

The Sweet Dews of Ch'an

Lectures on Buddhist Meditation given at
Chuang Yen Monastery

By Reverend Cheng Kuan

Transcribed by Richard Baksa

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The Sweet Dews of Ch'an

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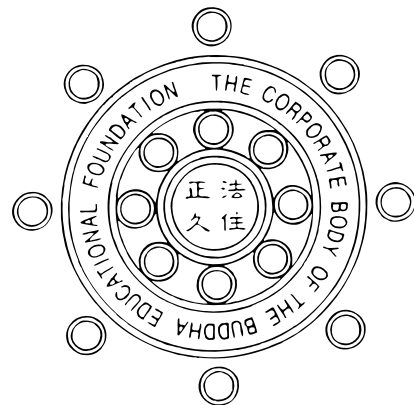
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太極拳，右擎天手式

Upholding the heaven with Right Hand, a form in 'Tai-Chi Chuan



攝於台北大毘盧寺大殿

At the Shrine Hall in Taipei's Temple



太極拳，上步單鞭式

Foreward Single Whip, a form in 'Tai-Chi Chuan



Fig. 1 Meditation posture – Full lotus.

圖1 靜坐姿勢——
跏趺坐

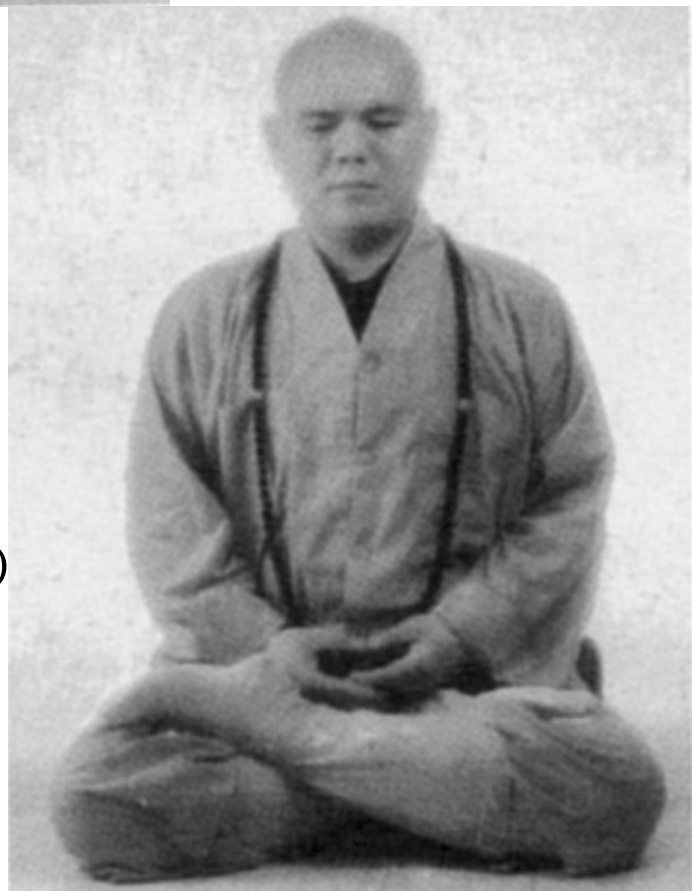


圖2 全跏坐之——
降伏坐(左腿押右腿)

Fig. 2 Full lotus 1
– Subjugating posture
[with the left leg on
top of the right].



Fig. 3 Full lotus 2
— Auspicious posture
(with the right leg on
top of the left).

圖3 全跏坐之二——
吉祥坐(右腿押左腿)



圖4 全跏坐側圖

Fig. 4 Full lotus posture
— Silhouette

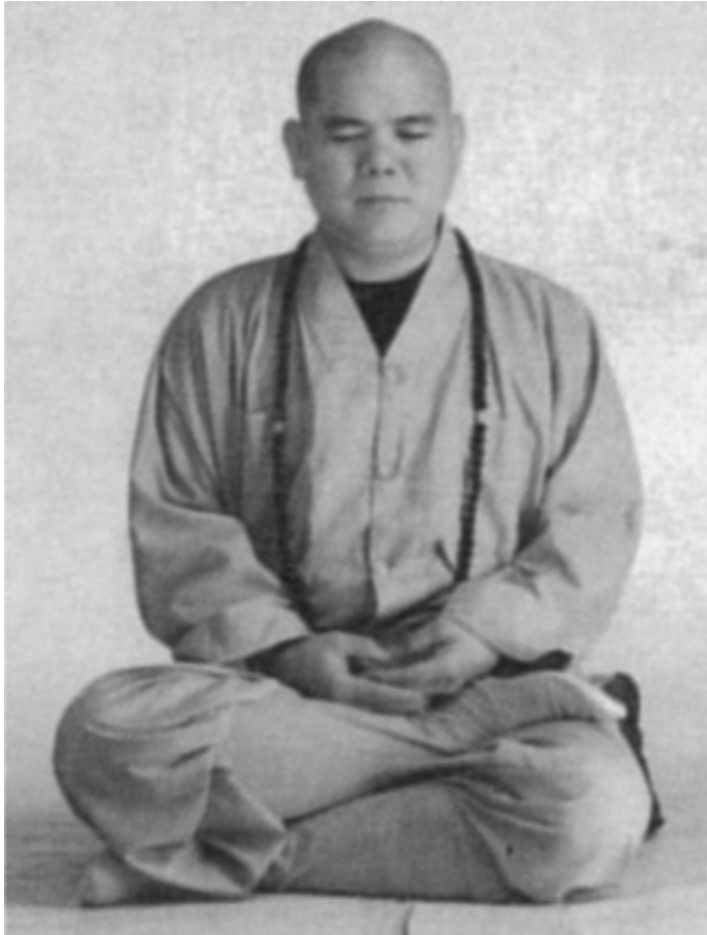


Fig. 5 Right half lotus posture

圖5 右單跏坐

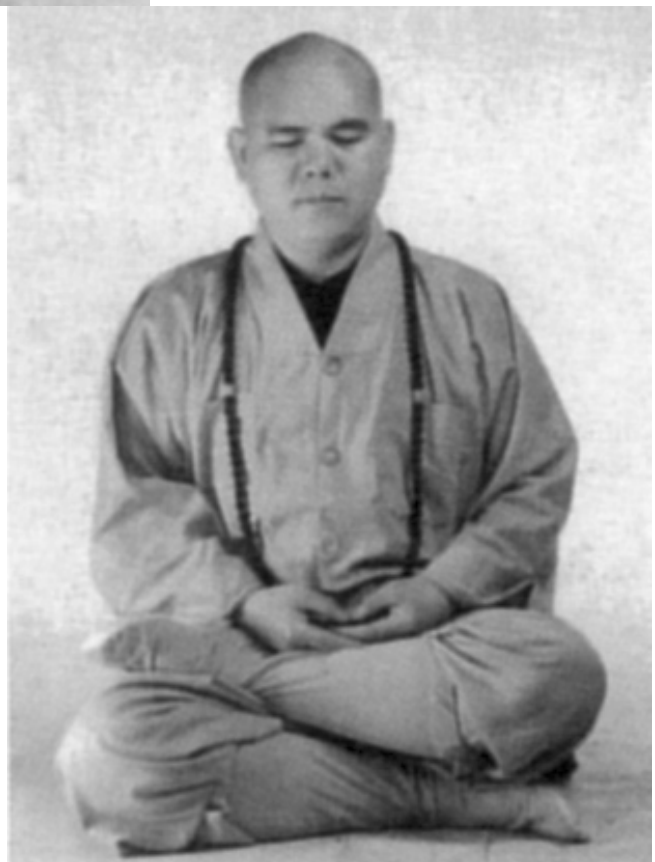


圖6 左單跏坐

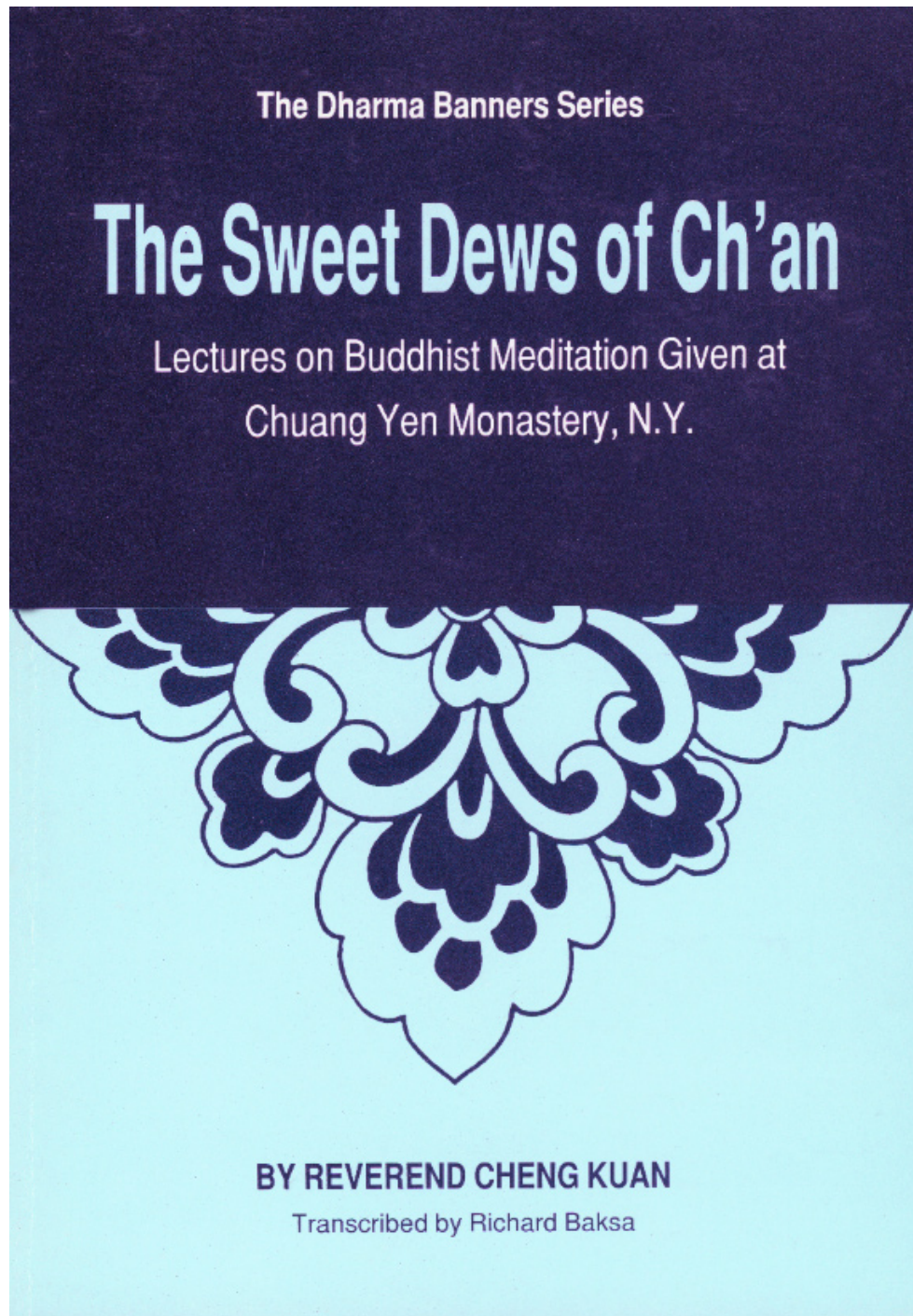
Fig. 6 Left half lotus posture

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Dedication

Namo Buddha, namo Dharma, namo Sangha. May all the sentient beings have all their good wishes fulfilled and attain the unsurpassed Bodhi as soon as possible.



1. The Essentials of Ch'an Buddhist Meditation

Ch'an or Zen is the outcome of meditation. The purpose of meditation is often not recognized. It depends on different people. Some people see it as *this way*, others see it as *that way*. But I will put it very simply and, when we go into the Sutra (Buddhist Scripture), you will know what Ch'an really is.

There are two “right” or “highest” purposes of Ch'an. The first purpose is to achieve “Dhyana.” Dhyana is a combination of relaxation, concentration and calmness or tranquility.

The second purpose is, using your very composed and tranquil mind, to observe clearly all the dharmas or phenomena externally and internally. As an outcome of Dhyana, you will be able to observe these phenomena very clearly because your “mental mirror” is very clear... for there are no more disturbances to veil it. Out of these observations will come Transcendental Wisdom, which in Sanskrit is called “Prajna.”

What does this wisdom transcend? It enables us to transcend the Three Realms. (We will discuss the details of this later.) It enables us to transcend desire, attachment, anger, etc. so that we will not be in “Samsara” or Transmigration. We will be emancipated — emancipated, not through the mercy of anybody, but rather through our own power of will and power of wisdom, coupled by the willingness to practice to achieve perfection. The total outcome will be Dhyana plus Prajna: tranquility plus wisdom.

Therefore, tranquility is the “Body” of the power, and wisdom is the “Use” of this power. We have the phrase

“to use the sword of wisdom to eliminate the thieves of worries and troubles.” Therefore, Dhyana plus Prajna becomes Samadhi. Samadhi, in turn, is the tool that leads to enlightenment.

Enlightenment has many categories and our proper purpose is to get to the highest, which is called Anatana-samyak-sambodhi, or full enlightenment. So we aim at the highest, and we start from the lowest. Like Don Quixote, we are aiming at the impossible, with our head high in the air, and our feet anchored to the ground.

So, this is meditation. And in meditation, we hope not to find any “ghosts” or “devils.” What do I mean by ghosts? When we sit, because of our “Karmic Obstacles,” we may see something, hear something or feel something unusual. All those colors, voices and sounds perceived are delusive, and not to be trusted. Just ignore them. Do not feel that those are your merits. Some of the phenomena in meditation are very good indeed, but if you become attached to them, then they may turn out to be your stumbling stones. Very inconceivable things can happen to you in meditation; therefore, you need to be *warned* about them. Trust them as mistresses; mistresses may be beautiful, but probably may not be trustworthy. View them like that. Try to ignore them. Do not become attached to them.

All the phenomena, mental and physical, can be good or bad. It depends on how you take them. The following is the basic concept and skill we need to develop: do not be shocked, or taken aback, when anything happens during meditation. Some people will rock or sweat or become cold. They may see beautiful or horrible things. Treat all

of these as fleeting dreams. Do not be horrified by them, and do not love them as misguided people do, which fact will lead them into deep trouble; i.e., from misconception to bewilderment, to hallucination, to derangement, and even to insanity. So watch out!

