

Practical Buddhism
Alternative titles ;
ANALA ROAD TO
ENLIGHTENMENT
INSTANT SALVATION
MIND GUIDE
FAST ROAD TO HAPPINESS
HAPPY LIFE
THE SECRET OF BEING
LIVING IN HAPPINESS
STRONGER THAN EVER
RELIEVE FROM SUFFERING
GUIDE TO THE INNER LIFE

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Preface

Buddhism is deeply ingrained among its adherents in Asia. Taking different forms in different lands, Buddhism permeates the multitude of cultures that make up Burma, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore and in all other countries of Asia.

As in every religion, the basic concept of Buddhism lies within compassion and love; as in every religion, the root meaning of Buddhism is that which binds men together - and which binds the loose ends of impulses, desires and various other processes of each individual. Buddhism comes out of life and can never be divorced from it. The Buddhist emphasis on moderation, justice, patience and kindness, its essentially human qualities, are revealing clues to behavior in Asia. A contrast between Mainland and Insular Southeast Asia appears clearly in the field of religion. The mainland peoples are largely Buddhist in faith while those of the islands are Muslim and Christian.

There are also resemblances: deference, politeness, the desire for agreement, are profoundly embedded in cultures as superficially different as Buddhist Thailand, the Christian Philippines and Muslim Indonesia. And throughout the whole of the area there has always been a tendency to blending. Later religions diffused through earlier faiths. Examples are the syncretism's of Siva-Buddha in the Khmer Empire and Indonesia, and the more recent (and more complex!) Vietnamese syncretism of the Caodai, which combines elements of Buddhism, Taoism, Christianity, Confucianism and animism.

In Southeast Asia, syncretism is the attempt to sink differences and effect union between religions, or philosophical schools. In other words, effecting union is the higher goal, for which it can be worth sacrificing principle and dogma. Moreover, in the process of development in Southeast Asia, religions have attenuated much of their dogmatism.

What is Buddhism? According to the teachers, there are two ways to define it. There is a way to define Buddhism as The Teachings of the Buddha. These teachings cover a wide variety of subjects, contained in the sermons of the Buddha, preached over a period of forty-five years. In the beginning Buddhism was essentially a Hindu reform movement, and its philosophy owes much to Hindu notions of *maya\ which is the illusory nature of existence, and **moksha**\ enlightenment. The big difference is that the Buddha avoided the Hindu polytheism and the caste system. Buddhism was initially a practical, moral philosophy free from the priestly Brahman hierarchy. The eventual message of the Buddha is that suffering can be ended by realizing the ultimate reality ending up with Nirvana.

There is also a way to define Buddhism as 'The True State of the Nature of the World', which is consisting of

1. Mind, which can be described as mental states (citta) which are composed of mental properties 'cetasika';
2. Matter or form, which is called **rupa**
3. Nirvana, which is the annihilation of greed, aversion and delusion.

These three factors,

- citta/cetasika,
- rupa and

- Nirvana, are ultimate reality.

This is Buddhism. Buddhism has a commitment to a life of spiritual culture, issuing into an all-pervasive pattern of behaviour. Like other religions, it is occupied with the task of living and adjustment to the various demands of life and society. Buddhism offers no deity, no concept of divine revelation, no dogma to be taken on faith. In Buddhism, there are no such things like views, because when analyzed, views are all found to be onesided obsession rooted in some strong and often unseen emotion. Instead, there must be right understanding of things as they really are.

Dhamma is a difficult word to translate into English: the Law, the Teaching; the Truth Within Us; the Doctrine, have all been used. Dhamma is a fusing of rational and ethical elements. Dhamma is that which ought to be done, that which is established as necessary. The Whole Duty of Man¹ is a good phrase to express its comprehensive meaning. Dhamma comes very close to St. Paul's inward law, to conscience. Dhamma is almost an inner light. "Make what is right become", is what the Buddha said about this. Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha together form the Triple Gem. When going to a temple, Buddhists recite (in Pali) passages and verses venerating and praising the Triple Gem. Pali is the ancient language which the Buddha spoke.

Buddhists dedicate themselves to follow, understand and realize inwardly the meaning of Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha, because they see therein the marks of supreme and fearless Truth. Buddhism includes the most exalted philosophy yet achieved by man, combined with a psychology from which the West is only slowly beginning to learn.

Buddhism appreciates and cultivates important human capabilities such as

- kindness,
- generosity,
- patience,
- tolerance,
- cooperation and
- compassion.

These are all the qualities one might wish for in one's family and friends, Modern society must be very careful not to undervalue these qualities, otherwise people are reduced to a sum of the jobs they do plus the things they consume.

There is nothing which a Buddhist is forbidden to question. As a Buddhist, I am free to question any part of the Buddha's teachings: indeed my Teachers have encouraged me to do so. There is no teaching about which a Buddhist must just close his mind and blindly believe. This is because faith, in the Buddhist way, is not a blind quality but is combined with wisdom. My Teachers stressed that Buddhism has no philosophy which is divorced from either its practice or its realization. Buddhist philosophy must have a secure basis in virtue, collectedness and wisdom, with an attitude of respect towards any other religion. Like every religion, Buddhism emphasizes the spiritual goal as the real end of life and its activities. My Teachers try to live their philosophy to the full in every situation of life, and have always expected their students to strive to do likewise.

"Complications do not exist in Buddhism", said a Laotian monk to me, "the complications which exist in men's religious belief are the result of the complications in their own hearts". "If one would find Buddhism difficult to understand, then it is because of the difficulties which are found in oneself,

Acknowledgements

This book originally was written in the '80's while traveling in Asia was limited and discovering or even uncovering things was still difficult. Peter Gutter was a good friend at that time and he was very interested in Buddhism in all its particular aspects especially in context to the political situation in Southeast Asia. In the original version he did profound research of the position of Buddhist in connection to different Governments.

In this book I will use still a part of his work as even for today it still stands. His interest in the organization of the Sangha and the ordination of monks gives a clear view of what has and often is still going on in the organizations of the different directions.

To me organizations have always been a far distance call as the Buddha did need to organize people to promote his vision to the people and needed to organize the followers, but he only reached the enlightenment due to his individual practice and not because of being organized.

A book about Buddhism is not complete without a good historical and organizational overview but it is information to provide you with possibilities in life. Buddhism is based on your own individual actions. Your own actions will be followed by re-actions. With other words to put yourself inside an organization will never relieve you from duties nor responsibilities. To organize yourself will bring more duties and responsibilities.

In our modern society we are all organized, willingly or unwillingly. We are organized in cities, villages, communities and families. Like the Buddhist Sangha it brings duties and responsibilities. If we do not enter the Sangha to become a part of that we will need to take the same responsibilities for our family and friends, our organization is where we live and work.

In my past I worked mainly with people who had severe problems as addiction, aggression disorders, mental illness and often were considered asocial. At my everyday work I have tried to give them a place, make them share my life and teach them responsibilities. It is often hard to discover that when we are trying to help the mind is out of our control. I lost my best friends during the process. Chris Troch chose suicide as his last resort after he suffered severely from a life of depression. When his girlfriend killed herself by hanging in his own bedroom his mind could no longer cope with it and he became from bad to worse. The Western society could only offer him talks and medicine but no mental help. The result was an escape to death, Chris only reached 43 years of age.

Fred Bierlee was side by side with me everyday for over 15 years. His efforts went way past by a friendship as he became a second father of my youngest child. He had a schizophrenic disorder and heard voices in his head all day. At some days it was good but at other days he was terrified. Training did help him. The more painful and harder a training the softer the voices in his head. The only person who really could help him was my daughter. As a child she accepted him for who he was, a giant man with a small heart. But when the child became a woman he felt that he lost the battle. He needed to search other ways and found them in the use of medicines to enhance his training and more. It

all made him lose his personality. The fear of aging and the lack of real friends did the rest. He died at age 53 giving up hope to live.

Living is never considered easy. Above I only gave a few samples of recent past. To survive this life we need to find stability in mind and body. Often people talk about balance, personally I do not agree with the word. Balance is an equal position where all movement or motion is cancelled, there is no progress nor change. Live is movement, change, a constant look for stability. Krisnamurti mentioned once that there is yet but one constant factor in life ; change. No moment is the same, no action is repeated exactly the same way. Science wish to prove that they ae exact when copying a test in the same way and consider it prove when it happens. But according to the saying of Krisnamurti there is always change, so we need to expect other outcome.

In this book we go to search stability in our life, we search the ways we are able to use and comply to and every day situation. As I did learn from the most difficult moments the value opf a positive action oriented life I want to share with you the knowledge it gave me.

This book is written to share life with you and in honor of life I devote the sales turnover of this book to a charity that will be chosen by the participants, readers and writers of this book.

Thankfulness and gratitude

Hereby I would like to thank Peter Gutter for its ever devotion to Buddhism practice and profound knowledge of the topic. Most of all his humoristic vision on life while he never had an easy time !

How to use this book

This book is written in parts. It has a general structure which can be found in the free flowing text. In the 'intermezzo' columns I have added special topics. Each topic can be read as a separated entity. The reason for this highlights is to make you think and consider the options the world has to offer.

Your road to "happiness" does not only go thru rigorous meditation or hours of contemplating religious texts. In our current society we have less time for the lengthy discussions about topics that are not much of our daily concern and we must leave these to the scholars of religion and philosophy.

My, or better "our" book as this book would be never finished with the help of many people, book is written to reach understanding of life, of loving or at least how to find a desired target in your life.

Read the book chapter by chapter and never in a whole as the information is too much. Take a part a day to make your mind stay.

Be healthy and cool
Do not act as a fool
Read when you feel
That what you read is real
That you can swallow
To fill that what is hollow

Chapter

The Life of the Buddha

Most chronologies state that the Buddha lived probably from 563 to 483 B.C., but some place his birth three years earlier. The Buddha's life spanned the Babylonian captivity of the Jews, and his contemporaries included Confucius (551-479 B.C.) and the Hebrew prophet Zachariah. The child who was to become the Buddha elected to be born among the Sakiyas, who lived in a kingdom in what is now Nepal. His father, King Suddhodhana, was the elected ruler of the Sakiyas. It is recorded that at the time of birth of the King's son, various unusual occurrences took place which showed that the newborn child was indeed a very extraordinary being. The wise men who had been called in by the King, foretold that the infant Prince Siddhattha had two possible careers. He could become a mighty emperor ruling vast dominions; or otherwise leave the household life to gain supreme enlightenment by meditating alone.

Enlightenment would enable the Prince to show the Way to countless other beings for their welfare and happiness, this being the prediction of one seer. The King, of the warrior caste, of course liked the idea of the former career and certainly did not approve of the latter. The King made every effort to distract the young Prince from thoughts of renunciation. The King determined to keep Siddhattha well-amused within three palaces, one each for the hot, wet and cold seasons.

In particular, the King wanted to make sure that his son would never see

- a sick person,
- one grown old,
- a dead body or
- a wandering monk

since it had been predicted that if he did, they would be the cause of his leaving the household life. Therefore, anything was done so that the young Prince might remain content with worldly pleasures.

But the King had left out of his reckoning one factor about which he could do nothing, namely that the Prince was really a Bodhisattva: someone who, ages ago, had dedicated himself to supreme enlightenment.

The stories of the previous lives of the Buddha are called 'Jatakam'. There are five-hundred of these stories corresponding to five-hundred of his former existences.

A person who is a Bodhisattva cannot be deceived into accepting the decidedly inferior pleasures with which sense-desire is associated. A Bodhisattva strives to become perfect in virtues such as patience, wisdom, generosity, morality, kindness, purity, compassion and concentration. According to Buddhist faith, the accumulated merits and the liberating wisdom develop through a series of lives, indeed over vast periods of time.

One day, when he was nearly thirty, Prince Siddhattha requested his father that he might view his future realm outside the palaces, which he had never seen. His father gave in to this request and then ordered a hasty cleaning of the city. The people had instructions that the Prince should not on any account see a sick person, one grown old, a dead body or a wandering monk. However, one by one these sights appeared to Siddhattha anyway,

and upon seeing the wandering monk, the Prince thought: "Maybe that way of life may enable me to find out how to relieve mankind from their sufferings".

And though he was married and even had a son, Siddhattha gave up his wealth and left his palaces. Legend offers a touching picture of the young Prince, his mind set on a life of renunciation, getting up in the middle of the night to kiss his sleeping wife and little son farewell. Then he took a yellow robe, the sign of a religious man, and went into the forest in order to gain knowledge from religious teachers. There were a lot of religious men of all kinds in India at that time. The Hindus and Brahmins were already among them. Although Siddhattha studied with them and practised up to the high meditative levels which they had attained, he was not entirely satisfied, for the answers he sought to the questions about the world, birth and death, were not yet clear to him. It seemed as if something besides meditation was needed, so Siddhattha applied a method still popular as a religious discipline in India: that of extreme asceticism.

The lonely Gotama, for such Siddhattha must now be called, went to live in a forest and sat under a wild fig tree which is now known as the Bodhi tree. Bodhi means tree of wisdom. Gotama systematically starved himself until his body resembled a skeleton, and he refused to wash. In such a way he has taught us that those who aspire for Enlightenment must be ready to sacrifice everything. The severe practice he tried for six years, and then he found that this was only exterior renunciation: only the renunciation of bodily comfort. Gotama discovered that by giving pain to the body, the mind was not quietened. He perceived that at least some bodily strength was necessary to meditate successfully, and so cope with the lack of inner renunciation of desires. He learned about the 'Middle Way; perhaps this is more accurately translated as the Middle Path of Practice, avoiding all extremes.

Then Gotama took a bath in the river, had a meal of rice pudding, and went to the famous Bodhi tree at the place now called Bodh-Gaya. Gotama sought not merely to abandon the remaining subtle tendencies to false views and evil conduct, but also to break free from the bonds of conventional goodness. Having made goodness a strong part of one's character, and weakened evil, one has eventually to relinquish even attachment to the good, for perfect Enlightenment lies beyond all attachments. Gotama passed beyond the bonds of human nature, when he discovered the Infinite.

As he reviewed his spiritual progress, he thought about the common belief that man's spirit was continually living, dying, and being reborn again, in human or other forms. The way out lay in the ancient Vedic belief that the world and man's personal existence in it were just illusions.

Gotama saw for himself that people are always looking for trouble for themselves, this being the origin of human suffering. The trouble consists in the continual desire to possess, to have, to taste, to obtain more and more; what people consider pleasant are already the causes of their own suffering. And if man could somehow shatter his illusion of personal existence, he could escape from **Sctmsara** which is the cycle of rebirth, the cycle of suffering; and enter Nirvana. Gotama practiced meditation under the Bodhi tree in Bodh-Gaya, south of Patna on the Ganges. And with a mind calm and settled, he arrived successively at three great knowledges.

The first was knowledge of past lives.

The second was about the arising and passing-away of beings according to their volitional actions (kamma or 'karma').

The third was knowledge that the prison of unknowing must be shattered before the excellence of Buddhahood can be found.

Gotama thought over Dependent Origination (Paticcasamuppadda) both forward and back. A description of such in detail can be found in the section of this essay about the Teachings of the Buddha.

And one early morning Gotama felt the most profound insight anyone could ever have. He called his experience Enlightenment, and ever afterwards he was known by the title Buddha, or Enlightened One.

Then the Buddha thought of his five **erstwhile** meditation companions and perceiving that they were staying in the Deer Park at Benares, he went to them. He taught his First Discourse, the famous "Setting in Motion of the Wheel of Truth". The five ascetics then became the first five Buddhist monks; they later attained Nirvana as well. The Order of Buddhist Monks, or Sangha, was established and rules were gradually formed for its internal administration. Likewise an Order of Nuns was established at the request of Buddha's aunt Mahapajapati. Many of the Buddha's relatives chose to ordain as monks and nuns (his own wife and son ordained as respective nun and monk also after some time). The Orders are still open for monks and nuns who wish to devote their total energies to Buddhism.

Gotama was thirty-five at the time of his enlightenment and for forty-five years thereafter gave the Dhamma to all who wished to hear.

Nine levels of birth

In the final part of the *Amitāyurdhyāna Sūtra*, Śākyamuni Buddha discusses the 9 levels into which those born into the Pure Land are categorized. The levels are ranked from highest to lowest as follows:^[1]

1. The highest level of the highest grade
2. The middle level of the highest grade
3. The lowest level of the highest grade
4. The highest level of the middle grade
5. The middle level of the middle grade
6. The lowest level of the middle grade
7. The highest level of the lowest grade
8. The middle level of the lowest grade
9. The lowest level of the lowest grade

Sukhavati, (Sanskrit: "Pure Land") in the Pure Land schools of Mahayana Buddhism, the Western Paradise of the Buddha Amitabha, described in the Pure Land sutras (*Sukhavati-vyuha-sutras*). According to doctrine, only men may be reborn in Sukhavati; however, some vernacular Buddhist writings demonstrate a popular belief that women may also enter Sukhavati upon death. Sukhavati is expressively described in the Pure Land sutras as being a joyous world, soft and glowing, filled with the music of birds and the tinkling of trees adorned with precious jewels and garlands of golden bells.

Amitabha sits on a lotus in the midst of a terraced pond, attended by the bodhisattvas

("buddhas-to-be") Avalokiteshvara and Mahasthamaprapta. The newly dead enter into lotus buds, which unfold when the occupants have become entirely purified and have attained enlightenment. Many are said to be reborn on Earth after leaving Sukhavati to become bodhisattvas working toward the liberation (*moksha*) of all sentient beings.

The Child Buddha

The Shakya clansmen dwelt along the river Rohini that flowed among the southern foothills of the Himalayas. Their King Suddhodana Gautama had transferred his capitol to Kapila and there had built a great castle and had ruled wisely, winning the joyful acclaim of his people.

The Queen's name was Maya. She was the daughter of the King's uncle who was also a king of the neighboring division of the same Shakya clan. For twenty years they had no children, then, after dreaming a strange dream of an elephant entering her side, Queen Maya became pregnant. The King and the people looked forward with joyful expectancy to the birth of a royal child. According to their custom the Queen returned to her own home for the birth, and while on the way, in the beautiful spring sunshine, she rested in the flower garden of Lumbini Park. All about her were Asoka blossoms and in delight she reached out her right arm to pluck a branch and the Prince was born. All expressed their heartfelt delight and extolled the glory of the Queen and her princely child; even Heaven and Earth manifested their joy. This memorable day was the eighth day of April. The joy of the King was extreme as he named the child: Siddhartha, which means, "Every wish fulfilled."

2. In the palace of the King, however, delight was quickly followed by sorrow, for after a few days lovely Queen Maya suddenly passed away. Fortunately her younger sister, Prajapati became the child's foster mother and brought it up with loving care.

A hermit, who lived in the mountains not far away, noticing a glory about the castle and interpreting it as a good omen, came down to the palace and was shown the child. He predicted: "This prince, if he remains in the palace after his youth, will become a great King to rule the Four Seas. But if he forsakes the household life to embrace a religious life, he will become a Buddha and the world's Savior." At first the King was pleased because of the prophecy, but later became troubled at the thought of the possibility of his only son leaving the palace to become a homeless recluse.

At the age of seven the Prince began his lessons in literature and the military arts, but his thoughts more naturally ran to other things. One spring day he went out of the castle with his father and they were watching a farmer at his plowing; he noticed a bird flying down to the ground and carrying away a little worm which had been thrown out of the ground by the farmer's plough. He who had lost his mother so soon after his birth, was deeply affected by the tragedy of these two little creatures. He sat down in the shade of a tree and thought about it, whispering to himself: "Alas! Do all living creatures kill each other?"

This spiritual wound was deepened day after day as he grew up; like a little scar on a young tree, the sufferings of human life were more and more deeply carved into his

mind.

The King was increasingly worried as he recalled the hermit's prophecy and tried in every possible way to cheer the Prince and to turn his thoughts in other directions. At the age of nineteen, the King arranged the marriage of the Prince to the Princess Yasodhara, who was the daughter of Suprabuddha, Lord of Koliya castle and a brother of the late Queen Maya.

For ten years the Prince was immersed in a round of music, dancing and pleasure, in the different pavilions of Spring, Autumn and Winter, but ever his thoughts reverted to the problem of suffering as he pensively tried to understand the true meaning of human life.

"Luxuries of the palace, healthy bodies, rejoicing youth! what do they mean to me?" he meditated. "Some day we may be sick, we shall become aged, from death we can not eventually escape. Pride of youth, pride of health, pride of existence, all thoughtful people must cast them aside."

"A man struggling for existence will naturally look for help. There are two ways of looking for help, a right way and a wrong way. To look the wrong way means that, while he recognizes that sickness, old age and death are unavoidable, he looks for help among the same class of empty, transitory things. To look the right way means that he recognizes the true nature of sickness, old age and death, and looks for life in that which transcends all human suffering. In this palace life of pleasure I seem to be looking for help in the wrong way."

Thus the mental struggle went on in the mind of the Prince until his twenty-ninth year when his only child, Rahula, was born. This seemed to bring things to a climax and he decided to leave his palace home and seek the solution of his mental unrest in the homeless life of a mendicant. This plan he carried out one night, by leaving the castle with only his personal servant, Channa, and his favorite horse, the snow-white Kanthaka, and even these he left behind him when he had crossed the river at the bounds of his Father's kingdom.

But his mental troubles were not at an end and many doubts beset him. "Perhaps it would be better for me to return to the castle and seek some other solution; then the whole world will be mine." But he resisted these doubts by realizing that nothing worldly could satisfy him. So he shaved his head, carried a begging bowl in his hand, and turned his mendicant steps to the south.

The Prince first visited the hermit Bhagava and watched his ascetic practices; then he went successively to Arada Kalama and Udraka Ramaputra to learn their methods of attainment, but after practicing them for a time became convinced that they would not lead him to enlightenment. Finally he went to the Magadha country and practiced asceticism in the forest of Uruvilva on the banks of the Nairanjana river where it flows by the Gaya Castle.

The methods of his practice were unbelievably intense. He spurred himself on with the thought that "no ascetic in the past, none in the present, and none in the future, ever

have or ever will practice more earnestly than I do."

Still, the Prince could not get what he sought. After six years in the forest he gave up the practice of asceticism. He bathed in the river and accepted a bowl of food from the hand of Sujata, a maid who lived in the neighboring village. The five companions who had lived with the Prince for the six years of his ascetic practices looked on with amazement that he could receive food from the hand of a maiden; they thought him degraded thereby and left him. The Prince, thus, was left alone. He was still feeble but at the risk of his life he attempted a final meditation, saying to himself, "Blood may become exhausted, flesh may decay, bones may fall apart, but I will never leave this place until I find the way to enlightenment."

It was an intense and incomparable struggle! His mind was desperate, was filled with confusing thoughts, dark shadows overhung his spirit, he was beset with all the lures of evil. But carefully and patiently he examined them one by one and rejected them all. It, indeed, was a hard struggle, that made his blood run thin, his flesh creep, and his bones crack. But when the morning star appeared in the eastern sky, the struggle was over and the Prince's mind was as clear and bright as the day-break. He had found the path to enlightenment at last. It was December the 8th, when he was thirty-five years of age that the Prince became Buddha.

(exerpted from *THE TEACHING OF BUDDHA, THE BUDDHIST BIBLE*)

Chapter 2

The Teachings of the Buddha

The spiritual training of a Buddhist is divided into three parts, known respectively as morality, meditation and wisdom.

A morally blameless or virtuous life is the basis of all other achievements. All Buddhists, whether Theravada or Mahayana, subscribe to the Four Noble Truths.

The Four Noble Truths represent a linked chain of reasoning leading from spiritual bondage to freedom:

- I. All forms of existence are subject to 'dukkha (unsatisfactoriness, suffering, disease, imperfectness);
- II. Dukkha is caused by desire or craving *tanha*
- III. The extinction of *tanha* results in the extinction of dukkha (this state of extinction is the annihilation of greed, aversion and delusion: called Nirvana);
- IV. Nirvana is attained by following the Noble Eightfold Path (*atthangika-magga*).

The Eightfold Path may be called the Middle Way, since ideally it avoids both extreme austerity and extreme sensuality. When you practise the Eightfold Path you realize the Four Noble Truths - and thus Enlightenment. Numerous interpretations of Nirvana have been proposed, but the scriptures, in the absence of a precise explanation from the Buddha, throw little light on the subject. One point is certain: Nirvana is the end of suffering. Some teachers claim that Nirvana is a state of sublime selflessness, the ultimate reality, eternal serenity. Other teachers state that Enlightenment is not exactly the same as Nirvana, but that it even goes beyond Nirvana: one should eventually have to leave the bliss of Nirvana to proceed to Enlightenment. When the Buddhist has fully experienced, realized, the Four Noble Truths, he casts off not only all desire to live, but also all desire not to live. Thus the circuit of rebirths is severed. The Eightfold Path, properly followed, destroys defilements that are the cause of suffering.

"Defilements can only be destroyed with wisdom. The practice of the Eightfold Path develops wisdom. Wisdom is the key to enlightenment", my Teacher said. The Noble Eightfold Path consists of:

1. Right Understanding (called *samma-ditt* in Pali language);
2. Right Mindedness, also called: Right Thought ('*samma-sati*');
3. Right Speech ('*samma-vaca*);
4. Right Action ('*samma-kammanta*);
5. Right Livelihood ('*samma-ajiva*);
6. Right Effort (*samma-vayama*)\
7. Right Awareness, also called: Right Attentiveness (*samma-sankappa*)\
8. Right Meditation, also called: Right Concentration (*samma-samada*).

These eight tenets belong to the three parts of Buddhist spiritual training, namely morality ('*sila*') 3 to 6; meditation ('*samadhi*') 7 and 8; and wisdom ('*panna*') 1 and 2.

What is Right Understanding?

In Buddhism, it is the ability to understand that there is a common purpose of life, and that there exists a natural principle known as skamma to govern. In the context of Buddhism, kamma is defined as '* action based on intention'. Actions free of intention are not considered to be kamma in the Buddha's teaching. Kamma is a word from the Pali language, and has the same meaning as the often used 'karma which is the Sanskrit spelling. A life of unsatiated fancies and desires defies the laws of kamma. Such a life is therefore bound to samsara, cycle of birth and death, which means repeated sufferings.

Since the delusion of being a permanent self or dealing with permanent things is held to be the root cause of all our grasping and craving, and hence of all human bondage and suffering, the denial of the self-belief is in some respects the central teaching of Buddhism. The Buddha thought over Dependent Origination (**paticcasamiippa**) both forward and back:

- on ignorance depend intellectual differentiations;
- on intellectual differentiations depends consciousness;
- on consciousness depend name and form;
- on name and form depend the six organs of sense;
- on the six organs of sense depends contact;
- on contact depends sensation;
- on sensation depends desire (in Buddhism, desire means blind want, the want by means of ignorance);
- on desire depends attachment; on attachment depends existence, which is suffering;
- on existence depends birth;
- on birth depend old age, sickness, sorrow, grief, misery and death; thus does this entire aggregation of misery arise.

But, otherwise,

- on the complete fading out and cessation of ignorance, cease all intellectual differentiations;
- on the cessation of intellectual differentiations ceases consciousness;
- on the cessation of consciousness cease name and form;
- on the cessation of name and form cease the six organs of sense;
- on the cessation of the six organs of sense ceases contact;
- on the cessation of contact ceases sensation;
- on the cessation of sensation ceases desire;
- on the cessation of desire ceases attachment;
- on the cessation of attachment ceases existence;
- on the cessation of existence ceases birth;
- on the cessation of birth, there will be no such things as old age, sickness, sorrow, grief, misery and death any longer; thus does this entire aggregation of misery cease.

The aggregation of misery is samsara, the cycle of birth and death. When enlightenment, or Nirvana, is experienced, samsara has come to an end. Nirvana, the annihilation of greed, aversion and delusion, eventually leads to the ultimate end of all corporeal

existence. The Buddha emphasized that human life is the main stage in the universal process and is the only stage from which enlightenment can be reached. As the duration of the present life is so uncertain, it is time that man should give thought to the fact that a life in which the lower instincts are permitted to destroy its natural harmony, will not lead to enlightenment. The common purpose of life is to strive for enlightenment.

My Teacher said: "One should realise that being born a human being is a rare and not a common occurrence. One should thus be grateful to one's parents: not only for their tender care, but also for having given one an opportunity to fulfil one's supreme duty and free oneself forever from suffering. Should the opportunity afforded in our present lives be unheeded and lost, millions of years may pass before we find ourselves once more born into the human state".

What is Right Mindedness?

In Buddhism, it is also called Right Thought. It means that one should not judge but must try to take an objective attitude. Good and bad are equal if the perspective of the viewer is changed in another direction. Often we do not have enough information to be able to judge and do we take an emotional point of view on which we base our judgement. It is important to take an objective position when encountering a situation. Do not be led by emotions as greed, hate, love, needs or information of third party.

What is Right Speech?

In Buddhism, it means that one avoids lying and abstains from it. One is devoted to the truth and also speaks the truth. One avoids vain talk, tale-bearing and harsh language. One speaks with moderation at the right time what is useful, in accordance with facts.

What is Right Action?

The Buddhist observance of the Five Precepts ("pancasila") results in Right Action. The fourth precept of the pancasila could also be placed under the tenet of Right Speech. A Buddhist monk proceeds to chant the Five Precepts in Pali language, whereupon each one of which the laypeople repeat after him:

- I. "Panatipata veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami"
("I undertake the rule of training to refrain from destroying life");
- II. "Adinnadana veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami"
("I undertake the rule of training to refrain from taking what is not given");
- III. "Kamesu micchacara veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami"
("I undertake the rule of training to refrain from wrong-doing in sexual desires");
- IV. "Musavada veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami"
("I undertake the rule of training to refrain from false speech");
- V. "Sura-meraya-majja-pamadatthana veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami"
("I undertake the rule of training to refrain from distilled and fermented intoxicants which cause heedlessness").

These Five Precepts are also the first five rules of the Patimokkha, the 227 fundamental rules of a Buddhist monk.

Although the pancasila system of the Five Precepts is technically a Buddhist concept, it is universal in implications. It can be found in all ancient and modern morality. For example, **Pancavratd** in Jainism and '**Pancayamd** in Hinduism which deal with five principles of non-violence, truth, non-stealing, non-possession and no adultery are very similar to the Buddhist Five Precepts. It also appears in the Ten Commandments upheld by the followers of Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

What is Right Livelihood?

In Buddhism, it means that one should follow a trade compatible with the first four tenets of the Eightfold Path: for example, one should not be a butcher or an armourer. One should attend to one's cost of living in a fair and honest way.

What is Right Effort?

In Buddhism, it is making the moral effort to remove all evil from one's mind and prevent new evil from entering. One must develop one's good qualities, which demands effort.

What is Right Awareness?

In Buddhism, it is also called Right Attentiveness. One should always be aware of the Three Characteristics, the realization that any and all mental and physical phenomena are impermanent ('anicca¹), unsatisfactory (fdukkh^{af}) and insubstantial e.g. non-self ('anatta¹). Right Awareness also points at mindfulness with regard to the Seal of the Three Laws:

1. Everything is Impermanent;
2. Everything is Dependent;
3. Nirvana is Peace.

What is Right Meditation?

In Buddhism, it is also called Right Concentration. As a matter of fact, meditation is a rather inadequate rendering of several more precise terms in Pali. Equivalents to some of these in English are mental development, one-pointedness, collectedness or absorbed concentration. The practice of meditation removes the mental hindrances, such as sense-desire, restlessness, scepticism, sloth, torpor, ill-will and worry. Meditation is characterized by a vastly increased power of mindfulness, and it is not making the mind blank, since the meditative mind always has one object.

My Teachers agree that there are two basic types of Buddhist meditation:
samatha and
vipassana .

The word samatha is derived from the Pali word 'samadhi¹ which means concentration. This type of meditation is considered preparatory in the sense that one practices samatha to establish mental calmness and a ba level of concentration, with which to proceed to vipassana.

Vipassana is considered the more important of the two practices. Anapanasati, which is contemplation of the breath, is a very commonly taught samatha technique in Southeast Asia.

Samatha has been defined by Teacher Prasert in this way: "It means firmly placing, the act of putting or placing the mind and mental Sanctions evenly and properly on one object". My Teacher in Burma stated that "mind is not a solid or permanent whole, but just a series of states of consciousness occurring one at a time at rapidly falling away. When the mind is seen this way, illusion is less likely to prevail". If you follow the Eightfold Path, you follow the Middle Way; and with the practice of Buddhist meditation it is the same. My Teachers in Thailand explained that one-pointedness in carrying on noble activities is the highest meditation.

Anapanasati, the contemplation of the breath, has four foundations upon which to set the mind while breathing in and breathing out:

- the body,
- the feelings,
- the mind and
- the mind-objects.

Anapanasati is a type of meditation which is based on mindfulness. It has been described by the Buddha in the Satipatthana Sutta. The Buddha explained that mindfulness is the only way for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow, for the destruction of pain and grief, for reaching the right path; for realization of Nirvana. Vipassana is actually the result (insight) from Satipatthana. Vipassana is insight meditation. It is mental cultivation leading to seeing clearly into reality.

Vipassana refers to the personal realization of the Three Characteristics: every mental and physical phenomenon is

- anicca (impermanent),
- dukkha (unsatisfactory) and
- anatta (insubstantial e.g. non-self).

Usually dukkha is listed as the second of the three, but this order seems more traditional than logical, for suffering is essentially the emotional result or living manifestation of the qualities of impermanence and insubstantiality of all beings. One is taught not to do anything absent-mindedly and to be in the present moment as much as possible. Samatha and vipassana are meditation types mainly from the Theravada tradition. In the context of this essay, these are Burma, Thailand, Laos and Cambodia. Vietnam, on the other hand, is part of the Mahayana tradition. There are various Zen sects in Vietnam.

Although Theravada disciplines and traditions continue to exert their influence in the daily activities of Vietnamese Buddhists, Zen comes closest to expressing the Vietnamese character, and as such their attitude towards life can be described as a Zen outlook. Thien (Vietnamese for Zen) is by far the most important sect. The practice of Thien is by no means easy. It requires a profound and powerful inner life, long and persistent training and a strong, firm will. The attitude of Thien towards the search for truth (and its view on the problem of living in this world) are extremely liberal. Thien does not recognize any dogma or belief that would hold back one's progress in meditation or in

daily life. Thien differs from orthodox religions in that it is not conditioned by anything, not even by the original teachings of the Buddha in many situations.

