, in what exercise must one put effort? One must put effort in ‘dead’ exercise.” To practice meditation, the mind must first exercise “dead while living”. Only after it can exercise “dead”, can it experience real “living”. Some people may question why, after much effort in meditation, they still do not have any accomplishment. It is because they cannot bring their mind to exercise “dead”. They continue an existence in this Saha world, not dead, not living, half dead, half living, forever striving to hold on. One feels empty when one has nothing to hold onto. What can one hold onto? On a basic level, one wants good clothing, delicious food. Yet when these are satisfied, one will still try and hold on. Onto what? Onto fame, wealth, power and status. Once all these have been acquired, will one sleep in peace with the mind at rest? Will the mind be completely satisfied? Likely not, because the mind will continue to hold onto some object of perception. This is the inter-working of an illusory mind and an associating mind. How hard, then, is it to have a mind that is completely detached and no longer associating?

We must resolve to settle our mind from the state of nothingness to fulfillment, from nothingness to satisfaction. This satisfaction neither comes from holding onto certain objects nor is it provided by anything from the external world. It is a satisfaction that must be fulfilled in our mind from within. Whatever comes to the mind from without is like a guest, not the host. To fulfill ourselves by ourselves, we have to rely on effort in

meditation. Having acquired the principles of meditation, we must put it to practice. While sitting in meditation, even if our legs become sore, our minds agitated, and our head dizzy, we should be neither afraid nor deterred. Instead, we need to wait and see where it eventually leads. In practicing meditation, one must traverse gate after gate and reach deeper, realm after realm. If presently your legs are no longer sore, your head is no longer dizzy, your whole body is feeling very relaxed and your mind is experiencing the delight from your meditation exercise, do not be complacent, thinking “this is great!” This is just a brief taste of sweetness, like a flash of lightening. You may be able to experience it now, but the next day you may be back to where you started. So do not be overjoyed. There are plenty of hardships ahead. Enlightenment does not come that easily. Never mind becoming a Buddha, even becoming a master is not easy!

The great master Bodhidharma (470-543 CE) is the twenty-eighth patriarch of the Indian *dhyana* Buddhist tradition. He traveled from India to China and became the first patriarch of the Chinese Ch’an tradition. He arrived at the Shoa-lin Monastery in Mt. Sung in Henan prefecture where he sat facing a wall for nine years. Even disregarding his previous accomplishment, just think of his effort in meditating in front of a wall in Shoa-lin Monastery for nine years. Are we capable of such accomplishment? Suppose no one sleeps tonight and we sit facing the wall all night. Just spending one night like this may turn out to be insufferable hardship for us. Need we consider sitting in such a manner for a month? A year? Even nine years? Without having actually done so, we cannot possibly know the hardships others have experienced. For example, when we start to do “one-day meditation”, immediately our minds feel tied down. As soon as we finish the one-day

meditation, we rush to a park to relax our body and mind, saying to ourselves, “what hard work!” If indeed one meditates in this manner, how can he bring the mind to exercise “dead”? Instead, one wanders in the Saha world not really dead, yet not really living. Once upon a time, a master gave himself a new name. What did he call himself? He called himself “dead mind”. For days and nights he sat there meditating on these two words, “dead mind” until, finally, he reached enlightenment. From then on people addressed him as “Master Dead Mind”. In fact that was not his real name given at ordination; he just became more famous by his pseudonym.

There are many methods of meditation. Buddhist ways abound everywhere, yet why are we unable to use them? It is because we are not accustomed to doing so. Why? It is due to our attaching and grasping mind. To attach or grasp is to hold firmly onto an illusory and associating mind. For example, a discussion where everyone insists on his own opinion and only considers himself in the right while regarding the opinions of all others as questionable, demonstrates the persistence of a grasping mind. The *Ideas-only* school lists eight *mind kings*. The illusory and associating mind, which we already discussed, belong to the sixth-consciousness mind king, but the grasping mind constitutes the seventh-consciousness. If the sixth-consciousness brings some object from outside, the seventh-consciousness sets up a gate in front of the eighth-consciousness, the so-called “store consciousness”. When the sixth-consciousness delivers the external object to the seventh-consciousness, if it wants the object, it will forward it to the “store consciousness” to keep. If it does not want it, it will leave it well alone. This seventh-consciousness is the grasping mind.

Where is the boundary between “grasping” and “not grasping”? I will explain this through an example. For instance, all children like to eat candy. Everyday sweets could be the source of their illusory thought. Their entire mind will hold on to candy. If one day, a child sees some candy but is not allowed to eat it, he may cry. This is the doing of his attaching or grasping mind. How about us adults? It might be rather different. If we see some sweets, it probably does not matter whether or not we get to eat it. To us, over eating candy is not advantageous for teeth anyway. In other words, when it comes to candy, adults will not grasp while children will very likely do so. Although we may not grasp candy, what about worldly fame, wealth, power or status? Will we grasp or not? Most people will. Symbolically, this attachment to the worldly values of prestige, wealth and authority makes us children again. Who then is a real adult? In this respect we must look up to the patriarch Bodhidharma.

Master Bodhidharma was an Indian prince. He could have anything he wanted; yet he wanted nothing. Instead, he left his home and became a monk. Was he still grasping? He did not want fame, wealth, power or status; hence, with respect to these he is an adult. Therefore, there are different levels of perceptions of the objective world. What do we mean by children? What do we mean by adults? Compared to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas we are all children. Our consciousness linked to the illusory, associating and grasping minds will mislead us into committing acts that bring about karmic effects. How does that work? When illusory thoughts enter your mind, your mind will grasp the objects of these thoughts, and as a consequence your mind becomes deluded and disturbed. When the mind is disturbed, one is prone to karmic deeds. If you look around, it is apparent that our

society is not the safest. People are still committing crimes everywhere. As for the world, there are wars going on with people getting killed at any moment. These are all caused by delusory thoughts of the disturbed mind. We have many delusory passions. They would be numerous indeed if we tried to name them. As for the ones most commonly spoken of, greed, anger and delusion, everybody is quite familiar with them. Every one of us has at one time experienced the mental states of greed, anger and delusion. These mental states originate from illusory thoughts, from the mind holding on to such thoughts, and from the mind attaching to or grasping such thoughts. When one's mind is in such a state, one is prone to various harmful behaviors all of which leading to karmic deeds. These results of karmic causes in turn bring about karmic effects. When these karmic effects come around, they can be detrimental and more than one can handle.

For example, just a few days ago, a committed lay follower gave me a phone call asking for advice. For some years he had been a devout follower of Buddhism, but becoming impatient and anxious in his practice, he wished to have quick, immediate accomplishment. He later met a person who claimed to have the ability to establish communication with the world of spirits. The lay follower requested such communication. Before this he was really looking forward to it, but afterwards he started seeing things here and there and even in his dreams. Eventually he could not sleep; he often felt multitude of formless beings surrounding him, talking to him. Both his body and mind became afflicted and distressed. When he saw our flyer of lectures on Buddhism, he called for help. I asked him,

“How do you expect me to save you? What is your dilemma?” That’s when he told us his story and asked for help. I said to him,

“You should ask the person who helped you with this communication to save you! If he enabled you to communicate with spirits, he should manage some way to save you from this.”

“It’s already been tried, but no use,” said he. His having such a connection is like opening a gate. Once opened, the gate could not be closed. He asked for guidance as to what he should do. I told him,

“I don’t know anything about communication with spirits. But if you listen to me, I have a way to help you shut this gate.”

“What method do you have?” he asked.

“You have to listen to what I say. If you don’t listen, you won’t be able to close this gate. You will still retain the connection to the spirits.” I replied.

“What is the way? Please tell me quickly,” he said. Although he asked me about the way, at first I was not inclined to tell him, because I knew even if I told him, he would most likely not believe in it and probably doubt its effectiveness. After hesitating for some moments, there was nothing to be done but to tell him.

“Recite ‘Namo Amita Buddha’ faithfully and reverently, that will do,” said I. My guess turned out to be right as he said, “Would this work?” You see, with such doubt how could he possibly succeed? From the bottom of his heart, he had no faith!

“How about chanting some mantras to counteract?” he asked. I then said to him,

“You see, you wanted to ask my advice, yet when I told you to recite ‘Namo Amita Buddha’, you wanted to chant mantras. Then you better go ahead and chant your mantras.”

“Chanting mantras hasn’t worked,” he replied.

“Try the recitation of Buddha then,” said I. He agreed to do so. I reminded him,

“You should recite earnestly for three to six months. Don’t come to me again after reciting for just a few days, it wouldn’t have worked yet! If you recite sincerely and devoutly for three to six months, it may work.”