These are the “Right Views” and essential points of meditation; we need to have these beforehand in order to start a good meditation, and we have a long way to go.

To put it more concretely we need to inquire, “What are we trying to achieve in meditation?” We are trying to calm down and to eliminate attachments, the aversions, and the ignorance that are in our hearts. The aversions — anger, jealousy, etc. — are defilements in our hearts and are called “karma” (meaning “action,” in Sanskrit) — and they have been accumulating through eons. They are formless, and therefore, without the eye of Transcendental Wisdom, no one will be able to perceive them, let alone eliminating them. While we cannot perceive them, we can still feel their presence, and be constantly at their mercy.

Therefore, the first thing we must do is to sit according to the right rules. All games have their own rules and this “game” is the most serious one of all, and its rules are, accordingly, the most demanding of all. If we can abide by these rules, we can achieve excellent results. One of the results is the ability to calm all the defilements — like settling the muddy water in a pond. Our mind is like a pond, full of muddy water or defilements. If we wish to wipe out the defilements, we must first of all calm our mind, and not try to agitate it. To quiet the mind, we must sit in meditation and utilize certain techniques. This method is called Samatha, meaning the “Subjugation” or “Cessation”

of troubles. This method is not final, however, since all it does is to deposit the defilements — it is still unable to eliminate them. On the surface, we are calm, but underneath, the defilements are still there.

The next step in meditation is to eliminate the defilements through “Vipassana,” or Visualization. In order to do Vipassana, we will need Transcendental Wisdom, because without this wisdom we cannot accomplish our task. So, first we must calm down, and settle the defilements, and then eventually we can get rid of them for good.

The first principle of meditation is relaxation; the second, concentration. Through concentration, you will develop the skill to attain Prajna — Transcendental Wisdom. Since Transcendental Wisdom is not compatible with a wandering mind, you must first learn to calm your mind, and then to focus it so as to achieve concentration. Once you are able to do this, you will be able to use your mind like a “sword of wisdom” to cut through all entanglements of troubles. This, in essence, is the purpose of meditation.

Meditation, therefore, as we can see, does not mean just to sit and seclude yourself from the crowd in order to achieve a few minutes of calmness or to enjoy some moments of quietude. That is only the very first step, not the ultimate goal. There is much more to meditation, and we will study those things later on in this class.

The above are the general concepts and principles about Buddhist meditation. Talking about specific techniques, for beginners, the first step is to learn to watch your breath and to count your breaths from one to ten. You do not have to take deep breaths, though; just breathe naturally because this is not any kind of physi-

cal exercise, but a mental one. As you breathe in, count “one,” then exhale. As you breathe in again, count “two.” Do not count both the inhalations and the exhalations, only one or the other. If you lose count, do not guess where you were and begin from that point; rather, you should start from “one” all over again. After you reach the number “ten,” begin again with “one.” This is no easy task, though try it, and you will know what I am talking about. Therefore, don’t treat it lightly: If your mind is not clear and calm enough, you just never seem to reach number Ten, once or twice.

When you sit, you must relax all of the muscles and bones and sinews in your body. Sit up, with your back straight. Sit upon the front end of the meditation cushion; do not sit with the whole of your buttocks upon it. If you can sit in the lotus position, do so; if you cannot, sit in the half-lotus position — that’s fine, too. If you cannot do that either, then sit as best you can.

Relax your body first, then try to relax your mind. Curl the tip of your tongue to the alveolar ridge, or soft palate — this is very important. Breathe only through your nose and do it noiselessly; don’t hiss or pant. Try to make your breathing as soft and smooth and deep as possible. The finer the breath is, the finer the mind becomes; but you cannot force it to be fine — it comes only naturally and only from constant and skillful practice.

After you can concentrate deeply, switch from counting your breath to “Following” it. “Follow your Breath” from your nostrils down through your throat and lungs and through the rest of your body. Feel the air all over your body, your skin, and pores. Feel the coolness of the

air as it comes into your body, and the warmth of it as it leaves your body. Observe when your breath is long and when it is short. Be fully aware of everything about your breath. Sometimes you can even feel the “sweetness” of the air at the tip of your tongue! (But do not anticipate it, though. If it happens, it is not too bad; if it does not, that’s OK — after all, meditation is for the “transformation” of the mind, not of the body.)

The sound of the “Wood Fish” being struck three times signals the beginning of the meditation session. The sound of the small gong being struck once signals the end of the meditation session.

When the meditation session is finished, rub your hands gently to warm them. Then, rub your eyes, face, and arms gently to restore proper circulation. Rub your legs gently before moving them.

Following the sitting meditation, we will practice walking meditation. We will walk to the sound of the Wood Fish being struck. As the striking becomes quicker and quicker, we will walk faster and faster until we gradually work into the running meditation. As we walk, we will repeat the phrase “Namo Ami-To Fo” — (“Pay deference to Amitabha Buddha”) — in our heart.

I have heard people say that in the West people are very fond of meditation, but many of them do not know that in practicing meditation they also need to acquire knowledge by reading the Sutras, or Scriptures. This amazed me, for acquiring *knowledge* by reading the Sutras is indispensable; otherwise, we do not have the proper, unmistakable, authentic techniques to guide us. Moreover, it is not just techniques, but the knowledge

gained from them that will throw light into our lives, into the very deepest niche of our hearts.

There are many different ways of meditation. I wish to give a comprehensive presentation of the methods or approaches in meditation, rather than requiring that you become fully skillful in one method before giving you the next one. The Buddha related an illustrious parable in one of his greatest Sutras, *The Sutra of Maha Paranirvana*: Some inherently blind people were touching an elephant in order to determine what it was like. One blind person touched the trunk and thought that an elephant was like a long tube. Another blind person touching the tail imagined that an elephant was like a rope. Each of them had his own concept of the elephant. They were all telling the truth as they perceived and they were all right — yet they were all wrong. They were only telling part of the whole. Thus, there is a danger in presenting only part of the facts. However, there is also a danger in presenting everything at once; that way, you may know everything, but you don't practice. You seem to know everything, but it will not bring you anything; therefore, you are not going to enjoy the fruit of it.

I think, in an intelligent way, we will approach meditation and get the whole picture of it. Then we will practice some of the methods. Finally, we will select from among them one or two approaches or methods which we will stay with and practice very hard. Then we will accomplish something! This is my view and I will try to do it this way. This was also the method adopted in the past by many great masters.

— **Lecture given on 9/17/1988**

2. Some Basic Concepts about Meditation

Relaxation and Concentration

Relaxation and Concentration are the two most fundamental techniques in meditation. Since our Mind is disturbed by anxiety, we need to quiet it by getting to the opposite of it, i.e., Relaxation. Also, because our mind is always wandering at large, we need to curb it by concentration, so that we do not waste or misuse our energy.

The Six Gunas

The Six Gunas (or “Dusts”) are the objects that “feed” the six senses: Form, Sound, Fragrance, Flavor, Touch, and Concept. They are called “Dusts” since they obscure our vision of Buddha Nature.

The Six Senses

These are the sense organs (eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind) that react with the Six Gunas respectively.

The Eight Vijnanas (Consciousnesses)

The First Five Consciousnesses arise as a result of the interaction of the Five Gunas (Five Dusts) with the five sense organs. They come into being without carrying any interpretations with them — they are, in another word, crude perceptions.

And then when the Sixth Consciousness comes into play, all kinds of feelings, opinions, and judgments will be formed. Therefore, the Sixth Consciousness is the one that does all the differentiating.

The Seventh Vijnana is the Center of Ego.

The Eighth Vijnana is the Alayagarbha, “The Storehouse of Consciousness,” or the storehouse of all karmas, whether they be good, bad, or neutral.

Dhyana

Dhyana is a general term for meditation or a state of quietude or equanimity gained through meditation. It can also mean the middle way between *Samatha* and *Vipassana*. The first use of meditation is to clarify the “water” of our mind of the “Dusts” in order to lessen the impact of the emotions, sensory impressions, thoughts, etc. upon our mind. This first use enables us to begin to free ourselves from the disturbances of external stimuli and our mental and emotional reactions to those stimuli.

Samatha

This means the quietude achieved through the practice of dhyana. It serves as the springboard for starting to learn the Buddhist Teachings. Dhyana, by itself, is not of great value unless we utilize it as a powerful tool to strive for enlightenment.

Vipassana

This means Visualization done in meditation, especially after one has achieved Samatha. When in Samathic quietude, in order to develop Transcendental Wisdom, one will need to practice the techniques of various Buddhist visualizations, such as the “Four Contemplations,” the “Contemplations Upon Bodily Uncleanliness,” etc.

Samadhi

Samadi is the balanced effect of Samatha and Vipassana. If there is too much Samatha, the mind will become too still to the point of dullness and dormancy; while too much Vipassana tends to make it too elevated and excited or even restless. Only the balanced application of both can keep the mind calm yet keen.

Prajna

Prajna, or Transcendental Wisdom, is the consummate fruition gained through Samadhi, which is a balanced combination of Samatha (quietude) with Vipassana (Visualization) as stated above.

— **Lecture given on 8/20/1988**

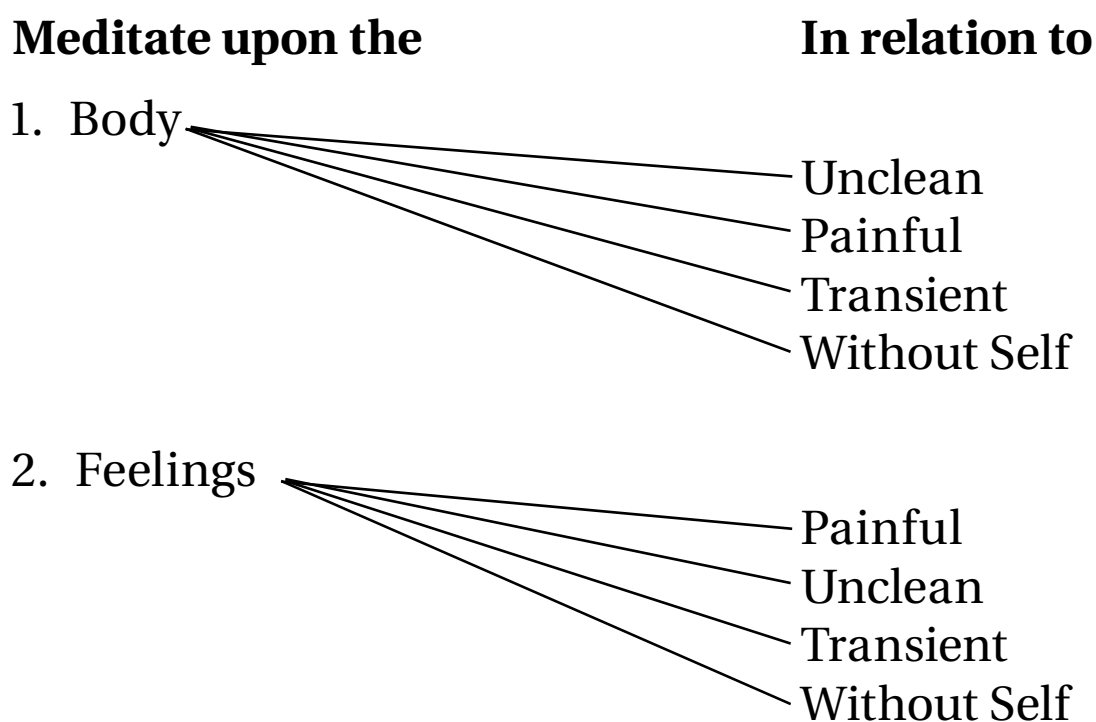


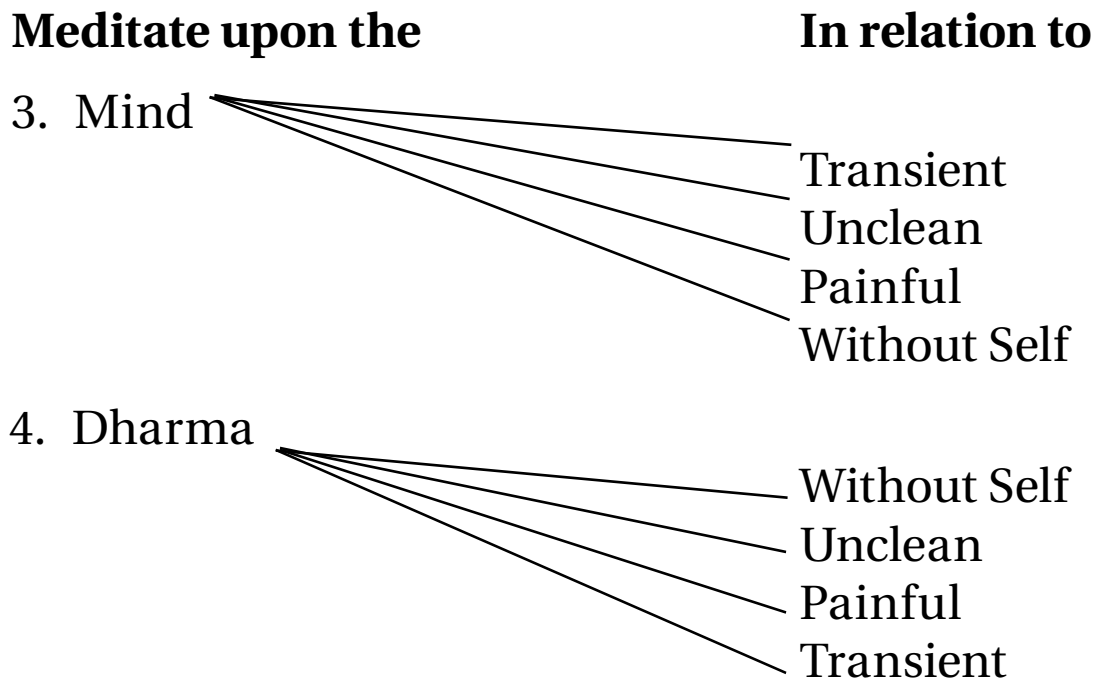
3. Some Advanced Meditation Techniques

Here are some other advanced Vipassana meditation techniques.