Vietnamese Zen is an attitude or a method for arriving at knowledge and action. For Zen the techniques of right eating and drinking, of right breathing and right concentration and meditation, are far more important than mere beliefs. Someone practising Zen meditation does not have to rely on beliefs in Nirvana, rebirth or causality. The Zen meditator has only to rely on the reality of his body, his psychology and the instructions of Zen masters who taught him. The Zen Buddhist's aim is to attain, to see. Once he has attained satori (insight) his action will conform by itself to reality.

Ten far reaching attitudes

Mainly in Mahayana the ten far reaching attitudes are practiced amongst bodhisattvas and not by shravakas. The reason is that it is considered only possible to be practiced when a person has reached a state of perfection or bodhicitta. In Theravada it is considered that no matter who you are you can study and practice the ten far reaching attitudes. Due to this the list also slightly differs.

Mahayana

- generosity
- ethical self –discipline
- patience
- joyful perseverance
- mental stability
- discriminating awareness
- skill in means
- aspirational prayer
- strengthening
- deep awareness

Theravada list omits mental stability, skill in means, aspirational prayer, strengthening and deep awareness. It adds in their places

- renunciation
- being true to one's world
- resolution
- love
- equanimity

Whether Theravada or Mahayana, one has to see the truth in oneself first, then the truth in everything else will be seen. "You must do the practice yourselves, the Buddha only points the Way", was written in the Dhammapada. I may note in passing that for Buddhism truth and reality are the same, especially in their ultimate natures. This is implied in Buddhist teaching that truth is to be realized, not merely known about, and that realization of the truth makes a difference in the realizer: for a truth which cannot be thought about by words, but must be felt-thought, is one which has a kind of perceptible reality about it. Those who have the strange illusion that Buddhism would be a religion of careless meditative isolation offering society no special benefits, should understand that according to Buddhism society can only be changed for the better; and

with this change, the Buddhist should start working on himself. The Buddhist call is therefore first to gain peace in one's own heart, when will follow quite naturally peace in the world around.

Trying to obtain peace in the opposite direction will not be practical and won't produce a lasting peace, because in that case the roots of greed, aversion and delusion are still in the hearts of people. One day a student asked my Teacher: "Isn't Buddhism rather pessimistic?" My Teacher smiled: "Pessimistic?" "Yes, the Three Characteristics that Buddhists talk about, namely that everything is impermanent, suffering and without self, sound pessimistic", the student said. My Teacher replied in a friendly voice: "It is the truth. We are always suffering. When we are eating food we are curing suffering; even if we blink our eyes we are curing suffering. Salvation in Buddhism must be aided by a balanced understanding of life in this world and for this, notice has to be taken of suffering. It is the Truth". My Teacher smiled again, and continued: "People who have never seen, or do not want to see Dukkha, will not be interested in Buddhism and cannot practise it. Those who know something of dukkha will understand. It is realism. It is the Truth. So, if facing the truth is pessimistic, well, Buddhism is pessimistic but it is the Truth". If people find suffering in life, Buddhism offers an answer to this. Realizing the Three Characteristics, pessimistic or not, provides the answer. Those who take up the cultivation of mindfulness will find out for themselves how it helps to solve life's problems.

PART

How to use this part

Do not read all of the chapters at once. Take a chapter a day. Try to apply what you read. Some chapters look very contradictive but that is done so on purpose. Life is full of contradictions. In contradictions we find organization. To organize our mind we need to go through many conflicting situations.

This part is written to be used. Everything is practical based. In over 30 years of daily application of the teachings I discovered the distance between many scholars and profound teachers and the realistic life of every day. As many prophets say ; it is not in the scripture you find the solution but in the application of them in everyday life. This part is what and how we can use all we learn every day of our life.

Practical application

The teachings of Buddhism can be used in strictly theoretical sense and in a practical way. In my daily life and work I prefer to use a practical approach. We are no longer able to go for a long period of retreat in a forest or monastery, at least not for most of us. Choosing a spiritual life in the care of the monastery or a lonely retreat to a spiritual inspiring place is for most people an impossible act in life. Buddha also did understand that the majority of people will never be able to give up the day to day life for a devoted spiritual life. This part of the book is written to be a guide line for daily activities in the most practical way.

How did I find these practical road to a better spiritual life ? The most simple explanation is that I combined sport, study and work in a daily practice. In my daily life I also had the care of a family with children, a housekeeping, shops and employee. As to all people sometimes the situation became so tensed that I had to find a way to escape the reality of the day. My sport is Muay Thai and this has guided me to a better reality. The hard training of the sport, the hours of daily practice and the needed discipline in training and teaching have been my guide to a better spiritual life.

In Buddhism we all condemn violence. For the outsider Muay Thai is extreme and practical violence. Especially in the Western world it was seen as a criminal linked, hard and merciless sport. In fact Muay Thai teaches compassion, respect, tolerance and gives a road to a higher spiritual lifestyle. The opposite what has been shown by the display of kicks, punches and other fighting to the outsider.

As we all learn from this book what we see is not reality. Most of what we see is illusion, made up by our brain of thoughts and memories. Hitting and kicking is often connected with violence to the innocent. Originally Muay Thai was only designed for the warrior, the soldier. A soldier in peacetime had to be well trained to come into action in a time of war. Muay Thai is developed as a method of proper exercise and test of the individual.

A test for the individual as we undergo every day. We all are tested every single day in our lives. In a city environment even more than on the country side. Today more than yesterday or the ancient centuries in which the Buddha lived. Throughout the centuries

there have been wars and crime always. But due to the amount of people it was less possible to become a victim than in the current day. Our society has changed and we all have come under a constant treat. No longer of a visible enemy, most of the dangers come from hidden places, from places we cannot see, feel or touch. We fight with unseen enemies that are threatening our daily lives.

Who are these enemies ?

First of all we can consider the things we see as our best friends : our computers, the internet, our social networks , taxes, duties, schooling, examinations and so many more realistic but untouchable friends. Most do also feel threatened by them. For some they are the source of daily sorrow and even fear. Yes our friends are the worst enemies in reality and thoughts. The question we need to answer in this book is how we deal with these enemies situations.

Who are our friends ?

We feel bounded to some people in our live. These people we consider friends. But the word "friend" did get other dimensions in the current time of internet. People no longer really know how to define real friendship, most even cannot even define a real relationship. Our friends are all people who are in our mind, people we feel really connected with. Most friends support you in good and bad times, they share your life. But some friends are on a distance, they are there but you do not often or ever see them. The cyber life has changed our ability to make friends and even our emotional binding to friends. We will need to ask our self again who are our friends ?

Buddhism is the way of the middle. As you see I mention enemies and friends in separate chapters but in fact they are the same. In our mind we make a strong distinguish of who we like and want and who we prefer or not. This is all based on our emotional connection with people. We want friends and by discriminating people we also get enemies. We will never ask for enemies but get them anyway in live. People who do not like us from the size of our shoes or the color of our hair or skin. Our target in Buddhism is to learn how to find a way to love even our enemies. It is easy to love our friends but being positive or even neutral of our enemies is one of the most difficult tasks in life.

Burn out

Burn Out is a serious problem for many people.

What is it ?

The name Burn Out suggest a total finish of fuel, a moment that the energy stops to flow. When a person suffers from a Burn Out he , or she, can do nothing anymore. The body cannot be moved much, there is no energy for anything, a sufferer wants to sleep the whole day but when waking up feels even more tired. Every day is a struggle for survival. Each new day feels as a burden to the soul, a torch of dark fire in the mind and a mind that cannot think of anything anymore.

Burn Out is the total collapse of a person's mental and physical energy. Having a Burn Out can take weeks, months but more often years and for many it ends in a suicide. We consider Burn Out a managers disease but it occurs more and more with the employee due to the rigorous woking system in China.

It is hard to cure when treated with the traditional medical ways. To treat a burn out is to learn a complete new lifestyle, a change that takes time and must be guided by specialist in that field. In the world there are currently only very few specialist, Arnaud van der Veere is one of them.

A Burn Out (BO) is a mental problem that slowly starts and over time controls the body completely. It start with little signs in the body. At first the body gives different signs that a persons need to slow down, the body sends information that it needs time to rest and be taken care of.

At the beginning of the Burn Out process we see a slow building up of the problem in following pace ;

- Skin rashes or other irritations with an unknown source
- Pain in muscles and joints without any relation to exercises
- Problems to focus and concentrate
- Feeling tired
- Sleeping and sexual activity problems
- Eating disorders

When these problems start to show in combination with each other we can consider it as a build up to the more or less permanent Burn Out. The person who suffers from a Burn Out can consider her life ended and her professional career finished. This is a terrible but al to realistic thought. When this occurs to the person it can lead to a chronic state of depression and more serious events like suicide. You understand that we need to treat Burn Out as a very serious problem and not taken lightly.

Can we treat a Burn Out ?

During my thirty years of working with addiction and other mental problems we discovered a number of ways to treat the persons who suffers of a BO. It is important for every person who wants to have a professional career to know the signs of a beginning burn out. People who know they have the first signs of BO start to look for treatments as her medical doctor is not able to find the source and starts giving drugs. When the drugs do not work the sufferer start to look for her own ways. These ways are often in the direction of special medicines, alcohol or drugs.

Woman will go to meditation and yoga classes to learn to relax. "Self help" is considered a real managers need to survive. But this kind of "self help" ends often in a worsening of the disease.

Healing a Burn Out is a combination of treatment and mental education. At first we explain the manager a new lifestyle as show here in this book and help to strengthen the positive personal powers which are already available. The medical world treat them as patient, more often medical problems, but they are not ! A person suffering from a Burn Out does not have a medical problem. They have a mental lifestyle problem.

Our treatment focus on the strength and weakness of the person. We use methods from Asia and the West combined to create a balance. The treatment is to enhance a person's qualities and improve performance. When a person finish our treatment he / she is a stronger and more balanced person, a better person than ever before. Most off all he

will feel a new life power that will last the rest of his life.

The steps of treatment are simple and effective ;

- Communication via the CMF modeling. It is very important the person explains its daily life and routine behaviors. Every step of the day can lead to important facts which can trigger the start of a Burn Out. The home situation with family and friends, with lovers or external relationships, intimacy, work and career and all that matters to life will pass the communication lines. A picture of lifestyle occurs and we get to know each other better.

- The treatment starts in a total strange place. This place is never a medical place as we consider the person as not sick but temporary out of order. We use the power of nature, the possibility to breath well and use space as a way to enlarge the human mind. In a narrow place with artificial light it is very hard to recover.

- With this map in hands the treatment get a number of focus points in specific order such as

- o Environment analyses. We map the environment where the customer works and lives. During this process we make suggestions of change and improvements.

- o A health = wealth plan. We map the persons health by interview, tests and performance. From this we draw a new lifestyle plan that can be implemented in steps such as a

- o Physical activity plan

- o Food and drink planning

- o Relax and entertainment planning

- o A new approach to life management. We introduce a new vision on how to manage life.

- o A personal plan to happiness. This plan is designed with the person to set up a series of goals in the future and a route toward them.

- After we finish the initial treatment procedure we focus on the re-emerging of the manager in society. As a team we work toward a re-energizing of the managers capacities and life fulfillment. The ways we use are completely new and every person has shown to be extremely happy with this re-energizing period.

- Test period. For most persons this period is about one week to a maximum of a month. After this the person and our expertise center comes together for evaluation of the period and analyses the planning to reality of the person .

My DIY tips to prevent yourself from going down the ladder and suffer from above mentioned problems ;

- Take one day a week off for personal affairs, it does not matter which day and also not really needed to be a specific day but you need to plan this day at least one week in advance

- When you are a woman : Career woman have the tendency to copy men behavior , that is ridiculous and dangerous. Being a woman does not mean you need to be in front of the mirror all day or go for shopping. A real woman loves to care of her body, find the moments of peace in music of words, take time to love and be loved, get a massage or beauty care.

- Take time for a relationship. Most man / woman cannot find a man / woman

relationship that fits all their demands. Most likely the man / woman is able to find a person that comes at least close enough to be trusted and to share intimate time with (not meaning sex !)

- Plan but do not over plan. An agenda is a tool and you can lose it. Do not plan your life on the minute. Stress often occurs when you start counting and expecting. Expectation on events , payments, contracts and more are the source of suffering. Sometimes you have to accept things go another way than you have planned, relax and let it go. Search new goals, we will hand many to you in this book.

When we look back at the warrior in this case symbolized by Muay Thai we can see that no matter who we fight against in the competition of life, we need to fight, friend or enemy alike. We need to show the same respect and have the mentality while fighting. We fight not to let our emotions take the upper hand but to control them in all means because the warrior knows that when the emotions take over he/she will lose the fight always.

Our first step today is to visualize good and bad. Look around you and distinguish what you consider good and what you consider bad. The second step is to take a distance from the topic and become an interviewer. Think of you are standing there and watching from a distance with a microphone or camera in your hand. You are no longer a part of these good and bad things. Now analyze how good or bad these things are. Is the good really that good and the bad really that bad ?

Your first task of this book is to learn to distance yourself from an everyday situation, become an observer. Control your emotions from a distance. The first thing we need to learn is to make it less personal. Life is connection but to live life in full you need to disconnect sometimes to oversee it.

5.1 What is the meaning of the teachings in our daily life

Before his onset to become the Gautama , the Buddha searched for all ways to reach enlightenment. He went through different stages of extremity to test the human body and mind. He found that only the Middle Path could lead to a better life and enlightenment. To us this is important. Our daily life consist often extreme happenings. Most of us are under extreme pressure every day. Work, school, private life, commercial standards, official duties, name them and you understand what I say.

The Middle Path is a way to find stability in life, to find a way to survive and to reach a healthier mental state. Yes, I do not mention any more than just a healthy mind in a healthy body, that is the beginning. We all need to make a beginning, the first steps are the most important.

We need to create time to get space in our life to evaluate the teachings and pay time to meditate. In the beginning we must try to combine a physical and mental exercise together for the best result. The best way is to use a short Sutra / Tantra as a way to focus on exercise and mental awareness. Mindfulness is an important step remember the 8 fold path of wisdom and you discover the Right Mindedness, also called: Right

Thought ('samma-sati'); To be aware of what we do and how we do it. This exercises help you in the struggle for daily sorrows, you become aware of the faintness of them.

The most important part to know when you study the teachings is what you personally can do with them. Most books and teachers will refer to a more spiritual setting of the teachings but Buddha was also a very practical man. He was in a house that did offer him everything, a future that was set and ready for all things in life and yet he chose to leave all behind to find his way. This is not so ideological as most people think, it is very practical.

He KNEW that when he stayed in the castle he would never reach peace of mind, stability of his senses and surely never would have the space to explore extremities of life. That would never been allowed by his environment. So he chose to leave. This is a first step to be practical. Know where you are, know your environment.

After you read this, look around you. Is this the place you want to grow old, is this the place that will allow you to reach a higher state of mind ? Look at who you are , your responsibilities, your ambitions in life and most of all toward the satisfaction of the current life. Are you satisfied, are you able to grow here ?

I am sure that most readers will think that they do not have a choice in life. Maybe that is true, but a little doubt can bring thoughts and ideas of how to change your life, how to create space for mental development. In the pure form of Buddhism we can find the solutions for the everyday problems as you will discover.

In former part I did ask you to look around. What did you discover ? Could you get a clear image of your life now ? For most it is impossible ! While looking around your mind will flow from one thing to the other. You see the dirty dishes on the table, you need to clean the room as you see dust. Fact is that your mind swings from an internal to an external thought. No longer you care about yourself or your mental state, you care of the exposure outside.

Today you get another task, sit in the room, even when many people are around, it is still not the way you want the room and close yourself down. For a moment try to close all incoming senses down. Try to get silence inside your head, even it is for just a little moment. Here I would like to introduce the Twelve Nidanas to you.



The Twelve Nidanas, The Twelve-fold Chain

Cause	Effect	Comments
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<i>Ignorance</i> - (Avijjā)	<i>Fabrications (volitional tendencies)</i> - (Saṅkhāra)	Not knowing ; the suffering, the origination of suffering, the end of suffering, the way of practice this is called Avijja.
<i>Fabrications (volitional fabrications)</i> - (Saṅkhāra)	<i>Consciousness</i> - (Viññāṇa)	These three are fabrications: bodily, verbal, mental. This is called Sankhara
<i>Consciousness</i> - (Viññāṇa)	<i>Name-and-form</i> - (Nāmarūpa)	These six are classes of consciousness: eye-, ear-, nose-, tongue-, body-, intellect-. This is called Vinnanja.
<i>Name-and-form</i> - (Nāmarūpa)	<i>Six sense media</i> - (Saḷāyatana)	Feeling, perception, intention, contact, and attention: This is called name. The four great elements, and the body dependent on the four great elements: This is called form. This is called Nāmarūpa
<i>Six sense media</i> - (Saḷāyatana)	<i>Contact</i> - (Phassa)	The eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind are the six sense media. This is called Saḷāyatana
<i>Contact</i> - (Phassa)	<i>Feeling</i> - (Vedanā)	The coming together of the object, the sense medium and the consciousness of that sense medium is called Phassa.
<i>Feeling (Sensation)</i> - (Vedanā)	<i>Craving</i> - (Taṇhā)	Feeling or sensations are of six forms: vision, hearing, olfactory sensation, gustatory sensation, tactile sensation, and intellectual sensation (thought). This is called Vedanā
<i>Craving</i> - (Taṇhā)	<i>Clinging/sustenance</i> - (Upādāna)	There are these six forms of cravings: cravings with respect to forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touch (massage, sex, pain), and ideas. This is called Taṇhā
<i>Clinging/sustenance</i> - (Upādāna)	<i>Becoming</i> (Bhava)	These four are clingings: <i>sensual clinging, visual, practice clinging, and self clinging</i> . This is called Upādāna
<i>Becoming</i> - (Bhava)	<i>Birth</i> - (Jāti)	These three are becoming: sensual, form, formless. This is called Bhava
<i>Birth</i> - (Jāti)	<i>Aging, death, and this entire mass of dukkha</i> - (Jarāmarāṇa)	Birth is any coming-to-be or coming-forth. It refers not just to birth at the beginning of a lifetime, but to birth as new person, acquisition of a new status or position etc. this is called Jāti

This Nidanas form the circle of life. In the following chapters it will return to you again and again.

5.1.1 Opening and closing the daily doors of life

When we are young our responsibilities are only too school and parents. It is a very practical way of life. We need to study hard to get the right result and everybody looks happy. The better the marks the more satisfied the people are. It seems all simple till the moment we get into a down period. Our performance goes down. Marks are no longer high and people start to be impatient and sometimes even angry. You do not know what is happening cause the harder your study, the more time you spend on the homework the lower the marks become. This is something nearly everybody encounters some day in life.

Our body and mind are no longer stabile. We have lost the stability in work / learning ability / performance. Something happened that made us lose control. The urgent question is what happened ? . Most of the time the young person becomes frustrated and is trying to find ways to break the 'spell' . Parents and school also try different ways, pity enough most use 'force ' as a way to improve results.

Intermezzo

Circadian rhythms are regular changes in mental and physical characteristics that occur in the course of a day (*circadian* is Latin for "around a day"). Most circadian rhythms are controlled by the body's biological "clock." This clock, called the *suprachiasmatic nucleus* or *SCN* , is actually a pair of pinhead-sized brain structures that together contain about 20,000 neurons. The SCN rests in a part of the brain called the *hypothalamus*, just above the point where the optic nerves cross. Light that reaches photoreceptors in the *retina* (a tissue at the back of the eye) creates signals that travel along the optic nerve to the SCN.

Signals from the SCN travel to several brain regions, including the *pineal gland*, which responds to light-induced signals by switching off production of the hormone melatonin. The body's level of melatonin normally increases after darkness falls, making people feel drowsy. The SCN also governs functions that are synchronized with the sleep/wake cycle, including body temperature, hormone secretion, urine production, and changes in blood pressure.

By depriving people of light and other external time cues, scientists have learned that most people's biological clocks work on a 25-hour cycle rather than a 24-hour one. But because sunlight or other bright lights can reset the SCN, our biological cycles normally follow the 24-hour cycle of the sun, rather than our innate cycle. Circadian rhythms can be affected to some degree by almost any kind of external time cue, such as the beeping of your alarm clock, the clatter of a garbage truck, or the timing of your meals. Scientists call external time cues *zeitgebers* (German for "time givers").

The biological clock in every person has a rhythm that we do not know. As you can read , this can be one of the reasons why every person has a physical and mental down time in life and things seems harder than they actually are. To some extend we can explain this with Nāmarūpa. When we refer to constituent processes of the human being: **nāma** is typically considered to refer to psychological elements of the human

person, while **Rūpa** refers to the physical. The Buddhist *nāma* and *rūpa* are mutually dependent, and not separable; as *nāmarūpa*, they designate an individual being. Namarupa are also referred to as the five shandas 五蘊(T) / 五蘊(S)

Force is considered a negative emotion toward a person. It takes away the free will and choice and throw a person into a vicious cycle leading to an emotional struggle for results and understanding. Numerous proves are delivered that force leads to destruction and hardly ever to positive results.

The best way to help a person in distress is to teach mindfulness in a positive way. We all know the task of the child going to school. Yes, it is clear that “we” know it but does the child know ? In our society pressure seems to be needed for everything. This pressure is building up over the years and for many people starts to play a major role in life. Often I refer to it as a house with only open doors. The ability to close down a door is gone.

- ☑ The truth of suffering (*dukkha*)
- ☑ The truth of the cause of suffering (*samudaya*)
- ☑ The truth of the end of suffering (*nirhodha*)
- ☑ The truth of the path that frees us from suffering (*magga*)

In the 4 noble truth we find the first is dhukka. Dhukka is the fact that we all undergo suffering, in past text all is referring to what we do to each other. In fact we are all the cause of suffering (*samudya*). But we all think to know how we can end this suffering (*nirhodha*) by postponing the salvation into the future. We press each other to get better and better because in the future we will have a better life. But the fact is that along the way we have destroyed so much of our inner self, lost so much stability that there will be no end to suffering.

We all search for the path to end suffering (*magga*) but even while walking on it we are unable to see it as we are so occupied with what possibly will be in the future. Our eyes are all directed to the benefit that may come in the future (*Saḷāyatana*). Like looking through the house with all these open doors. But we forget that the house with open doors can cause severe danger to our health, is hardly possible to heat or cool and is never private. A house with open doors can never solve a problem.

Our first step is to start closing doors in our life to create a better living space. When we close the door of a room we are able to control the heat or cold, and can feel more comfortable. With all doors closed we can see the walls and shape of the room better. A certain control start to exist. To gain control over our life we need to find first the cause of our suffering. Most psychologist will start to discuss this and analyze the reasons of suffering first. In Buddhism we teach to become an observer, a person on distance, to become disconnected too the problem.

When we become observer we can start to see our own suffering but also what we do to others, our demands on others, our pressure system and most of all what this hunting for fame and fortune actually is doing to us and others. We become able to even the review the “house” with open doors, discover the loss in energy and take action.

Here we start with a daily exercise. This exercise starts after a working day. When you leave the office or factory your mind is full of the days sorrows. Most take the daily job back to home. On the way home the mind is still occupied with all what happened, all what needs to be done and all we could not do that day. We occupy our mind with work.

Let us get back to the moment you LEAVE the office. The doors opens top let you go OUT. Some doors slide open, others you have to manually open. After we pass the door it need to be CLOSED. The closing of the door must cut the wire with the job completely. Let the door be the razor, upon closing the connection with the job is broken. Your mind is no longer allowed to be occupied by anything that is related to the job. You enter a new life, another life with other experiences, with other goals. The new goal for that moment is to empty your mind and enjoy the outside, if only for the moment. Breath in deep and drop all thoughts of that day. Close the door of the day, clear your mind, if only for a few hours the job does not exist.

In the morning, after you wake up, you sit down for a moment and opens the door of your mind and work. Close your eyes and visualize the door. Open that door and enter the work, you are back full force. A new day has come. You work till the end of the day and start the closing of the door ceremony again.

Humor

Often it is striking how serious people take themselves. In many of my lectures you can see the intense look on people's faces to listen and consider every words spoken. When I look around joining a seminar about a religious or philosophical topic participants seem to compete to show how serious they are. To them 'humor' is something you only have at parties and festivities. Humor is surely not something to use when discussing serious topics.

But humor has a deeper function than most of those serious people realizes. Today we know that when we laugh our brain gets a high dose of oxygen which is needed to create more awareness and makes it able to understand and function better. With other words laughing is not only healthy but very useful for our thinking process. Laughing has more functions ; it relaxes the muscles, produces all kind of hormones in our body that has a long term health effect and above all it will make a topic easier to understand. With humor you can give the most dry topics to new insight and often lead to new experiences and idea's.

But how can we use humor as a way to communicate with each other, how can it help us to understand the words of the Buddha or even make us understand them more ? The answer to that is often given by good lecturers who tell the message combined with stories. Often these stories contain a clue which is humorous and lead to a sudden insight of the information of the total and it is important for the listener as he/she will remember that 'refreshing moment' that broke the tense of the topic.

Feeling free to laugh or laughing out loud is showing emotions. Chinese, as most Asians, have a bit of a problem showing emotions publicly. Humor seems always misplaced as the show of extreme emotional hilarious laughing you easily can find in the West is hard to find in China, but that sudden smile, the twinkling of the eyes and

shaking of the head is a sign of understanding, a sign that the message came through and the tension is broken.

Humor is international and universal, only the way to tell it differs. In each place humor gets a different face due to customs and habits. When a story is told always listen to the core of the humor, the joke within like you do in the lectures. A joke carries a message often deeper than you think at first glance.

Laughing is good for your health and concentration. If you are able to do it at least once a day you are able to extend a healthy life span and ban the negative things from your life, a good laughter a day keeps depression away is my saying. If you want to know more please read the laughter meditation sessions and if you are able join them personally, it will not only brighten your days but gives you a deeper inside of all Buddha did teach.

5.1.2 Focus on duty

How often do we really have focus on the work we do ? Most work is routine. Everyday we have series of performances we do as a perfect routine. Duty seems boring and for most people it is. Boring is a negative emotion that restrict a person to open the mind and see the positive effects of the work that is done and to come. Routine work to most is a mind killing thing. To be involved routine work is considered a low status and to most it is below their own status.

But duty is responsibility and demands focus at all time. Imagine the machine worker who needs to check the water pipe system every day. His duty is to control the water flow, the quality of the water, the pressure and more. He needs to do so every working day a few times. When he is doing this he needs (Right Mindedness, also called: Right Thought ('samma-sati') the right concentration to the job. If he does not have so he will miss moments that things can go wrong.

For most people the word 'duty ' already contains a form of mental resistance. A duty refers to something you have to do, a force from outside. To most people it feels like something you need to resist against. We all have this feeling sometimes. The main reason why we wish to resist is that 'duty ' plays with our 'Ego', our individuality.

The Ego is who we think we are and not who we really are. It is our own impression of "self". What is an 'ego' ?

In our life we need to build a self-vision, an image of who we are, who we wish to be. This character / image building start when we are very young. After we start to interact with our environment . The first steps are all about sharing and caring. When we get the proper care most of us will develop the ability to share with others. Sharing makes us a more social being. But when the care is not sufficient or short in action or feeling, sharing becomes less possible , we will have the feeling to keep, to get and to collect. We look for a replacement of care, an alternative. This will build more need and greed.

An Ego is a reflection of the way we have grown up and our basic characteristics. In an Ego we find the persons protection towards its environment, his/her survival shield. Every person is interacting with its environment and needs to have an image. When a person says he has no image it implies he is not alive. We cannot confuse image completely with Ego. Image is something that plays completely inside the head of other people, the so called observers. They observe a person and when interacting they build an image of that person in their own head. This image is a mixture of what the person wish to express (reflection of the Ego) and what the receiver wish to think of that person. So image is a mix of internal and external impressions and thoughts / experiences / memory. Ego is soly an individual thing.

The Ego is compiled from ;

Characteristics as inborn such as genetic transferred abilities, physical and mental abilities

Environmental education, this is considered every contact with all living beings even plants, animals and human alike

Mental development, this is a mixture between intelligence and education. Hereby education is basically of learning , religious and morality

Personal idea's, thoughts and developments. These developments are often strongly influenced by the physical developments in puberty such as the body and face on the scales of attraction. For some people the physical attraction is an important part of the Ego, especially in a Western society oriented lifestyle.

As you can see the Ego is a very complex 'thing' but we all have it. To some people the Ego is built on a positive scale and others have a strong 'egocentric' tendency. As you can read the word already shows that it is a self-oriented way of living. The word ego-centric is clearly showing a mentality were as the person is focused on a self-image. We all need to have this feeling to some extent. All Buddhist who wish to reach enlightenment or go into a higher state of mental development must have a higher than general egocentric state of mind to be able to accomplish this.

An egocentric attitude cannot be seen as always negative. In our life we all need to have stages of more ego focused times. In short the Ego has an important function into development of mind and body.

The negative Ego receives all the attention in media and teachings. Before moving to the positive Ego I would like to address this state of mind also.

Affliction (kleśa, 煩惱) is something that agitates a person's mind, resulting in negative karmas which are done with body and/or mind.

The three root corrupting factors, also called the three poisons ;

- (1) greed,
- (2) anger,
- (3) delusion.

Derived from these three are

- (a) arrogance,
- (b) doubt,
- (c) wrong views.

Jack Engler, Harvard psychologist and Buddhist teacher said ; "you have to be

somebody before you can be nobody". In this view I want to share with you what the Western world considers the building of a good ego.

To create an healthy Ego seen from a psychological point of view we need to enhance ;

- Self-esteem
- Assertiveness
- Presence
- Values
- Independence
- Personal boundaries
- Individuality
- Freedom from complexes and sub personalities
- Specific tastes and preferences
- Personal opinions and perspectives
- Separation of other people
- Separation of parents

If we compare this list it is, on a first look, in many ways different from the way we view the Ego in Buddhism. But in fact it is not at all, only the words used give a different impression.

I want to start with the last 2 points ; Separation of other people and Separation of parents. These steps are taken the moment Buddha decided to leave the palace to follow his destiny. Breaking with the family is something very hard to do in a Asian society, it is considered a radical and bold step, we all know that.

To clean ourselves from a negative ego we need to break with traditions and build a real independent ego first. Only an open ego is able to become positive and united with the wisdom we so desire. When you read the list I am sure the first impressions you get were negative as you did associate most of these terms against your own cultural and moral background, in fact you did not compare them with what you wish but what others expect of you. Your first thoughts were driven by boundaries from others and not from yourself. This is exactly what Buddhism teaches to you. Be aware of who you are and be free of the environment before you can realize reality of the moment of the "self".

5.2 How can we apply the teachings in a community life

How we apply the teachings in our daily life becomes clear in all chapters of this book, I would like to introduce to you a well-known but not yet fully existing way of living in China. It is maybe a dream but I think it is possible to realize it when we work together as a group. Would you join ?

The Buddhist community,

To most people a Buddhist community is directly associated with a monastery. But the monastery is not the only correct form of living and caring. During my life I have stayed and organized different community systems that are certainly possible to be successful when placed in a large scale situation.

A perfect Chinese Buddhist community must be based on mutual respect between all participants and society. In the Chinese community each person gets a function and will do this according to the good principles of sharing and caring. In a community all persons have a duty and free will, nobody should be forced to do what is needed or to stay. To understand a community life we need to see how it is built from the core to the shells.

A Chinese Buddhist community must be a mixture between accepted social principles of organization and the buddhis life expectations. This is a complicated matter of which I will explain here.

The Chinese society has proven to be mainly Confusian in basic thinking. This implies that the family comes first. A man and a woman must have family duties before allowed or able to continue with their own spiritual development. Besides this the current developments in society do make this a complicated matter since the society has unequaled numbers of male and female. The community must be build upon the mixture of the Confusian and Buddhist phylosophy.

The way it must be build is in 5,7 or 9 rings depended on the local availability of land and the situation of the community itself. In the outer rings man and woman must live to have a chance to get married make children and form families. The traditional values of Chinese life can be honored in this way. In the inner rings different levels of spiritual development are offered and in the central ring only monks and ordained people of certain standard can live and work there. There is a devision between a male and a female area as according to traditions the mixture of genders will lead to sexual problems. To my knowledge it is more often the males who are the offenders than the females , so we need to protect the females more than the male.

Males mature in general only after 30 – 35 years of age. This is a good age as due to Confusian philosophy a male of that age must have had already children and become to mature also spiritually. In the community it is accounted for that a male will leave the house for a longer time and the other persons in our community take over the care of the children when the males leave for the inner circles. Children will receive the standard opportunities as all other children as education must give the freedom and possibilities to all to decide to stay or leave the community whenever the person wish for without the limitations of being grown up in a community structure.

The community has many benefits this way. By offering equal chances to males and females and coordinating a right amount of male and female in the society it is possible to create a solid Confusianal based community with all the opportunities of spiritual development.

The core of the community is the ruling comity, which is not a political organ but one who works on all daily affairs. Most people in the comity have the duty to make the comity run in all aspects such as supply of housing, food, clothing, schooling, healthcare and mental care. People responsible for each specific item is paying tribute and share information to the comity on a daily or weekly scale. This is purely the organizational chart. If you are more interested I can supply you with a complete version of it. But the main core of the community is the philosophy.

Man and woman can work and live together in a comity if they keep certain basic rules. These rules are mainly to control emotions and physical needs. In all those years of trials and errors we came to some very basic and easy to work with ruling. Man or woman are never allowed to be forced into a relationship no matter physical or mental (this refers to the Diamond Sutra of Tantrayana in which the relationship between male and female is stated). Right Understanding (called samma-ditt in Pali language)

Each person in the comity must have regular contact with others and at least once a week must participate in comity activities. Exceptions only made if the "core" agrees. Right Speech ('samma-vaca) It is considered healthy for body in mind to participate in group activities such as meditation, walking, sport, gardening or farming. People get to know each other better during activities, connections at laid down and it always strengthen the interpersonal relationships between all members in the community. Right Livelihood ('samma-ajiva), Right Meditation, also called: Right Concentration (samma-samada).