All of you in the audience, how do you think this incident with spirits came about? It all started from that lay follower’s associating mind and grasping mind, and ended up with his disturbed, even distressed mind. At present, he is rather fearful about this business, and if anyone were to ask him again, he definitely would not repeat his actions. Have any of you in the audience tried such communication with spirits? You would be much better off not having such inclinations. I have never felt any such inclination. Please, everybody, don’t ever entertain any such curiosity.

We have talked about the illusory mind, the grasping mind and the disturbed mind. According to the Theravada Buddhist tradition of Thailand, Burma and Sri Lanka, these mental states are defined differently in the Theravada sutras, or the *Nikayas*. In the *Nikayas*, these three minds are named as the “three subversions”: the “subverted or evil thought”, the “subverted or false view” and the “subverted or deluded mind”. Without the benefit of much previous study, one might not readily comprehend the Buddhist principles underlying the texts of various Buddhist schools and might not discern the equivalence

between the different expressions of these principles. The variations in Buddhist vocabulary for conveying the same essential doctrines as adopted in different sutras are sometimes not readily understandable. “Subverted thought” refers to the mental state of holding on to illusory thought. “Subverted view” means the grasping of one’s own perception and the adherence to strong subjective observation. “Subverted mind” is equivalent to the deluded, disturbed mind which, unaware of the right or wrong of one’s behavior, only prompts immediate action. At times like these, greed, anger and delusion will arise and lead to karmic deeds. For instance, when a person is having a fit of temper, he becomes fearless, spiteful of heaven and earth, even death. But when his temper recedes after some respite, he will then be fearful. At the moment of subverted mental states, he doesn’t fear anything because the flame of his delusory passion is raging through his mind. His mind is subverted, deluded and disturbed. All such mental states need to be settled. They, being neither pure nor clear, are not the true mind. What is the true nature of the mind? The true mind is real, not false. It is clear and pure, without any defilement. In order to have the mind reach a state of purity and clarity like that of the void, one must try to acquire the wisdom of *prajna*. The void is pure and clear, without disturbed or polluted thought. It is as boundless as the vast ocean as infinite as the clear sky. By what means can we purify and clarify our mind? By meditation. It is not easy to apply the practice of meditation to settle our mind, but if well applied, its value is immeasurable.

3. Meditation for Settling the Mind

We have talked about “all minds” and we have also mentioned “all ways”. All ways are for mastering all minds and refer to all of the Buddha’s teachings. Those teachings offer eighty-four thousand ways, for sentient beings have eighty-four thousand delusory passions. These eighty-four thousand ways then are for settling the eighty-four thousand deluded mental states. Although there are many Buddhist sutras, their fundamental teachings go neither beyond the four noble truths nor the three jewels, which are the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha. The four noble truths are first that existence is suffering, second that suffering is caused by desires (mainly greed, anger, and delusion), third that to cease suffering is to cease desire, and fourth that to cease desire is to follow the eight rightful paths. Anyone who is learning to be a Buddhist is familiar with the three jewels, but to be able to benefit from the three jewels and to have faith in the three jewels are tasks not so easily accomplished. One should first ask oneself,

“Do I have true faith in the three jewels?” Next, he should ask himself,

“Have I really enjoyed benefits from the three jewels?” Even those of us who have practiced Buddhism for years dare not claim to have attained great benefits. Even receiving a little benefit would already be a great achievement.

Some may say, “it is not necessary to take refuge in the three jewels. Instead, studying Buddhist sutras and carrying out Buddhist practice at home are just as well.” Or they may say, “Why must one take refuge in the three jewels? Some of those who have taken refuge in the three jewels are not necessarily performing better than I. At times, I

may even be doing better than them. For what purpose then should I take refuge in the three jewels?" Such attitudes seem rather questionable from the Buddhist perspective because without taking refuge in the three jewels, one cannot claim to be a true follower of the rightful faith. An analogy would be a person wanting to be a U.S. resident. If he does not have a green card granting permanent residency, no matter how good a resident he might be, he will eventually have to leave the country because he has not followed the rules for rightful immigration and cannot formally become a U.S. resident. Some may also say that this is just a formality; all worldly dharma are only false images. What do we call false? What do we call real? Real may not be different from false; false may be real. It is difficult to draw a boundary between worldly dharma and Buddhist dharma, but if one believes that worldly dharma is Buddhist dharma, he should be careful indeed! Why? It is because you cannot be a truly faithful Buddhist without taking refuge in the three jewels. Despite great effort in practice and study to be a Buddhist, the results may be questionable. This is due to the workings of the grasping mind and the illusory mind. These are not pure or clear minds; they are discriminating minds. Taking refuge in the three jewels is a good act; your attempt to avoid doing so acknowledges that your mind is not settled within itself. Without this self-realization, you might not be aware that your behavior should have reason to be doubted.

There are also some people who have taken refuge in the three jewels but after visiting many places of Buddhist practice, they find these places not completely satisfactory. They would rather practice at home. Perhaps this is so; yet allow me to pose the question,

“Which sutra ever teaches us to distance ourselves from the three jewels?”

Every single Buddhist sutra teaches us to approach the three jewels and not to be far away from the three jewels. Therefore, it does not matter whether one is lay or monastic, one should by all means endeavor to be close to the three jewels. Even among those who have become ordained monks, if their minds drift away from practice, they are also moving away from the three jewels. However, because the sangha reside in monasteries, their living environment renders it comparatively less likely for them to distance themselves from the three jewels. In any case, we should instill in our minds faith, sincerity and reverence towards the three jewels.

Where do we acquire “merit” in the Buddhist sense? Is it possible to show our attainment of merit to others? No. Merit cannot be shown. Merit is acquired in a spirit of devotion and reverence. For example, all of us here are simultaneously paying respect to the image of the Buddha. If one person kneels down and quickly gets up, his mind is not in the act, his mind is having illusory thoughts. Another person kneels down very deferentially with the utmost sincerity, paying respect to the image of the Buddha reverently as if seeing the real Buddha Himself. The mind of the latter would obtain immediately peace and comfort. As for the former who has not paid respect to the Buddha in this manner, he might not receive such comfort and peace of mind. Therefore, all Buddhist dharma should be acquired in the spirit of reverence and devotion. Just as when we make friends, we expect that friendship to be based on genuine and sincere regard. One should not take it lightly by lacking seriousness and sincerity, as the other party can surely tell if one’s heart is in it or not.

If the mind is compared to the body, then “all minds” are the various afflictions that require various drugs. If there is no affliction, then there is no need for any drug.

So it is with Buddhist dharma. All the Buddhist ways are like various drugs for various afflictions. If sentient beings did not have “all minds” needing to be settled, then there would be no need for any of the ways. Meditation is a fundamental way to settle the mind. As mentioned before, the lack of security in contemporary society and the lack of peace in the modern world are all due to the fact that human minds are not settled. According to a Buddhist sutra,

“In order to have peace in the world, we should first cultivate peace in our mind.

As long as the mind is not at peace, there is no way for the world to have peace.”

Buddhist dharma is a way to purify the human mind. How do we make our mind clear and pure? How do we make our mind devoid of defilement and disturbance? It requires the practice of meditation.

When was meditation first introduced to the East? When did Buddhism come to China from India? Buddhism came to China from India during the Eastern Han dynasty about two thousand years ago. What kind of meditation came to China at the very beginning? It was a form of Theravada or Hinayana meditation, not Mahayana meditation. The Mahayana ways of meditation developed from the Theravada tradition sometime later. From the Mahayana tradition, there are various techniques of practice and among them is the focus of our discussion—Bodhidharma’s meditation. How did Bodhidharma’s method of meditation develop? Bodhidharma’s meditation was not transmitted suddenly from India to China. It evolved in a gradual manner. The Theravada form of meditation that

was introduced to China at the beginning, in the Eastern Han dynasty, is called the “five-fold meditation”. This five-fold meditation is also referred to as “the five meditations for stopping (unwholesome) thoughts”: (1) “meditation on the impurity” of one’s body, etc., for stopping greed; (2) “compassionate meditation” on all living beings, for stopping anger and hatred; (3) “meditation on the causes and conditions” which give rise to all things, for stopping ignorance; (4) “meditation on the Buddha”, for stopping attachment to self or evil passion; (5) “breathing meditation”, for stopping distracting thoughts. These are essential meditative techniques practiced by the patriarchs and dhyana masters of the Indian lineage. One of the five meditations is the breathing practice which I often promote. The breathing exercise is fundamentally important; not only is it beneficial to physical health and applicable to settling the mind, but it is capable of leading to eventual enlightenment. Though this meditation belongs to the Theravada tradition, Bodhidharma’s meditation belongs to the Mahayana tradition.