The Four Contemplations

The Four Contemplations are designed to meditate upon the Body, Feelings, Mind, and Dharma. Generally, we are to contemplate on the Body as Unclean, the Feelings or Perceptions as Painful, the Mind as Transient, and the Dharmas as “Without Self.” However, we can also make a lot of variations and combinations, so as to view the Body as either Unclean, or Painful, or Transient, or “Without Self;” or all of them, or two or three items of them. We can also contemplate on the Feelings, or Mind, or Dharma in the same way. And these can be done item by item, or all of them at the same time (depending on your skill)! So we can have lots of combinations. Thus:





a) The Body is Unclean

“*Body*” stands for the eyes, the ear, the skin, etc. and the Uncleanliness can be the excretions of the eye, the ear, the skin, etc. The Body is unclean also in the sense that the sense organs delight in things that are not good for us (i.e., the “Dusts”), which distract us from the goal of Enlightenment.

b) The Feelings are Painful

There are three kinds of *Feelings*: Pleasure, Pain, and Neutral Ones. And the first doctrine of Buddha’s teaching is that all feelings are painful, for they are all impermanent, transient, ungraspable, and therefore unreal, illusive and deceptive.

c) The Mind is Transient

The *Mind* is transient or impermanent in that it really does not have any “real entity” to itself. What it has is merely the shadows or images resulted from that inter-

actions between the five sense organs and the five dusts; therefore, they are exactly like the images shown on a movie screen — although they are actually unreal, they are vividly alive there, with colors, shapes, sounds, even stimulated tastes and smells; and there are also hate and love, war and peace, heaven and hell. Yet the screen is blank and uncontaminated as ever. Therefore, all the images on the screen are fleeting and unreal, so are the images on our mental screen. Besides, the mind of an ordinary person is like a monkey, the wind, lightning, a drop of morning dew — it never dwells; it changes from second to second. This is the way to contemplate that the mind is transient.

d) The Dharma is Without Self

The word *Dharma* originally means “law” in Sanskrit. Here it has two meanings: 1. Everything in the world is called a dharma, either physical or mental (or spiritual), tangible or intangible, since everything in the world has all got its own rule to follow; therefore, things are called dharmas. 2. Buddha’s Teaching is called Buddha Dharma, or simply, Dharma. For it goes without saying that the Buddha’s Teaching, apparently like all dharmas, has its own law to follow; consequently, it has come to be called Dharma. However, the “dharma” here in the Four Contemplations refers to the first, general meaning. “Self” here means having an entity which can act fully independent of anything else. But we know that everything in this world cannot be totally divorced from other things. Everything is dependent upon each other to function. Just like a bundle of reeds, if separated, none of

them can stand upright and survive. This state of interdependence is called “without self” by the Buddha. And all dharma, in the final analysis, are in this kind of interdependent existence; therefore, they are not “free” from others — free to act on its own, at its own will — and so it follows that they do not have a “self.” This is one way to contemplate that the dharmas are without-self.

The Contemplation on the Four Elements

— Earth, Water, Fire, Air

One of the techniques in meditating on the Four Elements involves visualizing everything as being of the same color. If everything were of the same “color,” then everything would look almost the same and stop being attractive, and as a result, we will begin to lose preferences and attachments for things. Finally, all judgments will be discarded and the Wisdom of Ultimate Equality will be attained.

Another way to meditate upon the Four Elements is to contemplate that all of them, as well as each one of them, are transient, impermanent and inconstant. In addition, because their nature is impermanent, we can thereby arrive at a conclusion that the Four Elements are “Without Self,” for there is no unchanging entity in anything for us to hold on to and claim: “This is the thing!” Having so contemplated, we will not cling to the Inner Four Elements (i.e., our body), or the Outer Four Elements (i.e., the world) so much, and will thereby be liberated!

The Contemplation on the Mind

Besides the Buddha Nature, this is by far the deepest meditation of all, since the Mind is without shape and form and it is like an abstraction and can only be seen with the “Mind’s Eye,” the Eye of Wisdom. The Mind is so fleeting that it is extremely difficult to observe. If we can be aware of the Mind at all times, we will not go wrong, nor will we do or speak anything hurtful to ourselves or others. “Those who are able to observe their mind will be liberated; those who are unable to observe their mind will forever be under bondage,” says the Buddha in a Sutra (*The Sutra of the Buddha’s Past Lives and the Visualization of the Mental Ground*).

The Contemplation on the Buddha Nature

The Buddha Nature is also called our Original Nature. Let me use an analogy of a gold mine to illustrate the meaning of this term. The Buddha is the person who has excavated the gold of his Original Nature and has refined it. We, ordinary as we now are, also have the same amount of gold in the mine as the Buddha, but we have not yet dug it out and purified it. Therefore, *although we have the same amount and quality of treasure as the Buddha does, we still live in poverty since we have not excavated it and refined it yet!*

To contemplate upon this analogy, and to view all phenomena as the manifestations of our Buddha Nature, will deepen our wisdom and quicken our pace toward Enlightenment.

Lecture given on 8/27/1988

4. The “Five Flavors” of Ch’an

The Composition of the Mind and the Execution of Ch’an

The Composition of the Mind

In Sanskrit, Dhyana means Ch’an or Zen. (Zen is the Japanese pronunciation of the word.) There are five categories of Ch’an called the “Five Flavors” of Ch’an.

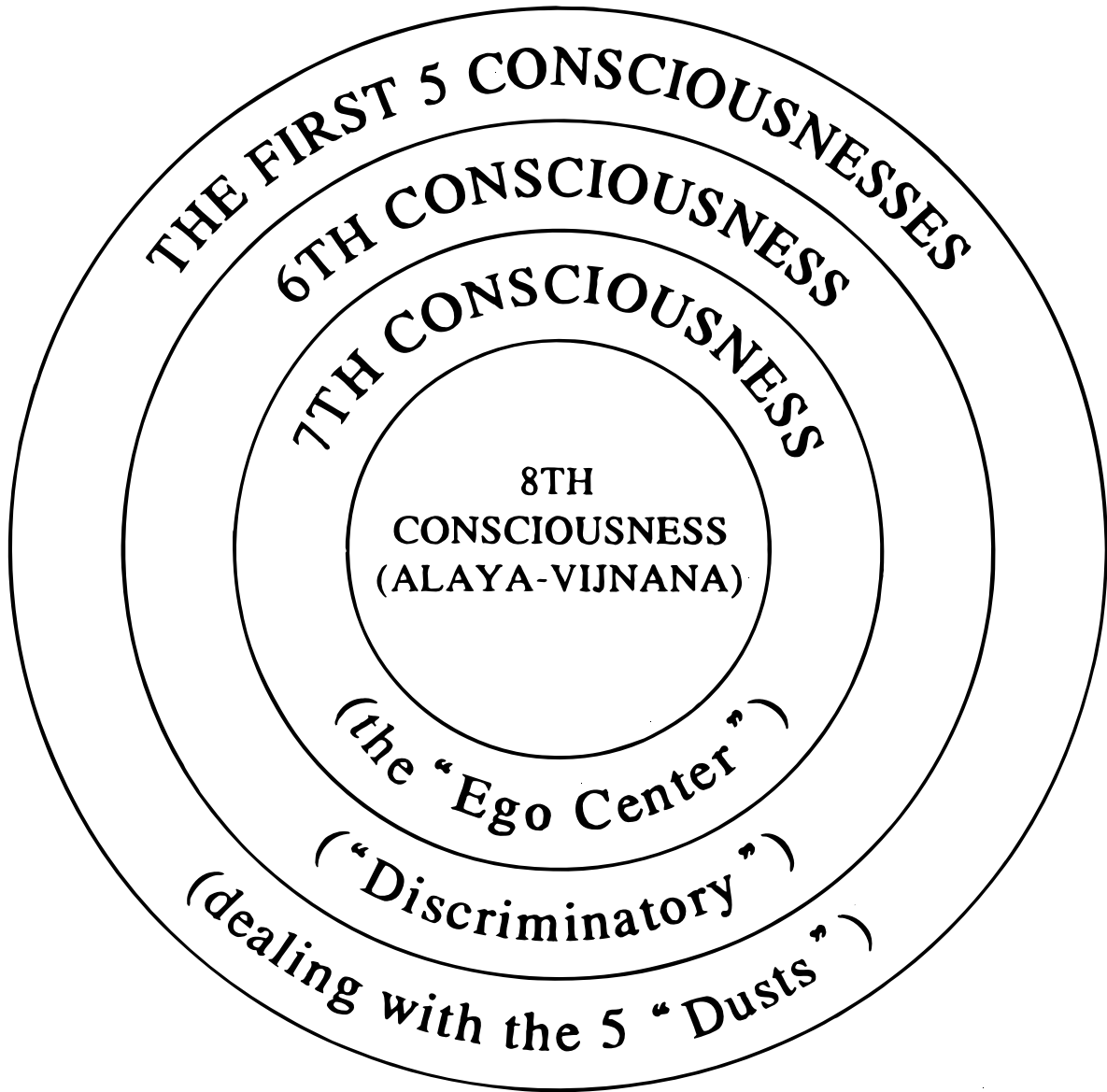
In order to make clear what I am going to say about the “Five Flavors” of Ch’an, let us first consider the mind and the consciousnesses.

The first level of the Mind consists of the First Five Consciousnesses. These consciousnesses come into being as the result of the interaction between the five senses (eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body) and the “Five Dusts” (form, sound, smell, flavor, and touch). The First Five Consciousnesses do not do any subtle differentiating, theirs is of the lowest level or rudimentary recognition; in other words, they are not “opinionated.”

The second level of the Mind is the Sixth Consciousness — it is this consciousness that operates all the sophisticated differentiatings. This is, consequently, the judgemental and rational level of our Mind. It ponders, weighs and discriminates upon the images of the Five Dusts collected by the five senses. This level of our Mind tends to consider itself as the “boss;” that is, it “thinks” it is “in control.” But, as a matter of fact, it merely takes orders from someone else — the Seventh Consciousness. However, the Sixth Consciousness is able to rationalize

THE MIND

(the 5 Dusts)



(the 5 Dusts)

and make all sorts of justifications for its hidden commander, the Seventh Consciousness. Therefore, the Sixth Consciousness is somewhat like a middleman in that it gratifies in a most delicate way the desires of the next level, the Ego, or the Seventh Consciousness.

The third level of our Mind is the Seventh Consciousness, the Ego Center. This is the so-called “I,” which has itself expressed in the daily world via the Sixth Consciousness. This also is the level which determines how the first six levels above will react to the external world — i.e. they all do its biddings. Nevertheless, we are unable to see this Ego, because we have covered it up with all sorts of excuses and rationalizations furnished by the “foreman,” the Sixth Consciousness.

The fourth level of the Mind under the Ego Center is the Eighth Consciousness, also called “Alaya Vijnana” (“Alaya” meaning storage). This is the storage house of consciousness, the big dumpster for all people.

The First Five Consciousnesses together with the Sixth enable us to function, or take actions in our daily life. Eventually, those actions of ours, if repeated a few times over, will form into habits and are thus pressed down into the Seventh and then the Eighth level of consciousness. Once they reach the Eighth level, they can resurface when we least expect them and in such ways that can startle us. And those same unexpected “somethings” are sometimes mysteriously called “inspirations.”

Under suitable situations, what resides in the Eighth Consciousness will emerge. This does not only occur in our waking life, but also in our dreams — so far as Freud

is concerned, it does so mostly in our dreams.

Habits are at once a blessing and a curse to us — a blessing, because without them life is almost impossible; if we had to think about literally everything before we did it, we would be in tremendous hardships — a curse, for they can enslave us. [Example of how the habit of smoking is brought down into Seventh and Eighth levels and becomes a “habit” is given by the Reverend at this point.]

Everything we do is called “Karmas,” or actions. (There are three kinds of karmas: body karma, speech karma, and mental karma.) In our conscious mind, our deliberate actions, when done, are pressed down to the unseen level beneath, and collected and made ready for use there, like ready-made suits or a drive-through hamburger restaurant, to the effect that we really do not need to think about what we are doing anymore; we just act through habits. In other words, on a larger scale, we are being carried by our previous Karmas, which are so abstruse that they are far beyond our imagination or thinking, and in a given situation they will just spring into view in an almost inexplicable manner. Now, let us see how this relates to the “Five Flavors” of Ch’an.

The Execution of Ch’an

There are five kinds or levels of Ch’an, called the Five Flavors of Ch’an. The inter-relations between Ch’an and the various consciousnesses will be depicted in each section respectively.

1. Worldly Meditation

This kind of meditation is practiced by ordinary people who wish to cultivate the body and, at the same time, wish to achieve some extraordinary states of experience — for instance, to suspend their heartbeat, to levitate, or to be squeezed into a tiny box, etc. Some of these people will be able to achieve the state of concentration in which they can suspend their breath and be buried alive for quite some time. It requires very strict concentration, though, in order to accomplish this goal. Such a *tour de force* is, at its best, a stunt. Feats of stunts, however breath-taking they might appear, cannot result in any wisdom, not to speak of enlightenment. Nor can they clarify or quiet your Mind. In time, they will not enable you to benefit yourself or others by increasing a gossamer of Wisdom.

The execution of this Worldly Meditation is based upon the five senses. The five senses, in turn, will give birth to the First Five Consciousnesses in our Mind after contact with the Five Dusts. The five senses are physical; the Five Consciousnesses are mental. The five senses grasp or take the Five “Dusts” (form, sound, smell, flavor, and touch). They are called “Dusts” because they can veil our Mind — they blind our mental eye. The five senses grasp the various Dusts into our Mind which will then ruminate upon them and relish them. Thus the Worldly Meditation is performed and achieved through the use of the five senses and the Five Dusts, so as to result in some sensational consequences on the First Five Consciousnesses. Therefore, its accomplishment is unavoi-

ably quite rudimentary and superficial, and so not to be taken seriously by the wise.

2. Other Religions' Meditation

Some other religions practice meditation, too; but, according to the Buddha, their practice is largely based upon some faulty views or beliefs and, therefore, more often than not, they go astray from the Right Path. Their fault lies in that, according to the Buddha, instead of seeking from within themselves, they usually seek from outside for something that will save them from their sins or faults, while others will seek illusively to unite themselves with some external thing, or being, or concept, claiming that in that way they are “returning to their origin,” which is grossly wrong.

The practice of this category is based upon the five senses and the Five Dusts, coupled by The First Five Consciousnesses and a little bit of the Sixth Consciousness. That is to say, this category is higher, or deeper, than the Worldly Meditation by one level, due to its slim application of the Sixth Consciousness. Nevertheless, it is still not a desirable form of meditation, for the Sixth Consciousness, based on the Ego Center, usually makes delusive and faulty judgements. Besides, this meditation does not go deep enough.