Each person has his own tasks and duties, these can be more than one. A person is allowed to change tasks and duties in agreement with others and will be responsible to find a replacing person for that particular work. Responsibility and duty are both mental aspects of development. To control mind and body it is stated that a regular lifestyle is needed. Emotional fast changes, adventure lifestyles are not good to develop a stable mind. But I would clearly make the exception to that. Many males up to the age of 35 need some form of stimulating activity to control the hormone level before able to reach a stable mind and control the body. Within a community this group must get a position in which they are able to develop and apply a lifestyle that does benefit the community from a distance without destabilizing it. (Right Effort (samma-vayama))

Women must be free to choose to have or not have children. In my experience more and more women choose to have a solitary life that is often not accepted by society or even males. To most woman, this is often related to a specific experience in life, a relationship is no longer the most important part of their life, more over the need to be a mother is not there. In the community these women need to have a respected position and feel safe. Right Awareness, also called: Right Attentiveness (samma-sankappa) Education within a community must be general and equal to the outer world if not higher. There are many methods of education and none of the children living in a community must be deprived from the possibility to leave the community and find their own way in the world. I do consider it very important that children receive the best possible education with the newest methods available. Right Mindedness, also called: Right Thought ('samma-sati') / Right Awareness, also called: Right Attentiveness (samma-sankappa)\

Most communities are completely inward oriented and have little or no connection with the outer world. This endanger every existing community. Our world is no longer a closed hiding place. The world exists of communication, interactions and traveling. A community is best served with an international operating network with regular visitors, availability to accommodate seminars, groups and workshops. A constant flow of information keeps a community awake and informed. The community must be 50/50 inward/outward oriented. Right Awareness, also called: Right Attentiveness (samma-sankappa)

The community must have a regional task. Most communities are outward oriented to many places except their own direct environment. To survive with a community it need to have a regional function in a caring position such as healthcare, mental care or other services. Right Effort (samma-vayama)

A community based on Buddhist principals is one that focus strongly on the 8 path.

1. Right Understanding (called samma-ditt in Pali language);
2. Right Mindedness, also called: Right Thought ('samma-sati');
3. Right Speech ('samma-vaca) ;
4. Right Action ('samma-kammanta);
5. Right Livelihood ('samma-ajiva);
6. Right Effort (samma-vayama)\
7. Right Awareness, also called: Right Attentiveness (samma-sankappa)\
8. Right Meditation, also called: Right Concentration (samma-samada).

Division	Eightfold Path factors	Acquired factors
Wisdom (Sanskrit: prajñā, Pāli: paññā)	1. Right view	9. Superior right knowledge
	2. Right intention	10. Superior right liberation
Ethical conduct (Sanskrit: śīla, Pāli: sīla)	3. Right speech	
	4. Right action	
	5. Right livelihood	
Concentration (Sanskrit and Pāli: samādhi)	6. Right effort	
	7. Right mindfulness	
	8. Right concentration	

Often I have been approached by people who wanted to know if there must be age

related matters within the community. It is an interested thought as the Chinese society is aging rapidly. According to the Confucian theory the elderly in our society must be respected and cared for. When we set up a new community, there are basically no elderly as the community itself does not have a long past. This is a very interesting thought.

Elderly persons are an asset to society based on their experience, their willingness to change from a historical background to a community lifestyle. For these people it is a drastic change but when taken in sincerity also a logical one. To our elderly persons a community with a purpose and targets brings a possibility to create a more spiritual content to their own life often in a way they have always longed for. In my vision the elderly can be a very valuable part of the community in many ways.

Elderly persons have knowledge, experience and above all a spiritual state of mind making them fit to make strong and proper lifechanging decisions. Younger persons need elderly for reflection this is very clear when we see the connection between grandparents and grandchildren. Without elderly a community will fail.

5.3 The difference between male and female in the teaching

Buddha considered female not really a part of the religious society. In fact Buddha was forced by his aunt to create opportunities for women to become nuns. Becoming a nun is still a complicated matter and in most countries a nun is considered of a lower degree than a monk by the general public. The question is why?

According to the Vajrayana traditions women are able to reach enlightenment by exercise and determination equal to their male counterparts.

If we go through most of the scriptures it can be found that the main reason is that women have the task to bring children to this world, they are considered to feed them and they have a monthly period during which they are not emotionally stable. Frequent readers of my books know I am completely against a separation of male and female and I do not believe in a not-equal treatment of both genders.

On the other side I have read many discussions and explanations on female rights in Buddhism that wish to state differently. If we look at the past the status of female was bad all over the world. In most countries, especially India at that time, women had really few rights and mountains of duties. They often were forced in many ways such as marriage, labor and family. They had to obey and follow men at all times. This position was nearly equal in all parts of the world. In that vision, the fact that Buddha dared to listen and get into discussion with the women, was already a radical change. So we need to see things in the light of the right time in history. Even in current times women are still not equal in work, belief and private life. In Buddhism changes are continuing, we have many stories of females who have forced the changes.

It is easy to understand that we separate male from female in monasteries. That is considered a logical reaction to the "dukkha" as the main cause of suffering are the relationships between male and female. Most monks and nuns did enter the monastic life for that reason.

The question that is always thrown to me during all my years of lecturing was ; can woman reach enlightenment ?

The answer to that question is impossible to give because a woman who reaches the state of enlightenment will have no desire to share that with other people, to check this is impossible.

To me the woman is the basic of our society. From her men arises. A man must be grateful to receive life from his mother. This is thankfulness. Knowing that this emotion is often banned from the mind also following the teachings I think we have forgotten the real positive energy we can contract from thankfulness during the steps toward enlightenment. Being thankful gives a lot of positive energy to mind and body because we have respect for that person and her deeds in past and maybe even future, if the deeds are positive of course.

Many scientist focus on the development of the mind and the physical capacities of a woman. We have found that most woman seems to be able to multi task, this implies that she is able to do more things at the same time. But this also gives root to the conception that the female mind can be split in more than one direction at the same time. That ability could be considered as negative to the development of a complete stable mind onto the path of enlightenment. But is this true ?

In my own research over the years I found that many, maybe even most woman, are not multi task takers. Most woman are very focused when they work, read or watch something. I did encounter many woman who are so focused that they did not hear anything in their surrounding when reading a book. Even a loud noise did not break their focus.

Men are different in this. Most males do still have a strong fight or flight hormonal reaction in all their actions. To focus seems to be a process of repeating trying and many errors. From focus to concentration and on to meditation seems to be harder for males than females.

But the teachings have disclosed, or do I need to say the organizations, woman from all formal processions. Woman are not allowed to perform the ceremonies and by such woman have a "lower" status than male. I have always wondered why ? Did we ever realize that not the male but the female is the founder of life ? We all came from female, the source of eternal life.

Buddha did not include women in his teachings is the saying. But who can say this with hands up to swear he or she was there overhearing him say this ? Be aware that the scriptures of Theravada are written around 400 year after the Buddha died. We will never know his real opinion.

From my study through many different religions males have all tried to exclude women from formal acts of duties but the founders, the prophets or Gods never mentioned that a female is of lesser breed than a male. Often they did not even mention any difference. In many books I found the equality of male and female in every way but the organization refused them.

5.3.1 How can we deal with the differences

As mentioned before there are no real differences. But the reality gives us a complete different picture of the everyday life. Women are, in no matter profession, seen as lesser in quality by most males. How can women and men deal with this in relation to the scriptures and teachings.

Women are considered more emotional than men. In general this may be true but the individual exceptions are increasing with the day. In the daily life we encounter more and more solid, emotionally stable women of high quality. They excel in some profession, study direction, scholarship or art. But still the amount is relatively less compared to men. Could it be the reason why we do not see them often? Or are there more differences we have to deal with?

Yes there are. Females not only bring a child into the living world they also carry the mother instinct to care and take care of the child and others. Women have an inborn desire to care and share. This inborn desire is hardly possible to control without going through many different phases from men. Women must interpret the scriptures and steps of life in a different way from men. This is the reason why female rules to be a nun are more complex and numerous than for monks.

One of the most beautiful acts a woman can bring to the world is to bear a child. The child is not only a product of the conception between man and woman but also her task in nature. Men will never be able to do so. It is a very honorable task and men should pay the utmost respect for women to do this. But to the women this natural task is also their burden. The inborn desire for children and caring is a flame that cannot be fought by no matter what form of meditation or training. To take this part away will deprive her from being a woman. Buddha did know this inborn desire and also knew there would be no way to change this.

But the teachings can bring women salvation, respect and most of all she will be able to reach a very feminine state of enlightenment, which surely is different from the non-attached males. Men are able to distance themselves from all human before they realize that the only way to reach enlightenment is to understand we are all of the same source, the same holy spirit. Women do know this by instinct, by inborn development.

When we study the scriptures well we can find that men must do many steps to understand the value of life. Women know that by instinct. Most will not be able to tell in words but know. To men it is a path to find this truth. Men are disconnected from the source of life the moment they are born, women get more connected all through their life.

The way we should deal with each other is with more respect, with giving honor to our tasks in life, our place in the Universe. With this we come close to the Confucian tales of hierarchy, except for the part that women always should follow their husbands. Sometime it should be the other way around.

The unmarried, single woman has a strange position in our society. In all my studies in the East I found them as undervalued, often neglected and most of the time discriminated and hurt persons. Most of these woman never choose to live a profound single life but circumstances and environment forced them in that position. An often very painful position for them.

They not only need to deal with their own problems with the situation, often the environment makes them feel that they are different. The close environment as family and friends will try to force relationships upon them as they are considered lonely, hopeless and people pity them. How different the situation of most single men.

Buddhism gives refuge too those woman in every way possible. As mentioned before they have . to cope with more than one problem. As they are single or unmarried (meaning divorced) their position in society is a very difficult one. First of all they always have the care of some person or even entire families. They carry the duties of the son. In many families a married son will delegate all his duties to the unmarried / single sister and so put all pressure on her.

To develop an emotional stability, a good quality of life in that position is extremely difficult. Most people do not realize the pressure, the emotional volcano inside these women. For them there is no way out the situation. They are often not capable to meet a partner due to daily duties and have very limited time for a proper mental / spiritual life development.

5.3.2 Support others from a different gender

We all need to support each other to walk the path of life, keep the Middle Road and stabilize our love and living. Building a positive Karma by helping each other unconditionally. Men and women are made to assist and connect with each other that is also why we got a different gender. Our duty is to fulfill the tasks given to us by our nature in harmony with that nature.

A good sample of this is the Mangala Sutra which I would like to introduce here to you ;

(in English)

Mangala Sutta

On one occasion Skiyamuni was walking around at Anathapindika's monastery, in Jeta's Grove, near Savatthi. It is said a deity approached him telling him the following sutra : "Many deities and men, yearning after good, have pondered on blessings. Pray, tell me the greatest blessing!"

"Not to associate with the foolish, but to associate with the wise; and to honor those who are worthy of honor — this is the greatest blessing.

To reside in a suitable locality, to have done meritorious actions in the past and to set oneself in the right course — this is the greatest blessing.

To have much learning, to be skillful in handicraft, well-trained in discipline, and to be of

good speech . This is the greatest blessing.

To support mother and father, to cherish wife and children, and to be engaged in peaceful occupation — this is the greatest blessing.

To be generous in giving, to be righteous in conduct, to help one's relatives, and to be blameless in action — this is the greatest blessing.

To loathe more evil and abstain from it, to refrain from intoxicants, and to be steadfast in virtue — this is the greatest blessing.

To be respectful, humble, contented and grateful; and to listen to the Dhamma on due occasions — this is the greatest blessing.

To be patient and obedient, to associate with monks and to have religious discussions on due occasions — this is the greatest blessing.

Self-restraint, a holy and chaste life, the perception of the Noble Truths and the realization of Nibbana — this is the greatest blessing.

A mind unruffled by the vagaries of fortune, from sorrow freed, from defilements cleansed, from fear liberated — this is the greatest blessing.

Those who thus abide, ever remain invincible, in happiness established. These are the greatest blessings."

"The Mangala Sutta shows that the Buddha's instructions do not always take negative forms, that they are not always a series of classifications and analysis, or concerned exclusively with monastic morality. Here in this sutra we find family morality expressed in most elegant verses. We can imagine the happy blissful state household life attained as a result of following these injunctions." (From *The Ethics of Buddhism* by S. Tachibana, Colombo 1943, Bauddha Sahitya Sabha).

Bahu Deva Manussacha - Mangalani Achintha ung

Akankha Mana Soththanam - Bruhi Mangala Muththa mang

Asewanacha Balanam - Pandithanancha Sevana

Pujacha Puja neeya nam - Ethang Mangala Muththa mang

Pathirupa Desa Vasocha Pubbetha Katha Punna tha

Aththa Samma Panidicha - Ethang Mangala Muththa mang

Bahuschancha Sippancha Vinayacha susikkitho

Subasithacha Yawacha - Ethang Mangala Muththa mang

Mathapithu Upattanam Puththadarssa Sangaho

anakulacha Kammantha - Ethang Mangala Muththa mang

Danancha Dhammachirayacha -gnathakanancha sangaho

Anawajjani Kammani - Ethang Mangala Muththa mang

Arathi Virthi Papa Majjapanacha Sangngamo

Appamadocha dhammesu - Ethang Mangala Muththa mang

8 Garavocha Nivathocha Santhutti cha Kathan gnutha

Kalena Dhamma Savanam - Ethang Mangala Muththa mang

9 Kanthicha Sova Thassatha Samanancha Dassanan

Kalena Dhamma Sakachcha - Ethang Mangala Muththa mang

- 10 Thapocha Brahmachariyacha Ariya Sachchana Dassanan
Nibbana Sachchakiriyacha - Ethang Mangala Muththa mang
- 11 Puttassa Loka Dhammehi Chiththng yassana kampathi
Asokan Virajan Kemang - Ethang Mangala Muththa mang
- 12 Etha Disani Kathwana Sabbaththa Maparajitha
Sabbantha Sothththing Thanthesan Mangala Muththa mang thi

5.4 Work and privacy

In China work and privacy are so often mixed up that it becomes hard to take them apart. When you work for a boss, he or she, often owns your time. There are no clear rules on what is your own time and what is the time of the company. This is very intruding in the planning of a private life. To most people it is a source of stress and frustration.

The first steps we need to take to create space and peace in our life are ;

Do we need the job / work

Do we need the amount of money offered by the job

What are the positive sides of the job

What are your future plans and can you reach them with this job

How long are you planning to work in the job

How many people and for how long are depended on you

These are the primal questions to be answered.

By answering the questions use the 8 fold path precepts this will make your considerations more stable and the conclusions less emotional.

First of all do you understand why you need the job, do you have the right understanding that you need the job and you take the right actions to get this job ?

Most people seek a job to earn money but do not like the boss or the work itself.

Sometimes bosses can be really bad persons, when that is a fact start searching to move right the moment you enter the job, do not wait !

When you do not like the work it is a complete different matter. Not like the work is an emotional issue directly linked with your personal acceptance of the position or work.

Can you accept the job or not ? If not it will become frustrating, difficult and health threatening !

Using mindfulness to accept work is the first we need to do.

Know the reasons of the job, the importance of the work to the system.

Know why you do it and how you must do it.

Find the core pride of the job and take the right effort to do the job every day.

Accept your place and do what is asked, do not question yourself all the time, control your mood and be aware of what you are doing. If possible change the job in a daily meditation.

We all need money, no question about that. The rent, the food and so many more we need, all cost money. Depending on the place we live we need more or less of it. But do we know how much we really need ? Are we spending it right ? is there anything at all we can cut off to make us a better living ? Most people smoke, drink, gamble or anything else that cost money for no good reason. It is called enjoyment, but do you really enjoy it ? Does it bring any positive feeling, any positive development to enrich your life ? It is

often very likely you can find a way to safe money. Stress and worries about money can be limited , most of the time, by mindfull consideration.

When you ask a person about its job they all easily can tell all the negative sides of the job. But do they, and also YOU, know the positive sides of your work / job ? This is what you need to do right now write down all the positive sides of the work and hang them on a clearly visible place next to the 8 fold path and every day consider them again. This will give you a positive awareness , right effort and right actions.

Future plans are made to look on the far distance. Plans are created from fantasy and imagination and do often not fit in anyway to reality. If you make plans do it is 3 to 8 steps. Create a short term , medium term and long term strategy. Never look only at the long term. When you reached a short term result, sit and review it, be mindfull about the result. Jobs can be found around the world when you are open to it. When you want you can plan yourself to be a rocket pilot and live in misery or plan something closer to your current position and you feel better with a result. Planning is understanding your position, be mindfull about it, take the right action and effort and you will be able to realize the target.

Make a time plan. Consider every job temporary as all is temporary. Focus on a short term. Every day is one day and when you are mindfull during the day it will last so much longer. Do not plan for the long run, we are currently living in a changing world which can move as fast as within a day.

The last important thing to consider always is about dependency. How many people are depended on you, do really need you for their living and loving. It is important to know that children grow up one day and leave the house. It is very important to realize that this is only a matter of time so use the time spend with them wisely and loving as what you do today has a strong meaning for tomorrow. Your love and attention are the future of your love and children. Being well aware of who you are in their eyues must give you strength and the right thoughts to create a strong and healthy livelihood.

5.4.1 The use of the teachings at work

What is Karma ?

"I am the owner of my karma .

I inherit my karma.

I am born of my karma.

I am related to my karma.

I live supported by my karma.

Whatever karma I create, whether good or evil, that I shall inherit."

The Buddha, Anguttara Nikaya V.57 - Upajjhatthana Sutta

"Countless rebirths lie ahead, both good and bad. The effects of karma (actions) are inevitable, and in previous lifetimes we have accumulated positive and negative karma which will inevitably have its effect in this or future lives. The Sanskrit word Karma (or kamma in Pali) means action. In Buddhism karma refers to the intention or motivation of an action. In Sanskrit words for effects or results of karma are 'vipaka' or 'phala'.

Karma is built from the principle “you get the fruits from the seed you spread around “. In other words what you do to the world around you will get it back as a boomerang. When you bring happiness to others, you will receive happiness in return. If you bring suffering or sorrow to others it will come bouncing back to you. Karma is considered as action = reaction.

There is probably a misunderstanding about the concept of time. In Karma there is no time function, we cannot calculate the re-action after we did an action. Karma behaves following the 12 Twelve Nidānas which are considered the wheel of life. A reaction can come at the most unexpected moment in this or other lives.

In this sample we can find it clearly back ;
Watch your thoughts, for they become words.
Watch your words, for they become actions.
Watch your actions, for they become habits.
Watch your habits, for they become character.
Watch your character, for it becomes your destiny.

It is also possible to find Karma back in the 'Golden Rule' of Confucianism;
Tzu-kung asked, "Is there one word which may serve as a rule of practice for all one's life?"
Confucius answered, "Is not reciprocity such a word? What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others."

Another reason why we can accept Karma as a scientific proven state is that Karma is nothing else than pure energy. Karma cannot be seen, nor ever will occur to be found with any of our natural senses. In physics there is the law of energy “ energy can never be lost “. Energy can change its shape or existence, even in dimension but will never be lost.

As the Buddha taught:

"Do not think a small sin will not return in your future lives.
Just as falling drops of water will fill a large container,
The little sins that steadfast accumulate will completely overwhelm you.

Do not think a small virtue will not return in your future lives.
Just as falling drops of water will fill a large container,
The little virtues that steadfast accumulate will completely overwhelm you."

Or ;

"Intention is the most important of all mental events because it gives direction to the mind, determining whether we engage with virtuous, non-virtuous, or neutral objects. Just as iron is powerlessly drawn to a magnet, our minds are powerlessly drawn to the object of our intentions." by Geshe Tashi Tsering in his book *The Buddha's Medicine for the Mind: Cultivating Wisdom and Compassion*

An intention is first of all a mental action; only after that it may be expressed through either physical or verbal actions. Karma, can be separated into two types:

- the action of an intention
- the intended action.

The action of an intention is the thought or impulse to start in a physical or verbal action. The intended action is the physical or verbal expression of that intention. Karma refers to the action of intention but in general usage it includes the intended action and the seeds that are left in the mind.

How do we accumulate karmic seeds? Every physical and verbal action is preceded by mental activity. Goodwill motivates a kind gesture; ill will motivates bad responses. Ill will is the intention to cause mental, emotional or physical damage. Thus, before and during a bad action, ill will is present in our mind. The presence of ill will before and during this act has an impact and influence on the mind due to which a certain potential is left behind. This potential is called a karmic seed, a seed planted in our mind by physical, verbal or mental action. The strength of this seed is determined by a number of factors,

- how strong our intention is,
- we clearly understand what we are doing,
- whether we act on our intention and
- whether the physical / verbal action is completed.

Seeds remain in the mind until they ripen or destroyed. Seeds left by negative mental events and actions can be destroyed. The most important power is regret for the negative act and a firm resolve not to act that way again in the future. Seeds left by positive mental events and actions can be destroyed by anger and destructive actions.

Results are similar to the cause. Simply said, when I cause other people harm, I will harvest suffering. It is important to note, that "positive" actions are defined as actions that have happiness as a result and "negative" actions are defined as actions that have suffering as a result. No results without a cause. Once an action is done, the result is never lost.

Karma expands. Once we have an imprint of an action in our mind, it tends to be habit-forming. As is often said in wars for example, killing the first enemy is tough, but after a handful, one quickly loses count and it becomes "normal". Also psychology often stresses a similar point when e.g. explaining actions of adults from their childhood experiences.

The severity of the results of our actions depends on various factors:

- Our intention or motivation - the intention is the most important aspect, as karma is mainly connected to the intention of the action, be it positive or negative.

- The nature of the action: gossiping is less severe than killing.
- The actual deed: killing in self-defense or torture someone to death makes a difference,
- The target of the action: it does make a difference whether we kill our mother or an ant.
- Repetition; how often do we repeat the action, which reinforces the habitual behavior

How we experience the result of an actions does depend on our other attitude and other actions in life. For example, if we experience the result of being hungry for a day, there is a difference whether we experience this as a malnourished person or as a healthy fast for an obese person.

The difference between positive and negative karma are distinguished as

- Positive actions are defined as their result being a pleasant experience,
- negative actions are defined by their unpleasant results.

In A Living Buddhism for the West, Lama Anagorika Govinda expresses another approach: "All the suffering of this world arises from a wrong attitude. The world is neither good or bad. It is only the relation to our ego that makes it seem the one or the other."

To avoid having negative thoughts that lead to negative actions in the future, we need to observe and control our own thoughts and behavior, and destroy our negative attitudes. At the same time we can observe/study our own mind by meditation practice (Vipasana) and encourage positive thoughts that lead to positive actions.

Four Powers of Purification:

- Power of the Object: One should practice thinking of all living beings one may have hurt. Traditionally, one remembers all living beings and the Three Jewels of Refuge (Buddha, Dharma and Sangha), by generating compassion for all living beings.
- Power of Regret: examine oneself and one's actions and to recognize that negative actions done in the past were unwise.
- Power of Promise: As a logical consequence of the above, one should promise not to repeat these negative actions. Not being honest at this stage makes the practice useless or even harmful to oneself.

- Power of Practice: Basically any positive action with a good motivation can be used as practice. Traditionally in Buddhism, one can practice e.g. making prostrations, making offerings (to counteract greed), reading Buddhist texts (to counteract ignorance and negative thoughts), reciting mantras etc.

It is often explained that one needs to clear a field by purifying it from rocks and weeds, then planting seeds by study and meditation, giving water and fertilizer by doing positive actions, and automatically new harvest will grow.

What can you do with the knowledge of Karma you just acquired ?

- First of all it is important that you understand, you are not able to change your current situation immediately
- Your experiences of today are a reflection of the past. Start realizing this fact and you can start building more positive Karma.
- Thoughts are often delusional, they are mixtures of reality and imagination, build from past and expectations. Try to clean the thoughts from delusional facts and project all in to the ' now '.
- As action is re-action you must consider every action to be as positive as possible. You only can control re-actions when you control the actions.
- Giving is more positive than receiving. This accounts for most except for care when needed. Learn to accept when needed as the giver will receive their own positive Karma this way.
- When something gets on to you the first natural reaction is to revenge. In all cases revenge leads to more re-actions of the same style which all builds negative Karma. Break the cycle.
- Responsibility is what we have all to ourselves and environment. Control this and keep a positive approach toward all. Believe in the good side otherwise it will build stress which again leads to negative actions.

5.1 What is the meaning of the teachings in our daily life

Before his onset to become the Gautama , the Buddha searched for all ways to reach enlightenment. He went through different stages of extremity to test the human body and mind. He found that only the Middle Path could lead to a better life and enlightenment. To us this is important. Our daily life consist often extreme happenings. Most of us are under extreme pressure every day. Work, school, private life, commercial standards, official duties, name them and you understand what I say.

The Middle Path is a way to find stability in life, to find a way to survive and to reach a healthier mental state. Yes, I do not mention any more than just a healthy mind in a healthy body, that is the beginning. We all need to make a beginning, the first steps are the most important.

We need to create time to get space in our life to evaluate the teachings and pay time to meditate. In the beginning we must try to combine a physical and mental exercise together for the best result. The best way is to use a short Sutra / Tantra as a way to focus on exercise and mental awareness. Mindfulness is an important step remember the 8 fold path of wisdom and you discover the Right Mindedness, also called: Right Thought ('samma-sati'); To be aware of what we do and how we do it. This exercises help you in the struggle for daily sorrows, you become aware of the faintness of them.

The most important part to know when you study the teachings is what you personally can do with them. Most books and teachers will refer to a more spiritual setting of the teachings but Buddha was also a very practical man. He was in a house that did offer him everything, a future that was set and ready for all things in life and yet he choose to leave all behind to find his way. This is not so ideological as most people think, it is very practical.

He KNEW that when he stayed in the castle he would never reach peace of mind, stability of his senses and surely never would have the space to explore extremities of life. That would never been allowed by his environment. So he choose to leave. This is a first step to be practical. Know where you are, know your environment.

After you read this, look around you. Is this the place you want to grow old, is this the place that will allow you to reach a higher state of mind ? Look at who you are , your responsibilities, your ambitions in life and most of all toward the satisfaction of the current life. Are you satisfied, are you able to grow here ?

I am sure that most readers will think that they do not have a choice in life. Maybe that is true, but a little doubt can bring thoughts and ideas of how to change your life, how to create space for mental development. In the pure form of Buddhism we can find the solutions for the everyday problems as you will discover.

In former part I did ask you to look around. What did you discover ? Could you get a clear image of your life now ? For most it is impossible ! While looking around your mind will flow from one thing to the other. You see the dirty dishes on the table, you need to clean the room as you see dust. Fact is that your mind swings from an internal to an external thought. No longer you care about yourself or your mental state, you care of the exposure outside.

5.5 Dealing with Love

Love is often symbolized by mutual relationship, by a giving and returning of loving favors. We deal with love like it is something we own. Most of us consider giving love an option, a choice that we make. But seldom we consider that we have no choice to receive

love. If we give love it is unfair to expect a return. If you give something to get a return we borrow it to somewhat and expect to get it back with a bonus or interest. This implies that when we give love as a child to our parents we will get it back later on in life with an incredible bonus. Or did we ever realize that when our parents give us love they also will need to get it back with a bonus ? Maybe their bonus will be even higher than ours.

Parental love should be endless and without any wish for returns. In Buddhism we regard the giving of love as something we do without expectation. How many readers can say in all honesty that they do not feel guilty when they think of their parents. What are you feeling when you think of your parents getting older and older, do you feel a real love to help them or a need, a duty to do so ? Consider this carefully and you know if their love was true and honest or it was a given love waiting for returns.

If you have children how do you give them love ? Do you give it with an open heart and mind and never to expect a return or are you already busy preparing your child for the future to take care of you ? Yes, we all need a caretaker and if possible even more than one but the time not only is changing rapidly also the ego of the people is changing, the individualistic state of mind of most people is increasing. Giving your children love will no longer be a guarantee that they will take care of you when you are at old age. Do not have that expectation any longer.

Sex

When we study spiritual development sex is considered a 'not done ' topic. In Buddhism it all depends on the direction if you can discuss the topic or need to avoid it. But sex is one of the main issues we need to deal with during our life to reach a higher spiritual level. To most people sex is considered "bad". In nearly all religions 'sex' is the bad omen of the mind, the 'devil' which is guiding a person into the wrong direction.

To most people sex is the cause of suffering (Samudaya). The reason behind this is something I would like to research and explain with you. Sex is not only an emotion but also an instinct, a real natural part of our life and thinking. To control sex desire is to control our natural instinct. This is a very complicated matter.

At first we need to understand the reasons why sex is a natural instinct and not only an emotion. When we are born our body has to go to many stages of development. When we are young and cared for the instincts are basically turned to survival, to life itself. When we reach a certain age, this is different between girls and boys, the body starts to change. Upon the moment the changes start a sleeping natural part of our instinct starts to come alive. One of these is the need to multiply ourselves. We often say "nature is calling" .

How we react on these natural needs are directly linked to the environment we grow up. In the Chinese society we are forced to control the natural desires and needs more than in other places of the world. The environmental pressure is equal to everybody. It is important to control the sexual desire and will not display our real thoughts related to sex to other people easily. This in contrary with the Western world where a sexual open attitude is considered the standard, but not everywhere. In many religious area's

the pressure of the environment is huge.

The question is ; what sex has to do with our spiritual development ? The answer is simple and clear ; everything ! As sex is a very important and life ruling factor of our emotions and as it is a major basic instinct we will have to deal with that before we can deal with any other thing.

Sex must be separated in a few different parts ;

- The basic instinct to multiplication
- The emotional connection desire
- Sexual frustrations and unhealthy desires

Dealing with our instinct to multiplication is something even the Buddha could not resist. He also left children in this world and never had a single regret of doing so. The natural desire to have or NOT have children is something we all have. To some it will come as a shock to realize that many people do not want to have children at all. Our society still does not recognize the normal and perfectly natural wish of NOT having children, our society stands at the point of view that a person is only complete when he or she has children but that is again an illusion.

NOT having children is also a perfectly normal natural solution to an increasing population in the world. Our nature is controlling our genes and will add or distract the wish or need to have children, it is not something WE choose but it is naturally chosen for us and we should have peace with it. If a person does not want them, it is perfectly natural and should be accepted by society.

But a child wish is also a natural thing. Many people want to have children for various reasons.

- To fill a need in their life, to complete their life and destiny
- To create security for the future
- To continue the family legacy

All reasons are useful and counted as good as long as the family is willing to give the child the needed shelter and care till the moment it can be an independent personality. For these people sex has a natural function, it will complete their lives, no matter love is involved.

When sex becomes part of a complete set of emotions it needs to be handled with care and attention. Most people have sexual issues, to some they are harder than others. The most important thing is that we are able to honestly and freely admit we do have certain issues to deal with. Our first step to a higher spiritual level is to admit having a certain issue we need to deal with. In general we can split these issues in following order ;

- A personal problem of physical origin
- An emotional issue of connection
- An emotional issue that related to having sex itself
- Environmental issues on your sexual choice

These are the issues that healthy people in body and mind will have to deal with in a normal situation. All of these 'problems' can be solved when we consider the 8 fold path at first.

At first we have to understand (Samma-ditt) what we are dealing with. The right understand means also the right openness, the right mindfulness (samma-sati) to confess first to yourself and when needed to a trusted external party what you consider an issue. As we can read in other parts of this book the best way to discuss these kind of personal sexual issues is to “impersonalize ‘ them. When we are facing a problem of this source we need to observe (samma-sankappa) to give it the right names and bring it into the right context (samma-vaca) so we will able to come to the right action (samma-kammanta). It is clear that when we apply the 8 fold path it is possible to solve our sexual desires before we are able to move to a next level in our spiritual development.

Another issue is when we have strong emotional connections that goes deeper than a sexual desire. We consider this love with sex as an source of expression. In this case we are no longer talking of sex as a natural part of multiplication but as a part of a mutual connection between a couple. It is regarded impossible that this kind of connection can be found between more than two persons. Our nature has destined our mental and spiritual capacities to love sincerely only one person at the time. It may be possible to have several real love affairs in your life but it is impossible to have more than one at the same time. A person connected in these kind of sincere love affairs may follow the path of Buddhism but also must be realistic that the earthly love connections will be stronger than his/her spiritual desires. Let we consider this a phase in the cycle of life as the Buddha did teach, a very important step in the spiritual development.

The last group is considered a difficult and often hard to reach group ; Sexual frustrations and unhealthy desires. To deal with these problems is a matter of evaluation and step by step exploration of what is considered the problem. Before able to reach any form of spiritual development it is important to address the issues well and picture them clear. This can hardly be done by a singular person. It is advised to find proper guidance when you consider yourself in this category.

Conclusion ; sex is a normal part of our life. It is a part we are allowed to enjoy and experience with the right person. Yes it is even very natural to explore the depts and possibilities of a great sexual lifestyle to reach a spiritual development but all within its boundaries of the 8 fold principles.

Question of a student ; Sir, can sex bring you to a higher spiritual level as suggested by the Kamasutra ? Answer ; did you try it ?

This question and answer may sound funny but it happens all the time. People mix the Kamasutra, Khundalini Yoga, Sexual Tantra movements with spiritual development. From all these semi-religious and often confusing philosophies people get confused and I do consider this very logical.

Sex as promoted in these teachings gives the follow the idea of spiritual development. The idea is created by the moment of following. Sexual desire gives us a certain mental ‘boost’. The hormones in our body will stimulate our mind to feel a certain kind of freedom. Depending on the possibility (physically and mentally) to finish during the intercourse or sexual play it gives the undertaker a strong emotional feeling of being on

a higher spiritual level. Here is a clear mix of what is real spiritual and physical development. The undertaker of a sexual strongly stimulating exercise or event feels the emotional and physical energy as it is a higher power taking his/her mind to another level of observation.

The teachings all have a strong foundation in the physical aspects of lovemaking. They are very educational and surely worth trying with the right partner and the right goal, I am strongly in favor of that. But they do not promote a spiritual change not an increase of development.

5.5.1 External Love

External love is all love given toward others and received from others. Love is a very abstract emotion and for most people hard to grasp. To love someone brings flashes of hugging, kissing and other physical movements. But love is not only a purely physical action. In general we can say that more than 80% of all love is not physical at all.

What do we consider love ?

Love is to care, to give care and to receive care when needed but also when not needed. Care is thoughtfulness from you about others and the others about you. The caring is from the heart and not for a benefit. If you can say that you honestly love a person you will be caring without any wish or demand for a reward of any kind.

Love is attention = mindfulness. For most people attention is a present or a temporary moment given toward a person or received. But attention is to keep someone's wishes and needs in mind. You give attention in the form of remembering, reminding, communication and sharing time and space with a person.

Love is connectivity. People connect with each other and love someone without ever having seen. A good example of this is that many people love a God, a writer or even the Buddha without ever having seen him. They fell in love with the words, the image and their own vision. This kind of imaginary love affair can be very strong and connects people even stronger than between real human beings.