While Theravada meditation was introduced when Buddhism first reached China, the Mahayana ways of meditation only began during the Eastern Jin dynasty. At that time there was a very famous master, Kumarajiva (344-413 CE), who translated the well-known *Lotus Sutra*, as well as other sutras on meditation. Kumarajiva started the development of Mahayana forms of meditation, and his personal method strongly influencing the methods which followed. Consequently, Mahayana meditation became known as the “bodhisattva’s meditation” and Theravada meditation, the “arhat’s meditation”. Bodhisattva’s meditation refers to the Mahayana way of using meditation on the path to enlightenment. How does one practice meditation according to the Mahayana

techniques? To describe briefly, it points out that things such as the sound of our voice are not real entities in that they are neither capable of settling our mind nor making it clear and pure; actions like reading words in the sutras are not able to really settle our mind either. An analogy would be the act of pointing our finger at the moon. When we read sutras or listen to lectures, it is like pointing our finger at some object. What object is our finger pointing at? It is the moon. What is written in the sutras is like the finger. We should not look at the finger only, but by means of the finger look at what it is pointing at--the moon, or the real truth that we need. However, most people look only at the finger and not at what the finger is pointing at. In other words, we may read the sutras by chanting all the words and still not thoroughly understand what the words mean.

How does one perceive the real meaning of the sutras? One must leave the sutras to sit and meditate, to sit and exercise dead. The mind must exercise dead in order to find the meaning. What meaning? It is like the moon in the sky. Only when one realizes the real meaning can one reach sudden enlightenment and become a Buddha. When Master Bodhidharma came to China, he initiated and expounded the way of sudden awakening: “pointing directly to the mind of man, having seen the essence, one becomes a Buddha.” That is, when the Master points, he points directly to your mind for you to see the essence, the true nature of your mind. Then you become a Buddha.

This meditative method of “sudden awakening to enlightenment” actually had an earlier advocate, Master Tao-sheng. As a disciple of Master Kumarajiva, he had a deep understanding of this meditative practice. According to the *Mahaparinirvana Sutra*, not only sentient beings, but inanimate objects also possess Buddha nature. Master Tao-sheng

particularly emphasized the teachings of this sutra. This led to severe disagreements from contemporary Buddhists, and he was criticized, avoided, and even accused of heresy. Although he was unmoved by this, eventually no one attended his lectures. One day, he went to the Tiger Hill in Suzhou, gathered some rocks, and lined them up in front of him. Then he gave a lecture on the Mahaparinirvana Sutra to the rocks. After the lecture, he said to the rocks,

“Let me ask you, if you think the dharma I lectured today is right, please nod in agreement; if not, then remain as rocks.” After his speech, all the rocks nodded. Are all of you in the audience familiar with the origin of the idiom, “even stubborn rocks would nod”? It is from this episode. Nowadays, people often cite this idiom without realizing they are borrowing from Buddhist diction.

It was not until later that the teachings of Tao-Sheng were shown to be in line with Buddhist dharma by missionaries and various other sutras. Since then his legacy has been regarded with the utmost respect, especially when one considers that the doctrine of sudden awakening which Tao-sheng practiced and preached were in line with now-established Buddhist dharma, well before the mainstream introduction of those theories. However, there was another disciple of Master Kumarajiva by the name of Hui-kuan who advocated an opposing approach: the “gradual method” which emphasized awakening not in a sudden, but eventual manner. This indicates that as early as the Eastern Jin dynasty, these two disciples of Kumarajiva had already ushered in the beginning of the competitive tradition of sudden and gradual enlightenment. Later on, the *Sutra of Hui-neng* records that two disciples of the fifth patriarch of the Ch’an School promoted similar opposing practices:

the sixth patriarch Master Hui-neng who espoused the sudden method and his counterpart, Master Shen-hsiu, who promoted the gradual method. These parallel theories of Buddhist practice are continued in sutras of later days. Current discussions on this subject should refer to some of these historical developments.

4. Bodhidharma's Meditation

Bodhidharma arrived in China over fourteen hundred years ago during the Liang dynasty reign of Emperor Wu-ti (~527 CE) and eventually became the first patriarch of the Chinese Ch'an lineage. His original meeting with Emperor Wu-ti did not prove satisfying for either party, and Bodhidharma went on to the Shao-lin monastery in Henan. There, he began his famous meditation in front of a wall. At the time, there were two renowned masters in Henan--Master Dao-yui and Master Shen-kuon, who later became the second patriarch, Hui-k'o. Bodhidharma instructed them on how to cultivate the mind using Mahayana techniques, saying,

“If you wish to settle your mind, meditate in front of a wall; if you aspire to practice, follow the ‘four-method meditation’; if you intend to accommodate and benefit sentient beings, guard and protect them from committing derisive speech; and if you endeavor to do so expediently, relinquish even non-grasping.

The first instruction says to settle your mind, sit facing a wall and meditate. The two Chinese characters are “bi kuan,” which literally means “wall meditate.” Nowadays though two different characters are used which sound exactly the same as “bi kuan” but mean “shut close.” A practitioner of this method would find an isolated room and a helper to guard the door, bring food, and lock the door from the outside. Thereafter, even if the practitioner wanted to exit, the locked door would prevent him from doing so. I believe the “bi-kuan” of Bodhidharma's days refers to sitting in front of a wall and meditating; as for the “bi kuan” that people refer to now, I don't believe I have ever seen those two

characters in any Buddhist sutra. Perhaps this technique was taught by masters after Bodhidharma. The obvious purpose of shutting the door is to persevere during practice, and the door must be locked to prevent the person from running out when he can no longer endure the practice. So maybe there is merit in locking oneself in to ensure successful practice.

Many years ago in Hong Kong, I lived with ten ordained monks. I was the prefect then and only twenty-four years old. There was a young novice with us, and though he was just eleven years old, he was able to recite from memory the many sutras chanted during daily practice and also able to handle various instruments accompanying the chants. Hong Kong in June is very hot, and we always kept the door and windows open. One day, the boy was asked to recite “The Universal Door of the Bodhisattva Who Listens to the Sounds of All the World” chapter of the *Lotus Sutra*. The boy responded by first asking us to shut the door.

“Shut the door in this heat?” I said.

“If the door is not shut, it will go out,” he replied.

“What will go out?” I asked.

“The mind will go out,” he replied. What he meant to say was

“When my eyes look out the door and window, my mind will follow and leave as well. Then I will not be able to recite the ‘Universal Door’ chapter, so could we please shut the door?” He was only eleven, yet he was already giving a lecture on the dharma. Now what is the use of shutting the material door? In fact, these gates are rather difficult to shut. We must shut the gates to our ears, the gates to our eyes, and the gate to our mind.

To shut all six sense-gates is not an easy task to accomplish. Therefore, some may need to be locked in to achieve proper focus. Regardless of which interpretation is chosen, “bi kuan” is effective for the settling and cultivation of our mind.

The second of Master Bodhidharma’s instructions for meditation says aspiring practitioners should follow four methods. This “four-method meditation” constitutes Bodhidharma’s contemplative and meditative approach to enlightenment and is very famous among Buddhist meditative practices. Those who have not studied this before may find it rather extraordinary. In actuality, the fundamental principles of the four-method meditation are contained in many sutras. We shall give a brief introduction here. According to Master Bodhidharma, although there are many paths leading to enlightenment, there are only two main routes: the first is doctrinal and the second is via exercise and actual practice.

The first route is to approach the dharma through doctrines, to comprehend truth by means of the sutras. One should try to understand the complete equality of what is perceived as self and what is perceived as beyond self. That is, one should try not to distinguish self from others. At all times, one should not let a “guest” or “dust” enter the mind. This analogy of comparing illusory thoughts to guests or dust, as used by Bodhidharma, appears also in the *Suramgama Sutra*. If one is already a guest, then he could not possibly be the host. For instance, if a guest stays in a hotel, he may leave after a few days. But the host is like the owner of a hotel; he does not leave while the guest comes and goes. The other analogy is to compare the mind to dust in the air which becomes visible in sunlight. This dust neither touches the ground nor is able to be counted.

Why? Because it is minuscule and drifts through the air, unable to settle down. Our mind is like the guest or the dust; both stand for illusory thoughts. Our mind may be guest one day, dust another day. Now that we comprehend the meaning of this analogy, we should no longer let our mind be a guest. Our mind must be the host. It should no longer be like the ever-shifting dust, and it should no longer flutter. If we can grasp the essence of this teaching, then it is possible to reach sudden awakening through doctrinal study.