The five senses take the “images” of the Five Dusts into our Mind. Once we take the five images in, we will ponder upon them like this: are they good or evil? desirable or undesirable? — and so on, and so forth. As a result of these ponderings or deliberations, almost simultaneously, the First Five Consciousnesses will bring the Sixth

Consciousness into existence. The Sixth Consciousness is contaminated and guided by the Ego Consciousness, the Seventh one, upon which basis the Sixth Consciousness formulates all our judgements, opinions, and sense of values. In sum, Other Religions' Meditation is still not deep enough in that it reaches only the surface of the Sixth Consciousness; also for this reason, other Religion's Meditation is, to a great extent, hampered and beguiled by the Sixth and Seventh Consciousnesses.

3. Minor-Vehicle Ch'an

The two kinds of meditation (the Worldly and Other Religions' Meditations) discussed above are also called the Mundane Meditations. (Incidentally, the fact that they are entitled as "Meditation," rather than Ch'an, is due to this author's discretion, not carelessness, so as to distinguish the right from the wrong. Besides, the word Ch'an, to the author, has a connotation of sacredness, authenticity, and legitimacy.) Since the compassion of the Minor-Vehicle practitioners is limited, they do not generate the wish to deliver other sentient beings, but only themselves. Once they can relieve themselves of their "Samsara," or Transmigration, or Rebirths, they *will not* return to this inflicted world again. Therefore, their goal is egoistic. They will not attain ultimate enlightenment for they do not aim at the highest. They feel contented with Arhathood, because it is good enough to deliver themselves, even though it would not be sufficient to emancipate all, or other, sentient beings — it would take the compassion and wisdom of Buddhahood to undertake this enterprise. (Undoubtedly it is much easier to

help only oneself without having to help others get out of their difficulties.) Yet the quest of Buddhahood is hard and long work!

The practice of this category is based upon the extinction of the First Six Consciousnesses — which the Hinayana practitioners call “Nirvana.” As a matter of fact, the Hinayanic Nirvana is brought about by the willful suppression of the First Six Consciousnesses to the point that they remain dormant or seemingly expired. This is far from a desirable way of practice for Bodhisattvaship practitioners, for it enables one, as it were, to indulge oneself in self-obsessed quietude, while neglecting all the needs and pains of other sentient beings who are fighting and groping their way toward deliverance and Bodhi.

4. Major-Vehicle Ch’an (Bodhisattva Ch’an)

Contrasted with the Minor-Vehicle practitioners, the cultivators of this category do not simply concentrate upon their own liberation. When they are able to solve their own problems to some extent, they will go a step further, by trying and learning to help others solve their problems through the wisdom they have acquired.

The practice of this category is based upon the elimination of the Seventh Consciousness and some initial cultivation on the Eighth Consciousness. The Elimination of the Seventh Consciousness, the Ego Center, enables these practitioners to engage themselves in altruistic endeavors without considering their own interest and the trouble they are involved in by so doing. Besides, the initial cultivation on the Eighth Consciousness moves

the Bodhisattva Ch'an practitioner's wisdom higher and closer to the Buddhas'.

5. Tathagata Ch'an (The Buddha's Ch'an)

Tathagata is a meritorious name for the Buddha, meaning "Thusness" or "Thus-Comingness," its Chinese version being "Ru-Lai." Tathagata Ch'an ("Ru-Lai Ch'an") is also called "Patriarchic Ch'an" (or "Chu-Shi Ch'an") since it was handed down from the Buddha to the First Patriarch, Mahakasyapa, and from him to later patriarchs. Hence, it is the highest form of Ch'an.

The practice of this category deals mainly with the Eighth Consciousness and yet to a much deeper degree than the previous category — so deep that it is almost impossible for us to talk about, let alone achieving it.

The fulfillment of Ru-Lai Ch'an results in complete awareness and ultimate *transformation* of all defilements into merits, of all ignorance into Prajna, and of all the Three Banes (Attachment, Aversion, and Ignorance) into the "Three Non-Leaking Virtues," (Precepts, Samadhi, and Wisdom.) The total outcome achieved is, in one word, the witnessing of one's Buddha Nature. However, it should be noted that at this level, the work is done not through *elimination*, but *transformation*; because at this level the Wisdom is so powerful that it can transform everything, turn everything into good use: nothing is useless, nothing is wasted. Such is the Transcendental Power of Ru-Lai, the Tathagata!

The key to the Ru-Lai Ch'an, in fine, is non-reliance — it is not to rely on anything whatsoever — forms, shapes, colors, breath, Dharma, anything at all. In this

non-reliant way you are to execute your Tathagatha Ch'an, which would mean as much as to say: "Go to the Heavens, but you are to do it without using a ladder or a rope, without taking an airplane, and even without jumping. You need just go to the Heavens." This sounds very much like a "Kung-An;" yet it *is* a Kung-An — it is by far the toughest one! (Incidentally, there is another Kung-An in the similar vein; it goes like this: "Speak — without opening your mouth!") And this is Ch'an, the Tathagata Ch'an, which is, needless to say, the supreme practice and cultivation that can lead us toward the Supreme Bodhi.

— **Lecture given on 9/17/1988**



5. The “Five Contemplations to Cease the Perturbed Mind”

I wish to introduce to you, the “Five Contemplations to Cease the Perturbed Mind.” This can also be viewed as the third stage of the “Six Wonderful Dharma Gates,” which is called Samatha, or “Cessation.”

When our mind is troubled or perturbed, it is difficult to calm or still it. The mind is without a form; it is invisible and ungraspable therefore, we are almost helpless when we try to calm it. Thanks to the Buddha’s wisdom, ways have been revealed to us in order to accomplish this task.

Although there can be thousands of ways to still the mind, their essence can be summarized into five major types. They are called the Five Contemplations for Ceasing the Perturbed Mind:

- I. Anapanasati — to destroy Wandering.
- II. The Contemplation of Uncleanliness — to destroy Attachments or Avarice.
- III. The Contemplation of the “Twelve Links” — to destroy Ignorance.
- IV. The Contemplation of Compassion — to destroy Aversions and Hate.
- V. The Contemplation of Buddha’s Merits — to destroy Heavy Black karma.

Each of these meditations can be done on various levels from the superficial or rudimentary to the intermediate, advanced, and even the profound level. This all depends on your skill, knowledge and comprehension.

Anapanasati

(Contemplation on the Breath)

In Sanskrit, “Napanana” means breathing or breathing in; “A” means the opposite of what follows. Anapana, therefore, means breathing in and out, and “Sati” means to watch. And so the whole word means “watching the breath coming in and out.”

The direct purpose of this meditation is to remind us to come back to our own person; that is, to *go inward* rather than outward. The inner self, however, is so deep and profound that it is very hard to reach. The Buddha, therefore, has bestowed upon us this method of breath-watching. The first step of this method, i.e., breath counting, is comparatively easier than some, other kinds, since everyone, no matter how rich or poor, must breathe; therefore, this method is open to all. In other words, it is easily accessible and readily affordable — it costs you nothing to do it. It also helps you to come back to yourself, and to realize that you *are* living because you *breathe*: in practicing this meditation you might for the first time in your life become aware of the fact that you are breathing!

The goal of this meditation is to stop the wandering mind in order to attain concentration. Our mind tends to wander from moment to moment and become highly uncontrollable. By practicing this meditation we can train our mind to stay at one single point for quite a long time. At the outset, we can stay on that point for probably only a few seconds before our mind begins to wander away. This is the crucial point — once we are aware that

our mind has wandered away from the point of concentration, or lost count of the breath, we should return to our concentration. Consequently, this becomes not just the practice of concentration, but also the practice of mindfulness or awareness. Always stay aware — that is, stay at “home!” Do not go astray after external objects. Each time our mind wanders away, we will pull it back again by force, if necessary. We need to do this over and over again, until we can destroy the habit of wandering. Bad habits, however, are difficult to break, that is why we must persevere with this practice until we are very good at concentrating. This is the essential of Anapanasati.

The Contemplation of Uncleanliness

“The uncleanliness” can be divided into two parts: the uncleanliness of the physical and the uncleanliness for the mental. According to the Buddha, we are inverted in our views. Like flies, we think of all the unclean things as desirable and palatable, and we are so attached to them that we cannot give them up. To cure ourselves of these inverted views, we need to practice this “healing” meditation.

Therefore, this meditation is designed to help us get rid of attachments, which is the most difficult task that we need to undertake. I will make a detailed presentation of this contemplation later, right after this general account of the Five Contemplations.

The Contemplation of the Twelve Links

This meditation is a great subject in Buddhist teaching. In fact, it involves one of the most significant doctrines

set forth by the Buddhas — the doctrine of “Cause and Effect.” This doctrine is very important in the cultivation of wisdom. If we want to know what “cause and effect” or “Karmic Causality” really is, then we need to acquire knowledge of this meditation. Moreover, we need to know this meditation in great detail, not just the terms, but the working of the whole contents.

The ultimate goal of this meditation is to eliminate or cease ignorance. By ignorance, the Buddha means to be ignorant of the true causes and effects, of how things come to be and how they are destroyed and reborn; in other words, to be ignorant of the true state of things (or beings). There are twelve causes and effects, of which the first one is *Ignorance*, the First Link.

Because of Ignorance, the mind is moved. This *Moving* is the Second Link. If the mind is moved, it will move everything. So, everything else comes into being due to that Initial Moving. Subsequent to this Moving, *Consciousness* arises. This Consciousness, as the Third Link, however, is not the ultimate consciousness of the Original Nature. It is rather the superficial of “False Consciousness” (or the False Mind), the consciousness of wrong views, derived from faulty differentiation or discrimination. Owing to Consciousness there arises *Form and Name*. This is the Fourth Link.

“Form” is the physical and so visible, while “Name” refers to the mental and therefore invisible. The visible and the invisible combine themselves together to form everything else. Form and Name causes the arising of the *Six Roots* or Six Organs, as the Fifth Link.

When the Six Roots come into contact with the internal

and the external, the Sixth Link, *Contact*, arises from it.

After the arising of Contact, *Feeling* or Perception, the Seventh Link, is brought forth.

Feeling or Perception is very important to sentient beings. Happiness, unhappiness, anger, love, etc., are all feelings. And we count on our feelings so much that we cannot afford to get them hurt. Whenever there is Feeling or Perception, *Attachment*, the Eighth Link arises.

We are attached to our Perceptions not just as the object of what we feel, but rather as a part of ourselves. Therefore, it is very difficult to detach ourselves from them. The hardest part for us to disassociate from is not the physical matter, but our mental feelings derived from it. If there is attachment, then *Grasping*, the Ninth Link, arises.

We grasp our feelings very strongly. When we grasp them, we claim that we own them. I “have” anger in my mind. I “have” it; I “own” it; it is mine. The anger is owned by you as if it were a piece of property — and, if you have some property, you will not let go of it easily. Hence, after Grasping, the Tenth Link, *Owning* or Possessing, will come into being. Subsequent to Owning, there will arise *Birth*, the Eleventh Link, which will in turn lead to the Twelfth Link: *Old Age, Illness, and Death* and all other afflictions. Therefore, all these are called “one large aggregate of afflictions.”

After death, there will be rebirth. Thus, all of these links form a cycle, the cycle of the Twelve Links. These twelve elements are linked together like a chain. They go around and around without ending. Each one can be at once a cause and an effect. It is such an unending circle

that without the “Sword of Prajna” (Transcendental Wisdom), there is no way to break off this chain. Worldly wisdom is not able even to perceive the existence and working of this chain, let alone breaking it. In order to cut through these links, we need to practice wisdom. If we contemplate upon these links, our wisdom will grow and our ignorance will gradually decrease until it totally disappears. So, this meditation will help to destroy our ignorance accumulated over aeons.

The Contemplation of Compassion

The purpose of this meditation is to eliminate hatred or aversion. The goal is to make us compassionate, not just to our loved ones, but to all beings — with no exceptions.

The Contemplation on Buddha’s Merits

To attain Buddhahood, one needs numerous merits. Since we have bad karmas which will hinder us from attaining wisdom and Buddhahood, we need to contemplate upon the Buddha’s merits to help clean away our bad karmas. Also, in a more mystical sense, through the blessings of the Buddhas, we can reach wisdom and Buddhahood. Even if we cannot understand or accept this idea of mystical use, just to contemplate upon the merits of the Buddha can be very pleasant and can make us very joyful, because the Buddha himself is a joyful figure to look at and contemplate upon.

The above is a brief account of the “Five Contemplations to Cease the Perturbed Mind.”

Lecture given on 10/15/1988

6. The Contemplation on Uncleanliness

I am going to make a more detailed account of the second meditation of the Five Contemplations — the Contemplation on Uncleanliness — so that we can begin to practice it today. Before we do the contemplation upon Uncleanliness, we need to know that there are three things most harmful to our goal of reaching enlightenment. They are called the “Three Poisons” or the “Three Banes.” The Three Banes are Attachment, Aversion and Avidya (Ignorance).

If the teaching you receive, either from me or from others, is concentrated upon removing these Three Banes, then that teaching will lead to enlightenment. If, on the other hand, the teaching you receive is for something else, you would need to be cautious. This is the essence of the Buddha’s teaching; if it is devoted to the elimination of the Three Banes, it will then lead to ultimate liberation and, hence is Right Buddhadharma; otherwise, it is not the right dharma, no matter how many tricks one can display — suspension, buried alive, eating glass, and so on.

Among the Three Banes, Ignorance does not have a concrete body of its own. It manifests itself through the other two banes — Attachment and Aversion. While Attachment and Aversion seem to be only two items, they can be broken down into thousands of things — fury, hate, irritation, hurt, harm — and even killing, which is the most violent form of Aversion. The coarsest form of the destructive state of mind is fury, in which you explode into anger. Hate is more reserved since it does

not reveal itself so readily; it is, in a way, a strong, concealed emotion. These second-generation banes in turn will beget all forms of poisons that will contaminate our mind and keep us from enlightenment.

In Buddhism, there is nothing called “sin or “evil;” everything bad is due to ignorance. Because of this view, it is possible for the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas to cultivate people, since they do not view people as bad or worthy of damnation. They just view ordinary people as ignorant, and ignorant people can be educated to become wise. Everybody is teachable. Therefore, enlightenment or Buddhahood is reachable, although far away, too.