It is clear that love fulfills an important role in every person's life. For most people love is also the biggest problem of their life. Love is strongly connected with expectations. As we have seen what expectations can do to a personal life we understand that love will do all the same. To love another person is only possible if you are able to love yourself. To be connected with yourself is to be able to connect with others.

5.5.2 Internal Love

What is internal love ? when you read this a first impression pops up in your mind, it must be a person who is looking at him or herself and being very satisfied, a kind of narcissi. This is an incorrect and negative vision.

Internal love is not as easy as we think. In fact internal love has a few important sources as roots for our life ;

The Karma of love from past lives

The given love at childhood

Personal – probably genetic – characteristics of the person

The Karma of past lives leaves us with an unknown and untraceable mark in our energetic part of our spiritual being. Most people are not aware and will never be able to come aware of it. When we study the scriptures we find that even Buddha was not in favor of knowing the past lives as this knowledge hardly will benefit the current state of development.

I have been to many rebirthing sessions and saw numerous people calling for the ghosts of the past to consult them. To many it seemed that those events are a way to understand the Karmatic principals of the current life. In fact these events only show how easy it is to fool people when you have a good knowledge of psychology. Rebirthing is like hypnosis and when this is combined with the sub-conscious memory a huge uncontrollable memory flow will occur and create a fictional idea of past lives that is often more entertaining than having connection with past reality. The connection with facts is rarely been proven.

Contact with ghosts is something even scientifically proven as it is a matter of energy dimensions and not an incredible unexplainable matter. Energy will never be lost, this is a basic law in nature. We are living in a clear 3 to 4 dimensional world, it is easy to define things we experience and are able to touch. But when it comes to more spiritual matters we are no longer able to talk in clear definitions as the events are crossing the language barriers. Our existence is in a multi dimensional univers. Each dimension has its own existence, wavelength of energy and subsequently its possibility of us observing it.

Let me make it more simple ; we can compare our world with the atomic world. When two atoms come closer they will never melt together but their electrons will exchange energy and connect the atoms. You can understand that the core of each atom will stay the same during its whole existence but the shells of electrons are changing constantly. Sometimes they come so close that the electron changes from trajectory route into another. Electorns will cross each other and sometimes hit each other. When they hit each other something like interaction happens, this event can be measured by current science. This event can be compared with the moments and places demensions connect together. At this moments and places of connection multi dimensional events can be seen such as ghosts or other spirits.

The Karmatic burden or load you have from past lives has nothing to do with those super natural events and to study a past Karma will not bring you more internal love nor it will help you to develop it, it is something you have to take for granted.

Childhood is a very important time for love. Every child comes to life in full dependency and in need of care. To a child it is important to feel loved and cared for. A child feels love with the so called six sense. Love connects the child with its caretakers, these does not always need to be the parents. Mothers have a close connection with their children but this is not always true. Here the sub-conscious comes in action. After birth the sub-conscious of the woman takes over and lead to acceptance or distance between her and the child.

Having it experienced myself several times the birth of my own children the father is very important to the child also. A father must feel fatherhood as a pleasant and happy duty, a reason and target in life. It must be the Confusian responsibility of the man for its family. When father and mother gives the right love and attention to the child it will become a stabil personily. In our current society the attention to the child suffers great pressure. Often the child care consist mainly in supply and demand of material things. When a child is not taken care of in a spiritual way it feels neglected and will develop all kinds of problems which leads to low spiritual levels of existence. On the other side when a child is spoiled by material matters it will become extremely narcistinc and denounce proper spiritual development . Only children take care of in a dynamic stasbile way will be able to develop their own mind and spiritual being.

Children must pass lots of life tests before getting a spiritual wellbeing. As Buddha said 'life is suffering' a child must receive proper care but has to find its own way into society and certain risks and pressures should not be banned from their life. They have to learn by experience. Some children will be faster than others (see my other books on puberty) but all will come at crossroads in their lives having to make choices.

An important part of internal love is a character issue. The character of a child is formed by partly the issues and mentioned before but also other influences are important.

Family matters outside the father/mother

Environment

Health

The environment is, most of the time, something we hva hardly control off. When the child is able to communicate with its environment , such as making friends and getting around with others, it will build a character based on these experiences. Some children do not have a natural ability to communitate and will have a terrible youth. This strongly influences the character and future abilities. These people often turn to me for help and advise. Most have difficulty with the 'internal love concept'. To them loving themselves is a complicated and sometimes even considered impossible matter as the environment does not love them, so why should they love themselves. This concept of self pity is fed by the environmental denial of an existing problem.

In a city environment more and more people are suffering of this problem. Pressure of schools, work, friends and family to accomplish something is to hard for them. Women feels this pressure even harder than men who are often overprotected by their mothers. Growing up in these circumstances makes the need of a safe community environment a need or at least a place where these persons can find spiritual rescue.

Under all this pressure it is not easy to develop a proper internal love. Internal love is foremost acceptance from who you are and your situation. To love yourself is to accept who you are and your faith as it is. When you find peace of mind you give loving a chance and will be able to chance your situation once and for all. Loving yourself starts with accepting the basic 8 fold path and apply it in your everyday life.

5.6 Relationships

What are the main factors of a good relationship?

In general we can say that there are the indicators of a good relationshipship. In this part I mention the most important. With these indicators you are able to look every time at your own relationships to see if they are still holding up and the relationship has chances to survive. When you can answer over 60% in a positive way you are still able to continue. With a percentage lower than 40% it is time for you to reconsider the relationship or search for counseling:

Good communication. Happy couples talk to each other, and they listen to each other. A couple willing to set up a harmonious communication will find a way in daily life to start this without much distraction from outside sources. Both recognize the importance of the communication and will be listener and talker in an equal amount depending on the situation.

Resolving conflict in a positive way. Having conflicts are part of every relationship. The goal of a conflict is to solve the problem with communication in as many ways as needed to find a solution. It is most important to look for positive solutions.

Having realistic expectations. When people first meet, they put their best foot forward and try to mask their flaws. This is normal, but couples should realize that as time goes on, the "real" person will emerge. Relationshipships develop over time, but unrealistic expectations of a partner, or of a relationshipship, can cause undue stress.

Paying attention to details of your partner's life. People in strong marriages know their partner well. They know major events in their partner's past, and they know each other's likes, dislikes, hopes and worries. And, they keep updating this information as their partner's world changes.

Experiencing more positive interactions than negative ones. Successful marriages have five times as many positive interactions as negative ones. Giving positive responses to a partner's bid for attention -- whether it's a question, an extended hand, or just a glance -- strengthens the relationshipship.

Building trust. Most people started with a full trust in a new relationship. Often too much trust. That amount will decrease fast and gets unstable. After a while it seems all trust is gone but in fact the level of real trust is changing to a more durable one. For people who have been in a relationship it was strange to feel a 100% trust one day they fell in love but after a while doubt started to rise and a new kind of trust needed to be build.

Spending time together. Sharing experiences is a good way to build a relationshipship. Couples who enjoy doing things together -- rather than feeling obligated or forced into doing things together -- have a stronger, healthier relationshipship.

Shared values. Couples who start out with a wide array of shared values -- who agree on what's important in life -- have a better chance at building a solid relationshipship.

Shared responsibilities. Both partners have the obligation of nurturing the relationshipship, keeping the household running smoothly and working toward common goals. Allowing only half of the couple to bear the brunt of these responsibilities can cause resentment to build.

Adapting to change. People and relationships change over time. That's to be expected, not feared. Even people's expectations of a relationship do change. Partners need to be able to communicate about these changes and find ways to adapt to them.

We are in relationships to learn how to negotiate with the other, not to "win" over the other person. Part of the package is that being in a relationship will teach you where your limitations are. The "job" of your loved one is to pinpoint at your weaknesses! Be grateful about this information! Thank your partner for teaching you where you need to improve, on the part of the info that is really true, and change it to a better attitude.

What is the most useful phrase in your marriage? "I'M SORRY," followed by a good try at making things better next time. There are many differences. What used to marvel you in the beginning, that the other was so different from your own experiences, is now a source of irritation. STOP, and remember that you are in a relationship exactly because the differences were exciting and a source of learning for you.

Thinking differently does not equal to confront or disagree with you...if you need your loved one to be on your side, just ask: "This time, I will explain to you how I see this issue; can you try to see it from my point of view? I need your support on this please. " Think of the differences in your relationship as assets and always ask: "Do you have a different opinion we need to consider here?" before proceeding to implement a joint decision.

Being in a relationship is not a commitment exclusive from other interests. You need to develop a well rounded personality, with many interests, so don't think that you have only to pursue shared interests. Having your own pet hobbies will give you a different take on reality, from which you can share your learning with the other person. You are in this relationship by your own will, and responsible to make from it the best experience you can...If something is required from you, at home or elsewhere in the relationship, just deliver promptly and with a smile. Doing something extra builds a lot of good will for the future.

Nobody is perfect, be grateful that you found someone to learn with, warts and all...as a work in progress, don't take yourself too seriously; you are only a little bit of the universe, and looking at yourself in this context is humbling.

Be aware that you fulfill the same role for the other person, being a witness and a help...so you have permission to laugh at yourself and at your mistakes... However, be certain that you are always faithful to your life mission! Being faithful to the relationship is most important of all. Faithfulness is something both persons in the relationship think different about. In all your communication you must find the borders of the relationship in this. The question is; what does my partner consider faithfulness. This accounts for every relationship.

5.6.1 Love relationships

The main question we need to ask is a simple one; can a man be a good friend of a woman without love or sex being involved?

The answer is yes but rarely. Statistically we can say that 95% of the friendships between man and woman end in a love affair involving one way or another physical contact, wanted or not by one of both sides. Only 5% of this kind of relationship are true and honest friendships.

This percentage is very low compared to equal gender friendships. The reason is that we have been like this since creation. Keeping a man and a woman in one room creates tensions and these tensions are often stronger than the psychological advantages of a good friendship. In most cases the man is the weaker factor in the relationship.

Why is a man a weaker factor in a relationship between man and woman? The main reason is that women are able to have a higher emotional control. Women are able to shut down feelings of sexual nature from all three systems. A woman is able to do that for protection and when growing children. Men can never fully shut down all systems at the same time as they need them for survival. When man and woman are together the woman automatically will shut down all these systems as with a friend she will feel safe and protected. The man on the other hand will always keep one or more open causing mental disturbing. Only few men are able to control these desires.

Three systems according to Collins and Freeney.

Collins and Feeney have examined the relationship between attachment and intimacy in detail. They define intimacy as a special set of interactions in which a person discloses something important about himself or herself, and a partner responds to the disclosure in a way that makes the person feel validated, understood, and cared for. These interactions usually involve verbal self-disclosure. But intimate interactions can also involve non-verbal forms of self-expression such as touching, hugging, kissing, and sexual behavior. From this perspective, intimacy requires the following:

willingness to disclose one's true thoughts, feelings, wishes, and fears

willingness to rely on a partner for care and emotional support

willingness to engage in physical intimacy

Collins and Feeney review a number of studies showing how each attachment style relates to the willingness to self-disclose, the willingness to rely on partners, and the willingness to engage in physical intimacy. The secure attachment style is generally related to more self-disclosure, more reliance on partners, and more physical intimacy than other attachment styles. However, the amount of intimacy in a relationship can vary due to personality variables and situational circumstances, so each attachment style may function to adapt an individual to the particular context of intimacy in which they live.

In most cultures women get the blame for the fact that men lose control while with a woman while the woman is perfectly in control of herself. If men say that this is nature I always reply with the simple question why we have so many men raping women and so very few women raping men.

In Asia we can find proper man/woman friendship in great numbers to a certain age and extend. It is great to see that men also have learnt to control the desire of sex while with their friends. This makes Asian men (especially Chinese) reliable friends for the woman.

Most relationships occur during school periods and from research we found that most relationships like this ended the moment they leave the school situation.

5.6.2 Friendly relationships

A good friendship between equal gender is next to a love relationship the most important relationship in every body's life. We all need friends, good friends and friends we have on a temporary base. Friendship is one of the most important social events in our life. With a friend we share our hopes, desires, wishes, plans and more. We share the energy of the days and the nights and follow a trail to the future we plan together. A friend is supposed never to leave you and when we are young it is always sure we will be friends forever. Often a friend is closer than a lover as we are able to share the most secrets in good faith.

But did you ever understand why we need a friend?

Friendship dates back at the beginning of time when we were still hunters. A hunter could seldom go on his own and needed partners to go with him. All partners had one target to find good pray and get it as food. While hunting they needed to cover each others back, this must have been a full trust as not only the animals were dangerous also the competition was fears by times. Men never have changed since then, sharing with strangers has never become humans greatest possession. From these events (and from war situations) we have the saying; you cover my back and I cover yours. With a friend you did spend more time than with your lover in those days. For many not much has changed. Some societies of today still consider a relationship between equal genders better than with the lover or wife. But men have been always competitive and all friendships are based on the competitive element in men. A friend is a person who fills gaps in your own personality, who is supportive and able to understand you and your needs. You are the same for him. As men are in a constant competition in daily life situations friends are a need to survive. In this book we talk of the different conception of friendship in East and West.

For woman it was different. They needed to stick together for more social reasons. Woman had the care of children, of housing, of the food and clothing. Even in the days back then a woman had many social tasks to fulfill while men went out for hunting. From beginning of time women learn to be multi tasking. For protection woman had to live in communities, share facilities and had to warn each other in case of danger. A woman always would try to safe the children of another woman considering it was a member of the community they were in. Women have the competition feeling only hidden in the mind, it only will be ready for battle when their direct family is under treat.

Women have developed a complete different approach to physical touching and closeness. Men are only able to touch each other for competitive reasons. They prefer hitting each other than showing affection. In Asia you still can see man are allowed to show affection toward a friend in a normal accepted way, in the West, were homo sexuality said to be accepted, men never dare to touch each other in fear of being seen as homosexual. Women on the other hand are more physical, they love to touch each other and with the touching they show emotional connection. We accept this from woman as they also have been taken care of children for ages. Men always have been standing in the shadow while raising children. The part of growing and taking care of children is

vital to the development of emotional / physical connections, so men have been disconnected with a proper physical / emotional development. *This missing connection allows them also to kill others in case of war or hunt. If they had a close connection toward other natural beings our history would have been radically different.*

Women are also willing to touch others for other reasons. In the emotional way woman want to be beautiful and attractive, not only for others but for themselves. Beauty is a personal matter, shaped by the environment and often empowered by the friends around. Dressing, make up and playing are all routine efforts to increase the social / emotional connection between women. Often done at strange places such as toilets and bathrooms in a private atmosphere. These moments of connection are something man will try to make up in bars and other social gathering places, but they dramatically fail to reach the level of woman. The main reason is competition.

5.6.3 Relationships with acknowledgements and strangers

We are all involved in relationships but do we really know what a relationship is? To understand this we need to investigate who we really are. In all religions and philosophies people search for answers to understand who they are and what the meaning of life is. Many also want to know what is expected from us by others. We explore the role of relationships in our life from the day we are able to communicate. Human are not solitary beings. In nature we can withdraw ourselves temporarily from social contacts, for instance take the hermits of Hinduism and Buddhism who go to the mountains for contemplation and meditation, but they always need to get back to the “world” and connect again. This proves that humans are social beings and in need of contact.

Humans need to be part of a community. For them the community is a protection and life support. A community can be a family or a larger environment. Communication combined with emotions, in some cases also physical attachment, toward members of this community and environment is called a relationship.

A relationship is a combination of emotional attachment, communication at all levels and social behavior toward other members of a community or environment.

We are all in need of relationships. Everybody needs multiple relationships of different natures to live a proper fruitful life. In our society we are taught that relationships are very important yet most people never understand the skills to start or maintain relationship.

To understand a relationship we need to know the process of how it works, starts, develops and ends. The first and most important part of every interpersonal relationship is communication. As the standard word relationship is often used in mathematics to describe a specific connection between certain facts science prefers it to call a relationship between humans a interpersonal relationship. For a better understanding I will use the word relationship in this book only in the context of an interpersonal relationship.

Karen Reynolds did develop the following transmission model for communication.

Information source – this is the side where information is produced, in general a person who starts communication

Transmitter – the source who send information to the receiver

Channel – the way information is transmitted

Receiver – the person who gets information and “decodes” it into an understandable message

Destination – this is the final place where the message is stored

Many things can go wrong in the process of transmitting information from one person to another. The “channel” can be polluted by interference or the receiver has processed the information in different way than intended. The foundation of a successful relationship is correct communication. Every relationship follows a certain building pattern. When you wish to communicate with a target in mind, you need to understand how a relationship is created.

Step 1 – **Acquaintance** - Becoming acquainted depends on existing and previous relationships, the place where you are at that moment, first impressions, and many other factors. We all perceive that there is no such thing as a second impression and that the first impression counts most, which is true for every relationship even internet relationships.

Step 2 – **Building the relationship** – During this stage one begins to explore the other backgrounds, goals, opportunities and common interests to find reasons to continue a relationship and build trust between people. Specially women, choose which direction a relationship goes. Men usually keep more options for a change of direction open than woman.

Step 3 – **Continuation** – When a mutual ground of trust has been found a relationship develops further into another level such as friendship, romance or even marriage. In general this is a long period. In this phase a relationship stabilizes and gets a solid foundation for the rest of someone’s life.

Step 4 – **Deterioration** – Every relationship show signs of deterioration, it strongly depends on the partners how to deal with it. We see phases of “downgrading the relationship” in different forms of relationship in this book.

The major signs of trouble are :

- boredom,
- dissatisfaction with the other person,
- less communication,
- avoid self-disclosure,
- lost of trust,
- less participation in common activities.

Step 5 – **Termination** – the end of a relationship can be with death or separation. Most people consider separation more difficult to handle than death..

A healthy relationship can only be built on a strong foundation of attachment. I have created a set of guidelines to understand your own life and compare this to what is considered a regular development of relationships.

5.7 Expectations in life

Expectations are a part of desire and can be closely connected to greed. In Buddhism expectations are seen as a source of *dukkha* or suffering. To expect something is to plan for a result, and outcome to an event in the future. Most people create expectations on a not solid fundament of thoughts and hope. Expectations are always a source of sorrow and emotional changes.

In my vision and that of Buddhism, to expect is to walk a road of creation of suffering. When you start to expect you have a result in mind. A result that is uncertain but to you the result is already a fact before it occurs. Expectations start at even a very young age. As baby we expect to get food in time. If the food does not come we cry. When we growing older we expect to play and people pay attention to us. Again when it did not come we cry or shout. In other words we always did show that we were not satisfied if the expectation did not find fulfillment.

Expectations become a part of our development and they are even forced upon us. When we are very young people start to expect things from us. Think about the time people expect us to have tooth or to walk, to talk and learn. They told us that they did expect to see results and when they did not get what they wanted they showed that they were not satisfied with you. We had to deal with internal and external expectations all the time. When growing we found that expectations became a ruling factor in life itself.

How about aging ?

Look around you and all you see is change. Your mobile bought yesterday is already old and the new models are luring art you from shopping windows and screaming advertisements. Technology is changing so fast that you think you are running behind and cannot follow the new trends. Some people will get frustrated of the speed and want to catch up at everything.

Time and environment has changed our perception, no longer is age a save haven. Age is not defined by a particular number. Some people are grandparent at the age of 40 while others will never see a grandchild. Many woman are not married at the age of 35 while in the past woman at that age had already grown up children. Man and woman are focused on career and are no longer interested in permanent relationships while parents focus on having grandchildren to continue the family "dynasty". Internet did speed up fast relationship marketing and contacts are often fast, full of passion and short, fulfilling a physical and mental need. In these relationships women often pulls the short end of the string.

Aging goes with a changing body and mind. The body grows from immature to mature. After this a period of stabilization and important improvements comes to end with a decline. The start of "decline" is different for men and women. In literature the time that is considered "decline" for woman is the moment they lost virility. For man it is set around 35 years of age. The speed of decline is depended on the physical activities of the period before. A body needs to move to stay in shape, to be healthy. Moving is different from sport. You move to keep the machine (the body) going to prevent it will start to be rusty. When you stop to move, like when you stop a machine, the structure will start to get stiff. We call this a rusty system. A stiff system reduces neural transmission (your nerve system falls back) and diminish blood circulation.

But aging is mainly a mind over body matter. Your mind controls your body, your activity. Most people start to be aware of becoming older when they reach the age 30. Specially woman suddenly realize that their lifespan becomes limited. The reason behind this is the limited virility time of the woman. At age 30 she realizes that she only has around 10 years to go to get children. In current situation many woman in China are still working on a career at that age. Man, on the other hand, are often not mature enough to start a family. This will worsen in the generations to come due to the spoiling of parents of their sons. In today's society we see a worsening of the gender age gap and young woman are looking for (much) older man. This is an unhealthy situation that is not good for future generation. This choice is not a matter of physic but of the mind.

Time is essential in life. We all live on the clock. Realize how often do you watch the time ? How interested are you really to KNOW the time ? Looking at the time has become a routine, nearly a ritual. We make appointments with time and dates, we use diaries every day, we make plans with time as our guidelines, we are living on (borrowed) time. But how long ago did we start to take time this serious. How did our ancestors use time ? Were they aware that there timespan on earth was so limited. Imagine that in the past human only reached the age of 40. A person over 40 was considered an exception. A person who dies in current time at the age of 40 is an exception. Our lifespan is nearly doubled in yet only 100 years. We live longer and seem to be more in control of natures time. But the more we gain "control" of time , the more we are aware of it. We have become scare of losing time, wasting time and yet we do so all day, every day.

To combat the negative effects of the aging process we need to be flexible and consistent in improving, maintaining and revalidating the body and the mind at all time. The first step in aging is accepting that aging is inevitable, it is not a matter of choice but of faith. Acceptance is very important and gives way to understanding. Every age level has its beauty. When young the chase of love is most important, to make a career is great and your energy seems unlimited. Over 30 your beauty is the knowledge of life the experience and (physical) maturity. Most women are much more beautiful after their 30's than before, pity that men hardly realize that !

After 50 a new look on life fills the mind, a new energy that brightens your day. Wisdom of life, often the fact that kids leave the home and you can consider the mistakes you have made. At 50 the energy is still enough to cover the day's work and the evening to relax. After 70 we are able to look back at life itself, look at what we did learn and for some people what we have reached. Satisfaction is a matter of accepting and expectation. When we are young we have a lot of expectations. Our parents and family also put expectations on us. For Chinese the external expectation feels like pressure and often a force. This heavy expectation can work as a burden to most and as an energizer to some.

The first step of growing up is acceptation that expectation must comply with reality. In China many people have a too high expectation and will burn out before even reaching the age of 30. Health is build on expectation and action. Our mind makes the expectation based on our internal and external influences. After that action must follow. When you want to become director of a company you need to have special capacities to

get there. Not only your abilities as a hard working person but also a social networking artist. To get to the top we have to walk the stairs. Each step is a part of our expectations and will take some time. When we constantly look up to the top of the stairs we get frustrated and our mind makes the body stressed and sick. But when we focus on one step a time and we are successful we will feel the joy of success and a good influence on our health. A positive mind, positive results are important to a healthy lifestyle and also improves the quality of the aging process. Our aging process is divided into time spaces. For every step in life you need to take a limited time. We call that deadline walking. Our life deadlines are realistic, possible to reach within a planned time. Reaching a goal brings the satisfaction in life.

We all want to control time, to do this we need to let time work for us. Most people think of a clock or a watch when they think of time. Some people use time as status, they buy a beautiful watch to show fortune. Other people control time via their mobile. Many people have multiple ways to keep track of time. But keeping track of time is not the same as controlling time. Most people have become a slave of time. They work, forced or not, from dawn to dusk and seem never to have enough time to finish work. Work consumes most of our time. A Chinese worker often just do what the boss asks. Follow orders. Most of these orders are inefficient and time consuming, hardly ever are these orders carefully planned or clear.

Time can be made usefully when we make clear plans. Efficiency in life saves time. You only can be efficient when you know exactly what you want. Being clear is efficient. My advice is to put more time in preparing a task. After you get an order, make clear to the superior what the order is. Just write it down and ask his / her permission to execute the order precisely as is written down. Doing so saves time in communication and later you cannot get arguments. Following orders becomes more plan directed and time efficient. Another positive thing is that your superior cannot pull back and tell that the order was different and you made a mistake. Being clear is also good in relationships. In a relationship you can set goals and talk about when to realize them. Having a good set of goals also makes a relationship stronger. Good goals and strong time limits will give less stress. Everybody knows that time and stress are connected. The more you need to do in less or unknown time will increase stress, irritation and that has a direct effect on health and aging.

Time is essential in our aging process. The better we plan, also the micro planning, the more time we will have for leisure and relax. You have to spend time wisely to get older in a better health.

5.7.1 Daily expectations

Your alarm clock rings. Time to wake up. You did set the alarm clock and expect it to ring in time. When it does you are satisfied for the ringing, not the waking up. But what happens if it does not ring in time. You will be late, people will be angry, you get frustrated and blame the clock. The day did start with the expectation that the clock will help you. But the clock is a thing which only will follow your guidelines, your exact instructions and the energy supplied. As you can see even that mechanical thing is depended on more than one factor to function well and live up to your expectations.

At school or work you are expected to work hard and you expect to get good results. In both cases there are multiple factors that can influence the outcome and you have a very limited control. When you understand that your own influence on expectations is so small it is easy to follow that any expectation involving many unclear or uncontrollable factors is more or less only a chance and not a fixed result. Your daily expectations are gambling on future outcomes, nothing more. We surely can say that expectations are more or less equal to betting / gambling.

Gambling is considered a negative habit by far most of the people. But gambling is also associated with changes, with hope and desire. The feeling that goes with gambling is one that easily lead to addiction. Of this we can conclude that most people are more or less addicted to expectations.

From this all we can see that expectations are a foundation in our daily lives. We have expectations oriented on all future events on a short or long term. In fact we no longer live in the moment and experience the moment in which we are existing now. The first thing we should learn from expectations is that we do not understand the current time, Live in this very moment and experience it with an open mind.

Expectations close our perception, it changes our observations and manipulates our thoughts on people and events. It is clear that expectations create a none existing world for us. Our own expectations make us start believing things as we want to see a positive result toward every expectation.

In past years a book was published called "The Secret" of Rh. Byrne. This book tells a story of expectations and hope. It plays with the mind of the reader. In the intermezzo I recall what the promoters said of the book.

"the Secret"

Once known only by an elite who were unwilling to share their knowledge of the power, 'the secret' of obtaining anything you desire is now revealed by prominent physicists, authors and philosophers as being based in the universal Law of Attraction. And the good news is that anyone can access its power to bring themselves health, wealth and happiness. Fragments of The Secret have been found in oral traditions, literature, religions and philosophies throughout the centuries. A number of the exceptional people who discovered its power went on to become regarded as the greatest human beings who ever lived. Among them: Plato, Leonardo, Galileo and Einstein. Now 'the secret' is being shared with the world. Beautiful in its simplicity, and mind-dazzling in its ability to really work, The Secret reveals the mystery of the hidden potential within us all. By unifying leading-edge scientific thought with ancient wisdom and spirituality, the riveting, practical knowledge will lead readers to a greater understanding of how they can be the masters of their own lives.

When you read it carefully you only can see that it build on expectations. It gives people false hope to be better than others and actually control expectations as if they become facts in live. The strange thing is that in fact they do promote a very strong self-control, self-discipline and the living in the moment. The mystery as what they call it is hidden in meditation in mind control. The secret is not a secret for a person who practice

Buddhism in real life. These so called secrets will become simple every day realities to a person willing to study the scriptures well and follow the right path.

Name change

When you feel that you enter a new stage in your life you want to make radical changes but do not know where to start. Often my students ask me where to start to make the changes happening . In some cases, this is still rare, I advise a person to change his or her name. A change of name is a very radical event in the Western world, also difficult. To change your name is first of all a matter of personal choice. Before doing so it is important to realize the consequences .

When you feel like doing so it is important to realize that a change of name brings the following aspects ;

A change of name is the beginning of a new episode in your life

Often a change of name demands a change of place

The legal procedures of a name change can be long and tiring

Old friends will not understand and you have a lot of explaining to do

Some friends will not respect or even refuse your name change

With a new name old habits are not gone yet, old Karma still exist

How to change your name ?

To change your name is not only an emotional affair but also a sensitive one. A new name must be chosen well. The name must have a meaning that will cover the need and wishes for the rest of his / her life. A name has power, lots of meaning and use. Our name is called often and we use it on many occasions. When you enter a room or space and introduce yourself you wish that the name is clear, show who you are, with other words you wish that a new name represents your new image.

I am always particularly surprised when I am in the West hearing Caucasian persons saying their purely Hindi name. They got these names from Indian “masters” , Swami Yogi, Tibetan Monks or other ‘holy’ persons to mark their conviction to a new religion or direction in life. The names are chosen by mystical drawing and represent some kind of radical change. To me, a pure Western male, this sounds pretty awkward. I have been always in Asia and I also had a fighters name chosen. My nickname was Ranava. The name was derived from Ravana, a rakshasa, is the king of Lanka. After performing severe penance for ten thousand years he received a boon from the creator-God Brahma: he could henceforth not be killed by Gods, demons, or spirits. He is portrayed as a powerful demon king who disturbs the penances of *Rishis*. Vishnu incarnates as the human Rama to defeat him, thus circumventing the boon given by Brahma. The name symbolized the fact I was a foreigner in the sport and my skin was scary white. My name was given to me for the simple reason that I was compared to a demon in the boxing ring to scare my opponents. Much later I found that my trainer just could not write my name right and I thought I wrote my name as Ranava instead of Arnaud, so it was just a reading mistake and not a special name change, a disillusion !

That event made me thinking even more about names. A name must be chosen seriously and it must be understood by the carrier and the giver alike. A name must fit the person, it must contain a meaning and it also must be cultural acceptable. The name

must give answers and not raise eyebrows for questions.

My conclusion is that changing a name can help a person to change life. A good name can be a strong help to find a new destiny, enter a new period of life. To choose a good name needs a good combination of giver and carrier and it must pass the careful selection of the above mentioned point. A new name is an asset to life , a new beginning.

5.7.2 Love expectations

Love expectations are based on getting love, receiving love. People are looking for love all over the world. They look for love in a “I want to get love” way , they are under the expectation that people will love them. They often wait for a person who is willing to scarify their live for them. Not one moment the thought occurs that love is something we should give more than expecting to receive.

First we have to practice the right understanding to what love is (samma-ditt) before we can start to apply it through the right mindfulness (samma-sati). Love is a universal conception of connection, it connects mind and often bodies together into a harmonious relationship. Love is the presentation of the opening of it “self” to another in strength and weakness, in good and bad times.

Most people do not know what ‘love’ really is. When we search for an answer the opinions differ as much as the colors of the rainbow. But love is not as abstract as people wish to make it. Love is attachment. It is very simple if you feel love for someone or something you feel attached to it. You want it or him/her to be close to you. Love knows no distance, place or space, it has no form and shape , it can never be taken but only given. You can accept love or refuse it, but love always demand an action. Love has a beginning and an end. It is considered that love is always positive. To a meaning full development of the mind and body love is needed like food for the body. Without love there is no life. A child born from a union without love will suffer the consequences every day of its life.

We all expect love in our life as we know that without it our life will be empty and cool. When we are babies we expect love to be given by the parents or caretakers. A baby is to weak and unable to ask for it so it expect to come all by itself. It is the first step to expectation that love will be brought to us. When we are children we try to make friends and expect to receive friendship back. We give to expect things back, that is a complete natural expectation, it is a built in natural mechanism.

When we are young we expect love to come to us one day, so we study hard, focus on duties and move on. Most of the time we do not think about love at all. Our lives are too busy and occupied with so many important, stressful or interesting things. But sometimes we sit down on our own and realize that life is not the way we did expect it to be. We miss that important factor in our life, we miss the love. Suddenly we think it is time to find someone willing to give love to us and in our mind we are already sure that we are able to give love back as much as needed. But is that really true ?

Do you really think that you can suddenly give love to a person who comes into your life ? Are you really thinking that you will have no doubts, no regrets or suspicion to that

person ? Now think again. Imagine you meet a person who is interested in you, he or she pays attention to all you say, gives you a perfect feeling, makes you feel beautiful and desired and most of all gives you a feeling of true and unlimited love.

At first you enjoy it, second you fear it and third you mistrust it. It is human nature to hold back. This person is giving you so much and not asking for anything in return. This makes you suspicious as you are only used to give to take, in your mind there is no free giving. You have always worked hard for all your received so with love it must be the same. But it is all so much different with real love.

Real love is not demanding return, it is given without any request or even desire to get a return. In fact someone who gives real love will never expect a return, it is given and gone for the best. The giver will not reflect nor ask for your response, neither he/she will stop the giving. To give seems to cost energy but actually when you give love it creates energy, a strong positive never ending energy.

When you wait for love or you expect to give love with a reward, be sure it will be returned and interest will be calculated. Giving without expectation of return will not call for rewards, interest or returns. Given love is a universal source of energy and the more you give the more you get.

5.7.3 Wealth expectations

Wealth is connected with goods, products, houses and more. Most wealth is directly related to earthly temporary things. In my vision all I have in this life is for the borrow, I use it well during my lifetime with respect and thankfulness. All products help me to survive and make life easier.

To most people wealth is a dream , a target, a desire. Living in wealth is something most people would love. Being wealthy is a status and gives you a 'face' , people will respect you and know who you are. To most it is the possibility to buy and use whatever is of their wishes and desire. Till the moment comes what is wealth without health ?

Buddha was a very wealthy man, he had more than he ever could spend, around him all the luxury and desires were brought to him on demand to please all his senses. In fact Buddha as Sakyamuni had nothing to fear from life. He had all what a men could imagine. People who loved him, the goods that were needed, the woman of his desire and so much more. But he became less happy with the years spend. To him all these goods were just products to use in this temporary life, nothing could be taken to a next as nothing was brought from the former lives.

When I visit temples and monasteries I see so many people praying for good luck and fortune. They all come to pray for wealth and expect a higher being to help them to get it. Before they sit down they already did realize that the higher being will not throw the desired products just from heaven to the earth. They also realize that no Gods deliver instant children or even temporary once. All they do is to sit down and share the frustrations of life with themselves as no God nor higher spirit has influence on the daily matters of the suffering people covering this earth surface. No, the gods are not home for wealth. But people still believe in it and why not ? Everybody is praying for something personal, something to get ?

We expect wealth to bring us happiness and luck. To most wealth brings live to a higher level and probably it will do so when your wishes and desires do not go higher than the material level. I do think to many people being rich is the highest ideal they expect in life.

