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1. Buddhism in Sri Lanka

<http://www.buddhanet.net/e-learning/buddhistworld/lanka-txt.htm>

Sri Lanka is the oldest continually Buddhist country, Theravada Buddhism being the major religion in the island since its official introduction in the 2nd century BC by Venerable Mahinda, the son of the Emperor Ashoka of India during the reign of King Devanampiya- Tissa. Later, the nun Sanghamitta, the daughter of Asoka, was said to have brought the southern branch of the original Bodhi tree, where it was planted at Anuradhapura. From that day up to the present, the Buddhists in Sri Lanka have paid and are paying the utmost reverence to this branch of the Bodhi Tree under the shade of which the Master achieved Enlightenment.

Monks from Sri Lanka have had an important role in spreading both Theravada and Mahayana throughout South-east Asia. It was in Sri Lanka, in the 1st century AD during the reign of King Vatta Gamini that the Buddhist monks assembled in Aloka-Vihara and wrote down the Tripitaka, the three basket of the Teachings, known as the Pali scriptures for the first time. It was Sri Lankan nuns who introduced the Sangha of nuns into China in 433AD. In the 16th century the Portuguese conquered Sri Lanka and savagely persecuted Buddhism as did the Dutch who followed them.

When the British won control at the beginning of the 19th century Buddhism was well into decline, a situation that encouraged the English missionaries that then began to flood the island. But against all expectations the monastic and lay community brought about a major revival from about 1860 onwards, a movement that went

hand in hand with growing nationalism.

Since then Buddhism has flourished and Sri Lankan monks and expatriate lay people have been prominent in spreading Theravada Buddhism in Asia, the West and even in Africa.

Some of the most marvellous monuments in the Buddhist world belong to Sri Lanka, and her sculpture is closely associated with the early art of the Krishna valley and the later Pallava and Chola kings, owing to the close relationship that existed between south India and Sri Lanka. (above: Seven-metre-tall standing image of the Buddha in a rare cross-armed pose at Gal Vihara).

According to the Sri Lankan chronicles, the Mahavamsa, one of Ashoka's sons, the monk Mahinda, supervised construction of monastic buildings near Anuradhapura. Simultaneously, he sent to India for relics. These, say the histories, included the Buddha's alms bowl and his right collarbone. Later a hair relic, and in the 4th century AD, the Buddha's tooth would be taken to Sri Lanka. The tooth is still preserved in Kandy where daily rituals venerate the Buddha's tooth relic in Temple of the Tooth Relic, Kandy 16th Century.

To house the relics, stupas were built. Standing at 300 feet, Ruwanweliseya, or the "Great Stupa" is regarded as one of the most important stupas at Anuradhapura in north-central Sri Lanka: Much restored, the great dome, circled with old columns, is still to be seen in Anuradhapura, now a great park. During major festivals it is crowded with hundreds of thousands of devotees in family groups, who picnic happily among the ruins and offer puja at the Bodhi tree. There are other important monuments nearby at Mihintale, the site of Mahinda's first sermon to King Devanampiya-Tissa. The ruins of the later capital at Polonnaruwa (9th century AD onwards), showing Hindu and Mahayana cultic influence, are yet more elaborate.

The stupa in Sri Lanka is a circular drum on a square base with a long succession of compressed umbrellas forming a conical top over a box-shaped harmika, of which the Ruwanweliseya stupa, (above right) at Anuradhapura (3rd century BC) is a fine example.

2. The Arrival of Buddhism in Sri Lanka ...by Aryadasa Ratnasinghe

<http://www.lankalibrary.com/geo/ancient/bud.htm>

It was on the memorable Posaon fullmoon day in the month Jaththa (June), in BC 306, (i.e., 237 years after the demise of the Buddha), that the Arhat Mahinda, the illustrious apostle of Buddhism met King Devanampiyatissa (307-267 BC) of Sri Lanka, atop the Mihintale rock (then known as Missaka-pabbata), situated about 12 km. east of Anuradhapura. This confrontation paved way for the establishment of Buddhism in Sri Lanka.

Arhat Mahinda, the profoundly sapient thera, came to Sri Lanka as bidden by his father, the emperor Asoka (264-267 BC) of India, who was earlier known as Chandasoka (Asoka the wicked), but later, when he renounced armed conquests, he came to be known as Dharmasoka (Asoka the pious). He proclaimed Buddhism, having become a convert to the faith, throughout India, as the state religion, and did everything for the propagation of Buddhism in the country.

Asoka's famous rock edicts read: "May the Dhamma last as long as my sons and grandsons, and the sun and the moon will be, and may the people follow the path of the Dhamma, for if one follows the path, happiness in this and in the other worlds will be attained." Even today, the Asoka Chakra (the Wheel of Asoka) dominates the national flag of India. Asoka, earlier as the viceroy of Udenipura (now Ujjain) in Avanti, fell in love with a beautiful damsel named Devi, the daughter of a wealthy merchant of Vidisa, who bore him two children. One was Mahendra (Mahinda) and the other was Sanghamitra (Sangamitta), both of whom entered the holy order of a bhikku and bhikkuni in fulfilment of the wish of their father Asoka. Mahinda entered the order at the age of 26 years, and elevated his spiritual position as an Arhant, having destroyed all passions pertaining to mundane existence.

When he came to Sri Lanka, he was 32 years old. It may rightly be considered that he was the first real teacher of Sri Lanka, who did much for the establishment of Buddhism in the island and the uplift of the Buddha Sasana. He stands credited for bringing about a socio-religious revolution in the country and in promoting religious zeal among the people.

However, Arhat Mahinda postponed his mission to Sri Lanka until the time was appropriate for him to undertake the mission, as the then king Mutasiva (367-307 BC), was too old and feeble to understand the doctrine of the Buddha. In order to mark time, first he left for the Dakkhinagiri vihara to see his mother and other kith and kin. He went there with the four theras, Itthiya, Utthiya, Sambala and Bhaddasala and the novice Sumana samanera.

After six month, they all left for Vidisagiri in Sanchi and lived there until the death of King Mutasiva. The enthronement of King Devanampiyatissa (the second son of Mutasiva), was found suitable to fit the occasion, and Arhat Mahinda, with his companions, left Vidisagiri vihara, bound for Sri Lanka. They were accompanied by Bhanduka upasaka, the lay-disciple. According to Mahavamsa, (Ch. 13:20), Arhat Mahinda and his companions, altogether six, "rose aloft into the air that very vihara, and instantaneously alighted atop the superb Missaka mountain (Mihintale), and stood on the rocky peak of the delightful and celebrated Ambatthala." This spot is now known as the aradhana-gala atop which the historic Mahinda-Tissa confrontation took place.

At this spot stands the Ambatthala chetiya of later times, built by King Mahadatika Mahanaga alias Maha Deliyamana (06-18 AD). On completion of the chetiya, the king held a splendid feast known as the Giribhanda-pooja (lighting the whole city with oil lamps), and an alms-giving known as Thulabhara-dana (offering of gold equal to king's weight).

If we are disposed to consider the mode of travel from Vidisagiri in India to Mihintale in Sri Lanka, we might consider them having followed the common routes of travel known at that time. It is said that the normal course would have been to arrive overland to a sea-port on the western coast of India, most probably, Bharukacca, and thence to take vessel to the island. If they had walked from the sea-port to Mihintale, many questions crop up. How did they reach Mihintale, through thick jungle infested with wild beasts? Who supplied meals to them en route, and who provided shelter for the night? How did they escape the attention of the king's spies who were on alert for intruders?

History reveals

Authentic history tells us that Arhat Mahinda met king Devanampiyatissa, when he was on a hunting spree towards the wilderness of Mihintale. Chasing wild animals was his famous form of amusement, which he did when he had the opportunity and leisure to do so. Seeing a stag browsing in the thicket, the king's fine sportive spirit could not brook on the idea of taking the grazing animal unawares. Pursuing the animal, which fled in the direction of Silakuta (the northern peak of Mihintale mountain), the king suddenly came upon Arhat Mahinda and his companions.

After a brief conversation to test the intelligence of the king, preparatory to preaching the Dhamma, the thera delivered the discourse on Culahastipadopama Sutta (simile on the foot of an elephant), and converted those assembled to Buddhism (Mhv. 14:22). This Sutta gives a clear idea of the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha, and describes how one is converted to Buddhism and becomes a bhikkhu, the sublime qualities he practises and possesses, the things from which he abstains, the various stages of spiritual development in his life and his attainment of arhantship (the final fruit of Buddhism, ceasing rebirth). Later, he preached to those assembled, the Petavattu, Vimanavattu, Saccasamyutta, Devaduta Sutta, Balapandita Sutta, Agghikkhandopama Sutta, Asivisupama Sutta, Anamataggiya Sutta, Khajjaniya Sutta Gomayapindi Sutta, Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta (the first discourse of the Buddha), Mahappamada Sutta and the Cariyapitaka.

The advent of Arhat Mahinda in Sri Lanka, brought forth a socio-religious revolution, changing the life and habitat of the people. The establishment of the Buddha Sasana in the island was the greatest step taken by him to mould the character of the masses, leading to spiritual awareness and morality. We observe that Arhat Mahinda belonged to the school of vinayadharas, who advocated discipline as the best weapon to fight against all evil.

Socio-religious revolution

When King Devanampiyatissa inquired from Arhat Mahinda, whether the Buddha Sasana had been well established in the island, the reply was that it would happen only when a person of the Sinhalese race studies the vinaya (code of discipline) and expounds it clearly and explicitly. Accordingly, conversion of the king and his people to the new faith can be regarded as the most important event in the socio-religious history of the island. The introduction of Buddhism, with a civilisation attached to it,

brought about a distinctive cultural pattern in the social and religious life of the community.

Dr. Senerath Paranavitana, the late Archaeological Commissioner of Sri Lanka, surveying the religious condition that prevailed in the island, prior to the advent of Arhat Mahinda, says: "When the missionaries of Asoka preached the doctrine of the Buddha, it becomes clear that the great majority of the people worshipped nature spirits, called the yakkas (demons), who were supposed to dwell in rivers, lakes, mountains, trees etc.

The worship of the sacred trees and groves was also connected with this primitive forms of worship. The heavenly bodies received the adoration of the people, and to a great extent influenced their everyday life. The more intellectual among the people, perhaps, followed the brahminical religion, i.e., Hinduism."

When Arhat Mahinda came to Sri Lanka, he brought with him the Theravada canon or orthodox Buddhism, preserved in memory by oral tradition, and finally redacted at the Third Buddhist Council held at Pataliputra (now Patna), under the leadership of the Maha Thera Moggaliputta Tissa. According to Mahavamsa, Aritta and fifty-five of his brothers were the first in the island to receive the pabajja (ordination), at the hands of the Arhat Mahinda.

Arhat Mahinda and his companions spent 26 days at the Mahamegha park in Anuradhapura, and later they retired to Mihintale to observe the first 'vas' (retreat). When the king went to see him, he delivered the discourse of Vassupanayikakkhandaka Sutta, The King built for them 68 caves to shelter themselves.

The succeeding years were marked by increasing religious activity throughout the island. Buddhism spread to every town, village and hamlet, where it was enthusiastically embraced. At the same time, a large number of viharas, chetiyas and other religious edifices soon dotted the island with everlasting grace. Arhat Mahinda was now old, having lived for 80 years of which 60 years he was a bhikkhu. After establishing Buddhism in Sri Lanka, and labouring in its cause, his strenuous life came to an end. He breathed his last in BC 259.

The king at the time was Uttiya (267-257 BC), and when he heard of the sad news, his sorrow was poignant. The corpse was brought to the city of Anuradhapura for cremation, adorned in a golden bier. After solemn obsequies, the body was cremated at a place to the left of the Maha Thupa (Ruvanweliseya) of later construction. The place was named Isibhumangana (Courtyard of the sages). Thus ended the life of the illustrious thera, who was second to Buddha in the island.

3. Sri Lanka and Buddhism

<http://www.explorelanka.com/special/buddhism.htm>

Religion

Sri Lanka is a multi ethnic society and hence all major religions are equally given prominence and probably the only country in the world along with Singapore, where important days of various religions are official holidays to allow for religious activities. Buddhism, Hinduism, Christian and Islam are freely practised in Sri Lanka and very often hand in hand with other religions. Catholic and Anglican sectors of the Christianity is equally followed in Sri Lanka.

Buddhism

Buddha did not represent another powerful invisible figure to preach his knowledge and was his own master. To the layman he taught how to live a good, sincere, happy and a purposeful life and proposed some guidelines to follow to achieve these objectives. Those who do good deeds are rewarded with positive results and vice versa he said. He also said those who want to improve the mind should practise to eliminate selfishness, hatred, anger and ignorance. He said right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration will lead to cessation of sorrow.

Buddhism and Sri Lanka

Buddhism arrived in Sri Lanka around 2 century BC and has tremendously influenced the lives of the people, their culture and the heritage. Buddhist monuments include many of the remaining ancient ruins ironically though the worship of physical items are not a aspect of Buddhism. The Buddhist doctrine that is taught in Sri Lanka is one of the least diluted form of Buddha's teaching.

Buddhist Information Centres in Sri Lanka (by Andrew Quernmore, Reproduced from:

<http://www.vipassana.com/resources/>

All Ceylon Buddhist Congress

380 Baudhaloka Mw

Colombo 7

Tel: 94-01-691695,688517

Bhikku Training Centre

Lake Road

Maharagama

Tel: 94-01-850207

Buddhist Theosophical Society

203 Olcott Mawatha

Colombo 11

Tel; 94-01-323085

Institute for Buddhist Studies

(Dhammaratna Memorial Meditation & Foreign Languages)

Tel: 94-034-6131

Buddhist & Pali University

71b Huludagoda Road

Mount Lavinia

Tel: 94-01-716530

Buddhist Library

20 Magazine Road

Colombo 8

Tel: 94-01-696030

Buddhist University

29 Rosmead Place

Colombo 7

Tel: 94-01-693888

Buddha

Buddha, unlike in some religions did not represent another powerful invisible figure to preach his knowledge. He was his master and preached the knowledge he gained through enlightenment. To the layman he taught how to live a good, sincere, happy and a purposeful life and proposed some guidelines to follow to achieve these objectives. For the intellectuals he said the life is sorrow and taught the way to eliminate the sorrow, by enlightenment. Enlightenment could only be attained through improvement of knowledge thus the improvement of conscious or mind hence some consider it as a philosophy. Worshipping is not a requirement in Buddhism though many do it as a habit and a custom.

Long before Newton, Buddha said every action has a reaction including in all conscious deeds. Those who do good deeds shall be rewarded with positive results and those who do harmful actions (with a evil intension) may experience in adverse results. The results of our righteous or sinful deeds Buddha said shall follow our soul in subsequent lives. Apart from heaven and hell he also said there are other forms of lives after this life.

Just like in thousands of present day books which provide self improvement techniques. Buddha provided an enormous amount of advice to the layman to improve one's self. He said selfishness, hatred, anger and ignorance prevent one from self improvement. One who want to improve the mind should learn to eliminate these four status of mind. He said right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration will lead to cessation of Sorrow.

Improved Mind

Buddha is said to have supernatural powers such as reading others thoughts. We already know some people possess super natural powers and extra ordinary abilities. Such status could be achieved by improving one's mind thought it is not the ultimatum of the Buddhism. Self improvement or the learning process since the childhood is a way of improving our mind or thinking. It is by improvement of one's mind that the truth could be understood.

It is not necessary for anyone (including Buddhists) to believe in Buddha or his teaching if they do not wish to. It is up to the individual to understand what he teaches.

Thus, the more we learn about Buddhism, the more we realize that it has not only made man into a being worthy of his humanity but also abundantly enriched the cultures of those lands to which it penetrated.

4. Dharma Vijaya Buddhist Vihara

<http://www.dharmavijaya.org/>

Dharma Vijaya Buddhist Vihara carries on the Theravada tradition of Buddhism found primarily in Sri Lanka, Thailand, Burma, Laos and Cambodia. The Theravada tradition is the oldest and most authentic version of the Buddha's teachings now surviving. It preserves the original doctrines and practices taught by the Buddha 2,500 years ago.

Dharma Vijaya Buddhist Vihara
1847 Crenshaw Boulevard,
Los Angeles, CA 90019-6039 USA

5. SERENDIPITY OF ANDREW GEORGE ...By Ananda W. P. Guruge

1stbooks Library, Bloomington, Indiana, USA
ISBN 1-4107-5701-3 (paperback) 2003, 566 pages.
Available from - <http://www.1stbooks.com>
\$17.00 + postage

Ananda Guruge's *Free at Last in Paradise* was an unusual novel. It traced the history of the one hundred years of Sri Lanka (then Ceylon), leading up to independence. The focus was on the national and Buddhist revival and the related movement for regaining independence. This was skillfully interwoven with a personal story, too, of a boy: his growing up, his entering the order of monks, his successful life as a layman for a time, and eventual return to monkhood, achieving fame as a great scholar. In this human story, love and other human emotions featured. It was a remarkable book by any standards: original, multi-layered, informative and touching.

The author has now produced a sequel to this book: ***Serendipity of Andrew George***. This is an equally remarkable book; it is equally readable – indeed ‘unputdownable,’ equally satisfying, and equally intriguing. It also, like its predecessor, contains a wealth of information woven into the novel. This time the information is about the religious, cultural, historical and geographical aspects of the Island of Sri Lanka, provided in a highly readable way as part of the story. One almost gets the impression that this is an encyclopedia on Sri Lanka, parading as a novel! I mean this not as a criticism, but as a compliment.

The setting is in the 1960s, a vibrant and exiting decade for the Island. The title is based on a pun. *Serendip* was the name by which the country was known to some foreign writers of times past. The word *Serendipity* was derived from it, meaning an incidental discovery or an apparent aptitude for making fortunate discoveries accidentally. And the novel’s theme is Andrew George’s Serendipity, literally and metaphorically. Who is Andrew George? He is an American Academic, an anthropologist by profession, who visits Sri Lanka (still known as Ceylon in the ‘sixties) on a research award. He is unaware that his own ancestral roots lay in the Island. This personal story unravels in stages, until the final, almost dramatic, confirmation. His great-grandfather was, in fact, the great scholar monk whose life was covered in *Free at Last in Paradise*.

The author uses a clever and unusual ploy in this story. The scholar monk had written his own story (which we read in *Free at Last in Paradise*), but had decreed that it should not be published until the young schoolboy to whom he had entrusted the task was seventy. This was to avoid any hurt that might be caused to family and others mentioned in the book: so a safe gap of time was needed. This young schoolboy who dutifully undertook the task, was – wait for it – none other than Ananda Guruge! Guruge, a highly regarded and top ranking civil servant at the time of Andrew George’s visit, eventually confirms the story of the latter’s ancestral roots. So the author is also a character in the story, in fact a key one. There are other real persons, too, such as Venerable Welivitiye Sorata, Martin Wickremasinghe, A. T. Ariyaratne, Amaradasa and Lorna Dewaraja, Cecil Lyons, Stuart Smith, Richard T. Arndt and David Vickery, along with numerous fictional characters. The clever, almost unique, mixing of the true and fictional characters is another major reason why this book is so interesting. In the hands of a less skilled author, the ploy of using himself as a character might have failed or appeared as an unwarranted intrusion. Here it is done unobtrusively and enhances the novel rather than diminishing it.

In addition to this story of Andrew George’s ancestry, which emerges in stages, the book is a panoramic account of the Island. Andrew George travels around the Island with various people who show him places of historical and cultural interest, including the early Sinhala cities and religious structures. He, ever the observant anthropologist, asks questions, and the answers he receives, sometimes in the form of disagreements and debates among the ‘guides,’ are a wonderful education for the reader, not just for him. The reader learns a great deal about Sri Lanka, not just its ancient history and culture but also its contemporary aspects – drama, cinema, poetry, rituals etc. The multiplicity of cultures and subcultures, how they have blended harmoniously in some ways and retained their distinctive features in others,

is an underlying theme throughout.

I said in an earlier paragraph that this book is an encyclopedia parading as a novel. It can also be seen as a travel guide. If one uses it in that role, one will not be disappointed. The wealth of information is truly amazing. Here we have Guruge the scholar extraordinary: historian, linguist, purveyor of literature, expert on art and architecture. He gives, through his fictional characters, the most authoritative information. When there are different theories and different versions of an event, he exposes the reader to these opposing positions. There is no dogma, but facts and a balanced interpretation of them. This is, in short, an exceptional book. It entertains the reader and educates him in equal measure, and the education is painless.

Only an author with exceptional talents, skill and wisdom can write such a book. One never ceases to marvel at the talents, skill and wisdom of Ananda Guruge.

To say that one waits eagerly for his next novel is a gross understatement.

Padmal de Silva
Institute of Psychiatry.
University of London.

The Urban Dharma Newsletter Archives:

<http://www.urbandharma.org/nlarchives.html>

The Los Angeles Buddhist-Catholic Dialogue:

<http://www.urbandharma.org/bcdialog/index.html>

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The Urban Dharma Newsletter... February 10, 2004

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1. A Chinese Buddhist Wedding

<http://www.carlton.tv.co.uk/data/weddings/series2/chinese.html>

WHO ARE THEY? Lai-Quin ('Queenie') and Michael

WHERE DID THEY LIVE BEFORE THE WEDDING? They had a civil marriage ceremony so that they could live together at Michael's parents' home without anyone in their community thinking badly of them. However, they are not regarded as properly married until their Buddhist wedding.

CHOOSING THE DAY Traditionally a fortune teller used to pick a lucky wedding day. For Queenie and Michael it is Michael's mother who chooses a good day for them to marry.

THE PARTY This takes place the day before the wedding. It involves family, friends, games, music and food - but not the bride-to-be. Traditionally, she can't see Michael before the wedding day.

GIFTS AND CEREMONIES A roast pig is brought as a gift for Queenie's parents. According to tradition, they cut the pig into three and keep the middle part. The rest is sent back, with fruits in the middle, for Michael's family. After cutting the pig they have a tea ceremony, in which the couple serves tea to the elders of the family and

receives a 'red packet' in return, containing money or jewellery. The couple also say prayers and receive blessings. The tea ceremony is repeated at Michael's house.

THE WEDDING DAY Early in the morning, the groom and the groomsmen decorate the car and drive over to where Queenie is staying at her sister's house. At the door, Queenie's friends have prepared a lot of tricky questions for the groom to answer, and tests for him to undergo, to prove his worthiness to marry her. The last test is a financial test: the groom pays the bridesmaids some 'red packets' (full of good fortune). Only then are Michael and the groomsmen allowed into the house.

THE CEREMONY At Michael's house, prayers are said and offerings made to his ancestors at a small altar and to the Gods outside in the garden. Then the couple kneel before their parents and serve them tea. It's this tea ceremony that is the single most important part of the proceedings. Without it, Michael and Queenie would not be married in Chinese eyes. Then the relatives and friends take it in turns to give them their blessing and good wishes.

THE BRIDAL BED Michael's bed is prepared for the marriage, with brand-new bed linen. According to tradition, this is done by someone who has many children - especially boys. After it has been made up, no one can sleep in it until Michael and Queenie on the wedding night - so Michael sleeps on the sofa!

Following the ceremony, Queenie and Michael go up to the bedroom and stand on either side of the bed. Between them a little boy jumps up and down on the bed. This is done because they believe it to be lucky and it will bring them a lot of children. It is always a little boy because in the Asian culture boys are considered 'more useful'.

Queenie and Michael are officially husband and wife.

WHAT COMES NEXT? Three days after the wedding, the bride is expected to return to her family. She brings gifts for the family and, traditionally, they return some gifts to Michael's family.

2. A Sri Lankan Buddhist Wedding

<http://www.manaali.com/buddhistwedmore.htm>

Sri Lankan Buddhist Weddings are influenced by the Hindu culture which gives prominence to 'Nekath', the auspicious times.

The 'Nekatha' is derived from the horoscopes of the Bride and the Groom which is created based on their dates and times of birth.

Of the many traditional events that take place during a Buddhist wedding, the

'Poruwa' ceremony is the most important. Therefore it is strictly guided by Nekath.

'Poruwa' is a beautifully decorated wooden platform on which the traditional Buddhist marriage ceremony takes place. Therefore this event is called the '**Poruwa Siritha**' (Ceremony).

The Poruwa Siritha (Poruwa Ceremony) appears to have existed in Sri Lanka before the introduction of Buddhism in the 3rd Century B.C.

Through the ages, many innovations have been introduced to the Poruwa Siritha. By and large, the men and women of present day society realize the value of their heritage and are motivated to protect and preserve something of their past for posterity.

The Poruwa Siritha was as valid custom as a registered marriage until the British introduced the registration of marriages by Law in 1870. Today's Poruwa Ceremony has been influenced by both upcountry and low country customs of Sri Lanka.

The bridegroom and party assemble on the left of the Poruwa and the bridal party on the right.

The bride and groom enter the Poruwa leading with the right foot. They greet each other with palms held together in the traditional manner.

Shilpadhipathi (master of ceremonies) presents a hand of betel leaves to the couple, which they accept and hand back to him to be placed on a height of the Poruwa. This symbolises the offering of betel to gods.

The bride's father places the right hand of the bride on that of the groom as a symbolic gesture of handing over the bride to the bridegroom.

The groom's brother hands a tray to the groom with seven sheaves of betel leaves with a coin placed in each. The groom holds the tray while the bride takes one sheaf at a time and drops it on the Poruwa. The groom repeats this process. This is a custom carried out to remember seven generations of relatives on each side.

The groom's brother hands a tray to the groom with seven sheaves of betel leaves with a coin placed in each. The groom holds the tray while the bride takes one sheaf at a time and drops it on the Poruwa. The groom repeats this process. This is a custom carried out to remember seven generations of relatives on each side.

The bride's maternal uncle enters the Poruwa, ties the small fingers of the bride and groom with a gold thread and then pours water over the fingers. Water and earth being the eternal verities, the water so poured and the earth on which it falls are intended to be the lasting witnesses to the marriage. The uncle then turns the couple clockwise, three times, on the Poruwa.

Next the groom presents to his bride a white cloth which in turn is presented to the bride's mother. This is an expression of the groom's gratitude to his mother-in-law for bringing up his bride.

Next, the groom's mother will present the going away saree to the groom. The groom hands it over to the bride and she in turn gives it to her mother.

The bride's mother will then present a plate of milk rice and kavum, cooked with special ingredients befitting a marriage ceremony, to the bride who feeds a piece of each to the bridegroom. The bridegroom feeds the bride in return.

As the newly weds step down from the Poruwa, helped by a couple from the bridegroom's party, Shilpathipathi breaks a coconut in two.

The bridal couple lights a brass oil lamp to signify their resolve to keep the home fires burning.

3. A Buddhist Wedding Ceremony

<http://www.clickwalla.com/article.php?cid=54&aid=73>

Buddhist wedding ceremonies are becoming increasingly popular in the west, and are not just restricted to those who follow the faith.

WHEREAS in many religions (both Asian and western), marriage is a sacrament and an essential aspect of religious duty, marriage in Buddhism is purely a secular affair. A Buddhist's decision to wed is not affected by or intertwined with a desire to continue the Buddhist faith. Marriage is considered a personal concern; there are no religious directions on whether or not one should marry or remain unwed. There is also no formal wedding service. This does not, however, mean that Buddhist weddings do not have a rich tradition. Throughout the subcontinent, Buddhist communities have assembled creative wedding ceremonies out of Asian and Buddhist rituals.

Pre-Wedding Rituals

In the cultural pervasion of religion that all Asia has experienced, many Buddhist weddings are arranged. A wedding broker is normally responsible for the match between bride and groom. He or she will visit families of the area assessing their wealth, health, social status and prospects. When visiting families, the wedding broker can easily suggest a match for their child, having mentally catalogued the available people of the area.

A family will likely take the marriage broker's advice and pay a preliminary visit to the family of the person suggested. The parents of the two families will meet without

the children to assess each other's prospect, checking the informational intelligence of the marriage broker. After several more visits, including one with an astrologer, the couple to be wed will meet and hopefully give the final okay to the wedding.

After having agreed upon a dowry amount, the astrologer will decide on a mutually auspicious date for the couple to wed. During the pre-wedding days, the couple may choose to receive monks in their new home. The monks will bless the house with holy water and recite verses from the Tipitaka (Buddhist holy book). As the monks complete their blessing, the groom's family will offer them alms (gifts) to bring good luck to the marriage.

The Wedding Ceremony

The wedding day is begun at a local temple where the couple separately asks for the blessings of Buddha. Both bride and groom are then dressed in outfits traditional to their region.

At the mutually auspicious astrologically designated wedding time, the bride and groom are individually taken to the shrine room of their local temple or a hall hired for the occasion. Here, the couple sees each other for the first time on that day.

Spiritual Buddhist wedding traditions don't necessarily require the presence of monks or the use of a temple's shrine room. For these traditions, the wedding location would be equipped with a shrine to Buddha featuring candles, flowers, incense and a statue or image of Buddha.

The ceremony begins as the entire assembly recites the Vandana, Tisarana and Pancasila readings. The couple then lights the candles and incense sticks surrounding Buddha's image and offers him the flowers within the shrine. Because of the secularity of Buddhist weddings, there is no assigned set of marriage vows. However, the bride and groom will recite their expected undertakings using the Sigilovdda Sutta as a guide. The Sigiloydda Sutta says:

"In five ways should a wife, as Western quarter, be ministered to by her husband: by respect, by courtesy, by faithfulness, by handing over authority to her, by providing her with ornaments. In these five ways does the wife minister to by her husband as the Western quarter, love him: her duties are well-performed by hospitality to kin of both, by faithfulness, by watching over the goods he brings and by skill and industry in discharging all business."

After these vows are spoken, the bride and groom can exchange rings. If monks are present, the marriage vows will be both preceded and proceeded by their chanting.

After the Wedding

Once officially married, the couple receives their guests with the huge feast and decorations prepared in the previous days to the wedding.

4. Buddhist Weddings

<http://www.weddingguide.co.uk/articles/ceremonies/buddhist.asp>

Introduction

There are a number of different sections of Buddhism, and the beliefs of each group vary slightly. In general, Buddhists believe in life as a process of change, moving towards greater wisdom, awareness and kindness. The mind is the decisive factor in the changing of the self, and meditation is used to develop the mind to a more positive state.

The main concern to Buddhists is that there is suffering in the world. There is no sense of a creator God in Buddhism. The Buddha (a title, rather than a name, which means one who is awake to reality) was a human being who transformed himself, through enormous effort, to a state of profound Enlightenment.

Buddhists follow Dharma, the teachings of the Buddha where there is suffering, caused by wanting. This suffering can end completely by using the Eightfold Path, which develops good understanding, thought speech, action, work, effort, mindfulness and meditation. Buddhism is an open religion that believes that all people are equal, and welcomes those of any age, gender, nationality or background.

Legal Requirements

A couple can be married in the eyes of the law by having a Buddhist ceremony as long as the person who conducts their ceremony is registered to conduct weddings. If this is not the case, a civil ceremony will also have to be held

The legal requirements to be fulfilled are those that apply to civil marriages. However, if the building in which the couple wish to marry is in a different registration district to where they live, the superintendent registrar needs proof that the building is the couples normal place of worship. If this is not possible, the couple are required to give notice in the registration district in which the building is situated after having met the necessary residency requirement.

If there is no building in the couples registration district, they will be permitted to marry in a building in the nearest registration district that has one.

A superintendent registrar may also need to attend the ceremony. If the building in which the couple intend to marry is not registered for the solemnisation of marriages, a civil ceremony must be arranged beforehand to comply with the requirements of the law.

Buddhism and divorce

Buddhism holds great store in peace, and not causing harm to any other living thing. Therefore it is held by most Buddhist groups that if every form of reconciliation has failed, the couple should be allowed to peacefully separate rather than cause any more suffering. The couple are asked to take into consideration the position and future of any children, so as not to cause them unnecessary suffering.

Preparations for a Buddhist Wedding

It is traditional in some communities on the morning of their wedding for the bride and groom to visit a monk who has taken a vow of poverty and give him food in return for his blessing.

As in Ceremonies: Greek Orthodox Greek Orthodox culture, the bed has significance and an older couple may sometimes be called on to prepare the bridal bed and decorate it with lucky talismans such as bags of rice, sesame seeds, coins and, in more rural communities, a tomcat. These symbolise fertility and happiness.

A Typical Wedding Ceremony

There is no specific marriage ritual established in the Buddhist religion. Historically, marriage was a secular observance, but modern Buddhists have developed services for those who wish to marry in the eyes of their religion. In the past it was customary that monks were invited by the couple and their families to chant sutras (classic Buddhist literature) after the secular civil or home ceremony, and, through the passing of time, this has developed into the marriage ceremonies used today. These ceremonies are not standard for all Buddhists, as Buddhism embraces a variety of groups with differing traditions.

The wedding ceremony explained below is the service developed by The International Buddhist Institute of Hawaii. Many sects use this version, which includes the bride and groom exchanging vows, the signing of a register, the issue of a marriage certificate and sometimes an exchange of rings. The wedding can take place during a Buddhist meeting, but more recently it has been normal for a separate ceremony to be held.

The service begins with chanting:

Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Samma Sambuddhassa.

Reply: Homage to Him, the Exalted One, the Supremely Awakened One.

Priest: May the wisdom of the Blessed One shine within our hearts, so that the mists of error and the foolish vanity of self may be dispelled. So shall we understand the changing nature of this life and strive to reach that spiritual peace which the Buddha taught. Friends, we are met together today in the presence of this congregation, and

in the sight of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, to witness the vows of x and x. I earnestly ask anyone who knows of any impediment to this marriage to make it known now, or else remain silent.

The priest then addresses the couple and says: Before taking of yourselves these vows, remember that it is the duty of the husband to support and cherish his wife, to be faithful to her, to comfort her in sickness or sorrow, and to assist in bringing up the children. It is the duty of the wife to love and help her husband, to be patient and gentle in her manner, and to be faithful to him always.

The priest asks the woman: Will you take this man to be your lawful husband and remain faithful to him always?

Her reply: I will.

The priest then asks the man: Will you take this woman to be your lawful wife, and remain faithful to her always?

His reply: I will.

Priest: Will you both undertake to sustain one another in sickness or in health, in happiness or in sorrow, and cherish one another at all times?

They reply: We will.

If an exchange of rings is to take place, the following will be spoken:

Priest to each in turn: I give you this ring that you may place it on the finger of this woman/man in token of your marriage to her/him, and may its circle remind you both of those things that are eternal.

The priest follows this by joining the couples hands together by placing a rosary (string of beads) round the wrists of their right hands and says:

Brother and sister, in the midst of worldly illusions with their fleeting glamour, try to preserve in your hearts the truths taught by the Buddha. Be compassionate to all, and set your feet on the Path which leads from illusion and sorrow to Enlightenment and Peace. Since you have both agreed to marry according to Buddhist rite, I pronounce you to be husband and wife.

The offering of lights will follow, and anyone who wishes to offer incense to the couple is invited to do so.

After this the Priest says: May the Blessed One receive you from this day forth as his faithful disciples, who take His teaching as your Guide. May peace be with you, and wisdom and compassion surround you at all times.

Reply: Namō Amida Buddha (three times) or Namō Buddhaya (three times).

The five ways that a husband should minister to his wife are read out to the couple as taken from the Duties of Husband and Wife as described by the Buddha in the Sigalovada Sutta:

1. By honour
2. By respect
3. By faithfulness
4. By handing over authority to her
5. By giving her adornments.

In return for being cared for, a wife is compassionate to her husband:

1. By doing her work well
2. By hospitality to her husband, relations and others
3. By faithfulness
4. By protecting what he earns
5. By skill and indulgence in all her duties.

The marriage ceremony may conclude with chanting by the Community of Monks, followed by meditation.

Other Buddhist wedding ceremonies include the offering of flowers to the Buddha, the lighting of candles. Some services ask that the couple bow to each other in reply to hearing the pledges asked of them, rather than saying I will.

Ceremonies may include the couple chanting:

* The Three Refuges or Tisarana as they face the Buddha:

I take refuge in the Buddha (the ideal of Enlightenment).

I take refuge in the Dharma (the teachings and practices of Buddhism).

I take refuge in the Sangha (the Buddhist community).

* The Five Precepts or Pañca Sila may also be chanted:

I undertake the precept to abstain from killing.

I undertake the precept to abstain from taking that which is not given.

I undertake the precept to abstain from sexual misconduct.

I undertake the precept to abstain from false speech.

I undertake the precept to abstain from intoxicating drink and drugs.

5. Setting Up Your Buddhist Home

http://www.beliefnet.com/story/83/story_8335_1.html

What newlywed Buddhist couples should have.

- * Small home altar
- * Buddha statue (also, Tara, Kwan Yin or other Buddhist deity statuary)
- * Incense burner
- * Offering bowls and small oil lamp (for Tibetan Buddhist altar)
- * Thangkas (religious paintings; again, for Tibetan Buddhist home)
- * Meditation cushions or benches
- * Copies of sacred texts in translation, such as the Dhammapada or sutras
- * Calligraphic scroll (for Zen Buddhist home)
- * Brocade altar cloth (usually for Zen home altar)
- * Small meditation gong with cushion and striker

6a. Our Buddhist Wedding - Japan - Photo Album

<http://community.webshots.com/album/100853095pywsnX>

About iamagoo

<http://community.webshots.com/user/iamagoo>

Greetings from Japan. I am from Canada, but have been living in Japan for 7 years (teaching English). All of these shots were taken with a Fuji Finepix S602 camera. I appreciate any and all comments in my guestbook. Thanks for looking!

Our Buddhist Wedding

<http://community.webshots.com/album/100853095pywsnX/1>

This album is comprised of shots taken at my wedding. Special thanks go to my friend Matt who came to Japan for the occasion (with Bob & Mike) and took these shots. The resolution is rather low, but the excitement is high!

6b. Our Buddhist Wedding - Thailand - Photo Album

<http://langbridge.tripod.com/osweb/bkk1.htm>

My friend Mick (Anthony) married his wife Kannika in a Buddhist ceremony, which started early in the morning;

The bride's family prepared food for the Monks, which they ate before the wedding.

The wedding was then conducted in the house of the Head Monk (pictured furthest from camera); there were 9 monks present at the wedding.

7. It's Easier Than You Think ...by Sylvia Boorstein (Author)

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0062512943/wwwkusalaorg-20/>

From Library Journal - American Buddhist teacher Boorstein has crafted a series of accessible lessons about engaging in the Buddhist way of life. With graceful humor, Boorstein teaches the insights of the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path of Buddhism by drawing on examples from her own pilgrimage toward the mindfulness wrought by Buddhist practice. A fine introduction to Buddhism cast in the language of everyday experience. Highly recommended.

Amazon.com - Reviewer: A reader from MI USA... This is a great book for people who turn to buddhism to help them cope with life. I have found comfort and have often pulled my head out of my "you know where" due to this book more so than I have found in many years of therapy. I suffer from depression at times and while I'm sure there is a physical reason I'm prone to depression, I'm even more sure that my outlook on life contributes to it more than any other single factor. The teachings of Buddha are to me, more a philosophy rather than a religion. Life is DIFFICULT. For EVERYONE. Accept it and learn not to cling to things, people and dreams. A mind free of wants will be a peaceful mind.

If you are interested in learning about buddhism as a means of learning to survive happily in this world, this is the book for you. It is light, easy to understand and makes a lot of sense.

Amazon.com - Reviewer: A reader from Holbrook, Arizona USA... My wife and I both read this and found it very worthwhile. I have read a great deal of "heavier" Buddhist material and almost think the word "Buddhist" in the title is unfortunate because it may drive away some readers who would profit from this book. It is really more "common sense" than "Buddhist," and even a Bible-thumping fundamentalist would enjoy it.

The author's points are very similar to those of another American Buddhist sage, Charlotte Joko Beck (check out her books as well). The beauty of this book is its brevity and simplicity. The author basically takes you through her life experiences in short chapters that flow quickly and make their points without preaching. My wife, who has approximately zero interest in the teachings of Buddha, nevertheless found this to be one of the most enjoyable and practical books she has read in a long time. I can't imagine anyone thinking that the couple of hours it takes to read this was time wasted.

The Urban Dharma Newsletter Archives:

<http://www.urbandharma.org/nlarchives.html>

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The Urban Dharma Newsletter... February 17, 2004

In This Issue: Buddhism in Vietnam

- 1. Theravada Buddhism in Vietnam ...Binh Anson**
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-

1. Theravada Buddhism in Vietnam ...Binh Anson

http://www.saigon.com/%7Eanson/ebud/vn_thera.htm

Buddhism came to Vietnam in the first century CE [1]. By the end of the second century, Vietnam developed a major Buddhist centre in the region, commonly known as the Luy-Lau centre, now in the Bac-Ninh province, north of the present Hanoi city. Luy-Lau was the capital of Giao-Chi, former name of Vietnam, and was a popular place visited by many Indian Buddhist missionary monks on their way to China, following the sea route from the Indian sub-continent by Indian traders. A number of Mahayana sutras and the Agamas were translated into Chinese scripts at that centre, including the sutra of Forty Two Chapters, the Anapanasati, the Vessantara-jataka, the Milinda-panha, etc.

In the next 18 centuries, due to geographical proximity with China and despite being annexed twice by the Chinese, the two countries shared many common features of cultural, philosophical and religious heritage. Vietnamese Buddhism has been greatly influenced by the development of Mahayana Buddhism in China, with the dominant traditions of Ch'an/Zen, Pure Land, and Tantra.

The southern part of the present Vietnam was originally occupied by the Champa (Cham) and the Cambodian (Khmer) people who followed both a syncretic Saiva-Mahayana Buddhism and Theravada Buddhism [2], although Champa probably had a Theravada presence from as early as the 3rd century CE, whilst Cambodia received the Theravada as late as the 12th century. The Vietnamese started to conquer and absorbed the land in the 15th century, and the current shape of the country was finalised in the 18th century. From that time onward, the dominant Viet followed the

Mahayana tradition whilst the ethnic Cambodian practiced the Theravada tradition, and both traditions peacefully co-existed.

In the 1920s and 1930s, there were a number of movements in Vietnam for the revival and modernisation of Buddhist activities. Together with the re-organisation of Mahayana establishments, there developed a growing interest in Theravadin meditation and also in Buddhist materials based on the Pali Canon. These were then available in French. Among the pioneers who brought Theravada Buddhism to the ethnic Viet was a young veterinary doctor named Le Van Giang. He was born in the South, received higher education in Hanoi, and after graduation, was sent to Phnom Penh, Cambodia, to work for the French government [3].

During that time, he developed a growing interest in Buddhism. He started to study and practice the Pure Land and Tantric ways but was not satisfied. By chance, he met the Vice Sangharaja of the Cambodian Sangha and was recommended a book on the Noble Eightfold Path written in French. He was struck by the clear message in the book, and decided to try out the Theravada way. He learnt meditation on the breath (Anapanasati) from a Cambodian monk at the Unalom Temple in Phnom Penh and achieved deep samadhi states. He continued the practice and after a few years, he decided to ordain and took the Dhamma name of Ho-Tong (Vansarakkhita).

In 1940, upon an invitation by a group of lay Buddhists led by Mr Nguyen Van Hieu, a close friend, he went back to Vietnam and helped to establish the first Theravada temple for Vietnamese Buddhists, at Go Dua, Thu Duc (now a district of Saigon). The temple was named Buu-Quang (Ratana Ramsyarama). Later, the Cambodian Sangharaja, Venerable Chuon Nath, together with 30 Cambodian bhikkhus established the Sima boundary at this temple [4]. The temple was destroyed by French troops in 1947, and was rebuilt in 1951.

Here at Buu-Quang temple, together with a group of Vietnamese bhikkhus, who had received training in Cambodia, such as Venerables Thien-Luat, Buu-Chon, Kim-Quang, Gioi-Nghiem, Tinh-Su, Toi-Thang, Giac-Quang, An-Lam, Venerable Ho-Tong started teaching the Buddha Dhamma in Vietnamese language. He also translated many Buddhist materials from the Pali Canon, and Theravada became part of Vietnamese Buddhist activity in the country.

In 1949-1950, Venerable Ho-Tong together with Mr Nguyen Van Hieu and supporters built a new temple in Saigon, named Ky-Vien Tu (Jetavana Vihara). This temple became the centre of Theravada activities in Vietnam, which continued to attract increasing interest among the Vietnamese Buddhists. In 1957, the Vietnamese Theravada Buddhist Sangha Congregation (Giao Hoi Tang Gia Nguyen Thuy Viet Nam) was formally established and recognised by the government, and the Theravada Sangha elected Venerable Ho-Tong as its first President, or Sangharaja.

Ky-Vien Temple

During that time, Dhamma activities were further strengthened by the presence of Venerable Narada from Sri Lanka. Venerable Narada had first come to Vietnam in the

1930s and brought with him Bodhi tree saplings which he planted in many places throughout the country. During his subsequent visits in the 1950s and 1960s, he attracted a large number of Buddhists to the Theravada tradition, one of whom was the popular translator, Mr Pham Kim Khanh who took the Dhamma name of Sunanda. Mr Khanh translated many books of Venerable Narada, including *The Buddha and His Teachings*, *Buddhism in a Nutshell*, *Satipatthana Sutta*, *The Dhammapada*, *A Manual of Abhidhamma*, etc [5]. Mr Khanh, now in his 80s, lives in the USA and is still active in translating Dhamma books of well-known meditation teachers from Thailand, Burma and Sri Lanka.

The Theravada movement spread to other provinces, and soon, a number of Theravada temples for ethnic Viet Buddhists were established in many areas in the South and Central parts of Vietnam. As at 1997, there were 64 Theravada temples throughout the country, of which 19 were located in Saigon and its vicinity [6]. Beside Buu-Quang and Ky-Vien temples, other well known temples are Buu-Long, Giac-Quang, Tam-Bao (Da-Nang), Thien-Lam and Huyen-Khong (Hue), and the large Sakyamuni Buddha Monument (Thich-Ca Phat Dai) in Vung Tau.

In the 1960s and 1970s, a number of Vietnamese bhikkhus were sent overseas for further training, mostly in Thailand and some in Sri Lanka and India. Recently, this programme has been resumed and about 20 bhikkhus and nuns are receiving training in Burma.

Historically, there has been a close relationship between the Cambodian and the Vietnamese bhikkhus. In fact, in 1979, after the Khmer Rouge were driven out of Phnom Penh, a group of Vietnamese bhikkhus led by Venerables Buu-Chon and Gioi-Nghiem came to that city to re-ordain 7 Cambodian monks, and thus re-established the Cambodian Sangha which had been destroyed by the Khmer Rouge when they were in control [7].