The purpose of the “Contemplation on Uncleanliness” is to remove the bane of Attachment. It should be noted that Attachment does not just mean being attached to something desirable. We can be attached to anything, either likable or unlikable, lovable or unlovable, desirable or otherwise. We can take all; in fact, we are so wonderfully capable and all-encompassing. The capacity of the mind is so tremendous that it can take everything, just like the earth. The earth takes all-clean, unclean, treasure or feces, everything. The earth absorbs it all, yet it is unmoved. So does the mind — the mind has everything and holds everything, but it is unmoved just like the earth. In Ch’an Buddhism, this is called the “*Mental-Earth Dharma Gate*.” If you can visualize your mind like the earth, capable of holding everything, you will come a step closer to enlightenment.

Always remember, the Buddha told us that if we want to practice or cultivate ourselves, we should not

go outward and seek externally, but rather come back to ourselves. In ourselves we have everything; if we really understand ourselves, we will comprehend everything. This is the key: In yourself there is the microcosm, and this very microcosm is the manifestation of the macrocosm, where everything is. Therefore, we need to come back to ourselves in this body and this mind of ours, both of which together are called “Me” or “I.”

While “I” is composed of the mind and the body, the mind is much finer and more delicate than the body, and so without the aid of Buddha’s eye of wisdom, it is unlikely for us to perceive the mind. Therefore, for beginners, let us try the coarser or more visible one first; that is, to visualize the body. What is the body? A person with little wisdom or knowledge can only see the body as “one,” i.e., an indivisible and integrated whole. But in the wisdom of the Buddhas or Bodhisattvas, the body can be divided; it is far from indivisible. The body can be divided into at least six major parts: the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and the mind. The mind here, however, does not mean the invisible Mind (the Consciousness); it is rather the visible organ.

The six organs in our body are also called the “Six Entrances” of our mind, for they enable us to reach the external world. They transmit communications between the internal and the external; thus they are indispensable in maintaining life.

When one of the organs comes into contact with the external world, or with one of the “dusts,” a consciousness, or awareness of the forms, arises. These interactions can be categorized and depicted as follows:

The Eighteen Realms:

Organ	+	“Dust”	→	Consciousness
Eye	+	Color/Forms	→	Visual Consciousness
Ear	+	Sound Audio	→	Consciousness
Nose	+	Smell Smelling	→	Consciousness
Tongue	+	Flavor Tasting	→	Consciousness
Body	+	Concrete Forms	→	Tactile Consciousness
Mind	+	Conceptions	→	Conceptual Consciousness

*The “+” signifies “contacting,” and the “→” means “producing” or “Engendering.”

Organ, Dust, and Consciousness are called the “Three Categories.” And the Six Organs, Six Dusts and Six Consciousnesses all together form the “Eighteen Realms,” while the first two categories are called the Twelve Locations.

Now, let us apply this knowledge to our meditation. In doing the “Contemplation on Uncleanliness,” we generally start from the concrete things, i.e., the Six Sense Organs, and then we proceed to the Six Dusts and from there to the Consciousnesses.

Why do we contemplate upon the uncleanliness of the body? The strongest attachment keeping us from enlightenment would be that of loving the body. That is why we fear death; we love this body so much that we would give up anything just to keep it.

If we divide the body into the Six Sense Organs and meditate upon the Uncleanliness of these organs, it will be easier to rid ourselves of our attachment to our body. However, by getting rid of the attachment, it does not mean that we need to get rid of the body, but just our

attachment to it — the problem does not lie in the body, but in the mind! Once in our mind we can rid ourselves of our attachment to the body, we will be free, free to go anywhere — liberated! For example, if you own a precious jewel, but are not attached to it, you feel free to go anywhere at will. But if you are deeply attached to that precious stone, then you will want to take it with you everywhere so that you will not part with it and that it will not be stolen or destroyed. Such is the case with this precious body of our own: we are so deeply attached to it that we will not part with it at any rate; even at the moment of death, we will cling all the faster to it, only to make the separation more painful.

The practice of the meditation upon the uncleanness of the eye is designed to free us from our attachment to forms or colors. This is the most difficult meditation, since most of what we love come to us through the eyes. And yet bear this in mind: it is not the eye that is at fault, nor the forms or colors perceived, but the mind which grasps the forms illusively!

Therefore, instead of contemplating upon the uncleanness of the outside world, we should contemplate upon the uncleanness in ourselves. This will make the effort of detaching more fruitful, because our love of ourselves is the root of all kinds of love.

The Buddha teaches us that there are nine openings in our body and from each of them there exudes all kinds of excretions all the time (for example phlegm from the throat, sweat from the pores of the skin, etc.). None of the things excreted are pleasant to smell or touch or taste. They are, essentially, unclean things. Why do

we love these unclean things so much? We love them because “Worldly beings are inverted,” says the Buddha. We do not consider ourselves inverted though, and we can point out that there are some who are more inverted than ourselves.

To the eyes of the Buddha, it is all a matter of degrees, and we are sufficiently inverted that we are still kept from enlightenment. Viewed from this point, we are all very much alike. Therefore, in order to attain enlightenment, we need to correct all of these inverted views and habits.

In performing the “Contemplation of Uncleanliness,” as I said earlier, we begin by contemplating upon the Organs. From there, we will proceed to the “Dusts” and, finally, to the “Consciousnesses” which arise from the interaction of the Organs and their respective Dusts.

Yet today it will be sufficient for us to contemplate upon the organs alone. We need to practice on them for quite a long time before we are ready to proceed to the next stage — the Dusts. In the meantime, there is another term for this meditation — “The contemplation of Bodily Uncleanliness.”

Now we have learned that the “Contemplation of Uncleanliness” is used to curb our attachments. Regarding the affliction of Attachment and Aversion, however, everyone varies: some people may have more Attachments than others, while others may have in their temperament more Aversions, or Ignorance or both combined, or even all three of them, with different shades. So, the emphasis in the individual practice of meditation should be so designed as to suit different personalities.

However, we need to know as many techniques as possible so that we may select the ones that are most suitable to ourselves. Therefore, if you think that your worst weakness is Attachment, then this meditation should be the right choice for you.

In doing this meditation, start with the eyes, then proceed to the nose, then the tongue, etc. You can also meditate upon the nine openings, one by one, with their excretions as well.

There are various stages to the practice of this meditation. The coarsest one deals with the organs, the external things. Then gradually, the practice may taper back to the root — from the Organs to the Consciousness, then to the Mind (which is the director of the Organs), and finally to our Original Nature, which is the groundwork of all. If we can get to our Original Nature, then, that is supreme, indeed! We can also gradually approach the Original Nature by using the chart of the “Eight Consciousness” that I showed you — and that will be the Bodhisattva practice.

The Anapanasati meditation (Mindfulness of the Breath) together with the “Contemplation on Uncleanliness” are called “The Two Nectars or Sweet Dews of the Buddha,” and are fundamental Hinayana practices. Hinayanic practitioners want to leave this troubled world and transmigration “so bad,” that they will concentrate upon the ugliness of the world and the body, so as to make themselves ever ready to desert it without hesitation when the time comes.

Yet, in Mahayana practice, we are not content with such accomplishments; instead, we will continue, in the

meditation, to trace back to our Original Nature — to find out, for instance, “who is using the organs?” “Who is saying Namó Amito-fo?” — who is at the back of all these? This evidently drives more deeply into the core of the problems, and can resolve them more ultimately. Anyone with wisdom can see that. This is why the Major Vehicle is more profound and ultimate than the Minor Vehicle.

In order to benefit all sentient beings, as all Bodhisattva practitioners do, we need to know all the techniques, not just the ones that will best suit ourselves. (For, please keep this well in mind: 1. the Buddha does not teach the Dharma for one person only, and 2. the Buddhadharmas are not for yourself only! And by the way, this is really the secret to Buddhahood: to be willing to take the trouble to learn and master all the Buddhadharma for all sentient beings’ sake!) Those who are not very sophisticated will need the more simplified methods, since they will not be able to comprehend the more advanced ones. As a Bodhisattvaship practitioner, you need to be able to tell people the methods that they can understand and use. So, all the practices are necessary and we must master them all for Bodhi’s sake.

There is a catch, though. After we have mastered the techniques, however, we must not be attached to them, which means that the techniques themselves should not become our new Attachments after they have helped us get rid of our old ones. Otherwise it will be very ironical. However, it is tremendously difficult to transcend the irony — to practice something very arduously and become very skilled at it, and then to detach oneself from them, to the extent that one almost “forgets about”

even owning the skill. From the very start, we should be aware that these techniques are mere *tools for our enlightenment*. *Do not take the tool for the goal* — it is just a means. If you take the means for the goal, you will be hindered from enlightenment by those means. “Forgetting about it” means figuratively rather than literally; it simply means not to be attached to the skill, but it is far from necessary to discard it. Although you are not attached to it, it will still be always there, ready to serve you — you don’t have to throw it away anyhow. And that is hard: to have it, to use it, and to forget about it, all at the same time. Yet this is Bodhisattva practice — the marrow of Bodhisattva Ch’an.

Question: “Can you give us an example of how the tongue is unclean?”

Response: “It can be examined from two ways in which the tongue is used. The tongue has two functions: tasting and speaking. First, in tasting, we need to chew. After being chewed, the food becomes a mess. As a matter of fact, it becomes so ugly-looking that, should it drop from the mouth, no one would pick it up and eat it again. Yet, what is the difference between the mess in our mouth and the mess that has fallen on the floor? That which is in the mouth tastes so good simply because we cannot see it. Secondly, you can also meditate upon the defilements of the tongue with regard to speech. All kinds of defiled speech come from the tongue. These are the general reasons that the tongue is viewed as unclean.”

And yet, similarly as I remarked above, the problem does not reside in the tongue that tastes, nor the tongue

that speaks — nor even in the food tasted, nor the speech spoken. To drive the question home: fundamentally, the thing that is defiled, unclean and foul is the mind! And why is the mind unclean? It is because of the Attachment that grows and takes root in it. And yet when the Attachment is uprooted, the Ground of the Mind is still fair as new. Although the weeds grow on the earth, they never become one with the earth. And though the ground looks messy because of the weeds, the weeds are never really a part of the ground — like the limbs to the body — for they can always be separated. Such is the same with the mental weeds (the Attachment) in our Mental Ground: they never become one. And once the Mental Weeds are extirpated, the Mental Ground will be restored to its original tidiness and fairness. Therefore, we realize that ultimately the Mental Ground (the Original Nature) is never really defiled by the Mental Weeds (Attachments, Aversions, Jealousy, etc.), in the highest sense.

— **Lecture given on 10/15/1988**



7. The Nine Visualizations on a Corpse

Besides the techniques presented in the preceding lecture, there is yet another method to meditate on Bodily Uncleanliness, that is, “The Nine Visualizations on Uncleanliness,” also called “The Contemplation on a Corpse.” In this meditation, you are to visualize a corpse — which can be none other than your own body after you are dead — as it undergoes the various stages of decomposition:

The Nine Visualizations

1. Swelling Visualization — The practitioner will visualize the corpse starting to swell, like a leather bag full of air.
2. Blue and Mottled Visualization — After visualizing the corpse swollen, the practitioner will then proceed to visualize the body, being exposed to the sun and wind, beginning to change its color on the skin to leaden and blue, like someone having been beaten up.
3. Bursting Visualization — The practitioner, after visualizing the above, will then go on visualizing that the skin and flesh of the corpse, worn out by the elements, begins to burst and split.
4. Blood-smearing Visualization — The practitioner will then visualize that the corpse, with its parts and intestines scattered all over the place, is a mess of blood from crown to toe.

5. Rotting Visualization — The practitioner will now visualize that the body as well as its smeared parts begin to rot, and that the smell becomes even more obnoxious.
6. Devoured Visualization — Now the practitioner is beginning to visualize that worms have appeared from the rotten flesh and have begun to eat the flesh; also that vultures and animals have come to devour the decayed flesh.
7. Dismembering Visualization — After visualizing the flesh being devoured, the practitioner will visualize that the corpse has been torn to small pieces, scattered all around.
8. Bone Visualization — And now the practitioner will visualize that the scattered pieces of the corpse, with its flesh eaten up, is nothing but small piles of bones dispersed about.
9. Burnt Visualization — The practitioner now visualizes that there comes a wild fire, which burns the bones of the corpse, creating peals of bursting noise and odious smoke; he then visualizes that finally the surrounding trees and logs and grasses also catch fire and are all burnt up together with the bones; and then that there comes a gust of wind which blows everything into thin air, with the sun glowing and the water flowing — and everything is serene: the state of Nirvana.

This meditation is very powerful to curb our desires and all kinds of attachments. Needless to say, the most difficult Attachment for us to get rid of is the Attachment to the human form. As humans, we consider our form beautiful and desirable — not just the forms of the opposite sex, but all human forms as well. Because of this Attachment, we have not made significant progress toward Buddhahood for so many lifetimes and still remain harnessed to this “favorite” human form.

— **Lecture given on 10/15/1988**



8. The White-Bone Visualization

Here, sitting in the full Lotus posture, the practitioner will visualize one of his big toes, say the left one, beginning to lose its skin and flesh, and to finally have only its bones left. And then he will go on to visualize that the bones are becoming whiter and whiter, as if having been bleached. The practitioner will then begin to visualize that all the five toes of that foot have become white bones in the same process. After that, he will visualize that all the left foot has become white bones only. And then he will visualize that the left calf as well as the thigh has become white bones — which will make the whole left leg become white bones.

Subsequently he will visualize that the right leg has become white bones in the same manner as the left one. Then the practitioner will visualize his torso becoming white bones, with the spine, ribs, and collar bones shown clearly to the eye. Immediately afterwards, he will visualize that his hands and wrists and elbows, and whole arm have turned into white bones.

Followed by that, he will then visualize that his neck has become white bones, and that his head — with its eyes, ears, nose, mouth, tongue, cheek, and hair, all disappearing — has turned into a white skull. And now as a result of the foregoing meditation, the practitioner comes to visualize that all his body has become a skeleton, and that all its bones are bleached white. And he will visualize this clearly either with his eyes closed or open. And this is the accomplished state of the first stage of the White-Bone Visualization.

At the second stage, the practitioner will visualize that not only he himself has become a skeleton of white bones, but also the members of his family, one by one, have become skeletons, too, in the same process. And from there he will proceed to visualize that his closest neighbors have become white skeletons one after another. Subsequent to that he will visualize that all the people on the street have turned into skeletons, and then the whole town of Carmel becomes a town of skeleton-people.