In Buddhism we do think different about this and according to my knowledge in every other religion or belief they will agree with me. If live was only the products that surround us now , how poor were all our ancestors, how terrible their life should have been. No cars to drive, no planes to fly, no music festivals to visit and no Jacuzzi to bath in. But still they had a wish for a spiritual life.

We are born naked and die 'naked'. Nothing will be taken to and from this earth. All we have is for the use of making our life easier to live. We may use them, they are there for temporary time. Wealth is a borrowed gift.

Monogamy and polygamy

From many people I got the question of what is considered the favorable path of life for man and woman to live happily together. Our society gets more and more hits due to divorce, adultery, cheating and all these followed by crimes. To start this part I would like to start with the 5 precepts as written down in Buddhist scriptures but used in every religion on earth ;

1.I undertake the training rule to abstain from taking life.

Pāṇātipātā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi.

2.I undertake the training rule to abstain from taking what is not given.

Adinnādānā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi.

3.I undertake the training rule to abstain from sexual misconduct.

Kāmesumicchācāra veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi.

4.I undertake the training rule to abstain from false speech.

Musāvādā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi.

5.I undertake the training rule to abstain from fermented drink that causes heedlessness.

Surāmerayamajjapamādatṭhānā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi.

In these precepts we find already clean guidelines on how to behave in a relationship. But I think we will need to clarify some parts more.

A relationship between people consist of good communication and behavior. In a relationship between man and woman communication is often an issue. When man and woman are not yet married the communication seems to be good, they both feel like it is otherwise they will not enter the holy matrimony of marriage. At least when the marriage is voluntary. Here we address already one issue that can cause men or women to find more love affairs.

Force or arranged marriages are basically against the 5 precepts. To start with it is against the second, third and fourth precept. When you are forced (in this case I accept an arranged marriage to be also forced upon the persons) to marry a person you did not chose you take something that is not given to you. Both persons in the marriage never

have given their own heart voluntary to the other, there was no free will. To both partners having sex with each other does not feel good, even when the desire raises high it still will never feel proper as the sexual conduct again is not voluntary, not given in free will. At last both must practice false speech every day. Both did not make a choice to marry and both must find a way to deal with each other to save the face of others. As you understand the basic of such a monogenic lifestyle is weak and precepts number 5 or even number 1 can soon enter the relationship.

In case two persons meet voluntarily we do not expect this to happen. But real free speech and being open and honest to each other is not a standard in most 'want to be' relationships. Often number 4 is there to impress each other. False speech is something that will build negative Karma which may return on you later on in life. But let us get on and suppose two people love each other and in the ideal situation they get married and start living together.

Love is made between a very limited amount of people, it is fragile and can be influenced by others. In a regular Chinese family the influence comes directly with the marriage. Many family members want to have a say in the marriage. The man and the woman both have responsibilities to the parents and often also grandparents. This is a heavy burden on both persons especially when they also wish to have one or more children of their own. Besides the financial pressure it is also the moral and other issues that will bring tension into the relationship. Slowly man and wife cannot face each other without a feeling or discussion of this pressure brought to others. This is creating a barrier between the lovers, to some a barrier that is higher than the relationship itself.

When such a pressure continues the partners both will need to look for a way out. To most men, women will seem to offer them a way out. It is the start of an affair and breaking of rule 3 and 4. A man is no longer involved in a monogenic relationship. When the outside woman knows the man is married she often will take her chances and also have other love affairs at the same time. I have seen this often happen. Many of these women do make a job of having temporary love affairs and do get themselves in a financially wealthy position.

Women in problems often seek other women, this because women are communication dependent more than sexual. Men are more sexually dependent than communicative. This difference soon leads to external influences where often the woman is in the losing role. As laws and society still do not protect the woman well her position is often weak and dangerous. Her danger is laid mainly in her husband who has affairs with women who will have affairs with others and at such can contaminate themselves with sexually transferred diseases. It happened all too often that the married woman suffered of diseases brought to her by her husband without telling or knowing it.

The ideal situation is a monogenic marriage where both partners exclude others and avoid taking family affairs back into their own family home. If they are able to exclude external influences and focus on their own relationship, a proper sexual interest and conduct, have good communication this will be the guarantee for a single partner only marriage. Question is how to create that situation?

Polygamy is a state where mainly men have more than one woman at the same time.

The question is if this is against the 5 precepts and the answer is, no it is not. In the time of Buddha it was a normal situation that a man who could afford himself more than one woman could do so. According to the annals even Buddha had more than one women. But the historical harem cannot be compared with a today situation. In the past a harem solely could exist by the financial and political status of a man. He needed to have access to large amounts of money to afford these women a proper housing, good care and living standard. To many women living in a harem was better than living in the slavery of home or force marriage.

But here we get to the 5 precepts and find that most of these women would not voluntarily choose the harem as their refuge if they had other options. To them the sexual conduct often felt wrong but it was the toll to pay for a better life, so they paid with their body but did not give their soul. To stay in the harem they needed to use false speech at all times. The fact shows that in the past staying in a harem was not a voluntary process nor something women did desire to do. It was a political or financial force that kept them there.

In the current life we have returned to the discussion because many men dream of having a harem. In the past I did encounter some groups that did successfully live together in harmony and love. It was interesting to see how they, in a Western society where this kind of relationships is officially prohibited, survived.

The first rule was a strong financial and emotional stability. The group needed to have a sufficient income, independent housing for all, privacy for each member of the group and open communication. Each member of the group was treated as an individual and had according to this communication about the relationship with others and the man of the house. For sexual activity there were schedules and seldom or never there was something like group sex, that was not considered proper. Sleeping with more than one woman at the time was no option for the man. The ideal of many men to sleep with more than one woman is a shattered dream for love groups of polygamic structure.

In all honesty we can say if the group comes together voluntarily, all women have the freedom of speech, agree on their state of being and have no force upon them it is very hard to tell that polygamy of this form is not allowed. By law it should be banned, but that only for very legal reasons and no other. In fact it should be that the man is not married by law to any of the women to protect them all in equality of rights. But it is not against the 5 precepts.

5.7.4 Health expectations

Health is a very general perception. A person is healthy when he or she has a feeling of wellbeing. Healthy is not only a physical concept based on medical terms. Real health is a combination of physical and mental wellbeing. A good health gives a person the ability to do the things as wanted. To most people a disabled person is not healthy, I do consider this a wrong perception. Most disabled persons feel themselves perfectly healthy as they came into peace with their disabilities and accepted their life as it is. This is a very healthy concept of which many able persons should take sample of.

But health is a fragile thing. It can be easily shattered, hurt or even destroyed. Most people have clear health expectations and even more never think of their health at all. Daily we take actions that could be dangerous to our health. As we read in the 8 fold path even Buddha did clearly state that the taking of intoxicants (*Surāmerayamajjapamādaṭṭhānā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi*) is a health hazard for as well body as mind.

Health is something we have only limited control. In many of my books you can read the sentence ; “you are what you eat “. As we are a part of society and food is something we have very little control about when we live in a city. Food is also one of the main point of concern when living in a Buddhist community.

One of the rules of Buddhism is not to kill (*Pāṇātipātā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi*). Monks are not allowed to eat meat that is killed for them to eat. In cities most people even do not know the source of meat anymore let alone they know if the meat is killed for them or not. The application of that rule in ancient time was easy as all meat was killed in low amounts and transported on short distances. In the current situation we do not know how old the meat is not where it comes from.

Being health in one thing, staying healthy a complete different one. As we find in the 8 fold path to use mindfulness it also concerns to our daily matters as food. It is important to understand how we can take care of good food and at the same time improve our spiritual powers.

Eat as less (red) meat of four leg animals as possible. This meat is often from bred animals in large farms and have used all kind of medical appliances to stay “healthy” and grown fast. The long lasting effect of this meat can be seen in a society such as USA were many people are far overweighted

Eat carbohydrate rich food according to your age. When you are young it is important to get enough energy rich food like rice and corn or even potatoes. In the aging process the body will need this lesser and lesser for energy. It is important to decrease the intake with growing older

Fruit and vegetables are very important for our body and should be taken daily. The influence of them on our mental stability is strong and long lasting.

To eat the food we have to choose the time of the day wisely (*samma-sankappa*). Most of us work during the daytime and the most important meal of the day is the morning. Eating the right meal in the morning will enlighten our mind and body and preparing it for the tasks to come. The better we are prepared (*samma-sati*) the more we have energy for doing the right efforts (*samma-vayama*). Most Buddhist monk are only allowed to eat in the morning before eleven a.m.

During the day, depending on your daily work, it is good to divide the meals in small easy to digest parts, something like every three hours a small meal. These meals must be easy to digest and not to contain heavy carbohydrates (such as fried rice or potatoes) or proteins (such as red meat) to keep a clear mind. Food is a very important part of physical and mental development and it strikes me time and again that so less time is paid to a healthy lifestyle in nearly all teachings. A healthy body is the temple for a healthy soul. In all my teachings I made students aware of these facts.

Buddhism and disability

The first question we need to answer here is ; what is disable ? Answering this can be complicated or rather simple. We consider a person disable who is not able to do everything equal to what the standard person is able to do. It is interesting that very dumb people are not considered disable because they have full use of their bodies. Medically speaking a person is only considered disable if he or she has factors that will limit the functioning of the individual in daily life. We can consider disability in fact as 'having limitations in body or mind '.

Limitations do not sound so serious and in fact they are not. Disable people are no losers nor people we need to feel pity with. In my understanding working with disabled people we only need to look for their abilities and not focus on their limitations.

In Buddhism we know that life is suffering. To many disability comes from bad deeds in a past life. A disabled person is considered to be a victim of wrong deed from past lives, with other words they are serving their Karma dept. A disabled person should not be seen as a poor person but one who is paying for old debts and need to make the best of in in this life. To them suffering gets an extra dimension when we pay negative attention to their limitations. From the side of a disabled person it is suffering when they try to live up the standards of not-disabled persons.

In the ancient Buddhism and still in most monasteries around the world a disabled person male or female cannot enter the monkhood. According to old rules a disabled person is not able to follow the rules of monkhood as written down. I think it is time to change this as in current situation the limitations of most disabled person are taken away by the help of medicine and instruments allowing a person to function to the optimal within its own perspectives.

If we look back to the point of Karma and suffering we find that most Buddhist think that being disable is a result of things that are done, or not done, in past lives. In our hearts we are all very interested in past lives, we all would love to know what we did there. I have been at many re-birth, awakening and re-live sessions and saw many people telling their stories of past lives. It happened only on a very few occasions that what the person was telling made real sense. In nearly all cases the stories where purely deprived of the memory of the person. Often they pictured themselves in a movie like scene.

The real question we need to ask here is if the Buddha was seriously interested in remembering his own past lives. The answer is a blunt NO. Buddha did not consider it at any value to remember a past live as we were not able to change history not learn from past lives as the current situation was always much different. Let the past be the past. Learn from the Karma we built in this life, live in the now and here.

This thoughts directly influence the way disabled persons should treat live itself. Living here and now, with their limitations. Life is suffering for all of us. The differences between abled and dis-abled persons maybe large at young age but during life they

become smaller and smaller as our abilities decrease while growing older.

In my research I found that some disabilities are even an advantage to reach higher levels of consciousness by meditation. During my travels I found some blind and also deaf persons who used the so called disabilities to their advantage by the use of meditate directed interpretations of the Buddhist lectures. They do have a real advantage over so called able people cause they can focus more strongly as they have lesser distractions.

As you can find in many places in this book we have to distinguish the organization of Buddhism and the application of the teachings into real life. It is my vision that Buddha came to his inspirational words after he was confronted with lives imperfection. In all scriptures we find that the Sakiyamuni only could realize his real life goal after he saw disability and lives end, he had to make a choice in his life after he saw them.

Fact is that disability is a part of realization of life itself. To be limited does not mean you do not have ability. It surely means you have to consider other options as the Buddha did the moment he saw the signs. In fact from this moment on everybody should realize that disability is neither wrong or right but a sign of life.

The fact that disabled people are discriminated on basis of their limitations has nothing to do with the intention of the religion or philosophy but everything with the social and society created of organizations and limited minds of the rulers and teachers. If we take the 8 fold path and apply them sincerely we understand that disability is just another form of being human.

5.8 Practical applications

Being practical and target oriented is a virtue in life. Using the right understanding (samma-ditt) of life will make us come to the right action (samma-kammanta). Our life is short and it is better we do not waste too much time. Surely we all “waste” time while growing up, time we are sick and the time our minds are occupied with things leading us away from the chosen path. Also the Buddha was confronted with time he needed to use to solve earthly matters. We all must consider time as valuable.

As I am a very practical man I waste no time in researching to much things that have been explored before, it is like inventing the wheel again. I do spend my time finding practical applications, things I can fit in my life and that of others to create the “highway to heaven”. When writing this down I cannot suppress a smile. I know the moment you read this you will think that I offer instant applications to ‘enlightment ‘ but I have to disappoint you. I offer guidance and leadership to bring you to the right path as a trainer prepares you to run a marathon. Finally it is you who run the marathon and not the trainer.

5.8.1 Concentration and meditation

This chapter is not only about meditation. Before we come to the important stages of Vipassana we will have to move thru many different levels of our mind to understand

what we are able to do and why we do it. These are the parts we will need to go thru to get to meditation first ;

- Prayers and devotion
- Concentration and focus
- Breathing and postures
- Active and passive pre-meditation
- Meditation
- Contemplation

(Instant ?) Enlightenment

Enlightenment refers to a conscious, momentary experience of the Truth. The objective of the Enlightenment is to experience the Truth of the self, life, and our connection to all other beings or universes. When these fundamental Truths are experienced directly, it is referred to as an enlightenment experience. It always occurs in a moment of timeless instant and always changes one's state of being into a more enlightened or awakened state of consciousness. The truth is taken here in the absolute sense, i.e. that which actually exists apart from how we sense, perceive, think, feel, describe, or learn about it.

Words cannot describe a enlightenment experience because it is beyond words, symbols or conceptualization. It is beyond all the methods we depend on for knowing; sensing, thinking, believing, deciding, reasoning, or feeling. But when a direct experience happens, it is self-evident beyond certainty and any doubt. In the case of self enlightenment you are at one with your "I" in the sense of being your true "I" consciously. In the state of enlightenment, there is no mental dichotomy, no subject-object duality but an at-one-ness with yourself. People who have achieved a direct experience of self speak of their deepest or highest source. They no longer identify themselves as only being their body, emotions, thoughts, mind or the roles they may play in life. Such people speak from themselves without having to refer to their past thoughts or the thoughts of others. A person who has had a direct experience of self increasingly sees each moment in life as a new and unique experience and does not tend to be stuck in a limited way of seeing things. Some people confuse the word enlightenment with a concept of becoming perfect. Enlightenment does not change one into a "perfect being". Enlightenment means experiencing who you are as you are.

Stage one Q & A. In your life there are many sensitive moments. In Q&A you need to answer the never answered questions of life. Questions that did "hunt" you from the past, questions that are "nagging" you. Each must be answered without the limitations.

Stage two is intellectual. In this stage you must think things out logically and reasonably way. If this is true, then that must be true, and so on. Answers, correct or otherwise, are not what we are looking for. This stage is completed when you stop trying to answer a question and begin to set about to experience the question directly.

Stage three is the stage of phenomena. In this stage your brain will begin to produce unfamiliar mental and physical phenomena. Visions or hallucinations may appear. You see auras around people and things. You could experience hot and cold flashes or waves of emotion running through your body. You may mistake these things for

enlightenment.

Stage four is the void. In this stage you will find your field of consciousness empty. No thoughts occur and no progress appears to be being made. To make further progress you must stop "looking" for yourself and, instead, seek to experience yourself directly.

Stage five encounter the barriers of emotion, pain, and death. You experience feelings of fear, anger, grief, sadness, apathy, and serenity. The confrontation with your inner self comes hard. All feelings that are part of your character structure will be exposed. They are constructs which may have, at some time, protected you from feeling something you did not want to feel. This established an emotional sense of self which you have identified as being you. Feelings of death or the fear of it, how confrontational they may be, will diminish to nothing when left loose. A stage of near death experience may occur.

Stage six is the enlightenment experience itself. Two things occur simultaneously. First you have a direct conscious experience of your being and, experience a release of energy and other effects. It all occurs in a timeless instant. You know it as a definite breakthrough, no doubt in your mind.

Stage seven is the glow in which you are radiating yourself as truth. You feel totally in contact with your inner self and your presence radiate from you like a glow. This continue until you have fully presented yourself to others.

Stage eight is the pure steady state. The steady state continues into your life to a degree that you continue to present the true you to others. In the pure steady state of consciousness of yourself, as you truly are, your interests will turn to life and others.

The effects of this training is ;

You achieve a quiet, peaceful mind.

You experience the opening of your heart and soul.

You self esteem will be boosted to unlimited height.

You experience a tremendous surge of life energy.

You work through your own fear of emotion, pain and death.

You discover your own immortality.

To achieve the state of enlightenment need proper guidance and training of qualified persons.

In this part I talk about all prayers, no matter your religion or faith, no matter the God you chose to pray too. I would like to make clear I will not use a HE or SHE to address a supreme being because in my vision a God does not have or need a gender. It does not need to follow our human rules where we wish to separate ourselves in male (considered by most more superior) and female. A supreme being does not need a body like we do, no gender to make children or anything that comes even close to our limited human mind. A supreme being cannot be described by the limitations of our language, let alone our intelligence. Why should it be "supreme being" if it has all human features ? Humans wrote books to tell about the Gods, to tell about their wishes, needs and wants

as if they could understand and even explain the thinking of these supreme beings. Let us be simple and clear ; If we could understand and explain their thoughts, what would make them superior to us ? Yes exactly they would just be the best person of the class not more, not less. Nothing really superior to us. But be sure there are powers beyond our comprehension, with intelligence so far over us that we are not able to understand a percent of it and in a shape we cannot image. The answer to all who pray to a supreme being or God is that they do right to do so but stop believing in books which are all written by men to explain things they do not understand and by doing so make them equal or lower than the human being itself. That is not right.

Prayer and devotion are for most people the first steps to free mind and body from earthly affairs. To most readers of this book prayers are in contradiction of the words of Buddha and I fully agree with it. But prayers are often the first stage to recognize powers that do not belong to us. In a prayer we show humiliation to others which we probably will never do in real life. When we are praying our deepest wishes and sorrows will surface and concentrate in our conscious mind. We place all these problems in front of a higher being and ask for help, to assist to solve them. In fact a prayer is the first step to recognize the things that are really bothering us. Things we need to get solved before we are able to step any further in our development as human beings.

All religions use prayers to let the followers focus on the higher powers and admit they are only human and not able to solve a problem on their own. They need help. A prayer is a very important moment in a person's life. The moment of a prayer is chosen and often carefully prepared. Prayers come with a message to the supreme being and yourself. We have to learn to listen to both messages before we can move to any other level. It is important to learn to pray before we learn to meditate.

Praying is not just fold your hands and say a few words. To pray we need to know what we would like to bring forward. The intention of praying is that we want to place a, for us, important fact in front of a superior being, to some called a God. Before you take the position to pray it is good to know what the words and intention of the pray will be. Are you going to talk about daily affairs or serious matters ? If about daily affairs it is good to reconsider the content of your prays. Millions of people will offer these prays for a quarter to the supreme beings. Do you seriously think they will have time to bother about every body's daily affairs ? That would be too much for even the highest being cause it will never interfere in the daily life of the human being. Why not ? The answer to that is simple ; a supreme being gave you a brain to think , a conscious to consider and a body for action. All these are the gifts of the being to you to solve your own daily affairs. It will never consider something you should take care of by the things it already did hand to you.

When you pray it is important to convey an important message, something you really need and want to share. You are going to give some of your inner secrets away to something you do not understand. The moment you close your eyes you need to feel trust, patience, believe in a solution and above all you need to focus on the prayer to send it loud and clear to whom you believe in. A prayer should not be disturbed by other thoughts, an unclear mind or second thoughts. Your prayer must be intentional and from the heart. To pray is to give yourself up, devote and hand over the most inner secret of yourself to something you never met before. You pray to get a solution.

Good praying goes hand in hand with devotion. When you are not devoted to the supreme being you wish to pray at, the pray will never arrive at the intended place. Let me visualize this more for you. All of us have a mobile phone. You dial a number and when it answers you tell your story, you do not listen who answered the phone nor you will reply on questions. It is a very useless phone call, you have wasted time and money for no reason. Telling your story is not the intention of a prayer. You want a solution for something bothering you. A good pray needs complete emotional involvement. A devoted person comes into the right emotional state of mind when he/she is able to focus on the right combination of content of the prayer and the knowledge of the supreme being. This knowledge often comes from books or stories of others.

To become devoted needs knowledge of who you want to pray to. Devotion comes from stories you hear, from the place where you go to for hearing these stories, from the content of these stories and most of all from the attraction of the supreme being, his prophets and disciples you feel attracted too. Devotion comes from identification with other believers and followers from that religion or philosophy. When hearing or reading the stories you feel emotionally touched. Believing is a strong emotional involvement. That is why I think praying is very important to start with. To pray is to believe and to believe is to be attached and to be attached is a strong emotional event that is life changing for the believer. A real believer will change his/her life completely to follow the advises of the believe.

Create your own Mantra

It is important to be creative with you own development. If you do not want to continue using the regular mantra's create your own by using following guidelines ;

1 / first consider your own feeling of the moment. As you are stressed, write down – stressed, if you are tired write down – tired and so on. After you have analyzed and written down your negative feelings we move to the next step.

2 / Now you write down a series of points with ; I am stressed , I am tired and so on

3 / After this you write in a column next to the negative emotions the opposite , like “I am relaxed”, “I feel energetic” and so on

4 / when you read the column of positive energy you start making sentences such as “Today I am very relaxed and full of energy”

5 / When you are ready with a few sentences like this , never more than 5, you write them down on a nice card, or even better a few cards, and hand them at places you often visit like the kitchen, bedroom, car and so on.

6 / Every time you visit this place read the Mantra's out loud while smiling.

Within an couple of weeks you will feel yourself very positive and energetic again.

We can use a believe constructive or destructive. Each believe has the same basic rules and regulations. It does not matter where you move into this world the basics of every religion or philosophy is the same ;

- We should not kill
- We should not steal
- We should not cheat

These rules are always the same. They are basic and we all break them. Gladly not all of us break the first rule or the second, but the third is broken so often that we know how to conceal this happening even to our own conscious soul.

In Buddhism we can consider chanting a part of the prayer routine. Chanting is not really a person pray but we can use it to go from a level of personal prayer to a higher level of mind development. This higher level is called concentration. When we chant our body and mind are able to get into a so called cadence, a rhythm with a meaning and a target. Chanting allows us to focus our mind and concentrate our soul and emotions, we are on the way to control and dominate our emotions. We do not suppress emotions, this is never a good way to deal with them. Suppression is like putting a “jack in a box”, it will come out at the most unexpected moment and can disturb or even annihilate all your progress.

We have to combine chanting with concentration or pre-meditation training to learn how to control our emotions. During our prayers we did learn that the intensity of the prayer could move our mind and often body to strong emotional reactions. While chanting we discovered that our mind got into a state of tranquility by the sounds of the chanting, the vibrations of our voices had a calming effect on our bodies and mind. This knowledge must be used in concentration training.

The best is to start with object focus. Concentration training by object focus is one of the easy methods to learn to control your mind direction. By the single object focus all other thoughts must be banned from the mind. The object must become a complete part of our mind, we need to be able to look at it from many different sides. First we need to look from different angles, later from above and even under it. When able to focus well we also need to get inside the object to see / feel how it is to be inside the object. This is a hypothetical focus training which needs to be done only when you are able to visualize something from the inside. Concentration training on objects is more a visualization training. It is easier than the thought focus training as during these sessions the mind easily slips away to other thoughts. That is why I always start with object training.

When you are able to focus on an object it is time to move to thought control. Thoughts are difficult to control. During these training sessions we teach you to become an observer. You have to become an observer of your own mind and later also your body. The first thing you need to do is to take a distance of all your own thoughts. Imagine yourself in a corridor and sitting aside on a bench watching the thoughts passing by one by one. In the beginning they all seem to rush through each other like traffic on a Beijing road. It looks messy and without any organization or structure. You have to organize them first. Get all in order. The only way to do so is to handle them one by one without getting involved with. You see the topic, the content as an observer. It is important not to think it over, but to keep on a distance. Bring family matters to family matters, school to school, work to work, separate private from work or school, try to create categories. Learn to organize your mind.

In our training we call this dis-sociation, to bring yourself to a distance from yourself, become observer and not a participant. In the beginning it is a weird feeling to look at your own thoughts and mind. In a later state we will promote to look at your complete self, this include your body.

From passive training we move to active training. Breathing exercises are based on active movements. Many of these movements we also can find in Martial arts like Tai Chi and Wu Shu. In Martial Arts all participants should train meditation and breath control. Breathing is of vital importance to the quality of oxygen in the body and the working of the brain. When the oxygen supply is sufficient it is possible to reach a higher state of mind. Buddha did exercise many ways of meditation from the most extreme to the moderated forms. He found by trial and error that moderation is the only path of the middle. This also accounts for the right breathing exercises.

Dance meditation

What is dance meditation? It is meditation in where we use rhythm, intuitive state, movement and sound to bring our mind and body into a 'higher' state of mind.

Dancing is a part of virtually all religions. Religious dancing is common in many cultures, and it was surely a part of ancient cultures often guided by shamans who would dance to enter a trance state. In nature-based societies and religions, the rhythm of dancing was an imitation of the rhythm of nature. Dancing was and still is an attempt to understand and unite oneself with those rhythms. In most cases, religious dancing became scrutinized and it lost its sacred meaning. Dancing is exploring life and spirituality. Dancing is self-discovery. Particularly improvised dancing where we dig deep into our feelings in order to find a way to express our most inner self.

When our body becomes energized through movement, we differentiate more clearly the energy of our body and the relation to the energy of the surrounding worlds; our body becomes less of a solid mass and more of a sacred focal-point of spiritual power within the physical world. To explore different aspects of ourselves, we can dance with a variety of musical styles, including jazz, rock, classical, and international music (Middle Eastern, African, etc.).

Dancing is a means of expression. Many mystics have said that words cannot communicate their visions and ecstasies; some of those mystics have used dance to express those inner experiences and their devotion to a deity. A simple hand-gesture (body language) can depict a revelation for which there are no words; the gesture might be understood by other people, whereas words might have provoked confusion or disagreement.

In a group, dancing is a means of ego-transcendence. We re-define the separate ego as we merge into the group's common activity, emotion -- and rhythm. Each rhythm induces a different state. Even if we are not specifically meditating on the dance's rhythm affects us in various ways:

It influences the cadence of our heartbeat and breathing, which in turn affect our psychological state.

It affects the functioning of our brain;

It affects us through "entrainment." In a religious setting, where our thoughts and emotions are aligned toward spirit, our rhythmic dancing reinforces and develops the group's spiritual orientation. This is a group meditation which uses the energy of the physical body to supplement the subtler energies of the mind and emotions in order to

create a transcendent state.

Traditionally, Meditative dancing was accompanied by the rhythms of drums. Drums are pondering on the beating of our heart. That constant beating sound is a meditative. The rhythm moves us into a state of meditative mind when the rhythm is unbroken, and constant. Focusing on the beats and letting go the emotions a gradual dissociation with your ego takes place. During the dance your emotions burst out and your mind refills itself with a positive energy leading your mind to a more tranquil state. After the dance you have a long lasting effect.

We can distinguish a number of different meditative dancing methods of which I will only describe a few here ;

- Free dance. Hereby movements are not generally described, when the music starts each person is requested to move in whatever way he or she wish to do. It is also called intuitive dance.
- Sufi dance or twirling which got most famous because of the Twirling Dervishes of Turkey
- Trance dancing. A drum related dance which is mainly used for shamans to get into a transcendental state of mind.
- Pattern dancing. Hereby the dancers follow a strict routine that is repeated again and again.

I would like to start with one of the currently most famous Meditative dance routines which has no connection what so ever with Buddhism but it is still a very interesting methods of use. In 2005, UNESCO, the United Nations' Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, recognized the Mevlevi Sufi whirling ceremony, known as Sema, (The Mevleviye are an Sufi order founded in 1273 in Konya) as one of the Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity. In Turkey today, tourists may view the ceremony performed for audiences. UNESCO hopes to encourage the preservation of the ceremony in its original form -- an intimate spiritual ritual, taught to dancers during 1,001 days of cloistered training that included poetry, music, ethics and prayer.

At their dancing ceremonies, or Sema, a particular musical repertoire called ayin is played. This is based on four sections of both vocal and instrumental compositions using contrasting rhythmic cycles and is performed by at least one singer, a flute-player (neyzen), a kettledrummer and a cymbal player. Dancers would receive 1,001 days of reclusive training within the mevlevihane, a sort of cloister, where they learnt about ethics, codes of behavior and beliefs by living a practice of prayer, religious music, poetry and dance. After this training, they remained members of the order but went back to their work and families, combining spiritualism with civic life.

Following a recommended fast of several hours, the whirlers begin to rotate on their left feet in short twists, using the right foot to drive their bodies around the left foot. The body of the whirler is meant to be supple with eyes open, but unfocused so that images become blurred and flowing. The Sema takes place in a large circular-shaped room that is part of the mevlevihane building. Whirling Dervishes spin to the left, fundamental to being a Whirling Dervish, and Tibetan Monks spin to the right, fundamental to being a Tibetan Monk.

Instructions of how you will be able to train yourself, although I recommend guidance ;

- Begin by crossing your right arm over your left arm over your chest.
- Now, looking down loosely at your left hand, stretch your right arm out slowly into the air. Continue to move round slowly to the left. Keep staring at the back of the left hand, all the time, and NEVER TAKING YOUR EYES OFF IT, now stretching it out to the left, with the palm facing downwards, connecting you with the earth.
- Continue slowly Spinning to the left, in an anti-clockwise direction
- Bringing the Sema to an end: Slowly bring your left back to your chest, whilst all the time keeping your focus on the back of your left hand, then EXTREMELY SLOWLY begin to bring your right arm in and cross it over your left hand, and continue to spin, increasingly more slowly, till you feel you are ready to stop.
- Follow this by quietly sitting and meditating for as long as you enjoy.

Intuitive dancing is to become one with the rhythm first which we hear and then let our body begins to move with the rhythm. Our rhythmic interaction will be according to cultural influences and individual beliefs. Often, a person can be made to feel wrong if they follow steps of a dance routine incorrectly, or struggle to co-ordinate their body with a rhythm that's not innately theirs. There are variable influences that shape our experiences of how we do things, of who we become. Our dance is shaped and developed over time by who we become.

Intuitive dance is often viewed as a private dance, yet it is the allowing of self that comes through a private dance that lets you and privileged others see the essential you, that comes out through your interpretative dance – the unveiled you.

Intuitive dance is a dance of the heart and an energetic expression of the person. It is a truly beautiful dance to witness and behold; and a true unveiled expression of the conscious and willing dancer.

When you start with breathing exercises it is important to know some information on the Chakra's, the energy centers of the body. These energy centers are concentrated on different points of the body along a central line also called the balance line.

The Chakra's

The word chakra comes from the Sanskrit word wheel. This is the wheel of the Twelve Nidānas which are explained in detail in the Visuddhimagga of Buddhaghosa, the central text of the Mahāvihāra commentarial tradition. Buddhaghosa recounts four methods to interpret the Twelve Nidanas:

- Working from "bottom to top",
- Working from the "middle to the top",
- Working from "top to bottom",
- Working from the "middle to the source"

The first method begins with ignorance and proceeds to sickness, old age, and death. The second method begins with attachment and proceeds to birth. The third method begins with birth and proceeds back to ignorance. The fourth method begins with attachment and proceeds to ignorance

The chakras begin at the base of the spine and finish at the top of the head. Though fixed in the central spinal column they are located on both the front and back of the body, and work through it.

Each chakra vibrates and rotates at a different speed. The root or first chakra at the base of the spine rotates at the slowest speed, the crown or seventh chakra on top of the head at the highest speed. Each chakra is stimulated by its own and complimentary color, and a range of gemstones for specific uses. The chakra colors are of the rainbow; red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet. The size and brightness of the wheels vary with individual development, physical condition, energy levels, disease, or stress.

If the chakras are not stable, or if the energies are blocked, the basic life force slows down. The individual feels listless, tired, out of sorts, or depressed. Not only the physical bodily functions be affected and diseases may manifest, but the thought processes and the mind also could be affected. A negative attitude, fear, doubt, etc. starts to preoccupy the individual.

Stability between the chakras promotes health and a sense of well being. If the chakras are opened to much, a person could literally short circuit themselves with too much universal energy going through the body (we can see a person with ADHD having this kind of problem = Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder). If the chakras are closed, this does not allow for the energy to flow through them properly which lead to problems.

Unpleasant experiences often block our feeling and stop a great deal of our natural energy flow. This affects the maturation and development of the chakras. Whenever a person blocks an experience he/she has, it in turn blocks the chakras, which eventually can become disfigured. When the chakras function normally, each will be open, spinning clockwise to metabolize the particular energies needed from the universal energy field.

THE SEVEN MAJOR CHAKRAS

First Chakra – Root

Studying the individual chakras begins with the root chakra, called Muladhara in Sanskrit. The root chakra is located at the base of the spine at the tailbone in back, and the pubic bone in front. This center holds the basic needs for survival, security and safety. The root chakra is powerfully related to contact with the Earth Mother, providing us with the ability to be grounded into the earth plane. This is the center of manifestation. When you are trying to make things happen in the material world, business or material possessions, the energy to succeed will come from the first chakra. If this chakra is blocked an individual may feel fearful, anxious, insecure and frustrated. Problems like obesity, anorexia nervosa, and knee troubles can occur. Root body parts include the hips, legs, lower back and sexual organs.

Second Chakra - Belly (Sacral)

The next chakra or second chakra is often referred to as the belly or (sacral). It is located two inches below the navel and is rooted into the spine. This center holds the

basic needs for sexuality, creativity, intuition, and self-worth. This chakra is also about friendliness, creativity, and emotions. It governs peoples sense of self-worth, their confidence in their own creativity, and their ability to relate to others in an open and friendly way. Its influenced by how emotions were expressed or repressed in the family during childhood. Proper balance in this chakra means the ability to flow with emotions freely and to feel and reach out to others sexually or not. If this chakra is blocked a person may feel emotionally explosive, manipulative, obsessed with thoughts of sex or may lack energy. Physical problems may include, kidney weakness, stiff lower back, constipation, and muscle spasms. Belly body parts include sexual organs (women), kidneys, bladder, and large intestine.