Dhamma literature in the Vietnamese language comes from two main sources: the Pali Canon and the Chinese Agamas, together with a large collection of Mahayana texts. Since 1980s, there has been an ongoing programme to publish these materials by scholar monks of both Mahayana and Theravada traditions. So far, 27 volumes of the first 4 Nikayas, translated by Venerable Minh-Chau, and the 4 Agamas, translated by Venerables Tri-Tinh, Thien-Sieu and Thanh-Tu, have been produced. Work is under way to translate and publish the 5th Nikaya. In addition, a complete set of the Abhidhamma, translated by Venerable Tinh-Su, has been printed, together with the *Dhammapada*, the *Milinda-Panha*, the *Visudhi-Magga*, the *Abhidhammatthasangaha* and many other work.

In summary, although Buddhism in Vietnam is predominantly of the Mahayana form, the Theravada tradition is well recognised and is experiencing a growing interest especially in the practice of meditation, in Nikaya-Agama literature and in Abhidhamma studies.

Binh Anson,
Perth, Western Australia

08 June 1999

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2. Vietnamese Buddhism

<http://mcel.pacificu.edu/as/students/vb/>

The classical period of Buddhism in South East Asia was from the 11th to the 15th century. In this period, there were several elements which made it classical. Buddhism, in the classical time period, had homogeneity of form and institutional orthodoxy, as well as helped to formulate kingship.

Buddhism, in this time period, tended to follow the Theravada tradition. Since the 19th century, Buddhism has continued to act as a structure for East Asian societies. Despite the challenges that western science has had on Buddhism, it has provided cultural and ideological support for modern, nationalist movements.

Buddhism has also offered solutions to political, economic, and social change. Vietnam, however, is different from the "norm" of the traditional South East Asian period of Classical Buddhism, since it was strongly impacted by the Chinese. With communist revolutions, Buddhism was displaced to as a fundamental mediator of cultural values.

Historically, Buddhism played a significant role in the definition of the classical South East Asian states. With Buddhism, when a country was dominated by a colonial power, nationalist movements grew out of and identified with a religious context. An example of this is the 1960 Buddhist protests, in which the Buddhist monks immolated themselves in fire. After the removal of Deim and his brother Nhu, the United Buddhist Association, which was under the leadership of Thich Tri Quang and Thich Thien Minh, remained politically active. "Vietnamese are Confucians in peacetime, Buddhists in times of trouble." (Fire in the Lake, 176)

Confucianism is Vietnam's governing religion. It consists of a hierarchy of relationships which governs day to day life. Husband to Wife, Father to son, Elder

brother to younger brother, Emperor to subject, and the relationship amongst friends. Therefore when Buddhism was introduced to Vietnam, it was introduced to a society which was used to a hierarchical governance. The Buddhist missionaries accepted Confucianism as a political system and social structure. According to a scholar of Asian studies, Paul Mus, "Confucianism was a social order defined by culture and history; Buddhism was a faith relevant to all times and to all men, no matter what their circumstances." (Fire in the Lake, 177)

Buddhism was a way to transcend the limitations of society and the self to a higher level. Buddhists were all equal whereas Confucians existed primarily in the five relationships. Buddhism offered the people a Way out of Confucianism's confining restrictions. "In peacetime it offered the Vietnamese an internal life--a soul, a personal identity--outside the conventions of society. In times of tyranny and 'splitting apart,' it indicated a morality that lay beyond loyalty to existing authorities." (Fire in the Lake, 177) Buddhism offered a form of brotherhood, where people become equals, rather than a world ruled by a few. Buddhism offered "means of reconciliation and showed the Way back into Confucian society." (Fire in the Lake, 178)

Along with this integration with Confucianism, Taoism also played a necessary part in the development of Vietnamese Buddhism. The natural tendency of Taoist philosophy towards meditation and contemplation was a compliment to many of the Buddhist techniques. As a result, many Taoist symbols and meditation tools became mainstreamed into Vietnamese Buddhist thought.

Buddhist entered Vietnam in two significant waves. The first was a missionary wave of scholars from India during the early millennia. These were primarily Mahayana scholars who introduced not only the scholarly elite to Buddhist doctrine, but the peasant class as well. The second wave of Buddhist thought occurred about two hundred years after the common era. This was a style of Buddhism filtered first through China, the Theravada school. Both of these schools of Buddhist thought co-existed throughout Vietnam.

The most significant defining features of Buddhist thought in Vietnam is first the integration of Buddhist, Taoist and Confucian traditions. In this respect Vietnam represents almost a unique case. The rituals, beliefs and notions of religion reflect each tradition equally. The second defining feature is the two step development of Mahayana and Theravada schools throughout the country. These two schools not only reflect differences in doctrine and basic theology, but also two different cultural influences: India and China.

India

India is the historical seat of Buddhism as well as home to both the Theravada and Mahayana sects. As the birthplace of the Buddha and the land where he traveled to spread the word of his teachings, India is considered the center of Buddhist studies. Buddhism is one of the most popular religions in India, and influences the culture in a multitude of ways.

Buddhism's roots are closely related to the Jain and Hindu religions in that its ultimate origin was found in the Rig Veda and Brahman tradition. It is possible to see Buddhism as a natural extension of these theologies, building on the foundations of a belief laid a thousand years before.

The Jain and Hindu schools both held the idea that life is a series of painful reoccurrence. A person attempts to learn these painful life lessons in order to reincarnate and come back as a more perfect person. Hindu's maintain that one can tell how far an individual has progressed by their position in the caste system. As a result, the experiences of a person's life are seen as being the result of action taken in previous incarnations. If a person lives in unhappy circumstances, that is taken to mean that they made mistakes or acted incorrectly in a past life. This is also true for those who experience great fortune, their happiness is the result of acts of compassion and good works which they engaged in during their last life. In this way, life is a continuous cycle that is improved or harmed by the actions that one commits. In the Buddhist tradition, the mechanism that regulates these occurrences is Karma.

The Buddhist centers in India were also responsible for the spread of Buddhism throughout Asia. During the reign of King Ashoka, missionaries were sent out to Asia, in order to relay the teachings of the Buddha. As a result, the earliest recorded ventures landed in Vietnam through India, then overland from China.

China

When Buddhism was introduced to China, the Chinese civilization was already ancient and had already developed several traditions. Therefore, once the doctrines were introduced, the Chinese quickly translated them. To them, these doctrines were the word of Buddha. The Chinese divided into different sects, Theravada and Mahayana. The Theravada doctrine was canonized first. The Mahayana school composed their text later with a more liberal interpretation. The Mahayanists said,

the Hinayana [Theravada] was not untrue, but was merely a preparatory doctrine, preached by the Buddha to disciples whose minds were not yet receptive to the ultimate truth. When he [the Buddha] had prepared them with the tentative doctrine, he then revealed to them his final truth. (The Buddhist Tradition, 140)

Buddhist philosophy first began to flourish in the fourth century CE. It was interpreted and judged in Taoist terms. Altogether, ten schools formed, divided into two categories, schools of Being and schools of Non-being. The underlying issue which divided the two schools was whether the school affirmed or denied the idea of "self-nature of the dharmas... and the ego." (The Buddhist Tradition, 141) Most of these schools did not last long. The schools which are the substance of Chinese Buddhism are the T'ien-t'ai, Hua-yen, Meditation, and Pure Land. All of these schools developed distinct Chinese characteristics.

Buddhism began to suffer during the T'ang dynasty, tenth century AD, and continued

to do so until the Confucians revived.

The early Vietnamese governed their country in a similar manner as the classical Chinese dynasties, however, their habits and custom differed. The Chinese empires achieved their length of power through their ability to keep track of their family ties. Many Vietnamese families worshipped their ancestors to only the ninth generation. After several wars, the clans have spilt to many families with unknown ties. As a result, the Chinese and Vietnamese governments have never been the same. "The emperors followed the rituals of state... so that time would not flow through the empire, but the 'natural order' of the universe did not hold throughout the society." (Fire in the Lake, 57)

The village was the primary community, though. The village was informally a family. "The village was always the efficient unit of local government, but in the fifteenth century, when the court abandoned the village mandariate and retired the lowest order of its officials from the villages, it became a quasi-autonomous unit." (Fire in the Lake, 58) This was demonstrated in the Vietnam War since the government failed continually to satisfy the peasants. In a state of confusion, Vietnam was fighting a civil war between the Confucian government and the Buddhist peasants. The Chinese government ruled with a compassion for all of China, since they kept such close ties amongst their families. In China, a whole community could be linked together on a line of heritage, whereas the Vietnamese could not.

Pure Land Buddhism

Pure Land is a theology designed to help believers attain Sukhavati (or the Buddha land) in only one lifetime. Sukhavati is Located Billions of Buddha lands away in the western direction from the world. The Buddha who presides over Sukhavati is named Amitabha, meaning immeasurable light. Amitabha created this theology in order to help all mortal beings to Buddha hood.

Utilizing meditation and mantras, the faithful will reach a stage of non-retrogression and make the constant cycle of birth and re-birth unnecessary. Upon reaching Sukhavati the newly enlightened soul can choose to return to the world realm and take up the duties of Bodhisattva.

The term Pure Land was first used by T'an Lua around 540 CE. Developed in China, there is not any evidence of Pure Land doctrine in India before 700 CE.

An important element of Pure Land is the existence of multiple Buddhas. There are indications that this theory was first discussed after the Sakyamuni Buddha's death in 486 CE. This notion is important to the development of Pure Land theology because if Sakyamuni Buddha is not the only Buddha, then others can attain Buddha hood as well.

If a believer recites the name of the Buddha, namely the Amitabha incarnation, they will reach enlightenment. Apparently this form of worship became well liked among the secular population because of its comparative ease to visualization and other

meditation techniques. Power is gained by the recitation of the Buddha's name and that will balance against the bad karma from other lives. The sincerity of the chant is an important element of the Pure Land doctrine, mere pronunciation of the name alone will not hasten a follower to enlightenment.

Even with these practices, the Pure Land school also emphasizes the importance of the Bodhisattva. No individual can attain Buddha hood without the instruction of an enlightened teacher. The teacher describes the Pure Land as well as the many aspects of the Buddha. The student is expected to receive this instruction and practice singular devotion and contemplation.

Cao Dai

Cao Dai is an attempt to create a perfect synthesis of world religions. It is a combination of Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, Confucianism, Hinduism, Geniism, and Taoism. Established in the Southern regions of Vietnam in the early 1920's, the religion was officially codified in 1926. The functioning center of Cao Daism is located in the Tay Ninh province. Cao Dai literally means high tower or palace, a metaphor for the spender of spiritual growth.

The central philosophy of Cao Daism pertains to the duty that the faithful perform for themselves, their family, society and the world at large. Much like Confucianism, this element of the Philosophy pertains to how the individual functions within the context of the community.

Other elements of Cao Dai philosophy are more clearly influenced by Buddhism and Hinduism. The Cao Dai faithful are expected to renounce materialism in order to more fully cultivate their spiritual growth. Similar to the Buddhist concept of Samsara, the material world is seen as a distraction to the greater goal of enlightenment. Also similar to Buddhist belief is the use of the device of Karma.

Cao Daism also reflects some of the more ancient belief systems of worship in Vietnam. Believers are expected to worship God, superior spirits, and ancestors. This spiritualism is reminiscent of the Animism philosophy that had been a part of Vietnam during its earliest times.

Cao Dai also utilizes spiritual mediums and channelers. These individuals are an essential part of Cao Dai worship. They offer guidance from superior spirits, departed family members, and other wise individuals. Most of the important cannon of the Cao Dai was gleaned from these spiritual seances. Respected saints of the Cao Dai include: Joan of Arc, Rene Descartes, William Shakespeare, Victor Hugo, Louis Pasteur, and Lenin.

The clergy is made up of men and women. The entrances of the temple are divided by gender, men on the right, women on the left. The priests practice spiritual purification including meditation, prayer and vegetarianism. They believe that consuming meat not only pollutes the body, but hinders other life forms during their quest for enlightenment.

Confucianism

Put simply, Confucianism is the quest for order. Most of the ideology dictates that the primary focus of Confucian doctrine is to balance the relationships of individual family, and society with the Five Agents of the Universe. More a method of management than an actual religion, it became a mode by which rulers and civic leaders could run the bureaucracy of the state.

For the most part, Vietnam was considered a Confucian state until the mid nineteenth century.

The Confucian state is often stratified into classes, and only the most scholarly elite need conform to Confucian ideals. Leaders were decided by examination over sacred texts. As a result, the peasant or farmer had little to say over the workings of their government. Confucianism is not an exclusionary doctrine, it works well with other moral codes and can synthesize easily. In Vietnam, Confucianism was used primarily for the running of the state, and Taoism and Buddhism for the morality of its citizens. Most of the issues that the Confucian scholars concerned themselves with, during their tenure in power was the proper regulation of the state from the top down and the division of communal property among the citizenry. The Confucian system of philosophy lost prominence in more recent history, but is still common among government bureaucrats and leaders.

Taoism

The Tao is the natural order of things. It is a force that flows through every living and sentient object, as well as through the entire universe. When the Tao is in balance it is possible to find perfect happiness. The primary religious figures in Taoism are Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu, two scholars who dedicated their lives to balancing their inner spirits. Lao Tzu claimed that the Tao defines translation, that it simply is.

Taoism encourages working with natural forces, not against them. Taoism teaches the path of wu-wei - the technique of mastering circumstances, not trying to control them. Teachers of the Tao often use examples of the bending reed or grass blowing in the wind to illustrate this important point. A Taoist would encourage an individual to work with their obstacles and problems instead of fighting adversity at every turn.

The most common graphic representation of Taoist theology is the circular Yin Yang figure. It represents the balance of opposites in the universe. When they are equally present, all is calm. When one is outweighed by the other, there is confusion and disarray. The Yin and Yang are a model that the faithful follow, an aid that allows each person to contemplate the state of their lives.

Taoists believe that nature and the earth is constantly in flux. Simply, the only constant in the world is change. When individuals learn that growth and movement are natural and necessary, they can become balanced. Reality is perpetual change.

Another essential element of the Tao is the term P'u or the uncarved block. A person who exemplifies this characteristic is one who is simple and looks at the world without preconceptions. P'u is the student, always held in wonder by the world and its constant change.

More a listening technique than an actual theology, Taoism asks that each person focuses on the world around them in order to understand the inner harmonies of the universe. It is a religious system heavily focused on meditation and contemplation. The Tao surrounds everyone and one must listen to find enlightenment.

Animism

The oldest peasant religion in Vietnam was known as Animism or ancestor worship. This system of belief was most common among the peasant or laboring class. It is not a basic theology per se, but more a system of reverence for deceased family members as well as all living things. This respect was manifested in many dramatic rituals, as well as alters and other constructed buildings. It was not uncommon for Vietnamese peasants to dedicate large amounts of time to this form of worship.

It was often believed that the dead would aid in harvest and fertility rites. If there was a famine or flood, it could be interpreted as someone's relative making a commotion in the heavens. Because of the connection between these beliefs and agricultural yield, the family are always incredibly devout. Due to the difficult nature of rice farming, one poor crop could cause a family to starve. The Vietnamese worshipped their ancestors as the source of their lives, their fortunes, and their civilizations (Fire in the Lake, 11)

Many of these rituals were seen as primarily superstitious by nature, and as a result were rebuffed by the intellectuals who preferred Confucianism. The classes were divided in this manner, Animist peasants and Confucian leadership.

Animism blended well with Buddhism and added a new dimension onto the belief system. When Buddhism was added to the previous practices of ancestor worship it became an inseparable element of peasant practices. So in effect, the peasants practiced both, not forsaking the old or rejecting the new.

Catholicism

The introduction of Christianity, specifically the Catholic faith, to Vietnam occurred at the same time as the French colonization during the 1850's. During the French reign it came to symbolize both western thought and power.

In order for a Vietnamese national to gain employment, or a government position, it was necessary to demonstrate that loyalty was first to France, then Vietnam. Therefore, converting to Catholicism was one of the first important steps to that end. It was a strong sign of loyalty for a Vietnamese citizen to abandon their religious

heritage for that of the Catholic tradition.

Because the Catholic faith was more attached to prestige than religious fervor, the demographic breakdown of converts tended to be the upper middle class. Always a minority, Catholics still wielded a significant amount of power in government. During the reign of Diem, being a Catholic was one of the only ways a person could be determined loyal. All non-Catholics were seen as potential traders and communist sympathizers.

Today the Catholics are still an affluent, though less powerful, minority. Many of the Vietnamese who left South Vietnam at the end of the American involvement were Catholic. They have had an easier time integrating into western culture and are disproportionately represented in the American Vietnamese community.

Zen

Possibly the most essential of all Buddhist practices, Zen focuses on the ultimate simplicity of the Buddha mind. Allen Watts writes that "Thus is Zen is to be translated at all, the nearest equivalent is 'Enlightenment', but even so Zen is not only Enlightenment; but the path to its attainment. (Watts, 24) Zen is a religion without a doctrine, a theology without theologians.

Zen stresses the prime importance of the enlightenment experience and the uselessness of ritual. This process stresses the spiritual analysis of doctrine and theology, not the analytical or expressly theological. Zen Buddhism, which is most commonly practiced in Japan, is the basic practice of meditation in order to reach peace within one's self. Zen is not a belief system ridden by dogma and philosophical intricacies but a belief etched by practice.

Zen is more often a monastic practice than one that has a strong ethic of public activism. It is the difference between debate and action, between diatribes about philosophy and turning within one's self and finding the answers that already lie there. Allan Watts writes in *The Spirit of Zen* that "Enlightenment, however, is living and cannot be fixed down into any form of words; therefore the object of the Zen school of Buddhism is to go beyond words and ideas in order that the original insight of the Buddha may be brought back to life." (p22) Watts continues that "It never makes the mistake of confusing teachings with wisdom, for essentially, Zen is that "something" which makes the difference between a Buddha and an ordinary man; it is Enlightenment as distinct from doctrine" (p22)

In Vietnam, Thich Nhat Hanh has written many books as guides for Western Buddhists attempting to practice Zen philosophy. His emphasis of ordinary practice as meditation encapsulates an essential ideal of Zen practice, action instead of dogma. Nhat Hanh maintains that "The most precious practice in Buddhism is meditation, and it is important to practice meditation in a joyful mood. We have to smile a lot in order to be able to meditate, the Bell of Mindfulness helps us do this(106). One of the poems he includes in his book *Being Peace* discusses the sound of breathing.

Listen, listen
this wonderful sound
brings me back to my true self

The Kingdom of Champa

While probably the strongest single cultural influence in Vietnam was China , the Cham civilization offers a startling contrast to many of Vietnam's Mandarin conventions. The Cham derive their cultural influences almost exclusively from India . Instead of the Confucianism and Taoism of other peoples in Vietnam, the Cham were almost exclusively Hindu. This divergence in religion had substantial impacts in both social organization and world view.

The Cham existed from the second to the sixteenth century throughout the central highlands of Vietnam. The strongholds of Cham influence and power were centered in the Dong Nai Basin and Deo Ngang province. It is generally agreed that the kingdom was separated into five regions: Northern area, Amravati area, Vijaya Area, Kauthara Area, and Panduranga area. Even though this is a considerable portion of Vietnam, the severity of weather and limited area for agriculture limited the size of the population to about two and a half million at its height. The Cham were separated into two clans: Narikel Vamsa (Coconut Clan) and Kramuk Vamsa (Betelnut Clan). The Narikel Vamsa primarily ruled the Northern regions of the kingdom, the Kramuk Vamsa centered in the South.

Much like the Brahman cultures that flourish in India , the Cham culture utilized a caste system. The strict rigor of this system benefited the privileged Brahmans and Kshatriyas, and served to relegate untouchables to the periphery of organized life. Marriages tended to occur within the same caste with little deviation. Bodies were also cremated in a funeral pyre, called a Ghat, instead of being buried in a family grave. A striking difference from some of the older animist beliefs that already existed in Vietnam. Unlike India , however, the position of women seems to be more central to the government power structure. Chinese historians note that women held considerable power in both matters of family and marriage. At the same time the ritual of Sati was also practiced. The Cham people also adopted the Hindu practice of not eating beef -- a practice still observed in some areas of Vietnam today.

The Cham worshipped the Trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh. In addition to this powerful trio, the Cham also paid reverence to their consorts and offspring. Shiva is the central figure of worship for most of the civilization of Champa. He is worshipped as both a figure of a man and his symbolic form, the linga. The Linga is often found in the art and architecture of the Cham people.

While the majority of the Cham people were Hindu, there is a significant minority of the population that were also Mahayana Buddhist and Islamic.

*much of the information presented in this section was obtained from the research conducted by J.C. Sharma in his text "Temples of Champa in Vietnam".

3. BuddhaSasana a Buddhist Page by Binh Anson

<http://www.saigon.com/%7Eanson/index.htm>

This is a large Buddhist web site in both English and Vietnamese from Australia, with many articles and eBooks on Basic Buddhism, Meditation, Suttas, and Buddhist Essays.

4. VIETNAM SPECIFIC TEXTS

<http://mcel.pacificu.edu/as/students/vb/Annotat.HTM>

Bechert, J., and D. Gombrich. **The World of Buddhism**. London: Thames & Hudson, 1991.

* This text examines all of The Buddhist doctrine. It dedicates a large chapter to the spread of Buddhism to Vietnam. There is also a lengthy discussion of Taoism, Confucianism and local religions in Vietnam. There is an emphasis on the Chinese influenced theology, and when it began to flourish in Vietnam and Korea during the tenth century.

Cadiere, Leopold. **Religious Beliefs and Practices of the Vietnamese**. Trans. Mabbett, Ian W. Victoria: Centre of South East Asian Studies, 1989.

* This text is a very good asset to a student who has a background in Buddhism and would like to learn specifics concerning Vietnamese Buddhism. It goes into depths of issues concerning: myths of the Buddhist introduction to Vietnam, description of a pagoda, and an in depth look at the way Buddhism is practiced in Vietnam. This text also addresses the importance of spirituality in Vietnam and worshipping one's ancestors.

Fitzgerald, Frances. **Fire in the Lake: The Vietnamese and the Americans in Vietnam**. New York: Vintage books, 1972.

* This is an awesome text. Fitzgerald's understanding of the people of Vietnam and the religion which governs the nation is excellent. Fitzgerald describes the religion of Vietnam as "a blend of Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism sunken into a background of animism." (pg. 18) With her understanding, Fitzgerald addresses the Vietnam War very thoroughly and covers Buddhist issues such as: protest movements, self-immolation, nationalism, peace movement of 1970, and several other issues concerning Vietnamese Buddhists. For anyone interested in learning about the Vietnam war, this is an excellent source.

Harvey, Peter. **An Introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, History and Practices**. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

* This is a great text in that it goes into great depths of Buddhism in many different areas. It also has an in depth list of resources and suggestions for further readings according to area and topics within Buddhism. Specifically addressing Vietnamese Buddhism, it touches on the spread of Buddhism throughout Asia, includes a map with the approximate population of Buddhists throughout Asia, and briefly covers the Buddhist protests of the Vietnam War on page 203.

Herring, George C., **America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam 1950-1975**. Second Ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1986.

* This is a good text for anyone who wants to learn about the Vietnam war. It touches on Buddhism in a matter-of-fact way as it addresses the Buddhist protests, but it never seems to address it as a religion. It is fairly dry reading, but the author does show a very thorough understanding of the war and the effects that it had on the United States. It lacks an understanding of how the war devastated Vietnam. This text is superior to other texts due to its list of references to other related sources.

Nhat Hanh, Thich. **The Miracle of Mindfulness: A Manual of Meditation**. Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1975.

* This is a great text for those who want to find peace through meditation. I would not recommend it for instructing students, but as personal reading, it is well worth the time, and written by one of Vietnam's experts.

Nhat Hanh, Thich. **Present Moment Wonderful Moment: Mindfulness Verses for Daily Living**. California, Parallax Press, 1990.

* This is a great text for those who have a thorough understanding of Buddhism or who practice Buddhism. Basically it is a book of verses which takes our daily routine and puts it into an appreciative perspective. The text also reveals the serenity and peacefulness of meditation and the importance of feeling happy and peaceful.

Nhat Hanh, Thich. **Walking Meditation**. Trans. Hoang, Jenny, Anh Huong, Nguyen. Connecticut: Eastern Press, 1985.

* This is another great text for those who want to learn how to walk and live a peaceful life. Nhat Hanh seems to share his experiences with the reader as a way of encouragement. It is a great resource for those who are practicing Buddhism or who have a thorough background in its beliefs.

Rutledge, Paul. **The Role of Religion in Ethnic Self Identity**. New York: University Press of America, 1985.

* Rutledge examines the Vietnamese community in the United States. He discusses both the traditional roots of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism in Vietnam as well as how it has changed and developed in the United States. It is an excellent account of the influence of religion on the world view of Vietnamese nationals.

Schechter, Jerrold. **The New Face of the Buddha**. New York: Coward-McCann, 1967.

* This book is an examination of Buddhism and Communism. It examines China, Thailand, Burma, and Vietnam in depth. One of the chapters is dedicated to the dissident leader Thich Tri Quang and his influence during the Vietnam conflict. There is also a well written account of the many conflicts that have arisen between the communist government and Buddhist leaders.

Tan Phat, Antoine N., **Mahayana Buddhism in Vietnam and its Background in India and China**. Diss. University of California, 1981. Ann Arbor: UMI, 1981. 82-00915

* A historical text examining the history of Buddhism in Vietnam. This dissertation is extremely specific and detailed. It is not a text designed to act as an introduction to Buddhism, but it is exceptionally well done. It also takes time to explore the origins of Buddhism in India and China.

Zacharas, Donald. **In Pursuit of Peace -- Speeches of the Sixties**. Austin: Random House, 1970.

* These are papers and speeches given during the Vietnam era. Some analyze the American perspective of Buddhist dissidence and desire for political freedom. The rhetoric is a study in itself. This text is not a discussion or explanation of the Buddhist doctrine, but it does demonstrate what American political leaders thought about Vietnam and Buddhism.

The Urban Dharma Newsletter Archives:

<http://www.urbandharma.org/nlarchives.html>

The Los Angeles Buddhist-Catholic Dialogue:

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The Urban Dharma Newsletter... February 24, 2004

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1. What is Emotion? ...by Lama Gendyn Rinpoche

<http://www.diamondway-buddhism.org/teachings/english/bt2emotions.htm>

It is important to be clear about what we mean by the word emotion.

We use the word daily to describe something that can be readily identified, a definite feeling in the mind that is both a reaction and a driving force. In Buddhism however, emotion is much more than that. It is a mental state that starts the instant the mind functions in a dualistic mode, long before the normal person is conscious of it.

Emotion is the habitual clinging that makes us automatically categorize our experiences according to whether our ego finds them attractive (desire), unattractive (anger), or neutral (ignorance). The more clinging there is, the stronger our reactions will be, until we reach a point where they finally break into our conscious mind and manifest as the obvious feelings we usually call emotions.

The above reactions are termed the three poisons, to which are added those of considering our own experience as predominant (pride) and judging our own position in relation to the object perceived (jealousy), to give the five poisons. The word poison is used because these reactions poison our mind and prevent the appearance of its intrinsic wisdom.

2. Mature Emotions ...Ajahn Vajiro is the senior incumbent of Bodhinyanarama Monastery in New Zealand.

<http://www.fsnewsletter.net/31/31.htm>

In the teachings of the Buddha there are mentioned the Brahma Viharas. These are usually translated as the divine, or heavenly abidings. This is from a literal translation:

"Brahma - God, and Vihara - Dwelling. They can be brought down from the heavens, to earth, by considering that as emotions they motivate and encourage the transcending of the limitations of basic human existence."

This 'transcending of limitation' is a definition of growing. For the seed of this idea I am grateful to a friend who pointed out that they can be considered the mature emotions. What follows are a few further reflections; not intended as a comprehensive analysis of the Brahma Viharas which may be found in a text-book on Buddhism.

Emotions, it seems clear to me, are motivating. I tend to think of them as those things that cause, or fuel, or drive us to, motion. They provide the fuel that drives the movement; the action, towards or away from some object or situation. We move and act through body, speech or mind and that movement is a response to the stimulation of the senses. It is in the responding that we can first notice the arising of emotions. Before the movement there is stimulation of the senses; this is the contact. A feeling follows, then perception; it is this which is mixed with, or linked to, the mature emotions. There is then in Pali no direct translation for the English word emotion. An emotion is a mixture of perception and sankhara - habit pattern; both of which may be consciously trained. Mature emotions are those emotions that are the response of, and fuel the movement of, the mature person.

Mature emotions are . . . those emotions that allow other people to mature.

Sometimes the goal of Buddhism can be described in terms that lead me to think that what is being sought is a cold emotionless passionless heart - no response, no feeling, no desires, no motivation. This conflicts with our image of the Buddha as someone with a strong motivation, a strong compassion to lead a life that would be of greatest benefit to all beings.

Mature emotions are also those emotions that allow other people to mature. So when a person acts or responds with mature emotion, other humans are helped in a way that allows them to transcend, to grow beyond their limitations. This appears abstract; and yet when we consider how parents can best allow their children to mature, it is through the expression of mature emotion.

The four 'maturing emotions', as explained here, may be realised, in practice, as being linked; only divided for the sake of convenient analysis and explanation. They are like different aspects of the same place, different ways of describing heaven. We describe the different aspects to help us to find a way of noticing them so we may express them, play with them, in our lives.

The metta - kindness - engendered in us encourages us to accept ourselves and others, and so to understand ourselves and others. Understanding implies wisdom. And this wisdom is that which allows us to find the way, to grow beyond, or let go of, that which limits and binds the heart. The kindness expressed to others allows them to accept themselves and others.

This is an emotional, gut or heart acceptance that allows the acts of body, speech and mind that are a response to that which is perceived as 'other' to be kind; not motivated by not-liking, not motivated by aversion or fear. The effect is unlimited. Metta is radiant and attractive, warming to those that are cold, cooling to those that are hot.

Karuna - Compassion - works. It works for us in allowing us to perceive the pain, anguish, affliction, agony, torment and distress of others clearly, through allowing it into our experience also. It is then something that has moved further out of the realm of the ignored or the unconscious into the realm of the included, the accepted, the conscious. Compassion is spacious, allowing the way things are to exist, to change, and to end. Particularly it allows pain to end. This means that it must be patient, not in any hurry to force pain to end or to try officiously to get rid of pain. It is the active side of wisdom and is the supreme purifier. The Buddha's compassion allowed him to realise that there is still something that can be done by a fully enlightened being. It was compassion that motivated him to teach "for the benefit of those with little dust in their eyes".

Mercy is a way to think of compassion, a word not often used and yet evocative of the quality of heart that is willing to bear the burdens of others; willing to always help to the best of its ability, listening out for the cries for help and acting. The 'cries' may not be loud. It can be as ordinary as helping to clean-up after an event or set up before the event. Whenever we notice that some assistance would be appreciated and are willing to act to give it, we practise karuna.

Mudita is usually translated as sympathetic joy. This has meant little to me. The suggestions in the words of sympathy, pathetic and joy suggest an omelette that has a strange flavour. 'Sympathy' and 'joy' seem to mix easily; it is the addition of 'pathetic' by alliteration that jars the palate. Appreciate, joy, enjoy, and bring joy to, are words that evoke from me the qualities of heart that are the opposite of envy and jealousy; the opposite of those qualities that wish to bring someone down to a lower level. is also a suffering that we can avoid; but it takes practice. It takes wise reflection, it takes effort and understanding.

Mudita implies full consciousness. We need to discriminate, to be conscious, to open to the possibility of appreciation. Particularly encouraged is consciousness of the

good, the virtue and the wisdom of others. What mudita allows is the arising of an aspiration to do or to be likewise. Luang Por Sumedho has said that when we can appreciate the beauty of a rose in full bloom, we can be moved by mudita. The suggestion is to practise at all levels. Sometimes when looking at a rose we can be caught by so-called 'realism' and just see that the flower will fade; we can be a bit like Scrooge with "bah humbug", a sour response to any suggestion that beauty can be appreciated without falling into desire to possess or hold on to. The balance is provided when upekkha is present.

Upekkha: again first the usual translation - equanimity. I prefer serenity, with the implied suggestion of accepting limitation and rising above it. The phrase, "be serene in the oneness of things" has always struck me as a beautiful suggestion to my heart when there is frustration with the pace of life; the limitations of the universe; or the limitations of myself or others. There has to be a conscious acceptance of the limited way things are, to allow the heart to train to transcend that limitation.

On a mundane level, if I wish to train myself to touch type I have first to accept that right now there is not the ability to touch type; and only then can the effort be honestly made to learn to train the fingers and the eyes to work together in an automatic way. If I am unwilling to accept the fact that right now there is not the ability and yet I wish to touch type then I can pretend, but the only person I will be really fooling is myself. We do this on a grand scale when we would like to be mature and fulfilled people and we are unable to accept the limitations we find ourselves with. We can then pretend to be mature when we are in fact not really clear about our emotions or intentions and allow ourselves to be motivated by immature and damaging emotions. In the case of touch typing there is no real harm done; in the case of the person pretending to themselves and others that they are grown up, it is more dangerous both for themselves and others.

The four Brahma Viharas work together. Ajahn Buddhadasa talked in terms of upekkha overseeing the other three. In skilful and beautiful situations mudita is the mature motivation of the heart. If it is possible to alleviate a situation where there is pain or distress compassion maybe invoked. An unpleasant or ugly situation invokes metta. Acceptance, an aspect of metta, finds its echo in the acceptance of limitation implied in upekkha, which is why metta is such an important beginning.

For most of us and even in animals it is metta, as found in the acceptance of the mother of the child, that is the first emotion that allows us, and others, to grow and begin to mature. If there is no metta expressed to an offspring, particularly a human child, it will either die quickly or grow to be a very warped and immature individual. It is the primary motivation that allows the very young to mature. The young express it in the way they reach out and learn about the place in which they find themselves. Young children can pick up things without discrimination and, to the horror of the adults, place them in the mouth. There is in this action of the child a very crude level of acceptance and lack of discrimination operating as the child begins to reach out beyond itself.

Compassion allows us to recognise the changes and developments that are a part of the natural changes from baby, to child, to young person, to adult, to old person -

and the pain of separation from the known, which is part of this process - and bear the changes sensitively.

Mudita allows us to enjoy life. The beauty and the wonder of this strange experience of being a sensitive separate life somehow mysteriously connected with it all. And when all the fear of the unknown has been allowed to fall away, the wonder of the unknowable can be appreciated and enjoyed.

What moves us through life, through the uncertainties and changes is what can bring some freedom for people. Our intentions move us through life, our intentions are the area of our greatest freedom. To use and train this freedom wisely is the challenge.

3. Buddhism and the Blues ...By Hara Estroff Marano -- Publication Date: Oct 30, 2003

<http://www.psychologytoday.com/htdocs/prod/PTOArticle/pto-20031030-000001.asp>

Summary: Meditation techniques can help cure depression. Buddhist psychology offers more than a method of investigation. Its core techniques of meditation and awareness may have much to offer ordinary Westerners, whose material comforts have not wiped out rampant emotional distress.

To most people Buddhism is an ancient Asian religion, although a very special one. It has no god, it has no central creed or dogma and its primary goal is the expansion of consciousness, or awareness.

But to the Dalai Lama, it's a highly refined tradition, perfected over the course of 2,500 years, of analyzing and investigating the inner world of the mind in order to transform mental states and promote happiness. "Whether you are a believer or not in the faith," the Dalai Lama recently told a conference of Buddhists and scientists at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, you can use its time-honored techniques to voluntarily control your emotional state.

Yes, the Dalai Lama is the spiritual leader of over 300 million Buddhists worldwide. Yes, he is the head of the Tibetan government in exile. But in the spirit of Buddhism the Dalai Lama has an inquiring mind and wishes to expand human knowledge to improve lives. At its core, Buddhism is a system of inquiry into the nature of what is.

He believes that psychology and neuroscience have gone about as far as they can go in understanding the mind and brain by measuring external reality. Now that inner reality--the nature of consciousness--is the pressing subject du jour, the sciences need to borrow from the knowledge base that Buddhism has long cultivated.

A comprehensive science of the mind requires a science of consciousness. Buddhism offers what MIT geneticist Eric Lander, Ph.D., called a "highly refined technology" of

introspective practices that provide systematic access to subjective experience. Yet Buddhist psychology offers more than a method of investigation. Its core techniques of meditation and awareness may have much to offer ordinary Westerners, whose material comforts have not wiped out rampant emotional distress.

Over the past 15 years, starting with his own personal interest, the Dalai Lama has set up discussions with Western scientists in an effort to further knowledge about the emotions. The recent meeting, held at MIT, was actually the eleventh in a series of annual conversations sponsored by the Colorado-based Mind & Life Institute. But it was the first one that was open to other participants.

The Buddhist view of how the mind works is somewhat different from the traditional Western view. Western psychology pretty much holds to the belief that things like attention and emotion are fixed and immutable. Buddhism sees the components of the mind more as skills that can be trained. This view has increasing support from modern neuroscience, which is almost daily providing new evidence of the brain's capacity for change and growth.

Buddhism uses intelligence to control the emotions. Through meditative practices, awareness can be trained and focused on the contents of the mind to observe ongoing experience. Such techniques are of growing interest to Western psychologists, who increasingly see depression as a disorder of emotional mismanagement. In this view, attention is hijacked by negative events and then sets off a kind of chain reaction of negative feeling, thinking and behavior that has its own rapidity and inevitability.

Techniques of awareness permit the cultivation of self-control. They allow people to break the negative emotional chain reaction and head off the hopelessness and despair it leads to. By focusing attention, it is possible to monitor your environment, recognize a negative stimulus and act on it the instant it registers on awareness. While attention as traditional psychologists know it can be an exhausting mental activity, as Buddhists practice it it actually becomes a relaxing and effortless enterprise.

One way of meditation is to use breathing techniques in which you focus on the breathing and let any negative stimulus just go by--instead of bringing it into your working memory, where you are likely to sit and ruminate about it and thus amplify its negativity. It's a way of unlearning the self-defeating ways you somehow acquired of responding catastrophically to negative experiences.

Evidence increasingly suggests that meditation techniques are highly effective at helping people recover from a bout of depression and especially useful in preventing recurrences. Medication may be needed during the depths of an acute episode to jump-start brain systems, but at best "antidepressants are a halfway house," says Alan Wallace, Ph.D., head of the Santa Barbara Institute for the Study of Consciousness. But meditation retrains the mind to allow ongoing control over the content of thoughts and feelings.

Basic Meditation Exercise

1. Sit with an alert and relaxed body posture so that you feel relatively comfortable without moving. (You can sit either in a straight-back chair with your feet flat on the floor or on a thick, firm cushion three to six inches off the floor.)
2. Keep your back, neck and head vertically aligned, relax your shoulders and find a comfortable place for your hands (usually on your knees).
3. Bring your attention to your breathing. Observe the breath as it flows in and out. Give full attention to the feeling of the breath as it comes in and goes out. Whenever you find that your attention has moved elsewhere, just note it and let go and gently escort your attention back to the breath, back to the rising and falling of your own belly.
4. When you can maintain some continuity of attention on the breath, try expanding the field of your awareness "around" your belly to include a sense of your body as a whole.
5. Maintain this awareness of the body sitting and breathing, and, when the mind wanders, bring it back to sitting and breathing.

4. from 'Living Dharma' ...by Venerable Lama Yeshe Losal

<http://www.samyeling.org/Buddhism/Teachings/3Emotions.htm>

When you have identified your major problem, whatever the poison, whatever the problem is that is bothering you terribly, you should then sit there, relax, and call up this emotion in your meditation. Whether it is anger, jealousy, pride, envy, whatever, summon it here. Then introduce yourself to this being which has somehow caused so much chaos in your life for so long, and investigate this feeling of yours. How big is it? Is it oblong? Round? Black? White? What colour, what shape is it?

Look at the essence of this emotion that makes you suffer so much. You always think that the emotion is genuinely happening, but if that were the case, it should have a shape, a colour, a size. If you are bothered by something, there must be something there for you to be bothered by! How can anything bother you when you find nothing? If it were a solid entity, really existing in some part of your body, you could just remove it with an operation and thus solve all your problems. However, emotions have no such characteristics.

This is the time to do a really proper investigation through meditation. Hopefully you will come to the very strong conclusion that there isn't anything to worry about, because there is nothing to be found. You then discover that you are responsible for creating emotions that do not really exist, and that you yourself transform them into solid realities.

That's why our emotional states are so difficult to handle. Somehow we are able to build this solid image out of an emotion, and it bothers us all the time. It takes away our peace and destroys whatever we're doing. If I were to tell you there is nothing to bother you, you would certainly reply, Oh, this Lama Yeshe is saying so, but my feelings really bother me. This is why I'm asking you to do this investigation here, now, in your own meditation. There is no other way. When you yourself come to the conclusion that there is actually nothing there to bother you, then you should be relieved. It should comfort you to know that somehow you have been enslaved by feelings that do not really exist.

5. from 'Taming the Tiger' ...by Dr Akong Tulku Rinpoche

<http://www.samyeling.org/Buddhism/Teachings/3Emotions.htm>

The mind is the root of all our experience, both of ourselves and of others. If we perceive the world in an unclear way, confusion and suffering will surely arise. It is like someone with defective vision seeing the world as being upside down, or a fearful person finding everything frightening. We may be largely unaware of our ignorance and wrong views, yet at present the mind can be compared to a wild tiger, rampaging through our daily lives. Motivated by desire, hatred and bewilderment this untamed mind blindly pursues what it wants and lashes out at all that stands in its way, with little or no understanding of the way things really are.

The wildness we have to deal with is not simply that of anger and rage; it is much more fundamental than that. The tendency to be driven by ignorance, hatred and delusion enslaves us, allowing confusion and negative emotions to predominate. Thus the mind becomes wild and uncontrollable and our freedom is effectively destroyed. Normally we are so blind that we are unaware of how wild our minds really are. When things go wrong we tend to blame other people and circumstances, rather than look inside ourselves for the causes of the suffering. But if we are ever to find true peace or happiness it is that wildness within which must be faced and dealt with. Only then can we learn to use our energy in a more positive and balanced way, so that we stop causing harm to ourselves and to others.

6. Buddhism and Human Feelings ...Rev. Gregory Gibbs

http://www.vbtemple.org/travelers/gibs_feel.htm

A Distorted View

There is a wide-spread impression amongst non-Buddhists that the Buddhist religion disregards human feeling. The notion of Buddhism as an aloof teaching that prizes detachment developed in Europe in the nineteenth century. This distorted view of

Buddhism was largely propagated by British and German dilettantes who had studied only the Theravadin approach as they found it in Thailand and Sri Lanka. This concept of Buddhism as preferring a dry and unfeeling way of living is built upon a misunderstanding of the objective of the Buddhist religion and a one-sided study of how monks and nuns address their emotional life. Let me look at these two areas briefly.

The Objective of Buddhist Living

The common (distorted) view of Buddhism which I am trying to correct presumes that the purpose of Buddhists is a detached life. But, Buddhist philosophy actually views detachment as an extreme as destructive as attachment. The historical Buddha, Sakyamuni, tried to guide us on a middle path between attachment to pleasures and possessions on the one hand and an ascetic detachment on the other. Both of these extremes are unworthy according to Sakyamuni Buddha.

The middle path is not a middle of the road existence. Rather it is living in the tension of being drawn toward various extremes. Walking such a middle path is not an end in itself. Buddhists do not cherish a life of moderation as such. Rather it is living moderately and navigating between the extremes which leads us toward our objective. The objective of Buddhist living is freedom and realization of the Truth.

Freedom is often conceived in a merely negative fashion -- freedom from... But, freedom is not conceived in merely negative terms by Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism. For us freedom means limitless potential. The Larger Vehicle of Buddhist teaching explains freedom as not being bound to some fixed forms of living, thinking and feeling, but ALSO not being bound to formlessness. True freedom is not detachment from forms of feeling, thinking and acting. Rather it is the limitless potential to flexibly take on new forms of being as situations and the needs they generate change.

Realization of the Truth is interdependent with true freedom. Jesus is reported to have said that, "the Truth will make you free." Buddhists would agree. However, we might tend to emphasize that FREEDOM WILL ALLOW YOU TO SEE THE TRUTH. Furthermore, realizing the truth will make us happy. Happy in an elegant and subtle way that goes beyond the happiness which we understand in contrast to pain, humiliation and sadness.

There is no way to adequately explain what such a realization of the truth is like in the language of the unenlightened. Yet, there is no other language and, as those who battle the AIDS virus remind us, SILENCE IS DEATH. Therefore, let me break the 'noble' silence of scholastic Buddhism and say that the realization of the Truth is discerning and non-substantial, luminous oneness of all persons, places and events. This realization is fulfilling in a way that is similar to and yet transcendent of the pleasures and rewards which come to us in our day to day affairs.

How Buddhists Address Their Emotions

The oldest Buddhist advice regarding emotions is that we might do well to deliberately cultivate positive emotions. The classic example of this is Metta meditation, the cultivation of kindly intentions towards all living beings. This procedure probably goes back to the historical Buddha, 2,500 years ago.

Once Buddhism had established an elite of educated monks and nuns the concern with suppressing disturbing emotions became a matter of some urgency. In particular, monks found it hard to meditate when they were still moved by sexual desires. The classic way of suppressing sexual desire was to go to a graveyard at night, dig up a corpse and watch it decay. The corpse would usually be buried again before day break and then dug up again the next night. After watching the progressive deterioration of a woman's corpse over a period of a few weeks a monk would typically find his sexual desires to have become dormant. This practice was only engaged in by monks.

With the Chan tradition in China (Zen) an approach of simply observing the feelings as they are developed. Without trying to suppress unwanted feelings or trying to cultivate positive emotions, simple attentiveness to feelings was and is practiced. The nearly universal experience which comes from this approach is that the feelings become gentler, softer, more flexible. This is considered an intermediate or advanced practice of Zen. Generally, it is taught only following a long period of concentrating daily on some particular object such as one's breathing. An almost identical sort of sitting and allowing thoughts and feelings to unfold, as they will, is practiced in Tibet and referred to as Dzog-chen meditation. The Tibetans consider this a very advanced practice and it is only taught to a person who has spent many years doing rigorous visualizations.