The practitioner will then visualize skeletons all over the city, coming and going, without the ability to show any facial expressions, but doing all kinds of matters — driving, running, typing, eating, etc. They look all alike, without too much difference in men and women, young and old, white and black. With this accomplished, the second stage of the White-Bone visualization is attained.

At the third stage, the practitioner will then visualize that the population of New York city has become skeletons. And then New York State, the Eastern States, and finally, the entire United States are haunted by skeletons. Afterwards, Canada, Mexico, and the whole American Continent, both North, Middle, and South Americas, together with its islands, are full of skeletons, hustling and bustling about, doing all kinds of jobs, transactions, and even eating in the restaurants! Then Asia, Europe, Africa, and all this magnificent globe are replete with “skeleton people.” And then the skeleton-practitioner will visualize not only this, but other planets — and not only other planets, but also the whole Solar System, the entire Galaxy, this Buddha World, other Buddha Worlds, and

all the Buddha Worlds, are all peopled by skeletons. With this accomplished, the third stage of the White-Bone Visualization is achieved.

The White-Bone Meditation works wonderfully to cure people of attachments and illusive differentiations. In viewing people becoming mere white skeletons, the practitioner will succeed in ridding himself of his differentiations about and attachments to both himself and other people. Furthermore, the illusion about the human form, the business people do, and the Five Desires (money, sex, fame, food, and sleep) they seek for — all of these will be destroyed, too. It would make them look ridiculous or bizarre to do all kinds of jobs and seek for all kinds of pleasures feverishly without flesh! What good will money, sex, fame, food, and sleep do to skeletons? — You might as well ask yourself and try to decipher this perplexing enigma.

In this visualization, it is as if the practitioner were endowed with “X-Ray Eyes,” which enables him to see through the superficial layer of skin and flesh, and to see the “Final Reality” of the bones — that all men are fundamentally alike. Hence, to the practitioner, when the visualization is achieved, not only the flames of his desires are quenched (without flesh and blood, whence comes the warmth of the body? — There will be no more fever of lusts!), but also the illusions of his differentiations are subdued. No wonder the meditation of Uncleanliness (of which White-Bone Visualization is a branch), together with the Anapanasati (Breath Watching Meditation) are called the Two Nectars (or Sweet Dews) of Tathagata.

Lecture given on 10/15/1988

9. The Five Stages in Realizing Dhyana – Part I

If used loosely, Dhyana is a combination of Samatha, Vipassana, and Samadhi. Therefore, it can be a general term for the various stages of accomplishment gained in meditation. Hence, the word Dhyana in the title here is used in the broadest sense.

The Five Stages in Realizing Dhyana

- I. Fulfilling the Prerequisites
- II. Realizing Samatha (Cessation)
- III. Realizing Vipassana (Visualization)
- IV. Realizing Samadhi (Balanced State of Samatha & Vipassana)
- V. Realizing Prajna (Transcendental Wisdom — To Clean and Transform Bad Karmas).

This is a summary of everything that we have discussed regarding meditation. It will give you a clear picture about what takes place with meditation, how it should be and how we should proceed.

However, I will purposely reverse the order a little bit by reserving the first item to the last that is, to discuss the First Stage, Fulfilling the Prerequisites, at the end of this lecture. Therefore, I will begin with the second stage right now.

The Second Stage — Realizing Samatha (Cessation)

Samatha means the cessation or stopping of our restless mind. To calm this “monkey mind” down we can use the

various techniques already discussed before (e.g., “The Five Contemplations to Cease the Perturbed Mind”). Refer to my previous lectures if you wish to review how Samatha can be obtained.

Our mind is like a pond, and the water therein is constantly disturbed; as a result, it can not reflect images clearly; on the contrary, it distorts those images. Therefore, our first job is to calm down the water and make it tranquil. Then we can see things clearly in the water of our “mental pond.” The things we wish to view are the “internal dharmas” as well as the “external dharmas.”

Internal dharmas are the functionings of our mind; that is, our thoughts, emotions, etc. Normally, in our daily life, our mind is so disturbed and the “mental water” is so muddy that we do not have the slightest idea as to what is going on in our mind. Only through the realization of Samatha, can we have a true look at our own mind.

The Third Stage — Realizing Vipassana (Visualization)

After attaining Samatha, we will be not only able to view the internal dharmas clearly, but by using special techniques, to view them in a transcendental way. In order to properly practice Vipassana, we must learn these special techniques. We can learn these techniques by studying the Sutras and by listening to lectures on them. In that way we will learn the proper techniques and know how to apply them, so that we will not be misled either by ourselves or by others.

The teaching of the Buddha must be our guide. It is undesirable that we practice on our own on under teachings that are not Buddhist, for that can be dangerous or misleading. Unfortunately, there are many seemingly good but false teachers who provide “wonder pills” that can jeopardize our practice. Stick to the “Right Dharma” so that genuine Vipassana can be acquired.

The Fourth Stage — Realizing Samadhi (Samatha + Vipassana)

Samadhi is the even combination or balance of both Samatha and Vipassana. It does not reside in too much of the one or of the other. If the practitioner has too much Samatha then his mind tends to become too quiet and dull. Thus, it is necessary to enliven the mind and animate it a bit by Vipassana, or visualization (for example, “The Four Boundless States of Mind”). This prevents the mind from becoming dull, like a log of wood. The goal of meditation is not to become a log of wood! After all, semantically the word “Meditation” means “deep thinking,” and not sitting like a dummy. Then what do we think about in meditation after gaining tranquility through Samatha? We think *deeply* on the Supreme Buddhadharma so that it can be deeply rooted in our Eighth Consciousness and finally become a part of ourselves. This is the function of Vipassana.

If, on the other hand, the practitioner has done too much Vipassana, his mind may become restless. At that time it will be necessary for him to return to Samatha in order to calm the mind down.

Thus, if the mind is too dull, go back to Vipassana; if it is too active, then switch to Samatha again. You do this until you find the correct balance and, at that point, you will attain Samadhi. In other words, there are delicate adjustment jobs to do.

Attaining Samadhi is a proof that your meditation practice has been promoted to an advanced stage. This stage cannot be attained without sitting for many hours during the day and even all through the night. In other words, both Samatha and Vipassana must be practiced for quite a long time and fully mastered before Samadhi can be achieved. I am telling you this not to frighten or to discourage you, but to truthfully explain to you what is necessary so that you will not have any misconceptions about meditation.

The Fifth Stage — Realizing Prajna (Transcendental Wisdom)

After Samadhi has been attained for quite some time, gradually Prajna or “Transcendental Wisdom” will arise. While in Samadhi, you will observe all the internal and external dharmas, as well as all the worldly and ultra-worldly dharmas, so that you can fully comprehend the Original Nature of everything. From that time on, you will not be beclouded or deceived any more, and you will be able to transcend all of those dharmas — that is, to go beyond the bondage of those dharmas. That is why it is called “Transcendental Wisdom.”

Once Prajna is obtained, then it is called “Prajna-Paramita.” Prajna means “Transcendental Wisdom”

and Paramita means “to transport to the other shore.” Together they mean “Wisdom to transport to the other shore (Nirvana).” “*This* shore” is called “the shore of trouble and afflictions.” “The *other* shore” is “the shore without trouble and afflictions.” It can also be called “Maha (Great) Prajna-Paramita” or “Great Wisdom to transport to the other shore of Nirvana.”



Now that we have finished with the Five Stages except the First one — “Fulfilling the Prerequisites” — let us come round to present it.

The First Stage — Fulfilling the Prerequisites

At this stage, in order to fulfill the prerequisites for the accomplishment of dhyana, there are three steps to follow:

- Step 1. To Reprimand the Five Desires
- Step 2. To Forsake the Five Coverings or Veils
- Step 3. To Perform the Five Practices

Dhyana, as mentioned before, is the broadest term used to describe the various stages of accomplishment gained through meditation. If someone has got “Dhyana,” then he is accomplished in meditation; he is not just doing meditation, he has accomplished something.

These things are called prerequisites because they are requirements for practitioners to fulfill before they

set out to practice Dhyana. These are necessary for serious meditation and for those who desire enlightenment and real Wisdom.

There are those who are very interested in meditation in order to improve their health — and meditation, if done properly, will improve your health, no doubt. Others wish to practice meditation in order to escape reality for a period of time. These are not the types of meditations we are concerned with. Here we are talking about *traditional* meditation which has been handed down for more than two thousand years. This is the traditional, the orthodox, the genuine meditation practice. Although we have many karmic obstacles, we must do the best that we can, nonetheless.

Step 1. To Reprimand the Five Desires

The first requirement is to Reprimand the Five Desires. Some Masters used to say that we must avoid or forsake desires, but this is very difficult for us to do now, since our world is getting more complicated, and our desires are getting more and more multiplied, as a result of mass production and swift communication, and our karmas are getting heavier. Thus, I would prefer to say “To Reprimand the Five Desires.” For worldly people desires are usually considered as enjoyable and good. As meditation practitioners, however, we should not treat desires as worth attaching to. If we cling to desires during our meditation practice, then that meditation practice will be of no benefit to us at all.

There are two sets of “Five Desires.” The first one consists of the Desire for:

1. Form
2. Sound
3. Smell
4. Flavor
5. Touch

These items sound somewhat abstract and metaphysical; nevertheless, they can also be quite concrete and tangible once their meanings are explicated and understood. They are to be explained as follows:

1. The Desire for Form

While this encompasses forms of all kinds, for meditation practitioners, this especially denotes human forms of the opposite sex. This desire, apparently, is one of the strongest.

2. The Desire for Sound

As Ch'an practitioners, we should not become attached to any type of sounds, pleasant or pleasurable ones in particular. There is a story concerning five hundred advanced practitioners who, through advanced meditation techniques, had achieved the ability to fly in the sky. While flying over a Royal forest, they happened to hear the songs of the king's concubines who were bathing in a pond in the forest. Upon hearing the sweet voices of the concubines, the minds of the practitioners were touched and trapped by the sound. At that very moment, the practitioners lost their power of control, and their Dhyana disappeared, and then they all fell to the ground!

Thus, pleasurable sounds can be very hazardous distractions to practitioners of Dhyana.

3. The Desire for Smell

The desire for good odor can be a bad distraction to dhyana practitioners, too. Another story: once there was a pond with lotus and water lilies blooming beautifully upon it. A dhyana master chanced to come that way and ran across that pond. At the sight of the giant lotus flowers, he was virtually enchanted. He stood there watching and sniffing, nearly totally forgetting what he had been up to. At that instant, the Floral Deity exclaimed and reproached, “Don’t you steal my fragrance!” On these words, the dhyana master “awoke” to himself, and protested, “Why would you say that? I was not stealing anything since I did not take anything from you.” The Floral Deity replied, “Yes, you did — you were taking the colors, forms and fragrance with your eyes and nose, by watching and sniffing greedily, and you were on the verge of losing your concentration, if I did not warn you.”

4. The Desire for Flavor

Flavor concerns the tongue and food and drink. When you are meditating, do not think about food. When, in meditation, if you should smell the food that your wife or anyone is preparing, do not become trapped into wondering about what you will have to eat and how it will taste.

5. The Desire for Touch

Among the five sensations, touch is the one that has a special connection with sex. Although there are several

kinds of touch, the most difficult form to overcome is the one concerning sex. As meditation practitioners we should be very aware of the power of Touch in disturbing our meditation.

There is a legend concerning a very advanced practitioner who lived in a remote mountain. One day the king of the country, hearing about the accomplishments of this practitioner, sent his messengers to fetch him and bring him to the palace as an honored guest. The king wished to pay homage to the practitioner and make offerings to him. The practitioner flew to the palace as the king wished and, in fact, did it several times. On one of these occasions, the king asked the queen to pay homage to the practitioner. In doing so, the queen knelt before the practitioner and put her hands upon his bare feet to show her highest respect. The queen's hands were very soft and the practitioner, never having had that kind of experience before, suddenly felt very excited and all at once lost his Dhyana. He felt faint and his body became very weak. He was no longer able to walk and had to be carried back to his mountain retreat!

So, this is the danger of Touch to a meditation practitioner! Now we will turn from the more metaphysical desires to the more tangible ones, that is, the second set of the Five Desires — the Desires for:

1. Wealth
2. Sex
3. Fame
4. Food
5. Sleep

The reason why I reserved the First Stage to the last is partly because this Stage demands a much more thorough discussion, and partly because it touches upon some sensitive parts of our daily concern; i.e., about money, sex, food, fame, etc. At the mere touch of these, meditation has become not just some exotic, far-away, mysterious oriental curiosity, but something highly close in contact with our day-to-day life. In other words, to discuss about these Prerequisites, you will come to realize that meditation is not merely a wild fantasy, which you can partake at will like seeing a movie in whatever way you like. Rather, by discussing these Prerequisites, meditation will become very realistic and highly serious. If we want to get the genuine stuff, the Real McCoy, then we need to face up to it. Although, for sure, we may not be able to do it a hundred percent right, at least we know what is good and genuine and we'll know exactly what we are doing; furthermore, with these Right Views as our guideline, we can march toward the Right Path without any doubt.

1. The Desire for Wealth

Wealth includes money and property. Not only should we not dwell on wealth and property in meditation, but we should not practice meditation for the purpose of gaining or accumulating money or property.

2. The Desire for Sex

This is particularly one of the reasons why I delayed this discussion until now. Although people everywhere love sex, it is beyond a doubt that Western people *now* tend

to overstress its importance to worldly happiness. And “sexy” has recently become a professed eulogy for “virtue,” which is still unacceptable to most Eastern people. This is a modern mundane thinking. But Ch’an practitioners, it seems to me, need to contemplate this from another angle, and to perceive it more deeply, too. If we can avoid sexual activity, then we can become more spiritual. Apparently, this is a difficult thing for the laity to do, and they do not need to do it if they are unable to. However, to be very frank, the avoidance of sex is vital to proper meditation. Meditation is like charging our “battery,” and if the battery is fully charged, the light that it powers will shine brightly. If, however, we drain the charge of our battery through sexual activities, we have defeated the purpose of meditation.

If you wish to reduce or eliminate sex, it is essential that you get the agreement and understanding of your spouse; do not cause matrimonial problems because of your meditation practice! That is not true Buddhism; Buddhism means to seek peace and to solve problems — both inner and outer, and never to cause problems. If your spouse does not approve of a reduction or elimination of your sexual activity, then that is due to your karma! On the other hand, if your spouse approves, then that is due to your good karma! Take advantage of what you have and do your best to improve yourself, so that you can have a better inner life and family life. This is the essential point of Buddhism.