The second route to approach dharma is via practice. This means putting the mind into actual exercise and to cultivate and train the mind through meditative methods. Master Bodhidharma outlines four methods for Buddhist practice. The first method is to practice abstaining from complaint of injustice. When people encounter hardship, they often feel wronged or ill used by somebody. Blaming either heaven or men, they complain that since they have been good people and have never done anything wrong, why should they suffer? The meditative exercise to abstain from such complaint is meant to teach the practitioner not to assign blame when running into difficulty. How do we carry out this practice of abstinence from complaint? We should cultivate our mind to think in this way:

“In our past lives, wandering through the six-cycles of rebirth, how many crimes might we have committed? How many enemies might we have made? How many people might we have injured? Whatever suffering we may experience today, we should readily and willingly endure, not to protest against heaven or other men.” Although one may be a good person in this lifetime and never commit any unwholesome act, does one know about their former lives? No. During those previous lives, one may have committed karmic actions and is now receiving the fruits from those karmic causes. Therefore, the first of the

four-method meditation teaches the practitioner not to be distressed or accusatory when encountering hardship. At such times, one should acknowledge the source of the so-called injustice and understand that the present suffering is retribution earned through previous karma. One must willingly endure the suffering and pay his debt, so to speak. At the same time, one should put effort in meditation in order to be undisturbed by such mental states or realms. You see, these principles are already contained in many sutras, are they not?

The second method is to practice accepting karma. This means that our experiences, be they suffering or enjoyment, unpleasant or happy, all come about following the laws of karma. If in this lifetime one has obtained fame and status, fulfilled all his wishes, enjoyed great karmic rewards, it is all because he has cultivated karmic merits from former lives. However, one should not be overjoyed while enjoying karmic fruits. One should be aware that, sooner or later, he will exhaust all his karmic merits, and it will all end. Therefore, at unhappy times be not over-distressed, while at happy times be aware of its impermanence. We should not let winning or losing in any endeavor add to or subtract from the balance of our mind. This requires effort in meditation. Without dedication and commitment to meditative exercise, our mind and mood might rise or fall according to the immediate mental climate.

The third method is the practice of freeing the mind from craving. We human beings are always deluded and ignorant. Distracted and disturbed by greed, anger and delusion, we incessantly crave and greedily grasp all forms of worldly attractions corresponding to the “five desires”: desire for wealth, sex, food, fame and sleep, in addition to the “six dusts” or six sense objects. That is to say, we lack *prajna*. We should

practice meditation by applying wisdom to settle our mind and abstain from achievement. We should not let the mind differentiate or discriminate between activities in the phenomenal world. Because all such endeavors are empty in the absolute sense, all will turn out to be empty. According to the *Lotus Sutra*, “The three realms offer no peace; they are like a house on fire.” We dwell in the three realms: the realm of sense, the realm of form, and the formless realm. These places are as unsafe as a building in flames; we should not forcefully crave for anything here. We should take things easily as they come and make do as circumstances allow. We should apply meditation to help the mind cease its greedy and incessant wants. The sutras state, “All forms of craving are suffering, freedom from craving is therefore happiness.” To be free from want is the real secret of practice. Thus, the third method teaches us not to crave anything. The idiom, “reduce desire, be satisfied” is just a paraphrasing of this principle.

The fourth method is to practice matching mind to dharma, or infusing mind with dharma. This is quite difficult. All the former methods are rather difficult already, so this is even less likely to be accomplished. “Dharma” means the real nature or essence of things--the clear and pure truth. True dharma has no boundary or limit. This true dharma is without any form or characteristics, neither marked by thousands of variations and differences like mountains, rivers or lands, nor distinguished like self or others, rights or wrongs. It is completely clear and pure, and it is empty. The sutras state, “No self, no other, the dharma is without sentient beings.” Since the dharma is without sentient beings, then how do sentient beings come about? Sentient beings are the coming together of physical and mental events as the constituents of the five aggregates or the five groups of

attachments. Sentient beings are defiled and polluted, neither clear nor pure. Why is the all encompassing, equalizing dharma without sentient beings? It is because the truly equalizing dharma is clear and pure, away from the defilement of sentient beings. Therefore the sutras state, “The dharma is without self, away from the defilement of the self.”

Sentient beings cannot help but be polluted by evil passions. But the void has no pollution; the true dharma is also without pollution. The essence of dharma is absolute and without duality; it is clear and pure. With this understanding, we should try to match the encompassing realm of dharma with our mind. How vast is the realm of dharma? Without bound. How vast is the void? Without bound. The *Suramgama Sutra* says, “The sky placed amidst enlightenment is like a ripple in the ocean.” That is, if the entire sky is placed amidst the enlightenment of the Buddha, it would be only a small ripple in the ocean. Once we comprehend this principle, we should start to practice training our mind to match the limitless dharma through the myriad practices of the six perfections (*paramita*), or the six kinds of practice by which a Bodhisattva attains Buddhahood. The first practice is charity or generosity--giving money or wealth to charity for instance. However, this form of giving is only material; one should further give away his body, even his life, realizing that all of these are inherently without existence and therefore empty. Indeed these are deeds performed by a Buddha while fulfilling his Bodhisattva vows. Can any of you in the audience imagine yourself capable of such acts? Even though we are unable to do so, we should at least understand the meaning.

There was once a very devout Buddhist king, who gave up his throne to work as a laborer in a monastery. There he obeyed and did whatever demanded of him; he swept the floors and carried water when the monks told him to. Going further, he eventually gave away his eyes, his nose, his head--anything upon request. Compared to this, giving away money or any material possession would be nothing, absolutely too easy. Why? Because he had infused everything with dharma; he himself, became part of dharma. What was anything to him? He was capable of giving away anything when asked. He did not give anything grudgingly; there is nothing he would grasp, nothing he felt was his to give to someone else. Grasping is defilement. One should try to lead and inspire other sentient beings without grasping, without partaking any merit as stated in the *Diamond Sutra*. To help others while helping oneself without attachment is the true practice of generosity. After accomplishing the perfection of generosity, one may then proceed to the rest of the six perfections, namely, observing precepts or good conduct, perseverance, energy, meditation and wisdom. These are ways to match mind to dharma with practice, and thus accomplish the fourth method of Bodhidharma's four-method meditation.

Which one of Bodhidharma's four meditative methods should be the starting point? It depends on what you are capable of. To begin with, one should try to be forbearing. One should have perseverance towards everything and should treat people with mutual politeness, humbleness and generosity. One should have forbearance and tolerance towards other people. This is universal love and compassion. If you put effort in these practices, you will be able to forbear, be able to accept karma, and be able to free yourself from craving. From there on you may further practice and strengthen your meditation. As

for giving away one's body, life or wealth, wealth may be easily given away, but body or life not as easily. One had better deeply contemplate such deeds before carrying them out.

We have completed our introduction of Master Bodhidharma's meditation. It may seem different from what is commonly known. The most often heard tale about Bodhidharma relates to his arrival at Shao-lin Monastery and his meditation in front of a wall for nine years. Relatively less known are his teachings and instructions. While meditating in front of the wall, he met Master Shen-kuan. Shen-kuan was already a very learned scholar and an able lecturer of Buddhist sutras. He had practiced meditation for eight years, making him not only a master, but a Ch'an master as well. However, after Master Bodhidharma came, Shen-kuan took a great liking to Bodhidharma's method of sudden enlightenment--that of "Pointing directly to the mind of man, having seen the essence one becomes a Buddha." He therefore tried to attend to Bodhidharma.

For several years Shen-kuan followed and stayed near Bodhidharma during his meditation in front of the wall. What do you think he learned from the Master? Unlike our current lecture, if you do not find it satisfying enough, you may attend another elsewhere. For Master Shen-kuan though there was no lecture to listen to. He tried accompanying his master and sitting next to him but Bodhidharma would not talk to him. Even though he tried to learn, what was there to learn? Nevertheless, Shen-kuan stayed with Bodhidharma for six years. If one had such dedication and devotion today, they might be set for enlightenment. Forget about six years, many of you might find it difficult to endure even six months. Even after six years, Bodhidharma still ignored him. One snowy day in December, Shen-kuan stood next to Bodhidharma from midnight till dawn. He stood until

the snow had piled above his knees, and he was numb from the cold. When Master Bodhidharma thought the time was ripe, he said to Shen-kuan,

“You have been standing here for a long time, what do you want? What is there to crave?” Bodhidharma’s sudden words moved Shen-kuan to tears. He responded,

“I beg you, Master, grant me loving kindness and compassion, guide me to the gate of enlightenment.” What do you think Master Bodhidharma’s response was? He said,

“The unsurpassed, most wonderful dharma was attained by all Buddhas through measureless hardships and countless kalpas of practice. They have practiced what is most difficult to practice, and have borne what is most difficult to bear to eventually become Buddhas. Although you have earned a little merit and possess a little wisdom, you nevertheless, are disrespectful and self-important; you think you can ask me for Buddhist dharma just like that! Do you think it can so easily be done?”