In the Jodo and Jodo Shinshu schools of Pure Land Buddhism the emotions are similarly allowed to develop naturally. Generally, unlike Zen and Dzog-chen, no special effort is applied to being mindful of the emotions. In Jodo Shinshu the natural, relaxed but devout holding of the Buddha's name in one's mind and heart is allowed to work its magic off-stage. Without any special effort to become gentler or more caring, but with a grateful appreciation for the Buddha's gift of his name, the surrounding emotional environment, internal and perhaps interpersonal as well, tends to become more wholesome.

7. Vista Buddhist Temple

<http://www.vbtemple.org/index.html>

As North San Diego County, CA's center for the continued transmission of the Buddhist teachings, referred to as the Buddha-Dharma, we are dedicated to the religious and educational aspirations of Jodo Shinshu Buddhist families. All events, activities, and religious gatherings are open to aspiring Buddhists, and membership in the Temple is encouraged for continued attendance. We are one of 60 Jodo Shinshu Temples in the Buddhist Churches of America, each independently organized, but joined in the pursuit of the Buddha Dharma.

History

The commitment and dedication of pioneer Jodo Shinshu families in the North County made possible the beautiful Temple we currently enjoy. Beginning in 1929, about 25 pioneer families gathered for religious, language schooling, and cultural and social activities at each other's homes. Seeing a need for expanded facilities, the current Cedar street property was purchased in 1937 by the Japanese-American community. Following World War II, the Cedar Road property served as temporary lodging for returning interned Japanese-American families. In 1978 the present Japanese Cultural Center was built with a portion serving as a place for Buddha-Dharma gatherings. Rev. Arthur Takemoto (1980-1994) became the first full-time resident minister. Rev. John Iwohara served as resident minister from 1996 to 1998. The current Temple was constructed and dedicated in 1987. We are a California, religious corporation and an IRS section 501 (c) (3) organization.

Facilities

The air conditioned main hall is capable of seating 408 people, and an engawa (covered porch-walkway) allows for an overflow of 100 more for religious gatherings. A small library of English and Japanese material is located at the rear of the main hall. A social hall including an audio system and stage, accommodating 250 is located downstairs, adjacent to a large kitchen. Four classrooms are located to the south side of the downstairs hall.

Jodo Shinshu

The Buddha-Dharma as taught by Sakyamuni Buddha (560-480BC) is said to encompass 84,000 different paths. Of these, the Vista Temple emphasizes the teachings as clarified by Shinran Shonin (1173-1262), known as Jodo Shinshu. Jodo Shinshu is part of the Mahayana tradition with aspirations for birth in Amida Buddha's Land of Utmost Bliss through practice of the nembutsu or calling the name of the Buddha of Infinite Wisdom and Compassion. Although an understanding of the Buddha-Dharma can be fostered through written, audio, and video material, an awareness of the living expression of nembutsu comes from listening to the Dharma at the Temple.

Primary Activities

Weekly Buddha-Dharma gatherings are scheduled for Sundays at 9:30 AM, unless precluded because of major memorials or Temple events. Seven major Jodo Shinshu commemorative gatherings are scheduled throughout the year (consult the Temple Calendar for dates and times). Two major fund-raising / religious / cultural events are planned, one in the spring (the Hanamatsuri Bazaar, usually in April) and one in the summer (the O-Bon Bazaar, usually in July). A monthly newsletter announces activities and events. Buddha-Dharma articles are also published in the newsletter.

8. Healing Emotions ...by Daniel Goleman

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/1570622124/wwwkusalaorg-20/>

Amazon.com - Become a fly on the wall at the Mind and Body Conference III, and eavesdrop on the world's leading Western physicians, psychologists, and meditation teachers as they discuss the mind-body connection with the Dalai Lama. East meets West in this important melding of contemporary research on the interrelationship between emotional states and physical well-being with the ancient Buddhist thinking on this obvious connection.

Amazon.com - Reviewer: Chinese Taoist from Detroit, Michigan United States ...In the summer of 1991 specialists in the fields of psychology, medicine, neuroscience, philosophy, immunology, meditation, and Buddhism gathered with the Dalai Lama to conduct the Third Mind Life Conference. The purpose of the Mind Life Conferences is to discuss bridges and interface with what can broadly be called the sciences of mind and life -biology, cognitive science, neuroscience, and psychology, as well as philosophy of mind. This third conference's purpose was to increase mutual understanding and facilitate the emergence of new insight to the relationship between health and emotional experience. This book, Healing Emotions, is the record of this meeting.

Daniel Goleman, scientific coordinator of the conference, cleanly edits and presents the content of the conference. He introduces each presentation with his summary of the content. Goleman then gives the actual presentation made by each of the speakers, and continues with the discussions that followed. The discussions cover ethics, virtues, emotions' impact on health, stress, behavioral medicine, self-esteem, medicine and compassion. In the presentations the speakers share their theories, tests, results, and case histories.

Amazon.com - Reviewer: A reader ...Dan Goleman has done it again. A highly readable book rooted in scientific research - just like his two books on Emotional Intelligence. Compared to other edited Mind and Life Conference books, this one describes the conversation in an extremely lively manner with explanations on Buddhist and scientific concepts presented as footnotes, and as a result making comprehension possible even with some abstract concepts unfamiliar to novice like me.

The enthusiasm shown by Dr. Goleman in the ability of mind over body can be found throughout the book (especially in the chapter presented by him where H.H. the Dalai Lama commented "You've just given me a lot of ammunition). This is probably due to his own knowledge and keen interest in the Eastern psychology and meditation.

The Urban Dharma Newsletter Archives:

<http://www.urbandharma.org/nlarchives.html>

The Los Angeles Buddhist-Catholic Dialogue:

<http://www.urbandharma.org/bcdialog/index.html>

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The Urban Dharma Newsletter... March 1, 2004

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 - 7. Book/CD/Movie: A Dictionary/Encyclopedia of Buddhism** - 999 Pages - (4.7 MB) - Free Download
-

0. Humor...

By all means marry.
If you get a good wife or husband, you'll be happy.
If you get a bad one, you'll become a philosopher.
- - **Socrates**

1. Loving Eyes (*tib. Chenrezig*)

<http://www.diamondway-buddhism.org/terms/chenrez.htm>

Loving Eyes is the white, four armed Buddha aspect, symbolizing the united love and compassion of all Buddhas. His mantra **OM MANI PEME HUNG** is used worldwide in most Buddhist traditions. The six syllables purify the six realms of existence:

- * **OM** purifies pride - the god's realm,
- * **MA** purifies jealousy - the realm of demi-gods,
- * **NI** purifies desire / attachment - the human realm,
- * **PE** purifies stupidity - the animal realm,
- * **ME** transforms greed - the realm of hungry ghosts,

* **HUNG** transforms hate and anger - the hell realm.

2. Buddhism: Love ...Contributor: Sakoun Sok, NY

<http://www.wattkhmer.org/buddhistlove.html>

A rich man said to the Buddha, "I see you are the Awakened One and I would like to open my mind to you and ask your advice. My life is full of work, and having made a great deal of money, I am surrounded by cares. I employ many people who depend on me to be successful. However, I enjoy my work and like working hard. But having heard your followers talk of the bliss of a hermit's life and seeing you as one who gave up a kingdom in order to become a homeless wanderer and find the truth, I wonder if I should do the same. I long to do what is right and to be a blessing to my people. Should I give up everything to find the truth?"

The Buddha replied: "The bliss of a truth-seeking life is attainable for anyone who follows the path of unselfishness. If you cling to your wealth, it is better to throw it away than let it poison your heart. But if you don't cling to it but use it wisely, then you will be a blessing to people. It's not wealth and power that enslave men but the clinging to wealth and power.

"My teaching does not require anyone to become homeless or resign the world unless he wants to, but it does require everyone to free himself from the illusion that he is a permanent self and to act with integrity while giving up his craving for pleasure.

"And whatever people do, whether in the world or as a recluse, let them put their whole heart into it. Let them be committed and energetic, and if they have to struggle, let them do it without envy or hatred. Let them live not a life of self but a life of truth, and in that way bliss will enter their hearts."

[Majjhima Nikaya]

3. Love in Buddhism

<http://buddhism.kalachakranet.org/immeasurables.html>

The definition of love in Buddhism is: wanting others to be happy.

This love is unconditional and it requires a lot of courage and acceptance (including self-acceptance).

The "near enemy" of love, or a quality which appears similar, but is more an opposite

is: conditional love (selfish love).

The opposite is wanting others to be unhappy: anger, hatred.

A result which one needs to avoid is: attachment.

This definition means that 'love' in Buddhism refers to something quite different from the ordinary term of love which is usually about attachment, more or less successful relationships and sex; all of which are rarely without self-interest. Instead, in Buddhism it refers to de-tachment and the unselfish interest in others' welfare.

'Even offering three hundred bowls of food three times a day does not match the spiritual merit gained in one moment of love.' - *Nagarjuna*

"If there is love, there is hope that one may have real families, real brotherhood, real equanimity, real peace. If the love within your mind is lost and you see other beings as enemies, then no matter how much knowledge or education or material comfort you have, only suffering and confusion will ensue" - *His Holiness the Dalai Lama from 'The little book of Buddhism'*

4. Love as the basis of Spiritual Growth ...Ven. Prof. Dhammavihari Thera

<http://www.metta.lk/english/wwyng2.htm>

Let us see how Buddhism presents and develops its concept of love or respect and concern for all that lives. The Buddha preached and maintained that all life in the universe is a product of natural evolution, each little thing therein in the diverse eco-systems possessing its own right to exist. This thinking blossomed out in Buddhism's greatest contribution to mankind, namely the concept of *mettā* [Skt. *maitrā*] or universal loving kindness. One loves every other thing in the universe in a direct relationship of one to another, without a mediator or creator. We are, after all, in the world we live in, a part of a complete network. In spite of our differences, we are integrated into a whole and each one of us loves to be loved. Therefore harmony and healthy relationships of one to another are considered a must which necessarily leads to a smooth running order in the universe.

Striking a very high note as it were, in his personal admonition to his own son Rahula in the Mahārāhulovāda Sutta [M.1.424], the Buddha tells that the cultivation and practice of *mettā* or universal loving kindness, dispels the unwholesome mental frame called enmity or hostility. It eliminates the possibility of 'coming into conflict with' those around us. This conflict and confrontation is referred to as *vyāpāda* and is considered as leading thereafter to violence or *vihimsā*. [*Mettaū hi te Rāhula bhāvanaū bhāvayato yo vyāpādo so pahāyissati. loc.cit.*].

In loving via the medium of *mettā*, one expects nothing back as a return or reward.

Love in *mettà* knows of no bleeding hearts, with or without arrows piercing through them. This concept of love also brings along with it the cognate virtue of equality [or *egalite*]. In love, all have to become equal, and where honest equality prevails love must know no barriers, as known or unknown, friendly or otherwise. Not even as I and another. The amount of love one is required to give to others cannot in any way be less than what one wishes and expects others to bestow upon oneself.

Phrases like ' He who loves himself harms not another ' [*Tasmà na hiüse paraü attakàmo* as at S.1.75] or ' Taking oneself as the norm [i.e. that one likes to be loved and treated with respect] let one cause no harm or injury to others ' [*Attànaü upamaü katvà na haneyya na ghàtaye* as at Dhp. v. 129] clearly indicate the Buddhist self-stand [*attàpanàyika*] judgement in the practice of love towards others. This applies to all grades of life [*sabba-pàñña-bhàta-hita-anukampā*], literally all living things. To us, this practice of love does not appear as an injunction that one must love oneself first, and then and thereafter, extend love to others. The direction given is that one must love others to the same extent that one wishes to be loved by others. That is the meaning of *attànaü upamaü katvà* = taking oneself as the model of loving. It certainly does not mean giving priority to oneself.

The Buddhist concept of love has the capacity to extend not only from human to animal but also from animal to the world of plants as well. There are schools of scientists in the world today who maintain that the world of plants also yearn for love and care. They claim that plants react very specifically to human emotions like love and cruelty in their own way. Besides, the plants as an integral part of our ecosystem have to be treated with utmost respect and recognition. For in the guarantee of their survival lies our own survival. There seems to be very little doubt about that. We shall discuss elsewhere, from the Buddhist point of view, about their being animate or inanimate, sentient or insentient. At any rate, it appears to be the greatest day in the life of a Buddhist saint when he sees no difference between his own body of flesh and blood and the trees and the grass that grow in the wild around him. So wishes Thera Tàlapuñña in verse No. 1101 of the Theragàthà.

When will that ever be, when I can compare
All infinite components of which I am made,
Those within me, with those without
Like trees and grass and creepers that trail ?

Seeing them all equal , well and true !

When will such vision , mine ever be ?

[Translated by the author]

***Kadà nu kaññhe ca tiöe latà ca khandhe ime ' haü amite ca dhamme
Ajjhattikàn ' eva ca bàhiràni samaü tuleyyaü tadidaü kadà me.*** Thag. v.1101

In Buddhism, this practice of universal loving kindness or *mettā* is called ' the Godly way of living ' or *brahma-vihāra*. It knows no revenge. It is one of four gradually upgraded qualities of love. Collectively they are also called 'sates of unbounded or magnanimous living' : *appamāna-vihāra* or *appama??a*. The other three are compassion or *karuṇā* , appreciative [not sympathetic] joy or *muditā* and equanimity or *upekkhā* . We wish to stress here adequately the word living [*vihāra*]. These aspects of love cannot remain as mere thoughts in one's head or as mere wishes on one's lips. They must necessarily get translated into a philosophy of living. It must indeed be lived. If wishes were horses, then beggars would be kings. By virtue of their being life-toners, they are literally soul-elevating. They enrich our lives as we live that way. Hence they are called *Brahma-vihāra* , i.e. Godly or Heavenly Modes of Living.

At the same time, universal loving kindness [or universal acceptance of friendship with everything that lives] practiced in this manner contributes to the much needed Buddhist virtue of ego-destruction or ridding oneself of the menacing notion of I and mine [*ahaükāra- mamiükāra- mñānusaya*]. This absence of ego is the basic character of the goal of Nirvana. The over-inflation of the ego or self-hood is said to stand in the way of true happiness in this life as well as in the way of final release out of the painful round of births and deaths of *saūsāra*. It warps and distorts good human relationships. It takes the lubricants off our interpersonal relationships.

Because we know we love ourselves and we know love plays such a great role in our lives, let us give this freely to others. Let none in the world we live in suffer for want of love. And let none suffer because we do not truly practice love towards all that live, like ourselves. Let us not forget our callous disrespect for the lives of others and the pain we thereby bring upon them.

5. How would Buddha love? ...Lama Surya Das

http://www.beliefnet.com/story/121/story_12129_1.html

"If one's thoughts towards spirituality

were of the same intensity as those towards love,

one would become a Buddha

in this very body, in this very life."

--from the Love Poems of the Sixth Dalai Lama

Valentine's Day is one of my favorite American holidays. The fact that this heart-centered if over-commercialized day falls around the same time as Tibetan New Year reminds me to make new year's resolutions relating to those I love and renew my

commitment to cultivating goodness of heart. These resolutions usually involve opening my heart and mind; listening better; learning to forgive and to love even those I don't like; and coming to accept and bless the world, rather than fighting with it or trying to escape from it. As Zen Master Dogen says: "To study the Buddha Way is to be intimate with all things."

Some say we are here in this world to learn and to evolve in consciousness. Certainly primary among life's lessons is how to love and to love well, and to BE love, as well to give and receive it. I believe love is central to happiness, growth and fulfillment.

How would Buddha love? By seeing every single being, human and otherwise, as fundamentally like himself, and thus able to treat them and love them in the way he would be treated. We call this infinitely benevolent, selfless love, Bodhicitta or the Awakened Heart, the very spirit of enlightenment.

One can find this taught beautifully in the "Loving-kindness Sutra"; in Shantideva's classic "The Way of the Bodhisattva"; in Atisha's "Mind Training and Attitude Transformation"; and in Togmed's "Thirty Seven Practices of Bodhisattvas"... As well as in the Old Testament.

Each relationship and every single encounter can be a vehicle for meaningful spiritual connection, through the transformative magic of Bodhicitta. Buddha taught that this Bodhicitta or spiritual love has four active arms, known as the Four Boundless Heartitudes, and four expressive faces known as the Four Forms of Compassion in action. This is how we love, Buddha-style: impartial to all, free from excessive attachment or false hope and expectation; accepting, tolerant, and forgiving. Buddhist nonattachment doesn't imply complacency or indifference, or not having committed relationships or being passionately engaged with society, but rather has to do with our effort to defy change and resist the fact of impermanence and our mortality. By holding on to that which in any case is forever slipping through our fingers, we just get rope burn.

Buddhist love is based on recognizing our fundamental interconnectedness and knowing that all beings are like ourselves in wanting and needing happiness, safety, fulfillment, and not wanting suffering and misery. The Dalai Lama says, "If you want to be wisely selfish, care for others." All the happiness and virtue in this world comes from selflessness and generosity, all the sorrow from egotism, selfishness, and greed.

The immaculate image of Buddhist love is the four-armed Avalokitesvara, known as Chenrayzig in Tibet and Kuan Yin in China. Each of his/her four arms represent one of the Four Boundless Attitudes, and each one of her four radiant faces or aspects - peaceful, magnetizing, powerful, and fierce-express one of the four styles or modes of active compassion.

We might, for example, think of Buddhist spirituality as peace-loving, calm, virtuous and nonviolent; but in the case of a child or a pet running into the street, the active sides of compassion's calm heart spontaneously blaze forth, even as the loving

center remains unchanged. Thus, the selfless Bodhisattva could possibly use force for the greater good, to protect, or to prevent harm and so forth, and need not be passive in the face of danger or when there is need for skillful, appropriate action.

The first arm of Buddhist love is maitri or lovingkindness, a boundless feeling of friendliness and wishing well for others. Maitri, or metta in the Pali language, implies friendliness: befriending and accepting yourself, your body and mind, and the world.

The second is karuna, or compassion, empathy, being moved by feeling what others feel. The third arm is upeksha, equanimity, recognizing the equality of all that lives. This recognition leads to the wisdom of detachment but not indifference or complacency, which are its near enemies.

The fourth arm is mudita, spiritual joy and satisfaction. This includes rejoicing in the virtue and success of others, -- the antidote to envy and jealousy.

The essence of Buddhist relationship is to cultivate the cling-free relationship, enriched with caring and equanimity. It is helpful in intimate relationships to communicate honestly, stay present, tell the truth of your experience using I-statements rather than accusations and judgments, and honor the other enough to show up with an open heart and mind and really listen.

Passion becomes compassion when we bring it into the path, when we recognize every moment in life as a possibility of awakening. Human love and sexual consummation can be like the tip of the iceberg of divine love, an ecstatic intimation of eternity, a portal to infinite depths of the groundlessness and boundarylessness that transports us beyond our limited, egoic selves. People often ask me how to find their Soul Mate, or even if I believe in such a concept. I think that rather than focusing on past lives or on finding the perfect mate in this world, we would generally do better to work on improving and developing ourselves. Make yourself the "perfect" mate, without being too perfectionistic about it, and you will be a good mate with almost anyone. When your heart is pure, your life and the entire world is pure.

We all feel the desire to possess and be possessed, to love and be loved, to connect and be embraced and to belong. However, I think that the most important thing in being together is the tenderness of a good heart. If our relationships aren't nurturing the growth and development of goodness of heart, openness, generosity, authenticity and intimate connection, they are not serving us or furthering a better world.

To truly love people I have learned that I need to let them be, and to love and accept and appreciate them as they are (free of my projections and illusions) and not as how I would like them to be. This is equally true for loving and accepting oneself.

Bhante Henepola Gunaratana writes, in his "Eight Mindful Steps to Happiness: "Whatever attitudes we habitually use toward ourselves, we will use on others, and whatever attitudes we habitually use toward others, we will use on ourselves. The

situation is comparable to our serving food to ourselves and to other people from the same bowl. Everyone ends up eating the same thing--we must examine carefully what we are dishing out."

I notice that children let go of anger and would rather be happy than right, unlike so many of us adults. Like them, my dog reminds me that love is a verb, not a noun. Staying present in this very moment, through mindful awareness and paying attention to what is-- rather than dwelling on the past or the future, or on who I think I am and who I imagine others are-- helps free me from excess baggage, anxiety and neurosis - and opens me to love.

6. California Vipassana Center

<http://www.mahavana.dhamma.org/>

P.O. Box 1167; North Fork, CA 93643

Phone: 559.877.4386 Fax: 559.877.4387

Email: info@mahavana.dhamma.org

The California Vipassana Center, in North Fork, CA, is dedicated to the practice of Vipassana meditation as taught by S. N. Goenka. This technique gradually eradicates all inner suffering.

The Center is in the Sierra foothills south of Yosemite. It lies four hours from San Francisco and five from Los Angeles, with bus, rail, and air connections an hour away in Fresno.

Stands of oak, pine, cedar, and manzanita occupy the bulk of the 109-acre site, and are complemented by a tranquil pond and a broad meadow. Wildlife abounds.

A newly constructed meditation hall allows expanded courses of 100 students or more; other recent additions include a teachers' residence and accommodations for meditators working long-term at the center. Plans are moving forward for a complex of individual meditation cells.

An Interview with S. N. Goenka on the Technique of Vipassana Meditation

This interview first appeared in the Winter 2000 issue of Tricycle:

S. N. Goenka has been teaching Vipassana meditation for thirty-one years and is most widely known, perhaps, for his famous introductory ten-day intensive courses, which are held free of charge in centers all around the world, supported by student donations. Born in Mandalay, Burma in 1924, he was trained by the renowned

Vipassana teacher Sayagyi U Ba Khin (1899-1971). After fourteen years of training, he retired from his life as a successful businessman to devote himself to teaching meditation. Today he oversees an organization of more than eighty meditation centers worldwide and has had remarkable success in bringing meditation into prisons, first in India, and then in numerous other countries. The organization estimates that as many as 10,000 prisoners, as well as many members of the police and military, have attended the ten-day courses.

S. N. Goenka came to New York this fall for the Millennium World Peace Summit at the United Nations. He was interviewed there by **Helen Tworkov**.

Photos by **Chris Dinerman**

Tworkov: According to some people, Vipassana is a particular meditation practice of the Theravada School; for others, it is a lineage of its own. How do you use the term?

S.N. Goenka: This is a lineage, but it is a lineage that has nothing to do with any sect. To me, Buddha never established a sect. When I met my teacher, Sayagyi U Ba Khin, he simply asked me a few questions. He asked me if, as a Hindu leader, I had any objection towards sila, that is, morality. How can there be any objection? But how can you practice sila unless you have control of the mind? He said, I will teach you to practice sila with controlled mind. I will teach you samadhi, concentration. Any objection? What can be objected to in samadhi? Then he said, that alone will not help—that will purify your mind at the surface level. Deep inside there are complexes, there are habit patterns, which are not broken by samadhi. I will teach you prajna, wisdom, insight, which will take you to the depth of the mind. I will teach you to go to the depth of the mind, the source where the impurities start and they get multiplied and they get stored so that you can clear them out. So when my teacher told me: I will teach you only these three—sila, samadhi and prajna—and nothing else, I was affected. I said, let me try.

How is sila generated by watching the mind?

When I began to learn Vipassana meditation, I became convinced that Buddha was a not a founder of religion, he was a super-scientist. A spiritual super-scientist. When he teaches morality, the point is, of course, there that we are human beings, living in human society, and we should not do anything which would harm the society. It's quite true. But then—and it's as a scientist he's talking here—he says that when you harm anybody, when you perform any unwholesome action, you are the first victim. You first harm yourself and then you harm others. As soon as a defilement arises in the mind, your nature is such that you feel miserable. That is what vipassana teaches me.

So if you can see that mental defilement is causing anxiety and pain for yourself, that is the beginning of sila and of compassion?

If you can change that to compassion, then another reality becomes so clear. If instead of generating anger or hatred or passion or fear or ego, I generate love, compassion, goodwill, then nature starts rewarding me. I feel so peaceful, so much harmony within me. It is such that when I defile my mind I get punishment then and there, and when I purify my mind I get a reward then and there.

What happens during a 10-day Vipassana course?

The whole process is one of total realization, the process of self-realization, truth pertaining to oneself, by oneself, within oneself. It is not an intellectual game. It is not an emotional or devotional game: "Oh, Buddha said such and such . . . so wonderful . . . I must accept." It is pure science. I must understand what's happening within me, what's the truth within me. We start with breath. It looks like a physical concept, the breath moving in and moving out. It is true. But on the deeper level the breath is strongly connected to mind, to mental impurities. While we're meditating, and we're observing the breath, the mind starts wandering—some memory of the past, some thoughts of the future—immediately what we notice is that the breath has lost its normality: it might be slightly hard, slightly fast. And as soon as that impurity is gone away it is normal again. That means the breath is strongly connected to the mind, and not only mind but mental impurities. So we are here to experiment, to explore what is happening within us. At a deeper level, one finds that mind is affecting the body at the sensation level.

This causes another big discovery . . . that you are not reacting to an outside object. Say I hear a sound and I find that it is some kind of praise for me; or I find someone abusing me, I get angry. You are reacting to the words at the apparent level, yes, true. You are reacting. But Buddha says you are actually reacting to the sensations, body sensations. That when you feel body sensation and you are ignorant, then you keep on defiling your mind by craving or by aversion, by greed or by hatred or anger. Because you don't know what's happening.

When you hear praise or abuse, is the response filtered through the psychological mind to the bodily sensations, or is it simultaneous?

It is one after the other, but so quick that you can't separate them. So quick! At some point automatically you can start realizing, "Look what's happening! I have generated anger." And the Vipassana meditator will immediately say, "Oh, a lot of hate! There is a lot of hate in the body, palpitation is increased . . . Oh, miserable. I feel miserable."

If you are not working with the body sensations, then you are working only at the intellectual level. You might say, "Anger is not good," or "Lust is not good," or "Fear is not—." All of this is intellectual, moral teachings heard in childhood. Wonderful. They help. But when you practice, you understand why they're not good. Not only do I harm others by generating these defilements of anger or passion or fear or evil, I harm myself also, simultaneously.

Vipassana is observing the truth. With the breath I am observing the truth at the surface level, at the crust level. This takes me to the subtler, subtler, subtler levels. Within three days the mind becomes so sharp, because you are observing the truth. It's not imagination. Not philosophy or thinking. Truth, breath, truth as breath, deep or shallow. The mind becomes so sharp that in the area around the nostrils, you start feeling some biochemical reaction that means some physical sensation. This is always there throughout the body, but the mind was so gross it was feeling only very gross sensations like pain or such. But otherwise there are so many sensations which the mind is not capable to feel.

7. A Dictionary/Encyclopedia of Buddhism - 999 Pages - (4.7 MB) - Free Download

<http://www.urbandharma.org/udharma5/ebooks.html>

The Seeker's Glossary of Buddhism: A Dictionary/Encyclopedia of Buddhism - Sutra Translation Committee of USA/Canada

This is a revised and expanded edition of 'The Seeker's Glossary of Buddhism.' The text is a compendium of excerpts and quotations from some 350 works by monks, nuns, professors, scholars and other laypersons from nine different countries, in their own words or in translation.

How to use the Glossary: This book can be used in threeways: to find the definition of unfamiliar terms; to gain a broader understanding of specific Buddhist concepts; and also as an introduction to Buddhism. In the last instance, we suggest that readers begin with the entry on *Parables*, then move on to *Practice, Obstacles to Cultivation* and *Ten Non-Seeking Practices*. Other entries of a more contemporary interest can be read with benefit by all. These include: *Birth Control, Organ Transplants, Vegetarianism, Universe, Immortality*.

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The Urban Dharma Newsletter... March 9, 2004

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0. Humor...

The beginning of wisdom is to call things by their right names.

Chinese proverb

Never express yourself more clearly than you are able to think.

Niels Bohr (1885-1962)

Making the simple complicated is commonplace; making the complicated simple, awesomely simple, that's creativity.

Charles Mingus

1. Anger - a strong emotion; a feeling that is oriented toward some real or supposed grievance

2. Transforming Anger ...Lama Surya Das

http://www.beliefnet.com/story/51/story_5112_1.html

Even the Dalai Lama gets angry. The trick is what you do with it.

Q: What did the Buddha teach about anger, specifically righteous anger? Is any anger acceptable in Buddhism?

A: The Dalai Lama recently answered the question, "Is there a positive form of anger?" by saying that righteous anger is a "defilement" or "afflictive emotion"--a Buddhist term translated from the Sanskrit word *klesha*--that must be eliminated if one seeks to achieve nirvana. He added that although anger might have some positive effects in terms of survival or moral outrage, he did not accept anger of any kind as a virtuous emotion nor aggression as constructive behavior.

Buddhism in general teaches that anger is a destructive emotion and that there is no good example of it. The Buddha taught that three basic kleshas are at the root of samsara (bondage, illusion) and the vicious cycle of rebirth. These are greed, hatred, and delusion--also translatable as attachment, anger, and ignorance. They bring us confusion and misery rather than peace, happiness, and fulfillment. It is in our own self-interest to purify and transform them.

In the tantric teachings of Vajrayana (Tibetan Buddhism), it is said that all the kleshas or afflictive emotions have their own sacred power, their own particular intelligence, wisdom, and logic. The late Tibetan teacher Chogyam Tryungpa Rinpoche often taught that five kleshas (in the Tibetan tradition, they are greed, hatred, delusion, pride, and jealousy) are in essence five wisdoms. The wisdom side of anger, for example, is discriminating awareness.

How can this be? Anger makes us sharp and quick to criticize, but anger also helps us see what's wrong. Our feelings and emotions are actually serving like intelligence agents, bringing in news from the field of our experience. We should not dismiss, ignore, or repress them.

In Tibetan tantric iconography, moreover, not all the Buddhas and meditational deities are pacific. Some are surrounded by flames and wear fierce masks symbolizing the shadow side of our psyches. Yet it is always taught that the wrathful buddhas and "dharma protectors" have peaceful Buddha at their hearts. Perhaps this is connected to the modern, Western notion that righteous anger can help drive compassionate action to redress injustices in the world.

Sadly, in our increasingly uncivil, fast-paced, and competitive society, there are plenty of contributing causes of anger. Violence in the media, permissiveness about expressing oneself, accelerating change, and lack of an ethos of personal responsibility are coupled with a growing sense of entitlement and dearth of family and community connection.

But the Buddha said that no one can *make* us angry if the seed of anger is not in our hearts. The truth is, we *all* have some anger in us. Even the Dalai Lama says he gets angry as does the Vietnamese Zen master and peace activist Thich Nhat Hanh. The difference is that these two sages know what to do with their anger. Intense angry feelings don't automatically become unhealthy or destructive or drive negative

actions.

The Dalai Lama and Thich Nhat Hanh, I believe, have learned to constructively channel the energy that can turn into anger. Through opening the heart to that energy rather than repressing and suppressing it they have learned how to recognize its essential emptiness and transitory nature, and then transform and release it, or direct it creatively.

"The ghosts of the past which follow us into the present also belong to the present moment," says Thich Nhat Hanh. "To observe them deeply, recognize their nature and transform them, is to transform the past."

Ultimately, I believe that anger is just an emotion. We needn't be afraid of it or judge it too harshly. Emotions occur quickly; moods linger longer. These temporary states of mind are conditioned, and therefore can be reconditioned. Through self-discipline and practice, negativity can be transformed into positivity and freedom and self-mastery achieved.

A clue to anger is that a lot of it stems from fear, and it manifests in the primitive "fight or flight" response. I have noticed that when I am feeling angry, asking myself, "Where and how do I hurt? What am I afraid of?" helps clarify things and mitigate my tempestuous reaction. After cooling down, I ask myself, "What would Buddha do; What would Love do in this situation?" This helps me soothe my passions, be more creative and proactive instead of reactive. In that state, I can transcend blame, resentment, and bitterness.

As Thich Nhat Hanh has written, "Our attitude is to take care of anger. We don't suppress or hate it, or run away from it. We just breathe gently and cradle our anger in our arms with the utmost tenderness."

This "embracing" of our anger is an important part of the practice of lovingkindness: learning to accept and love even what we don't like. The Dalai Lama has said: "My religion is kindness." The cultivation of lovingkindness is an inner attitude that embraces all in a way that allows no separation between self, events, and others, and honors the Buddha-nature or core of goodness at the heart of one and all.

Lovingkindness is the root of nonviolence, the antidote to anger and aggression, and the root of mindfulness practice, in that it requires the same non-judging, non-grasping calmness and clarity that is at the heart of Buddhist meditation practice.

When anger surges up in you, try cultivating patience, lovingkindness, and forbearance. When hatred rears its head, cultivate forgiveness and equanimity, try to empathize with the other and see things through their eyes for a moment. If you are moved towards aggression, try to breathe, relax, and quiet the agitated mind and strive for restraint and moderation, remembering that others are just like you. They want and need happiness; they are trying to avoid pain, harm, and suffering, too.

The following is a very simple strategy to apply in the moment that anger arises:

1. First, "I know that I'm angry--furious, livid, etc."
2. Breathe in deeply, and while breathing out say, "I send compassion towards my anger."

Practice this mantra, and observe how it magically interrupts the habitual pattern of unskillful, thoughtless reactivity. This practice can provide--on the spot--a moment of mindfulness and sanity. It helps us take better care of ourselves and heads off negative behaviors we know we don't want to perpetuate.

3. Anger Management --Buddhist Style ...Jeffrey Po

<http://www.4ui.com/eart/178eart1.htm>

Like other human emotions of love, patience, hatred, jealousy, anxiety and so on, anger is a normal emotional experience also. It is described as an intense feeling of irritation, displeasure or dissatisfaction. Anger by itself is not something to be feared about but the way and manner it is expressed can affect others and us. This is something that we ought to be concerned about.

The Lord Buddha Gotama, recognized the emotions of anger in humans and He had made remarks in this direction:

"There are three types of people in the world. What three? One who is like carving on a rock, one who is like scratching on the ground and one who is like writing on the water. What sort of person is like carving on the rock? Imagine a certain person who is always getting angry and his anger lasts long, just as carving on a rock is not soon worn off by wind, water or lapse of time. What sort of person is like scratching on the ground? Imagine a certain person who is always getting angry but his anger does not last long, just as scratching on the ground is soon worn off by wind, water and lapse of time. And what sort of person is like writing on the water? Imagine a certain person who, even though spoken to harshly, sharply, roughly, is easily reconciled and becomes agreeable and friendly, just as writing on the water soon disappears".

--Anguttara Nikaya I/283

Anger is therefore inherent in humans. Though a natural expression of emotion, Buddhists consider it as "akusala" (unwholesome, unskillful) action. Buddhists do not subscribe to notions such as "righteous anger" or "justifiable anger". Anger lasts for a period of time and with varying depths and intensities. Anger when directed at others shows up as aggression and when turned inwards towards us leads to frustration, irritation, and anxiety and eventually to depression. Both situations are surely "dukkha" (unsatisfactory). It is therefore looked upon a destructive emotional

expressions.

Anger originates from the mind and often gives rise to other unwholesome (akusala) tendencies such as malice, hatred (dosa), ill will (vyapada), revenge. In Buddhism, anger is taken to be synonymous to hatred (dosa) which is one of the three unwholesome roots (mulas) that has to be eradicated if one wishes to attain the state of Nibbanic bliss. It is a defilement (kilesa) of the mental faculties. Its long-term effects are usually detrimental to oneself and others. As a mind-force, anger arises from two sources - external and internal to the person. External situations and issues (arammana) such as those from the speeches, behaviors and body languages of others, received through the 5 sense-doors (panca dvara) stimulate the arising of the anger emotions. Internal stimulations of anger can arise from thinking and ideations about those situations and issues be they from the present, the past or even the future. From whatever way(s) anger arises and in whatever form, it is mostly destructive and seldom constructive in consequences.

Since anger originates from the mind, it can also be removed if the mind can be trained in methods to firstly manage it and finally to remove it. In psychology, the usual counselling technique employed is the Rational Emotive Therapy (RET) or Cognitive Therapy. This involves the slow process of modifying and altering the mindset, attitude and worldview of the person. It means redrawing the mind map so that judgments passed and decisions derived at, do not cause the stimulation of anger. It also means correcting any cognitive distortions that are held.

To assist the redrawing of the mind map the following pointers can be helpful:

a. Select a Role-model:

For Buddhists the excellent role-model is the Lord Buddha Gotama. Just be familiar with His life story and His constant admonishment for peace, calmness and tranquility. Read the Jataka stories concerning His past births - for instance when as the Bodhisatta, born as Samkhapala, a serpent, maintained perfect peace and tranquility of mind though He was beaten and pierced with sharp instruments (Jataka story 524). Again, in spite of the many attempts by Devadatta to create a schism within the Sangha, He did not harbor any thoughts of malice and ill-will against the former. If this selection is uncomfortable then a choice of a bhikkhu or bhikkhuni or any other that one has affinity with is helpful.

That the Lord Buddha Gotama is the perfect role-model is undeniable. The Dhammapada verse 387 shares:

"The sun glows by the day; the moon shines by the night: in his amour the warrior glows.

In meditation shines the Brahman.

But all day and night, shines with radiance the Awakened One"

b. Be Mindful:

Most times anger arises unconsciously and instinctively. It simply flares up. The cultivation of the state of mindfulness (sati) is considered as the best guard against anger and all other unwholesome states of the mind. Mindfulness (sati) is "pure awareness"; the presence of mind; realizing and knowing clearly any happenings at that moment of time. Usually one is unaware that anger has arisen until after a period of time. By then the angry person is all red in the face; feeling hot; lousy; huffing and puffing and the mind is speeding like a run-away train. Persistent meditative practices to note the arising of anger can eventually lead one to detect the arising of anger before it arises (and erupts). The moment anger arises one needs to quickly recognize it and perhaps say to oneself, "Aha - anger, anger". Also it is worthwhile to note that Right Effort (Samma Vayama), the sixth factor in the Noble Eightfold Path states:

"What now, O Monks, is Right Effort?

If the disciple rouses his will to avoid evil,
demeritorious things that have not yet arisen...

If the disciple rouses his will to overcome evil,
demeritorious things that have already arisen...

...and so forth..."

This clearly shows that with mindfulness, one can really detect any sort of unwanted or unwholesome thinking that is about to arise and through sheer training, curb it.

c. Substitute Anger:

The mind can be trained to substitute emotional expressions. Constant recitation of short "catch phrases" is embedded in the mind. Habit eventually forms to become instinctive responses. Here the Buddhist concept of Loving-kindness (metta) comes handy. Short phrases connected to it are useful substitutes. Whenever anger is about to arise, those phrases spring instinctively to the mind and replace the anger expressions. The recommended stanza is:

"May all beings be free from harm and danger
May all beings be free from mental sufferings
May all beings be free from physical sufferings
May all beings take care of themselves happily".

Or one might simply recite again and again to oneself:

"May all beings be well and happy".

d. Looking into ourselves:

As one saying goes, "It takes two hands to clap". Anger situations are usually provoked, though on most occasions parties are unaware of those provocations. As much as others are blamed, sometimes upon reflection we share some blame also. According to the Lord Buddha Gotama, no one is blameless.

"This, O Atula, is an old saying;
it is not one of today only:
they blame those who sit silent,
they blame those who speak too much.

Those speaking little too they blame.

There never was, there never will be, nor does there exist now, a person who is wholly blamed or wholly praised"

--Dhammapada verse 227/228

e. Think of Harmful effects on yourself:

Undeniable, expressions of anger affect everyone. They are unpleasant, distasteful and wretched. So, before an outburst, just consider the aftermath. Why get into it the first place? The Ven. Buddhaghosa reasons:

"Suppose an enemy has hurt you in his own domain, why should you annoy yourself and hurt your mind in your own domain?"

Suppose someone, to annoy, provokes you to do some evil act, why allow anger to arise and thus do exactly as he wants you to do?"

--Visuddhi Magga

f. Live and Let live:

Think of death. Consider that one day all will die. Life is short. Why go walking around with thunder and lightning above our heads? Would it not be better and beneficial for all if more congeniality and pleasantness ensues? Thinking in this manner one could perhaps cool down and decide against getting angry. The Lord Buddha Gotama reminds:

"Life in the world is unpredictable and uncertain.
Life is difficult, short and fraught with suffering."

"When the fruit is ripe, it may drop early in the morning.
In the same way, one who is born may die at any moment".

--Sutta Nipata 574/576

g. Adopt Forgiving Nature:

Hate is the end product of anger. To stop hating, the expression of love is the substitute. To love is to forgive. Ignore the faults and mistakes of others. Do not look for motives to justify one's anger. Just forgive and be relieved from the situation. The very act strengthens both the spiritual and moral character of the forgiver. Once again the Lord Buddha Gotama remarks:

"By three things the wise person may be known. What three? He sees a shortcoming as it is. When he sees it, he tries to correct it. And when another acknowledges a shortcoming, the wise one forgive it as he should".

--Anguttara Nikaya I - 103

h. The Law of Karma:

Buddhists are familiar with the workings of the Law of Karma. It is one of the 5 Niyamas (natural laws). As such it is worthwhile to remember that one is the owner and heir of one's deeds. They will surely ripen one day either in this life or in future lives. Therefore be wary of one's actions and be wise to remember:

"Not to do any evil, to cultivate good, to purify one's mind, this is the teaching of the Buddhas".

--Dhammapada verse 183

Having said thus far, would it mean that all expressions of anger are to be entirely removed and forever eradicated from one's nature and personality? Living in the modern society such directions may backfire and result in stress and anxiety for the individual instead. Today, it is recognized that "anger" consciously deployed to reinforce another emotional expression such as being stern (mother chiding her child) or to discipline (instructor bellowing at recruits) is healthy as it reveals the emotions of the "angry person". The other party is able to follow-up the cue. The episode ends. However uncontrollable and prolonged outbursts; fuming inside; unreasonable yelling and shouting; challenging others (or oneself); instinctive flaring up - they constitute "angry" emotional responses and expressions that are considered unhealthy mental stances that ought to be recognized, restrained and finally removed.

4. HANDLING ANGER - APPLYING ANTIDOTES ...kalachakranet.org

<http://buddhism.kalachakranet.org/anger.html>

Below is a summary of various approaches to anger. They obviously will be most

efficient when used with a calm and concentrated mind, either during meditation or at the moment you realize that something needs to be done about your anger. Obviously, the problem during an actual difficult situation is to have a calm and concentrated mind - a regular meditation practice can be of great help then! One of the best ways to really make progress with understanding and changing the functioning of our own mind is to try out analytical meditation, combined with these clues.

ANTIDOTE 1 - Patience.

Patience is the main antidote to anger. As common wisdom says: just count to 100... During this time, any of the below methods can be effective. The most effective method will depend on the actual situation. Especially in our age of rush and intense change, patience may not be seen as a positive quality, but take a minute to think impatience can easily give rise to a general feeling of anger.

ANTIDOTE 2 - Realisation of the Noble Truth of Suffering.

Once one understands that problems and frustration is a basic fact of life, it can reduce our impatience with our own unrealistic expectations. In other words: nothing is perfect, so don't expect it.

Because of my belief that things are or can be perfect, it is easy to feel hurt.

ANTIDOTE 3 - Understanding Karma.

As explained in the page on Karma, the real reasons for our problems are our own actions, which are in turn caused by our own negative states of mind. If someone makes us angry, it has a sobering effect if we dare to think that the real reasons for this situation are our own past actions, and the person is just a circumstance for our own karma to ripen.

ANTIDOTE 4 - Changing or Accepting.

Basically, we can find ourselves in two types of unpleasant situations: ones we can change and ones we cannot change.

- If I can change the situation, I should do something about it instead of getting all worked-up and angry. Not acting in such a situation will cause frustration in the end.
- If I cannot change the situation, I will have to accept it. If I don't, it will only lead to frustration and a negative and unpleasant state of mind, which will make the situation only worse.

For some reasons unclear to me, Westerners (including myself) appear to have big problems with accepting unpleasant situations which we cannot change. Could this be a result of impatience (a form of anger) with imperfection (an unrealistic

expectation)?

Do consider the wisdom in the following remarks (from an online discussion - forgot the writer.):

*"How does this effect my Buddhist practice?
It doesn't.*

*These reported events are like an arrow shot at my heart but it lands at my feet.
I choose not to bend over, pick it up, and stab myself with it."*

ANTIDOTE 5 - Realistic Analysis.

For example: someone accuses me of something.

- If it is true, I apparently made a mistake, so I should listen and learn.
- If it is untrue, the other person makes a mistake. So what? Nobody is perfect. I also make mistakes, and it is all too easy to label the other as "enemy", in which case a helpful discussion or forgiving becomes difficult.

It may also be worthwhile searching for the real underlying reason of the problem. Of special importance is to evaluate one's own role in the situation: my own fears, insecurity, being very unfriendly, or not being blameless (like leaving home much too late for an appointment and blaming the 5 minutes delay of the train).

ANTIDOTE - Realisation of Emptiness.

To summarise it briefly, if one deeply realises the emptiness of inherent existence or interdependence of the other person, the situation and oneself, there is nothing to be angry about. The realisation of emptiness is therefore the ultimate means of ridding oneself of unrealistic negative emotions like anger.

ANTIDOTE 7 - Equanimity.

Equanimity means that one realises the basic equality of all sentient beings; others want happiness, just like I do. Others make mistakes just like I do. Others are confused, angry, attached just like I often am. Is the other person happy in this situation, or just struggling like I am?

ANTIDOTE 8 - Openness

Be prepared to be open for the motivation of others to do what causes you problems. Talking it over and being prepared to listen can suddenly make a problem acceptable.

Did you ever notice the difference when a plane or train has much delay and nobody gives any reasons for it? People very quickly become irritated and hostile. Then when the driver or pilot explains there is a technical defect or an accident, suddenly waiting becomes easier.

ANTIDOTE 9 - Relativity.

Ask yourself if this situation is actually important enough to spoil your own and other people's mood. Is this problem worth getting upset in a life where death can hit me at any moment?

ANTIDOTE 10 - Change Your Motivation.

In case a situation is really unacceptable, and another person needs to be convinced that something is to be done or changed, there is no need to become upset and angry. It is likely much more efficient if you show understanding and try to make the other understand the need for change. If one needs to appear angry for some reason to convince the other person of the seriousness of the situation, one can think like a parent acting wrathful to prevent the child from harming itself.