Of all of the desires, sex is the strongest and most difficult one for meditation practitioners to cope with since sex encompasses all of the first set of desires that we dis-

cussed (form, sound, smell, flavor, and touch), and in sex all of these desires are present in their most poignant form. Also, we need to be aware that it is just because of sex that we continually return to this world through rebirths.

If you are not able to renounce sex, you may be able to reduce your level of sexual activity to less than that of the normal person who is not a meditation practitioner. Nevertheless, only make sure not to lead a voluptuous life and practice meditation: you should be at least more spiritual than that.

3. The Desire for Fame

As I have mentioned before, the underlying reason for many of the pursuits that we make in this life is for fame, which includes the good opinion or respect from others. When we fail to get respect from others, we feel as if all that we own and everything that we have accomplished were meaningless. Thus, the ultimate goal of obtaining the material is for the sake of the immaterial. And among the immaterial questings, fame almost serves as a central drive, along with money.

In the Ch'ing Dynasty (1700 A.D.) in China, an Emperor called Chien Long, while observing the many boats sailing back and forth on the Yangtze River, remarked to his Prime Minister about how gorgeous and numerous the boats were. However, the Prime Minister replied that there were only two boats upon the river. The Emperor, somewhat angered by being contradicted, demanded his Prime Minister to explain how there were only "two" boats upon the river. The Prime Minister said, "Your Majesty, there are only the boat of Money and the boat

of Fame.” In all of our life, like the boats upon the river, we constantly travel back and forth seeking mostly those two things — money and fame, and all the variations and by-products of these two things.

4. The Desire for Food

A person who wishes to practice meditation seriously cannot be a gourmand; he cannot be finicky about food and eating. He should not be addicted to gluttony, either. He should eat the proper amount and at the proper time. In one word, eat moderately. Yet to go fasting the whole day is not the Buddhist way, either, because it goes to the other extreme. The Buddhist way is always the tranquil, balanced “Middle Way,” which calls for a perfectly balanced mind, and which is totally against any kind of extremity or fanaticism.

5. The Desire for Sleep

In order to practice meditation seriously, a practitioner is encouraged to sleep as little as possible. The practitioner can eat as much as his body needs, but if possible, he should try not to sleep. This is Buddhist practice and it is different from many other religions’ practice. Often other religions say that, while you can sleep as much as you wish, you should refrain from eating as much as possible and even go fasting. Buddhism, however, does not advocate total fasting because you do need energy in order to carry on your meditation practice.

As your practice improves, you will find that you need less and less sleep. Contemplate upon sleep: Who is sleeping? You may respond that it is your body that is

sleeping, but actually, the body does not sleep. It is the mind that sleeps. That which needs rest is not the body, it is the mind. The mind needs rest because of the karmic result of ignorance. Ignorance is like a big black hole that engulfs everything in darkness. During the course of the day, we accumulate karma which is deposited in the mind. This karma forms a veil over the mind which causes us to feel sleepy. During sleep, this karma will settle and be deposited in the lower realm of our mind — the Alaya. After the karma has settled into the Alaya, the surface of our mind becomes clear again, and so we awaken. Once awake, we begin to accumulate some more karmas which must settle into the Alaya during the next sleep — and so in this way it goes on and on.

There is a term in Buddhism called “Sinking Dullness.” When we are upset, we feel low and our mind becomes dull. When we feel bored, again the mind becomes dull. Sleep is the heaviest kind of “Sinking Dullness.” The accumulation of karma on the surface of our mind causes our mind to become dull and dark and low.

Thus, if we wish to practice serious meditation, then we need to overcome sleep.

The above is Step One of the First Prerequisite for Fulfillment of Dhyana, Reproaching the Five Desires. We will go on to discuss the other two steps in the next lecture.

— **Lecture given on 5/20/1989**



10. The Five Stages in Realizing Dhyana – Part 2

Here is the full chart of the Three Steps of the Prerequisites for the Fulfillment of Dhyana:

Step 1. To Reprimand the Five Desires

There are two groups of “Five Desires”:

- (A) The desires for Form, Sound, Smell, Flavor, and Touch — the more metaphysical category.
- (B) The desires for Wealth, Sex, Fame, Food, and Sleep — the more corporeal category.

These Five Desires will prevent us from concentration and will veil the clarity of our mind. Therefore, we should reproach these desires.

Step 2. To Forsake the “Five Coverings” or the “Five Veils”

The Five Coverings are:

1. Avarice (Greed or Attachment)
2. Aversion (Detestation or Hate)
3. Sleep
4. Restlessness
5. Doubt (or Skepticism concerning the Dharma)

Step 3. To Perform the “Five Practices”

1. Wish
2. Memory (Thinking and Reminding)
3. Diligence
4. Ingeniousness
5. Single Mindedness

Step 1. To Reprimand the Five Desires

This is the section we covered last week. We spoke about ‘Reprimanding the Five Desires’ and explained how those ‘Five Desires’ destroy or obstruct our ability to concentrate properly in meditation. Just one more word. By “reproaching” or “reprimanding” it connotes the ability to view in perspective that the Five Desires are undesirable and a hindrance to the purpose of the practitioner, so that he either reproaches himself for having such impure desires, or treats the desires, if any, as “personified beings” and scolds them so as to hold them down or back; that is, to get them out of the way. Now I will discuss the next step in the “Prerequisites for the Fulfillment of Dhyana” — “To Forsake the Five Coverings or Veils”:

Step 2. To Forsake the “Five Coverings” or the “Five Veils”

There are five kinds of “Coverings” that can envelop our mind in the darkness of Ignorance; they are:

- (1) The Covering of Avarice (Greed or Attachment)
- (2) The Covering of Aversion (Detestation or Hate)
- (3) The Covering of Sleep
- (4) The Covering of Restlessness
- (5) The Covering of Doubt (or Skepticism concerning the Dharma)

These are called “Coverings” because they can cover up our Mind and, ultimately, our Original Nature. The rea-

son we have drifted away from our Original (or Buddha) Nature is because of these “Five Coverings.” The truth, however, is that we are not far from our Buddha Nature — it is always there with us; still we can’t see it, due to the “Veils” which cover it from our sight. We are on one side of a “wall” and our Buddha Nature is on the other side. Only the wall of the “Coverings” stands between us and our Buddha Nature! It is this untransparent “wall” that makes us feel that we are far away from our Buddha Nature, as a matter of fact, we are very close to it indeed! It is important to remember that we are not far from our Buddha Nature or Original Nature, and that the obstacles separating us from it are not as great as we think them to be. Our goal is to remove the “Coverings” so that our Buddha Nature can be revealed. The techniques are discussed as follows:

(1) To Forsake the Covering of Avarice (Greed or Attachment)

This is, in one sense, a summary of the first step in “The Prerequisites for the Fulfillment of Dhyana” — To Reprimand the Five Desires. The Five Desires, or the Covering of Avarice is called here, are so deep-rooted in us, for we have been accumulating these karmas for such a long time that they have become almost impregnable and extremely hard to remove or get rid of. Therefore, right after finishing the First Steps of the Requirement, it is beneficial for us to make the endeavor one more time, almost as a final combat, or as the terminal scuffle in bayonets, so as to insure that all the enemy (baneful roots) are done with in all their trenches and battlements. In other words, this is to “finish them up.”

(2) To Forsake the Covering of Aversion (Detestation or Hate)

When we have a liking for something, we tend to grow attached to it. If, however, we cannot obtain that which we desire, then that feeling of attachment rebounds to become a feeling of aversion or detestation. These feelings are very dangerous to meditation practitioners — even much more so than Attachments. While Attachments can drive us to do good, bad, or neutral things, Aversion or anger can only goad us to do injurious acts — it is purely negative. As a matter of fact, most of the destructive deeds are done directly or indirectly through the urge of anger or Aversion. Hence, it is imperative for the practitioner to remove the Covering of Aversion.

Incidentally, among the Three Poisons, Ignorance is the primitive origin of all the pernicious things, and Greed or Attachment is its first generation offspring, while Aversion or anger is the second generation. Together, they form a “family” — the home or headquarters of Samsara (Transmigration, or Rebirths).

(3) To Forsake the Covering of Sleep

Sleep is a covering because it can veil everything in utter darkness. In sleep, we totally lose control of ourselves and drift power of volition. It is, according to the Sutras, very similar to the existence right after death (specifically, the 49 days interim between death and rebirth, i.e., *Antara-Bhava* in Sanskrit, *Or Bardo* in Tibetan), for after death, we lose our power of volition and, meanwhile, our karma will take over instead, and choose everything for us, and we will be thus willy-nilly led to our next rebirth.

In sleep, due to different past karmas, some people

will have nightmares, others will have pleasant dreams, while some very good practitioners will be able to continue practicing the Dharma to some extent, even in their dream! It sounds fantastic and incredible, but it is not. The fact is that these people who have been practicing the Dharma very hard, upon encountering some difficult situations or calamities in their dreams, may either invoke the Buddha or resort to the Dharma by reciting a dharani (mantra), or simply do something useful (compared with the total helplessness of ordinary people), and their predicaments in that dream will cease to be.

Nevertheless, this waking life of ours is something like a dream, isn't it? Thus, the dream we have in the night is, so to speak, a dream within a dream, which is just as in *Hamlet*, where there are "plays within the play." Similarly, we have "little dreams" within the "Big Dream." We, however, would Desire to wake up from this "Big Dream" and that is exactly why we are here studying Buddhism! Many of us are here in this class because we are driven by our karmic force; we are driven by our karmic force either willingly or unwillingly, knowingly or unknowingly.

As practitioners, we feel badly about the fact that sleep reduces us to sheer powerlessness and helplessness, like a living corpse. It is for that very reason that the Buddha admonishes us not to sleep too much. Furthermore, the Buddha taught us that, as Buddhist practitioners, while we should eat sufficiently to maintain our energy for practice, we should yet try to sleep as little as possible. Sleep darkens everything; it is professedly one of the worst three enemies for meditation practitioners, the

other two being the wandering of the mind and restlessness. Also, when your practice is going very well and then if you, for any reason, stop to sleep, you will find upon awakening that, to your lamentation, you must begin afresh with your meditation practices — The continuous progressive line has been broken up or interrupted by the “blank” of the sleep. It is somewhat like driving a car on the highway: Once you stop the car in order to rest awhile or do some other things, to begin again you must restart and rewarm up the car and re-accelerate all over again.

Notwithstanding, you should not *force* yourself not to sleep. If you do, then you may find that the next day you might justify yourself to sleep even longer for compensation's sake — for you might unconsciously feel as if you had been maltreated or abused!

If you wish to test the quality of your practice, a very good way to do so is to assess it by the amount of sleep that you need. If your practice is progressing well, you will find that you need progressively less and less sleep. This sounds mystical but it is not. You must understand this fact from the standpoint of the “Five Coverings.” The mind needs sleep because, after a whole day's gathering of the “Five Dusts,” it is covered with thick layers of dusts and is, therefore, tired and heavy. We need sleep in order to clarify the mind by allowing the dusts to settle into the Alaya; that is to say, to put them away in the storage. Proper meditation practice clarifies the mind without the necessity of much sleep. Meditation here acts like an agent or a good store-keeper who keeps all the in-coming stuff in order, so that he actually needs very

little time to put them away. Besides, the store is always in good order, neat, and effective. Thus, with the help of meditation our mind is not covered with messy dusts; therefore, it is obvious that it no longer needs the same amount of sleep in order to clarify itself. Consequently, you feel wide awake and your mind can always stay very conscious and clear.

There are times, however, when you will feel the need for more, rather than less, sleep after practice. The reason for this is that, during practice, you are cleaning your mind of impure karmas. Cleaning the mind of karmas is somewhat like sweeping the floor of dust. As you sweep the floor in order to make it clean, you may raise some dust which will fly into the air. Thus, sometimes after cleaning our mind of karmas, the “dust” we have swept into the air seems to becloud our mind. At that point, we should not give in to sleepiness. We should try hard to get up and walk about a bit in order to dispel the feeling of sleepiness.

(4) To Forsake the Covering of Restlessness

Restlessness is somewhat like irritation. We need to eliminate any restlessness that exists in our mind. In meditation, we will try to avoid any excitement so that we will be able to calm our mind. Restlessness generally comes from two sources: recollection of the past and the expectation of the future. Both of these can throw you into the abyss of remorse, nostalgic lamentation, worry, anxiety, and even never-ending reveries. In one word, this is the ailment of failing to keep in the conscious track of the present. Therefore, in meditation be sure to stick

to the *present*, and never dwell on the future or the past, for we need to come to the realization that the past was “deceased,” and the future is yet unborn — the deceased past is a shadow of a ghost and the unborn future is a figment of our imagination, and none of them has any real entity right now — so it is pointless to dwell on them and to be beguiled by them which are no more than illusions or delusive images conjured up by our own mind. This way, our mind will be able to remain tranquil and free from restlessness.

(5) To Forsake the Covering of Doubt

There are four kinds of doubts: the Doubts about the Buddha, the Dharma, the Sangha, and oneself.

a) The Doubts about the Three Jewels

If you have any doubt about the Three Jewels (the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha), especially about the Dharma, it will cause tremendous hindrances to your practice. In some gravest cases, it may even disable you totally in practice. Among the Doubts about the Dharma, the most serious one is the doubt about the Tathagata Nature, or the Buddha [Nature, or Original Nature, because if this Doubt arose, then all the Buddha Dharma in you would be annihilated to the last thread. For without the Buddha Nature, nobody can ever become a Buddha, and it follows that all the efforts of hard practice will be futile. And this is called by the Buddha the most evil view, for it keeps everybody from the quest of Bodhi and to remain ignorant and at the mercy of everlasting Samsara.