At this point, Shen-kuan thought the Master believed him lacking in sincerity and inordinately proud. Hence, Shen-kuan secretly took a knife and in one swing, cut off his arm and presented it to Bodhidharma. Bodhidharma saw then that Shen-kuan was truly devout and that the moment was ripe. He said,

“All Buddhas at the beginning of the path to enlightenment also forgot their bodies in seeking dharma. Though you cut off your arm, you still have your life. There are some who even gave away their lives. All right, I will change your name for you. Don’t call yourself Shen-kuan (deity-light) anymore. From this day forward call yourself Hui-k’o (wisdom-capable). This was how Bodhidharma changed Shen-kuan’s name, and Hui-k’o, his arm hurting, responded though with

“I cannot settle my mind!” Master Bodhidharma told him,

“Your mind will not settle? Hand it over; I will settle it for you.” Hui-k’o searched for his mind while his arm still hurt, and then said

“I have searched by all means, but unable to find the mind.” To which Bodhidharma replied,

“I have already settled the mind for you.”

All of you should think about this dialogue. If any of you came to me for Buddhist dharma, could I repeat these lines? How simple would it be? Why should I be going through all these books? Though it worked for him, it would not work if I said it. Why? The most important reason is that before this conversation, both of them had already put great effort in practice. According to legend, Bodhidharma was the reappearance of the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara. Master Hui-k’o also spent much effort in meditation and endured many years of hardship, before the time was right for his karma to ripen. He was then able to lay the path for settling his mind to reach enlightenment and become the second patriarch of the Ch’an School. It was neither simple nor easy.

Having settled his mind with the help of Bodhidharma, Hui-k’o thanked the Master, but remained standing without any intention to leave. Bodhidharma then instructed him thusly,

“If you want to practice, it is very simple.” How simple?

“Relinquish all outside realms,

Focus the mind without disruptions,

Fix it at one-pointedness as a wall,

Thus can you reach enlightenment.”

“Relinquish all outside realms” means to leave alone, to release any perception of or attachment to the external world. Of primary importance to all Buddhist practice is relinquishing. After relinquishing everything outside, focus the mind without any disruption. Focus and contemplate, fix the mind one-pointedly like a wall. As per the common saying “mind like steel”, the mind should not be moved by anything. Practicing in this way, you will be able to reach enlightenment. In other words, you need endurance and perseverance. You must leave everything behind and proceed forward with only a mind concentrated in a state of one-pointedness like steel. Finally you will reach the moment of awakening. This was how Master Hui-k’o attained enlightenment by following Master Bodhidharma’s instructions. Besides practice and doctrines, what sutra did Bodhidharma teach? When Master Bodhidharma first came to the East, he taught the *Lankavatara Sutra*, which was the most important sutra in the Ch’an school at that time. Later, the fifth and the six patriarchs of the Ch’an school adopted the *Diamond Sutra* for “mind to mind transmission” of Buddhist dharma. Today, we all read the *Diamond Sutra* which belongs to the study of prajna. While it is also a very important sutra for the Ch’an school, the original sutra taught by Bodhidharma was the *Lankavatara Sutra*.

5. Conclusion

As we conclude this lecture, it is my hope that from now on, you will have a method to settle your mind while meditating. However, I do not wish you to emulate the second patriarch; rather I wish you to practice safely, without enduring much hardship but not neglecting to practice. From Bodhidharma's meditation, I have the following thoughts to share:

“Meditation, incapable of settling the mind, is not true meditation,

The mind, not in genuine meditation, is difficult to settle;

The mind, without meditation, will not settle,

The mind, not settling, is not in meditation.

Meditation, capable of settling the mind, is true meditation,

The mind, in genuine meditation, is able to settle;

The mind, with meditation, will naturally settle,

The mind, naturally settling, is in meditation!”

Is there any doubt? If not, you have the right idea. If you have any doubts, you have not yet caught on with meditation. If there are no doubts, I will tell another story about meditation. Long ago there was a Ch'an master who asked,

“What is meditation? How does one reach enlightenment?” He went on to say,

“A man gets on a tree and stays on by biting a branch. He can neither use his hands to hold on, nor can he step on any branch with his feet. At this moment, someone on the ground asks him a question. If you were on the tree, and you answered the question, you

would fall. But if you do not answer, he would still be asking the question. What should you do at this point?" What do you think is the meaning of this? This is a meditation riddle; go home and think on it.

Although we have mainly discussed meditation today, we should nevertheless keep the parallel practice of meditation and the recitation of the Buddha's name. I still recommend the breathing technique together with the recitation of Amita Buddha's name. Although breathing exercises are considered Theravada meditation, they are also comparable to forms of Mahayana meditation. The Mahayana text, "*Discourse on the Stages of Concentration Practices*" (*Yogacara-bhumi*), also introduces breathing techniques, although this breathing method is somewhat different. The Theravada way is to count your breath from one to ten. The method from the "Discourse" is to count from one up to thousands and millions, the more the better as long as there is no miscount or confusion. Therefore, there are indeed many ways to practice. Despite the many approaches to Buddhism, one still has to calm down the mind to experience meditation. With such experience and awareness, we may then enjoy the efficacy and benefit of meditation while facing daily encounters. How can meditation change our lives? If life cannot be changed, then we can neither become Buddhas nor end up in hell. Such supposition does not agree with Buddhist dharma.

For example, when people go to fortune tellers or palm readers, the results cannot be absolute. If it was absolute, would that not be determining man's destiny? How did palm lines and the so-called "eight words", the eight Chinese words representing the time, day, month and year of one's birth, come about? These are produced by karmic actions of

one's former lives. Consequently, in the present life people are endowed with different facial features and palm lines. Then how did past actions come about? They were brought about by our behavior and the workings of our mental states. I often say that I don't know much about scientific studies. However, I think that while scientists today study physical changes, Buddhist dharma focuses on the chemistry of the mind. Human beings reach different ends, some going to heaven, some going to hell, some becoming animals, and some becoming Buddhas. These are all produced by the workings of the mind. Karmic cause starts from formless to having form, from infinitesimal to vast, maybe invisible, but once visible, it is already karmic result, unable to be changed. To deal with karmic causes while they are invisible is of fundamental importance. Therefore while learning about Buddhism, one must pay attention and caution to the formless. Buddhism stresses the karmic cause and not the karmic result. Because when karmic cause becomes the result, it can no longer be changed. It is like the rice grain that has already become cooked rice; it is impossible to be changed back to uncooked grain.

Therefore we regard "the realm of cause" with the utmost attention. The realm of cause is our mind. We should be careful about what we think, contemplate and do everyday. We should employ meditation practice to cultivate and enrich our mind with wisdom. Buddhist dharma is a study of wisdom. Where does wisdom come from? Wisdom without calm or concentration is not real wisdom. It is just cleverness. Cleverness is superficial, floating like the water on the ground after a rainstorm which doesn't sink into the mud. "Wisdom" is like the water sinking into the ground, moistening and enriching the soil for the nurturing of flowers, grass and trees. Our mind is like the

ground, the foundation. To cultivate the realm of our mind we must begin with “calm” wisdom, or the wisdom acquired from meditation practice. In learning Buddhism, we should give attention and effort to good conduct, meditation and wisdom. This is a very practical way of applying Buddhist principles and technique to everyday living. It is not superstition and not merely praying and begging for protection and safety.

We do pray for protection. But while we rely on the Buddha’s merits and wisdom for spiritual endowments, we nevertheless must have faith and sincerity in order to be responsive to and benefit from such endowments. Why is that? Like the great bell in a monastery, it is capable of sound, but if you don’t strike it, it will not ring. So is the giving power of the Buddha; unless we ring it with sincerity and trust, we may not be ready to receive spiritual endowments from the Buddha. Therefore one should indeed ring the bell; as the saying goes:

“The great bell set in its frame, upon knocking it will ring; without knocking, it won’t ring.” It is not as if the bell is disinclined to ring; it is just the way of nature. We shall end our lecture here today. Thank you.

Part Two

Fundamental Techniques for Sitting Meditation

A hands-on manual for beginners

1. Buddhist Meditation

Today we will talk about some beginning techniques for practicing sitting meditation. People often say “sitting meditation,” but in actuality meditation entails not only sitting but also walking – an exercise sometimes referred to as “walking meditation.” I wonder if anyone in the audience has ever tried “walking meditation?” However, before we start “walking” or “sitting,” I would like to share some basic history of meditation itself.