In general, to be really effective one needs to reflect on quite a number of aspects in one's own mind like; forgiveness, peace of mind, fears, self-acceptance (no acceptance of others is really possible without self-acceptance), habits, prejudices etc.

ANTIDOTE 11 - Watch Your Hands.

An interesting suggestion from Jon Kabat-Zinn, from 'Wherever You Go, There You Are':

"All our hand postures are mudras in that they are associated with subtle or not-so-subtle energies. Take the energy of the fist, for instance. When we get angry, our hands tend to close into fists. Some people unknowingly practice this mudra a lot in their lives. It waters the seeds of anger and violence within you every time you do it, and they respond by sprouting and growing stronger.

The next time you find yourself making fists out of anger, try to bring mindfulness to the inner attitude embodied in a fist. Feel the tension, the hatred, the anger, the aggression, and the fear which it contains. Then, in the midst of your anger, as an experiment, if the person you are angry at is present, try opening your fists and placing the palms together over your heart in the prayer position right in front of him. (Of course, he won't have the slightest idea what you are doing.) Notice what happens to the anger and hurt as you hold this position for even a few moments."

ANTIDOTE 12 - Meditation.

Last, but certainly not least, meditation can be the ultimate cure to completely

eliminating anger from your mind. In the beginning, one can do analytical meditations, but also meditation on compassion, love and forgiving reduce anger as well.

Ultimately, the realization of emptiness eradicates all delusions like anger.

5. Los Angeles County Coroner - Gift Shop

<http://lacstores.co.la.ca.us/coroner/>

History

The shop, called '**Skeletons In The Closet**', has been operating since September 1993. With the declining tax revenue, other concepts had to be considered to help off-set monetary losses. The intent was to use monies raised to offset the costs associated with the Youthful Drunk Driving Visitation Program (YDDVP), which uses no tax dollars as support.

This marketing effort is an outgrowth of a coffee mug and tee-shirt that had already been used to complement an annually sponsored professional Coroner conference.

Skeletons in the Closet features a complete line of quality souvenir items, such as beach towels, tee-shirts, tote bags, baseball caps, coroner toe tag key chains, boxer shorts called "undertakers," and more. Each item displays a unique Los Angeles County Coroner design such as a skeleton in Sherlock Holmes attire, a chalked-out body outline or the L.A. County Coroner seal.

Response to this marketing program has been overwhelmingly positive and has received worldwide interests, particularly throughout the United States and Canada. Customer awareness has been generated through much publicized newspaper and magazine articles, as well as radio and television appearances.

A worldwide mail order business has been established with over 30,000 names of people interested in receiving the annual Skeletons in the Closet catalog. Customer names are constantly being added to the mailing list throughout the year from visitors to the shop, and daily telephone requests.

6. Working With Anger ...by Thubten Chodron

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/1559391634/wwwkusalaorg-20/>

Amazon.com - Reviewer: Midwest Book Review from Oregon, WI USA ...What are the advantages and disadvantages of anger? Is it ever useful? Working With Anger

considers various forms of anger in response to various life conditions, revealing the circumstances in which anger can serve as a catalyst for change. An excellent survey and self-help guide.

Amazon.com - Reviewer: from Sacramento, CA United States ...This was an AWESOME book. Thubten Chodron knows what it's like to be in the shoes of an American living in the millennium. And more! She gives wise, yet practical, perspectives in how our perception is what stands in our way 100% of the time. Of the many choices we have in reacting to any given situation, anger is but only one, and Thubten clearly illustrates how it only serves to pave a destructive path for ourselves and others. I initially bought this book in the hopes of finding a few answers for personal situations, and I found myself feeling transformed within the first 30-40 pages! For those who are naturally introspective, some of this book will serve as an effective reminder for what you already know. Most of it, however, will offer a refreshing new view to take with you as you approach your day. One does not need to be religious to benefit from this book, and you don't need to spend a chunk of your day in a meditational state to make use of it. A definite must for those who want to evolve in a difficult world.

The Urban Dharma Newsletter Archives:

<http://www.urbandharma.org/nlarchives.html>

The Los Angeles Buddhist-Catholic Dialogue:

<http://www.urbandharma.org/bcdialog/index.html>

Support "Dana" UrbanDharma.org:

<http://www.urbandharma.org/udharma6/dana.html>

The Urban Dharma Newsletter... March 16, 2004

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0. Humor/Quotes...

There are few nudities so objectionable as the naked truth. - **Agnes Repplier** (1855 - 1950)

Believe those who are seeking the truth. Doubt those who find it. - **Andre Gide** (1869 - 1951)

All truth passes through three stages. First, it is ridiculed. Second, it is violently opposed. Third, it is accepted as being self-evident. - **Arthur Schopenhauer** (1788 - 1860)

Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. - **Bible**, John 8:32

Chase after truth like hell and you'll free yourself, even though you never touch its coat-tails. - **Clarence Darrow** (1857 - 1938)

The public will believe anything, so long as it is not founded on truth. - **Edith Sitwell**

(1887 - 1964)

All truths are easy to understand once they are discovered; the point is to discover them. - **Galileo Galilei** (1564 - 1642)

1. The Two Truths ...Mark Whitley's home page - Mark's Musings

<http://codepoet.org/~markw/musings/buddhism.html>

An Excerpt:

1. The Ultimate Truth - This is the ultimate state of reality that is devoid of all ephemeral, temporal, transitional things that are found on this Earth. This is the destination of the perfect, enlightened being, and the ultimate liberation of all suffering.

2. The Relative Truth - This is the perception of reality as it exists on this Earth. So named because social conditions, human wisdom, lifestyles and human achievements are constantly in a state of flux. Growing an attachment to any Relative Truth is a cause of suffering.

2. Relative Truth and Ultimate Truth ...Researched by Andrea Deschenes

<http://www.diversitywatch.ryerson.ca/backgrounds/buddhism.htm>

An Excerpt:

Nagarjuna taught that there is neither reality nor non-reality but only relativity. Madhyamika introduced the concept of Sunyata or emptiness. It taught that all elements are impermanent and have no independent existence in themselves. Another important concept attributed to Nagarjuna is his teaching of relative truth and ultimate truth. Relative truth is conventional or empirical truth - that experienced by the senses, whereas, the ultimate truth can only be realized by transcending concepts through intuitive insight.

The Yogacara school emphasised that the ultimate truth can only be known through meditation.

Whereas Madhyamika teaches about two truths - relative and absolute, Yogacara divides truth into three: Illusory truth which is a false attribution to an object because of causes and conditions; Empirical truth which is knowledge produced by causes and conditions which is relative and practical; and finally Absolute truth which is the highest truth.

3. Buddhism Introduces Absolute and Relative Truth ...American Zen Buddhist Temple - Vairocana Monastery

http://www.evenlink.com/~azbtnews/English/News/great_teacher.htm

An Excerpt:

Other than the Eight Right Paths, Buddhism introduces Absolute and Relative Truth.

Abhidharmamaha-vibhasa-shastra defines that all understandable phenomena based on worldly common sense or rational traditions and customs that people agree upon with is the Relative Truth and that the truth of the reality that is clearly observed by those Saints without any defilement is the Absolute Truth. The commentary of the Middle Path (Mulamadhyamaka-karika) explains the absolute and relative truth by the empty nature of interdependent origination. The understanding of interdependent origination, that is, all phenomena arise or cease based on co-existing interdependent relationship, is called the Relative Truth. Interdependent origination is a temporary phenomenon. All things do not have permanent and unchangeable nature. Therefore, arising or ceasing is just a false image that has false name and function but no real substance. The arising is not real arising and ceasing is not real ceasing. The reality of no arising and no ceasing is called the nature of emptiness. Realizing the empty nature is the Absolute Truth.

The Absolute Truth and the Relative Truth, one is the empty nature of all phenomena and the other the temporary occurrence and function of all things, are in truth an indivisible method of non-duality. Even though the Relative Truth is not the ultimate, yet we may rely on it to search for the Absolute Truth. For example, language, action, ideal, and concept etc. are all Relative Truth. Yet, if we do not apply them, we are not going to be able to explain the Absolute Truth, which is beyond the Relative Truth, to sentient beings. If there is no way to realize the Absolute Truth, then there is no way to enter the Nirvana.

4. Shunyata in Pure Land Buddhism ...Michio Tokunaga

<http://www.nembutsu.info/tokusuny.htm>

An Excerpt:

The Highest Truth in Two Divisions

There is in Mahayana a noteworthy analysis of the highest truth in two divisions - the 'mundane' truth and the 'supramundane' truth - usually termed 'two truths'. The relationship between the two has been given in diverse ways but, in order to avoid

confusion, the 'two truths' doctrine is discussed here only as two aspects of shunyata. One is the highest truth, which is formless and beyond conceptual understanding, and the other, the manifestation of the formless in the realm of human conception, that is, form.

It was Nagarjuna who first presented the notion of 'two truths' as an analysis of shunyata. The highest truth (paramarthasatya) is beyond words or description, i.e. beyond the reach of conceptual understanding and yet it was presented by the Buddha Shakyamuni as his teaching so that our conceptual understanding could grasp it. It is in this sense that the teaching is regarded as an 'expedient means' (upaya), often likened to a finger pointing to the moon. What is crucial about this metaphor is that the finger and the moon are mutually reflexive. Without the finger, the moon would not be known. Without the moon, there would be no need for the finger pointing to it. The one is involved in the other. The finger and the moon are inseparable. In this sense, the 'two truths' may be called the 'twofold truth'.

Kumarajiva, in his treatment of shunyata philosophy in translating Nagarjuna into Chinese, used the term chia-ming ("name only for a temporary use") for the mundane aspect of the truth. 'Temporary' in this compound represents the negative aspect of the highest truth. 'Negative' in this case means the non-substantial nature of beings from the viewpoint of the truth of shunyata. 'Name' represents the positive aspect in which conceptual understanding 'revives' only after it is once negated. Even shunyata is a 'name only for a temporary use' so long as it is expressed in order for our conceptual understanding to grasp it. It is chia-ming which is the very ground of Pure Land Buddhism and which refers to the 'positive' phase of shunyata expressed in 'forms'.

5. The Curative Value of Egolessness and the Ethical Importance of Compassion in Buddhism ...Sharon Belfer, Department of Psychology - Simon Fraser University

<http://www.sfu.ca/~wwwpsyb/issues/1995/summer/belfer.htm>

An Excerpt:

Absolute Personhood and the Path to Self-Actualization

Whereas Gautama's path to cure focuses on the insubstantiality of self, Gautama's path to self-actualization focuses on the insubstantiality of the dualism between self and other. In other words, once one's cognition, affect and conation have been cured of ignorance of egolessness, one has only achieved an understanding of relative reality. To become a fully self-actualized person, however, one must achieve a three-fold understanding of both absolute and relative reality.

A cognitive understanding of absolute reality involves an intellectual recognition that "all experience is basically a manifestation of mind. . .the whole of existence is

empty of a duality of substance between mind and matter" (Gyatso, 1988, p. 39). According to Gautama, the essence of this universal mind is luminous, unborn awareness; absolutely real, yet "empty" of concepts and preconceptions. Once one realizes that the essence of absolute reality is indiscriminate and non-dualistic, one will inevitably realize that the nature of everyone's mind is this luminous awareness. At this point, one intellectually understands that there is no absolute basis for the relative experience of duality between self and other (Rahula, 1974). Note that Gautama is neither denying the existence of individual differences nor suggesting that all people are really just one big Person. Rather, he is suggesting that the essence of all people (and of the entire world, for that matter) is the same indestructible, unalterable quality of luminous awareness. Accordingly, although differences among people obviously exist, they are meaningful only on a relative level.

An affective understanding of absolute reality involves an emotional experience of the lack of duality between self and other. Having already experienced the relative realization that there is no "self" to protect and prioritize, one now experiences the absolute realization that there is no "other" to be compassionate towards (Trungpa, 1975). Because there is no longer any sense of "mine" and "yours", one's primary emotional state is characterized by spontaneous compassion, beyond contrivance or condescension. At this point, one has transcended both the intellectual dualism between self and other, and the emotional dualism between giver and receiver (Trungpa, 1975).

As the third aspect of Gautama's path to nondual, nonconceptual self-actualization, the conative understanding of absolute reality transcends the duality between intention and action. Remember that in the relative reality of ethico-legal personhood, people are held responsible only for actions with deliberately intended consequences; people are not held responsible for actions which have unforeseen or unintended consequences. Implicit in this distinction is a recognition that people are either not interested in being aware or are not able to be aware of all the consequences of their actions. In contrast, in the ultimate reality of Gautama's absolute, self-actualized personhood, one is always aware of the consequences of one's actions, and one always acts with the intent of achieving a desired result.

In relative reality, people's actions are caused by both the efficient motivators of unconscious karmic predispositions, and the teleological motivators of conscious intentions. In absolute reality, however, one is no longer subject to the unconscious, self-perpetuating force of karma, and one's actions are therefore entirely motivated by the conscious intent to achieve a desired end result (Trungpa, 1981). Free of all karmic tendencies to act mindlessly and habitually, one now realizes that there is no absolute basis for the relative distinction between the giver and the act of giving (Trungpa, 1981). Moreover, one's sense of morality is no longer constrained by the arbitrary, dualistic distinctions of relative reality. Once one has developed a three-fold understanding of the indestructible luminosity of one's mind and one's world, cognition, affect and conation become synchronized beyond the relative dictates of culture and law. One may not always think, feel and act in a culturally appropriate manner, but one will always think, feel and act in a way that manifests the absolute nature of one's mind (Trungpa, 1994). Therefore, although Gautama emphasized the

ethical value of the synoptic functioning of cognition, affect and conation, his path of self-actualization is really one of absolute personhood, in which the fundamental essence of a person is universal and nomothetic.

In distinguishing between relative and absolute reality, Gautama was aspiring to make his theory applicable to all human beings, beyond the relative boundaries of culture, financial situation and social status. Contrary to the stereotype of the disheveled Buddhist struggling to escape the grime and grit of everyday reality, Gautama's curative goal of ethico-legal personhood stresses the importance of being able "to function as normal human beings" within the shared reference point of relative reality (Gyatso, 1988, p. 21). Moreover, Gautama's ethical goal of absolute personhood does not contradict or deny the importance of relative truth. Although "self" and "other" may not exist in an absolute sense, they still have a relative existence which enables us to communicate and function within the constraints of common sense reality. For Gautama to deny the importance of relative reality, encouraging each student to believe that "the world is his own invention and that nothing exists outside of himself. . . would be like some kind of madness" (Gyatso, p.38, 1988). As Khenpo Tsultrim Gyatso (1988, p. 14) has pointed out: "without a proper understanding of the vast aspects of the relative truth, meditation on Emptiness [i.e. absolute reality] can be misleading and even dangerous". Therefore, to follow the path of the Buddha is not to deny the importance of our relative situation; but to realize that our absolute essence remains unaltered by the happiness or misery of our present situation. Like the sun which has been temporarily covered by passing clouds (Rahula, 1974), absolute truth pervades and sanctifies the poignancy of our relative truth, even on our sickest and most un-actualized days.

6. Emptiness, Concepts and the knowledge of Truth ...The White Lotus Center for Shin Buddhism

<http://www.akshin.net/philosophy/budphilnagarjuna.htm>

An Excerpt:

Already the historical Buddha stated that:

all forms of existence are characterized by unsatisfactoriness;
all forms of existence are characterized by impermanence;
all elements of existence are characterized by non-self.

Within the existential experience we can therefore not speak of permanent or autonomous values.

But how then should we interpret this existential experience?

In Buddhist terms this is samsara, the 'world of suffering'. 'To exist' is what each

separate being perceives for itself. Existence is that which takes place - again for each separate being - between the moment that has passed and the moment that is not yet here, i.e. the transitional process from past (karma = the acts of the past) towards future (phala = karmic results). The present therefore is always a 'becoming'. This 'becoming' is none other than pratitya samutpada, namely, a process of causal conditions.

That which is 'true' therefore remains beyond being (permanence) and non-being (annihilation).

Nagarjuna consequently extends this train of thought.

He calls this 'neither being nor non-being' sunyata (emptiness). Emptiness is not a negative concept (as in 'nothing'), but affirms the possibility, in function of eventual relational conditions, of manifesting all imaginable characteristics.

Since all that is knowable (the phenomenal world) is 'empty', also all our knowing which is made relative by the relation (subject/object) is 'empty'. We reduce the perception into elementary concepts (dharmas), who in their turn can be again regarded as cognitive objects. Nagarjuna stresses the 'emptiness' of each dharma on every level of our cognitive abilities.

Concepts (dharmas) are empty, i.e. without substance. Our discursive thought, which uses language to attach concepts to what is perceived, is therefore irrelevant when it comes to adequately knowing reality in-itself, i.e. independent from perception.³

The only thing that can be said with sense, is that all experience and expression of that experience, is 'emptiness'. 'Emptiness' is, where our powers of cognition are concerned, the only reality that all things (subjects and objects) have in common.

But also this concept of 'emptiness' is 'empty' and in the final analysis irrelevant - yet, it remains the ultimate point of what is expressible.

Conceptual thought is necessarily dualistic since - when reduced to its simplest expression - it can only exist in the mutual relationship of a 'conceiver' (as subject) and a 'concept' (as object). Neither 'conceiver' nor 'concept' can be regarded as separate entities. By way of discursive thought, which works with concepts and their language expressions, we therefore can never go beyond what is relative (or relational).

Here, Nagarjuna manifests himself clearly as an empirical epistemologist. He comes to the conclusion that there are three levels of truth. The first two are mutually related and form a bivalence: something is untrue/something is true. Which gives us:

1. asatya - untruth (lie or mistake), e.g. "a hare has horns"

2. loka-samvriti-satya - 'world speech truth', 'relative truth', e.g. "a hare does not have horns"

the third level of truth is non-conceptual :

3. paramartha-satya - 'ultimate truth, absolute truth'. Since this third level can neither be conceptual nor discursive, it is a truth which is inconceivable and inexpressible.

Traditionally these three levels of truth are illustrated by the metaphor of the snake :

At dusk a man walks along a path in the forest. Suddenly on the road in front of him he sees a snake. He is terrified and runs off. Next morning he walks the same path and discovers that what he took to be a snake is, in broad daylight, just a rope.

1. the perceived 'snake' is untruth

2. the 'snake that is a rope' is a relative truth.

Nagarjuna adds to this that both 'rope' and 'snake' are only concepts and concludes:

3. in 'absolute truth' there exist neither snake nor rope, only the empty concepts of them.

Concepts that are untruth, belong to the world of ego-illusion (aham iti = I am) and are characterized by ego-thought:

subject 'untrue' object 'untrue'

Concepts that are relative truth, are forms of expression from a non-ego perspective. They are 'true' in the system in which they appear:

subject 'untrue' object 'true'

Concepts can never be 'absolute truth', since on this level every duality falls away. Every knowledge of absolute truth therefore has to be non-conceptual i.e. 'immediate' (without mediator)

In the forms of mediate knowledge, which makes use of ideas, thoughts, words, etc., things are only knowable as concepts, i.e. within the relations in which they appear. Subject and object are reducible to dharmas, thus, 'emptiness' is the only 'true' nature we can attribute to them.

Where there is dualism present, the "true nature of things" or "true reality" remains beyond knowing; the "knower" - at best - remains at the level of relative truth.

Some examples of dualisms or dichotomies: good/evil, creator/creation, the Enlightened One/the foolish being, transcendent/immanent, suffering/joy, duality/unity, samsara/nirvana.

Applied in relation to the Buddhist teachings this gives:

* untruth: adharma, the non-teaching

* relative truth: buddhadharma, the teaching as it was proclaimed by the historical Buddha Sakyamuni.

* absolute truth: saddharma, the Teaching seen beyond time and space.

What then, is the relation between the Four Noble Truths and the levels of truth established by Nagarjuna?

To the level of relative truth belong the first two Noble Truths (Suffering and the Cause of Suffering), since they take place on the samsaric level. They form as it where the transition from (a) to (b) and their result is relative knowledge (jñāna: knowledge).

To the level of absolute truth belong the last two Noble Truths (Cessation of Suffering, and the Noble Eightfold Path), since they take place on the nirvanic oriented level. They form as it where the transition from (b) to (c), and their result is absolute knowledge (sarvajña: omniscience or prajña: wisdom).

We can note here that each of these transitions is nothing else than a process of dependent causation, which takes place according to the paradigm which is pratitya-samutpada.

Nagarjuna's point of departure is clearly negating. The introductory verses to his MMK e.g. are (from the Sanskrit Version):

"I salute him, the fully enlightened, the best of speakers, who preached the non-ceasing and the non-arising, the non-annihilation and the non-permanence, the non-identity and the non-difference, the non-appearance and the non-disappearance, the dependent arising, the appeasement of obsessions and the auspicious."

7. E-sangha, Buddhist Forum & Buddhism Forum -> Topics in Buddhism -> Buddhist Philosophy - (Truth?)

<http://www.lioncity.net/buddhism/index.php?>

An Excerpt:

Monk "Kyrie, Iisous Christos, Yios Theou, eleison imas." :

If we all see truth different, how do we know what truth really is?

kaTaka_00:

hi mr monk,

yes, the practice of Buddhism is relative to the individual. in Buddhism the major part of practice whether in meditation, or in daily affairs, is mindfulness. being mindful means we should be mindful of many things in order to learn about how we act and react according to the arising and cessation of phenomena in inter-action with the essence of mind consciousness which creates all our experiences. this being the case each particular participant in the play of the Dhamma is learning in relativity to ones own experiences as we are all the owners of these aggregates and our actions which we create by using these aggregates as a vehicle ... the senses which with we perceive and experience contact with phenomena, including that of ourself, perceive according to how they are physically engineered and also the way which our physical self behaves is in accordance with how the mind consciousness reacts to that experiencing of phenomena, including that of ourself.

this being the case each individual, having differing experiences will learn in differing stages and sequences according to which parts of the Dhamma they are capable of associating with at certain and various times depending on their circumstances which have led up to that point of such time.

therefore there is very little chance of ever getting the same response from any two practicing Buddhists because each experience will vary accordingly, although the four noble truths and the eightfold path are timeless truths which have been expounded by all the Buddhas and are essentially necessary teachings within the teachings of the Buddha, and therefore for that reason the understandings in these areas will be more consistent than understandings in other areas.

the areas which become most confusing are those which attempt to define the undefinable, but even so there is much to be learnt from speculating these kinds of things, though any conclusions should never be taken as a final or definite conclusion. methods of meditation vary in practice also relative to the preferences and needs of the individual practitioner, in theory methods are similar in most cases, some have extra aspects such as recitation, chanting, visualising, etc ... but essentially mindfulness, effort, and concentration are key elements in meditation, and also right intention so one should understand the purpose of meditation in Buddhist practices. breath meditation is common amongst the traditions, also metta (loving kindness) is common, the main purpose is to attain the jhanas but until then

we just have to keep meditating as best as we can, so in that way meditation will also vary relative to each individual practitioner.

Monk "Kyrie, Iisous Christos, Yios Theou, eleison imas." :

You do understand that relativism (meaning all points of view are equally valid and that all truth is relative to the individual), is self refuting?

kaTaka_00:

yes, i guess so, i would say that whatever one perceives to be the truth, whether it is the truth or not, is valid to one, ... just as what is perceived to be truth to another, whether it is the truth or not, is valid to the same extent to that individual.

whether it is valid as an accurate and effective truth is another matter, but each individual sees truth in their own experiences whether it is true or not. if one reflects deeply enough then they are able to see this, and then make effort to change that pattern to some extent so that one may realise that they should not take their own comprehensions as truth, but always accept that everything is merely speculation, and the truth is always around the next corner but even so, one still believes oneself to a large extent simply because we all have the affliction of delusion.

maybe i have understood what you want to know ...

or maybe i have misunderstood myself ...

Monk "Kyrie, Iisous Christos, Yios Theou, eleison imas." :

If all truth is relative, then the statement "All truth is relative" would be absolutely true. If it is absolutely true, then not all things are relative and the statement that "All truth is relative" is false.

Hummmm.....

Is there an absolute truth taught in Buddhism?

kaTaka_00:

individually perceived truths are relative, but the truth is the truth and is not relative, so truth both is and isn't relative depending on whether you mean it is relative to the individuals understanding and grasping of some speculated truth, or if it is relative to the effective existence of the individual.

although even a speculated truth which is not true has effects on the individual who grasps at it and believes it because in turn it manipulates his/her way of thinking, of course thoughts are precursors to actions, and so our actions will be influenced by

what we believe at that particular time. so in turn it has truthfully deceived the owner of those thoughts and actions, so in this way it is possible to consider that it is a truth but not not a true truth

in Buddhism there is no absolute or ultimate truth which is taught, although there is a truth which one comes to realise through actually experiencing it, ... or ... through not experiencing it even these kinds of truths should not be taken as truth.

the truth is always around the next corner.

the truth is that the dhamma makes perfect sense and we are able to benefit and create benefits for others, and so we practice it like dhamma junkies just for the heck of it ... well, maybe there is a bit more to it than that.

now then ... what was that about relativism again ???

tealeaf:

Monk, You are asking a good and difficult question that pierces to the heart of things. I would say, Buddhism teaches one absolute truth, that is the truth of interdependent arising, but understood fully, and not only as 12 links of interdependent arising, but understood fully as shunyata (Buddhist emptiness).

This is mentioned over and over again in every school of Buddhism. You can think of shunyata as absolute, but it has no particular form of its own, so if you label it "absolute" you still can't grasp it. So, if by "absolute" you're trying to fix a picture or some idea in your mind, it will not work.

If you are interested further in this, and you are of a philosophical bent, you may want to pick up "The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way: Nagarjuna's Mulamadhyamakakarika" translated and commented by Jay L. Garfield.

I also like this writing from Theravada:

<http://www.accesstoinight.org/lib/bps/whe...s/wheel277.html>

I would especially suggest reading the commentary in addition to the actual sutta.

If you are not of a hugely philosophical bent, you may want to ponder a little bit on this: when you see light, right away you know what darkness is, even if you are not yet experiencing darkness. If you see 'self' right away you know what 'other' is and vice versa. If you see past, you also see present and future, and if you see present, you see past and future, etc. And what is time without form? What is the nature of mind? Where is the limit of mind? And meditate, obviously, right?

Last few words: this question only occurs when you cling to the idea of 'self'. Without

'self' this question loses its importance.

If anyone notices any errors, etc., please correct me.

Monk "Kyrie, Iisous Christos, Yios Theou, eleison imas." :

I'm new, so all I can do is ask questions.

8. A Season for Nonviolence

<http://www.agnt.org/snv02.htm>

Vision

As a human family we are asking the question: "How can any act of violence be recognized as a solution to the consequences of violence that we face today?" Violent actions and reactions are the scars of social, educational, and economic wounds... the voices of a spiritually inarticulate culture.

The practice of nonviolence is initiated by choice and cultivated through agreement. The time has come to agree upon this as a global community--as if our lives, and those of our children's children, depended on it. Our vision is of a better world for all human beings.

To this end, we undertake "Gandhi & King: A Season for Nonviolence" by applying our efforts and resources to identifying, then bringing into focus the spectrum of grassroots projects and programs by individuals and organizations who are pro-actualizing a peaceful social order.

Mission

Our mission is to create an awareness of nonviolent principles and practice as a powerful way to heal, transform and empower our lives and communities.

Through an educational and community action campaign, we are honoring those who are using nonviolence to build a community that honors the dignity and worth of every human being.

We are demonstrating that every person can move the world in the direction of peace through their daily nonviolent choice and action.

**9. Appearance and Reality: The Two Truths in Four Buddhist Systems ...by
Guy Newland**

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/1559391316/wwwkusalaorg-20/>

Amazon.com - Reviewer: An Amazon.com Customer ...When someone seeks to understand Buddhism, where should one start: With the elaboration on what it means to take refuge in the three jewels? Or the four noble truths? When the Dalai Lama was asked this question, he suggested that for many in the West today, the two truths, conventional truth and ultimate truth, is the best place to start. When the Buddha awoke from the dream we still dream, he saw the ultimate reality of things just as they are. There are shifting appearances and conventions, the manners and traditions of the vast and diverse world; and then there is the mystery of things just as they are, sheer reality. And yet we cannot find this reality anywhere else but right here. Each system of Buddhist philosophy has its own way of explaining exactly what these two truths are and how they relate to one another. In exploring these systems, we are looking over the shoulders of Buddhist thinkers as they grapple with a basic question: What is real? This is not an idle intellectual question, but a matter which cuts to the heart of our practice in life.

The Urban Dharma Newsletter Archives:

<http://www.urbandharma.org/nlarchives.html>

The Los Angeles Buddhist-Catholic Dialogue:

<http://www.urbandharma.org/bcdialog/index.html>

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0. Humor/Quotes...

Reality is merely an illusion, albeit a very persistent one. - **Albert Einstein** (1879 - 1955)

Everything is a dangerous drug except reality, which is unendurable. - **Cyril Connolly** (1903 - 1974), "The Unquiet Grave", 1945

I believe in looking reality straight in the eye and denying it. - **Garrison Keillor** (1942 -)

The real distinction is between those who adapt their purposes to reality and those who seek to mold reality in the light of their purposes. - **Henry Kissinger** (1923 -)

Realism...has no more to do with reality than anything else. - **Hob Broun**

Reality is the leading cause of stress amongst those in touch with it - **Jane Wagner** (and Lily Tomlin)

I've wrestled with reality for 35 years, Doctor, and I'm happy to state I finally won out over it. - **Jimmy Stewart** (1908 - 1997), in "Harvey", 1950

1. The Ultimate Reality in Buddhism

<http://www.comparativereligion.com/god.html>

Buddhism is another important Eastern religion that extended beyond the boundaries of India, shortly after it was proclaimed by its founder, Siddharta Gotama - the Buddha (6th century BC). Two main forms of Buddhism are known today: the conservative branch, represented by the Theravada school, spread mainly in Sri Lanka and southeast Asia, and the liberal branch - Mahayana, spread in China, Tibet, Korea and Japan.

The Theravada school, which claims to have guarded the unaltered message of its founder, teaches that there is neither a personal god, nor a spiritual or material substance that exists by itself as Ultimate Reality. The world as we know it does not have its origin in a primordial being such as Brahman. It exists only as a mental construction shaped by the senses. What we see is only a product of transitory factors of existence, which depend functionally upon each other. The Buddha said:

The world exists because of causal actions, all things are produced by causal actions and all beings are governed and bound by causal actions. They are fixed like the rolling wheel of a cart, fixed by the pin of its axle shaft. (Sutta-Nipata 654)

That gods exist is not rejected, but they are only temporary beings that attained heaven using the same virtues as any human disciple. Gods are not worshipped, do not represent the basis for morality, and are not the givers of happiness. The Ultimate Reality is nothing but a transcendent truth, which governs the universe and human life. The Buddha expressed it in the following words:

There is grief but none suffering,
There is no doer though there is action.
There is quietude but none tranquil.
There is the path but none walks upon the path.

(Majjhima Nikaya 1; Visuddhi Magga 16)

We will analyze these concepts in the document aimed at analyzing man's destiny in Theravada Buddhism. The Buddha was concerned only with finding a way out of suffering. Therefore he refused to speak about things considered to be irrelevant or even hindrances in reaching nirvana, and this included a definition of Ultimate Reality.

The other branch of Buddhism was grounded later, probably in the 1st century AD, and organized by Nagarjuna in the 2nd century AD. Although the texts of Mahayana Buddhism claim to be a recollection of early speeches of the Buddha, they sometimes contradict conservative doctrines of the Theravada school. It is said that the latter texts were revealed many years after the master's death, because at that time there were too few people able to understand them. Mahayana takes a different stand on

the person of Siddharta Gotama. According to the traditional view he was a physical being, the founder of the "four noble truths" and the first man that reached nirvana. In Mahayana Buddhism he is considered to be only one of the many humans who attained the state of a bodhisattva, the celestial being that helps other humans to find liberation.

Reality, according to Mahayana Buddhism, has three levels of perception, known also as the three bodies (trikaya) of Buddha: nirmanakaya, the physical body of the founder, that is subject to change; sambhogakaya, the body of the bodhisattvas; and dharmakaya, the ultimate nature of all things. The dharmakaya state is also called suchness or emptiness (devoid of attributes). Although any resemblance to the Hindu Vedanta is denied, there are at least two important aspects that suggest the contrary. First, the pure state dharmakaya, the absolute body of the Buddha and, at the same time, the fundamental nature of the universe is described in the same way as Brahman:

How should enlightened beings see the body of Buddha? (dharmakaya) They should see the body of Buddha in infinite places. Why? They should not see Buddha in just one thing, one phenomenon, one body, one land, one being - they should see Buddha everywhere. Just as space is omnipresent, in all places, material or immaterial, yet without either arriving or not arriving there, because space is incorporeal, in the same way Buddha is omnipresent, in all places, in all beings, in all things, in all lands, yet neither arriving nor not arriving there, because Buddha's body is incorporeal, manifesting a body for the sake of sentient beings. (Garland Sutra 37)

This statute of the Buddha allows him to become manifested whenever people become ignorant, have no more interest in getting spiritual wisdom, and are too concerned with carnal lusts. The same message appears in the discourse of Krishna of theistic Hinduism (Bhagavad Gita IV, 7-8). The resemblance is even greater by the fact that the bodhisattva beings (as the Hindu avatars) are mediators between humans and Ultimate Reality. This is the second resemblance, the substitution of the Hindu gods with the Buddhist bodhisattvas, which might be interpreted as a penetration of the Hindu bhakti tradition in Buddhism.

In conclusion, Mahayana Buddhism is a pantheistic religion, with an impersonal Ultimate Reality (the dharmakaya) and personal beings (the bodhisattvas) acting as intermediaries between humans and it.

2. Dhamma and Reality ...Bhikkhu Nagasena - Birmingham Buddhist Vihara, UK

<http://web.ukonline.co.uk/buddhism/nagasen2.htm>

No God, no Brahma can be found. No matter of this wheel of life, Just bare phenomena roll Dependent

on conditions all. (Visuddhimagga)

The scripture of Dependent Origination demonstrates the Buddha's view of the nature of reality by showing how human beings wander in Samsara as a result of ignorance (avijja); it further defines the path leading to the end of rebirth as the development of wisdom (vijja). The ultimate reality as defined in Buddhism rests on the definition of these words avijja and vijja. Reality as perceived through ignorance is conditional and is that pointed to in the first and second Noble Truths.

In the Dependent Origination formula, it is suggested that due to lack of wisdom, through not seeing reality clearly, a person is bound to produce kamma. Conditional reality, therefore, leads to wandering round the wheel of becoming. The nature of wisdom, on the other hand, is pure and unconditional. This teaching is the subject of the last two Noble Truths and it is this teaching alone that leads to the end of rebirth. The Buddhist training aims at abandoning the production of kamma and should be developed by the practice of the Noble Eightfold Path. It is just through this that we attain the ultimate wisdom that ends rebirth.

There are thus two ways to experience reality in this world: the arising of rebirth dependent on ignorance and the cessation of rebirth dependent upon wisdom. This is all there has ever been. From this point of view, the Middle Path means understanding the reality of the present that no abiding self ever existed in the past nor will persist in the future. When recollecting all of His past births the Buddha found only this reality. The rebirths were there without permanent abiding soul, as many people believe. There was no self, no soul to be found, which is unchangeable, he said. The existence of these two realities is not dependent upon the manifestation of a Buddha to point them out.

Buddhism came into existence as the result of the discovery of these two realities. Accordingly, practice within it should be concerned with practice rather than with ceremony. Since the realisation of ultimate reality is the central element of Buddhism, the practice of the Dhamma therefore means the practice of religion.

Human beings in a state of ignorance are subject to suffering and the Buddha makes use of wisdom to show how one can be rid of this suffering. Ultimately, experience of suffering and the cause of its arising are products of the mind. Since this is so, the Buddha insists that to investigate such metaphysical questions as the creation of the universe and our place in it only enslaves the mind and overpowers it with concepts of god, divine grace and dependence. Such mind games do not provide empirical evidence and, in fact, create the bondage that is called Samsara. He further confirms that it is not possible to get rid of suffering by such investigation.

In our ignorance, it appears to us that a permanent being or soul, or even inner spark of divinity, sets in motion a process which surfaces in the form of physical, mental or verbal action. These are the product of a mistaken belief in an unchanging self. Thus, any form of craving, either for sensual pleasure or for an eternity of individual existence (or indeed, anything else), is called conditional reality and subjects the mind to the production of kamma.

Conventional religious practices, for example, can be seen as the result of attachment to the concept of a creator, an eternal soul and so on. Such clinging produces kamma and results in rebirth. In Buddhism, the concept of liberation is opposed to such clinging to concepts. That is why the Buddha avoids metaphysical speculation, judging it to be extremely harmful. Down the centuries many battles have raged, much blood has been shed by religious factions striving to prove the true message of their religion.

The Buddha says that attempting to fathom the metaphysical world does not put an end to the human predicament but creates Samsara. Similarly, by craving pleasurable sensations there arise conflict and suffering which, in their turn, produce kamma. For the mind to become stable and at peace one has to experience for oneself the conditional nature of reality. Ultimately, a human being is solely a psycho-physical construct of five components: form, feeling, perception, mental formations and consciousness (the khandas). This is the reality that the Buddha discovered. Because of this five factors human being become identical in terms of perceptions, emotions or feelings, no matter of their race. These are common.

The existence of a human being is a mere phenomenon of the rebirth process. Such renewed being should not, however, be considered dependent on an everlasting soul. There is no eternal soul nor is there annihilation. Ultimate reality is completely apart from concepts of annihilation and of eternal being. There is no place for them. Samsara, conditional existence, is due to the clinging of the five aggregates. It is necessary to learn the theory and practice as discovered by the Buddha in order to achieve liberation. When beginners learn the theory they see it as philosophy rather than reality and misunderstand the teaching. One must practice insight meditation to see things as they really are. What ultimately exists is only peace, which is experienced right now.

The second part: Buddha said that neither parents nor relatives, friends nor material acquisitions could give us inner peace. None of these can surpass and excel the inner peace that arises from one's cultivation of mind; a developed mind and a mind associated with purity that comes from meditation. On contrary, looking for peace outside of ourselves rather than from within prevents us investigating the peace available within the framework of our mind and body.

The Buddha pointed out His central aim of teaching in the Majjhimanikaya where he states "My teaching is only to know two things: Dukkha and cessation of Dukkha". Many people misunderstand Buddhism since they do not accept Dukkha as a true reality. They see Buddhism as teaching a negative view of life rather than seeing the teaching on dukkha as a positive contribution to their understanding. They cannot accept dukkha as a reality because they never look into its underlying meaning. To see the reality of dukkha, as it is one has to see it for oneself, and the way to this realisation is through the practice of meditation, through listening to the teaching on the dhamma and by the exercise of wisdom. Meditation enables us to see the reality of mind and how it operates within us. The timeless reality pertaining to natural law, the pure method of dealing with the investigation into the peace offered by the Buddha is to see the true dhamma as it really is within human consciousness, and not only to see the consciousness associated with dukkha but to see the consciousness

associated with ultimate peace and purity. One becomes peaceful knowing both purity and impurity, sukka and dukkha, and how they operate within us.

One after another, we seek after pleasures, in the process causing ourselves much worry, anxiety, fear, hatred and disappointment. But we never see the arising of worry, anxiety, etc. because the mind becomes overpowered by the object we crave, fettered by taints and clinging to what is desired. Our mind remains restless until our desired object is acquired, only to repeat the same action over and over, as new objects of desire rise up and confront us. So our mind remains restless, day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year, even up to death, never seeing reality nor finding peace. Unless one sees into this process and recognises it for what it is, the mental turmoil will continue to have the power to overwhelm us. The meaning of dukkha should not merely be considered when we are suffering from disease or are in pain, for the ultimate meaning of dukkha transcends both disease and pain. We are dogged by dukkha, by unsatisfactoriness. There is always something to cling to: feelings, objects, fame, power, material objects etc., and all are unsatisfactory for they never quench the thirst for very long. Having achieved one desire another takes its place you will hear someone say "I need only this in my life to become happy" (a recognition of this sense of unsatisfactoriness that drives us on). After acquisition, the possession of that which was desire, there is only a temporary easing before the mind diverts into another object causing new desire and craving to arise, the same as before. This unsatisfactoriness never comes to an end. Dukkha remains constantly active driving us on and on, making us the seeker of ever-new desires, objects and objectives. As well as the craving for acquisitions, there is also the fear of loss associated with ownership and in relationships. Those we love dearly may die or leave us. Maybe they stop loving us back. Here dukkha comes in the form of disappointment, frustration, despair, and loss, even fear of loss. We are never safe from it. Living with undesirable consequences, full of resistance and reaction, little relaxation and without a balanced mind, how can even a so-called religious person find peace? Only through knowing the reality of dukkha can one achieve the peace that is absent from mental turmoil, worry, fear, unsatisfactoriness and so on. Insight meditation is important both to see and to overcome this unsatisfactory life. The well-developed meditator lives with knowledge, reality and peace within.

3. Buddhism and the True Value of Reality...by Thich Tam Thien

<http://www.psywww.com/psyrelig/buddhism.htm>

This is the discussion paper delivered at the conference on "Religion and The Modern Way of Life", organized by the Catholic Solidarity Committee at Hochiminh City in December 1996.

First of all, we would like to thank the Catholic Solidarity Committee of Hochiminh City for inviting us to participate in the seminar on "The Religions Way of Life in Modern Times". Today, as a Buddhist participant in this non Buddhist conference, I would like to focus my discussion on one of the most important, unique but also the

most complex concepts in Buddhism. That is the true value of living reality.

I- BUDDHISM AND THE CONCEPT OF RELIGION.

A- Man's search for the meaning of Religion :

In following and practicing any religion, first of all, one has to know what that religion is all about and how it would guide him to his ultimate liberation. Otherwise, the religious experience that he tries to realize will be a sheer illusion and of course, there will be no real spiritual growth whatsoever.

In the noble but arduous attempt to understand what religion is all about, many philosophers of religions, both ancient and modern, have tried very hard to define religions, including Buddhism. But so far, their efforts have not been very productive, especially in the case of Buddhism. Most of the definitions of religion which have been often built on conceptual reasonings have been unable to grasp the vastness, depth, and vitality of Buddhism. Before we come to a tentative definition of Buddhism, I would like to reexamine some definitions of religions by some of the most respected thinkers and / or from some of the most reliable sources of knowledge in recent history.

+ **Oxford Dictionary** : "Religion - belief in the existence of god or gods who has / have created the universe and given man a spiritual nature which continues to exist after the death of the body... particular, system of faith and worship based on such a belief..., controlling influence on one life ; something one is devoted or committed to". (1)

+ **Thomas Carlyle, the Scottish essayist and historian (1795 - 1881)** : "Religion is the thing a man does practically to heart and knows for certain, concerning his vital relations to this mysterious universe and his duty and destiny therein" (2)

+ **J. S. Mill, the English philosopher and economist (1806 - 1873)** : "The essence of religion is the strong and earnest direction of the conditions and desires towards an ideal object recognized as of the highest excellence, and as rightly paramount over all selfish objects of desire". (3)

+ **Aldous Huxley, the English novelist (1894 - 1963)** : "Religion is, among many other things, a system of education, by means of which human beings may train themselves, first to make desirable changes in their own personalities and, at one remove, in society, and, in the second place, to heighten consciousness and so establish more adequate relations between themselves". (4)

+ **Friedrich Engels, the German socialist (1820 - 1895)** : "Religion is nothing but the fantastic reflection in men's minds of those external forces which control their early life". (5)

+ **Sir. Edwin Ray Lankester (1847 - 1929)** : "Religion means the knowledge of our destiny and of the means of fulfilling it. We can say no more and no less of science". (6)

+ **Alfred North whitehead, the English mathematician and philosopher (1861-1947)** : "Religion is what the individual does with his own solitude. If you are never solitary, you are never religious" (7)

There are two trends of thoughts in the above statements. First is the trend in which religion is defined as the moral and ethical system that man can recognize and understand with his reasoning mind. Second is the trend in which religion is presented as a miraculous mode of existence which requires man's direct perceptions and reflections. Besides these two trends of thoughts, there is the third one which is based purely on reason. American political philosopher Thomas Paine (1737 - 1809) represented this school with his saying at the last moment of his life : "The world is my country, mankind are my brotherhood and to do good is my religion". (8) Last is the case of modern Indian philosophy. Many Indian philosophers proclaimed that religion is not a series of profound theological doctrines but an inner experience derived from man's direct recognition of the divine existing in him.

Regardless of that these definitions of religions are different and contradictory, they share one common ground. That is the emphasis and embrace of loving-kindness as the highest religious value as Thomas Paine eloquently and succinctly declared : "To do good is my religion". (9)

B. The Buddhist definition of Religion.

D.T. Suzuki, the well known Japanese Zen master and Buddhist scholar once said : "Buddhism is a religion that refuses to be objectively defined, for this will be setting a limit to the growth of its spirit". (10a) However, if Buddhism has to be defined, in any case, we should then first examine what Buddhism has to say about man and his world, both at the conceptual level and the deep psychological one. At the conceptual level according to Buddhism, language and logical thinking can only be used to observe and analyse the surface of the human world and the universe. They can deal only with the manifestation of the physiognomy. On the contrary, at the deep psychological level ; the spiritual experience is an implicit hermeneutical struture. It transcends the monistic, dualistic and pluralistic world. It goes beyond all linguistic formations because it is invisible and formless. It belongs to the realm of metaphysics. This does not suggest that Buddhism tries to lead man into the world of fantasies filled with "incense mist". Buddhism only aims to cut through the logical thingking of man's ego and shows him a way to get in touch with the divine nature or the Buddha nature in himself.

D. T. Suzuki then put forward his definition of Buddhism which, he argued, must be that of the life-force which carries forward a spiritual movement called Buddhism.(10b) Suzuki 's definition of Buddhism means that from the Buddhist point of view religion can never be discussed without any refenence to the spiritual realm and / or the inner experience of the individual involved. It should be made clear that

here, according to Buddhism, returning to the primordial essence of man or the true nature does not mean an advocacy of egocentrism. On the contrary, it means, in order to take the first step to return to the primordial essence of man, first and foremost, man must completely cast off all the attributes of his ego, namely his infatuated feelings, solid attachment, sensuous desire, mental formations such as "I", "mine" and "myself". Neither does the return to the inner spiritual experience means non-egocentrism. According to Buddhism, precisely at the moment that one get in touch with his devine nature, he establishes in himself an ultimate reality which by nature is essential, original, and eternal - This is called Tathata (Suchness) or Buddha nature which is an everlasting, living stream of present consciousness.