Third Chakra - Solar Plexus

The third chakra is referred to as the Solar Plexus. It is located two inches below the breastbone in the center behind the stomach. The third chakra is the center of personal power, the place of ego , of passions, impulses, anger and strength. It is also the center for astral travel and astral influences, receptivity of spirit guides and for psychic development. When the Third Chakra is out of balance you may lack confidence, be confused, worry about what others think, feel that others are controlling your life, and may be depressed. Physical problems may include digestive difficulties, liver problems, diabetes, nervous exhaustion, and food allergies. When balanced you may feel cheerful, outgoing, have self-respect, expressive, enjoy taking on new challenges, and have a strong sense of personal power. The body parts for this chakra include the stomach, liver, gall bladder, pancreas, and small intestine. The main color for this chakra is yellow.

Fourth Chakra - Heart

The fourth chakra is referred to as the heart chakra. It is located behind the breast bone in front and on the spine between the shoulder blades in back. This is the center for love, compassion and spirituality. This center directs one's ability to love themselves and others, to give and to receive love. This is also the chakra connecting body and mind with spirit. Almost everyone today has a hurt, or broken heart, and it is no accident that heart disease is the number one killer today. When this chakra is unstable you may feel sorry for yourself, paranoid, indecisive, afraid of letting go, afraid of getting hurt, or unworthy of love. Physical illnesses include heart attack, high blood pressure, insomnia, and difficulty in breathing. When this chakra is stable you feel compassionate, friendly, empathetic, desire to nurture others and see the good side in everyone. Body parts for the fourth chakra include heart, lungs, circulatory system, shoulders, and upper back. The main colors used are pink and green.

Fifth Chakra - Throat

The fifth chakra is referred to as the Throat. It is located in the V of the collarbone at the lower neck and is the center of communication, sound, and expression of creativity via thought , speech, and writing. The possibility for change, transformation and healing are located here. The throat is where anger is stored and finally let go of. When this chakra is out of balance you may want to hold back, feel timid, be quiet, feel weak, or can't express your thoughts. Physical illnesses or ailments include, hyperthyroid, skin

irritations, ear infections, sore throat, inflammations, and back pain. When this chakra is stable you feel centered, musically or artistically inspired, and be a good speaker. Body parts for the fifth chakra are throat, neck, teeth, ears, and thyroid gland. The main color used is light blue.

Sixth Chakra - Third Eye

The sixth chakra is referred to as the Third Eye. It is located above the physical eyes on the center of the forehead. This is the center for psychic ability, higher intuition, the energies of spirit and light. It also assists in the purification of negative tendencies and in the elimination of selfish attitudes. Through the power of the sixth chakra, you can receive guidance, channel, and tune into your Higher Self. When this chakra is not stable you feel non-assertive, afraid of success, or go the opposite way and be egotistical. Physical symptoms may include headaches, blurred vision, blindness, and eyestrain. When this chakra is balanced and open you are your own master with no fear of death, are not attached to material things, may experience telepathy, astral travel, and past lives. Sixth chakra body parts include the eyes, face, brain, lymphatic and endocrine system. The main colors are purple and dark blue.

Seventh Chakra - Crown

The seventh chakra is referred to as the Crown. It is located just behind the top of the skull. It is the center of spirituality, enlightenment, dynamic thought and energy. It allows for the inward flow of wisdom, and brings the gift of cosmic consciousness. This is the center of connectedness with the higher energy, the place where life animates the physical body. The silver cord that connects the aura bodies extends from the crown. The soul comes into the body through the crown at birth and leaves from the crown at death. When this chakra is not stable there is a constant sense of frustration, no spark of joy, and destructive feelings. Illnesses include migraine headaches and depression. Stable energy in this chakra include the ability to open up to the Divine and total access to the unconscious and subconscious. The main colors for the crown are white and purple.

There are numerous breathing exercises from chakra focused to hyper active forms. I always chose the exercises to the nature of the group or the individual. Here I want to show some only for individual use, if you want to have them for a group do not hesitate to contact me.

Standing in a straight up position. To have a maximum result your head should be a little tilted into the neck. This way your breathing will be easier and the airflow has a maximum impact. Depending on the environment you breathe thru the nose or thru the mouth.

The first exercise is inhale / exhale while moving the arms up and down. The arms start from the position with the hands near the hips, the palms of both hands facing outward. Slowly we move both arms up while breathing in at the same time. As soon as we are on top of our head with both arm still stretched , the hands clap and start moving down in a straight line. The right hand lays flat on the left hand while the hands come down. Both

elbows move as much as possible outward of the body. When the hands go down we breathe out. This movement can be continued different times.

The second is pull and push. We move the left feet backwards, it is important we continue to stand in good balance. Hands come again from the hips and slowly move up in a straight line till they both come at a height of the breast. We place the left hand inside the right hand and start pulling our hands toward the chest while breathing in. When the hands arrive at the chest we turn them around and let the palms of the hands facing out. At the very moment we start to push the hands away from our chest we breathe out, sometimes we use noise and at other times we just exhale without a sound. Both mentioned exercise can be done in slow motion but also with explosive inhale and exhale moments. Explosive breathing is something we cannot use for beginners. A more active form of breathing is to stand in a position where we bend the upper body a little over to the front. Both arms are hanging down with hands on hip level. Hand palms facing backwards. We move the hands up and breathe in, when the hands reach the level of the chest we bring them down again while breathing out. The speed of this action may vary with age and level of the person.

After active breathing we go to a more passive exercise where we sit down and start using breath and chakra. In standard exercises we sit in a lotus sit and bring our hands to the central chakra point. But we will start from a different angle. Our hands are placed next to our body. The hand palms face up and start moving in a low, near the ground, circle toward each other while breathing in. The moment the handpalms touch each other we bring them in a straight line to the central chakra while breathing out. Upon arrive of the central chakra (the belly) we press the right hand over the left hand and press them as hard as possible together while breathing out as deep as possible. We hold the end of breath a little longer and feel the pressure inside our body. After a few seconds we release the pressure and start over again. (this exercise is not good for people with high bloodpressure or some other medical problems).

We move to the Third chakra. Our hands are pressed together. Both flat hands and the pressure is mainly on the palm of the hand and the under parts. Both hands are now places strongly against the chest. The head must be tilted a bit in the neck and the back straightened or even a little hollow. The breathing cannot be deep this way. Our focus is the chest and we keep the breathing in and out only on chest level. Between breathing in and out we hold the breath for a few second each time. During this we need to make a focus inward to the sixth chakra and feel it energizing.

A fourth Chakra opening / energizing / stimulation can be done accordingly. Sit in a good position (by the way it does not need to be always a Lotus sit !) with the back straight and chin a little tilted up. Hands need to be 'pressed' together with fingers pointed away from the body. Breath out while moving the hands away from the body and in when bringing them back toward the body. To stimulate the chakra more it would be good if you try to lower the heartbeat, raise it sometime and let it go slower again. Do not force a rhythm ! Just feel comfortable and feel the tension release on the body. An open heart chakra is healthy for the body.

The Fifth is more breath related and one of the many ways to put more attention to this is to place the folded hands pointed with the fingers under the chin. The chin may be

tilted to the front or the back, both are different exercises. The focus of this exercise is on the entrance of the breathing through the mouth and sometimes departure via nose and at other times the mouth. A strong mind focus must be made on the passing moment of the breath thru the throat at the moment breath goes out we let it take the negative things with it and upon breathing in we let the positive things enter. In this relation positive and negative are not energy related. In some of the exercise we produce a monotonous low sound.

Sixth and seventh Chakra exercises are somewhat high level and should only be practiced under supervision. In the context of this book I see no need to publish them, if you are interested join the classes and step on level by level, you are welcome.

Laugh mediation

Developed in the Western world is a special laughter meditation cycles. Laughing has proven to be healthy. Prof Henri Rubenstein discovered that 1 minute of free hilarious laughing equals 45 minutes of relaxation. Another professor William Fry of the Stanford University discovered that 100 laughs are equal to 10 minutes on a rowing machine. Another research that is interesting (Robert Provine) shows that we better enjoy laughing in a group than alone. In a group we laugh more, deeper, harder and longer. This proves that laughing is a social event and better be done in groups than as single. When I think of it..... it is all logical. Imagine that you hear a loud rolling laughter coming from a mountain where some hermit is living. That would be rather scary.

How can laughing benefit our meditations ? First of all laughing relaxes you. When you laugh the muscles will receive extreme strong impulses to contract and soon after that to relax. This is why people are so much more relaxed when having a pleasant time with lots of laughter. When you practice meditation you must be able to relax body and mind.

Laughing has more functions than to relax the body. When you laugh you take in deep breaths with oxygen. The oxygen is vastly taken into the bloodstream by the lungs as all bronchium open up to take in the higher amounts and distributes it faster. When laughing the hearts speeds up its beats and increases the blood pressure. The very closed body / brain membrane seems to let more oxygen passes through and the brain gets more 'food for thought' . In the brain some more actions occur. The stimulus of the laughing and availability of oxygen increases the production of different hormones and hormone groups. This is a biological explanation of what is going on in your body while laughing. It is a health promoting and physical exercise happening.

It is possible to train yourself before joining a group. One way is to buy some funny movies and enjoy them. This is an external stimulus and not something you are able to control well. Some jokes you like and others not, the variation in stimulus is not under your control. Another way is to focus on funny events and remember them. You will discover that after a while the fun of these topics will be diminished or even gone. All these are temporary solutions.

A good laughing training is a combined sound and breath training. The first action you take is to mirror yourself literarily, you sit in front of a mirror. While looking at

yourself , smile. Use a friendly kind and warm smile. Imagine the reflex ion to be another person. Bow your head and greet the person. Brighten your smile and start producing the sound of laughter, first only with your voice and slowly involve your chest and stomach let the sound come from as deep inside you as possible. Increase the volume slowly. See how your eyes change, your facial expressions change and feel that your emotional state changes to a positive oriented one. Check your physical and mental state after the session and you will understand the positive effects of this exercise.

I prefer to laugh in groups as the effects are often stronger and it will lead to more human connections and border breaking approaches of the mind. Laughing together breaks down the most limiting emotions and barriers in us. Laughing let depressions and negative emotions vanish. Enjoying a group session gives a multiplication of positive energy which reflects on each individual.

Hypnosis, meditation and trance

Before we start to compare the different states of mind we must understand something of our brain. Our brain works on certain levels of conscious which are directly related to a wave pattern called Beta, Alpha, Theta and Delta.

Beta Brain Waves (13-30 cycles per second). The fastest, representing the most intense state of alertness. The result of heightened mental activity. Maximum mind power. All five external senses, logical mind, memory from the five senses & logical thinking.

Alpha Brain Waves (8 to 12 cycles per second) This brain wave indicates a relaxed state of mind.. State of relaxed alertness, good for inspiration and learning facts fast. A meditative mind. In this state tap into internal "antenna" like qualities. Visions, powerful ideas, mindless creation of the incredible. Internal feeling & sensations.

Theta Brain Waves (4 to 8 cycles per second) Deep meditation. Deep inward thought. This is associated with life-like imagination. High state of mental concentration. A magical mind. Internal pictures / visualisation. Intuition, inner guidance. Access to unconscious material. Dreaming.

Delta Brain Waves (0.5 to 4 cycles per second) Deep dreamless sleep. Deep relaxation. State of oneness, whole body feeling. Pure being & will.

For a deeper understanding we also need to explore more of the body and mind. There are two nervous systems: the central nervous system and the autonomic nervous system. The central nervous system regulates motor responses to sensory impressions via the brain and spinal cord. The autonomic nervous system regulates the internal systems. These internal systems are usually not under our voluntary control. They include the heart beat, pulse, glandular activity and digestive processes.

Within the autonomic system are two divisions. These two systems are in direct opposition to each other. The first is the sympathetic division. It is responsible for

mobilizing the body's energies to meet emergencies. For example, it causes the heart to beat faster and more strongly, the blood pressure to rise, respiration to accelerate. It releases blood sugar from the liver and adrenalin from the adrenal glands.

The condition of "stage fright" is an apt example of the sympathetic nervous system in action. Stage fright includes the following physiological responses: knees and hands shake, heart beats faster and faster, perspiration increases on the palms and face, the stomach has unpleasant fluttering or hollow feeling. These symptoms are caused by the sympathetic nervous system's response to the person's fear of standing before a group. This constitutes an "emergency" situation and the body prepares for a fight or flight response.

In direct opposition to this is the parasympathetic response. The parasympathetic division slows the heartbeat, reduces blood pressure, produces visceral responses typical of periods of rest and relaxation. The parasympathetic responds in such a way as to restore the calm operation of the organism. It conserves the body's energy.

These two systems -- the sympathetic and the parasympathetic -- cannot both be active at the same time. Hence, utilizing Hypnosis to activate the parasympathetic response of relaxation before the sympathetic response of arousal can begin, is one approach to eliminating the problem.

Additionally, removing the fear stimulus reduces the sympathetic response. So, if the fear stimulus can be reduced enough -- while the relaxed, calm response is being heightened -- success becomes even more imminent.

So, as an example with stage fright: Hypnosis would be used in a calm atmosphere. The person would be taught relaxation away from the actual stage. Once the subject is able to achieve a calm state -- a state of strong parasympathetic response -- he will be asked to imagine looking at the stage. This is an action which might increase sympathetic response. However, since the parasympathetic activity is so strong, the person will be able to stay relaxed while imagining that he is looking at the stage. The sympathetic response is not triggered.

Then, the Hypnotized person might be asked to imagine himself walking toward the stage. Again, he is doing this in the safety of the distant setting and can imagine himself calmly walking toward the stage. Again, the sympathetic response is not triggered.

Further relaxation instructions and Hypnosis-deepening directions are given. Then, he is requested to imagine himself walking onto the stage. Once again, because the parasympathetic response is strong and directly opposes a sympathetic response, the sympathetic response remains absent.

Through rehearsal to actual walking onto the stage and speaking to the audience. This way of working is successfully performed by the person because the parasympathetic response continues to provide the person with the desired control.

Hypnosis has been shown to span the alpha to alpha-theta to theta brain-wave states. In

research studies, hypnosis has been shown to involve a change from the alert beta state to a predominantly alpha-theta state (Kissin B., *Psychobiology of Human Behavior: Vol. 1. Conscious and Unconscious Programs in the Brain*, NY: Plenum Medical Book, 1986). These same scientists describe an alpha-theta state. This state is one of the states reached by subjects in Hypnosis. Artists, musicians and athletes are all prolific producers of alpha-theta brainwave patterns.

Zen monks, individuals using self-Hypnosis and some experienced meditators have learned with training and discipline to enter the alpha-theta state of consciousness at will. The delta brain-wave state is not reached in Hypnosis.

Now we understand about the science of hypnosis we move to trance. Emotions are very hypnotic. Did you ever felt the emotions ; in lust? Love? A rage? In fear / in anger ? Think about how focused and suggestible (and disassociated) you become in these states. But a more well-known state of trance is depression. All these stages are the borders between hypnosis and trance. Anyone who can make you more emotional will also be making you more suggestible. When cults (or politicians) want to influence people's belief systems, they try to raise the emotional pitch. And such charismatic people are naturally more hypnotic. Hereby it is proven that hypnosis isn't 'just a state of relaxation' as you might think. It is much more than that. Hypnosis, used purposefully, generally have a very specific psychological (and therefore behavioral) aim.

Meditation has the effect of making us calmer day-to-day, but it's not used to stop someone addiction or to treat a specific phobia. Likewise, clinical hypnosis, whilst wonderful for 'just relaxing', isn't generally used with the sole intention of helping someone achieve an 'empty' mind or objective 'mindfulness' - although we can certainly use hypnosis for this effect.

Some hypnotic states could be more like quiet meditative states, and I'm sure some people who meditate experience profoundly hypnotic imagery sometimes. We use hypnosis to help people detach from destructive emotions and calmly begin to see wider and happier possibilities (such as feeling calmer around spiders!). One meditation technique, that of 'mindfulness', seeks the same result as the person meditating seeks to name his or her feelings whilst not disentangling themselves from them. In this way, meditation can help people. But again, people in hypnosis will often report feeling totally focused in the now.

In one piece of research using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) to record brain activity, it was found that using 'mindfulness' lowered the arousal in the amygdala - the brain's emotional alarm system. This part of your brain has the job of producing the stress response very rapidly; so calming it down (and thereby helping it to 'go off' only when it really needs to) will make people happier, as they'll be generally much less stressed, according to research carried out by David Creswell, a research scientist with the Cousins Center for Psychoneuroimmunology at the Semel Institute for Neuroscience and Human Behavior at UCLA

The benefits of self hypnosis are similar to those of meditation, because the same brain wave states, chiefly alpha and theta, can be achieved in self hypnosis. Therefore, if one

is choosing a method to reach these brain wave states to accrue their beneficial effects, the choice of self hypnosis or meditation is an individual one.

Self hypnosis is more commonly associated with providing suggestion to the subconscious mind with the goal of changing behavior than meditation is; however, meditation upon a given phrase or desired goal can also provide this type of suggestion, so in some ways the lines between the two techniques blur here as well.

The chief differences between self hypnosis and meditation lie in the primary goal and the method of achieving the trance state. The primary goal of self hypnosis is most often to provide positive suggestions for change to the subconscious, while the primary goal for meditation is usually to achieve a relaxed, thought-free state in alpha or theta, with the goal of training the mind.

Trance is reached by a form of meditative action .We can not be forced to do anything in trance which goes against our sense of ethics but we need to be free from worry that anyone will impose their will on us while we are in this suggestible state. This is one of the reasons why professional trance performers are often so witty. They want to avoid any interference in their trance state.

It is suggested that trance runs through nearly all different levels of brainwaves.

Depending of the nature of the trance ;

- Speaking with the death, the Gods or other beings
- Finding a cure for a disease
- Creating a spell or destroy one
- Performing special rituals
- Predicting the future
- Virility rituals

And so many more different reasons, the trance person or shaman or wizard is considered away from this earth. The best trance performances are done in Theta level.

The method of achieving the trance state is a significant point of difference. While there are a variety of different techniques to achieve either self hypnosis or meditation, self hypnosis is generally achieved in a more structured way, by following a count-in or a proscribed method of tiring the conscious mind by counting objects, etc. Meditation is generally less structured, achieved by either closing one's eyes and repeatedly bringing the focus back to the breathing or focusing on a point such as a flame, while gently releasing thought. If analyzed carefully, someone experienced in both meditation and self hypnosis will recognize that both methods of entering the trance state involve the same mechanisms of tiring the conscious mind, through eye fixation or confusion, etc.

Therefore, since the benefits of entering the trance state (e.g., alpha or theta brain wave states) through either technique are similar, and both techniques can be used for relaxation, brain entrainment, and programming the mind with positive suggestions, the choice of meditation or self-hypnosis is really an individual choice. Often this choice comes down to which method works best for the individual to enter the trance state quickly, easily and reliably. (Cindy Locher, C.Ht.,)

What is the Transcendental Meditation (TM) technique?

It is a simple, natural, effortless procedure practiced 20 minutes twice each day while sitting comfortably with the eyes closed. It's not a religion, philosophy, or lifestyle.

What happens when you meditate?

The Transcendental Meditation technique allows your mind to settle inward beyond thought to experience the source of thought — pure awareness, also known as transcendental consciousness. This is the most silent and peaceful level of consciousness — your innermost Self. In this state of restful alertness, your brain functions with significantly greater coherence and your body gains deep rest.

Where did the TM technique come from?

The Transcendental Meditation technique is based on the ancient Vedic tradition of enlightenment in India. This knowledge has been handed down by Vedic masters from generation to generation for thousands of years. About 50 years ago, Maharishi — the representative in our age of the Vedic tradition — introduced Transcendental Meditation to the world, restoring the knowledge and experience of higher states of consciousness at this critical time for humanity.

This shortcut to enlightenment seems beautiful and in nearly all cases something that sounds too good to be true is not true. Maybe I am a very critical person but I have many things to base my critical vision on. Most of all it is a very commercial way of a "master or guru" to get rich quick. As his headoffice was based in the Netherlands and I was able to visit and research his "institute" I think that I am entitled to give my opinion which is shared with so many others.

One of the main appeals of TM seems to be its claim to be a scientific means of overcoming stress. TM claims to be based on the "Science of Creative Intelligence," in which one may get a degree at the Maharishi University of Management (MUM, formerly Maharishi International University) in Fairfield, Iowa. MUM offers "a Full Range of Academic Disciplines for Successful Management of All Fields of Life." Maharishi Ayurveda sells a number of health and beauty products for those who want a perfect body to go with the perfect mind.

TM recruiting literature is full of charts and graphs demonstrating the wonders of TM. Things like metabolic rate, oxygen consumption rate, bodily production of carbon dioxide, hormone production, brain waves, etc. are measured and charted and graphically presented to suggest that TM really takes a person to a new state of consciousness. Some of the studies done by TM scientists simply show that some of the same physiological results you can achieve by relaxing completely are achievable by TM. Nevertheless, according to TM advocates, tests have shown that TM produces "neurophysiological signatures that are distinctly different from relaxation and rest" [Judy Stein, personal correspondence].

After a TM student pays up to \$400 and receives his own personal mantra to chant, he is told never to reveal it to another. Why? Because the same "unique" mantra has been given - on the basis of age - to thousands of people. The belief that Nature Support through TM is aiding your life is not supported by any statistical data. TM adherents

don't drive around amazingly reaching every traffic light as it turns green. They have good days, bad days and, mostly, average days like the rest of us.

TM is a simple, scientific technique. It is simple, but it certainly is not "scientific". It is a Hindu method of meditation in the Tantric tradition. The point of this lie is to hide its Hindu origins and nature so that other religious traditions won't be threatened by it. The Initiation Ritual is a "scientific procedure." It is a Hindu religious ceremony where the TM teacher chants the names in the history of the Hindu religious tradition and gives thanks, and then bows down to the Guru.

These are the shared opinions of many leading personalities in the world of science, religion, philosophy and people who did actually follow the courses of the center. I personally cannot recommend anything related to TM as a serious researcher.

5.9 Individual or group ?

Buddhism practice is an individual perception, in fact we all must search and walk the path of life as purely individuals. We are not able to share our mind with anybody. Responsibility cannot be shared neither living can be. But all need people around us. People who do care for us and who we care with. From the first till the last breath of life we need other people. Humans are no hermits for life. Some people retreat themselves to a state of hermitic life. They escape from the world by searching for the inner self on places hidden from mankind.

To them the confrontation with real life is often too confusing, too hard. Most hermits seem to be rather autistic in nature because they are able to live a life under harsh circumstances. Buddha himself went to the jungle to study the life of the hermit and decided that it was not a life that could lead to enlightenment. After years of suffering and torturing himself the Buddha decided that he should not physically suffer from life as the mental suffering was already enough. He went back to the living world and sat down under the Bodhi tree. From that time on he could meet people, discuss life and living and teach.

He passed the stages of highly individualized to a group leader patiently and thoroughly. During the passing he found that to guide others you guide yourself also. Teaching is a learning process. When you are a good teacher you learn from every student. Here we see clearly that even you live a life as ascent you need others to help you along the way by communication and in most cases guidance, we are not all like Buddha who could do things on his own.

Individuality is a great thing and when we are able to be in a good group all members will help and support the strengthening of individuality. The group grow in quality if the individual members share and support with the other members. When a group has targets set they can help each other on equal basis to grow.

It is my opinion and experience that a group which respect individuality will support your personal growth. Growing together is a matter of respect and support.

5.9.1 The advantage of the individual

As individual we are born and as individual we will die, in between we share life and space with all others. There are only few places you can be a complete individual and only one you will be all your life and all the time ; inside your head ! To some this is a very depressing thought to others it is a happiness. It is my target to make you consider it as an opportunity.

Our body is a temple in which we suppose to live a good life. When we are young the temple is used to play and challenge. Our minds develop with the body no matter we are able to all or disabled. The body carries our soul and conscious living. This is our individuality. When you get older you often come to some very important individual choices made for and the body and the soul. Women goes through some more stages during this process than men.

When the temple is cracked with the growing of the baby it takes time to recuperate and sometimes it will not come back into the desired shape. Your temple has changed in shape and you need to accept it once again. It is a fact that the woman's mind must endure more experiences and is swept through the higher seas of emotions than men ever will experience.

Men have a relatively simple life compare to that of the women. His life is like a time line slowly going up, flattens and goes down. But the men have other problems. Competition is a build in programming. Men need to compete with themselves and others. This competition gives emotional stress. Men must deal with women which are often a complete different specie to them.

Individuality is something we all have wanted or not, we are individuals. As individual we try to find bindings with others, it all start with parents, family , friends, lovers and children. At older age we can count the grandchildren or even more steps. But all these will not touch our individuality in body and soul. There are some exceptions ; Twins, they share more than single born.

Buddha have sought in his individuality and found a true identity, not the identity we know to mirror to the world but the core of it Self. It is possible by meditation and guiding to reach to the core of your own permanent individuality, the core of your existence , the real identity of your own personal self. The advantage of individuality is your ability to search for your own place in the Universe, your own universal identity which will last forever. Individuality can make you free from suffering, free from all earthly matters and will release the core of your existence.

It is most interesting to know that you only can reach this supreme form of identity with the help of others.

5.9.2 The group advantage

As we read before is individuality the core of the group. We are all individuals gathering together to unite our powers and share a common goal. A group of likeminded is stronger than a group assembled for no specific reason. From this we understand that a

group only has advantage to you if they are like minded and they have the same goals as you have.

A group is needed for our own development as a reflection. Each individual need to have reflections on thoughts and behavior to improve himself. In the beginning I stimulate mix groups for some obvious reasons ;

Males are visual oriented creatures

Females are sound related creatures

When in a group this works complementary. Male and female have a different way to direct the same problems, through communication and sharing it will strengthen each other to help the individual members of the group. One of the best results in basic meditation training is reached by visual / sound training programs.

Living in a group or community, even when it is temporary or on a visit base, helps to strengthen your own individual growth. This is the idea behind the monasteries in the world. The founders of every believe, religion or philosophy found that the individual development is strongly depended on the group and environment he/she lives. When we supply the individual with the right environment it will speed development.

Monastic life vs community

The first time I entered a monastery I was impressed. The grandeur of buildings, immense Buddha's in all different shapes and postures most covered with gold were extremely impressive. At around eleven a.m. the sound of monks in prayer filled the area and you can feel the power of the voices. The monotone sound slowly got me in a special state of mind and I was floating on the rivers of my mind. I sat down near one of the Buddha images and felt that this was a place of honor, a place of devotion. It felt good.

I was young but not innocent so I wanted to know more of what was going on in the monastery. As I was more or less a traveler I visited every monastery I could in countries like Thailand, Burma, Laos, Cambodia, India and also in sates as Taiwan and Tibet, and so more. Everywhere it looked, on the surface, the same. A group of devoted people catering together to study the teachings of Buddha. Gladly I had also the referencebase with monestries from the Western world so I was able to compare.

Over the years I got to know more and more of the world Buddhist community and especially of the people living abroad such as in Europe or USA. The new Buddhist, I consider the group of people who did turn to Buddhism as a new life rule/style the newcomers, were mainly devoted to the teachings of Buddha and did focus on the words and lessons of the wise teaching monks. These new Buddhist are, in general, devoted to apply the teachings into their practical daily life.

Beside teaching the new-Buddhist the monks served the people who were originally coming from the same country as the monks, mainly from South East Asia. Due to my work as Muay Thai fighter and father of half Thai children I was often involved in these local events. Monks were involved in marriages, in ceremonies such as opening shopping malls, blessing of people, performing rituals for groups and so on. They do

serve the communities with all these possibilities, all in good faith.

But these rituals and services have nothing to do with the original form of Buddhism as the Buddha did teach, all these services have just one reason, to service the community. These services must be performed by monks to receive money for the monastery and their living. Without this money they are not able to survive as the new-Buddhist will not easily give them the shelter needed for giving the teachings.

China does not have a strong monastic history for the last hundred years or so. When saying so I hear you recall that you have Tibet with its strong and ages old religious culture and the thousands of monasteries that have been build and remained of the years all over the country. That is true, I surely will not deny this but the influence on all of China is very limited. The greater China has gone through turbulent times and did not have the intention to create a network of connected Buddhist temples over the country. Another good reason for this is that Confucianism is the foundation of the Chinese society which denounce the chosen singularity of the monkhood as the family is the core of a Confucian reality.

China is different from South East Asia. The monastic culture of these countries has last and survived ages, like the Christian churches in the West and the Islam in the Arabic world. They earned their existence by organization, by interacting with the local society and being an integral part of each community and most of all by assimilating local and regional customs. They surely have a positive effect on the stability of such society and they are strongly needed to facilitate an important part of the society. But all have come a long way from the basic principles of their faith, of the original teachings. All have been changed, manipulated by individuals to fit their needs and wishes and at many times to pay honor to their status.

In recent years the Western world is shocked by large scale sex offences by priests and other church officials. Many happened in the safe confinement of the monastery and churches. Sex offenders were protected by heads of organizations like even by the Pope of the Catholic church. These events have led to many victims which are and lost for the faith and damaged for all life time. Also I have encountered numerous cases of sexual misconduct and other crimes in Asia. How often was I confronted with fake monks in Burma who demanded money for rituals performed for me without asking or how many cheaters in monk dress did try to predict my future ?

These horrific events sound seriously bad and gladly they are still rare but they gradually have increased with the years. Probably they only now become known to the public because of the increasing interest of journalist and media who are able to let it get out of the sealed worlds of monastic and religious life as the religious organizations are no longer closed and strongly protective as in the past.

The monastic life is changing and no longer as appealing as before. Fact is that the increase bad news as mentioned here does not help to restore faith nor is appealing to people to enter the monkhood. A more terrible thing is that monks are now looked at with suspicion as maybe being part of a corrupted or sexual organization. This is offensive to all serious monks and places a stain on them that cannot be removed, which gives them a strong limitation to a proper mental and spiritual development.

In the past few years the questions related to this have grown more and more, also during my lessons and lectures. It was and is a serious concern for society that needs places of spiritual shelter to give certain people the chance to work on their personal spiritual development.

In another part of this book I mentioned the community, in this perspective the Buddhist community. For China this could be the best solution to solve the possibility for people to find a place of spiritual retreat. (As you can read I do not mention the word worship. To me you worship a God, a supreme being that is pictured out by books and religious structures in Buddhism you work on spiritual development and not on worship.) This community can be based on a 5,7 or even 9 ring structure.

In Buddhism, depending on the direction, we consider the numbers 5,7, or 9 to the levels of spiritual engagement. These levels are often displayed in the form of a pyramid. The outer ring should be used for people who supply the community with all services that are needed daily and must be considered the source of income to the community. The next circle is for spiritual development training and offers all kind of facilities for training and teaching. To move from the outer levels to the most inner level is a matter of time and training, it all is a matter of spiritual development. The most inner circle is used for people who wish to retreat in almost solitary confinement and no longer seek the teaching of a trainer or master. In this kind of community the teachings can be properly applied and will not restrain a free movement of persons from one level to the other.

When I worked with Peter Gutter, the writer of the original version of “Between Junta and Nirvana” he showed me the books of monkhood ordination. To be a monk or nun is a huge effort, it takes a lot of rules and regulations to fit into the organization of the Sangha. The book is around two centimeter thick and it regulates everything of the personal, spiritual, sexual, emotional and relational life of the person. With other words becoming a monk will decrease the real freedom of mind and body. Knowing this it has been always my question if this was the original intention of Buddha to restrict a person’s life in such a way. Didn’t he voluntary left the castle, seek his salvation and found his way in freedom ?

I am very well aware that the monastery did serve its important tasks for the community in many countries and it will do so for the many hundreds of years to come but do we need to establish the same traditions in China ?

Chapter

Theravada (formerly also called Hinayana) and Mahayana,
The real advance of Buddhism across Asia owed a great deal to a remarkable man, Asoka Maurya (727-232 B.C.). Asoka was the ruler of an empire that spanned the Buddhist heart-land of northern India.

In the eighth year of his reign, during his conquest against the ruler of Orissa, Asoka's army killed no less than 100,000 men. Although he won the battle, the sight of so much bloodshed disgusted Asoka. Appalled by the suffering he had caused, Asoka renounced

the use of force and turned to Buddhism. He took his new faith seriously. Inscribed stone pillars from that time mention not so much that under Asoka India was unified for the first time as that he desired to assist in the salvation of his subjects through the Dhamma, the Moral Law: "To govern according to Dhamma, to administer according to Dhamma, to protect according to the Dhamma". Asoka devoted virtually all the resources of his empire to improving the lives of his people. Asoka's inscriptions do not mention Nirvana and hardly mention the name Buddhism as such. The only inscription containing purely Buddhist concepts (Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha) is also the only one in which he calls himself friend of the gods.

It confirms the Buddhist ideal of his welfare state. Such a definition is justified by the welfare character of the public works Asoka mentions. He founded lots of hospitals and monasteries. He asked to be kept informed of his subjects' welfare at all times, and granted religious freedom to them. New and going far beyond the existing religions of that time, and Asoka's original contribution to the history of the Buddhist oriented states, were welfare measures of the government as means to permit men to rise towards the overcoming of their suffering, the aim of Buddhism: "On the roads have I planted banyan trees. They will offer shade to man and beast. I have grown mango-trees. I have caused wells to be dug; and I have had rest houses built. I have made waiting sheds at different places. Mankind has been blessed with as many such blessings by the previous kings as by me. But I have done this with the intent that man may practise practices of Dhamma". According to tradition, Asoka equipped some of his most able monks to go to other countries as missionaries.

Some of them brought Buddhism to southern India during Asoka's reign, and probably to Sri Lanka as well. It is often heard that the Buddha himself paid no less than three visits to Sri Lanka, although this is very unlikely, since the Buddha always travelled on foot and mostly traversed the northern area of India which is presently covered by the states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

Asoka himself is said to have established Buddhism in Nepal. Out of his remorse for the bloodshed that had brought about his previous conquests, Asoka resolved to engage in further conquest not by military force but only through the power of Buddhist ethics. In the pursuit of this 'conquest by Dhamma', the Buddhist Messengers of the Teaching even sent the Buddhist message to the Hellenistic third century kings of Syria, Egypt, Cyrene, Epirus and Macedonia. There was even a Buddhist population in Alexandria, although this far-separated group could not thrive for very long. Other missionaries went to China, Burma and Siam. The missionaries set up inscribed stone pillars, with Buddhist texts, almost everywhere they went. Such pillars have been found at many sites, for example in India, Nepal, Kashmir and Afghanistan. One pillar quotes Asoka's words: "If my independent neighbours ask what indeed is my desire towards the neighbours, the reply is: they should understand that Asoka, the Beloved of the Gods, desires that they should be confident towards me, they should trust me, and that they would receive from me happiness, not misery. They should follow Dhamma for my sake in order that they might gain this world and the next" (Asoka used these words to express his desire of welfare and happiness in this world and in the next).