An ancient idiom says: “teaching is the mouth of the Buddha; meditation is the mind of the Buddha.” Teaching refers to both the transmission of Buddhist Dharma and the Buddhist doctrines themselves. All twelve scriptures of the Tripitaka are dictates from the mouth of the Buddha and are intended to guide us toward sound practice. Yet why, you might ask, should there be so much talk of teaching just for the sake of practice? It is because speaking of any particular method alone is not enough to help all sentient beings reach the other shore. The Buddha says that as sentient beings, we have different fundamental natures, and therefore need to be taught and enlightened in various ways. However, faced with so many Buddhist methods, how do we choose the right practice? After all, it is not feasible to learn every possible way. Although in the study of Buddhist teachings, we should try to learn as many principles as possible and understand the meaning of each, in actual practice, the objective is to narrow down and simplify. You need only choose one method for practice-- “one gate to deeply enter.”

A master of antiquity said “practice starts, understanding ends.” According to the monastic tradition of mainland China, one is not permitted to read from sutras in a meditation hall, a recitation hall, during “seven-day meditation exercises,” or “seven-day recitations of Buddha’s name.” The same rule also applies to daily morning and evening exercises. This of course pertains only to monastic life, which is different from our current joint practice by ordained and lay Buddhists. For the ordained, morning and evening lessons must be memorized and consultation of texts is strictly forbidden in the hall. The same goes for any seven-day exercises. These rules reflect the motto of “one practice diligently carried out,” as well as “practice starts, understanding ends.” Understanding here means comprehension and interpretation, and interpretation means to engage the discerning mind to learn, distinguish and discriminate what is right from what is wrong. For practice, however, you should not use the discerning mind, but instead apply the “non-discerning mind” and fix it on one thought only. For example, in carrying out sitting meditation, put your heart and mind in just the meditation; in reciting the Buddha’s name, concentrate only on the recitation of Buddha’s name. Focus your effort on one practice. Do not have “three minds, two thoughts.” Do not try to sit and meditate for one moment, attempt to recite the Buddha’s name the next; this will only drive you to distraction and accomplish nothing.

Today we shall discuss “ch’an,” the Chinese word for meditation. “Ch’an,” derived from the Indian word dhyana, is defined as tranquil contemplation. The way to meditate is twofold: first, it requires calming of the mind and second, it requires contemplation. Calm requires concentration; contemplation requires wisdom. In this light, meditation refers to

concentration with wisdom, or in other words, the wisdom arising from the state of concentration. Meditation can truly change lives in that it has the power to settle the minds of men. It enables us to act neither blindly, nor in agitation, establishing instead an inner calm. Precisely because we are prone to make mistakes via actions without a settled mind, it is essential to learn meditation. Thus, it is important to make meditation and Buddhist dharma a part of our everyday life.

Though there are many varieties of meditation, mainstream Chinese Buddhist meditation usually refers to the method introduced by Master Bodhidharma, the first patriarch of the Chinese Ch'an School. This practice was further expounded by Master Hui-neng, the sixth patriarch of the same school. As the most representative form of meditation in Chinese Buddhism, this method is generally known as the "special transmission outside the written scriptures," as well as the "first patriarch's meditation." According to Buddhist history, the concept of meditation was transmitted from the Buddha Sakyamuni at a congregation on Vulture Peak where he lifted a bouquet of flowers and his foremost disciple, the venerable Mahakasyapa, responded by smiling. Though there were countless people and gods present, Mahakasyapa alone understood the Buddha's meaning. Perhaps as a result of his silent comprehension, Mahakasyapa became the first patriarch of the Indian dhyana lineage. Historically speaking, the venerable Ananda succeeded him as the second patriarch. There is a saying: "Buddhist dharma, like the vast ocean, pours into the mind of Ananda" because the venerable Ananda was known to commit all the Buddha's sermons to memory. These words of the Buddha were eventually collected and compiled into the twelve scriptures of the Tripitaka. Thus, Ananda earned the epithet of

“first and foremost in hearing the sermons”. Tracing the dhyana lineage thereafter, this concept of meditation was eventually transmitted to the twenty-eighth patriarch, Master Bodhidharma who simultaneously became the first patriarch of the Chinese Ch’an School.

Now let us return to Mahakasyapa’s story. Although he was older than the Buddha, he started out as a disciple and eventually attained arhatship. Mahakasyapa was renowned for his strict observance of the dhuta practices. Before he was ordained, he belonged to the richest family in the entire kingdom and as such, he was the wealthiest and most prestigious man after the king. Yet like the Buddha Sakyamuni, he gave up all aspirations to fame and wealth and renounced a wealthy life to become a monk. Not satisfied with mere monasticism, Mahakasyapa further performed the dhuta practices, the twelve rules of frugal living for Buddhist mendicants. He endured the foremost hardships during everyday practice. Needless to say, such renunciation of fame and fortune and such embracing of the harshness of monastic life seem as difficult today as it was then. Mahakasyapa did it most voluntarily and proved with his great achievement that he was worthy of becoming the first patriarch of the dhyana lineage.

Consider also that, to this day, long after the Buddha entered nirvana, Mahakasyapa has yet to follow. Why is this? Prior to attaining nirvana, Mahakasyapa has undertaken the duty of giving Sakyamuni’s robe to the future Buddha Maitreya. As such it is believed that Mahakasyapa entered into samadhi at India’s Mt. Chi-tsu and sits waiting to this day for Maitreya to descend into our world. It is said that approximately five billion six hundred and seventy million years from now Maitreya will become a Buddha under a dragon-flower tree and deliver sermons to three assemblies, known as the “three

assemblies under the dragon-flower tree.” There sometimes is a misconception that because Sakyamuni Buddha has left this world, Maitreya Buddha now oversees it. Please do not make that mistake, since as Buddhist history states clearly, Maitreya is still a bodhisattva residing in the Tusita Heaven. He is a bodhisattva of the highest rank, and because he will become a Buddha in the next life and because he has yet to be born in this world, he is often referred to as the “Maitreya Buddha coming down to the human world.” Thus, it is essential to understand that the Buddhism we are studying now is the Buddhist dharma taught by Sakyamuni Buddha and not Maitreya Buddha. The time of Maitreya is not here yet.

Now we move to Bodhidharma, the first patriarch of the Ch’an school. A prince from Southern India, he came to China over a thousand years ago, during the reign of Emperor Wu-ti of the Liang dynasty. A meeting with the Emperor was not satisfactory for either party and Bodhidharma proceeded to the Shao-lin Monastery, where he meditated in front of a wall for nine years. Later Master Shen-kuan came to seek the Buddhist dharma from Bodhidharma and as a result, attained sudden enlightenment. This very master, Master Shen-kuan, succeeded Bodhidharma as the second patriarch Hui-k’o. This lineage continued to the sixth patriarch Master Hui-neng. The meditation method transmitted by Master Bodhidharma can be captured by this quote, “Pointing directly to the mind of man, having seen the essence, one becomes a Buddha.” This method should not be associated to the using of koans, as that came much later. Master Bodhidharma taught the Lankavatara Sutra of which four volumes were translated into Chinese during the Liu-Sung dynasty.

However, by the time of the fourth patriarch Tao-hsin and the fifth patriarch Huangmei, the Ch'an School adopted the Diamond Sutra as the vehicle for transmitting Buddhist dharma. The sixth patriarch heard this line from the Diamond Sutra and became suddenly enlightened: "A bodhisattva should develop a mind that alights upon nothing whatsoever, and so should he establish it." Since then, the Diamond Sutra has replaced the Lankavatara Sutra as the representative doctrine. To this day many people recite the Diamond Sutra which is the essence of the Prajna Paramita (Perfection of Wisdom) Sutra, the scripture that expounds the theme of perfect wisdom. For this reason, it is a supremely important sutra which should be read often. After the sixth patriarch the lineage split into five houses. Through different masters from each historical period, there arose various forms of the Ch'an tradition among which these five achieved the greatest prominence. Though each patriarch had his own way of guiding and instructing sentient beings to enlightenment, and though each school differed in their methods of practice, each has helped many achieving awakening. Following different paths, they have all reached enlightenment.