As a consequence, Buddhism is not the faith that one has to accept blindly. Neither is it a series of sacred principles that are created, transmitted to man's soul and guided by some mysterious power from outside. It is the teachings that show us the path to reach enlightenment through our inner individual experience. In Dhammapada, Lord Buddha said : "Like earth, a balanced and well disciplined person results not. He is comparable to an Indakhila. Like a pool unsullied by mud, is he, to such a balanced one life's wandering do not arise". (11)

II- BUDDHISM - ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR RELIGIONS OF THE MODERN WORLD

Albert Einstein, the famous German physicist, in his Testament wrote that : "The religion of the future will be a cosmic religion. It should transcend a person God and avoid dogmas and theology. Covering both the natural and spiritual, it should be based on a religious sense, arising from the experience of all things, natural and spiritual, as a meaningful unity. Buddhism answers this description". (12) How will Buddhism be understood through this inclusive and thoughtful statement of one of the greatest scientists of the 20th century ?

A. Buddhism - The Religion Which Transcends A Person God, Dogmas, and Theology and The Doctrine of Dependent Origination and The Doctrine of Cause and Effects.

In essence, Buddhism is a system of teachings which shows us the way to return to our primordial nature or our true nature. Once standing on the ground of our true nature, we will recognize the true nature of other human existences as well as other existing beings around us like bird, stone, branch of tamarind tree. This is the interdependent relations or the Dependent Origination of the reality. Simultaneously, with the realization of his true nature and those of other existing beings, man also realizes that, it is his volitional actions that create and shape his own destiny-as Lord Buddha said : "Owner of their karma are the beings, heirs of their karma, the karma is their womb from which they are born, their karma is their friend, their refuge". (13) In Dhammapada, Lord Buddha also taught us : "By oneself alone is evil done, by oneself alone is evil avoided, by oneself alone is one purified. Purity and impurity depend on oneself. No one can purify another". (Attanaø 'va katam paøpam, attanaø sankilissati, attanaø akatam paøpam, attanaø 'va visujjhati ; suddhi asuddhi asuddhi paccattam naønno annam visodhage) (14) This suggests that The Buddha did not recognize any super natural power which exerted over control human life. In

Buddhism, man is the only sentient being who has volitional actions. He has to harvest and accept the consequences of these actions and, doing so, he lives his own fate...

The doctrine of causes and effects in Buddhism asserts that both good karma and bad karma are the end results of man 's psychological and physical actions ; and that through the relation of cause and effect, man establishes his own karma with his good and evil actions. It also affirms that man has the potential capacities to liberate himself from the life which he has created and lived with his own psychological attitude and actions accumulated in successive previous lives ; that is the orientated biological causation.

As a consequence, the doctrine of causes and effects awakens in man the inner power which makes him to be himself and transforms him into his own creator with responsibilities and obligations. In other words, the doctrine of causes and effects liberates man from the ruling power of person God, dogmas and theology. Once liberated, man would understand that he has to be responsible for all the consequences of his own psychological states and volitional actions and should not look for any salvation outside himself. St. Paul 's famous statement that : "If Christ be not raised in you, your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins" (15) - seems to acknowledge man 's self liberating power (once he is aware of the causes and effects of his own actions).

B. Buddhism - The Religion Which Comprises Both The Natural and Spiritual ; and The Doctrine of Sunyaøta.

If Buddhism cuts through the natural world with prism of Dependent Origination (paticcasamuppao - anatta), it illuminates the metaphysical world by spot lighting at the latter 's emptiness (Sunyaøta). The metaphysical world is empty because it does not reside in forms and sounds and goes beyond all appearances (Buddhist terms called Naõma - Ruõpa : mentality and corporeality). It is in the realm of non-dualism (Asunyataø-Abhaøvaø).

As discussed above, in Buddhism, the process of becoming (Bhava) and existence of human beings and nature is viewed as the operation of a myriad interconnecting causations and conditions (yakti). In this intricate operation, there is no single object that can live independently, without being interconnected with its surrounding, and / or in disharmony with its constituents.

On this irrefutable interconnecting conditions of the human and natural world, Buddha said :

"No God, no Brahma can be found
No matter of this wheel of life
Just bare phenomena roll
Dependent on Conditions all" (16)

In other words, there is no prime force which sets in motion the operation of the

human and natural world. This is the foundation of doctrine of Patīccasamuppāḥ - anatta, which consists of the teachings of non-ego (pudgalanairātmya) and non-substantiality of things (dharmanairātmya). It is also called the doctrine of Sunyata or Emptiness.

As a philosophical concept, Sunyata (Emptiness or E'tat de vacuiteù) is the nature of the original reality, or the absolute reality.

Man recognizes and is conscious of Sunyata when he becomes one with the absolute reality. However, it is important to note that Sunyata is not the opposite of substantiality like the Have not versus the Have or the Negative (asat) versus the Affirmative (sat). Neither does it mean a complete absence of content. In trying to understand the Buddhist concept of Sunyata, many people tend to turn to logical reasoning and different sets of opposite categories and subcategorizes such as "to be" or "not to be" to define it with the irsecular philosophical mind - set. However, in doing so, they are entangled in an endless web of dualistic concepts such as to be (bhava) not to be (abhava), birth or death, permanence or impermanence, coming or going without directly experiencing or living with the original and ultimate Reality which exists right in this very life. Lord Buddha taught us that, all phenomenon (dharma) do not have a true self (svabhava) ; neither birth or death that is pure and Tathata by nature or it is Sarvadharmasūnyatā (all is Emptiness). Consequently, Sunyata and Tathata are the same. They are omnipresent and everlasting.

Following is the examination of the concept of Sunyata according to the Mahayana Buddhist philosophy of knowledge-only (Prajñātimatā).

First, Sunyata is the true nature of dharma or the existing substantiality. When man recognizes the entirety of Sunyata, he becomes enlightened. Saying that does not mean to negate the existing substantiality or the world of phenomena, but to affirm that man or the subject which recognizes and the world or the object which is recognized are created, and exist in a great number of causes and effects systems. They are not independent and self contained entities. They are non-entities. According to The Buddhist philosophy of Knowledge-Only, in Buddhism all existing beings has three natures :

- Temporary nature (Parikalpita - svabhava)
- Dependent nature (Paratantra - svabhava)
- Absolute nature (Pariniṣpanna - svabhava)

1. Temporary Nature :

Ordinarily, man has a habitual tendency to control and to possess the objective world. This is resulted in the idea that the world are made up of living independent objects. But in reality, these object do not have any intrinsic attribute. Their nature is emptiness and no-self. So the so called independent nature that men imposed on the

world is called the temporary nature. The temporary nature is formed in the process of interaction between man 's senses which are determined by his physical and psychological make up and the objective world. In Buddhist terms man 's physical and psychological make up is called Skandhas (five aggregates of body), A0yatana (six spheres of sense organs), and Dhatus (body remains).

2. The Dependent Nature :

Although the temporary nature is unreal, it does not suggest that things are not actually existing. The key issue here is to explain and illustrate the process of becoming of things.

And yet this process of becoming is made up of the consequences of *paticcasamuppada* or interconnecting causations. Therefore the nature of the process of becoming of things is impermanent, ever changing, and self annihilating (*anitya - uccheda*). This view of the objective world refuses all man 's attempts to reduce the world into an individual, unique and self contained entity. It also rejects the theories of "Chances" and "Coincidences" which advocates the simplistic and mechanical operation of the material world. As a result, if one rejects the dependent nature of the world, he will automatically and inevitably become the victim of nihilism. And he also rejects the reality which is actually becoming through the operation of the myriad of interconnecting conditions.

3. The Absolute Nature :

Existing beings are *Tathata* (Suchness) because by nature, they do not have temporary natures in themselves. Neither do they have the dependent nature in themselves because the dependent nature consists of series of causes and effects and by nature is non substantiality. That is to say they are empty. As a result, at the level of language and logical thinking what we call the inherent nature of things never really exist. It is non-self or *Anatta*.

In summation, of the three natures of things. The temporary nature shows that by nature the world is empty, the dependent nature illustrates that man and his world are dependently originated and the absolute nature asserts that the *Tathata* essence or *Nirvana* exists right in physical and psychological world, not in any other worlds regardless of how fantastically this other world is imagined. As a result to experience the Emptiness of the world one has no other way except to live or to merge with the three natures of the existing world. This is the actual process of living with reality and attaining the Enlightenment in the Buddhist *prajna0ptima0tra* philosophy

III. BUDDHISM - THE RELIGION FOR SPIRITUAL AND RATIONAL WHOLENESS

To practice Buddhism is to lead a way of life with the motto : "Not to do evil, to do good, to purify one's mind". The Buddha's enlightenment is the end of the spiritual journey, full of hardships and deprivations. It was the supreme will power and the extraordinary energy which has transformed Prince Siddhartha from a man with a

deep religious consciousness and a wholesome life into a Buddha. Buddha is the sentient being who had reached enlightenment and obtained great wisdom.

Therefore, it is necessary to affirm that it is the inner experience of each individual that would lead him to the supreme enlightenment and that enlightenment is the moment that the supreme wisdom or The Boddhicitta in one individual blossoms and radiates to all sentient and natural beings. Lord Buddha said that : All sentient beings can become Buddha. On the path to enlightenment, one has to light the torch and hold it to show the way for himself ; in the ocean of samsara (Cycles of life), each individual has to be an isolated island ; I, Tathagata is merely a teacher in principle. (17).

According to Buddhism, the religious consciousness and the inner individual experience are the two extremely important factors in man 's path to his enlightenment. They are the keys which control man's thinking and action in his relations with the outside world. As a result, consciousness or mind is always the bases of Buddhist training. Buddha said : "Mind is the forerunner of all (evil condition) - Mind is chief ; and they are mind - made. If, with an impure mind, one speaks or acts, then pain follows one even as the wheel, the hoof of the Ox". "... If, with a pure mind, one speaks or acts, then happiness follows one even as the shadow that never leaves" (Manopubhanga ; manasaø le padutthena, bhaø sati vaø karoti vaø, tato nam dukkhamanveti, cakkam 'va vahato padam... manaøsa le pasannena, bhaø sati vaø karoti vaø, tato nam sukhamanveti, chaø yaø 'va anapaø yini". (18) (Yamakavagga)

To lead a Buddhist way of life, whether it is to cultivate faith in Buddha or to take refuge the three jewels, man has to have the correct consciousness or the pure mind. The Buddhist term for this is Ehipasiko, which means "Come and recognize". Buddhism does not teach man to believe in, obey and worship anything that he does not know or cannot recognize ; the term Ehipasiko also implies the inner experience of enlightenment that is only known by the individual himself. In a Buddhist life, not the idol of worship but man is the most important matter. As a result, a real Buddhist has to develop for himself a life of religious sense and an inner spiritual experience. The combination of these two elements will ultimately give rise to the absolute truth or the spiritual value. With them, one will develop the omniscient mind which rises above all delusions and defilements. Only then, a life - force will surge from within and brilliantly radiate into the world. This inner life-force will fearlessly and gladly receive any infringements and not be hindered by any obstacles. On the path to reach the highest perfection in the spiritual life, each step forward is a belittlement of the ego. Only when one reaches a totally egoless state, Nirvana will rise in his life and right in this world.

To conclude this paper I would like to read Venerable Thich Thien Sieu 's statement about Nirvana : "Nirvana is something which outrightly rejects the ego. Nirvana is indefinite and spaceless. It is very difficult to enter Nirvana because it is formless (Aristaka). To enter Nirvana, we must also be as formless as Nirvana. The entrance to Nirvana is very narrow. It is as thin as hair feather, so thin that we cannot go through it, if we still carry our possessions with us, be it our body, our concept of the "I" and the "ego". The bigger our ego becomes, the further we will be away from

Nirvana. So it is ruled that ego will lead to Samsara ; non-ego to Nirvana" (19)

Thank you.

Notes :

(1) OXFORD Advanced Learner's Dictionary, Jonathan Crowther, Oxford University Press, New York, 1992, p. 762.

(2) Why Religion ?, K. Sri. Dhammananda, The Buddhist Missionary Society, Kuala Lumpur, 1966, p. 06.

(3) Ibid, p. 06.

(4) Ibid, p. 06.

(5) Ibid, p. 07.

(6) Ibid, p. 07.

(7) Ibid, p. 07.

(8) Ibid, p. 08.

(9) One should be cautions about the do-goodism that Thomas paine advocated here. Not all the people who do good are religious. Further more, doing good does not mean the same thing to different nations, peoples and races. Taking the issue of family planing by modern medical devices for instance. It may mean loving kindness to some but unkindness to others.

(10a and b) Essay in Zen Buddhism, D. T. Suzuki, Vol I, p. 53.

(11) reference omitted

(12) Extracted from, Ñāi i Cōông Trieát Hoï c Phōông Ñoàng, Haø Thuùc Minh - Minh Chi, Tröông Ñāi i Hoï c Toàng Hôi p, TP. Hoà Chí Minh, HCMC, 1994, p. 10.

(13) Majjhima Nikaya. 135, from Buddhist Dictionary Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines, Nyanatikola, Frewin & Co. Ltd. Colombo, Ceylon, 1972, p. 77.

(14) Dhammapada, Thích Minh Chau, Buddhist Institute of Hochiminh City, 1990, p. 97.

(15) Essay in Zen Buddhism, D. T. Suzuki, Vol I, p. 57.

(16) The Path of Purification, Bhadantacariya Buddha-Gkosa, translated from the Pali, Comlombo, Ceylon, 1956.

(17) In Nikaya and Mahayana Sutras.

(18) Dhammapada, Naørada, Vajiraøraøma, Colombo, 1962.

(19) Nirvana is Non-self, Thich Thien Sieu, Buddhist Institute of Vietnam, Hochiminh City, 1990, Statement quoted on the back cover. (Ven, Thich Thien Sieu is the Head of the Buddhist Central Educational Committee in Vietnam).

4. NoZen

<http://www.nozen.com/index.htm>

Welcome to NoZen

Please, make yourself comfortable and relax. Maybe some tea, maybe some music, maybe just some silence or the sound of a small waterfall.

Find a style that pleases you and relaxes you and set yourself free to wander.

Maybe you'll find a koan that makes you laugh, or think, or maybe, just maybe, you'll find the one that sets your mind free.

But in the meantime, enjoy yourself.

NoZen is the brainchild of Ken Boucher. It's a simple site with a simple purpose. However, I don't see my work on it ending anytime soon.

This isn't a for profit site. It's not here to drum up business or to get rich off of banner ads. It's not here so that I can scream to the world, "Look what I can do". I have other sites for that.

There's a place I used to go once, as a small child, where I could sit and think. Sometimes, I would just stare at a leaf or a bird and get lost in the moment.

The internet doesn't really have a place like that, or if it does, I haven't found it yet.

And maybe we can't build such a place. Maybe the zen gardens we build with our rakes may never achieve true beauty any more than the web pages we build with HTML.

But for now, adding another koan or making a different style sheet doesn't seem like

such a bad way to spend a few minutes.

5. Man's Search for Ultimate Meaning ...by Viktor E. Frankl

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0738203548/wwwkusalaorg-20/>

Amazon.com - Viktor Frankl, author of the smash bestseller *Man's Search for Meaning*, offers a more straightforward alternative to traditional Freudian psychoanalysis: one's problems may be rooted in a failure to find a meaning in life beyond one's interior world. The basis for his interpretation, however, is not so straightforward. It lies in Frankl's existential analysis, plumbing for the reasons that people have repressed their consciences, their love, their creativity. By legitimizing a spiritual aspect of the human mind, Frankl has separated us definitively from the animal kingdom, but it is still up to each of us to rise to our human potential. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Amazon.com - Reviewer: A reader from Lubbock, TX USA ...Holocaust survivor Frankl earned the right to teach us how to transcend ourselves and find "ultimate meaning". He was a contemporary of Freud who was able to take Freud to task for naturalism and reductionism which "undermines and erodes the enthusiasm of youth". Frankl has a lot to tell us about how to avoid the neurotic train wreck many of us are headed for. He points out that an existential vacuum (meaninglessness and emptiness) is growing in our culture as man "Now, knowing neither what he must do nor what he should do, he sometimes does not even know what he basically wishes to do. Instead, he wishes to do what other people do-which is conformism-or he does what other people wish him to do-which is totalitarianism." Frankl tells us "Man is responsible for fulfilling the meaning of his life." He contends "man is not he who poses the question, What is the meaning of life? But he who is asked this question, for life itself poses it to him. And man has to answer to life by answering for life; he has to respond by being responsible;" and "Being human means being confronted continually with situations, each of which is at once a chance and a challenge, giving us a "chance" to fulfill ourselves by meeting the "challenge" to fulfill it's meaning.

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The Urban Dharma Newsletter... March 30, 2004

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0. Humor/Quotes...

Enlightenment After Death

The Emperor asked Master Gudo, "What happens to a man of enlightenment after death?"

"How should I know?" replied Gudo.

"Because you are a master," answered the Emperor.

"Yes sir," said Gudo, "but not a dead one."

Yes, there is a Nirvana; it is leading your sheep to a green pasture, and in putting your child to sleep, and in writing the last line of your poem. - **Kahlil Gibran (1883 - 1931)**

1. Nirvana, Buddhism

<http://reference.allrefer.com/encyclopedia/N/nirvana.html>

Related Category: Buddhism

nirvana[nErvA´nu] Pronunciation Key, in Buddhism, Jainism, and Hinduism, a state of supreme liberation and bliss, contrasted to samsara or bondage in the repeating cycle of death and rebirth. The word in Sanskrit refers to the going out of a flame once its fuel has been consumed; it thus suggests both the end of suffering and the cessation of desires that perpetuate bondage. Epithets of nirvana in Buddhism include "the free," "the immortal," and "the unconditioned." Nirvana is attainable in life, and the death of one who has attained it is termed parinirvana, or complete nirvana. This has often been interpreted as annihilation, but in fact the Buddhist scriptures say that the state of the enlightened man beyond death cannot be described. Nirvana in the different Indian traditions is achieved by moral discipline and the practice of yoga leading to the extinction of all attachment and ignorance.

2. Nirvana

<http://library.thinkquest.org/28505/buddhism/nirva.htm>

Nirvana is the supreme state free from suffering and individual existence. It is a state Buddhists refer to as "Enlightenment". It is the ultimate goal of all Buddhists. The attainment of nirvana breaks the otherwise endless rebirth cycle of reincarnation. Buddhists also consider nirvana as freedom from all worldly concerns such as greed, hate, and ignorance. No one can describe in words what nirvana is. It can only be experienced directly.

3. Buddhist Nirvana ...by Tom Harris

<http://science.howstuffworks.com/nirvana1.htm>

The term nirvana is associated with both Hinduism, the oldest religion in the world, and Buddhism, its best known off-shoot. In both Hinduism and Buddhism, the word refers to a higher state of being, but the two religions view this state very differently. As it turns out, examining the distinction between the concepts of nirvana is an excellent way of understanding some of the major differences between the two religions.

Consequently, there are very few qualities or beliefs you can attribute to Hinduism or Buddhism as a whole. But there are a number of ideas that broadly characterize the religions. When we talk about Hindu and Buddhist beliefs, we're referring to these

general tenets that are common to most major sects.

Nirvana is mainly associated with Buddhism, which was born out of Hinduism back in the 5th century B.C. It began as a movement within Hinduism, based on the philosophy and life of a man named Siddhartha Gautama, and eventually diverged to form its own path.

Siddhartha Gautama, who later became the Buddha ("the awakened one"), was born to a rich, ruling family around 563 B.C. in what is now modern Nepal. According to Buddhist legend, he led a sheltered, pampered life for all of his childhood and well into his twenties.

As a young man, he began to question the spiritual worth of this luxurious life and decided to give up all his possessions and emotional attachments, including his wife and young son. He wanted to understand the true nature of life and saw all his attachments as distractions, in keeping with Hindu thought.

He became a shramana, a wandering, homeless ascetic dedicated to meditation. He hoped to find enlightenment by completely detaching himself from the world, swinging to the polar opposite of his earlier life. Over time, he removed himself farther and farther from the earthly world, to the point that he was close to starvation. But he still hadn't achieved enlightenment.

He decided that if he continued on that path, he would die without reaching any understanding, so he gave up the ascetic life and accepted a meal from a stranger. He decided to take the middle road, the life between the luxury he had known and the poverty he had known.

According to legend, soon after Siddhartha took this path, he finally achieved enlightenment. As he meditated under a tree, he saw all of his past lives, and then the past lives of others. Eventually he gained a perfect, omniscient knowledge of this world and the world beyond it.

In Buddhism, this state, which the Buddha couldn't relate in language, is called nirvana. The word is Sanskrit for "to extinguish." In this case, it means to extinguish ignorance, hatred and earthly suffering. The term is most closely associated with Buddhism, though it's applied to a similar concept in Hinduism (as we'll see later on).

By achieving nirvana, you can escape samsara, the cycle of reincarnation that characterizes both Hinduism and Buddhism. In each life, a soul is punished or rewarded based on its past actions, or karma, from the current life as well as earlier lives (which also include lives as animals). It's important to note that the law of karma isn't due to a god's judgment over a person's behavior; it's closer to Newton's law of motion -- every action has an equal and opposite reaction. It happens automatically, of its own accord.

When you achieve nirvana, you stop accumulating bad karma because you've

transcended it. You spend the rest of your life and sometimes future lives "working off" the bad karma you've already accumulated.

Once you have fully escaped the karmic cycle, you achieve parinirvana -- final nirvana -- in the afterlife. As with Hindu nirvana, souls that have achieved parinirvana are free of the cycle of reincarnation. The Buddha never specified what parinirvana was like. In Buddhist thought, it is beyond normal human comprehension.

In the next section, we'll find out what the Buddha prescribed for achieving nirvana on earth and parinirvana in the afterlife.

4. Hindu Nirvana ...by Tom Harris

<http://science.howstuffworks.com/nirvana3.htm>

In Hindu tradition, nirvana (more commonly called moksha) is the reuniting with Brahman, the universal God or universal soul. In traditional Hinduism, a soul reaches this state after living many lives in which it climbs up through the varna, or caste system.

Humans accumulate good karma by performing the duties of the caste they were born in. If a person is born in a lower caste, his only hope is to behave properly in that caste so he will move up to a higher caste in the next life.

When a soul has reached the upper castes, it may escape the cycle of reincarnation by eliminating bad karma. This includes setting the scales right through good deeds (possibly over several lifetimes) and also removing oneself from all earthly distractions. When a soul finally escapes the karmic cycle, it becomes one with Brahman when the last bodily incarnation dies. This is a higher plane of existence that transcends the suffering of earthly life. Essentially, the soul rejoins the intangible energy that created the universe.

Buddhism arose out of Siddhartha's alternate understanding of samsara and transcendence of earthly life. In the Buddhist philosophy, the best path to enlightenment is somewhere in between the luxury of many in the upper castes and the poverty of the most devout Hindu holy men.

Siddhartha was also a social reformer of sorts. He taught that anybody might achieve higher enlightenment and escape from samsara if he followed the right path, completely rejecting the caste structure that defined traditional Hinduism. This is arguably the most important difference between the two religions, at least when Buddhism was born.

The worlds of Hinduism and Buddhism, and the concept of nirvana, are rich and multi-

faceted. As in most religions, you can summarize the fundamental ideas quickly, but you could easily spend your whole life studying the details.

5. How Buddhist Nirvana Works ...by Tom Harris

<http://science.howstuffworks.com/nirvana2.htm>

Achieving Buddhist Nirvana

The Buddha couldn't fully relate his new understanding of the universe, but he could spread the essential message of his enlightenment and guide people toward achieving the same understanding. He traveled from place to place teaching the four noble truths:

1. Life is suffering.
2. This suffering is caused by ignorance of the true nature of the universe.
3. You can only end this suffering by overcoming ignorance and attachment to earthly things.
4. You can overcome ignorance and attachment by following the Noble Eightfold Path.

The Noble Eightfold Path is a list of eight ideals that guide a person toward greater understanding of the universe. The eight ideals are:

- * Right views
- * Right intention
- * Right speech
- * Right action
- * Right livelihood
- * Right effort
- * Right mindedness
- * Right contemplation

On the surface, the eight ideals are incredibly vague -- they're open to almost any interpretation. Buddhist sects do view them differently, but generally speaking, Buddhists follow the path by approaching the world with compassion, patience and joy, and contemplating the universe through meditation. The fundamental goals are to cultivate morality (shila), meditation (dhyana) and wisdom (prajna).

Buddhists who achieve nirvana on their own become buddhas, awakened ones (this is different from "the Buddha," the specific buddha who was incarnated as Siddhartha). Like the Buddha, other buddhas gain omniscience when they are

enlightened. Buddhists who achieve nirvana with the help of a buddha guide become arhats, people who are enlightened but not omniscient.

While nirvana is possible for any person, in most Buddhist sects only monks attempt to achieve it. Lay Buddhists -- Buddhists outside the monastic community -- strive instead for a higher existence in their next life. They follow the Noble Eightfold Path and help others, trying to accumulate good Karma. In this sense, they're working toward nirvana because they're setting up a future life in which they might achieve nirvana.

6. Buddhist Enlightenment vs Nirvana ...by Rev. Kusala Bhikshu

<http://www.urbandharma.org/udharma6/enlightnirvana.html>

Disclaimer - Buddhist Enlightenment vs Nirvana... Is not an academic article, but simply a personal reflection on the unity and diversity found in Buddhism. My interpretation of Enlightenment and Nirvana is only a finger pointing, and not the moon.

When I first started reading books on Buddhism back in the late 1970's, I had trouble understanding *Nirvana and Enlightenment. These two words were often used interchangeably by authors writing on the *Theravada and *Mahayana traditions. Sometimes though, the meaning seemed to change depending on who was doing the writing.

I couldn't understand why, for instance... In some Zen and Mahayana texts folks didn't want Nirvana. Why did some choose one, and not the other? If they were not the same... What was the difference?

The first thing I did was define Enlightenment and Nirvana myself, in a way that made sense to me. My definition of Nirvana became- "The end of suffering"... and Enlightenment became- "The Wisdom of Emptiness."

Nirvana- The End of Suffering... In this lifetime and all future lifetimes.

The Buddha once said, "I teach the path to immortality." As it turns out, he didn't mean, not having to die, even Christ had to die. The Buddha was saying... Samsara, the perpetual cycle of birth and death ended in Nirvana, I could never be reborn again... I would exist and not exist at the very same time, forever. I would abide in Nirvana.

Enlightenment- The Wisdom of Emptiness... The wisdom that arises from the direct experience of all phenomena being empty of independent existence.

Knowing through personal experience (for example, meditation) that all things are interconnected and interdependent. That nothing in this world exists independently. All things are connected and conditional... In other words... All things exist because of other things.

I am here because my parents had sex, and I had Karma. If both conditions hadn't come together in a very special way years ago, I wouldn't be standing here today, but that's only half the story.

In order for me to live in this world, the Buddha said I need... "Food, Shelter, Clothing, and Medicine." These are the four major conditions necessary for me to subsist. Some conditions were necessary for me to be born, other conditions are important for me to stay alive.

The whole story is... Certain conditions got me here, other conditions keep me here, and when all the necessary conditions come to an end, so do I. I do not live independent of conditions.

Enlightenment is a direct result, of the direct experience, of conditional and interconnected reality. Enlightenment is more than an intellectual understanding though, it's also an intuitive knowing. It is a total transformation of the heart.

A favorite Mahayana sutra on emptiness is the Heart Sutra.

The Perfect Wisdom of the Heart Sutra

Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva, when practicing deeply the Perfect Wisdom clearly saw that all five Skandhas are empty and passed beyond all suffering.

Sariputra, form does not differ from emptiness: Emptiness does not differ from form. Form then is emptiness. Emptiness then is form. Sensation, perception, volition, and consciousness, are also like this.

Sariputra, all Dharmas are marked with emptiness: not born and not dying, not stained and not pure, not gaining and not losing. Therefore, in emptiness there is no form, no sensation, perception, volition or consciousness. No eye, ear, nose, tongue, body or mind; nor form, sound, smell, taste, touch, or Dharmas; no realm of sight 'til we come to no realm of consciousness; no ignorance and no ending of ignorance, 'til we come to no old age and death, and no ending of old age and death. No suffering, origination, extinction, or path. No wisdom, and no attainment, with nothing to attain.

Because the Bodhisattva is the Perfect Wisdom of emptiness, his mind has no hindrance. Having no hindrance, there is no fear and far from all fantasy, he is dwelling in Nirvana.

Because all Buddhas of the three times practice the wisdom of emptiness, they gain complete and perfect enlightenment.

Therefore know, that Perfect Wisdom, is the great holy mantram, the great bright mantram, the wisdom mantram, the unequaled mantram, which can destroy all suffering---truly real and not false. So he gave the Perfect Wisdom mantram, which goes;

Ga te Ga te, Pa ra Ga te,
Pa ra sam Ga te,
Bodhi Swaha.

When a Buddhist realizes Enlightenment... The "Great Compassion" cannot but arise in his or her heart. He is no longer able to view the world in the same way he did before his Enlightenment. He can now see, feel, know, and understand... If one person is sick, hungry, homeless, or dying in the world... There is a part of him that is sick, hungry, homeless, or dying. He no longer feels separate and safe. He views the world as a sea of suffering and is directly connected to each and every suffering being, in the same way the ocean connects to each and every wave.

It's really a choice all Buddhist practitioners make... To change themselves in a way that is of benefit to all living beings, and not just their 'Self.' This transformation is founded on the direct experience of "Enlightenment" in Mahayana Buddhism. The path that leads to "Enlightenment" is called the 'Path of the *Bodhisattva.'

Reconnecting to the world in this very special way, does not end the Bodhisattva's suffering, however... In some ways Bodhisattva's may suffer more, but each time they help end the suffering of another being, their suffering is also eased. Each time they feed someone, clothe someone, shelter someone, comfort someone... Their suffering is transformed.

The path of the Bodhisattva is very difficult... There is no time out, they never take a vacation. Where would they go? Where is the place, no one suffers?

In the Theravada tradition, the Buddha was a Bodhisattva numerous times in his past lives and seemed to achieve Enlightenment many times before his Nirvana. The story of the Buddha's life as a Bodhisattva is found in an Early Buddhist text called the 'Jataka Tales.'

In the Mahayana Tradition, the focus is on 'Enlightenment,' not Nirvana. The goal is to become a Bodhisattva, and then a Buddha. The Bodhisattva ends his/her suffering only in Buddhahood, and not before. In the Mahayana, it's not so much... Do what the Buddha says... But, do what the Buddha did.

In the Theravada tradition, the focus is on Nirvana... Here and now. By following the teachings of the Buddha, he/she can become an *Arahant. Having crossed over the sea of suffering and landed on the other shore... The Arahant not only ends his

suffering, but gains the 'Compassion and Wisdom' of a Buddha

But again, as with the Bodhisattva, the Arahant's life is fully dedicated to the end of suffering. Again, there is no rest so long as one person suffers. Again, there is no place to go, and nothing to do, other than be of service. The activity of the Bodhisattva and the Arahant is not determined by Self or ego, but by compassion and wisdom for the other.

When all is said and done, are the path's of the Bodhisattva and Arahant the same? I don't think so, they appear to be different... But they both end and/or reduce suffering in the world.

Is Enlightenment the same as Nirvana? I think they mean different things to different people. In my mind, the future Bodhisattva strives towards Enlightenment, and the future Arahant towards Nirvana.

In the Theravada tradition, the focus is on Nirvana, doing what the Buddha taught, and following the path of the Arahant to the 'End of Suffering.'

In the Mahayana tradition, the focus is on Enlightenment, doing what the Buddha did, and following the path of the Bodhisattva to the 'Wisdom of Emptiness.'

Before I end this portion of the presentation... One last point needs to be made... I have tried to share with you how Enlightenment and Nirvana may be different... But they are very much the same in this sense.

That in the end... In the Ultimate reality of Buddhism... Both the path of the Bodhisattva and the Arahant lead to the end of suffering. Just as the Buddha's many past lives as a Bodhisattva finished in Buddhahood. Every path found in Buddhism will ultimately end in Nirvana!

I hope my explanation of Enlightenment and Nirvana will help you read the teaching's of the Buddha with more clarity and insight.

Bodhisattva... Arahant... Enlightenment... Nirvana... The Wisdom of Emptiness... The End of Suffering... The choice is up to you!

* **Mahayana**

The Great Vehicle. This form of Buddhism emerged somewhere between 150 BCE and 100CE. Its distinctive features include the new emphasis given to compassion and the Bodhisattva ideal, the three-bodies of the Buddha doctrine, emptiness and skill in means.

* **Bodhisattva**

Enlightenment Being. This is a being whose Buddhahood is assured but who postpones his/her own entry into Nirvana to help all other sentient beings attain to it first. The Buddha himself was described as a Bodhisattva in stories of his previous lives.

* **Theravada**

The Theravada school of Buddhism was the first one to emerge after the Buddha's parinirvana (Death). Over the centuries, it has retained its unique approach to the search for Nirvana, relying closely on the word of the Buddha as it appears in the Pali Canon.

* **Arahant**

Noble one. An arahant is an individual who has realized Nirvana, brought an end to his own suffering and the cycle of birth and death.

* **Nirvana**

To cease blowing. Nirvana is the ultimate goal of Buddhism, the third noble truth. In nirvana, the suffering and the desire that causes suffering have come to an end, as has the cycle of birth and death. Sometimes nirvana is referred to by the Buddha as 'unborn' and 'unconditioned', in contrast to the phenomenal world we experience in our unenlightened state.

7. Nirvana Day

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/religion/buddhism/nirvana.shtml>

Nirvana Day is an annual Buddhist festival. It is also known as Parinirvana and is celebrated by some Buddhists on February 15th. Nirvana Day is one of many Buddhist festivals which also include Wesak and Uposatha days. Nirvana Day is the celebration of Buddha's death when he reached total Nirvana, at the age of 80.

On Nirvana Day, Buddhists think about their lives and how they can work towards gaining the perfect peace of nirvana. Nirvana is believed to be the end of rebirth and is the ultimate aim of buddhism. It is reached when all want and suffering is gone.

Buddhists celebrate Nirvana by meditating or by going to Buddhist temples or monasteries. Celebrations vary throughout the world. In monasteries Nirvana Day is treated as a social occasion. Food is prepared and some people bring presents such as money, household goods or clothes. Some Buddhists will read passages from the The Paranibbana Sutta which describes the last days of Buddha, while others may reflect on those who have recently passed away.

8. Ekoji Buddhist Temple

<http://www.ekoji.org/indextemp.html>

Ekoji Buddhist Temple Information - Reverend Shojo Honda, Minister

LOCATION

6500 Lake Haven Lane

Fairfax Station, VA 22039-1879

MAILING ADDRESS

P.O. Box 2337

Springfield, VA 22152-0337

Ekoji, Buddhist Temple of the Gift of Light: A Vision of the Future

We envision our temple as housing a warm and supportive sangha for the national capital area. The temple and its minister support the practice of Shin Buddhists throughout the area. The accessibility of our new Burke Road location near the Fairfax County Parkway makes this possible.

Activities for adults of all ages can build on the foundations of our study groups, taiko drum ensemble, and other activities that we support. The Dharma school offers Buddhist education for children and related social activities.

We envision our temple as the location for regional and national seminars on the development of Buddhism in America. The Ekoji temple recently hosted the 1998 Eastern Buddhist League Conference. As an Ekoji temple, historically supported by Bukkyo Dendo Kyokai and other Shin Buddhist philanthropists, we have an obligation to act as a source of education and contemplation in Buddhism for people who are not necessarily regular members of our sangha.

Programs

The Ekoji Buddhist Temple of the greater Washington, D.C. area was founded in 1981 by the late industrialist and philanthropist Reverend Dr. Yehan Numata and the Reverend Kenryu T. Tsuji.

In Buddhism, it is said that there are more than 88,000 different paths to

enlightenment. Amongst these paths, Ekoji shares the teaching of Shinran, a 12th Century Japanese Buddhist whose path is based on the Nembutsu Teaching of the Amida Buddha [the Buddha of Infinite Life and Light].

Master Shinran. Outcast by the older sects of Japanese Buddhism and the government as well, Shinran nonetheless continued to share his beliefs about the Amida Buddha [the Buddha of Infinite Life and Light] with the masses. For more than 50 years, Shinran shared the "Life of Nembutsu," claiming no followers and proclaiming that all people were "the children of Amida." The basis teaching of Amida Buddha is his Primal Vow which promises Universal Enlightenment for not only humans but for all living beings. The compassionate activity of Amida Buddha will never cease as long as beings are lost, forlorn, suffering, or wandering in a meaningless existence.

The Meaning of Life. While the ultimate objective of life for all Buddhists lies in the achievement of Buddhahood, life's immediate purpose is realized in the awakening of faith.

Ekoji Programs. Ekoji offers various programs and activities which will help one to walk the path of a Buddhist.

At this time, the regular schedule of religious activities is as follows:

Adult Service. Held weekly Sundays at 11:00 a.m, this service and the Dharma message is intended for adult followers.

Adult Dharma School. Held on a regular basis, these classes are open to anyone, of any background, who wants to learn more about Buddhism in general and Jodo Shinshu Buddhism in particular. Classes are led by Ekoji's Director of Buddhist Education. Check the web page for class schedules.

Children's Service and Dharma School. Programs for children, youth and their parents are held on the second Sunday of every month beginning at 10:00 a.m. and the fourth Saturday at 6:00 p.m.

Meditation Classes. 'Sitting' [seiza] sessions are held on Wednesdays at 8:00 p.m.

Weddings, Funerals, and other Services. Ekoji and the resident minister are available to conduct private and public religious observances. Please consult with the minister to set up a schedule and arrangements.

Temple Description. A 5-foot statue of the Buddha overlooks the seating for 150 Sangha members and friends. An overflow area provides additional seating for 50 people. A columbarium is also part of this structure.

Adjacent to the temple is an education center, which includes a library, classrooms, assembly room/social hall, recreation room, and a kitchen facility. Parking for more

than 50 cars is available.

9. Psychoanalysis & Buddhism: An Unfolding Dialogue ...by Jeremy D. Safran

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0861713427/wwwkusalaorg-20/>

Book Description

Contributors:

Neil Altman • Joseph Bobrow • Jack Engler • Mark Finn • James Grotstein • Robert Langan • Barry Magid • Stephen A. Mitchell • Raul Moncayo • Stuart Pizer • Owen Renik • Philip A. Ringstrom • Jeffrey B. Rubin • Jeremy D. Safran • Charles Spezzano • Neville Symington • M. Guy Thompson • Sara Weber • Polly Young-Eisendrath

In this groundbreaking book Jeremy Safran assembles an extraordinary array of contributors who engage in an unprecedented dialogue about the relationship between psychoanalysis and Buddhism. Some are psychoanalysts who have been steeped in Buddhist practice over many years. Others are leading figures in contemporary psychoanalysis, who have an interest in examining similarities and differences between the two worlds as well as areas of potential synergy. The dialogical format of the book dramatically enlivens the text for the reader who is thereby afforded the opportunity to hear some of his or her most pressing questions asked and commented on by a discussant and then responded to by the first author. The contributors cover a wide territory in the examination of Buddhism from a psychoanalytic point of view—including the concept that is so difficult for the Western mind, the question of no self. Safran has provided us with a trail-blazing book that will be deeply rewarding to both psychoanalysts and Buddhists; it will extend the horizons of both. - Emmanuel Ghent, M.D., Supervisor and Faculty, NYU Postdoctoral Program in Psychoanalysis

Amazon.com - Reviewer: Oregon, WI USA ...Compiled and edited by Jeremy D. Safran, *Psychoanalysis And Buddhism: An Unfolding Dialogue* brings together dialogues from a group of nineteen talented writers who focus on concerns respecting the intersection of Buddhism and the science of psychoanalysis. Contemplating the complexities of the human mind, will, and spirit, these informed and informative writings meditate upon the depths of transformation possible in the individual. A profound and recommended addition to Buddhist studies shelves, *Psychoanalysis And Buddhism* will prove of immense interest and value to students of Eastern Philosophy and Western Psychology.

The Urban Dharma Newsletter Archives:

<http://www.urbandharma.org/nlarchives.html>

The Los Angeles Buddhist-Catholic Dialogue:

<http://www.urbandharma.org/bcdialog/index.html>

Support "Dana" UrbanDharma.org:

<http://www.urbandharma.org/udharma6/dana.html>

The Urban Dharma Newsletter... April 6, 2004

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 - 4. Temple/Center/Website: True Yoga**
 - 5. Book/CD/Movie: None**
-

0. Humor/Quotes...

You must believe in free will; there is no choice. - **Isaac Bashevis Singer** (1904-1991)

I haven't failed, I've found 10,000 ways that don't work. - **Thomas Edison** (1847-1931)

Half the work that is done in this world is to make things appear what they are not. - **Elias Root Beadle**

The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn. - **Alvin Toffler**

1. Yoga and Buddhism ...by David Frawley (Vamadeva Shastri)

<http://www.hindu.org/publications/frawley/yogabuddhism.html>

Yoga and Buddhism are sister traditions which evolved in the same spiritual culture of ancient India. They use many of the same terms and follow many of the same principles and practices. For this reason it is not surprising that many of us born in the West, particularly after an initial exposure, are apt to regard Yoga and Buddhism as more or less the same. The differences that have existed between the two

systems historically are less obvious to us than their commonalities. Those who study Buddhism may find so much similarity in Yoga that they will see a strong Buddhist influence on Yoga. Those who study Yoga may find so much similarity in Buddhism that they will see a strong yogic influence on Buddhism.

However the tendency to find commonality between these two great spiritual traditions is not limited to the West. Swami Vivekananda, the first great figure to bring Yoga to the West, examined the Buddhist Mahayana scriptures (Sutras) and found much similarity between their key teachings and those of Vedanta. In recent years with the influx of Tibetan refugees, including the Dalai Lama, into India since the Chinese occupation of Tibet there has been a new dialogue between the two traditions that is bringing about greater respect between them. Tibetan Buddhists often appear at Hindu religious gatherings and partake in all manner of discussions.

Nor is the attempt to connect the two traditions limited to modern times. Various synthetic Hindu-Buddhist teachings have existed through history. Buddha himself was born a Hindu and some scholars have argued that Buddhism as a religion apart from Hinduism did not arise until long after the Buddha had passed away. A Shiva-Buddha teaching existed in Indonesia in medieval times, and for many Tantric Yogis it is difficult to tell whether they were Hindus or Buddhists. Buddha became accepted as an avatar of Vishnu during the period while Buddhism was still flourishing in India, and most Hindus still consider that we live in the age of the Buddha-avatar. Most Hindus accept Buddha, even if they do not accept all Buddhist teachings.

However such synthetic trends did not exclude disagreements and debates between the two traditions, which were quite common historically. Nor did they ever succeed in fully uniting them. Their traditions and lineages remain separate to the present day. Generally the Hindu Yoga tradition sought to absorb Buddhism into itself by reinterpreting Buddha in a more Hindu light. Buddhism however strove to maintain its separate identity. Most Hindu and Buddhist teachers, including those of the Yoga school of Hinduism, found it necessary to discriminate their doctrines, particularly on subtle levels of practice and insight. Hence while we can honor the connections between these two systems, we cannot overlook their differences either.

The Yoga Tradition

By Yoga here we mean primarily the classical Yoga system as set forth by Patanjali in the Yoga Sutras. Patanjali taught an eightfold (ashtanga) system of Yoga emphasizing an integral spiritual development including ethical disciplines (Yama and Niyama), postures (Asana), breathing exercises (Pranayama), control of the senses (Pratyahara), concentration (Dharana), meditation (Dhyana) and absorption (Samadhi). This constitutes a complete and integral system of spiritual training.

However classical Yoga was part of the greater Hindu and Vedic tradition. Patanjali was not the inventor of Yoga, as many people in the West are inclined to believe, but only a compiler of the teaching at a later period. Yogic teachings covering all aspects of Patanjali Yoga are common in pre-Patanjali literature of the Puranas, Mahabharata and Upanishads, where the name Patanjali has yet to occur. The originator of the

Yoga system is said to be Hiranyagarbha, who symbolizes the creative and evolutionary force in the universe, and is a form of the Vedic Sun God.

Yoga can be traced back to the Rig Veda itself, the oldest Hindu text which speaks about yoking our mind and insight to the Sun of Truth. Great teachers of early Yoga include the names of many famous Vedic sages like Vasishtha, Yajnavalkya, and Jaigishavya. The greatest of the Yogis is always said to be Lord Krishna himself, whose Bhagavad Gita itself is called a Yoga Shastra or authoritative work on Yoga. Among Hindu deities it is Shiva who is the greatest of the Yogis or lord of Yoga, Yogeshvara. Hence a comparison of classical Yoga and Buddhism brings the greater issue of a comparison between Buddhist and Hindu teachings generally.

Unfortunately some misinformed people in the West have claimed that Yoga is not Hindu but is an independent or more universal tradition. They point out that the term Hindu does not appear in the Yoga Sutras, nor does the Yoga Sutra deal with the basic practices of Hinduism. Such readings are superficial. The Yoga Sutras abounds with technical terms of Hindu and Vedic philosophy, which its traditional commentaries and related literature explain in great detail. Another great early Yogic text, the Brihatyogi Yajnavalkya Smriti, describes Vedic mantras and practices along with Yogic practices of asana and pranayama. The same is true of the Yoga Upanishads. Those who try to study Yoga Sutras in isolation are bound to make mistakes. The Yoga Sutras, after all, is a Sutra work. Sutras are short statements, often incomplete sentences, that without any commentary often do not make sense or can be taken in a number of ways.

Other people in the West including several Yoga teachers state that Yoga is not a religion. This can also be misleading. Yoga is not part of any religious dogma proclaiming that there is only one God, church or savior, nor have the great Yoga teachers from India insisted that their students become Hindus, but Yoga is still a system from the Hindu religion. It clearly does deal with the nature of the soul, God and immortality, which are the main topics of religion throughout the world. Its main concern is religious and certainly not merely exercise or health.