A realization that the state can contribute towards the liberation of man from suffering, by providing its citizens with leisure opportunities for meditation, may be behind the

following regretful words of Asoka: "I am never satisfied with exertions or with dispatch of business. For the welfare of the whole world is an esteemed duty with me. And the root of that, again, is this, namely exertion and dispatch of business. There is no higher duty than the welfare of the whole world. And what little effort I make is from debt to all beings. I work for their happiness in this life, that in the next world they may gain heaven" (*Savralokahitend , Pillar Edict VI). In the twentieth century Asoka has again become a symbol of political self-conception of non-violence and ethics of international relationships. Asoka has been called one of humanity's greatest figures. Asoka is different from many other emperors in that he founded no state church, engaged in no forced conversions and did not conduct holy wars. Asoka's Buddhism spread also along the sea trade routes to Southeast Asia.

The impact of India on Southeast Asia has always been enormous. Indian scripts were introduced and now form the basis of Burmese, Thai, Cambodian and Laotian scripts. India's commercial and cultural contacts with Southeast Asia provided for the introduction of religion. After Asoka's death, Buddhism divided slowly into two great schools, namely Theravada and Mahayana.

Strictly speaking, Theravada refers to the earliest forms of Buddhism practised during the Asokan and post-Asokan periods in Southeast Asia. Theravada literally means "The Teaching of the Elders", by reason of its having been rehearsed by five-hundred Theras (or Elders) immediately after the Buddha's death. During the seminal meetings, the Buddha's oral teachings were codified as the Pali Canon. These recitations were first written down in Sri Lanka during the first century B.C. In establishing the Pali Canon, the Theravada monks were separating themselves from other Buddhist groups who had added their own opinions to the original oral tradition. Later the non-Theravada began referring to themselves as Mahayana, or 'Great Vehicle' Buddhism. They derisively dubbed Theravada the 'Lesser Vehicle' or Hinayana. Theravada Buddhism was also called the 'southern school' since it spread southeast from India to Sri Lanka, Burma, Siam (Thailand), Khmer Empire (Cambodia) and Laos.

In contrast, Mahayana Buddhism diffused north through Nepal, Tibet, Bhutan, Mongolia, Japan, Korea and China; and the Chinese carried it down to Vietnam. (Tibetan Buddhism and Japanese/Vietnamese Zen have been directly derived from Mahayana). Those who profess Theravada or Mahayana Buddhism are all Buddhists. Although there are differences in their external practices such as ceremonies and rituals and festivals, both Theravada and Mahayana equally deserve the label 'Buddhism' and followers of these traditions are called 'Buddhists'. This is because the main teachings of the Buddha are still practised in both these schools.

The following seven are main Teachings maintained by both schools of Buddhism:

- I. The faith in the Triple Gem, i.e. Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha;
- II. The Three Characteristics, of Impermanence, Suffering and Insubstantiality;
- III. Dependent Origination ('*paticcasamuppada*');
- IV. Kamma and rebirth;
- V. No belief in a Creator-God, however with an attitude of sympathy and respect towards other religions in the world (through the years, I have met so many Buddhist monks who have no problems at all with the idea of a Creator-God. They generally say that you can't prove whether it is true or not, it's a matter of belief, which must be respected);

- VI. The Four Virtues, viz. Faith {saddha\ Morality (sila\ Generosity (caga) and Wisdom (pannd). This means Faith in the Triple Gem, Morally good behaviour resulting from the observance of at least Five Precepts, Willingness to help other people, not as a master or slave but as a friend; and Insight into the true nature of things through the practice of meditation;
- VII. The Four Noble Truths, and hence, the Eightfold Path.

These basic seven Teachings are regarded as common features which mark the identity between Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism.

My Teachers have singled out five topics which seem to them particularly important as to considering the difference between Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism: The first is referring to the great division between Mahayana and Theravada. Phra Bounxay, a teacher from Laos, said: "It seems very likely that Theravada was Buddhism as originally taught, and that Mahayana was a product of development and conventionalisation". Theravada generally react to the Mahayana by silence, and their writings practically never mention it. Mahayana, on the other hand, were under the charge of innovation, and so they wrote much as to justify their position. They began referring to themselves as 'Great Vehicle* Buddhism. One of the holiest books of the Mahayana is the "Lotus of the Good Law", also called the "Threefold Lotus Sutra", which contains the 'Parable of the Burning House'. For reasons which will become apparent from a perusal of this parable, Buddhist methods are referred to as 'vehicles'. Later Mahayana derisively dubbed Theravada the 'Lesser vehicle' or Hinayana. There is also the often-quoted instance in which the Buddha likens the little he has told his disciples, when compared to all that he knows, to the few leaves of a tree that a man can hold in his hand when compared to the multitude of leaves in the forest. Mahayana has, somewhat invidiously, compared the few leaves to the "narrow" Theravada tradition, and the forest of knowledge to their own revelation with even many secret teachings. Theravada counters by quoting the Buddha to the effect that he is no closed-fist teacher who keeps back any secret teachings, but gives the full truth to all alike.

II. The second is concerning the fundament of Buddhist thinking, the assertion that there is no 'self. Within the Theravada school some Teachers maintain that in addition to impersonal events there is still a 'person' to be reckoned with. This aspect has ever since been object of polemics on the part of orthodox Mahayana Buddhists, i.e. the personalist controversy. "It is only when all outward appearances are gone that there is left that one principle of life which exists independently of all external phenomena. It is the fire that burns in the eternal light, when the fuel is expended and the flame is extinguished; for that fire is neither in the flame nor in the fuel, nor yet inside either of the two, but above, beneath and everywhere" (from the Parinirvana Sutra). In this magnificent passage is the Mahayana teaching on Self, on Nirvana and, by inference, its application of the Theravada tenet Anatta (non-self). On the other hand, many Theravada Buddhists state that Mahayana has reintroduced a positive self. The Venerable Thich The Tinh said to me: "Meanwhile we live in a world of duality, the reality of which is falsely imagined. The Mahayana holds a middle position regarding the nature of the world. It is neither real nor unreal. It affirms that it actually exists, but denies its absolute reality".

III. The third is about vegetarianism. In the Theravada tradition, it is permissible for a Buddhist monk to eat fish and meat, provided that it must be "Pure on Three Counts":

which means that an animal should have not been seen, heard, or even suspected to have been killed to provide food especially for a Buddhist monk. Hence in Theravada it is not obligatory for a Buddhist monk to be a vegetarian (in some monasteries it is encouraged to be a vegetarian, for those who wish to be). According to a Sayadaw whom I met in Burma, the particular phrase that non-killing is the highest religion (ahimsa-pammo dhamma) occurs in Mahabharata. Mahabharata is an epic of the Hindus, and it does not occur in any Buddhist scripture, according to that Sayadaw. In Mahayana texts, taking of meat is totally condemned. Since Vietnamese Buddhist monks are living according to Mahayana texts, they are strict vegetarians, although the average Vietnamese citizen would eat anything. As far as the explanation of a non-vegetarian diet being "Pure on Three Counts" is concerned, is it hardly tenable in the modern world, since all animals slaughtered by machines in big slaughterhouses are generally not slaughtered for particular individuals. The meat is packed and exported to consumers all over the world. Although much can be said against non-vegetarianism, according to Theravada nobody who eats meat that way can individually be held responsible for the slaughtering of these animals. A Theravada monk is, in accordance with the Vinaya, not allowed to request or specify any particular dish. He must accept whatever food is being put into his alms-bowl by the laypeople. No monk who has been given meat this way, can be held responsible for the slaughtering of the animal. I met a Buddhist monk at Chua Quang Dong Pagoda in Hue, Vietnam. He told me that some Mahayana monks in Vietnam eat fish, and no meat. Upon my question how that could be possible, the monk answered: "Fish is cheaper". Then he laughed: "Oh, don't worry, I am only joking. The reason is that a fish swims voluntarily into the net, but no cattle walk voluntarily into the slaughterhouse. We are making jokes about that, saying that fish is cheaper".

IV. The fourth is about the question whether there can be more than one Buddha at a time. Theravada states that there is one historical Buddha, and my Teachers in Burma, Thailand and Laos said that it would be unsuitable for two Buddhas to appear at the same moment, for if they did, disputes might arise between their respective followers. It would lead to the formation of two rival factions. Mahayana states that one Buddha alone cannot possibly save all beings. There must therefore also be others. As a matter of fact, beings are countless and their sufferings are measureless. According to Mahayana, countless Buddhas are therefore necessary to lead all beings to salvation.

V. The fifth results from the Tibetan Concile in Lhasa, in the year 800 A.D. Monks from India described the progress to enlightenment as a slow and gradual process, which had to pass precisely defined stages. Monks from China taught a 'sudden' enlightenment. The Chinese (Mahayana) monks preferred the approach whereby the emphasis was laid on the Self to be attained rather than the Not-Self to be stamped out.

The Venerable Thich The Tinh said: "An accurate symbol for Theravada and Mahayana would be two concentric circles, the Theravada forming the compact and well-defined inner circle; and the Mahayana forming a more nebulous ring about it. Mahayana is not so much a school as a collection of schools, all of which, compared with Theravada, are rather speculative, I have to admit that". He added that Mahayana, unlike Theravada, has no wish to escape from Samsara, the cycle of rebirths, but claims to find salvation within it.

Many Mahayana teachers advise their followers to give up attempting self-enlightenment, and to leave all to the Buddha, whereas Zen advises its followers to see directly into the heart of man¹. Vietnamese monks said to me: "Samsara and Nirvana are, at the gates of Enlightenment, found to be one; there is nothing dualistic about that". Mahayana accepted yoga, which taught that man could achieve union with the universe through psychological and physical training. Yoga prepared the way for Tantra, which later took a place among the basic teachings of Tibetan Buddhism. In many cases, Mahayana emphasized enlightenment in a single lifetime, but the method of gaining it was usually left up to the individual. Tantra claimed to offer a shorter path to enlightenment in stead of the lifetimes of moral effort required by Theravada. The most striking feature of Tantra is the technique of occult visualization. As the student visualizes the deity which is given by the tantric master, he tries to become what he sees: in tantric thinking, by visualizing an enlightened being, you can become one yourself.

Under the stimulus of tantra, Mahayana Buddhism in Tibet further multiplied its Buddhas and Bodhisattvas by assigning female consorts to them all. This made eventually many schools of Mahayana very complex. The scriptures of Theravada are tidy and complete while the Mahayana equivalent appears in four languages and is immensely broad. Only in Vietnam there were already six different Zen Schools: the Ty-Ni-Da-Lu'u-Chi, the Vo-Ngon-Thong, the Thao-Duong, the True-Lam, the Ngiiyen-Thieu, and the Lieu-Quan (a branch of Lin-chi Zen). But still the basic principles of Theravada Buddhism are common to nearly all sects of the Mahayana tradition.

Tantrayana (or Vajrayana)

This part is a more complicated matter as it involves many speculations and assumptions. Tantrayana is considered a mixture of Mahayana and Bon. As I have explained most of the Mahayana already in this chapter I want to go deeper into the origin of Tantrayana as far as possible is known and verified.

According to Buddhist legends before the Shakyamuni, or original first Buddha, there were manifestations of other Buddhas. It is considered that Tompa Shenrab Miwoche from Zhangzhung (West of Tibet) founded Yungdrung Bon.

Bon

Bon may be distinguished by certain characteristics of the Tantric Mahayana traditions

The origin of the Bonpo lineage is traced to 'Buddha' Tönpa Shenrab rather than to Buddha Shakyamuni.

Bonpos circumambulate chortens or other venerated structures counter-clockwise (i.e., with the left shoulder toward the object), rather than clockwise (as Buddhists do with right shoulder to the object).

Bonpos use the yungdrung (g.yung-drung or sauvastika) instead of the dorje (rdo-rje, vajra) as a symbol and ritual implement.

Instead of a bell, in their rituals Bonpos use the shang, a cymbal-like instrument with

a "clapper" usually made of animal horn.

A nine-way path is described in Bon. It is distinct from the nine-yana (-vehicle) system of the Nyingma school of Tibetan Buddhism. Bonpos consider Bon to be a superset of Buddhist paths. (The Bonpos divide their teachings in a mostly familiar way: a Causal Vehicle, Sutra, Tantra and Dzogchen).

The Bonpo textual canon includes rites to pacify spirits, influence the weather, heal people through spiritual means and other shamanic practices.

While many of these practices are also common in some form to Tibetan Buddhism they are actually included within the recognized Bon canon, rather than in Buddhist texts.

Bonpos have some sacred texts, of neither Sanskrit nor Tibetan origin, which include some sections written in the ancient Zhangzhung language.

The Bonpo mythic universe includes the Mountain of Nine sauvastikas and the Tagzig Olmo Lung Ring paradise.

A follower of Bon is called Bon-po or pa, a female follower –ma or –mo. The main target is to cultivate a heart-mind connection. This is to purify and silence the noise of the mindstream within the body-mind, and reveal rigpa — a transcendent natural state of body-mind.

Bonpos resemble folk Taoism which connection can be found in the five elemental processes of earth, water, fire, air and space which are the essential elements of all existent phenomena or skandhas the most subtle enumeration of which are known as the five pure lights.

IN Bon practice the elements are considered :

- earth is solidity
- water is cohesion
- fire is temperature
- air is motion

space is the spatial dimension that accommodates the other four active elements, this is the only inconsistent part with the Chinese elemental chart used in medicine were wood is considered number five.

The elements are connected to different emotions, temperaments, directions, colors, tastes, body types, illnesses, thinking styles, and character.

From the five elements arise the five senses and the five fields of sensual experience; the five negative emotions and the five wisdoms; and the five extensions of the body. They are the five primary pranas or vital energies.

In many scripture we also find references to the "chakra's " which are the six centers of the "prana" the sources of enegy streaming around the body. In Traditional Chinese Medicine we see them back in the accupunture.

The county (or even country) Zhangzhung must have been situated on the silk road as evidence has been found that Bonpo stupa's were build Afghanistan. In the 6th century Khosrau of Persia did order the translation of Buddhist jataka works into the Persiana language.

In the 7th century the Tibetan king Songtsen Gampo assassinated king Ligmicha of Zhangzhung and took the kingdom over. To establish better relationships with his neighbors he decided to marry

- 632, the Nepalese princess Bhrikuti, she was a devoted Buddhist
- in 641, princess Wencheng, daughter of emperor Tang Taizong of the Tang Dynasty also a devoted Buddhist

To celebrate this last marriage a Buddhist temple was build in Tibet to accommodate the Buddha statue that was brought over as a wedding gift.

It is considered that Bon and Mahayana were in some kind of religious battle for the favor of royalty as in these times religion and state could not be separated. The religion carried by the state was considered the countries religion. This is the reason why King Trisong Detsen (742-797) held a debate contest between Bon priests and Buddhist. He decided to convert to Buddhism and invited some great teachers from India. In 779 the teacher Padmasambhawa came to Tibet and is considered to have brought Tantric Buddhism to the region. From this point on Tantric Buddhism became the permanent religion of the state. Bon was persecuted and most masters had to escape the country or hide out in obscure villages. In 842, upon the collapse of the Tibetan empire, Bonpo reoccurred and a revival of Bon came to existence.

We make a jump in time.

During the early eleventh century when the new translation schools were emerging, Nyingma masters started to uncover the texts that were buried earlier. Longchenpa put them together in the thirteenth century to reform the textual basis for the Nyingma school. The Nyingma tradition is probably the least uniform of the various Tibetan schools; each of its monasteries is quite independent.

The Sakya timeline came primarily from the Indian master Virupa. From him, comes the teachings known as Lamdray, "the paths and their results," the main Sakya teaching combining sutra and tantra. The Sakya school developed through a line of five masters, all belonging to the same family. One of them, Chogyal Pagpa, was given the political regency of Tibet in the thirteenth century by the Mongol Emperor Kublai Khan. This step reestablished political unity in Tibet for the first time during the new translation period.

The Kadam timeline derives from the Indian master Atisha. One of the features of this tradition were the lojong teachings. Lojong is translated as "mind training," .This timeline split into three, then was reunified and reformed by Tsongkhapa in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries to become the Gelug tradition. Tsongkhapa read almost all available Buddhist literature and started to compare them. From this comperation he re-wrote most of the works and added a rather scientific study to them with reasoning, his work became the foundation of the Gelug school. Tsongkhapa had many followers.

The Dzungars invaded Tibet in 1717 and killed a pretender to the position of ruler who had been promoted by Lhabzang, King of Tibet. The local people approved with this killing as the person was not selected through the right procedures. The Dzungars soon after started to rob the capital Lhasa and lute the country. Despite the efforts of Emperor Kangxi who was defeated in 1718.

Many Nyingmapas and Bonpos were executed and Tibetans visiting Dzungar officials were forced to stick their tongues out. The Dzungars thought they could tell if the person recited constant mantras, which was said to make the tongue black or brown. This allowed them to pick the Nyingmapas and Bonpos, who recited many magic-mantras. A habit of sticking one's tongue out as a mark of respect on greeting someone has remained a Tibetan custom into modern times.

In the early nineteenth century in Kham, Southeastern Tibet the the Rimey or "nonsectarian movement." Came into power. The founding masters all came from the Kagyu, Sakya, and Nyingma schools. Among them the First Kongtrul Rinpoche, Jamgon Kongtrul. The main reason for starting the Rimey movement was to preserve lineages and texts from all traditions, including Gelug, that had become rare at that time.

In the 19th century Sharza Tashi Gyeltsen, a Bon master, wrote around eighteen volumes to promote Bon. Kagya Khyungrul Jigmey Namkha, one of his students made significant effort to educate people into the ancient disciplines. Due to there work a number as great as around 300 monestaries where ereceted of which today only few are left.

Rituals

We all use rituals every day. When we wake up you start with a routine like behavior that you often have used for many years and every morning. This behavior is called a routine but will become a ritual when you add some parts that does not have a clear meaning nor function. A sample to that is that you come your hair before you take the shower and after it again. Or you stretch yourself out before getting out of bed, always with the right leg first, shake your head and move the left leg to the ground. A part of the routine is useless and can be considered a ritual movement.

Are all rituals useless or without a meaning ? The answer to that is NO. Rituals have a function in society. For instance a major of a city is wearing a long official chain to show he is the major of the city. When appointed he will get the chain as a token of his profession, it is handed to him in an official ritual ceremony. This is just a simple example from the many we undergo or observe in regular life.

In religion rituals all have very specific functions. They are extremely important and often need great care to perform. Rituals are carried through time with only little changes. It is interesting to know that rituals are often better transferred through generations than the words or literatures that describe them.

We can distinguish different rituals of importance ;

- Initiation or introduction rituals. Nearly every religion has a special ritual to perform the entering of a new participant. As all religions has different levels within the

organization rituals are designed to make the new member aware that he/she is entering a special group and from that moment on must 'obey' the rules and regulations of the organization. In Buddhism there is no such thing as a layman's initiation like in the Christian or Muslim believes. As a Buddhist want to devoted him or herself the only way is to enter a monastery. This is often a large and definitive step which will not be open to most. In my vision it is strongly recommended to introduce a ritual for a person who is willing to open his/her heart for the teachings to let them make a sincere commitment to themselves and not to the 'organization'. This initiation ritual is considered the 'entering of the self'. (see kader)

The initiation ritual for lay persons

When a person wishes to change their life and have made a serious consideration about that it is good to initiate this change via a ritual performed in close circle. The first and only reason do create an initiation ritual is to mark a moment in life that this person decided to make a radical change and wish to confirm this in front of others who will witness and support the change.

This initiation takes place in a small space with limited amount of people. The room is decorated in style, the light is on a medium level and there is music which only on the background to support the ritual. In the middle of the room the person takes a seat, this maybe a pillow, mat or even a chair.

When the monks get ordained their hair will be all shaven but upon initiation the hair will be cut as long as the person wish it to be. The cut hair is collected in a basket and kept for the memory. It is not allowed to shave the head bold as with the monks. After this a monk will recite first the 4 precepts of Buddhism and the initiated must repeat one by one from memory. The monk will ask ; do you accept these precepts as your life guidance and try to live up to them. When answered the monk recite the 8 fold path with again the initiated person repeating them.

The monk will ask ; do you understand the meaning of the 8 fold path ? Here the initiated person must give a clear response and one question. It is important that one question is asked this will prove the real initiative of the person to question life and be conscious of the target of the 8 fold path to create awareness. The question must be personal oriented. Here after the monk will try to answer the question or return another.

After this the monk will ask again ; are you sure you are willing to change your life to follow the road of the middle as Buddha have laid down for you to be followed with a conscious mind the will to denounce suffering from yourself and others ? The initiated answers. Finally the monk ask if the initiated wishes to get a new name to show the change to the outer world. In this case the initiated person does not have to change the name, this is voluntary. A given name has a meaning connected with the persons own personality and would be search for before initiation by appointed specialists.

After this the ritual is ended and together the people in the room may chant.

Bowing

When a person enters a place where the Buddha spirit is represented, if in statue, painting or in other form, the hands are fold in front of the person in respect for the Buddha and his teachings a short bow (prostrate) is made. If this happens in a temple or holy place the person may sit down and bow three times in honor. It is custom to open the hands with palms facing or the Buddha or the sky to show honesty and openness.

The second prostration indicates the Buddha or Bodhisattva's gift of wisdom and compassion to the world. A third marks the sincerity of the person's to the Buddha.

Chanting

Chanting is the expression of the Buddha's teachings., it helps to focus our mind, creates self-discipline and repeats the teachings. Gongs are used in Buddhist ceremonies as chanting instruments. They are used in the temples for three purposes: to announce the time for a meeting, to mark different phases of services or tempos in chanting, and to aid the attending people during their meditation.

Lighting Incense

The lit incense makes us aware and show respect to follow the Buddha's practices and teachings, and supports our minds to focus on during meditation. The lighting of incense reminds us to free ourselves from samsara.

Altar Offerings

People fruits, incense and many other things on the altars in appreciation for the Buddha's teachings and to receive blessings by the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Altar offerings at the temple are typically flowers and fresh fruit. Sometimes there may be small vegetarian dishes.

Offering of food

The central daily rite of lay Buddhism is the offering of food. Theravada laity make this offering to the monks. Mahayana laity make it to the Buddha as part of the morning or evening worship. In both settings merit is shared.

Observance Day rituals

The weekly Observance Day rituals at the Theravada monastery are opportunities for both laity and monks to quicken faith, discipline, and understanding, and make and share merit. On these days, twice each month, the monks change and reaffirm the code of discipline. On all of these days, they honor the Eight Precepts to the gathered laity, the laity repeating them after the monks and offer a ceremony on the Dharma. The monks use holy water to transfer merit to the laity; the laity share water to share this merit with their ancestors.

Marriage rituals

In general, a Buddhist wedding ceremony takes place in a temple. Thus, on an given time, both the bride and the groom bow in front of Buddha image. After this, they recite

chants and text and light incense sticks and candles in front of the Buddha image. The parents of the couple put a loop of strings on their heads to connect them. After this, the couple makes offering to the monks such as flowers, food, sweets and medicines. Token money is also given to the temple.

The priest places a thread on the heads of the monks. Recitations in Pali language are made to evoke blessings for the newly wed couple. The string is connected to a container that is sanctified after the ceremony. Also, a red or white paste is applied on the foreheads of the bride and the groom. Though Buddhist weddings are not very formal.

Death and funeral rituals

It is regarded as a meritorious deed to visit a sick neighbor or relationship, but it is considered a must when someone is close to death. It is a custom to bring small presents or money to support the family. One form of merit gathering as a near-death custom is the releasing of animals, usually birds, but even cows, which is regarded as a very meritorious deed.

- Buddhists from all traditions prefer to have a clear state of mind approaching death and may wish to reduce any mind-altering medication.
- Preferably a dying Buddhist should be moved to a private area to allow prayers to be conducted in privacy.
- All Buddhist traditions believe that awareness is retained for some period after clinical death.

Cleaning and touching the body:

- Delay moving and laying out the body for a minimum of four hours to allow for prayers necessary to be conducted.
- Buddhists believe that the spirit should be allowed to leave gently. Clarify with the spiritual leader if it is necessary for the head to be touched in the traditional way to enable the departure of the spirit. If so, the practice should be attended to before moving or cleaning the body and should be carried out by the spiritual leader or another Buddhist.

Buddhists followed the Indian custom of burning the body at death. The Buddha's body was cremated and this set the example for many Buddhists. When someone is dying in a Buddhist home, monks come to comfort them by chanting verses. Such as ; "Even the gorgeous royal chariots wear out; and indeed this body too wears out. But the teaching of goodness does not age; and so Goodness makes that known to the good ones."

After death, while the dead person is being prepared for the funeral fire, the monks continue to chant in order to help the dead one's good energies to be released from their fading personality. The monks come with the family to the funeral. The family and all their friends give food and candles to the monks. Goodwill is created by these gifts and it is believed that the goodwill helps the lingering spirit of the dead person. The question of whether or not it is advisable to donate one's organs after dying. The usual answer given by the Tibetan lamas to this question is that if the wish to donate one's organs is done with the motivation of compassion, then any disturbance to the

death process that this causes is far outweighed by the positive karma that one is creating by this act of giving. It is another way in which one can die with a positive and compassionate mind.

A Tibetan tradition which is becoming more popular in the West is to get part of the remains of the deceased (e.g. ashes, hair, nails) blessed and then put into statues, tsatsas (Buddha images made of clay or plaster) or stupas (reliquary monuments representing the Buddha's body, speech and mind).

Sometimes the cremation is deferred for a week to allow distant relatives to attend or to show special honour to the dead. In this case a chapter of monks comes to the house one or more times each day to chant from the Abhidharma, sometimes holding the bhusa yong, a broad ribbon, attached to the coffin. Food is offered to the officiating monks as part of the merit-making for the deceased. The food offered in the name of the dead is known as Matakabhatta from mataka ("one who is dead").

At an ordinary funeral in northern Thailand the cremation takes place within three days. The neighbours gather nightly to feast, visit, attend the services and play games with cards and huge dominoes. The final night is the one following the cremation. On the day of the funeral an orchestra is employed and every effort is made to banish sorrow, loneliness and the fear of spirits by means of music and fellowship. Before the funeral procession begins the monks chant a service at the home and then precede the coffin down the steps of the house, - stairs which are sometimes carpeted with banana leaves. It is felt that the body should not leave the house by the usual route, but instead of removing the coffin through a hole in the wall or floor, which is sometimes done, the front stairs are covered with green leaves to make that route unusual. A man carrying a white banner on a long pole often leads the procession to the crematorium grounds. He is followed by some elderly men carrying flowers in silver bowls and then by a group of eight to ten monks walking ahead of the coffin and holding a broad ribbon (bhusa yong) which extend to the deceased. Often one of the monks repeats portions of the Abhidharma en route.

The coffin may be carried by pall bearers or conveyed in a funeral car drawn by a large number of friends and relatives who feel that they are performing their last service for the deceased and engaged in a meritorious act while doing so. If the procession is accompanied by music the players may ride in motor truck at the rear. During the service at the cemetery the monks sit facing the coffin on which rest the Pangsukula robes. After the chanting the coffin is placed on a pyre made of brick; the people then come up with lighted torches of candles, incense and fragrant wood and toss them beneath the coffin so that the actual cremation takes place at once. Later the ashes may be collected and kept in an urn.

Frequently the bodies of prominent or wealthy persons are kept for a year or more in a special building at a temple. Cremations are deferred this long to show love and respect for the deceased and to perform religious rites which will benefit the departed. In such cases a series of memorial services are held on the seventh, fiftieth, and hundredth days after the death. In one instance a wealthy merchant did not cremate the body of his daughter until he had spent all her inheritance in merit-making services for her.

Another merchant spent the ten thousand baht insurance money received on the death of his small son entirely for religious ceremonies. As long as the body is present the spirit can benefit by the gifts presented, the sermons preached and the chants uttered before it. This thought lies behind the use of the bhusa yhong ribbon which extends from the body within the coffin to the chanting monks before it. The dead may thus have contact with the holy sutras. When the body is cremated the spirit is more definitely cut off from the world, it is best therefore not to force that spirit to enter the preta world finally and irrevocably until it has had the benefit of a number of religious services designed to improve its status. At cremations it is quite common for wealthy people to have printed for distribution books and pamphlets setting forth Buddhist teachings in the form of essays, translation of the sutras, historical sketches and explanations of ceremonies. Such books, numbering in the thousands, are not only a tribute to the dead and a means of making merit but they have practical value as well.

Circling Buddhist objects

Always walk clockwise around Buddhist monuments, keeping the religious landmarks to your right. The Buddhist practice of circling stupas and religion sites is believed to have been derived from cults that circled solar temples.

Taking of the shoes

People are supposed to take off their shoes before entering a temple. Some cultures require visitors to take their shoes when entering the temple grounds. Others only require that they be removed when entering a shrine or pagoda. Some people wash their feet before entering a temple. Shoes get the temple dirty and desecrate it. This custom may be rooted in the belief, particularly common in Southeast Asia, that the head is the highest and most virtuous part of the body and the feet are the lowest, dirtiest and most despicable part.

Ritual instruments

The thunderbolt (dorje or vajra) and bell (drilbu) are ritual objects used in Tantric rites that symbolize male and female aspects. The male thunderbolt is a double-headed object held in the right hand. This object is associated with skill and compassion, it is regarded as indestructible and has the power to cut through ignorance. The bell is held in the left hand. It represents wisdom, emptiness and nirvana.

The ritual dagger (phurbu) is used in Tantric rituals to “drive the invocation on it way” it has three sides which cut through the core of passion, ignorance and aggression. Some Tibetans use cups and bowls made of human skulls and flutes carved out of human thigh bones. Some ceremonies at Portala Palace in Lhasa incorporate hourglass-shaped drums fashioned from two skulls, and a container made from a silver-encrusted upside-down skull (the jaw bone serves as the container's lid). Skull drums are usually covered by leather. Sometimes they are covered with human skin. The bones belong to revered lamas and monks.

Tibetan Buddhists also use rosaries made of beads from 108 different skulls. Objects made with human bones are not regarded as gruesome but rather as symbols of the shortness of life and need for religion to facilitate rebirth. Each time the beads are touched, a prayer is said and merit is earned.

Prayer wheels are devices inscribed with mani prayers and containing sutra scrolls attached to their axels. Each turn of a prayer wheel represents a recitation of the prayer

inside and transports it to heaven. Prayer wheels can be made of wood, copper, bronze, silver or gold. They can be turned by wind or water or rotated by hand and are often stuffed with prayers handwritten in pieces of cloth.

Prayer flags are colored pieces of cloth that have Buddhist sutras printed on them. They are strung up at mountain passes and along trails and streams and are attached to chortens, temples and other sacred structures so their prayers can be released in the wind to purify the air and appease the gods.

Mani stones are flat-surfaced stones carved by Buddhist devotees to earn merit. Most are inscribed with prayer "om mani padme hum" ("Hail to the Jewel in the Lotus"). They are often placed alongside trails near Tibetan-style monasteries and temples.

CHINA

History of Chinese Buddhism

Buddhism entered China, around the first century B.C., from India via the Silk Road trade route and Central Asia, where goods were traded. It became established in the different trade centers but was seen as alien as no translations were available. According to the annals around 150 C.E. the first translations were made by An Shigao. Han Emperor Ming was the first who became interested in Buddhism and sent a mission to India which returned in A.D. 67 with Buddhist scriptures, some Indian monks and Buddhist images. By the end of the A.D. 1st century there was a Buddhist community in the Chinese capital of Loyang. The first introduction of Buddhism was the Hinayana (Theravada) from which was compared to Daoism, the ruling religion of that time.

Daoist compared the Buddhist stories with their own and found that Buddha was seen as a foreign immortal who had achieved some form of Daoist nondeath. The mindfulness and breathing exercises were compared to their own breathing training and the amazing karmic retribution of rebirth was considered very impressive. The fact of constance rebirths stroke fear in the hearts of the Daoist and only soon after the revalation that this could be ended by enlightenment and nirvana they came at peace with the new religion and accepted it.

At the end of the Han dynasty (220 C.E.) Daoism and Confucianism weakened. Buddhist monks crossed the country with shaven heads, begging bowls and robes at a time when the only people in China that dressed and acted in such a manner were criminals and beggars. These monks, traveling alone and in pairs, had nether homes nor families—concepts that defied traditional Confucian emphasis on family, honoring ancestors and producing heirs. The earliest Buddhist monasteries in China were run primarily by Chinese-speaking Indians and Central Asians. As their Chinese students matured Chinese took over the monasteries and Buddhist texts translated to Chinese became the main texts.

Buddhism arrived in China at roughly the same time Christianity was spreading from Palestine into the Roman Empire. Unlike Christianity in Europe, Buddhism in China was never willing to wipe out traditional moral and religious beliefs that existed before it. At first Buddhism was viewed as just another Taoist sect. There were even many debates (520, in Loyang the Huahu Controversy) that the Taoist founder Lao-tze moved to the

West and became a teacher of The Buddha or became The Buddha himself or that Buddha was incarnated as Laozi.

Buddhism developed and spread the Six Dynasties Period (A.D. 220-589) that followed the collapse of the Han dynasty in A.D. 220. The focus of Buddhism during this time was transferred from the Hinayana principles to the Mahayana for reasons as the studies of the 'being' or 'non-being' and the increasing interest in the Prajnaparamita Sutras which state that all forms of life are empty. This gave preachers such as Zhuangzi the possibility to promote 'jiran' or 'self-being'. The lecturers and scholars became aware of a naturalness of all things and this was strongly associated with the well-known 'dao'. Slowly the idea of the real 'dharma' became diluted.