As Buddhist students, we should try to avoid too much variance between our understanding and view of the Buddhist dharma. Instead, we should follow the words of the Buddha, "the correct words of Buddhism," as our guide. Particularly in the beginning, we should be careful not to over-indulge our own perspective because, simply put, we may be wrong. It would be hard indeed to achieve most Buddhist endeavors if one only stuck to a single point of view. For example, even with respect to a single person, their way of thinking will change from youth to middle to old age. Taking into account differences in age, experience and education, it is easy to see how there will be contrasting thoughts and

opinions among us. Therefore, we should neither be too subjective, nor entirely without perspective on most matters. With respect to Buddhism, our goal is to be objective as possible while relying on the guidance and rules of the Sangha. Let the “Buddhist dharma of right faith” be our guide and keep us from treading the wrong path. In other words, being neither overly critical nor accepting, we are “depending on and upholding the teaching and respectfully practicing it.”

Also, when choosing from various different methods by which to learn the Buddhist dharma, you should exercise wisdom to find the most suitable and compatible techniques for your personal circumstances. If you feel you do not have enough information to form that opinion, then you should read more of the sutras and consult your mentors along the Buddhist way. The more Buddhist teaching you absorb, the greater your ability to make those choices. Every Buddhist will encounter some doubt and confusion on their journey towards enlightenment, and though at present we are among the “uninitiated,” we should nevertheless clearly and unequivocally understand that the dharma is good for us. We must do our best in practice and consider:

“How rare it is to come upon a human existence,
How rare it is to have the occasion to hear the Buddhist dharma,
If we do not work toward enlightenment in this life time,
Till which life time must we wait to enlighten ourselves?”

Let us find happiness in learning Buddhist dharma, and having learned it, we should try to benefit others as well as ourselves. In order not to betray or forfeit the opportunity of a lifetime, we should sincerely endeavor to enlighten all sentient beings.

Now let us turn back to the practice of meditation. As we discussed earlier, the patriarchs after the time of Hui-neng differed in their methods of teaching and practice. Nevertheless, many benefited from each method, and as a result, the Ch'an School flourished in China and produced many renowned masters. However, this same approach also contributed to the subsequent decline of Chinese Buddhism. The very reason lies in that motto: "practice starts, understanding ends." At that time, the Ch'an School focused only on practice and completely neglected the study of sutras. Of course it would be great to be able to awaken suddenly without reading sutras, but what if one is not capable of reaching enlightenment in this manner? One would instead be delayed in his journey toward awakening. Therefore, the saying should rather be that "understanding and practice simultaneously proceed." Specifically, to "understand," one focuses on learning and to "practice," one focuses on single mindedness or "specializing." Understanding and practice together should form the foundation for the Buddhist student.

The "special transmission outside of Buddhist scriptures" we have talked about is also known as the "patriarch's meditation." In fact, there are also the "true transmissions within Buddhist scriptures" based on sutras spoken by the Buddha, such as "worldly meditation," "meditation transcending this world," "supreme meditation transcending this world," "Theravada meditation," and "Mahayana meditation". There is also the Tien-dai School's "hsiu chih kuan" (practice calm and insight) which has several sub-divisions. It would be impossible to cover so many variations of meditation methods in such a short lecture. What I would like to focus on today is the technique that I personally used as a beginner in Buddhist meditation. Though I have greatly benefited from this method, I did

not initially intend to publicize it. However, given the enthusiasm of some of our fellow Buddhists, I thought I would introduce here what I call the “twelve fundamental techniques for calm sitting meditation practice.”

But first, I must make it clear that this technique is meant only as a foundation to build upon and is by no means a comprehensive guide for achieving enlightenment. Still, a solid foundation is essential for anyone beginning to learn Buddhism and practice meditation. These twelve contemplative techniques are a result of my studies of both Indian and Chinese Buddhist theories and philosophies. Also importantly, though they are all firmly founded on general Buddhist doctrines, the teachings do not, from a strict Mahayana perspective, constitute a complete method. Hence, I would remind everyone again that this is structured more as a prelude and a foundation for beginners rather than a complete teaching of meditation practice. After you have mastered these techniques, you can proceed further with the calm and insight meditation, and hopefully in further practice, you will find these fundamental techniques to be of use.

For me, the efficacy of these twelve techniques is proven by their fast physical results. There are sometimes those who find it difficult to realize any effects from their current form of meditation. I will show you how our techniques work this very day, and once you experience it, you will surely have more confidence in meditation as a whole. Today, we shall not only have lectures but practice too!

2. The Twelve Fundamental Techniques for Beginners

The first of the twelve techniques is the contemplation of the body sitting upright. Obviously, everyone knows how to do that; the difference, however, lies in the word contemplation. Since all twelve techniques involve contemplation of some form, please keep this important word in mind. Now, what does it mean for the body to sit in an upright position? For starters, there are the single fold and double fold positions. The single fold, or half-lotus posture, is derived from the position most commonly used in China and involves crossing both legs, with the left leg on top of the right leg. For the double fold, or lotus posture, just bring your right foot up so that both feet are on top of the opposite legs. We should probably begin here with the single folded position, and if you find that to be difficult, just cross your legs in any comfortable manner. It certainly will not do to start off with sore legs!

Now that you're sitting with legs folded, place your right hand on top of the left, with both palms facing up and with both thumbs touching each other. Next, rest your hands on top of your legs close to the body; be careful not to hold your hands too high or fatigue will distract you. We mentioned that the thumbs should be touching, but what happens if they move away during the course of meditation? Just leave it as is and do not be distracted. In the same way, don't be unduly concerned if your sitting position begins straying from its initial upright pose. We cannot succeed in our practice if our attention is so easily diverted. The body should be held upright but not too stiff; the waist should be naturally straight and should resist the urge to bend. As for the neck, we in the Sangha

have a saying—“neck leans on the collar.” This applies also for lay practitioners attempting to meditate. So, do not bend forward, lean backward, fall eastward or westward; instead sit straight, close your eyes and mouth, and let your tongue rest lightly against the inside of your top teeth. This completes the sitting position.

Keep in mind that while experienced meditators may be used to sitting for extended periods of time, beginners may easily feel their bodies become taut, nervous, and quite tired. When that happens, loosen up your mind. Imagine sitting effortlessly like a sheet of cotton—light, fluffy, and completely buoyant. By relaxing in such a manner and even though you have not yet attained the expertise of meditation, a compassionate and kind-hearted look resembling the appearance of Maitreya Buddha will naturally suffuse the face. This is the face of loving kindness! If we correctly practice sound meditation, we may acquire this countenance of loving kindness. Then, we may not only hope to be reborn in the Western Paradise, but we can begin cultivating good karmic relationships even while in this world.

What is the advantage of feeling the body light and relaxed? When the body is loose, the sitting position becomes easy. Keep in mind that following the Dharma should bring beneficial results instead of the contrary. Therefore, paying attention to one’s health is very important; Buddhism is not just about cultivating the mind but also focuses on disciplining the body. The goal is to achieve harmony in both mind and body. However, this does not mean to relax to the point of indulgence, as that can hardly be called practice! While the body relaxes, the mind must be focused; you must watch and guard the mind.

Keep this brief phrase in mind, for by adhering to this, you will be on the right track. This is the way towards the contemplation of the body sitting upright.

So how should we contemplate? Sit upright, straighten your waist and neck, but do it naturally without straining. Keep correcting your posture and remember to lift your head. After several months of practice, it will become easier to maintain our posture, and eventually, you will be able to sit steadily in the image of a Buddha in the state of thusness. Buddhist doctrine includes four foundations of mindfulness, among which is the contemplation of the body. Although that actually refers to contemplating the body as defiled, all we need to do for now is contemplate whether our body is upright. To contemplate here means to look within our minds and see with our minds; usually when we “see,” we look outside ourselves, but here, we must look within.

The second technique is the contemplation of the body glowing with light. This means to imagine the entire body shining with light and to feel that the whole body is light.

The third technique is the contemplation of light as equivalent to emptiness. Why should it be empty? Because we perceive the body to be real and because we continue to grasp this as reality, there will be no true light. Therefore, you must contemplate the body as empty because it is shining with light from within and without, and light everywhere is emptiness. However, this is easier said than done; such perception will only come with actual practice.

The fourth technique is the contemplation of emptiness as equivalent to breathing. When we count or regulate our breath, we usually begin by inhaling through the nose. Therefore, we must now contemplate and imagine the entire body to be at one with our

nose and then picture our breath to be at one with emptiness. This means to not only contemplate breathing through the nose, but to visualize the whole body breathing. In this fashion, breathing becomes equivalent to emptiness.

The fifth technique is the contemplation of breathing as equivalent to the mind. Where is the mind? It follows the breath, not leaving it for even a fraction of a second.

The sixth technique is the contemplation of mutual dependence between mind and breathing. Mind is breath, breath is mind; mind does not leave breath, breath does not leave mind. Each relies on the other; mind and breathing no longer stay as two separate functions. The two have merged into one.