Classical Yoga is one of the six schools of Vedic philosophy (sad darsanas) which accept the authority of the Vedas. Yoga is coupled with another of these six schools, the Samkhya system, which sets forth the cosmic principles (tattvas) that the Yogi seeks to realized. Nyaya and Vaisheshika, Purva Mimamsa and Uttara Mimamsa (also called Vedanta) are the remaining schools, set off in groups of two. Yoga is also closely aligned with Vedanta. Most of the great teachers who brought Yoga to the modern world, like Swami Vivekananda, Paramahansa Yogananda, Sri Aurobindo, and Swami Shivananda, were Vedantins.

These six Vedic systems were generally studied together. All adapted to some degree the methods and practices of Yoga. While we can find philosophical arguments and disputes between them, they all aim at unfolding the truth of the Vedas and differ mainly in details or levels of approach. All quote from Vedic texts, including the Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita and Puranas for deriving their authority.

Some Western scholars call these "the six schools of Indian philosophy." This is a mistake. These schools only represent Vedic systems, not the non-Vedic of which they are several. In addition they only represent Vedic based philosophies of the classical era. There were many other Vedic and Hindu philosophical systems of later times.

Buddhism

The Buddhist schools, of which there are four in classical Indian philosophy, though they shared many ideas and with Vedic spirituality, like karma and rebirth, did not accept the authority of the Vedas and rejected a number of key Vedic principles. All Buddhist schools employ meditation but some add more specific yogic practices, like Pranayama and Mantra. Such systems may be called Buddhist Yoga by modern writers. However, Yoga as a term is lacking in early Buddhist texts, particularly of the Theravadin type, and becomes prominent mainly in the Buddhist Tantric tradition that developed later, particularly as practiced in Tibet. Some Buddhists regard that Buddha was a great Yogi, particularly relative to the occult and psychic powers he was supposed to possess.

Forms of Buddhism

Buddhism has basically two varieties, as well as many subvarieties. The northern, Mahayana or "great vehicle" tradition prevails in Tibet, China and Japan and adjacent countries. This is the type of Buddhism that is most known and followed by the largest number of people in the world. It includes Chan, Zen, Buddhist Tantra, Vajrayana, and Dzog Chen. The southern, Theravadin, prevails in the south of Asia, Sri Lanka, Burma and Thailand. Vipassana is the most commonly known practice of Theravada Buddhism. Generally the Theravadin form is considered to be the older of the two forms of Buddhism. However, most Indian Buddhism, including the Sanskrit Buddhist Sutras, is of the Mahayana branch and has probably been best preserved in Tibet, where it has undergone a further development into Vajrayana.

There are some disagreements between these two main Buddhist lines. The Mahayana tradition calls the Theravadin tradition, the Hinayana, or "lesser vehicle." Many Theravadins consider that types of Mahayana Buddhism, particularly the Tibetan, are not truly Buddhist because they have mixed Buddhism with indigenous religious practices.

The Mahayana tradition, particularly in its Tantric forms, uses breathing exercises, mantras, visualizations and deities much like the Yoga tradition. The Theravadin tradition has less in common with Yoga, though it does use similar meditation and concentration methods. It generally rejects devotional worship and the use of deities such as occurs in Yogic paths. For example, Vipassana teachers have often criticized the use of mantra, which is common not only in Hindu Yogic traditions but in the Mahayana Buddhist teachings. In fact it could be argued that Tibetan Buddhism, with its mantras, deities and yogic teachings, is closer to Hinduism in its teachings than to such Buddhist schools.

Buddhism grew up in a cultural base of Hinduism. For this reason Indian and Tibetan Buddhism have included Ayurvedic medicine, Hindu astrology, Sanskrit, the same rules of iconography and the same forms of temple worship, and other common factors. A number of Hindu Gods and Goddesses, like Ganesh and Sarasvati, appear in the Buddhist tradition. Some figures like the Goddess Tara appear in both. Yet as Buddhism moved to other countries many of these connections were either lost or their basis forgotten.

Nepal has remained as one region of the Indian subcontinent in which both these religions have continued, though Nepal has a Hindu majority, a Hindu king and is officially a Hindu state. In this regard Nepalese Hindus and Buddhist respect one another but seldom combine the teachings of these two different religions by way of their actual practices. They tend to follow one tradition or the other but seldom both.

Yoga and Meditation

Today Yoga is most known for its asana tradition or yogic postures, which are the most popular, visible and outward form of the system. Buddhism is known as a tradition of meditation, as in the more popular forms of Buddhist meditation like Zen and Vipassana. This is rather strange because Yoga traditionally defines itself as meditation, or calming the disturbances of the mind, not as asana, which is taught merely as an aid to meditation. In the Yoga Sutras, the classical text on Yoga, of which there are two hundred Sutras only three deal with asana, while the great majority deal with meditation, its theory and results. In the West we hear people talk of "Yoga and meditation," yoga meaning asana or some other outer practice like pranayama. If one states this in India, one hears "Yoga and meditation, are they two?"

Unfortunately many people who have studied Yoga in the West have learned only the asana or posture side of the teaching, not the meditation side. Some of them may therefore look to Buddhist teachings, like Zen or Vipassana, for meditation practices, not realizing that there are yogic and Vedantic forms of meditation which are traditionally not only part of the yogic system, but its core teaching! The cause for this often resides with Yoga teachers who have not studied the meditation side of their own tradition. Some have not been taught it as purely asana-oriented teachers have become more popular, no doubt owing to their appeal to the physically oriented Western mind.

There is nothing necessarily wrong with doing Yogic asanas and Buddhist meditation but one who is claiming to be a Yoga teacher and yet does not know the Yogic meditation tradition cannot claim to be a real Yoga teacher. We could compare them with someone who practices a Buddhist physical exercise system, like Buddhist martial arts, but on top of this does a non-Buddhist meditation system, and still claims to be a teacher of Buddhism! The real Yoga tradition has aimed at producing meditation masters, not merely beautifully flexible bodies. Most of the Yoga System of Patanjali is concerned with the science of meditation (sanyama) as concentration, meditation and Samadhi (Dharana, Dhyana, Samadhi). In fact in the beginning of the Yoga Sutras Yoga is defined as Samadhi or spiritual absorption.

Yoga and its related Vedantic systems includes numerous types of meditation both with form and without. These include pranayama techniques like So'ham Pranayama or the various types of Kriya Yoga (like those taught by Yogananda), meditation on deities of all types and various devotional approaches, every sort of mantra from simple bija mantras like Om to long extended mantras like Gayatri, the use of yantras and other geometrical devises, diverse concentration methods, passive meditation approaches and active approaches like the Self-inquiry taught by Ramana Maharshi. It is a rich meditation tradition of which the rich asana tradition is merely an aspect.

Philosophical Differences Between Hinduism and Buddhism

Various Hindu-Buddhist philosophical debates have occurred through time. There are Buddhist refutations of the different schools of Hindu philosophy, including Yoga and Vedanta, and a rejection of Hindu deities like Shiva and Krishna. There are similar Yoga-Vedantic refutations of the different schools of Buddhist philosophy, including the rejection of the omniscience of Buddha, criticism of the Buddhist view of the mind, and so on.

Buddhist scriptures both Mahayana and Theravadin contain refutations of the Atman, Brahman, Ishvara, and the key tenets of Yoga and Vedanta, which are regarded as false doctrines. Note the Lankavatara Sutra, which is very typical in this regard. Refutation of Buddhist teachings does not occur in Hindu scriptures, which are largely pre-Buddhist but are common in the later literature. Many Vedantic, Sankhya and Yoga texts contain refutations of Buddhist doctrines, particularly of the four classical schools of Buddhist philosophy, which are similarly regarded as untrue. Such criticism of Buddhist teachings occur in the Yoga Sutra itself and are common in Advaita or non-dualistic Vedanta.

Such critiques can be found among the works of the greatest Hindu and Buddhist sages like Shankara of the Hindus, and Nagarjuna and Aryadeva of the Buddhists. Relative to Yoga and Buddhism one of the most interesting interactions was between Ishvara Krishna (not Krishna of the Bhagavad Gita) and the Buddhist guru of Vasubandhu, the founder of the Vijnanavada school. The debate was won by Ishvara Krishna and the record of his arguments, the Sankhya Karika was produced, which has become the main text on Samkhya. Vijnanavada, also called Yogachara, is the closest Buddhist school to classical Yoga, but curiously was the Buddhist system most in conflict with it in philosophical debates.

There have been similar, but more limited debates within each tradition, with Advaita Vedanta critiques of other Hindu traditions like Sankhya-Yoga, or Buddhist Madhyamika critiques of Buddhist Vijnanavada and other Buddhist traditions. The Indian tradition cherished debate as a means of finding truth and did not simply aim at superficial intellectual agreements. This tradition of free and open debate is alive not only in India but in Tibet. The Indian tradition never required intellectual uniformity but honored diversity.

How Yoga and Buddhism Compare

Yoga and Buddhism are both meditation traditions devised to help us transcend karma and rebirth and realize the truth of consciousness. They see the suffering and impermanence inherent in all birth, whether it is animal, human or god, and seek to alleviate it through developing a higher awareness. Both emphasize the need to dissolve the ego, the sense of the me and the mine, and return to the original reality that is not limited by the separate self. Both traditions emphasize enlightenment or inner illumination to be realized through meditation.

Both systems recognize dharma, the principle of truth or natural law, as the basic law of the universe we must come to understand. Such dharmas are the law of karma and the unity of all sentient beings. Buddhism defines itself as Buddha dharma or the dharma of the enlightened ones, which is seen as a tradition transcending time or place. 2E Yoga defines itself as part of the Hindu tradition called Sanatana Dharma, the universal or eternal dharma, which is not defined according to any particular teacher or tradition. Both traditions have called themselves Arya Dharma or the Dharma of noble men.

The main differences between the two systems are over their cosmic view and way of practice. Vedic systems are built upon fundamental principles like the Self (Atman), the Creator (Ishvara), and Godhead (Brahman). Buddhism rejects all such ontological principles as mere creations of the mind itself. In this regard Vedic systems are more idealistic and Buddhism systems more phenomenological.

Apart from such philosophical differences both systems share the same basic ethical values like non-violence, truthfulness, non-attachment and non-stealing. The vows that Buddhist monks take and those that monks and sadhus take in the Yoga tradition are the same, so are those of Jain monks.

Cosmic Principles

The Absolute

Vedanta defines the absolute as a metaphysical principle Being-Consciousness-Bliss, or Brahman in which there is perfect peace and liberation. Buddhism does recognize an Absolute, which is non-dual and beyond all birth and death. However Buddhism generally does not allow it any definition and regards it as void. It is sometimes called the Dharmakaya or body of dharma, though Sanskrit Buddhist texts never call it Brahman.

Self and not-Self

Buddhism generally rejects the Self (Atma or Purusha) of Yoga-Vedanta and emphasizes the non-Self (anatman). It says that there is no Self in anything and therefore that the Self is merely a fiction of the mind. Whatever we point out as the Self, the Buddhists state, is merely some impression, thought or feeling, but no such homogenous entity like a Self can be found anywhere. Buddhism has tended to lump the Self of Vedanta as another form of the ego or the misconception that there is a

Self.

The Yoga-Vedanta tradition emphasizes Self-realization or the realization of our true nature. It states that the Self does not exist in anything external. If we cannot find a self in anything it is no wonder, because if we did find a self in something it would not be the self but that particular thing. We cannot point out anything as the Self because the Self is the one who points all things out. The Self transcends the mind-body complex, but this is not to say that it does not exist. Without the Self we would not exist. We would not even be able to ask questions.

Yoga-Vedanta discriminates between the Self (Atman), which is our true nature as consciousness, and the ego (generally called Ahamkara), which is the false identification of our true nature with the mind-body complex. The Atman of Vedanta is not the ego but is the enlightened awareness which transcends time and space.

However a number of Buddhist traditions, particularly traditions outside of India, like the Chan and Zen traditions of China, have used terms like Self-mind, one's original nature, the original nature of consciousness or one's original face, which are similar to the Self of Vedanta.

Mind and Self

Buddhism defines reality in terms of mind and often refers to ultimate truth as the One Mind or original nature of the mind. In Yoga mind (manas) is regarded as an instrument of consciousness which is the Self. It speaks of the One Self and the many minds which are its vehicles. For it mind is not an ultimate principle but an aspect of creation.

If we examine the terms mind and Self in the two traditions it appears that what Yoga criticizes as attachment to the mind and ego is much like the Buddhist criticism of the attachment to the self, while what Vedanta calls the Supreme Self is similar to the Buddhist idea of the original nature of the Mind or One Mind. The Self is the unborn, uncreate reality similar to what Buddhism refers to as the transcendent aspect of Mind. The enlightened mind which dwells within the heart of the Buddhists (Bodhicitta) resembles the Supreme Self (Paramatman) which also dwells within the heart. Yet these similarities aside, the formulations and methodologies of the two systems in this regard can be quite different. Classical Indian Buddhist texts do not make such correlations either, but insist that the Vedantic Self is different than the One Mind of Buddhism.

God or the Creator

The yogic tradition is based upon a recognition of, respect for and devotion to God or the creator, preserver and destroyer of the universe. One of its main principles is that of surrender to God (Ishvara-Pranidhana), which is said to be the most direct method to Self-realization. Some degree of theism exists in the various Yoga-Vedanta teachings, though in Advaitic systems Ishvara is subordinated to the Self-Absolute, which transcend even the Creator. This is perhaps the main point of

difference between Yoga and Buddhism. Buddhism rejects God (Ishvara) or a cosmic lord and creator. It sees no need for any creator and considers that living beings arise through karma alone. The Dalai Lama recently noted that Buddha is similar to God in omniscience but is not a creator of the universe.

Yet we do note that some modern Buddhist teachers use the term God and make it equivalent to the Buddha-nature. There is also the figure of the Adi-Buddha or primordial Buddha in some Buddhist traditions who resembles God. The Buddha appears as God not in the sense of a theological entity but as the Divine potential inherent in living beings, but is similarly looked upon as a great being who is prayed to for forgiveness of misdeeds 2E

Karma and Rebirth

Both systems see karma as the main causative factor behind rebirth in the world. However in Buddhism karma is said to be a self-existent principle. Buddhism states that the world exists owing to the beginningless karma of living beings. In the Yoga tradition, however, karma is not a self-existent principle. The world is created by God (Ishvara), the creative aspect of consciousness. Karma as a mere force of inertia and attachment cannot explain the creation of the world but only our attachment to it. Karma is regarded as a force dispensed by God, which cannot exist by itself, just as a law code cannot exist without a judge. However some other Vedic systems, also, like Purva Mimamsa put more emphasis upon karma than upon God.

Yoga recognizes the existence of a Jiva or individual soul who is reborn. Buddhism denies the existence of such a soul and says that rebirth is just the continuance of a stream of karma, not any real entity.

The Figure of the Buddha

All Buddhist traditions go back to the Buddha and most emphasize studying the life of the historical Buddha, Shakyamuni. The Vedic tradition, on the other hand, recognizes many teachers and there is no one teacher that everyone must follow or look back to. There is no single historical figure like the Buddha that dominates the tradition or whom all must follow, honor or worship. Hinduism has accepted Buddha as a great teacher but it has included him among its stream of many other teachers, gurus and avatars. Buddhism does recognize the existence of Buddhas both before and after the historical Buddha, and says that a Buddha comes into the world every 5000 years. It is interesting to note that the previous Buddha to the historical Buddha is called Kashyapa which is also the name of one of the oldest and most important of the Vedic seers. However Buddhism has yet to include any of the great yogis and Rishis of Hinduism as on par with the Buddha as enlightened sages.

The term Buddha itself is common in Vedic teachings, as it is a common Sanskrit term meaning wise, awake, aware or enlightened. When Buddhism is referred to in Hindu literature it is called Bauddha Dharma or Saugata Dharma, as there is nothing in the term Buddha in Sanskrit that refers to a particular person or religion. While Hindus make Buddha into an avatar, in Buddhism Buddha cannot be an avatar

because Buddhism has no God that Buddha could manifest. If Buddha is an avatar in Buddhism it is of the enlightened mind, not of the Creator.

Nirvana

Both systems regard Nirvana or mergence in the Absolute as a primary goal of practice. However in the Buddhist tradition, particularly the Theravadin, Nirvana is generally described only negatively as cessation. It is given no positive appellations. In the Vedic tradition Nirvana is described in a positive way as mergence into Brahman or Sacchidananda, Being-Consciousness-Bliss, the realization of the infinite and eternal Self, called Brahma Nirvana. Yet both systems agree that this truth transcends all concepts. Vedanta describes Nirvana as freedom or liberation (Moksha). This term does not occur in Buddhism which does not accept the existence of any soul that can be liberated.

Devotion and Compassion

Yoga with its recognition of God emphasizes devotion and surrender to God (Ishvara-pranidhana) as one of the main spiritual paths. It contains an entire Yogic approach based on devotion, Bhakti Yoga, through which we open our hearts to God and surrender to the Divine Will. As Buddhism does not recognize God, devotion to God does not appear as a Buddhist path. That is why we don't find any significant tradition of great devotees and singers of Divine Love in Buddhism like Chaitanya, Ramakrishna, Tulsidas or Mirabai in the Hindu tradition.

Buddhism does recognize devotion to the Buddha or faith in the Buddha-mind. However devotion to great teachers or to functions of the enlightened mind does not quite strike the human heart with the same significance as devotion to the Divine Father and Mother of the Universe, the creator, preserver and destroyer of all, which requires a recognition of God.

Not having God to guide and protect living beings, Buddhism has developed the role of the Bodhisattva, the enlightened one who stays on after enlightenment to teach and guide living beings. As according to Yoga God and all the sages merged in him are ever present to help all beings, so there is no need for such a special Bodhisattva vow. Yoga values compassion as an ethical principle, however, and says that we cannot realize our true Self as long as we think that we are separate from other creatures.

Gods and Goddesses/ Buddhas and Bodhisattvas

Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, technically speaking, are not deities or Gods and Goddesses. They are not forms of the Divine Father and Mother and have no role in creating, preserving and destroying the universe. They are not the parents of all creatures but merely wise guides and teachers. They are often described as great beings who once lived and attained enlightenment at some point in time and took various vows to stay in the world to help save living beings.

For example perhaps the greatest Buddhist Goddess, Tara is such a Bodhisattva, an enlightened person - not the Divine Mother like Durga or Kali of Hinduism - but a great enlightened sage who has continued to exist in the world to help living beings. She is not the Goddess or a form of God but a personal expression of the enlightened mind and its power of compassion. There are also meditation Buddhas (Dhyani Buddhas), who represent archetypes of enlightenment.

Yet though the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are not forms of God, they can be prayed to provide grace and protection. For example, the Bodhisattva Tara was thought to save those in calamities. Worship of various Bodhisattvas is called Deity Yoga in the Tibetan tradition.

Summary

If we can equate the One Mind of the Buddhists with the One Self of Vedanta, make Buddha and God the same and give the Buddha the power of creation of the universe, and make other such correlations, both traditions could be synthesized. However this would essentially absorb Buddhism into Hinduism and make the Buddhist rejection of the Vedas unnecessary. This is what most Hindus incline to do with Buddhism. However prominent Buddhist leaders have yet to make such statements. Until they do we cannot dismiss such differences as unnecessary but must respect them as a different view of truth or different approach to it. If you believe not only in karma and rebirth but also the existence of God or the Creator, you would be a Hindu, not a Buddhist in your views.

Choosing a Path

There are a number of people in the West today, and even in India, who are combining Yoga and Buddhism, as well as less related traditions. Some people may try to follow gurus in both traditions (generally without the approval of the teachers). Of course, teachings which are common to both traditions like non-violence are obviously easy to correlate. Different meditation techniques, however, may not be so easy to combine. For example it may be difficult to meditate upon the Supreme Self of Vedanta, while meditating upon the non-Self of Buddhism. The Buddhist approach requires doubting that there is any self at all. The Vedantic approach requires complete faith in the Self and merging everything into it. Above all it is hard to maintain certain devotional approaches in a Buddhist context where there is no real God or Creator.

In this eclectic age such synthetic experimentation is bound to continue and may prove fruitful in some instances, particularly when one is still searching out one's path. Yet it frequently gets people lost or confused, trying to mix teachings together they do not really understand. Jumping back and forth between teachers and traditions may prevent us from getting anywhere with any of them. Superficial synthesis, which is largely a mental exercise, is no substitute for deep practice that requires dedicated concentration. The goal is not to combine the paths but to reach to the goal, which requires taking a true path out to the end. While there may be many paths up to the top of a mountain, one will not climb far cross-crossing

between paths. Above all it is not for students on the path to try to combine paths. It is for the masters, the great lineage bearers in the traditions, to do so, if this is necessary.

Today we are entering into a global age that requires the development of a global spirituality. This requires honoring all forms of the inner quest regardless of where and when they come from. The unity of truth cuts across all boundaries and breaks down all divisions between human beings. It is crucial that such meditation traditions as Yoga and Buddhism form a common front in light of the needs of the global era. All such true spiritual traditions face many common enemies in this materialistic age. Their common values of protecting the earth, non-violence, recognition of the law of karma, and the practice of meditation are perhaps the crucial voice to deliver us out of our present crisis.

But in coming together the diversity of teachings should be preserved, which means not only recognizing their unity but respecting their differences. This is the same issue as that of different cultures. While we should recognize the unity of humanity, we should allow various cultures to preserve their unique forms, and not simply throw them all into one big melting pot, in which all their distinctions are lost. True unity is universality that fosters a creative multiplicity, not a uniformity that reduces everything to a stereotype. Truth is not only One but Infinite and cannot be reduced to any final forms. Pluralism is also true as each individual is unique and we should have a broad enough view to allow others to have contrary opinions. As the Vedic Rishis stated, "That which is the One Truth the seers teach in diverse ways." This is to accommodate all the different types and levels of souls.

AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF VEDIC STUDIES
PO Box 8357, Santa Fe NM, 87504-8357
David Frawley (Vamadeva Shastri), Director

2. Hindu Yoga, Buddhist Yoga, Jaina Yoga ...by Georg Feuerstein

<http://www.yrec.org/3yoga.html>

In an article entitled "Yoga and Buddhism," published on the Web site of Hinduism Today, David Frawley (Vamadeva Shastri) speaks of Yoga and Buddhism as sister traditions. It would perhaps be more appropriate to characterize Hinduism as a sister tradition to Buddhism and Jainism. However, these three are not merely particular spiritual traditions spawned on Indian soil but whole cultures with their own distinct moral and spiritual teachings, art, architecture, and social organization. There are many overlaps but also significant divergencies. For instance, in the area of social organization, Buddhism does not subscribe to the caste system, which is a hall mark of Hinduism (though by no means all Hindu traditions accept or support it).

Yoga is commonly understood to be an aspect of Hinduism. However, both the term and the concept (in the sense of spiritual practice) are also widespread in Buddhism.

Thus it makes little sense to compare Yoga and Buddhism, unless we define Yoga more narrowly as the particular philosophical system known as yoga-darshana, as expounded in Patanjali's Yoga-Sûtra and its extensive commentarial literature.

In the broadest sense, Yoga is simply spiritual practice, or spirituality. It is India's version of what has long been known as "mysticism" in Christianity, "Kabbalah" in Judaism, and "Sufism" in Islam. Hinduism and Buddhism, as well as Jainism, are all yogic cultures or traditions. That is to say, these cultures are at heart spiritual: They acknowledge and promote the age-old ideal of liberation (moksha), however it may be conceived. Yoga has from the beginning been a liberation teaching (moksha-shâstra), and as such has shaped Hinduism, Buddhism, and also Jainism.

"Hinduism" is the name given to a particular developmental phase of the complex civilization that originated in India over eight millennia ago and that has meantime spread throughout the world. Buddhism is not, as widely thought, an offshoot of Hinduism but of the Indic civilization as such. Yoga is a unique contribution to humankind by the Indic civilization.

Many Western Yoga students confuse Yoga with Hinduism and typically pitch it against Buddhism. Many more Westerners confuse Yoga with physical exercise (i.e., the yogic postures) and see in Buddhism a path of meditation. But the oppositions "Yoga : Hinduism" and "Yoga : Buddhist meditation" are ill conceived.

Yoga is common to both cultural traditions and forms their spiritual essence. Yoga must not be reduced to a mere system of physical exercises but clearly offers many spiritual methods and approaches, especially meditation. It makes no sense to say, as often heard, that Yoga has no meditation practice and that therefore one must resort to Buddhist meditation. Yoga has a wide variety of meditation techniques, which include Buddhist, Hindu, and Jaina meditation practices.

During the past two and half millennia or so, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jaina have been in dialogue with each other, and each cultural tradition has incorporated elements from the others. It has even been said that the disappearance of Buddhism from India was largely due to the fact that Shankara and his school of Advaita Vedanta, or nondual metaphysics, so successfully assimilated Buddhist ideas that Buddhism lost its foothold with regard to the dominant Hindu culture. The Moslem invasion of Northern India was, however, a more decisive factor.

There has traditionally been far less tension between Hinduism and Jainism, since most Jaina adherents regard themselves as Hindu or as not being in conflict with Hinduism. At times, the dialogue between Hindu and Buddhist Yoga was indeed doctrinaire and fierce, but when we look at the great teachers and teachings we also find much common ground. Those of us in the West who are not mired in religious ideology and have imbibed a cosmopolitan outlook, the doctrinal squabbles among the Indic traditions are of little relevance. We are hungering for practices that can nourish us spiritually and in our pragmatist approach are willing to regard their theoretical underpinnings with openmindedness.

Since the mid-1960s, I have endeavored to make Hindu Yoga accessible to my fellow-Westerners. I have focused on such key scriptures as the Yoga-Sûtra and the Bhagavad-Gî tã but also have translated or commented on other, in the West less well-known Yoga texts. I brought many of them together in my book *The Yoga Tradition*, and in that volume also furnished a broad overview of the history of Hindu, Buddhist, and Jaina Yoga.

In my scholarly work thus far, I have had less concern with Buddhist Yoga, which, from the beginning of my career, I felt had received better attention by preceding scholars than had Hindu Yoga. Certainly over the past two decades, there has been an increasing preoccupation with Buddhist Yoga in the form of Tibetan Buddhism. What is more, the custodians of the Tibetan Buddhist heritage have shown a great willingness to impart to Westerners the esoteric practices underlying their sacred texts. In the case of Hindu Yoga, this is no longer possible to the same extent, though there still are masters capable of imparting the full range of practices and expounding the teachings of specific schools, such as Shrî Vidyâ, Kaula, Nãtha, Kashmiri Shaivism, or Gaudî ya.

Compared to Hindu and Buddhist Yoga, Jaina Yoga is a sealed book for Westerner spiritual seekers, who may not even have heard of it. Yet it has its own distinct path and practices, which are kept alive by a few adepts and which definitely deserve to be better known. However, the scriptures of the Jainas have been neglected by scholars, and only a few texts are available in English translation.

Jaina Saint Shri Vidya Sagar

From the vantage point of our own time, we can look upon the incredibly complex and diversified heritage of Yoga and appreciate its unique significance for the human race. The adepts of Yoga have blazed trails to summits that at present we see only through a glass darkly but that we sense are of utter relevance to our human destiny. As we delve into the yogic heritage, we encounter a breathtaking wealth of ideas and practices. Yet, at the bottom of it all, are a handful of universal truths that, once we have recognized them, can become powerful agents of transformation for us. Equipped with that recognition, we can then engage any form of Yoga or any specific practice with efficiency and tolerance. © 2000 by Georg Feuerstein

3. An Introduction to the Practice of Yoga and Buddhism ...By John C. Kimbrough

<http://stress.about.com/library/blintroyogabuddhism.htm>

In wanting to apply and benefit from a spiritual path and practice, it is necessary to be knowledgeable about and understand the path and the various mental and physical disciplines and practices that make it up. The first thing to learn and understand is what is the basic philosophy behind that path and its practices. The second thing to learn and understand is what the path and its practice actually

consist of. The third thing is to learn and understand is what we achieve from the implementation of this path and practice. The fourth thing is to learn and understand is what are those things that may stand in the way of us making progress and succeeding in our implementation of this path and practice.

We can look at both Yoga and Buddhism in these terms and surprisingly for some, we will see those four things to be the same or strikingly similar. Both are based on the philosophy that there is suffering in life and it is caused by mental defilements and the state of our ego. Both put forth a path of mental and physical practices in order to weaken and alleviate these tendencies of mind and ego which create individual pain and pain in our actions with others. This path of mental and physical practices revolves around moral and ethical actions to ourselves and others and meditation.

The postures of Yoga that most individuals perceive Yoga to be and consist of are used to prepare the mind and body to be more open to, understanding of and strong and disciplined enough to practice the teachings in their entirety. The implementation of these paths brings about a change in one's consciousness so states of consciousness that are already part of our being are accessed, strengthened and cultivated. These are states such as tranquility, concentration and mindfulness, among others. Both Yoga and Buddhism refer to states of mental and physical being that creates hindrances to growth, progress and success in the spiritual path and practice. These include things such as doubt, sensual desire, restlessness, and worry, among others. So if one wants to learn about either Yoga or Buddhism, just out of a general interest or with the idea to bring them into their life so that there will be some meaningful and joyful change to their being, one may want to learn and study them from this perspective.

We do not have to go to India or Thailand in order to learn these things. Books and teachers are usually available in our own countries and information can be easily accessed and downloaded through the services of the internet and the various websites that are devoted to these teachings. Because someone is from Thailand, India or Sri Lanka does not make them more knowledgeable about or more advanced in the teachings and practices of either Yoga or Buddhism. We may need or benefit from what might be termed hands on assistance, so a weekend retreat or a retreat or stay in a temple or ashram that is longer may be beneficial. In this environment we can get some support in cultivating our understanding and practice and have others to answer our questions and direct us in a skillful way as we are sharing this experience with like-minded people and teachers who have more experience in this and are skilled and knowledgeable in sharing the teachings and practices that make them up with us. Also retreats and longer stays in temples or ashrams offer a physical and logistical environment that can create a new mindfulness of how we can practice skillfully and effectively at home on our own. Then it is really up to us to try to implement these things into our lives.

We may approach this in various ways and have various results from it. We may push ourselves quite hard and want quick expectations. This may lead to burnout and disappointment, and one may give up quickly. Another way that we approach it may be in an inconsistent manner, practicing and studying here and there, when

possible, when we can and we are reminded as to how to practice. Another way will be in a disciplined way, learning, studying and practicing on a regular basis and building on what we learn, what we realize and awaken to and on our meditation practice. Some may experience all of these approaches and it may take months or even years until they have developed a strong and consistent practice.

One's individual nature may be a factor in how they cultivate this strong and consistent practice, as will what kind of habits and behaviors they have to deal with and overcome and changes that they may have to make in their life and free and leisure time in order to practice on a regular basis. Sometimes it is not cultivating the practice of meditation or posture practice that is most demanding and challenging for a person to bring into their lives as it is to bring into their lives those teachings that one might call moral and ethical teachings and practices. Sadly, in Yoga these teachings are frequently overlooked or only touched on briefly. In Buddhism, they make up a major part of the teachings and should be studied with an attempt made to understand and implement them from the very first day of one's exposure to the teachings of Buddhism.

Just being exposed to these teachings is one thing. Understanding and being able to implement them into all of our daily activities and actions can be incredibly difficult. It may take daily study and reflection on the teachings, in addition to whatever one's physical practice consists of, that being meditation and posture practice. But to define these as being physical practices is in itself an error as these practices where one is working with the body and breath in a manner where the body is still in a meditative posture for an extended period of time, or as one performs a variety of postures that bend and twist the spine in various ways, one is also working on the consciousness in subtle and overt ways. For many, this is the starting point of one's practice and many of us know how much of a challenge and effort this can be. Through this sort of discipline, we do become more mindful and concentrated, and that in itself opens us up more to understanding the wisdom and simplicity of the teachings and makes it more possible for us to successfully implement them.

The books below are highly recommended for those who want to learn more about the paths and practices of Buddhism and Yoga.

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* 2003 John C. Kimbrough (John lives and teaches in Bangkok, Thailand.

4. True Yoga

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Creating a Home Practice with Jessica Anderson. Learn the necessities to establishing a well-rounded home practice when you are away from the studio.

Saturday, April 24th, 12:00 2:00.

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To know oneself is to study oneself in action with another person. - **Bruce Lee** (1940 - 1973)

The key to immortality is first to live a life worth remembering. - **Bruce Lee** (1940 - 1973)

The consciousness of self is the greatest hindrance to the proper execution of all physical action. There is no fixed teaching. All I can provide is an appropriate medicine for a particular ailment. - **Bruce Lee** (1940 - 1973)

When you point to the moon, what do you see in front of your finger; Your task is to feel, not to think, when you can understand that the lesson will be learned. - **Bruce Lee** (1940 - 1973)

1. About Jainism

http://altreligion.about.com/library/faqs/bl_jainism.htm

History/Founder/important persons/saints:

Jainism is a heretical sect of Hindu Brahminism, and is believed by some scholars to be related to Buddhism. It was founded in roughly 600 BCE by Jnatriputra, who was later given the title Vardhamana Mahavira. (as well as the title Jina, conqueror, from which the name Jain is derived) Mahavira, like Buddha, was reputedly the son of a Prince, rejected the Vedas, and practiced extreme asceticism. Mahavira was the first of 24 Tirthankaras, or enlightened teachers.

Current leader/governing body:

There are two main sects of Jainism, the Svetamabara and Digambara. Svetamabararas accept women into their ranks, the Digambara do not. The Digambara also practice nudity whenever possible, to be as close to a natural state as possible.

Number of Adherents:

About five million, the vast majority in India.

Clergy:

Jains have no official clergy; generally serious believers become monks.

Requirements to join:

To become a monk, one is initiated, and takes vows to live a life without worldliness.

Church/temple:

Jains tend to prefer ornate temples similar to Hindu temples, however, only the laity worship in temples- monastics repudiate temple worship as worldly. Temples contain statues of the Tirthankaras and minor deities.

Scripture:

The scriptures agreed upon by both sects are the Purvas, which have been lost. Other scriptures include the Angas, Upangas, Mulasutras, the Satkhandagama, and the Anuyogas.

Required observances, dietary restrictions:

Jainists practice extreme self-denial, avoiding meat, cooked food, killing, and anything thought to be "worldly." Jains usually wear face coverings to prevent the accidental inhalation and killing of insects.

Code of Conduct:

Ordained Monastics take five vows:

1. Ahimsa (non-killing) for all living things.
2. No lying.
3. No stealing.
4. To avoid worldly attachments.
5. To avoid walking after dark.

Basic teachings and Beliefs:

Jain belief is similar to Buddhism in many ways. They believe that Moksa, or enlightenment, is the only way to be liberated from the Dharma, the law of Karma and rebirth. To achieve this end, Jains practice ahimsa, non-harming. Everyday Jains avoid killing "five-sensed" creatures, the Monastics avoid taking the life of any creature at all. Unlike Buddhism, Jains teach self-denial and asceticism.

Another doctrine Jains hold that is similar to Buddhism is the triratna, or "three gems." These are:

Right knowledge
Right faith
Right action

Jain cosmology divides the universe and everything in it into five categories (astikayas) :

Soul
Motion
Rest
Atoms
Space

2. Jainism

<http://www.indiainvitation.com/pilgrimages/Janism.html>

Jainism was born in India about the same period as Buddhism. It was established by Mahavira in about 500 B. C. Mahavira like Buddha belonged to the warrior caste. Mahavira was called 'Jina' meaning the big winner and from this name was derived the name of the religion. In many senses Jainism is similar to Buddhism. Jainism is as old as nature, which has neither beginning nor any end. The mission of Jainism is the mission of nature, which is to work for the welfare of one and all, to rise from the pitfall of ignorance and inaction to the spiritual climax of infinite bliss and perfect knowledge. i.e. absolute freedom.

Jainism is about live & let live, the oldest religion in India. The main followers are the Jains. All those who follow the religion are vegetarians and they follow what Lord Mahaveera said live & let live.

The Central Principle is - Respect for all Living Forms

The principle that is central to the Jain religion is that of Jivadaya (Respect for all Living Forms) and Ahimsa (non-violence). Although Ahimsa is recognised even by the Buddhists and the Hindus, it is practised ritually, only amongst the Jains. Under this obligation they abstain entirely from meat, fruit and wine and may drink only that water which has been used earlier by someone else for cooking. The logic behind this is that if by drinking such water if a Jain causes harm to any living organisms in the water, the guilt for that rests not on the Jain who drinks it but on the person who first used it for cooking.

Jainism believes that all people on the Earth should Love one another and not to kill the animals. They have the rights to live on the Earth also. They believe that every thing has life and this also includes stones, sand, trees and every other thing. Mahavira who believed that every thing has life. The religious Jains will do everything possible to prevent hurting any being. They mostly do not work in professions where there is a possibility of killing any living being like in agriculture instead professions like banking and business.

Jain whether monks, nuns or householders, therefore, affirm prayerfully and sincerely, that their heart is filled with forgiveness for all living beings and that they have sought and received the forgiveness of all beings, that they crave the friendship of all beings, that all beings give them their friendship and that there is not the slightest feeling of alienation or enmity in their heart, for any one or anything. They also pray that forgiveness and friendliness may reign throughout the world and that all living beings may cherish each other.

Jainism believes there are two kinds of energies, one is the energy of mechanism and the other is the energy of intelligence. In technical terms they are called matter and life.

There are two Jain philosophies. Svetamber and Digamber. Digamber or 'sky-clad' monks like Mahavira don't wear any clothes, but normally they don't walk like that outside their temples. The Digambers include among them only men. The Svetambers monks wear white clothes and they include women. The Svetambers split from the main body of the Jain religion some 200 years after Mahavira but today they account for a majority among the Jains. The Svetamber Jains are concentrated in Gujarat and Rajasthan. The Digambers are mostly found in Karnataka.

3. Jainism Today

Jainism is one of the oldest living religions in the world. It was founded by Mahavira in 6th century BC and has remained more or less unchanged for centuries. Mahavira was born in Kudargram near Patna. He renounced an opulent lifestyle to become an ascetic, and took up severe penance and austerities before he finally attained enlightenment at Jrimbhika Grama. Thereafter, he preached the path of total abstinence and renunciation from all worldly desires to attain moksha or salvation.

The teachings of Mahavira are now codified and form the basis of the Jain religion. Jains believe in a cosmic cycle of births and re-births, salvation from which can be gained only through right belief, conduct and knowledge. They are strict vegetarians and non-violence or Ahimsa is the main doctrine. The religion lays down some very strict rules upon its followers. The practices are more severe for the monks, as compared to the normal householder.

The basic doctrine has not undergone any major change since the 6th century. However, different sects do exist. The Svetambara or the white-clad, and the Digambara or the sky-clad, are the two main sects of the Jains. The difference exists mainly in the Digambar practices being more austere and ascetic.

Compared to Buddhism which was also founded round about the same time, Jainism does not have as many followers. The stricter Jain conduct is possibly the reason for this. 11th century AD is considered to be the golden period in Jain history, when many kings and commoners converted to Jainism, especially in Rajasthan. A large part of the trader community in western India converted to Jainism to get a better social standing. In the Hindu caste system, they were third in the hierarchy, behind the Brahmins and the kings.

Jainism In India

Today, Jainism is followed by approximately 7 million people in India, which is a small percentage of the Indian population. Most of them belong to Karnataka in the south, or Gujarat and Rajasthan in the west. Even so, the Jains are a prominent community and have been able to maintain their cultural identity. Today, they are also among the most affluent in India. However, they maintain an extremely simple lifestyle, in conformity with the Jain ideology.

The Jains have built many exquisite temples all over India. The restrained austerity of the Jain way of life has its anti-thesis in the delightful exuberance, even opulence, that one sees in these temples. The Dilwara temples at Mount Abu and the temples of Ranakpur are prime examples of this.

Jain Festivals

Many religious practices of the Jains are similar to those of the Hindus. Hindu festivals with different connotations are celebrated by the Jains. The Jains celebrate

Diwali, Holi and the birthday of Ganesha, just like the Hindus. Mahavira Jayanti, the birthday of Lord Mahavira is however their most important festival. Monsoons are an extremely significant period and a festival called Paryushana is celebrated about one and a half months after the monsoons.

4. Buddhism Vs Jainism

<http://hinduwebsite.com/jainism/buddhismvsjainism.htm>

Mahavira was a senior contemporary of Gautama Buddha, the founder of Buddhism. The Buddhist texts refer to Mahavira as an enlightened being. However there seems to be no personal contact or communication between the two when they were alive.

Interestingly, no rivalry seemed to have existed between Buddhism and Jainism in the early days of Buddhism, definitely not so much as the rivalry between them and the Ajivakas sect, with whom the Buddha himself often indulged in prolonged debates and discussions. However the very fact that the Buddha denounced extreme asceticism as the means to salvation suggests that there was no scope for any reconciliation between the two.

Both Buddhism and Jainism deny the existence of God or the First Cause which is responsible for the entire creation. But both acknowledge the presence of gods, who are higher than human beings in status but subject to change and evolution and also plane of higher beings, called Jinas or Kevalins by Jains and Bodhisattvas by Buddhists. The Bodhisattvas take interest in the welfare of the world and work for its liberation, but the Kevalins are rather indifferent to our prayers and problems and remain unaffected.

They also differ on the question of the status and evolution of individual beings. According to Jainism, after liberation, the Jiva or soul continues to remain as an individual soul, but in the highest state of purity and enlightenment. According to Buddhism, there is no soul but the individuality or character of an individual which after nirvana passes into some kind of indescribable nothingness that cannot be speculated upon.

The followers of Jainism acknowledge the presence of soul in every animate and inanimate object of the universe, including the elements of the universe, such as the earth, the water, wind, fire and air. Buddhists on the other hand believe that some vague kind of individuality do exist in the plants and animals, but they do not find any such individuality in the inanimate things. The concept of a world filled with innumerable individual souls or clusters of souls, or souls lying hidden in the rocks and mountains, the rivers and lakes, the stars and planets is simply untenable in Buddhism.

Both Buddhism and Jainism acknowledge the universality of karma and its effect on the individual beings. But in Jainism the karma is not a mere effect or result of ones

actions, but a real substance that flows into each individual body or jiva as it indulges in various actions. This karmic substance which is a kind of fine matter or energy field, remains with it until it is got rid of through good conduct and self purification.

Though both Buddhism and Jainism originated and developed as distinct religions in the same geographical area comprising the present day Bihar and adjoining states, Buddhism crossed the frontiers of Indian subcontinent and went to far away lands like Nepal, China, far eastern countries, central Asia, Sri Lanka and Japan, while Jainism remained mostly confined to the land of its origin.

Strangely over a period of time, Buddhism disappeared from the Indian soil, despite of making several compromises with Hinduism, and having almost been absorbed into Hinduism as a sect, while Jainism survived in India, with its teachings intact, mostly untouched by the overwhelming philosophy and practices of Hinduism, at the same time imparting to the latter some of its noblest ideas.

5. Test your knowledge of Global History and Geography - Buddhism & Jainism

Correct answers can be found at:

<http://www.historyteacher.net/GlobalHistory-1/Quizzes/MC-Buddhism-1.htm>

1 Jainism?:

was the most widespread religion of ancient India.
was founded by Gautama Siddhartha around 500 BCE.
carried the principle of non-violence to extremes.
provided the military leadership for the Maurya Empire.

2 Buddhists believed that?:

the cause of suffering is desire for worthless things.
only young people can reach nirvana.
reincarnation is a way of escaping from nirvana.
Chandragupta II was reincarnated as the Buddha.

3 Buddhists and Hindus agree on all of the following EXCEPT?:

the caste system.
belief in the desirability of good conduct on earth.
belief in the progress of the soul toward an afterlife.
belief in certain rules of conducting one's life.

4 The Buddha set out his basic teachings in the?:

Analects.
Five Classics.
Upanishads.
Four Noble Truths.

5 Buddhism began in ancient India as a result of the?:

desire for new goods.
desire for reforming Hinduism.
invasion of India by the East Asians.
political influence of the Untouchables.

6 Buddhists rejected the idea that?:

there are no gods.
all people can achieve salvation.
only Brahmins can show people the way to salvation.
the ultimate goal of life is escape from desire.

7 What happened to Buddhism in India?:

it became the majority religion.
it was absorbed back into Hinduism.
it gained few converts.
eventually about half of the people of India became Buddhists.

8 The MAIN belief of Mahayana Buddhism was that?:

bodhisattvas have postponed nirvana to help others achieve enlightenment.
life was suffering.
all should worship in their own language and according to their customs.
monks should travel around converting people to Buddhism.

9 In its earliest days, Buddhism was very popular among?:

the Brahmins.
the Sudras and the Untouchables.
mandarins.
warriors.

6. The Shaolin Temple Overseas Headquarters

<http://www.shaolin-overseas.org/>

The Shaolin Temple Overseas Headquarters' intent is to spread the Buddha's message of compassion and wisdom in many ways, through Buddhist seminars, martial arts (better known as kungfu) classes, other publications, and electronic media---including this Web site.

From these efforts will spring a new 1/2Twenty-first Century Shaolin Chan Buddhism,... which goal will be to meld Buddhist philosophy seamlessly with contemporary life, allowing Chan practice to become more accessible and relevant in people's everyday living.

This Web sight is a dynamic and modern vehicle for conveying the timeless and universal philosophies of the great teacher, the Buddha. Just as the monks of the Shaolin Temple utilized the innovative approach of studying kungfu over that of the sutras and still meditation in their quest for enlightenment, I hope that you can use this Web sight as a means to learn how Shaolin Kungfu and Chan Buddhism can help you to live a better life, both physically and spiritually.

Shoalin History

Among the various mountains on mainland China, none is as spiritual as the Songshan (TheHigh Mountain) within the province of Henan. The Songshan Shaolin Temple was founded in the 19th imperial year of Tai Her's Northern Wei dynasty in 495 AD.

The name of the Songshan Shaolin Temple achieved legendary status and fame in Asia as being the ancient center where hundreds of many different martial arts systems were developed and culminated. These Shaolin teachings are a 1,500 year old legacy that is part of the rich heritage and tradition of China.

Shaolin is now also well-known among many Western people through the exposure in the media. Today, Shaolin martial arts (better known as Shaolin kungfu) is widely practiced by many enthusiasts through out the world. Shaolin kungfu epitomizes the meditative principles of Chan Buddhism wherein the mind, spirit, and body become one.