At the 3rd century Chinese monk community had become consolidated and Buddhist monks and lecturers began moving around China. Buddhism caught on in northern China, where the belief was patronized by a number of rulers. The famous monk Kumārajīva was captured during the Chinese conquest of the Buddhist kingdom of Kucha, he was imprisoned for many years. He was honored by Emperor Yao Xing of the state of Later Qin, who gave him a title and treated him well. Kumārajīva changed Chinese Buddhism with his translations. The translations of Kumārajīva have remained more popular than those of other translators. Among the most well-known are his translations of the *Diamond Sutra*, the *Amitabha Sutra*, the *Lotus Sutra*, the *Vimalakīrti Nirdeśa Sūtra*, the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, and the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*. It was around 401 that the translator Kumarajiva arrived in Chang'an that the 'teachings of the middle path' became more clear to the Chinese and Sengzhao (374-414) became the first Chinese to master the Lotus Sutra and the Madhyamanika philosophy which all teacher the 'singular reality' of the Buddha. It is considered that the steps of order in which acceptance in China of that time was ;

1. Hinayana / Theravada teachings of the "four noble truths", samsara , the 8 fold path and other teachings did take ground
2. Mahayana teachings took over with the introduction of doctrines as 'emptiness' , 'self-being', 'dao' and others to be integrated into society
3. Introduction of the sutra's that is supposed to have begun with the 'Vimalakirti Sutra" as it did focus on the emptiness, the noble silence, the truth of the nondual which made that all things are part of an interrelationsnetwork and thus one
4. Lotus sutra the continuation of 'one vehicle' = reality ,of the Buddha
5. Nirvana Sutra as the final doctrine of permanence

During the 4th century, when China was engaged in war and the northern areas were overrun by horsemen from Mongolia, Buddhism was the dominant faith in China. This environment could not be a favorable place for philosophical development but yet it still did. Fotudeng, the leader of the northern Sangha, spends his time spreading the lectures to the masses and even was able to impress the Mongols not to kill his followers. This did earn him the strong support of the court.

A most interesting debate was about the fact that monks needed to bow for the King or not. At that time the emperor was seen as a 'son of heaven' and needed to be respected by all living people by bowing and other rituals. Huiyan, a monastic leader, defended the fact that monks should not bow because they were on a spiritual quest and by such they were not from this world. Monks were working for the sake of the society and the

spiritual leadership of the world, thus the King should be grateful to them, treating them with respect what the least he could do. Emperor Taizu of the Wei state found a solution to that and declared himself vicar of the Sangha and monks had to pay respect to him again. By doing so Buddhism became a state religion. But unlike the emperor planned to rule the Sangha he became a part of the discussion committee and found himself often opposed by the other ruling members of the Sangha.

By the 5th century Buddhism was well established in many Chinese states. The best known promoter of Buddhism is Emperor Wu of Liang (梁武帝) (464–549), personal name Xiao Yan (蕭衍). Emperor Wu created universities and extending the Confucian civil service exams, demanding that sons of nobles study before taking on any official duty. He was well read and wrote poetry and embraced the arts. Although for governmental affairs he was Confucian in values, he took Buddhism as his life treat. Around 481 or 482, Xiao Yan married Chi Hui (郗徽), the daughter of the Liu Song official Chi Ye (郗燁) and the Princess Xunyang. She bore him three daughters—Xiao Yuyao (蕭玉姚), Xiao Yuwan (蕭玉婉), and Xiao Yuhuan (蕭玉嬛), but no sons. Xiao Yan reigned for 48 years and died at the age of 86. He was one of the longest living emperors in Chinese history, second only to Qing Dynasty emperor, Qianlong (1711-1799). According to the Comprehensive Mirror for Aid in Government (Zizhi Tongjian), a classic of Chinese historiography, Emperor Wu “had a broad knowledge and was versed in literature, Yin-Yang Theory, riding, archery, music, both cursory style and clerical style calligraphy, and Chinese Wei-chi.” He was especially talented in literature and the arts. After Emperor Wu converted to Buddhism, he became a monk, fully four times, in the Tongtai Temple. In 527 when he lived in the temple, he read and recited Buddhist scriptures daily from the morning bell, until sunset when the drum was beaten, and cleaned the temple with other monks. But an empire cannot exist without its king, so after much begging from the civil and military ministers, Emperor Wu was finally persuaded to return to the palace.

In September 529 he again refused to go back to his palace and became a monk in the Tongtai Temple. His ministers tried every means to persuade Emperor Wu, but their efforts were in vain. Finally, officials contrived to donate an enormous sum to the temple for his redemption; in return Emperor Wu agreed to return to the palace in October 529. But the tug of the monastic robe was irresistible. In 546, the 83-year-old Emperor Wu left the palace once again to become a monk. This time, the ministers spent double what they paid before to “ransom” him.

Then, again, just one year later, Emperor Wu entered Tongtai to become a monk. It was the fourth time. He stayed there for 37 days before the ministers again got him back. Through his devoted promotion of Buddhism, the influence of Buddhism greatly expanded in China. Moreover Buddhism reached the peak of its development during the reign of Emperor Wu of Liang. At that time, all people, from the emperor to the royal family and from the noblemen to the common citizens, believed in Buddhism. Buddhism experienced unprecedented popularity at this time, and it became the religion of the whole nation.

Another interesting development happened around Harivarman (ca. 310–390) writer of the famous Cheng shi lun. In his vision there are only two truths. To him the truth about Nirvana was the most important and the 3 others were only because of this. In a more

technical way the search for the truth in China was focused on the content of the Nirvana sutra which explained them as ;

The discussion of the two truths in the Ta-chih-tu-lun (Mahāprajñā-pāramitā-śāstra), translated by Kumārajīva (344~413) is found in its presentation of the four siddhāntas. The word siddhānta refers to method, teaching, principle, or objective. The four siddhāntas are as follows:

The worldly principle (shih-chieh-hsi-t'an, laukika siddhānta)

The individual principle (ke-ke-wei-jen-hsi-t'an, prātipauruṣika siddhānta)

The therapeutic point of view (tui-chih-hsi-t'an, prātipākṣika siddhānta)

The supreme point of view (ti-i-i-hsi-t'an, pāramārthika siddhānta)

All these discussions were leading to the doctrine of the universal Buddha Nature.

Around 493 the emperor Gaozu moved the capital to Loyang and initiated a complete cultural renaissance to let the north gain as much knowledge and arts as the southern part of the country. Till that time the north was behind the south in developments. A complete merging of cultures was not possible as during the anti-Buddhist campaigns from 574-577 many important people died and others flee. One of the main persons behind this was the Northern emperor Wu from Zhou state. He supported the Confucian model and outlawed Buddhism and Daoism. Many new schools came to existence during that time.

One of the more important typical Chinese schools which is Buddhist but not only based on the Indian doctrines or sutra's was Chan school which later became well-known in the rest of the world as Zen when exported to Japan.

In the early six dynasties Buddhism needed to change its directions and methods to keep into the attention of the people and work with official Governments. More sutras of filial piety were introduced to fit with the family demands of Confucianism.

Tiantai School under the leadership of patriarch Zhiyi (538-597) found ways to get in favor of the Sui rulers (581-618) who were impressed by king Ashoka from India who did build a stable just full social empire. They build temples and shrines and gave Buddhism a stronger Chinese image. Due to his popularity as monk Zhuyi had to postpone his wish to retreat on Mount Tiantai in solitary confinement to a next life.

One of the most important works of Zhiyi was the new method of reading the Lotus Sutra. He broke down the sutra in small parts and located two major principals instead of one as all his predecessors did. His work proclaimed the presence of the omnipresent Buddha wisdom (also called Buddha nature) in everything. This again collapsed into the eternal Buddha of time – past, present, future – which are constantly a part of all sutra's but is the focus of the Lotus sutra. According to this wisdom the Buddha must be present at every level of reality from the lowest (hell) to the highest (nirvana). For the first time the 'theory of essential evil' was developed by the Tiantai School.

China of that time was already familiar with the counter polar yin/yang union but the Tiantai school introduced the philosophy of the 'tree in one' which depicts perfection of harmony ; a triadic round (or 'yuan circle') in which the three members are equally

holistic. This theory comes very close to Christianity in which we also find the three fold union of ; father – son- holy ghost. The difference is that in Zhiyi's theory there is a complete equal interaction unlike in Christianity where it is a superiority of one over the others. Most of Zhiyi's work is based on the works of Nāgārjuna who was promoter in the development of the two-truths doctrine, which claims that there are two levels of truth or reality in Buddhist teaching, the ultimate reality (paramārtha satya) and the conventionally or superficial reality (saṃvṛtisatya). Zhiyi insisted that a person should always look at reality from all sides, the positive , the negative and the neutral.

During the reign of Emperor Taizong (627-650) at A.D. 645, the Chinese monk Xuanzang (Hsuan-tsang or master Tripitaka) left China for India to obtain Buddhist texts from which the Chinese could learn more about Buddhism. He traveled the Silk Road where he made it to Central Asia and India despite being held up by surly Chinese guards and guides who abandoned him in the middle of nowhere. In Central Asia he traveled to Turfan, Kucha, the Bedel pass, Lake Issyk-kul, the Chu Valley (near present-day Bishkek), Tashkent, Samarkand, Balk, Kashgar and Khoton before crossing the Himalayas into India. Xuanzang spent 16 years in India collecting texts and returned with 700 Buddhist texts. Xuanzang's translations were important. He translated central Yogācāra texts such as the Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra and the Yogācārabhūmi Śāstra, as well as important texts such as the Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra and the Bhaiṣajyaguruvaidūryaprabhārāja Sūtra (Medicine Buddha Sūtra). He is credited with writing or compiling the Cheng Weishi Lun (Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi Śāstra) as a commentary on these texts. His translation of the Heart Sūtra became the standard in all East Asian Buddhist sects. The proliferation of these sūtras expanded the Chinese Buddhist canon significantly with high quality translations of some of the most important Indian Buddhist texts.

Bodhisattva Leading the Way, color on silk, China, c. 875, British Museum.

Near the end of his 16-year journey, the monk Xuanzang (Hsuan-tsang or master Tripitaka) stopped in Dunhuang at The Mogao Grottoes— also known as Thousand Buddha Caves—of which is said that he was one of the initiators of the Buddhistic arts created there in the massive group of caves which now are filled with Buddhist statues and imagery. Xuanzang may have been a great scholar he was less of a politician. One of his partners in translation the Huayan patriarch Fazang (643-712) had more political tact and soon became the trusty of the Tang Empress Wu.

Empress Wu Zetian of Tang Dynasty was her most glorious title and she was the only female emperor in Chinese history who actually ruled the whole country for almost half a century. When she was young, she read many books and received a good education from her father. At the age of 14, she was selected to be Emperor Taizong's Cai Ren (a kind of Tang concubine) because of her beauty and intelligence. During that period, Wu Zetian's literary talents impressed Emperor Taizong who appointed her to assist as a secretary. This enlarged Wu's insight and knowledge of state affairs. It was also then that Wu began to attract the attention of Prince Li Zhi who later became Emperor Gaozong. In 649 when Emperor Taizong died, Wu was sent to Ganye Temple to be a nun. Ambitious Wu Zetian was not satisfied with this title. In order to get the position of empress, she killed her baby daughter with her own hands and imputed it to Empress Wang. In this way, she made Emperor Gaozong depose Empress Wang. In 655, Wu Zetian successfully became the empress, launching her political career. In 683, Emperor

Gaozong died. Successively, Wu Zetian put her two sons, Li Xian³ and Li Dan, onto the throne as Emperor Zhongzong and Emperor Ruizong. Actually, the real power always remained in Wu's hands. In 690, Wu deposed Emperor Ruizong and proclaimed herself Emperor Zetian. By changing the state title into Zhou, she realized her long-cherished imperial dream. Nevertheless, she also had many faults. For example, she appointed many cruel officials whose behavior disturbed the normal order of the court and brought much hardship to the common people. What's more, Wu's personally killing her sons (Li Hong and Li Xian²) and her baby daughter only to achieve her political aims incurred much historical condemnation.

The Kaiyuan's Masters, Śubhakarasiṃha, Vajrabodhi, and Amoghavajra, established Esoteric Buddhism in China from AD 716 to 720 during the reign of emperor Xuanzong. They came to Daxing Shansi (大行善寺, *which* was established in the ancient capital Chang'an, today's Xi'an). They invented a mysterious, dynamic, and magical teaching, which included mantra formula and detailed rituals to protect a person or an empire, to affect a person's fate after death, to bring rain in times of drought. The Esoteric Buddhist lineage of China (and almost all of Buddhism in China at the time) was nearly wiped out by the Emperor Tang Wuzong, leading to the Great Anti-Buddhist Persecution. In 845 the persecution took full bloom. One of the leading figures Han Yu wrote, *"Buddha was a man of the barbarians who did not speak the language of China and wore clothes of a different fashion. His sayings did not concern the ways of our ancient kings, nor did his manner of dress conform to their laws. He understood neither the duties that bind sovereign and subject, nor the affections of father and son."*

As mentioned earlier, persecution came during the reign of Emperor Wuzong in the Tang Dynasty. Wuzong was said to hate the sight of Buddhist monks, whom he thought were tax-evaders. In 845, he ordered the destruction of 4,600 Buddhist monasteries and 40,000 temples. More than 400,000 Buddhist monks and nuns then became peasants liable to the Two Taxes (grain and cloth). Wuzong cited that Buddhism was an alien religion, which is the reason he also persecuted the Christians in China. Chinese Buddhism never fully recovered from the persecution.

By the late tenth century the Silk Road had begun to fade. More caves would be dug and decorated, including one with sexually charged tantric murals that was built in 1267 under the Mongol Empire founded by Genghis Khan. But as new sea routes opened and faster ships were built, land caravans slipped into obsolescence. China, moreover, lost control over large portions of the Silk Road, and Islam had started its long migration over the mountains from Central Asia. By the early 11th century several of the so-called western regions (part of modern-day Xinjiang, in China's far west) had been converted to Islam, and Buddhist monks placed tens of thousands of manuscripts and paintings in a small side chamber adjoining a larger Mogao grotto.

Were the monks hiding documents for fear of an eventual Muslim invasion? Nobody knows for sure. The only certainty is that the chamber—now known as Cave 17, or the Library Cave—was sealed up, plastered over, and concealed by murals. The secret cache would remain entombed for 900 years.

Buddhism reached its height in the Tang Dynasty (A.D. 618-907). The Pure Land School and the worship of Amitabha became widespread. Many Tang emperors were Buddhists,

or at least favorable to Buddhism. Some great Chinese poets from the period were monks.

Towards the end of the Tang dynasty, Chinese Emperors began to favor Taoism over Buddhism; monks and nuns were secularized; temples and libraries were destroyed. Buddhism remained overshadowed by Taoism and Confucianism until it experienced a revival in the 11th century.

During the Song Dynasty in the 11th, 12th and 13th centuries, the Ch'an school rose in importance. Under the Mongols in the 13th and 14th centuries, Tibetan Buddhism was adopted by the Chinese imperial court, a tradition that continued under the Manchus primarily for political reasons. Interest in Buddhism began to wane between the 11th to 15th centuries as religion divided into yet more movements and Taoism and especially Confucianism reasserted themselves by tuning into the traditional Confucian emphasis on living in this world not the next and devoting one's attention to things like family, education, being a good citizen and fulfilling duties expected by society. Buddhism underwent a revival in the early part of the 20th century and prospered during the period of revolution and chaos before and during World War II but was put down under Maoist rule. During the Cultural Revolution temples were destroyed or turned into factories, storage facilities or residences; scriptures were burned; statues were smashed; monks were thrown out on the streets.

In April 2006 China organized the World Buddhist Forum, an event now held every two years, and in March 2007 the government banned mining on Buddhist sacred mountains.

Hsu Yun is generally regarded as one of the most influential Buddhist teachers of the 19th and 20th centuries.. In 1953, the Chinese Buddhist Association was established at a meeting with 121 delegates in Beijing.

Festivals

These are the holy days that Chinese Buddhists celebrate by visiting temples to make offerings of prayers, incense, fruits, flowers and donations. On such days they observe the moral precepts very strictly as well as a full day's vegetarian diet, a practice originally from China. The dates given are based on the Chinese calendar system so that 8.4 means the *Eighth day of the fourth lunar moon* and so on.

8.12 — Enlightenment Day of Śākyamuni Buddha

1.1 — Birthday of Maitreya Buddha

9.1 — Birthday of Śakra, Lord of the Devas

8.2 — Renunciation Day of Śākyamuni Buddha

15.2 — Mahāparinirvāṇa Day of Śākyamuni Buddha

19.2 — Birthday of Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara (Guan Yin)

21.2 — Birthday of Bodhisattva Samantabhadra

4.4 — Birthday of Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī

8.4 — Birthday of Śākyamuni Buddha

15.4 — Vesak Day

3.6 — Birthday of Skanda (Wei Tuo)

10.6 — Birthday of Padmasambhava (Guru Rinpoche)

19.6 — Enlightenment Day of Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara

13.7 — Birthday of Bodhisattva Mahāsthāmaprāpta

15.7 — Ghost Festival

- 30.7 — Birthday of Bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha
- 22.8 — Birthday of Dīpaṃkara Buddha (an ancient buddha)
- 19.9 — Renunciation Day of Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara
- 30.9 — Birthday of Bhaiṣajyaguru Buddha (Medicine Buddha)
- 5.10 — Anniversary of the death of Bodhidharma
- 17.11 — Birthday of Amitābha Buddha

Shamanism in Korea

The term 'shamanism' is derived from a Tungus (The largest of the Tungusic peoples are the Manchu. They are originally from Manchuria) language term for spirit mediums who practice healing rituals to help individuals and the community live in harmony with each other, nature, and ancestors, and all the spirit powers in heaven, earth, and underworld. In Korean language, a spirit medium healer is termed 'mudang' or 'mansin'. When researching the origin of shamanism it is rather confusing as the terms Muism (Mugyo, "religion of the Mu") or sometimes Sinism (Shingyo, "religion of the gods") also keep coming back.

A shaman is known as a mudang (무당, 巫堂) or Tangol(당골). The role of the mudang, mainly a woman, is to act as intermediary between a spirit entity, spirits or gods and human beings. Korean shamans are similar in many ways to those found in Siberia, Mongolia, and Manchuria. They also resemble the yuta found on the Ryukyu Islands, in Japan. They differ slightly from the Tibetan styles. Shamanism has its roots in ancient animism cultures, dating at least as far back as 40,000 years. What set him apart from other healers or priests was the ability to move at will into trance states. The shaman provided healing on many levels; physical, psychological and spiritual. Traditionally, shamans held low social status and were members of the ch'onmin (천민) class. Mudang can be categorized into two basic archetypes: sessŭmu, who inherit the right to perform the shamanic rituals and kangshinmu, who are initiated into their mudang status through a ceremony.

Kangshinmu (강신무; 降神巫) are historically found throughout Korea, but are especially concentrated in the central and northern regions. The essential characteristic of the kangshinmu is that the shaman becomes one with a god or spirit as part of her ceremony. There are two types of kangshinmu: one shares its name with the general Korean word for shaman, mudang; the other is called the myŏngdu.

A person becomes a kangshinmu by participating in an initiation ceremony known as a naerim-gut, during which she undergoes a state known as a shinbyeong (神病). The kangshinmu-initiate is said to be possessed by a spirit during the ceremony. The act of possession is said to be accompanied by physical pain and psychosis.

A mudang is a type of shaman that has become possessed by a god, called a momju. Mudang perform fortune telling using their spiritual powers derived from their possession. They preside over a gut (kut) involving song and dance. A subcategory of this type, called sŏnmudang or posal, are thought to have power through a spiritual

experience, but are not considered worthy to preside over an orthodox gut. Certain shamans in this category are male and are called paksu.

Myǒngdu differ from the basic type of mudang by receiving the spirit of a dead person (usually a young child relative of the Myǒngdu) rather than being possessed by a god. The myǒngdu invites the spirit to a shrine in her dwelling. Myǒngdu are found primarily in the Honam area of Korea.

Seseummu (세습무; 世襲巫) found in the area south of the Han River, have their status as shamans passed on through family bloodlines.

Two types of mudang are seseummu: shimbang and tang'ol. Shimbang are similar to the kangshimu types of mudang in the unification of men and god. But, unlike with kangshimu, the right to conduct ceremonies is inherited. A shimbang also differs from a kangshimu in that their bodies are not possessed by spirits or gods during the gut ritual. Rather, the shimbang contacts the god through a medium (mujǒmgu) and does not become one with the god.

Within the shaman's initiation the central issue is a shinbyeong. When a woman starts to suffer from insomnia, hallucinations, loss of appetite and visual delusions she is considered to have a spiritual sickness which is the beginning of the "losing the self". A ritual called a naerim-gut cures this illness and inducts the new shaman.

In the tradition of Muism, the shinbyeong is considered a structured religious experience demonstrating the vertical connection between god and humanity and showing that "god in some form exists in human consciousness." It is a form of revelation that causes the shaman to become one with god and, consequently, change her patterns of thought. The shinbyeong is dissociated from reality and enters a higher form of consciousness.

Confucianism was able to reduce the power of shamanism power and change its context, but Shamanism continued as a strong tradition because of its strong appeal to women's needs. Confucian ritual is a completely male-dominated and male-centered display of filial piety; the central rite, chesa, focuses on the worship of patrilineal ancestors by male family members while women prepare ceremonial foods and clean up afterwards. In shamanism the woman plays a central role which in conflicting with the Confucian order.

Shamanism incorporates Taoist symbols and the older animist symbols. The incorporation of animist and Taoist symbols (which emphasize son-bearing, health, and longevity) suggests an interesting relationship between Shamanism and Confucianism. In relegating Shamanism to the private sphere and turning it into a women's tradition, the Confucian order seems to have enforced a nature/culture division. Confucianism explicitly demeans women, and the typical Korean woman "accepts her own devaluation and takes culture's point of view"

In the traditional Confucian family, "the woman is conceptually an outsider, brought into the household to provide services that cannot be provided by 'true' family members"). She did not attain more secure status as a member of her husband's family until she has produced a son to continue the husband's lineage; only then, with her

duty fulfilled, did she "acquire the privileges and authority of motherhood" . Even as a secure member of the husband's household, the Korean woman retains her natal surname (the surname of her father) while her children take on the name of their father and become his property. The wife remains symbolically an outsider, not only in her husband's family, but even, to some degree, while in her natal family. This position makes the woman strongly attracted to shamanism.

In the Confucian society, which is patrilineal and patrilocal, Shamanism harks back to a time before the introduction of rigid legal codes, when marriage rules were more flexible, divorce and plural marriage common, and residence was matrilineal.

Shinto

Shintoism is a purely Japanese religion, the origins is unknown. Shintoism teaches that no other land than Japan is more divine. Shinto has a fundamental doctrine ; Japan is the country of the gods and the people are the descendants of gods. This has given rise to a conviction of superiority over other countries and peoples. With the exception of a few sects in Shinto, the religion has neither a founder, sacred writings, nor any authoritative set of beliefs. Worship takes place at one of the numerous shrines in Japan, although many Japanese have altars in their home to one or more of the large number of deities.

The word Shinto comes from the Chinese word Shen-tao, which means "the way of the gods." A major feature of Shinto is the notion of kami, the concept of sacred power in both animate and inanimate objects. There is in Shinto a powerful sense of the presence of gods and spirits in nature. The gods of Shinto are too numerous to lend themselves to a hierarchy, but the sun goddess Amaterasu is very highly revered. Shinto teaches that the Japanese people are themselves descended from the kami.

It was towards the end of the 6th century when the Japanese were conscious of these activities and called them 'Way of Kami(the deity or the deities)'. It coincides the time when the 31st Emperor Yomei prayed before an image of Buddha for the first time as an emperor for recovery of his illness. Thus accepting Buddhism, a foreign religion, the Japanese realized existence of a tradition of their own faith. After having gone through a long history since then, this indigenous faith, Shinto, has developed into four main forms:

- Koshitsu Shinto (Shinto of the Imperial House),
- Jinja Shinto (Shrine Shinto),
- Shuha Shinto (Sectarian Shinto), and
- Minzoku Shinto (Folk Shinto).

Shinto gives divine status equally to forces of nature, to animals or to famous people. These divinities are called " kamis " in Japanese and their Chinese equivalent is " shin ". "To" or "do" mean " way " or " method " in Sino-Japanese. So Shinto is literally " the way of the gods ". The most important god is the sun which, among its other virtues, serves as a protection against invasions. So, we can say that the Japanese flag is a Shinto symbol. The very name of the country, Nippon, is written with two Chinese characters : " ni ", meaning " sun " and " pan ", meaning " root " hence the translation Empire of the Rising Sun. Japan comes from the Chinese pronunciation of the same characters, Je-ben.

However, the sun does not have a hierarchical role among the Shinto gods : each one has its place. The kami almost always inspire respectful fear. Among these we find mountains, animals like the tiger, the snake or the wolf ; and the Emperor himself. An imperial minister of the IXth century is the kami of calligraphy. There are allegedly 800 million kamis and the nickname given to Japan is Shinkoku, " country of the gods " .

Shinto has no supreme God and heaven, and, unlike Chinese beliefs, it is not a divinity but the place where the kamis live. The kamis are thought to be intrinsically good but there are many exceptions. Prayers are made to the kami on various occasions for rain, good crops, the coronation of the Emperor etc.

In fact, Shinto has no established doctrine but is made up of a combination of practices which originally varied considerably from one village to another.

Shinto is far more deeply seated in the social life of the Japanese than in their personal lives. Their religion of communion with nature in which everything is sacred, the stars, the rivers, the ancestors, famous people – is present in all Japanese traditions. In Sumo, a fight in which two very large semi-naked men try to push one another out of a circle, the notion of sport is almost secondary in relation to the rituals. The wrestlers throw down a handful of salt to purify the arena ; they kick one another in order to crush the forces of evil. As for the referee, he comes from a family specialized in this function and he is dressed as a Shinto priest.

The Japanese have celebrations according to the Shinto ritual to mark the special events in the life of individuals, of the community or the nation. These celebrations, called Matsuri, are simply occasions for rejoicing in being alive. They try to be pure in heart, to give expression to their gratitude for all the pleasurable things in the world and hope that happiness will continue to prevail.

By its very nature, Shinto is in no way incompatible with other religions since it is not in itself religious. Throughout its history it has fitted in with Buddhism and Confucianism and does not find any difficulty today in accommodating Christianity. Modern life has still further stripped it of its supernatural content, but Shinto continues to be an extraordinary binding force preserving Japanese unity.

ZEN

Although McRae has reservations about the division of Chán-history in phases or periods, he nevertheless distinguishes four phases in the history of Chán:

1. Proto-Chán (ca. 500-600). In this phase, Chán developed in multiple locations in northern China. It was based on the practice of *dhyana*, and is connected to the figures of Bodhiharma and Huike. It's principal text is the Two Entrances and Four Practices, attributed to Bodhidharma.
2. Early Chán (ca. 600-900). In this phase Chán took its first clear contours. Prime figures are the fifth patriarch Daman Hongren ((601–674), his dharma-heir Yuquan Shenxiu (606?-706), the sixth patriarch Huineng (638–713),

antagonist of the quintessential Platform Sutra, and Shenhui (670-762), whose propaganda elevated Huineng to the status of sixth patriarch. Prime factions are the Northern School, Southern School and Oxhead School.

3. Middle Chán (ca. 750-1000). In this phase developed the well-known Chán of the iconoclastic zen-masters. Prime figures are Mazu Daoyi (709-788), Shitou Xiqian (710-790), Linji Yixuan (d.867), and Xuefeng Yicun (822-908). Prime factions are the Hongzhou school and the Hubei faction. An important text is the Anthology of the Patriarchal Hall (952), which gives a great amount of "encounter-stories", and the well-known genealogy of the Chán-school.
4. Song-Dynasty Chán (ca. 950-1300). In this phase Chán took its definitive shape, including the picture of the "golden age" of the Chán of the Tang-Dynasty, and the use of koans for individual study and meditation. Prime figures are Dahui Zonggao (1089-1163), who introduced the Hua Tou practice, and Hongzhi Zhengjue (1091-1157), who emphasized Shikantaza. Prime factions are the Linji school and the Caodong school. The classic koan-collections, such as the Blue Cliff Record were assembled in this period, which reflect the influence of the "literati" on the development of Chán. In this phase Chán is transported to Japan, and exerts a great influence on Korean Seon via Jinul.

Both Ferguson and McRae don't give a periodisation for Chinese Chán after the Song-dynasty, though McRae mentions "at least a postclassical phase or perhaps multiple phases".

"Zen" is the Japanese pronunciation of the Chinese character "chan," which is in turn the Chinese translation from the Indian Sanskrit term "dhyana," which means meditation. Zen, like Tao, cannot be totally explained in words. Much of your grasp of Zen must necessarily depend on your own intuition.

"Silent is the sound
That echoes around
Harder than the loud noise
Softer than a voice
But always there
Or even everywhere
Not to catch
Or to fetch
Like the endless water stream
Or a daring dream "
(Arnaud van der Veere)

- Zen is more of an attitude than a belief.
- Zen is the peace that comes from being one with an entity other than yourself.
- Zen means being aware of your oneness with the world and everything in it.
- Zen means living in the present and experiencing reality fully.
- Zen means being free of the distractions and illusory conflicts of the material world.
- Zen means being in the flow of the universe.

- Zen means experiencing fully the present, and delighting in the basic miracle of life itself.

Therefore:

- Zen is nothing and yet everything.
- Zen is both empty and full.
- Zen encompasses all and is encompassed by all.
- Zen is the beginning and the end.

Zen began as a stripped down form of more traditional Buddhism, and flourished especially in Japan where it has retained a monastic religious format. Monks lead a highly regulated and disciplined life. The first step involves learning to meditate and achieve a level of proficiency in calming and emptying the mind of distractions. Eventually the strong meditative mind can start work on a koan. Koan-like riddles occur throughout scriptures from many religions.

In ordinary experience, being and doing are separated: what one does is cut off from what one is, and conversely. Such separation leads inevitably to the condition of self-alienation. Particularly in this century, this condition has become acute. With time and sincere effort in Zazen practice, mind and body, inside and outside, self and other are experienced as one. This condition of effortless concentration, is known as Samadhi. In the clarity of Samadhi-liveliness, dissatisfaction and the sense of the meaningless of modern life vanish. No longer searching for answers externally, the student journeys within to reach the moving spirit of the Buddha - his own Self-Nature.

Through devotion and persistence, the aims of Zazen practice are eventually realized. The first is Enlightenment. With this experience, Samadhi is fulfilled; mind and body, the self and the universe are seen to have been one reality from the beginning. The second and more difficult aim is the actualization of the Bodhisattva (Enlightened Being) ideal. This spirit of love and compassion for all beings is developed through continual spiritual purification, the cultivation of a deep sense of responsibility, and most importantly, through self-discipline. As one's practice ripens, one becomes more alive, more creative; filled with the longing to actualize the Bodhisattva spirit in every moment and every aspect of daily life.

About the writer

Arnaud van der Veere is born in the Netherlands in 1960. The sixties are known for the turbulent changes of the Western world. The changes were numerous ;

- political changes, people demanded a more social lifestyle and work for all
 - morally, woman demanded their rights to be equal to men and make their own decisions
 - 'freedom' such as the free use of all kind of drug, free sex
 - changes in education and lifestyle
 - changes in religions
- And so many more changes.

I was born under the Asian light my parents always told me. Since I was a child my interest in Asia was strong. The birth was not easy, upon birth I had a heavy form of Asthma and between birth and my eleventh I often did face death in the eyes. Due to my inborn asthma I had to train sport and needed a controlled regular lifestyle. Since birth I

- never did smoke
- never took alcohol in any way
- never did use drugs
- never did gamble
- never made use of prostitutes

nor had addictive habits else than sport, cause I needed sport for my health and survival.

From the age of 4 I developed a passion for Martial arts. At that time Judo was the only way to train them. From age 8 I discovered the art of Muay Thai and was fascinated by the elegant but also very hard way of fighting as a real warrior. Being a warrior in the ring was to me an ideal that I reached soon after. Through rigorous training in Thailand I became a known fighter. But fighting alone never seemed to satisfy me. I was always looking on the other side of the coin. Physical exhaustion brought only a part of the satisfaction and at some times I felt empty and in need of a mental and moral support.

Growing up in the Netherlands implied directly going to church and learn the Christian believe. I studied the bible and many related scriptures but saw and felt more often that the people used religion as a tool to gain something and not follow the words of the scriptures. To most the words were spoken in the church and forgotten when the door closed behind them. Christians seem to believe that their deeds were forgotten as soon as the prayers ended. In my vision that was impossible as why should Jesus die for the sins of others when they never did learn from his words ? That was a question that still goes unanswered.

Buddhism came in my life at age 12 as it was introduced to me by Peter Bacas, my Aikido teacher. He taught us meditation and concentration but forgot to point us more to the role of scriptures and teachings of the Buddha. I guess he did forgot to do so on purpose as he was probably afraid of our Christian parents. Peter Bacas was of Indonesian origin he died in his 60's, much too young.

In 1975 I visited Thailand for the first time. It was a true eye opener. The temples, the monks and all the training made me aware of another world another perception of life. My goal was to become a professional Muay Thai fighter which I did. Training Muay Thai

is harsh and takes an enormous amount of daily effort. Not only the body is trained during sessions. Some Buddhist monks, who coached me in training, taught me to be more focused, to empty the mind and concentrate the energy in the body. They taught me to meditate during practice as in their vision “moving meditation” could be the best way to reach a higher state of mind for a layman like me.

After this encounter I started to study the scriptures and visited the lectures of monks in various monasteries. This continues till today as I will never consider myself an expert in something as we all need to study till we die is my opinion.

Since 1979 I use the principles of Buddhism in my work as therapist, trainer, coach and even salesman. In 1984 I started my own businesses and found that a Western approach of marketing and sales did not fit my personality. To force a person to buy my products or service did not feel right. Lying for profit felt absolutely wrong and I was not able to do so in any way.

As mentioned before most of my work is with people, often people with special needs like addiction, mental problems, relationship troubles, physical changes and so many more. Doing this work feels natural and as you can read in my many different books I do this with pleasure and the target to help my fellow human being to lead a better, healthier and more satisfied life. Reaching enlightenment is not possible for most but going into the right direction is the least we can do.

In the past few years I wrote different books directing social problems in China and others about sports. To most people life starts with a sense of competition and during growing up this is stimulated by the environment. Some people will never get over that feeling but most gradually lose it and others will feel it as a past station. Too much competition is a wear out, tear out for body and mind and to most the end of an emotional healthy life. Finding stability in emotions and relationships is all what counts but often a matter of “too late” for most.

As an active competitor, trainer and developer I encounter numerous negative events to knock me out but in the contrary they made me stronger and more persistent. Competition is a learning process but you need to understand and guide it well. It is an autodidact process, you must find your own way. This book will help you to find your own way and if needed join my classes and it will lead you to the right way.

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