The seventh technique is the contemplation of focusing attention to inner reflections. When the mind and breathing have united as one, it will be the right time to contemplate the self in this state of concentration. Focusing attention means bringing one's entire awareness together, fixing it to steady the mind without any disruption. To reflect within is to observe and investigate oneself, that is, to illuminate and then contemplate the self with wisdom. This is an instruction given by Master Shen-hsiu. I find it very useful, most sound and efficient when applied to actual practice. Hence, I adopted it here as the seventh technique.

The eighth technique is the contemplation of exerting effort as light as cotton but continuous without break. Why do we use these words to describe exertion? Because if you try too hard to focus your mind on self-reflection, your mind may become tense and irritated, hence, try and do it in an easy yet uninterrupted manner. When sitting in meditation, loosen your whole body and hold it soft and buoyant, not as if your entire life

force is at work. You should keep your body and mind light and relaxed—exerting a cotton-like effort both soft and gentle but also tightly knit and continuous without the slightest break. While your body concentrates, your mind stays calm, just as if you were practicing Tai-chi slowly but continuously. Proceeding with such ease and uninterrupted effort, you should be able to attain Samadhi, the state of concentration arrived by recitation of Buddha's name, and dhyana, the true concentration in meditation.

The above eight contemplative techniques, which should be practiced daily, are the most fundamental for beginners. It is important to master these first before attempting to proceed further.

The ninth technique is the contemplation of focused inhaling, and the tenth technique is the contemplation of the one-hundred and twenty count inhalation. Now that we've completed the practice of easy but uninterrupted effort via the previous technique, we move onto focused inhaling, which is especially beneficial to the body. Breathing exercises usually count the breath either by inhales or exhales. There are several variations of these exercises, and some maintain that older people should count the inhale, while younger folks count the exhale. I do believe, however, that the following method of focused inhaling offers immediate effects for everyone young or old. To start with, pay close attention to your breath as you inhale and keep doing so as long as possible. How long need that be? Start counting as you breathe in—up to one hundred and twenty if possible. How does one count? As you inhale, count with your mind and listen with your ears. After counting to a hundred and twenty, let your breath out slowly and sparingly through the mouth; every exhale should be in this manner. Then, take a rest and start again.

How far should we carry on like this? When I first started, I could not reach one hundred and twenty right away. As you get to eighty and ninety, or even sixty and seventy, in your breath count, you will have to hold in your stomach tighter and tighter. To get to a hundred and twenty is to have accomplished the beginner's first step. Some may question what happens if the breath expires during the exercise, and when I had that exact thought, I decided to see whether the breath actually expired or not. I discovered that it did not, and that in fact, it did just fine! That was how I persevered, but I do know that this is a difficult juncture in your practice. Because it is demanding and tiring, it is very easy for people to back down here and give up, and once turned back, it maybe difficult to proceed again. Hence, this should be regarded as a gateway along the path of practice which one must successfully traverse. Just keep with this for a few days, and you will immediately see the results of this exercise.

There is, however, one important warning: never attempt this exercise right after eating. In fact, you should wait at least an hour and a half after a meal and should also try not to become too full, as that may lead to dizziness during practice. Please make sure you remember this clearly, lest you end up with a negative experience. If that happens, I doubt this method will gain in popularity!

Thus far, I have completed directions for the exercise part of the twelve contemplative techniques. There are aspects of which lecturing cannot do proper justice and must be left for each to perceive through their own experience. Everyone breathes according to their own rhythm; as you add to your learning and experience, you will have your own insights into the ways of application. Buddhist dharma exists in all our daily

lives. What comes to us from without is the teaching of the Buddha, but what emerges from within is the response from our own fundamental nature. According to the Ch'an School, all twelve scriptures of the Tripitaka are already contained in the intrinsic nature of our minds. Therefore, when you practice this method of meditation, the application will naturally start from within your mind and then reach outside. In such moments you yourself will know what to do, and you will not need to ask anyone else. However, you should always practice with caution and discretion. Heed the common saying: "A difference of a fraction of a millimeter may lead to a miss by thousands of kilometers."

Some may ask whether there are any risks or dangers involved in this method. I say no. I have adopted this method for several decades and have never run into any risks or dangers. I know some people are wary and apprehensive towards any kind of practice. If you are preoccupied only by fear, then aren't you afraid of becoming a Buddha? Is that not what it comes down to? If you are even afraid of practice and dare not proceed, does that not mean you fear to become a Buddha? As an analogy, I travel by airplane to lecture in many different countries. If I am afraid of flying, would I be able to reach my destinations? Besides, no one can guarantee hundred percent safety even when driving or walking on the streets. One can only be as careful as possible. It is the same for our meditation exercises; boldness and discretion should be hand in hand. Thinking that because one is not afraid then nothing matters would be an incorrect attitude. One should be careful but not fearful; that is how to practice.

The next two fundamental techniques do not involve exercise but understanding. The eleventh technique is the contemplation of entering into concentration through much effort. With respect to meditative practice, if you lack in effort you will not be able to enter the state of concentration. It is necessary to put in abundant effort and to continue with uninterrupted perseverance. When a liberal amount of diligence is employed in this exercise, it will be easier to reach a state of concentration.

The twelfth technique is the contemplation of realizing and attaining enlightenment through sufficiently long practice. There are various states of concentration. Previously we have spoken of worldly meditation. At first, our practice cannot go beyond from the secular world—just as the first steps of the “common practice by five vehicles” do not go beyond this world. However, the “special Mahayana practice” transcends this world and so does the “common practice by three vehicles.” Entering a state of concentration should be considered the easier practice to achieve. To realize and attain enlightenment through sufficiently long practice requires even further efforts. This is where Buddhism differs most from other religions. To attain enlightenment you need to contemplate the breathing in and out in relation to the cycles of birth and death, the impermanence of all things and the causal relationships of all phenomenal existences. The breathing in and out illustrates the principle of causality and that of dependent arising. Breathing itself is an example of impermanence. When you are awakened to this impermanence, you will comprehend “non-self” and thus the emptiness of all things. Consequently, you will be able to leave the three realms and enter true nirvana.

While followers of Taoism and Hinduistic yoga also practice breathing exercises which similarly lead to states of concentration, their purpose is primarily to fortify the body. This is entirely different from the goal of Buddhism, which is to discipline and cultivate both body and mind. Beginners in Buddhism should proceed gradually in an orderly manner and slowly practice step by step. Everything related to sitting meditation that I have touched on so far is to help you build a foundation; next is giving practicing a good try!

Now, I will talk a little about “walking meditation”. This exercise is divided into the outer, middle, inner and inner most circles. Usually the slower moving, outer circles are designated for older people or those who prefer less exertion, while the faster moving, inner circles are assigned to younger people who do not mind a quicker pace. This practice generally involves circumambulating a statue of Buddha, with routes separated into several rounds to avoid any confusion. While walking, one swings his arms according to the following guidelines: left three right seven. This means to swing the right arm by a fraction of seven out of ten, followed by giving the left arm a small swing measuring only three out of ten. This is the standard method of walking with arms swinging in a meditation hall. When we engage in sitting meditation, our legs may become numb and backs sore, but as soon as we shift to walking meditation, the swinging will wash away all the numbness and soreness, giving the entire body a feeling of incomparable relaxation and ease. Indeed, the more we walk, the more energetic we become. However, we must not begin walking meditation with too swift a pace. One should start slow to allow the body to return to its usual state of mobility, and as you walk along you will naturally pick up speed.

There is no need, indeed it would be inadvisable, to start off running. For example, when we start a car, do we floor the accelerator as soon as we leave the driveway? Wouldn't that be rather dangerous? The same applies to walking meditation; this gradual acceleration is called, "walk like a breeze." Buddhist tradition offers four guidelines for general posture: "walk like a breeze, sit like a temple bell, stand like a pine tree, and sleep like a bow." This shows that the impressions our mind receive from meditation practice permeate daily activities such as walking, sitting, standing and sleeping. Yet it can only be up to us to meditate and experience what that kind of mental realm really is.

To conclude, I would like to tell you about the "scented or fragrance board." There is a saying in the Chinese monastic community: "from under the scented board, a patriarch rises." In the old days when I participated in seven-day meditation exercises, I remember being spanked by the scented board. Although it was winter and I wore several layers of heavy clothing, the impact from the spanking board hurt not only my muscles but also the bones. The scented board seemed to be dispatched around the entire meditation hall, such that all anyone could hear was the sound "ping-pong, ping-pong!" But don't be afraid here; if you doze off during practice, I will only give you a nominal pat! In a while we will do some sitting and walking meditation, but as for instructions, I shall end here now. Thank you.