Thus, we must eliminate doubts concerning the

Dharma, or teachings of the Buddha, to the extent that we deeply believe that the Dharmas are good and are able to lead us to Nirvana or the Supreme Bodhi.

b) The Doubts about Oneself

This means the Doubt about one's ability to practice, or specifically, to attain the highest goal and in this case, to attain the Supreme Bodhi, Anatana-Samyaksambodhi. If we have any doubt of this sort, then it will certainly hold us back, and we will not exert ourselves to do our level best for it — because we see no hope: You seem to say to yourself: “No, I'm not made for this; not ME. This is much too high for me.” or “That's too perfect for me.” This is lack of self-confidence. And it would amount to nothing but heaps of excuses for laziness and shirking. But this self-doubt is against the first doctrine of Buddhadharma that ultimately all sentient beings share the same quality of Buddha Nature, and that eventually you will become a Buddha (otherwise the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas should not bother to come to inculcate us so patiently time and again). In the last analysis, all the self-doubts arise from the karma of Ignorance, the Ignorance about the ultimate truth. And this Ignorance has been practiced and accumulated for such a long time that it has become a karmic habit to us, so that we will be ever ready to revert to it “spontaneously,” should we consciously try to illuminate or change it in any way. But this karmic habit of Ignorance is so much against the Ultimate Truth, and so much in the way of our own Enlightenment, that we need to change it by all means, if we are to hope for any significant fruition in practice at

all. Otherwise, all the practice would be very flimsy, for, after all, even as common sense goes, Self-Confidence is the basis for any kind of enterprise. Therefore, to eliminate any doubt about yourself — your ability and your potentials — lies in the very core of all your practice. You should so educate yourself and reform your own pattern of thinking in this line that you will be spiritually and mentally correspondent to the Higher Dharma.

This has been the Second Step of the prerequisites for the fulfillment of Dhyana.

Step 3. To Perform the Five Practices

The first two steps of the “Prerequisites for Dhyana” are truly “prerequisites” as such; in other words, they are outfits you need to be equipped with *before* you begin to practice “serious meditation.” However, the Third Step stipulates the things you need to do both *before* and *in* (or *during*) meditation.

(1) The Wish for Dhyana

This means primarily the wish, or aspiration, for attaining the Dhyana state. We need to deliberately instill this wish into ourselves for, if we do not have the wish for Dhyana, then we will not be able to attain it. We must make the desire for the Dhyana state as strong as possible so that we strive as hard as we can in order to attain that state. The stronger the wish, the higher the attainment we can achieve. If our wish is weak, then our attainment will be limited, because wish is the origin of will. If we have a very strong desire to attain Dhyana, then we can attain it well.

This wish, however, is never inherent. This is the most important part of Buddhist teaching. Anything good, or any “good root” is learned, practiced, and cultivated and acquired; is not inborn. In Buddhist teaching and wisdom, no one is born a Saint or Bodhisattva or even Buddha. Buddhahood or Bodhisattvahood comes solely from wish, practice, perseverance, and the conquest of difficulties. Nothing comes from nothing. The higher the goal, the more effort it requires. Partly because the attainment of Dhyana is hard, and partly because of our impure karmas, we tend to grow lazy and become smug with the little we have achieved, we need now and again to prompt ourselves to grow ever-higher wishes for the Dhyana.

Thus, if you have a wish or aspiration for Dhyana, you must try to make that aspiration stronger and stronger — no matter how strong it already is, there is always room to do this to enhance it! And we need to strive hard to do this.

(2) Memory

Once we have made the aspiration for Dhyana as strong as we can, we must then keep that aspiration always in our mind; we must not forget it for an instant — this is important, but it is no easy task to do! Because of our karmic habits, we tend to forget things very easily — especially good things! Yet we have a strong tendency to remember bad things and cling to them tenaciously. Good things, however, no sooner have we learned them than we forget.

Here let me use an analogy of a man wandering in the desert for the illustration of this point. When this

man comes upon a pond of water, he rejoices and bends down to drink the water. Before he can drink at all, however, he must first brush aside the leaves and debris that are floating upon the surface of the water. After his first drink, if he wishes to drink again, he must once more brush the undesirable stuff aside — for they have again resumed to the former state to cover the surface. The leaves and debris are likened to our karmic dusts, and the pond to our Original Nature. Our Original Nature itself is always clean, but it is “undrinkable” (that is, not in its full use) until we brush aside the karmic dusts or debris from the surface. Once we do this, then we can drink from our original Nature (i.e., it can have its full, free play of its latent potentials — not a bit of energy is wasted, trammelled, or covered up — and this is called LIBERATION). But like leaves and debris, the karmic dusts cover our Original Nature again and again. And they must be removed again and again so that we may continue to drink from the pond of Original Nature, to get it into some use. To keep the water drinkable, we must constantly brush aside the karmic dusts. Once we stop brushing the karmic dusts away, we quickly forget how delicious the “water” of our Original Nature is. If we stop our practice (brushing aside the karmic dusts) for just one moment, then our pond (Original Nature) quickly becomes untidy again. Therefore, it takes continuous effort to accomplish the goal of Bodhi, and Memory has a significant role to play herein.

(3) Diligence

Diligence is one of the most important factors in Bud-

dhist practice. Just as a student who works hard will earn his degree more quickly than one who is slack in his studies, so too, if we work hard, we will attain Dhyana more quickly than if we are lax in our practice.

Sakyamuni Buddha relates the story about himself that in his past lives, a long time ago, when he was still an ordinary lay person, Maitreya had already avowed and started his Bodhisattvaship practice forty kalpas before. And yet, says the Buddha, Maitreya “took it easy” and did not strive hard for his aim. Later on, Sakyamuni finally made up his mind for the Supreme Bodhi, and he strove so hard and worked so diligently that he attained his Buddhahood even before Maitreya, who was supposed to become a Buddha first. This means that by his diligence, Sakyamuni has surpassed more than forty kalpas and thus shortened the distance of time to Buddhahood, as well as abbreviated ages of afflictions and rebirths, both of his own and lots of other sentient beings. Therefore, diligence is an imperative factor in achieving the goal faster.

(4) Ingeniousness

This means that you must objectively compare the merits of the Dhyana Realm with the demerits of this Desire Realm of ours in order to promote your wish for Dhyana. Visualization will help. Visualize how happy you will be after you attain some Dhyana; visualize how happy the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are upon achieving Dhyana. Therefore, Ingeniousness is to exhaust all the means to strengthen your will to attain your goal. Where the will is fortified, the way is bound to reveal itself.

(5) Single-Mindedness

Fix your mind fast upon your meditation. Do not let your thinking disperse or wander; when it does, pull it back again even by force. Before you can pull your mind back to the track, however, you must first be aware of the fact that your mind has wandered away. Most of the time we are not aware that our mind has gone astray. Once we are *aware* of its having wandered apart, we must force it back again. And this is going to happen ever so often that we will find ourselves doing the same thing.

It is important that you are not to be discouraged about this, for it is merely karmic habit that causes your mind to wander. With time and practice, you will improve and your mind will wander less and less, until it is finally fixed at one single point.

[Conclusion]

These are the three sets of “Prerequisites for Dhyana,” and they are virtually the “secret” to Dhyana, too. To sum it up once again, they are the prerequisites for serious meditation practice, and indeed, for “Professional Meditation”: Without conforming to these we are merely “Amateur Meditators.” There is no short-cut to Dhyana; if any, this is it.

Yet, this is not an easy path, for there is no easy Path. And, unfortunately, this is the only way to get to Dhyana. It is the original, the genuine, the authentic Buddhist teaching concerning meditation fulfillment. Meanwhile in our practice of meditation three things should be remarked:

1. Not to be deceived by others.
2. Not to deceive ourselves.
3. Not to deceive others.

All of these are difficult to avoid. If we do not wish to be deceived, then we must have the first-hand knowledge about the true state of things; that is, not by hearsay, but by the genuine teachings of proficient, experienced teachers, and preferably from the Sangha. We must have the proper “know how” so we will not be misled. This is true not only of Westerners, but also of Orientals. In Taiwan, China, America, and elsewhere, there are many different types of practices preached by many “teachers” with “supernatural” powers. It is easy to be deceived by charlatans. Innocent people are specially more gullible.

Secondly, we must not deceive ourselves. Many practitioners tend to deceive themselves into overrating their own accomplishments. Again, this is the outcome of being ignorant about the true state of things. Once we succeed in deceiving ourselves about our own achievements, then it will become fairly easy for us to deceive others. That is why on this globe right now we have so many living “Buddhas” or “Saints” who have founded so many different sects with numerous followers. To be free from self-deception is to be delivered from the timeless Ignorance, which will result in penetrating all the falsehood of phenomena as well as the illusion of the expansion of ourselves and its encroachment upon others. Once the self-deception is ultimately extirpated, we will be able to witness our “original looks” for the very first time. And this is much to be anticipated.

Thirdly, in order not to deceive others we must be able to detach ourselves from self-deception, as well as from the attachment to wealth, fame, prestige, respect, and the like. Any form of Buddhist practice that concerns itself with the acquisition of money or fame is bound to be false and destructive. The Buddha himself has told us that to practice Buddhism for this purpose is to follow Mara's karma and to become Mara's adherent, both figuratively and literally. In sum, to be able to transcend the Three Deceptions, one needs to acquire great wisdom, so as to see through all sorts of trickeries, delusions and illusions, both internally and externally.

[THE MEDITATION SESSION BEGINS]

[AFTER THE MEDITATION SESSION]

You may have noticed that, immediately after a deep meditation session, you do not wish to speak. This is due to the calming of your mind that takes place during meditation. This calming stills our mind and makes it quiet, to the extent that you do not incline to open your mouth or move your thought for speaking. Partly for that reason, after sitting meditation, we need to practice walking meditation, so that we can "recover" to our normal state of mind and regenerate it.

Lecture given on 5/27/1989



II. An Epilogue: The Origin of Walking/Running Meditation and the Incense Board

About 260 years ago, in the early Ching Dynasty in China, there lived an emperor called Young Cheng who was very powerful and a devotee of Buddhism. The emperor sent for a Ch'an priest named Tien Huei (meaning "Celestial Wisdom"), who had received the transmission of the Chou Dung Sect, to discuss the Dharma with him. Upon speaking about the High Dharma with this high priest, the emperor at once realized that the monk did not seem to know the Essentials of the Dharma and had not yet experienced enlightenment. Because he took the Dharma very seriously, the emperor became exceedingly angry with the monk and said, "I will give you seven days to tell me what the Essentials of the Dharma are. No one can decipher the essentials of the Dharma unless he is enlightened. I am going to send a guard to keep you under surveillance, and if you cannot tell me the Essentials of the Dharma in seven days, the guard will chop your head off!"

In olden times, if a monk was enlightened, he would not be afraid of anything and even emperors would prostrate themselves before him and honor him as Master of the State. But, of course, this monk in question was not yet enlightened, so he could not but go into strict retreat in order to get the answer and save his head. Later on, the emperor softened his position and told the monk that he would allow him twenty-one days to describe the Essentials of the Dharma.

In the first seven days of his retreat, the monk did not sleep at all — he could not! Instead, he vigorously meditated to pursue Enlightenment for his life was at stake! He practiced extremely hard for he knew that the emperor meant what he said.

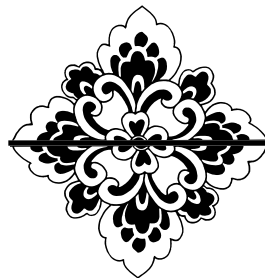
In the second seven days, again he did not dare to sleep, but practiced even more strenuously. By the fourteenth day, due to lack of sleep, he began to feel dull and drowsy and fell asleep for awhile. In no time he started up as from a nightmare, and he began to walk around the room in order to drive away sleep. During all of this time, guards took turns standing at the door to his hut — the guards who would behead him if he failed in his quest for enlightenment.

On the fifteenth day, the monk walked on in order to drive away sleepiness so that he could continue with his meditation. On the sixteenth day, Tien Huei — who was now extremely anxious — began to walk more quickly. On the seventeenth day, he walked even faster — gradually the walk grew to be a slow run. By the twentieth day the monk still had not attained anything.

On the twenty-first day, still anxiously striving for Enlightenment, the monk ran quicker and quicker and the more anxious he grew, the faster he ran, until, suddenly, he ran into a wall. His head was bruised and cut and bleeding, and he fell down onto the floor. At that very moment, all of a sudden, he said, “Oh, I see!” Tien Huei then tranquilly told the guard that he wished to speak to the emperor. The emperor, hearing this, realized that Tien Huei had achieved enlightenment and become a real Master.

This legend demonstrates that, when a person's life is at stake, he will practice very hard, no doubt. It also shows that enlightenment can come unexpectedly, and yet not without much painstaking effort. The monk, now enlightened, eventually became a Patriarch, and the practice of walking-running meditation (which is called *Pao-Hsiang* or “Running Incense” in Chinese) became a tradition with Ch'an meditation practitioners. This legend is also the origin of the “Incense Board.” The Incense Board is in the shape of a sword — the sword that threatens to chop your head off if you do not try hard to achieve enlightenment! And the sword also symbolizes the Sword of Diamond Wisdom which would cut off the cobwebs of timeless Ignorance and Illusions.

— **Lecture given on 5/27/1989**



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Publications

- *The Strategic Principles of the U.S. Psychological Warfare.* (A transl. Publ. Ministry of R.O.C., 1974)
- *Persuasion: How Opinions and Attitude are Influenced and Changed.* (A transl. Publ. Buffalo, Taipei, 1979)
- *A Commentary on Lankavatara Sutra.* (Mahayana Vihara, Taipei 1990)
- *The Writings of Kalu Rinpoche.* (Being Publ. in installments by **The Tse-Yuen** Magazine, Taipei, 1990)

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A Path to Ultimate Happiness

True Sincerity
towards others

Purity of Mind
Inside

Equality
in everything we see

Proper Understanding
of ourselves and our environment

Compassion
helping others in a wise and unconditional way

See Through
to the truth of impermanence

Let Go
of all wandering thoughts and attachments

Freedom
of mind and spirit

Accord with Conditions
go along with the environment

Be Mindful of Amitabha Buddha
wishing to reach the Pure Land and follow in His Teachings

From The Teachings of
Venerable Master Chin Kong

The Teachings of Great Master Yin Guang



Whether one is a layperson or has left the home life, one should respect elders and be harmonious to those surrounding him. One should endure what others cannot, and practice what others cannot achieve. One should take others' difficulties unto oneself and help them succeed in their undertakings. While sitting quietly, one should often reflect upon one's own faults, and when chatting with friends, one should not discuss the rights and wrongs of others. In every action one makes, whether dressing or eating, from dawn to dusk and dusk till dawn, one should not cease to recite the Buddha's name. Aside from Buddha recitation, whether reciting quietly or silently, one should not give rise to other improper thoughts. If wandering thoughts appear, one should immediately dismiss them. Constantly maintain a humble and repentful heart; even if one has upheld true cultivation, one should still feel one's practice is shallow and never boast. One should mind one's own business and not the business of others. Only look after the good examples of others instead of bad ones. One should see oneself as mundane and everyone else as Bodhisattvas. If one can cultivate according to these teachings, one is sure to reach the Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss.

Homage to Amitabha! Amitabha!