The Shaolin Temple Overseas Headquarters in Flushing, NY, was founded in 1995 by the Venerable Shi Guolin, a 34th generation monk of the Songshan Shaolin Temple in China. The Venerable Shi Guolin began his study of Shaolin martial arts at the age of seven and took the vows to become a monk at the Shaolin Monastery at the age of fifteen. He then became the direct lineage disciple of Abbot Yongxin. Venerable Shi Guolin has previously served as the head martial arts instructor at the Songshan Shaolin Temple. Abbot Yongxin has appointed him as the director of the Shaolin Temple Overseas Headquarters.

7. Shaolin Soccer

http://miramax.com/shaolin_soccer/

The Story

In the wicked game of "Shaolin Soccer," players will stop at nothing to score a laugh. It fuses ancient martial arts with hard-hitting physical comedy and the high-flying energy of competitive sports. Champion player Fung (Ng Man-tat) is so good that they call him "Golden Leg." However, when he loses the Chinese national championship game by missing a goal, enraged fans break his legs. Twenty years later, Fung is hauling equipment for his former teammate Hung's (Patrick Tse) "Team Evil."

When Fung is fired, he comes across Sing (Stephen Chow), a monk from the legendary Shaolin Temple with superlative martial arts skills and a "Mighty Iron Leg." Unfortunately, in modern-day China, there is little money to be made as a monk, so Sing ekes out a meager living collecting garbage. Sing dreams of "a world gone Shaolin," where Kung Fu is used to solve even the smallest problems. When Fung sees Sing take on a bunch of thugs with nothing but a soccer ball, he hatches the brilliant idea of forming a Shaolin soccer team. They set out to recruit Sing's former Shaolin classmates< all are down and out< but each has a special power adding to the team's limitless potential. One has a head of iron, another bears stomach muscles able to propel the ball at warp speed, a third weighs 300 pounds but possesses the ability to walk on air, and finally the goalie who can stop any shot. Well, almost any shot.

"Shaolin Soccer" shows the game of soccer in "bullet time", so the eye follows the action at the velocity of the ball itself. A kicked ball morphs into a fiery comet and then a flaming tiger as it races across the field. Another ball creates a vortex as it flies through the air, chewing up the field and everything in its path. Players constantly defy the laws of physics by leaping several stories and doing impossible back-flips. At one point, the impact of supersonic soccer balls blows the unlucky goalie away.

On his climb to the top, Sing meets Mui (Vicki Zhao), a homely martial arts mistress who has been reduced to making sweet buns. Her skin is so bad that flies buzz around her but her Kung Fu skills exert a powerful pull on Sing. Sing, however, is too focused on his team's success to properly return Mui's affection. When the Shaolin team makes it to the finals, they must battle the ferocious Team Evil. The showdown proves to be much more than the team expected. One by one, the Shaolin players fall to Team Evil's deceitful tactics. Just when all seems lost, the Shaolin players even the score.

Review

<http://www.avault.com/film/get.asp?source=shaolinsoccer>

Sports and kung-fu fans alike will leave the theater grinning after watching Shaolin Soccer. It's a fun, not-so-serious action flick that plays with the kung-fu genre and bends it like ... well ... a famous soccer player. Even if you're not a Hong Kong cinema fan, Stephen Chow's offering, with its fast action and madcap humor, is a good introduction to the genre. Although the actors may not be familiar to American audiences, Chow and the casts' performances are enjoyable to watch and may make you wish that every soccer match were played Shaolin style.

The Urban Dharma Newsletter Archives:

<http://www.urbandharma.org/nlarchives.html>

The Los Angeles Buddhist-Catholic Dialogue:

<http://www.urbandharma.org/bcdialog/index.html>

Support "Dana" UrbanDharma.org:

<http://www.urbandharma.org/udharma6/dana.html>

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0. Humor/Quotes...

A neurosis is a secret that you don't know you are keeping. - **Kenneth Tynan**

In a mad world only the mad are sane. - **Akira Kurosawa (1910 -)**

Insanity: doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results. - **Albert Einstein (1879 - 1955)**

Sometimes the mind, for reasons we don't necessarily understand, just decides to go to the store for a quart of milk. - **Diane Frolov and Andrew Schneider, Northern Exposure, Three Doctors, 1993**

Insanity in individuals is something rare - but in groups, parties, nations and epochs, it is the rule. - **Friedrich Nietzsche (1844 - 1900)**

Correct me if I'm wrong, but hasn't the fine line between sanity and madness gotten finer? - **George Price**

Ordinarily he was insane, but he had lucid moments when he was merely stupid. - **Heinrich Heine (1797 - 1856)**

Truly great madness cannot be achieved without significant intelligence. - **Henrik Tikkanen**

1. Hinduism and Buddhism

http://hinduwebsite.com/hinduism/h_buddhism.htm

Gautama was born and brought up and lived and died a Hindu...There was not much in the metaphysics and principles of Gautama which cannot be found in one or other of the orthodox systems, and a great deal of his morality could be matched from earlier or later Hindu books." (Rhys Davids)

"Buddhism, in its origin at least is an offshoot of Hinduism." (S.Rahdhakrishnan)

Similarities

1. Both emphasize the illusory nature of the world and the role of karma in keeping men bound to this world and the cycle of births and deaths.
2. Both believe in the transmigration of souls and the cycle of births and deaths for each soul.
3. Both emphasize compassion and non violence towards all living beings.
4. Both believe in the existence of several hells and heavens or higher and lower worlds.
5. Both believe in the existence of gods or deities on different planes.
6. Both believe in certain spiritual practices like meditation, concentration, cultivation of certain bhavas or states of mind.
7. Both believe in detachment, renunciation of worldly life as a precondition to enter to spiritual life. Both consider desire as the chief cause of suffering.
8. The Advaita philosophy of Hinduism is closer to Buddhism in many respects.
9. Buddhism and Hinduism have their own versions of Tantra.
10. Both originated and evolved on the Indian soil. The founder of Buddhism was a Hindu who became the Buddha. Buddhism is the greatest gift of India to mankind.

Differences

1. Hinduism is not founded by any particular prophet. Buddhism was founded by the

Buddha.

2. Hinduism believes in the efficacy and supremacy of the Vedas. The Buddhist do not believe in the Vedas.
3. Buddhism does not believe in the existence of souls as well in the first cause, whom we generally call God. Hinduism believe in the existence of Atman , that is the individual soul and Brahman, the Supreme Creator.
4. Hinduism accepts the Buddha as an incarnation of Mahavishnu, one of the gods of Hindu trinity. The Buddhist do not accept this.
5. The original Buddhism as taught by the Buddha is known as Theravada Buddhism or Hinayana Buddhism. Followers of this do not worship images of the Buddha nor believe in the Bodhisattvas. The Mahayana sect considers the Buddha as the Supreme Soul or the Highest Being, akin to the Brahman of Hinduism and worship him in the form of images and icons.
6. The Buddhists consider the world to be full of sorrow and regard ending the sorrow as the chief aim of human life. The Hindus consider that there are four chief aims (arthas) in life which every being should pursue. They are dharma (religious duty), artha (wealth or material possessions), kama (desires and passions) and moksha (salvation.)
7. Hindus also believe in the four ashramas or stages in life. This is not followed in Buddhism. People can join the Order any time depending upon their spiritual preparedness.
8. Buddhists organize themselves into Order (Sangha) and the monks live in groups. Hinduism is basically a religion of the individual.
9. Buddhism believes in the concept of Bodhisattvas. Hinduism does not believe in it.

2. Hinduism & Buddhism Different Religions! ...By Nandakumar Chandran

<http://www.esamskriti.com/html/inside.asp?cat=635&subcat=634&cname=hinduism#>

In modern perception today Buddhism is regarded as a religion distinct and apart from Hinduism. It is our view that such an understanding lacks historical validity and is also logically flawed. In the enterprise of clarifying Buddhism's relationship with "Hinduism" we will in the essay below adopt the following strategy:

1. Show the inadequacy of the modern understanding of the word "religion" in representing Indian religious traditions.

2. Understand the historical context of the definition of "Hinduism".
3. Understand the inadequacy of the arguments, which distinguish Buddhism as a religion distinct from "Hinduism".
4. Understand why Buddhism is regarded as a religion distinct from "Hinduism" today.
5. Attempt to understand the true relationship between Buddhism and "Hinduism".

Some fundamental problems with regards defining "religion" in India

A religion in the modern sense is generally understood in the Semitic mould as a faith distinguished by its belief in a historical prophet and a holy book. Thus the combination of Jesus and the Bible or Mohammed and the Quran establish the distinct identity of Christianity and Islam. According to these religions salvation or access to God is possible only if you accept the authority of their prophet and holy book. So each of these religions hold that theirs is the only true path and the claims of all other religions are false and invalid. At a secondary level apart from theological distinctions the adherents of these religions also distinguish themselves by their distinct cultural traits - like naming themselves after the holy men of their religions, dressing in a distinct way or observing cultural practices particular to their own religion. So it is in these factors - primarily the exclusive belief in prophet and holy book and secondarily in theological beliefs and distinct cultural practices - that the individual identity of a religion and its adherents rests.

But if we look at India the concept of a prophet is totally lacking - no saint has ever claimed that "he is the only way". With regards the scriptures, a few streams of the Miimaamsaa consider the Vedas to be infallible and the sole authority on matters spiritual - but even here they're careful to stress on the importance of reason in interpreting the scriptures. Simply put: even the Vedas cannot make fire cold. But the majority of the religious streams were agreed about the relative value of their scriptures and accepted the authority of other sources too - logic, the views of enlightened men etc. So no religious stream in India has ever claimed that they and only they represent the sole way to God based on their prophet and holy book and all others are false. Simply put the argument is that God/reality is not validated by a prophet or a holy book and is open to anybody with the right inclination. So each religious stream at best claims to be a better and more effective path to access God/reality.

With regards theological views, all religious streams of India consider man to be caught in an endless cycle of rebirths, where each life is inevitably sunk in suffering due to the transient nature of the world. Salvation is escape from the cycle of rebirths. Knowledge of the true nature of ones own self is what brings about salvation (even for Buddhism the "I" is without substance and it is on understanding its true nature that the root of the bonds which tie a human being to samsaara - "I" and "mine" - are erased and thus liberation effected). This saving knowledge can arise either by intuition or by the grace of God. But it is imperative that one must lead a life of control of the psycho/physical faculties and practice compassion and charity. This is

fundamental dharma and no religious stream has ever disputed it.

Where the various spiritual streams differ is in their metaphysical worldviews

(whether there is one or many souls, where there's a primal matter or infinite atoms etc) and their own particular path to effect liberation - but this path is not anything totally new but an emphasis on a particular set of spiritual practices of the fundamental dharma. For e.g. Advaita might lay greater emphasis on self-introspection, while Mahaayaana Buddhism might give more importance to ethics and meditation or Yoga, which teaches mind control.

With regards cultural practices, it is to be noted that only serious practitioners of the Indian spiritual streams, who in most cases were monks, did anything significant to distinguish themselves from the adherents of other spiritual streams. For example the Saamkhya ascetics wore red robes and the Buddhist and Jainaa monks named themselves in a particular way. But the laity of the various streams existed together with little to distinguish between themselves. For a Shaivite or a Vaishnavite or a Nyaaya logician to become a Buddhist only meant abandoning a few of his existing views and practices on spirituality and adopting new ones as taught by Buddhism. To embrace a new path only meant adopting a slightly different way of life more conducive to one's own spiritual inclinations. Sometimes those who converted to a new path, not satisfied with their current path, went back to their original fold - the great Purva Miimaamsaa philosopher Kumaarilla Bhatta being a notable example. But this seldom involved any change in existing cultural practices as they were all born/married/died the same way, ate similar food, dressed similarly, enjoyed similar past times and upheld similar ideals about the purpose of life. It was not unusual for an orthodox Brahmin family to have a son who was a Buddhist, married to a woman who believed in the teachings of the Mahaaveera. They all belonged to the same civilization and lived as one people under the shade of the dharma.

So considering all these it is a flawed theory that considers Buddhism as a religion distinct from "Hinduism" based on modern notions of religion.

Understanding "Hinduism"

If we see in the four thousand years worth of religious literature in India we cannot find a single reference to the word "Hinduism" anywhere! "Hinduism" is a word concocted by Europeans to refer to the myriad streams of religious faiths in the land of Hindustan. "Hindu" only means an inhabitant of the sub-continent east of the river Sindhu. The Persians pronounced "Sindu" as "Hindu" which the Greeks in turn pronounced as "Indu" - thus the word to refer to the denizens of the sub-continent. Even "India" is but a Greek word for Hindustan.

Only after the advent of Islam and later Christianity in India, the natives of the sub-continent who did not belong to either of these religions, used the word "Hindu" to distinguish between themselves and the adherents of these alien religions. Though the definition is strictly geographical in nature but interpreted in the religious sense a "Hindu" can be a Shaivite or a Vaishnavite or an Advaita Vedaanti or a follower of one of the numerous such sects - each with their own set of Gods and Goddesses, their

own holy book(s), their own spiritual founder/teachers and their own specific way of effecting liberation. And historically we do not see even heterodox streams like Buddhism or Jainism being excluded from such a definition. Neither in the works of the astika nor naastika schools do we find any distinction like "Hindu and Buddha" or "Hindu and Jain". Within themselves it is always "Vedaanti and Buddha" or "Naiyaayika and Jain". Only when there's a reference to Christianity or Islam does the word "Hindu" come into play. So to both the adherents of the alien and native religions "Hindu" meant a follower of one of the native religions of India, including Buddhism and Jainism.

But even then before the advent of Europeans into the sub-continent nobody is known to have clubbed together the myriad spiritual streams of India under a single definition of "Hinduism". Under this definition all the adherents of the astika and assorted miscellaneous sects excluding the Jains and Buddhists, were classified under "Hinduism". Though there's no problem with regards what constitutes "Hinduism" itself, still if you look at the reasons why Buddhism and Jainism are identified as separate religions distinct from "Hinduism", then we find that the definition of "Hinduism" itself becomes untenable.

Problems in distinguishing between Buddhism and "Hinduism"

There're seven main factors, which are normally used to distinguish Buddhism as an entity apart from the various sects that make up "Hinduism":

1. Repudiation of the authority of the Vedas: It is generally held that the Buddha repudiated the authority of the Vedas. But it is very important to understand level this "repudiation" extended to. Nowhere do we find the Buddha saying that the teachings of the Vedas are false. He only questioned whether those who revered the Vedas had experienced/seen the reality which they claimed that the Vedas talked about - so he was not disputing the validity of the Vedas per se, but only those who claimed to know the reality that the Vedas talked about.

The Vedas have traditionally been divided into the karma kaanda and the jnaana kaanda - the ritualistic and the knowledge sections. By the time of the Buddha the ritualistic section had gained prominence with Brahmins performing elaborate rituals and sacrificing animals in the name of Vedic karma. The Buddha was not opposed to rituals per se as we find in the Nikhaayas that he has no problem in participating in a Vedic ritual with a Brahmin - he only opposed the prominence given to the Vedic rituals in the scheme of spiritual liberation and the sacrifice of animals in this process.

As has been noted by a lot of scholars, both ancient and modern, the Buddha's teachings compare very favorably to the jnaana kaanda of the Vedas - the Upanishads. In contrast to the orthodoxy who tried to present the whole Vedas as absolutely valid, the Buddha only shifted the emphasis on the knowledge section. In this he considered the teachings of anybody who had "crossed the further shore", including himself, to be as authoritative as the Vedas.

The "relativity" in the Buddha's approach to the Vedas is not unique to him. All the

orthodox schools except the two Mimaamsaas too pay only lip service to the Vedas - where their doctrines agree with the Vedas they are eager to show it off - but where it doesn't they ignore such contradictions. For each school, only the Sutras of the founder truly play the part of the scripture. The Naiyaayikas dilute the validity of the scripture by accepting anything that's proved by logic.

Even with respect to the two Miimaamsaas, it is only the Purva Miimaamsaa, which can be said to accept scriptural injunctions as absolute. In contrast the schools of the Uttara Miimaamsaa exhibit various positions regarding the scripture: Advaita accepts the relativity of the Vedas and asserts that scriptural teachings are only to "instruct" - also from the ultimate standpoint Advaitins consider even the Vedas to be in the realm of ignorance. The Visishtadvaita school considers the Divya Prabandham to be on par with the Vedas. The Saiva Siddhaanta school considers the Saiva Aagamaas to be more authoritative than the Vedas.

Regarding Vedic rituals with the exception of the Miimaamsaas, all the orthodox schools too are interested mainly in the jnaana kaanda and are indifferent to the karma kaanda. Even with the Mimaamsaas, it is only the Purva Miimaamsaa for which rituals form a very vital aspect of spirituality - the Vedaantic schools in contrast emphasize on the importance of the jnaana kaanda over the karma kaanda. Also historically the Saamkhya and Dvaita Vedaanta too were strong in their opposition to animal sacrifices in the name of religion.

Considering all these it is very difficult to establish Buddhism as a religion distinct from "Hinduism" merely on the basis of the Buddha's "repudiation of the Vedas". It is also to be noted that historically Buddhist universities like Takshila and Nalanda didn't teach Buddhist philosophy alone - the Vedas and the philosophies of aastika schools were also taught in these institutes.

2. The caste system: it is generally held that the Buddha rejected the caste system in contrast to the other schools, which accepted the varna system. This too is not really true.

* In the Ambatta Sutta we find the Buddha scorned as a lower caste Kshatriya by a Brahmin. The Buddha in response points out to the Brahmin that while the Brahmin was born of wedlock between a Brahmin and a lower caste woman, the Buddha's ancestors resorted even to incest to preserve the purity of the race of the Saakhyaas! Thus the Buddha declares himself to be superior to the Brahmin.

* The practical implication of the doctrine of karma itself is that one is born in a higher caste due to the virtues of past lives. The Buddha himself admits that to be born as a Brahmin in a spiritually conducive environment reflects a life of dharma lived in past lives.

* Nowhere in the dialogues of the Buddha do we find him declaring all castes to be equal - nor is it supposed to be so even after they join the Buddhist order. In the Nikhaayas we find Brahmin disciples of the Buddha addressed as Brahmins even after they have joined the sangha.

* Even after the Buddha, his followers in many instances have harped on his "royal" birth to assert the validity of their religion - quite like Jainism it is a regular practice in Buddhist literature to assert the superiority of the Kshatriya caste over the Brahmin caste.

* The Jaatakaas too assert that the Buddha in all his past and future existences will be born only as a Brahmin or a Kshatriya and never in a caste lower than these two. According to Buddhist prophecy even the future "Buddha-to-be" - Maitreya - is supposed to be born as a Brahmin.

Due to the reasons given above we find it hard to accept that the Buddha was against the caste system. The Vedic religion allowed only the dvijas (the top three castes) access to spiritual knowledge - the Buddha only opened up such knowledge for the lower castes and women. So this does not necessarily mean that the Buddha was opposed to the caste system per se, but only disputed the claims of spiritual supremacy of the Brahmins and asserted that anybody with the right inclination can take up spirituality. Also the Buddha was not particularly against Brahmins - for we find recurring instances in the Nikhaayas where the Buddha affirms that it is a virtue to give alms to Brahmins. So in reality the Buddha was only against the exaggerated claims of the spiritual prowess of Brahmins, but not against Brahmins or the caste system per se.

On a related note, we'd like to point out that this is the exact case with respect to the Bhakti saints too. If the bhakti saints can be accommodated within the ambit of Hinduism, then why not the Buddha?

It is also to be noted that even for the Saamkya and Yoga systems anybody who's enlightened is considered a guru irrespective of caste. The Visishtadvaita and the Saiva Siddhaanta reveres many non-Brahmin teachers as saints.

Considering all these it is very difficult to establish Buddhism as a religion distinct from "Hinduism" merely on the basis of the Buddha's alleged "repudiation of the caste system".

3. Philosophical views: It cannot be said that just because of distinct metaphysical views Buddhism is a distinct religion - for the same can be said about all the schools which constitute "Hinduism" too. They all have distinct metaphysical views, which distinguish them from each other. Here it is sometimes pointed out that Buddhism does not accept a creator God - but the same applies to even orthodox schools like classical Saamkhya and the Purva Miimaamsaa.

4. Anatta: it is sometimes said that while the traditional view of "Hinduism" is based on the Atman (Self), the Buddha in contrast taught the anatta.

But here it is to be noted that anatta only meant that which is not the Self - the non-self. It doesn't mean "no self". Nowhere do we find the Buddha denying the reality of the Atman. He just maintained silence when questioned about the Atman.

The Buddha's attitude to philosophy was that it was more meaningful to understand the known than wasting time speculating about the unknown. Thus it is the non-self - the skandhas or aggregates -, which should be contemplated on and understood. But his stress on the non-self doesn't mean that the Buddha negated the self - Naagaarjuna puts anatta in the right perspective when he questions in his *Mulamaadhyamaka Kaarikaa* : without the self how can the non-self exist? The Buddha only taught the insubstantiality of the individual self, but not no-substance or no-soul.

It is also to be noted that the great Advaitin teacher Gaudapaada quite in line with Mahaayaana Buddhism asserts that it is only those who go beyond the notions of the existence or non-existence or both or neither of the Self, are truly omniscient.

So Buddhism cannot be distinguished from "Hinduism" based merely on simplistic notions of the concept of anatta.

5. Teachings: Even with regards his teachings there's nothing in what the Buddha taught that cannot be found in texts earlier to Buddhism. The four noble truths are unanimously accepted right across the Indian philosophical spectrum - right from the Upanishads to the darshanas these truths are accepted as fundamental reason for a life of the spirit.

The origins of the theories of anatta, kshanikavaada (momentariness), pratitya samutpaada (dependant origination) can all be found in the Upanishads (this has been noted by as orthodox a thinker as Kumaarilla Bhatta in his *Tantravaartikam*). Schools generally picked out what they could relate to in the scriptures and expanded on them. The Buddha too only did the same thing.

Even with regards to later Buddhist philosophy it didn't develop in isolation and only developed in relation to other schools of philosophy. Naagaarjuna was primarily responding to Gautama's *Nyaaya Sutras*. Vaatsyaayana the classical commentator of the *Nyaaya Sutras* addresses many of Naagaarjuna's concerns. Likewise the Buddhist logician Dignaaga answers Vaatsyaayana; the *Naiyaayika* Udhyotakaara responds to Dignaaga; and Dignaaga's disciple Dharmakirti addresses the concerns of Udhyotakaara. This was the way Indian philosophy developed. So directly or indirectly each school influenced the philosophy of other schools. So Buddhism developed only in relation to its native cousins and thus its identity itself depends on its cousins to a great extent.

6. Aastika vs. Naastika: as noted above many of the so-called aastika schools stood for the same things that Buddhism did. So it is not easy to identify aastika schools with Hinduism either. Also historically even schools like Saamkhya and Advaita Vedanta have been branded "naastika" in certain quarters.

Further the hostility we observe in the texts of aastika schools against Buddhism itself cannot be used as a point to establish Buddhism as an independent entity apart from the aastika schools. Because even as the aastika schools were opposed to Buddhism,

they were mutually antagonistic to each other too. Also we find many aastika scholars like Gaudapaada who are sympathetic to Buddhism and revere the Buddha. As traditional a scriptural text as the Devi Bhaagavatham considers the Buddha as the Lord descended in human form to prevent cruelty to animals in Vedic sacrifices.

So it is not possible to distinguish Buddhism with "Hinduism" based on simplistic notions of aastika and naastika.

7. Vihaara vs. Temple: Apart from these technical distinctions it is also pointed out that Buddhists have their own temples or vihaaraas. But the same applies to even traditional Shaivites, Vaishnavites, Shaaktaaists etc - each will go only to temples which house their deity and none other. Vaishnavites will not go to a Shiva temple nor will Shaivites go to a Vishnu temple.

In conclusion we find that it is not possible to distinguish Buddhism as a religion distinct from "Hinduism" on the basis of the reasons given above. It is true that at the time of the Buddha, he did preach something quite distinct in the prevailing environment with regards caste, philosophy, spiritual practice etc. But it did not take long for the other spiritual streams to accept and reconcile the validity of these teachings with their own worldview. In some cases even Buddhism itself wasn't able to live up to the original world view of the Buddha: Departing from the original monastic tradition, Mahaayaana with the intent to increase the scope of the sangha in spreading the dharma tried to reconcile spirituality with worldly life - thus the introduction of the bodhisattva ideal in the model of the brahmin householder to spread the dharma. This naturally compromised Buddhism's traditional opposition to the Brahmins; in the religious sphere it embraced theism; philosophically it accepted reality to be pure consciousness. So as time passed the differences narrowed so drastically that Buddhism could no more sustain its individual identity in any meaningful sense and thus could no more be distinguished from other religious streams. The same is the case with the non-Miimaamsaa schools, which were all assimilated into one or the other form of the Vedanta. Jainism quite like Buddhism dominated certain parts of India at certain points in time - but it too met the same fate as Buddhism. Jainism has all but disappeared from its one-time strongholds and survives only in tiny pockets mainly near its historical birthplace in Northern India, where it is held together more by clannish loyalties rather than any meaningful religious distinction with the sects of Hinduism. But for all practical purpose most Jains today consider themselves as Hindus only.

So why is Buddhism regarded as a religion distinct from "Hinduism" today?

By the time modern Indologists started their enquiries into Indian culture, Buddhism was no more a living religion in India and so these scholars couldn't evaluate it as a living religion on its own in its native soil. Jainism too had lost its once dominant position in India and survives only in tiny pockets in North Western India. Influenced by their own exclusive Christian backgrounds western Indologists seem to have viewed Indian religious streams in the same mould - basing it on the validity of a single scriptural text - the Vedas, or a prophet - the Buddha or the Mahaaveera. The ancient distinction between aastika and naastika based on the acceptance or otherwise of the validity of the Vedas and the supremacy of the Brahmin in the chatur

varna system seems to have strengthened their opinion on the validity of such distinctions between "Hinduism" and Buddhism/Jainism. Plus what they saw of Buddhism in practice in countries like Tibet, China and Japan, obviously influenced them to identify Buddhism as a religion distinct from "Hinduism".

But as noted, we cannot distinguish between Buddhism and "Hinduism" the way the latter can be distinguished from Christianity or Islam. Also historically the development of Buddhism in India is different from the way Buddhism developed in other countries. Buddhism in India grew only in relation to its native cousins and its relationship with them is different from its relationship with the religions of the alien lands it spread to. So while it might be meaningful to distinguish between Buddhism and Taoism or Shintoism as distinct religions primarily because of the native cultural and philosophical contexts in which each religious stream developed, the same doesn't hold for its relationship with the so-called "Hinduism".

Understanding the relationship between Indic spiritual streams: Dharmic Substratum

One of the important questions to be asked in understanding Buddhism's relationship with Hinduism is: Did the Buddha consider himself to be starting out a totally new tradition apart from the Vedic tradition?

This cannot be so because the Buddha accepted that what he was doing was only continuing the ancient arya tradition - puraana aarya dharma. It is in this spirit that though his name was Siddhaatha, the Buddha let himself be addressed to by his Vedic gotra name - Gautama - and also in many cases took care to refer to other people by their Gotra names - Vaccha (Vatsa), Kaashyapa etc. This clearly indicates that he considered himself to be a part of the existing tradition.

Also the very fact that Buddha accepted that he had gone through various births and it was due to adherence of the dharma in past lives that he has come to the present stage of Buddhahood, itself implies that there was dharma prior to him and he was an integral part of it. But like various teachers prior to and after him, he only gave that extra individual addition to the dharma, which was his own individual contribution to the understanding of the dharma. But this doesn't make his school a totally new tradition divorced from its cultural ancestors and contemporaries - if this is so then all other schools too have to be considered likewise.

So there is little doubt that even as other spiritual streams the Buddha considered himself to be a part of an age-old tradition. And historically too all the spiritual streams were acutely conscious of their traditional connection to the underlying age old religious tradition of the land and took care to emphasize it - in fact each school claimed that they were the true representatives of the tradition.

With regards to the identity of this tradition there are two possibilities:

1. The Buddha considered himself part of the Vedic tradition, but disputed the Brahmanical interpretation of the Vedas. OR

2. There's an even earlier dharmic substratum of which even the Vedic tradition is but a part - and it is this ancient dharmic substratum that the Buddha considered himself as reviving/following.

Either way there is little doubt that the Buddha considered himself to be following in the footsteps of his civilizational ancestors in spreading the dharma. The same is the view of his rivals too. It is due to this common dharmic ancestor that all religious streams of India share many common beliefs in philosophy and spiritual practice: that there's a cycle of rebirths and each life is filled with suffering due to the transient nature of the world; karma which conditions each existence based on past actions; salvation is knowing the reality inherent in oneself which is effected by living a life of dharma (control of the psycho/physical faculties, compassion and charity) in combination with meditation or devotion - thus does one escape the cycle of rebirths.

The underlying civilizational unity underlying all the spiritual streams of India is more than evident in the shared philosophical heritage that they all subscribed to. All streams predominantly worked under the same philosophical framework and mainly used Sanskrit as the lingua franca amongst themselves. In this regard it is to be noted that Panini's Ashtadhyayi and Patanjali's Mahaabashyam, the classical works on Sanskrit grammar, have been commented upon by both Buddhist and Jaina authors too.

Thus the various spiritual streams of India are better understood from the standpoint of the dharma. It is from the same dharmic tree that all the great spiritual streams of India, including Buddhism, sprung as branches to teach their own brand of dharma with the common goal of salvation from the cycle of rebirths. It is in this spirit that each school referred to other schools only as a darshana (school of philosophy) or a siddhanta (spiritual philosophy) and not as independent religions. Hence the significance of works like Sarva Darshana Samgraha or Sad Darshana Samuccaya.

In conclusion given the civilizational/dharmic unity underlying all the spiritual streams of India we have to find a more integrative way to define and represent the various spiritual streams of India.

3. Hinduism in Sri Lanka

http://atheism.about.com/library/world/KZ/bl_SriLankaHinduism.htm

Whereas Buddhism claims a historical founder, a basic doctrine, and a formal monastic structure, Hinduism embraces a vast and varied body of religious belief, practice, and organization. In its widest sense, Hinduism encompasses all the religious and cultural systems originating in South Asia, and many Hindus actually accept the Buddha as an important sectarian teacher or as a rebel against or reformer of ancient Hindu culture. The medieval Arabs first used the term Hindu to describe the entire cultural complex east of the Sindhu, or Indus, River (in contemporary Pakistan). Hindu

beliefs and practices in different regions claim descent from common textual sources, while retaining their regional individuality. In Sri Lanka, Hinduism is closely related to the distinctive cultural systems of neighboring Tamil Nadu

Classical Hinduism includes as a central tenet of belief the concept of nonviolence (ahimsa), a concept that was of great importance to the Buddha and to such reformers as Mahatma Gandhi some 2,500 years later. Veneration of pure life, especially of the cow, has come to be intimately associated with orthodox Hinduism of all sects. The cow is regarded as, among other things, the sacred embodiment of motherhood and fruitfulness. The deliberate killing of a cow is scarcely less terrible than the killing of a Brahman. For the miscreant it results in immediate and irrevocable outcasting; even the accidental killing of a cow requires elaborate purification ceremonies

The earliest and most sacred sources of Hinduism are the Vedas, a compilation of hymns originating in northern India around 1,500 B.C. They are the oldest surviving body of literature in South Asia, created by the culture of the Arya (the "noble" or "pure" ones) in northwest India. Composed in an archaic form of the Sanskrit language, the Vedas were sung by a caste of priests (Brahmans) during sacrifices for the ancient gods. Families of Brahmans have passed down the oral recitation of these hymns for thousands of years, and Brahman claims to high status ultimately rest on their association with Vedic hymns. The vast majority of Hindus know almost nothing of Sanskrit or the Vedas, but even in the late twentieth century Brahmans frequently officiate at important ceremonies such as weddings, reciting ancient hymns and making offerings into sacred flames

By the time of the Buddha, intellectual speculations gave rise to philosophical concepts that still influence all of South Asia. These speculations became books called Upanishads, originally written as commentaries on the Vedas but later viewed as sacred works in their own right. The Upanishads discuss brahman, an impersonal, eternal force that embodies all good and all knowledge. The individual "soul," or atman, partakes of the same qualities as brahman but remains immersed in ignorance. Action (karma) is the cause of its ignorance; reason continually searches for meaning in the material world and in its own mental creations, instead of concentrating on brahman, the one true reality. The individual soul, immersed in action, migrates from life to life, until it achieves identity with brahman and is released. There is a close relationship between the Buddha's understanding of suffering and enlightenment, and the ideas of atman, karma, and brahman that became basic to Hindu philosophy. The Buddha, however, claimed that even the idea of the soul was a mental construct of no value, whereas Hindu thought has generally preserved a belief in the soul

As India became a major center of civilization with extensive political and economic systems, Hinduism became associated with new visions of the gods and worship in temples. Tamil Nadu was a major center of this transformation. By about A.D. 1000, the Tamils had reworked Brahmanical culture into a southern Indian type of devotional (bhakti) religion. This religion claimed to be based on the Vedas and the philosophy of the Upanishads, but its roots lay just as deep in strong attachments to local deities and a desire for salvation (moksha) through their intercession

Several gods predominate in the many myths, legends, and styles of worship. One of the main Hindu gods is Vishnu, often represented as a divine king accompanied by his beautiful wife, Lakshmi, the bestower of wealth and good fortune. Besides presiding as a divine monarch, Vishnu periodically descends to earth, assuming a physical form to help beings attain salvation. Vishnu has ten main incarnations, two of which - Rama and Krishna - are particularly popular. Rama was a great hero, whose exploits in rescuing his wife from the demon king of Lanka are recounted in the epic Ramayana. Vishnu's most popular incarnation is Krishna, who combines in a single divine figure the mythic episodes of a warrior prince and a rustic cowherd god. As warrior, Krishna figures prominently in what is perhaps the single most important Hindu text, the Bhagavad Gita, where he stresses the importance of doing one's duty and devotion to god. As divine cowherd, Krishna served as an inspiration for a vast body of religious poetry in Sanskrit and the regional South Asian languages. From the eighth to the twelfth centuries, Tamil devotees of Vishnu (alvars) composed poetry in praise of the god. These Tamil poems, collected in anthologies, are still recited during worship and festivals for Vishnu

The second major Hindu deity, and by far the most important god among the Tamils in Sri Lanka, is Siva. He differs considerably from Vishnu. In many stories he reigns as a king, but often he appears as a religious ascetic, smeared with ashes, sitting on a tiger skin in the jungle, with a snake around his neck. He is the lord of animals. Although he is an ascetic, he is also a sexual figure, married to the beautiful Parvati (the daughter of the mountain), and his image is often a single rock shaped like a phallus (lingam). He is often a distant figure whose power is destructive, but paradoxically he is a henpecked husband who has to deal with family squabbles involving his sons. His devotees enjoy retelling his myths, but worshipers visualize him as a cosmic creator who will save his creatures when they have abandoned themselves totally to his love. One of the most powerful expressions of his creative role is the image of Nataraja, "Lord of the Dance," who gracefully manifests the rhythm of the universe. Great Tamil devotees (nayanmar) of the early middle ages created a large collection of poems dedicated to Siva and his holiest shrines. These collections are still revered among the Tamils as sacred scriptures on the same plane as the Vedas

Female deities are very important among the Hindu Tamils. At temples for Siva or Vishnu there are separate shrines for the god and for his consort, and in many cases the shrine for the goddess (amman) receives much more attention from worshipers. Hindu philosophy interprets the goddess as the Shakti, or cosmic energy, of the god in the world and therefore the most immediate creative or destructive force, to be thanked or placated. Many of the manifestations of the goddess are capricious or violent, and she is often seen as a warrior who destroys demons on her own or whom Siva himself has to defeat in combat. As Mariamman, she used to bring smallpox, and she is still held responsible for diseases of the hot season

In addition to the main gods, there are a number of subordinate divine beings, who are often the most popular deities. Ganesha, or Pillaiyar (or Ganapati), the elephant-headed son of Siva and Parvati, is the patron of good fortune and is worshiped at the beginning of a religious service or a new venture, such as a business deal or even a

short trip. Murugan, his brother, is a handsome young warrior who carries a spear and rides a peacock. He is worshiped near hills or mountains, and his devotees are known for fierce vows and austerity that may include self-mutilation. Every village has its own protective deities, often symbolized as warriors, who may have their own local stories and saints

Worship of the gods is known as puja. Worship can occur mentally or in front of the most rudimentary representations, such as stones or trees. Most people assemble pictures or small statues of their favorite deities and create small shrines in their homes for daily services, and they make trips to local shrines to worship before larger and more ornate statues. Public temples (kovil) consist of a central shrine containing images of the gods, with a surrounding courtyard and an enclosing wall entered through ornately carved towers (gopuram). During worship, the images become the gods after special rituals are performed. Worshipers then offer them presents of food, clothing, and flowers as they would honored guests

The gifts are sanctified through contact with the gods, and worshipers may eat the sacred food or smear themselves with sacred ash in order to absorb the god's grace. In public temples, only consecrated priests (pujari) are allowed into the sanctum housing the god's image, and worshipers hand offerings to the priests for presentation to the god. Most of the time, worship of the gods is not congregational, but involves offerings by individuals or small family groups at home or through temple priests. During major festivals, however, hundreds or thousands of people may come together in noisy, packed crowds to worship at temples or to witness processions of the gods through public streets.

4. DharmaDate

<http://www.dharmadate.com/>

Are you ready to have a relationship with someone who shares your highest values? Who you can connect with on a level of ethics, philosophy and spirituality?

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Namaste, Gassho and Tashi Delek - **Erik Curren and L.B. Shiu**, Lexington, Virginia, USA

5. A Buddhist History of the West ...by David R. Loy

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0791452603/wwwkusalaorg-20/>

Editorial Reviews; *From the Back Cover* - Buddhism teaches that to become happy, greed, ill-will, and delusion must be transformed into their positive counterparts: generosity, compassion, and wisdom. The history of the West, like all histories, has been plagued by the consequences of greed, ill-will, and delusion. A Buddhist History of the West investigates how individuals have tried to ground themselves to make themselves feel more real. To be self-conscious is to experience ungroundedness as a sense of lack, but what is lacking has been understood differently in different historical periods. Author David R. Loy examines how the understanding of lack changes at historical junctures and shows how those junctures were so crucial in the development of the West.

Amazon.com - Reviewer: from Shaker Heights, Ohio United States ...This is an incredibly insightful contribution to our understanding of why Western institutions have become so destructive of the world around us while generally failing to provide people with a sense of meaning, direction, or pleasure in life. As Loy so clearly articulates, Buddhism offers a perspective that can transform our lives and, perhaps, our self-destructive culture.

Amazon.com - Reviewer: from Seattle, WA ...For Westerners who've had a taste of Buddhist practice or insights, there comes a moment when we must look back on our own cultural heritage and wonder, "What the hell happened?" Why this long 2,500 year detour into dominating nature and building social empires? Why this absorption into disconnected individualism? Loy's book is exciting trailblazing into the emerging field of putting Buddhist concepts to work to decode history. Highly recommended. Gassho.

The Urban Dharma Newsletter Archives:

<http://www.urbandharma.org/nlarchives.html>

The Los Angeles Buddhist-Catholic Dialogue:

<http://www.urbandharma.org/bcdialog/index.html>

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0. Humor/Quotes...

A banker is a fellow who lends you his umbrella when the sun is shining, but wants it back the minute it begins to rain. - **Mark Twain**

A lie can travel halfway around the world while the truth is putting on its shoes. - **Mark Twain**

A man cannot be comfortable without his own approval. - **Mark Twain**

Always acknowledge a fault. This will throw those in authority off their guard and give you an opportunity to commit more. - **Mark Twain**

Always do right. This will gratify some people and astonish the rest. - **Mark Twain**

An Englishman is a person who does things because they have been done before. An American is a person who does things because they haven't been done before. - **Mark Twain**

Be careful about reading health books. You may die of a misprint. - **Mark Twain**

Clothes make the man. Naked people have little or no influence on society. - **Mark Twain**

Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear - not absence of fear. - **Mark Twain**

1. Parallel Sayings of Buddha and Christ

<http://www.heartlandsangha.org/parallel-sayings.html>

These parallel sayings of Buddha and Christ were shared with people at the joint Buddhist/Christian religious service held at Lake Street Church in Evanston, IL in May.

Although the Buddha and Jesus lived hundreds of years and cultures apart, there are striking parallels to the sayings attributed to them. It is not that they said exactly the same things, it is rather that their distinctive and independent sayings pierce the veil of illusion, reminding us that God, or truth (Dharma) or whatever word that we choose to call that which is ultimate, binds us together in a timeless and infinite garment of mutuality.

The parallel teachings of Buddha and Christ are from the book Jesus and Buddha, the Parallel Teachings by Marcus Borg, Jesus scholar and Buddhist writer, Jack Kornfield. The Buddha sayings are taken from the Dhammapada and the sutras of the Buddha. The Jesus sayings are taken from the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

Buddha: They agreed among themselves, friends, here comes the recluse, Gotama, who lives luxuriously, who gives up his striving and reverted to luxury.

Jesus: The son of humanity came eating and drinking and they said look a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.

Buddha: With the relinquishing of all thought and egotism, the enlightened one is liberated through not clinging.

Jesus: Those who want to save their life will lose it. Those who lose their life for my sake will save it.

Buddha: One is the way to gain, the other is the way to Nirvana, knowing this fact, students of the Buddha should not take pleasure in being honored, but, should practice detachment.

Jesus: No slave can serve two masters For a slave will either hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

Buddha: Just as a mother would protect her only child at the risk of her own life, even so, cultivate a boundless heart towards all beings. Let your thoughts of boundless love pervade the whole world.

Jesus: This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends.

Buddha: If you do not tend to one another then who is there to tend to you? Whoever who would tend me, he should tend the sick.

Jesus: Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these, so you have done it unto me.

Buddha: Consider others as yourself.

Jesus: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

Buddha: One who acts on truth is happy, in this world and beyond.

Jesus: You will know the truth and the truth will make you free.

Buddha: Hatred do not ever cease in this world by hating, but by love; this is an eternal truth... Overcome anger by love, Overcome evil by good. overcome the miser by giving, overcome the liar by truth.

Jesus: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. From anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again.

2. "Benedict's Dharma: Buddhists Reflect on the Rule of Saint Benedict' ...by Norman Fisher, Joseph Goldstein, Judith Simmer-Brown, Yofa(Editor), Patrick Henery(Editor). / Book Review by Christina Fox - Reprinted courtesy of Golden String Publication

http://www.ordinarymind.net/Spotlight/bookreview_may2002.htm

This book is the child of the Gethsemani Encounter, a seminal and extended dialogue between Buddhist and Christian monastics which, at the request of the Dalai Lama, was held in 1996 at the monastery of his friend Thomas Merton. The purpose of the meetings was to explore the monastic archetype which in their distinctive ways each tradition exemplifies. As Patrick Henry listened to two of the Christian monastics, it occurred to him that, if a few of the technical terms were changed, it might just as well have been a discussion between two Buddhists. From that flash of insight this book emerged, in which Buddhist monastics from several traditions and states of life respond to the distinctive character of that very explicitly Christian document, the Rule of St Benedict.

Like almost all such encounters in our time, Benedict's Dharma walks the tightrope

between cultures, doctrines and experiences; between patterns of difference and of similarity. In dialogue between Buddhists and Christians, one sometimes senses an undercurrent of anxiety. We are frequently exhorted not to attempt to put a yak's head on a sheep. All this is quite understandable. No one wants to see either tradition treated as another commodity, to be packaged attractively with an eye to the Western market. We ought not to sell the Gospel, the Dharma or the Benedictine Rule, through superficial syncretism or any other means. One of the strengths of Benedict's Dharma is that it moves beyond this anxiety, to face with trust the cost and promise of deep ecumenism; a gift which will inevitably change both traditions, not by sacrificing their distinctive gifts and insights, but by an undefended and receptive listening, a mutual lection in which each tradition becomes for the other a living and holy text. As we breathe each other's spiritual atmospheres in this way, we will be changed, in ways that we cannot wholly predict.

Perhaps as Christians we might see this as a participation in the death and resurrection of Christ. After all, we have been there before, as primitive Christianity absorbed and was transformed by Greek philosophy. We are placing ourselves in a crucible, as the Buddha himself taught: testing, rubbing, refining, purifying, not only the teachings and traditions of the other, but also our own. From the crucible comes pure gold. As Steindl-Rast reminds us in his invaluable concluding essay, Benedict's Rule is written in letters of fire. In reading it, much less attempting to live by it, we are on holy ground. In a website devoted to discussion of this book, Steindl-Rast reminds us that baptism was once known as photismos, - illumination, enlightenment. Baptism begins the opening of our eyes to the deifying light of which Benedict speaks.

Catching even a glimpse of this light, thousands of people, including that glittering prize, 'youth', are turning from a materially glutted and spiritually famished culture, and flocking to Buddhist centres and Buddhist masters. A startling number of them were brought up as Christians. Many of them are attracted to Buddhist paths because they need to find enlightenment embodied, not only in a text or a tradition, but also in living teachers, in whom they see an extension or manifestation of the Buddha himself. They display a longing for authentic teachers and teaching. When they sense this authenticity, they willingly entrust themselves to the demanding disciplines of the ancient paths, and to teachers who make little allowance for the sensibilities of post-modern Western egos. The youthful David Steindl-Rast's response to the Rule illustrates this: he felt that what we in practice had now, fourteen hundred years after Benedict, was not Benedict's Rule; and it was Benedict's Rule that inspired him. It was like reading a score that had never been performed. He is not alone in this response; yet aspirants to Benedictine monasteries are seldom encouraged to retain it.

However obscurely or confusedly, such aspirants, Buddhist or Christian, seem to know instinctively that what we long for is in us, whether this is understood as Buddha-nature or as the interior presence of the divine energies, commonly known as the image of God. Without ever having heard of Origen, they sense the truth of his words: Understand that you are another universe ... that in you there are sun, moon, and stars too ... Sensing this, they want to do what the Magi did. As children of their culture, they want to follow the stars, those whom they take to be the

manifestation in outward form of their inner teacher, the star within. Benedict's Dharma sheds light on two paths which flow with this inclination and energy, instead of eyeing it from afar with apprehension and disapproval.

Just about everything in our Western Christian experience clouds our vision here. Unlike the Buddhists, some denominations have a three-fold order of ministry, an institutionally transmitted lineage, through which the ordained are held to be drawn into the Apostolic Succession in virtue of their ordination, *ex opere operato*. The validity of the Sacrament of Holy Order (as of all Sacraments) is considered to depend upon neither the personal holiness and wisdom of the ordaining bishop, nor that of the ordinand. For a Buddhist, to be ordained means simply, to be a monk or nun. Benedict writes of the abbot as the one who holds the place of Christ in the community; but except in the case of founders, this text refers to an elected figure, who is seen in this way in virtue of his office, whether he is also a charismatic teacher or not. As with Christian ordination there is no question here of the direct transmission of wisdom and holiness through a living charismatic lineage. In the monasteries of the Eastern Orthodox, however, one may meet living lineage-holders, spiritual fathers or mothers who do not necessarily hold any institutional office at all. These charismatic lineages are regarded as themselves a form of Apostolic Succession, by the direct and living transmission of grace from heart to heart, across many generations. From time to time new lineage-founders emerge. Was not Father Bede Griffiths such a one, as abbot and guru?

Buddhists take this ongoing supply of stars as a given. Many Christians do not. The primacy of office over charism in the life of the Western churches and of text over image in the Protestant mind undergirds the deep reserve which many contemporary Christians feel towards gurus of every description. Yet it was surely Benedict's desire that the abbot be a person in whom the graces of office and charism were fused. A star is a ball of fire whose light reaches us through almost unimaginable space-time. Lovely as it is, we know that the source of the starlight is dead. It was not so for the Fathers themselves; and the light of these spiritual stars is inextinguishable. Moreover, as Kallistos Ware reminds us, who are we to say that the age of the Fathers is over? Who knows but that God will send us another Basil? Or indeed, although Ware does not say so, another Macrina? Here, it seems to me, is a nettle which contemporary Christian monastics, and, indeed, the Western churches themselves, are still struggling to grasp. Folk wisdom assures us that nettles don't sting as long as we take hold of them boldly. In the book, the nettle of charismatic leadership has several companion-plants: obedience, humility and lay monasticism. Among a number of other significant topics, these three will be the focus of this review.

As the Zen priest and abbot Norman Fisher says of the charismatic teacher, in the beginning, a Buddhist monastery is created around such a figure, and everyone who has come is there because of the leader's charisma. In a sense, the monastery's lifeblood and the person of the superior seem to be one and the same. In a Tibetan Buddhist monastery, a reincarnate successor is sought; in a community in the West, a local leader may be appointed as the representative of the lineage-holder. When the first charismatically graced founder of a Zen monastery dies, the community must perforce elect a successor or dissolve itself. At least in Christian monasteries,

the choice is seldom considered so bluntly. A tacit decision to proceed to election is virtually built into the fabric of modern Christian monastic life. Where there is no charismatic successor to hand, no obvious Dharma-heir, Buddhist monastics are quite free to go to another monastery, whereas it is far harder for Benedictines. Monastic constitutions and the sheer weight of common practice, together with canon law, make the transference of one's stability a very serious matter. Both Buddhist and Christian monastics are walking a path which becomes incandescent when it is embodied in a living teacher, not just in a text. Clearly, then, the selection of a successor, like the choice of whom to follow in the first instance, as founder or root lama, is a mysterious and religiously monumental task.

Steindl-Rast points out that the Rule of St Benedict offers a specific and detailed blueprint for our journey into the deifying light. It is by no means the only blueprint that can be trusted, but it has worked. The marvellous intricacies of a great cathedral depend on the ground-plan, and its practical enactment. An indispensable part of Benedict's ground-plan is his teaching on obedience to the abbot. Under the Gospel and the Rule, a wise and discerning abbot provides a thread through the labyrinth of our own cloudy minds and wills. There is no glorifying of impulse here. Yet, no matter how often we are reminded that it means 'listening', many Christians, and some monastics, dislike the very word 'obedience.' Mutual, horizontal obedience may in practice be considered more appropriate to adult monastics today than is the Rule's strongly vertical emphasis on obedience to the abbot. There may be much talk of personal responsibility, delegation and initiative. In the daily give-and-take of monastic life, where the abbot's wishes are at least implicitly known, they may be quietly resisted surprisingly often, especially in small things. If the horizontal perspective is too dominant, we may end by obeying the collective ego, or the one who shouts loudest, with the abbot as a rubber-stamp. Yet there is more to the minutiae than meets the eye; they too are part of the enactment of the ground-plan, and so it is not all right to treat practical injunctions of the Rule cavalierly .

In the mandala of community, as Judith Simmer-Brown, a Vajrayana practitioner, notes, the abbot or guru is at the centre and the others are the perimeter; centre and perimeter are constantly interacting. Teacher and student must listen to each other; the guru must decide, and the others follow. If they don't listen, his wisdom will not benefit them because they will be unable to receive it, and if he doesn't listen it will be an unnatural graft that does not take. Attachment or resistance to his personality is an obstacle to the listening of the student; a defensive refusal to consult or to be spiritually visible and vulnerable is an obstacle to the listening of the teacher.

The charisms and disciplines of leading and following, as all the traditions represented in this book seem to realise, are inter-dependent. In the book, a lot of energy seems to constellate around these delicate and profoundly formative visions of leading and following. The Burmese nun Yifa's polite and pointed reservations about the teaching of the Rule on obedience, for example, represent a cutting-edge of dialogue. For Theravadin practitioners sometimes express similar reservations about the place of guru-devotion in the Vajrayana tradition, in which the teacher is seen as the embodiment of the enlightened state; our inner teacher, which is ultimately the awakened mind, manifest in the external form of the outer teacher -

star mirroring star, as we saw above.

The misunderstanding of Benedictine obedience which, in my view, she expresses, is alive and well in wider Christian circles too. A naive or simplistic conflation between institutional authority and the authority of God is a fertile breeding-ground for abuse of authority, and an ongoing temptation for all Christian institutions. Moreover, I suggest, we have been radically impoverished by our excessive focus on the authority of office to the exclusion of charismatic authority. When Adalbert de Vogue, author of many scholarly and theological commentaries on the Rule, pointed out some years ago that a Benedictine monastery was a community gathered around an abbot, there was an outcry. This neglect and resistance seems to be compounded of inculpable ignorance and fear. Contingent historical circumstances have obscured, and to some extent ruptured, the continuity of our Patristic and monastic heritage for us. Predatory 'gurus' abound in the West, and we have all seen something of the damage they can do.

Most of us, however, have seen it from afar; most Western Christians have no experience at all of following a charismatically gifted teacher. One of the great gifts of this book is its steadfast refusal to leave the fresh fields of lived experience. There is nothing purely speculative or theoretical in what the authors say. Few Western people could be more qualified by experience to speak about the teacher-student relationship than Judith Simmer-Brown, a thoroughly modern, intelligent and sane American academic, who was a student of the controversial Chogyam Trungpa until his death. She writes peacefully, after years of living what she writes, that the commitment and devotion to the root teacher require putting aside personal preferences in following the spiritual counsel of the teacher. This touches on another very sensitive area for Western Christian monastics. It goes far beyond just obeying orders, which may be little more than a joyless and grudging resignation, draining one's energies. For Simmer-Brown is talking about radical and highly interpersonal renunciation. This is only possible and life-giving when it springs from a foundational trust in the teacher of a kind that many Christians find positively alarming, as we saw. At the same time, it challenges us to look more closely at our own defences. For the Buddhist, disobedience, pride, and murmuring are more than momentary gestures of autonomy or independence. They are all expressions of self-absorption [which is] a defence against our own spiritual development .

To expose that self-absorption in a way that neither breaks the rusty vessel nor crushes the bruised reed is one of the principle tasks of the spiritual teacher. Speaking of Chogyam Trungpa's various ways of exposing her stubbornness, Simmer-Brown writes: Even if he said nothing, my awareness of my confusion and self-absorption became highlighted in his presence. The shock and nausea of seeing our own self-absorption can be overwhelming for a time. We may find ourselves awkward or tongue-tied when we are around our teacher, our neuroses heightened, as our self-absorption rises to the surface. Simmer-Brown says she was often unable, in the presence of Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, to hold a single coherent thought in her mind. Vulnerability of this kind opens the heart to the teacher's skilful means. A teacher who lovingly does this for us, showing us our shortcomings and his view of them, is a revealer of hidden treasures, inviting us to a true change of heart.

But what if the fortress of self-absorption seems impregnable? Then the utmost delicacy, clarity and firmness are required for the good of all. One truly incorrigible and self-willed person can destroy a community. But careful discernment is essential, as rebellion can be a sign of breakthrough rather than of breakdown; it can mean that one is approaching fresh frontiers of practice. The disciplines of monastic life and obedience may be serving to exaggerate [self-absorption and rebellion] to the point of self-awareness. Either way, the community needs skilful means to deal with intransigent and disruptive self-absorption, and to care for the rebel. In the Rule, excommunication is presented as a final and very drastic circuit-breaker. It is ordered towards restoration and healing. Actual dismissal is held in reserve for those whose continued presence would clearly and irremediably be destructive.

Simmer-Brown's exploration of this aspect of the teacher-student relationship occurs in the context of Benedict's teaching on humility. A significant proportion of this chapter is quite alien to Buddhist sensibilities, as it is thick with images and ideas derived from the highly stratified world of the sixth century. For much the same reason, this chapter is also notoriously difficult for contemporary Westerners to interpret. If Western monastics are still exploring this issue, little wonder that Buddhists find it opaque. Yet the Zen Buddhist Norman Fisher offers one of the most illuminating analyses of it that I have ever seen.

The Rule likens our life on earth to Jacob's ladder; our body and soul are its sides, and the degrees of humility are its rungs. Fisher prefers to see it as a bridge across the chasm that separates the shore of selfishness and ignorance from the shore of love and true vision. Wise and loving monastics are always going back and forth across this bridge, until finally they can't see the difference between the two shores. There is only the bridge, the bracing, wide-open view of the chasm itself, and the movement between. A horizontal perspective alongside Benedict's vertical one, each reflecting its own cultural milieu. Paradoxically, in the profoundly vertical perspective of the Scriptures and the Fathers, and indeed of traditional high Christology, one ascends by descending. The horizontal perspective of Fisher the Zen Buddhist simply turns the whole image on its side; ladder becomes bridge, earth and heaven become parallel worlds or shores. Here, perhaps, it is easier to see that the journey is essentially interior; that the two shores co-exist in every human heart, as do heaven and earth. In each case, the polarities dissolve in the depths of humility and pure perception.

One would at first expect that once this dissolution is accomplished, the means to it - ladder and bridge - would also disappear, themselves dissolving into the fusion of horizons towards which they are ordered. Fisher's interpretation recalls for me Teresa's Interior Castle, in which the closer one moves to the centre, the larger, not the smaller, each room is, until one reaches the largest of all, the limitless spaciousness of the Seventh Mansion. At this point, neither the acquired nor the infused virtues - the 'bridge/ladder' - disappears; rather, each becomes a distinctive and scintillating point of radiance, like the gems of Indra's net. Each part reflects and refracts the whole. So the ordinary, mundane interior and exterior acts and attitudes of humility express and direct the limitless energies, the ceaseless perichoresis of a life transfigured by the deificum lumen, the deifying light.

That light lives within and is offered to all, without distinction. In particular, it is offered as freely to lay people as to vowed monastics. This leads us naturally to the final issue to be highlighted here. The monastic heart is alive and well in lay practitioners of both traditions. As Steindl-Rast notes, lay practitioners are running away with the monastic ball. The laity deliberately cultivate the contemplative dimension of life. Oblates outnumber the others by as much as ten to one; and this figure is growing. In Rumer Godden's *In this House of Brede*, a fine novel of life in a great Benedictine monastery for women caught in the upheaval that followed Vatican 2, an abbess observes ironically that since contemplatives now want to do the work of the active orders, and the active orders want to do the work of the laity, perhaps the laity will turn to contemplation. And so they have.

This is not universally recognised. Some monasteries seem to fear that their own monasticism will be diluted to the point of disappearance, if the obvious distinctions between lay people and monastics are played down or even dissolved. Where this fear prevails, oblation tends to be largely a matter of pious association, with oblates given no real monastic formation. This book invites monasteries and oblates to get real about each other. It has been well-said that apples and oranges don't mix only if you are determined never to enjoy a fruit salad. Zen monasteries in particular have something to teach us here. Temporary membership of their monastic communities is seen as part of one's ongoing life of formation and practice, not as failure. As the 'householder monastic', Norman Fisher, says in the website mentioned above, he repeatedly enters and leaves by ritual gates. So the enclosing walls of the monastery become, in Steindl-Rast's words, a permeable membrane; a shimmering threshold, not a barrier; a translucent stream within which monastic and lay practitioners alike may be at home, like fish in the sea.

The monastery is a place of intensive practice, the world of the laity, extensive, expansive and diffused. In the monastery, the bell rings and it's time to go to the Office, whether you feel like it or not. In many households, one must, each day, consciously and deliberately renegotiate a space for the Office. We need each other's complementary charisms. The imploded world of the monastery offers a highly focussed and intentional sub-culture in which everything is consciously oriented to the path. Without regular access to something like this, it is almost impossible for lay practitioners to keep going. Without regular contact with those seriously pursuing the monastic ideal in 'the world', monks and nuns can all too easily become insular, defensive and condescending.

Oblates ought, therefore, to be especially welcomed in our Christian monasteries. And this means more than the exercise of the expected social graces - the superficial smile or the warm reception of expected guests - more than a meticulous and thoroughly controlling courtesy by which monastics and oblates keep each other's distinctive charisms at a comfortable distance. Preserving the peace and silence of the monastery need not involve distancing the oblates, keeping them at bay by rigid enclosure or an obvious and intimidating reticence, especially if they are members of the opposite sex. Rather, it could mean asking them to give themselves seriously and humbly to the disciplines of monastic formation and life; drawing them into lifelong, non-trivial formation, acknowledging and nurturing the monastic charism within them, however untutored it may be.

The abbot, obedience and humility, lay monastics: these are by no means the only issues explored in Benedict's Dharma; but I have focussed on them in this review because for contemporary Benedictine monastics they are among the most thorny. We stand at something of a crossroads. Are the hundreds of oblates gathering around our monasteries a field ripe for harvest, or, albeit unwittingly, a swarm of locusts? How do we listen to the voices of our Buddhist brothers and sisters in the monastic life? Is this a new Pentecost or a new Tower of Babel? Will we allow the immense reverence and devotion offered to the teacher, especially within Vajrayana practice, to cast new light on what the Rule says about the abbot? Will we allow it to speak into our experience of choosing and learning from our own abbots or spiritual teachers? If we do these things, where will it all lead? Joseph Goldstein, faced with the claim that Dudjom Rinpoche was a reincarnation of Sariputra, perhaps the closest disciple of the Buddha, was at first confused. He, a Theravadin who did not believe in rebirth after enlightenment, had to own that he did not know whether this claim was true. And this 'not knowing' became a place of great openness and freedom. 'A breath of fresh air blew through my mind, sweeping out many previously held opinions, conclusions, and certainties.'

When you come to a fork in the road, take it, a master once said. These are brave words, pointing to a path which is not to be entered lightly; for it asks much in the way of discipline, detachment, surrender, and eyes that are brimful with Benedict's deifying light, so beloved of Steindl-Rast, and so often concealed by the circumlocutions of nervous translators. The editor and participants in this venture are among those who have entrusted themselves to the fork in the road, not quite knowing where it will take them or us. They are unfailingly courteous and sensitive, yet always, so it seems, honest, as they gaze with eyes not ours on the very foundations of the Western monastic life as mirrored in the Rule of St Benedict. Benedict's Dharma is a complex book, never settling for superficial agreement, unusually willing to speak openly and strongly about points of union and mutual illumination. The boundaries between the Buddhist and Christian monastic traditions are still there; but this exploratory book weaves across them many subtle, delicate threads of experience and reflection.

**And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.**

The little Rule for beginners lends itself well to such exploration. The Buddhist commentators approach it with a mixture of awe and reverence. They recognize it as belonging to monastics of all traditions. The large-hearted Benedict would surely agree.

3. Benedict's Dharma: The Conference

<http://www.monasticdialog.com/benedict/about.htm>

Benedict's Dharma: A Conference of Buddhist and Christian Monastics gathered on September 19-21, 2001 at Our Lady of Grace Monastery in Beech Grove, Indiana to launch and discuss the book, *Benedict's Dharma: Buddhists Reflect on the Rule of St. Benedict*, edited by Patrick Henry and published by Riverhead Press.

Hosted by Sister Mary Margaret Funk and Fr. William Skudlarek, the conference was convened only just over a week after the events of September 11, the conference was without two participants in the book, Joseph Goldstein and Norman Fischer, who felt it was more appropriate to be with their Buddhist communities at the time. However, the editor, Patrick Henry, and contributors Judith Simmer-Brown and Ven. Yifa were able to attend, along with about 100 attendees, both from Buddhist and Christian communities.

In addition to these, there were talks from Sr. Sarah Schwartzberg, Fr. Francis Kline, Ven. Heng Sure, Fr. Columba Stewart, Fr. Patrick Barry, Fr. James Wiseman, and Brother David Steindl-Rast. There were also many contributions from the attendees, and each day began and ended with a ceremony. The Conference was sponsored by Monastic Interreligious Dialogue with a grant from the Fetzer Institute.

The conference was brought to a close by a ceremony that affirmed the two religious traditions and called for healing and peace in the wake of September 11th

You are invited to follow the conference day by day, or to go to the list of speakers for a particular talk. You may also read the reflections of many of the attendees on the conference or follow the links to other organizations working on interreligious and Buddhist-Christian dialogue.

4. MOVIE REVIEW - "Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter . . . and Spring." A stunning tale of now and Zen

By Ty Burr, Globe Staff | April 16, 2004

The big movie news this week is Quentin Tarantino's "Kill Bill, Vol. 2," a glitteringly busy antihero sandwich of borrowed Eastern and Western elements. Opening much more quietly is its polar opposite, Korean writer-director Kim Ki Duk's Buddhist fable "Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter . . . and Spring." The film is as spare and unvarnished as a wooden temple floating on a lake, but its reflections run deep, and it can ripple your thoughts for months. If Tarantino's film is built to thrill, "Spring, Summer" is made to last.

The plot is deceptively simple. An aging monk (Oh Young Soo) lives in a shrine on a lake with his sole companion, a child apprentice (Kim Jong Ho). The boy, as boys sometimes will, spends one afternoon casually tormenting animals, tying rocks to a frog, a snake, and a fish. The monk responds by tying a rock to the boy's back and instructing him to rescue the animals he has burdened. Two survive but one does

not, and that figurative rock will stay with the boy for a long time.

Each season is a chapter in the young monk's life, separated by a decade or so. As summer arrives, so does a sickly but attractive adolescent girl (Ha Yeon Jin), and the teenage apprentice (now played by Kim Young Min) is pulled into a raw, urgently sexual relationship. Director Kim gets the pulse of young hormones going haywire, but the film sits on the fence: We applaud the boy's ardor even as we fear where it will lead him.

And we're right to. If you know your Buddhism, you know the "noble truth" that desire is the root cause of suffering, that craving nothing is the path to everything. The young monk learns this the hard, human way, leaving the island and returning years later, still carrying that invisible stone (and played, at last, by the director himself). His aging master sets an absurd task that flowers into something monumentally pointless and profound, and while there's more, I think I'll keep it to myself. You might guess where the tale goes from here but not its sneaky, poetic impact.

Shot by cinematographer Baek Dong Hyeon in the environs of Jusan Pond, a 200-year-old man-made body of water in Korea's North Kyungsang province, "Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter. . . and Spring" has a rural beauty so timeless that it's a shock when the director drops hints that we're in the present day. The images turn pungent, hyperreal, and mythic over the course of the decades: The boat that ferries the elder monk to shore becomes both a symbol and a plain-hewn character in its own right, as does the ornamental gate on the shore, and the wintry ice that chokes both. A cat's tail becomes a calligraphy pen; a foundling child becomes a savior; the seasons swing 'round.

Films that hope to distill the essence of belief are often willfully naive and "Spring, Summer" occasionally leans too hard on its own simplicity. This is anything but a fuzzy new age bath, though. If the film is a meditation, it's the lean, unyielding sort, with muscles honed by the act of observing human struggle against a backdrop of ceaseless change. And if it doesn't offer transcendence, it shows, like a finger pointing at the moon, how we might spin toward it. - **Ty Burr** can be reached at tburr@globe.com.

The Urban Dharma Newsletter Archives:

<http://www.urbandharma.org/nlarchives.html>

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The Urban Dharma Newsletter... May 4, 2004

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 - 3. Temple/Center/Website: The Journal of Buddhist Ethics**
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-

0. Quotes...

Ethics and Morality

http://www.inet.co.th/cyberclub/toom/people/people_morality.html

Social and Moral Code - The most important element of the Buddhist reform has always been its social and moral code. That moral code taken by itself is one of the most perfect which the world has ever known. On this point all testimonials from hostile and friendly quarters agree; philosophers there may have been, religious preachers, subtle metaphysists, disputants there may have been, but where shall we find such an incarnation of love, love that knows no distinction of caste and creed or colour, a love that over- flowed even the bound of humanity, that embraced the whole of sentient beings in its sweep, a love that embodied as the gospel of universal 'Maitri' and Ahimsa. - **(Prof. Max Muller)**

Natural Morality - The moral code of Buddhism has given a pure expression to natural morality. - **(Rev. Adolph Thomas)**

Morality Is Based on Freedom - Buddhist morality is based on freedom, i.e. on individual development. It is therefore relative. In fact there cannot be any morality nor any ethical principle if there is compulsion or determination from an agent outside ourselves. Therefore the idea of a Creator and ruler of this world takes away the very foundation of morality and ethics; for how can we be made responsible for our faults if we have been created with them or in such a weak form that we cannot

resist the evil. - **(Anagarika B. Govinda, A German Scholar)**

Good and Bad - From the Buddhist point of view, however, there is no riddle at all. The sources of evil are found, not in the inscrutable purpose of a good God, or in the machination of a devil, but simply in the history of man himself. - **(Revolt in The Temple)**

Moral Truths - Most of the moral truths prescribed by the gospel are to be met within the Buddhist scriptures --in reading the particulars of the life of the last Buddha Gotama, it is impossible not to feel reminded of many circumstances relating to our Saviour's life, such as it has been sketched by the Evangelists. - **(Bishop Bigendet)**

Knowledge and Morality - In Buddhism there can be no real morality without knowledge, no real knowledge without morality; both are bound up together like heat and light in a flame. As Prof. E. W. Hopkins says, in Buddha's thought there is no incompatibility between the ethical ideal and that devotion to mental training which is prominent in early Buddhism, but is not regarded as a requisite in Christianity. Christianity seldom emphasises, even when it permits, the utmost intellectual freedom, while Buddhism establishes the faith intellectually from the beginning." What constitutes Bodhi is not mere intellectual enlightenment, but humanity. The consciousness of moral excellence is of the very essence of Bodhi. "Love thy neighbour as thyself" and "love thine enemy" are indeed noble precepts, but so long as one does not understand the reason why he should love his neighbour and even his enemy, these precepts must necessarily remain a dead letter. If it is selfish to love an enemy because such love will lead one to Bodhi, it is worse still to do good to others for the sake of rewards in heaven or for fear of punishment in hell. - **(Bhikkhu Dhammapala, "Physics and Metaphysics")**

Kamma - Kamma is nothing else but the force, the energy produced by action, action itself. The actions pass away, but in their passing they have influenced, conditioned, caused; and the effect rising therefrom will in its turn be the new cause of new effects. We are like silkworms, says the Vedanta. We make the thread which is our Karma out of our own substance and spin the cocoon, and in course of time we are imprisoned inside. But this not for ever. In that cocoon we shall develop spiritual realisation, and like the butterfly come out free. - **(Bhikkhu Dhammapala, "Physics and Metaphysics")**

Ethics - The Buddha gave an ethical twist to the thought of His time. We find in the early teaching of Buddhism three marked characteristics, an ethical earnestness, an absence of any theological tendency and an aversion to metaphysical speculation. - **(Dr. S. Radhakrishnan)**

Ethical Man of Genius - In this sphere He gave expression to truths of everlasting value and advanced the ethics not of India alone but of humanity. Buddha was one of the greatest ethical men of genius ever bestowed upon the world. - **(Albert Schweitzer, a leading Western philosopher)**

Ethical Evolution - The study of ethical theory in the West has hitherto resulted in a deplorable failure through irreconcilable logomachies and the barrenness of speculation cut off from the actual fact. The only true method of ethical inquiry is surely the historical method. And I cannot be wrong in maintaining that the study of Buddhism should be considered a necessary part of any ethical course and should not be dismissed in a page or two but receive its due proportion in the historical perspective of ethical evolution. - **(Prof. Rhys Davids)**

The Moral Teaching - It is not too much to say that almost the whole of the moral teachings of the Gospels as distinct from the dogmatic teaching will be found in Buddhist writings several centuries older than the Gospels." - **(Prof. Rhys Davids)**

World Culture - Buddhism has done more for the advance of world civilization and true culture than any other influence in the chronicles of mankind. - **(H. G. Wells)**

1. Morality with and without a creator God. ...Radhika Abeysekera

<http://www.saigon.com/~anson/ebud/ebdha169.htm>

The *Winnipeg Free Press* (Canada) of Saturday October 14, 2000 printed an article in the Faith page entitled, *Is evolution based on illogical premise?* by John M. Craig of Winnipeg. In the article Mr. Craig gives his reasons for not believing in evolution. The main reason given is the lack of fossils of transitional creatures (half fish/half amphibians). He then goes on to surmise that as such, creation must be accurate. No reasoning is given to prove that creation is accurate. After assuming that creation is accurate, Mr. Craig concludes his article as follows:

"In conclusion, we are raising a generation of young people to believe that there is no God and that they are just accidents evolved from algae! What does this belief do to the value of human life and the basis for morality? If we are nothing but evolved animals, then why shouldn't we live like animals? Isn't the rise in bloodshed of the last century just 'survival' of the fittest. Aren't teen pregnancies, mass abortions (30 million in the US alone since Roe V. Wade") and STD's including AIDS simply the end product of a philosophy that has people living with no foundation for morals?"

Evolution is a 19th-century philosophy that has been destroyed by 20th-century science, yet the myth continues to be perpetrated, not on scientific grounds, but because it is what justifies our immoral society today. If people admitted their was a creator then they would become morally responsible to that creator. Too many people today don't want to be morally responsible to anyone, other than to their own ego.

Christians and Jews can be confident that the first 11 chapters of geneses records actual history, especially the six literal days for creation." -- John M. Craig, Winnipeg.

There was a host of scientific literature in response to the above article by professors

and scientist who supported the theory of evolution. The following article which was from a moral and ethical point of view as opposed to a scientific point of view was not printed by the *Winnipeg Free Press* due to lack of space.

I found the article "Is evolution based on illogical premise?" in last Saturday's *Winnipeg Free Press*, by John M. Craig quite interesting and would like to share my views with your readers.

Many world religions claim that their holy books state that God created the universe and man. The interesting point is that each of these holy books claim that it is their God and only their God that created the universe and each holy book then describes an interesting story as to how this was accomplished.

Looking at the different holy books impartially, it is only fair to say that they all have an equal chance of being accurate. Each of these holy books have been read and researched by many of its followers who are convinced of the Truth found in their book. As acceptance is based on a book written many years after the death of its founder as opposed to direct experience, they all have equal right to their claim. As such if we had four religions that claim that their holy book is correct they each have 25% chances of being accurate just as if we had five religions that made such claim they each have 20% chances of being accurate.

In order to be fair by all the holy books, one could also presume that all of these Gods had a hand in the creation of the world. After all the universe is very complex. Unfortunately none of the holy books talk of such cooperation and harmony. And as such, it is doubtful if any of the theist religions are willing to accept such a possibility.

The possibility also exists that it is the same God that each holy book refers to with different names. The problem with this is that each holy book has a different account of how creation took place and a different description of the characteristics of their God. Some portray God as being compassionate while others portray God as being jealous and cruel. Different books may have different names for God but which of the books has the authentic version? It would be arrogant for any one to claim that his and only his holy book is correct, just because he happened to be born into a particular religious tradition.

I personally have no issue with any religion that wants to take the responsibility for creation so long as the said God takes full responsibility for His creation. If a scientist creates an advanced robot with super intelligence that benefits mankind he gets credit and accolade for his creation. But if his robot malfunctions and starts maiming and killing indiscriminately, the scientist is held responsible for its actions. Similarly a manufacturer of any item is fully responsible for its defects and the result and suffering that may be caused by its defects just as he enjoys the profits and accolades of his success.

As such it is logical that which ever God created the universe should be held fully responsible for His creation. The earth quakes, volcanoes, floods and famine that take countless lives and cause untold suffering are the results of the flaws in the creation of the world. And just as we can credit the creator God for the gentle rain and sun that resulted in a good harvest we can credit the creator God for the untold misery. Similarly the blind and the handicapped, the sick and the lame can credit God for their suffering and misery just as they credit God for their talents and good health. We could even go as far as to place all evil and good on Gods shoulders. After all God created man. Even if He decided to give free-will to man it was His sole decision and as such He should take responsibility for any lack of wisdom in such a decision. As an all-knowing God, I am sure he was aware that some of his creations would cause more suffering and misery than joy and happiness. (*Beyond Belief* - A.L. De Silva; BuddhaSasana web site).

The question then arises is God compassionate or is he omnipotent? All the misery and suffering in the world leads me to believe that He can not be both? Most people would like to assume that God is better than us and that our goal is to be as God like as possible and as such use Him as a role model. And yet, if we were omnipotent would we cause such misery? We now live in a society where we are taught to help our children grow with love and understanding as opposed to spanking and hitting. How does one relate to a God who kills and maims to teach us to grow? As I have previously indicated, despite my non-belief in creation, I have no issue with religions claiming that their God created the world. They have to, however, in my opinion take full responsibility for His creation.

I do, however, take exception to Mr. Craig's concluding statements. He writes, "In conclusion we are raising a generation of young people to believe that there is no God and that they are just accidents evolved from algae. What does this belief do to the value of human life and the basis of morality?..." Mr Craig implies that one can not be moral or value human life if one does not believe in a creator God. There are many people who do not believe in creation or an omnipotent creator God, who are moral. Compassion, loving kindness, generosity, tolerance, and universal responsibility exists in followers of every religion and in those that do not subscribe to any religion.

I would like to draw the reader's attention to Buddhism, one such religion that has boundless compassion and wisdom that does not believe in an omnipotent creator God. And this is what the great scientist Albert Einstein says of Buddhism (*What intellectuals say about Buddhism* - Dr. K. Sri. Dhammananda):

"The religion of the future will be a cosmic religion. It should transcend a personal God, avoid dogmas and theology. Covering both the natural and spiritual, it should be based on a religious sense arising from the experience of all things natural and spiritual and a meaningful unity. Buddhism answers this description. If there is any religion that would cope with modern scientific needs it would be Buddhism."

The tolerance and compassion found in Buddhism has been acknowledge by all informed religious leaders just as the compassion found on the Sermon on the Mount is acknowledged by all religious leaders. In fact the similarities found in the Sermon

on the Mount and the Dhammapada of the Buddha have been the authorship of many scholars and academics.

Dr. Roy. C Amore, professor of religion at the University of Windsor in his book *Two masters one Message* has done a wonderful comparison of the startling similarities and differences of the two religions and has come to some enlightening conclusions. Morality exists in both religions despite their different beliefs on creation. Is this just coincidence or is it possible that one religion borrowed from the other? Interesting reading especially as the Buddha was born more than 500 years before Christ. Gruber and Kirsten in their book, *The Original Jesus - Buddhist Sources of Christianity* goes into an in-depth study of not only the similarities in some of the teachings on morality but the historical beginning and spread of the teachings. These are but few of the books that address some of the similarities in two of the world's leading theist and non-theist religions both of which contain deep compassion..

Dr. Paul Dahlke of Germany in his *Buddhists Essays* states, "It is the knowledge of the law of cause and effect, action and reaction, that urges a man to refrain from evil and gather good. A believer in cause and effect knows only too well that it is his own actions that make his life miserable or otherwise". Dr. Dahlke is referring to the Buddhist doctrine of kamma, where intentional wholesome and unwholesome actions have wholesome and unwholesome reactions at the opportune time and the doctrine of rebirth. Many scholars and academics have researched rebirth. *Many Lives Many Masters* - Brian Weiss MD, *Rebirth as Doctrine and Experience* - Francis Story, *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation*- Ian Stevenson, and *Many Mansions* - Gina Cerminara are some that point towards rebirth and kamma. In this instance Dr. Dahlke shows that knowledge of the operation of the law of kamma and rebirth also leads its believers to morality. It is clear that belief in an omnipotent creator God is not an essential requirement for morality.

Jack Kornfield in his book *A Path with Heart* and Howard Cutler MD. and His Holiness The Dalai Lama in their book the *Art of Happiness* effectively convey the boundless compassion and loving kindness found in Buddhism – a religion that does not believe in an omnipotent God or creation. Buddhism is a non-violent, compassionate religion, and throughout its peaceful existence of over 2500 years, not a drop of blood has been shed in the spread of the teaching of the Buddha. Unfortunately history does not support Mr. Craig's claims that belief in a creator God is required to value human life. Many theist religions have used the sword to spread their religion.

The compassion found in Buddhism extends to all living beings. Not only are Buddhists to refrain from killing all living beings but Buddhists are advised by the Buddha to refrain from any livelihood that is harmful to living beings such as the selling of animals for killing and manufacture and sale of weapons and armaments used in war fare. Practising Buddhists accept these precepts or modes of discipline (which are not commandments) after careful examination and understanding. And then with effort they try to live up to their commitment.

I believe that it is prudent to study all world religions before one claims that belief in an omnipotent God and creation are necessary for one to be moral. It is understandable for one who is brought up in a particular religious tradition to view

the holy scriptures of that religion as being authentic. We must remember, however, that the frog in the well thinks it is the whole world. As we embark on the 21st century it is prudent that we study all world religions to find truth, compassion and tolerance. One will then see that morality and wholesomeness exists in every religion. All we need to do is to seek out the religion/philosophy/path that appeals to one's intellect and heart. Once one has confidence, gained through question and analytical examination of one's chosen path, one will practice with effort in order to reach one's spiritual potential. Human beings are varied and have different needs. Is it not wonderful that we have so many religious traditions to assist us in reaching our full spiritual potential?

2. If There's No God in Buddhism, Are Buddhists Atheists? ...Lama Surya Das

http://www.beliefnet.com/story/35/story_3562_1.html

Q: Is there a God in Buddhism? I read in a book by the pope that Buddhism is atheistic and life-denying.

A: I read the same thing in the pope's book "Crossing the Threshold of Hope," in a chapter called "Buddha?" But the pontiff should know better, or at least be better informed by his scholar-advisers. Buddhism is neither atheistic nor life-denying. We can witness this in the great surge of socially activist Buddhists in the Western countries today, which includes the widespread movement of so-called "engaged Buddhism" founded in part by the Vietnamese Zen master, poet, and peace activist Thich Nhat Hanh. There is great affirmation and hope in Buddhist teaching, or Buddha-dharma, and great respect and reverence for life in all its forms, human and otherwise.

In fact, Buddhism is generally considered to be not atheistic but agnostic, in that, the Buddha himself did not deny the existence of God. The Indian teacher and social reformer teacher called Sakyamuni Buddha is reported to have either kept silent when asked whether God existed, or in other cases to have said that his Noble Eightfold path led to enlightenment and deathless peace, and did not require faith or belief in a divine being or supreme creator. "Buddhism Without Beliefs," by the former monk and Buddhist scholar Stephen Batchelor, offers a fine argument for the agnostic thinking of basic Buddhism.

Q: Do you believe in hell? And if not, what keeps you from sin?

A: I don't believe in eternal damnation or hell. Everything is impermanent, or so it seems to me. Transience and impermanence is also one of the fundamental tenets of Buddhism, simply a fact of life from the Buddhist perspective. Of course, it does seem like some beings do live in and experience truly hellacious states of mind, due to their karma. That is probably enough suffering for anyone, and my heart goes out to them, wishing they may expiate their sins, exhaust their bad karma, and eventually evolve out of the darkness.

What keeps me from sin is a felt understanding about karmic cause and effect: that what goes around comes around, that as we sow, we shall reap. That, combined with my deep wish to do no harm. I am also trained in and committed to the five fundamental lay Buddhist ethical precepts of cherishing life, honesty, right action, non-intoxication, and sexual responsibility, which helps me stay grounded and balanced, experience spiritual wellness and wholeness, and keeps me in alignment with the universal law. This is Buddha's Middle Path, free of extremism, and it brings freedom, inner peace and harmony, wisdom, and joyous fulfillment.

Fear of hellfire is not necessary to motivate me to live a moral life, challenging as that may occasionally prove to be. I prefer to strive for virtue and to live a wholesome, happy, nonviolent, service-oriented life that contributes to the greater good. For I would rather be part of the solution to the world's woes than part of that problem.

3. The Journal of Buddhist Ethics

<http://jbe.gold.ac.uk/>

Aims - The *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* has been established to promote the study of Buddhist ethics through the publication of research, book reviews, and hosting occasional online conferences.

Description - The *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* is the first academic journal dedicated entirely to Buddhist ethics, and is innovative in adopting a totally electronic mode of publication. In most other respects, however, it functions as a traditional scholarly journal. Research articles as well as discussions and critical notes submitted to the journal are subject to blind peer review.

The Concept of an Online Journal - An online journal differs from a traditional journal in publishing electronically as opposed to a printed format. The *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* also publishes material on an ongoing rather than a periodic basis, eliminating any backlog between acceptance and publication. An online journal is NOT the same as a newsgroup, discussion list, or bulletin board: The *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* is none of these things and does not function in this way.

Why Publish Online? - Online journals are a logical development in the use of information technology. The dissemination of information through this medium has three main advantages over publication in the traditional manner, namely, cost, speed, and ease of access. Other advantages of an electronic medium include keyword searching and the use of multimedia and hypertext formats.

Editorial Policy - The editors are committed to the widest dissemination for material published by the journal. As well as publishing online they will also explore possibilities for the publication of the contents of the journal from time to time in partnership with traditional presses.

Subject Classifications - The *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* interprets "ethics" in a broad sense as including subject matter in the ten areas listed below.

1. Vinaya and Jurisprudence
2. Medical Ethics
3. Philosophical Ethics
4. Human Rights
5. Ethics and Psychology
6. Ecology and the Environment
7. Social and Political Philosophy
8. Cross-cultural Ethics
9. Ethics and Anthropology
10. Interfaith Dialogue on Ethics

1. Vinaya and Jurisprudence - Research into all aspects of Buddhist monastic discipline. The origins and development of the Vinaya; its categories, structure, and organization; its provisions on specific matters; comparative studies of the Vinayas of different schools; legal and jurisprudential principles.

2. Medical Ethics - Issues in contemporary medical ethics and biotechnology; abortion, embryo research, reproductive technologies (IVF, AID etc.), and genetic engineering; AIDS; organ transplants; resource allocation; informed consent; coma patients and the persistent vegetative state; criminal and medical law; suicide; defining death; terminal care and euthanasia; state medicine and health policy.

3. Philosophical Ethics - Theories of ethics and meta-ethics; codes of ethics; moral obligations; altruism and compassion; virtues; patterns of justification; teleological, deontological, and consequentialist theories; situation ethics; the quality of life; the value of life; personhood; ethics and human good; natural law; the status of moral norms; moral absolutes; "skillful means."

4. Human Rights - The Buddhist basis for a doctrine of human rights and its provisions; the concept of "rights" in Buddhism; fundamental rights of individuals; autonomy and self-determination; human dignity; equality; justice; freedom; privacy; the protection of rights; women's rights; international codes, charters and declarations; human rights abuses in Buddhist cultures.

5. Ethics and Psychology - The relationship between psychology and moral conduct; the psychology of moral judgments; the analysis of ethical terminology in the *Abhidharma* and elsewhere; the concepts of motive, intention, will, virtue, and character; the emotions; desire; love; moral choice and self-determination; related issues in philosophical psychology.

6. Ecology, Animals and the Environment - Responsibilities and obligations toward nature; animal rights; the moral status of animals and non-sentient life; experimentation on animals; philosophy of biology; speciesism; evolution; future generations; the relationship between Buddhist and other environmental

philosophies.

7. Social and Political Philosophy - The Buddhist blueprint for a just society; the nature and role of the state; rights and duties of governments and citizens; democracy and alternative political systems; socialism, communism, and capitalism; social, educational, and welfare provisions; Buddhist law; law and ethics; Buddhism and war; nuclear warfare; revolution; capital punishment; justifiable killing; pacifism and ahimsa.

8. Cross-cultural Ethics - Buddhism and comparative religious ethics; methodologies for the study of Buddhist ethics.

9. Ethics and Anthropology - Ethics in practice in Buddhist societies; ethics and social mores; the influence of indigenous customs and attitudes on moral teachings; rites de passage; variation in marriage and other customs; the great tradition and the little tradition; moral relativism; cultural pluralism.

10. Interfaith Dialogue - Similarities and differences between Buddhism and other world religions in the field of ethics; the basis for dialogue; ethics and metaphysics; hermeneutics and the derivation of moral norms from scripture.

4. The Science of Good and Evil : Why People Cheat, Gossip, Care, Share, and Follow the Golden Rule -- by Michael Shermer

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0805075208/wwwkusalaorg-20/>

From Publishers Weekly - Drawing on evolutionary psychology, Skeptic publisher and Scientific American contributor Shermer (Why People Believe Weird Things) argues that the sources of moral behavior can be traced scientifically to humanity's evolutionary origins. He contends that human morality evolved as first an individual and then a species-wide mechanism for survival. As society evolved, humans needed rules governing behavior-e.g., altruism, sympathy, reciprocity and community concern-in order to ensure survival. Shermer says that some form of the Golden Rule-"Do unto others as you would have others do unto you"-provides the foundation of morality in human societies. Out of this, he develops the principles of what he calls a "provisional ethics" that "is neither absolute nor relative," that applies to most people most of the time, while allowing for "tolerance and diversity." According to the "ask-first" principle, for instance, the performer of an act simply asks its intended receiver whether the act is right or wrong. Other principles include the "happiness" principle ("always seek happiness with someone else's happiness in mind"), the liberty principle ("always seek liberty with someone else's liberty in mind") and the moderation principle ("when innocent people die, extremism in the defense of anything is no virtue, and moderation in the protection of everything is no vice"). Shermer's provisional ethics might reflect the messy ways that human moral behavior developed, but his simplistic principles establish a utilitarian calculus that not everyone will find acceptable. 35 b&w illus

Amazon.com - Reviewer: from Wyoming ...from an avid reader of the life sciences and philosophy, Shermer's survey of evolutionary ethics is excellent start to finish. His prologue is simply the best I've read on the subject. I highly recommend this book without any reservations.

Amazon.com - Reviewer: From Colorado Springs, Colorado United States ...Shermer's discussion of morality in this book is a continuation of that he started in How We Believe, though that book was less dry and more complete. Still, he bravely tackles morality with an approach not unlike Nietzsche's (one must drop the crutch of religion and take responsibility for their own morals) only less angry and more scientific (hence the dryness). Shermer does do a fair job of trying to explain the beauty of individual moral responsibility, but the book concerns mainly the historical or 'evolutionary' explanation of morals, in that they serve a societal function. (A good companion book to this would be Sagan's Shadows Of Forgotten Ancestors.)

Shermer's lens seems greatly shaped by Darwin. That may be because one of his books between How We Believe and this on was In Darwin's Shadow (about Alfred Wallace), or perhaps Darwin's science is pretty solid stuff. At any rate, to apply a scientific approach to morality is to try and replace thousands of years of mythology which did the job until recently. Can morality be explained without religious ties? That's the interesting part of it.

I was going to give this book 4 stars because of the slight disappointment I had with Shermer's writing style, but the topic is so vast and this book gives one of the best discussions of it I've seen in a long time. So it's a Fiver!

Amazon.com - Reviewer: from Lafayette, IN USA ...Can humans be moral without relying on some divine list of rights and wrongs? This book describes how morality could emerge from the need to optimize in-groups ("us") and coalesce in a common defense from out-groups ("them"). When we are seen as the descendents of hundreds of generations of hunter-gatherers, the idea is that certain lines of behavior might confer reproductive advantage, thus the genes motivating in-group cooperation and mutual defense towards common out-groups would prosper into the future. The rules of such cooperation and mutual altruism become codified into moral systems. A superb book.

The Urban Dharma Newsletter Archives:

<http://www.urbandharma.org/nlarchives.html>

The Los Angeles Buddhist-Catholic Dialogue:

<http://www.urbandharma.org/bcdialog/index.html>

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The Urban Dharma Newsletter... May 11, 2004

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0. Quotes...

I have never made but one prayer to God, a very short one: 'O Lord, make my enemies ridiculous.' And God granted it. - **Voltaire (1694 - 1778)**

Under certain circumstances, profanity provides a relief denied even to prayer. - **Mark Twain (1835 - 1910)**

When the gods wish to punish us, they answer our prayers. - **Oscar Wilde (1854 - 1900), An Ideal husband, 1893**

Pray as if everything depended upon God and work as if everything depended upon man. - **Francis Cardinal Spellman (1889 - 1967)**

Prayer indeed is good, but while calling on the gods a man should himself lend a hand. - **Hippocrates (460 BC - 377 BC), Regimen**

1. BUDDHIST PRAYER

http://buddhistfaith.tripod.com/pureland_sangha/id41.html

The purpose of Buddhist prayer is to awaken our inherent inner capacities of strength, compassion and wisdom rather than to petition external forces based on fear, idolizing, and worldly and/or heavenly gain. Buddhist prayer is a form of meditation; it is a practice of inner reconditioning. Buddhist prayer replaces the negative with the virtuous and points us to the blessings of Life.

For Buddhists, prayer expresses an aspiration to pull something into one's life, like some new energy or purifying influence and share it with all beings. Likewise, prayer inspires our hearts towards wisdom and compassion for others and ourselves. It allows us to turn our hearts and minds to the beneficial, rousing our thoughts and actions towards Awakening. If we believe in something enough, it will take hold of us. In other words, believing in it, we will become what we believe. Our ability to be touched like this is evidence of the working of Great Compassion within us.

What's more, it can function as a form of self-talking or self-therapy in which one mentally talks through a problem, or talks through it aloud, in the hope that some new insight will come or a better decision can be made. Prayer therefore frequently has the function of being part of a decision-making process.

Everywhere and Anytime

The wonderful thing about prayer practice is that we can do it everywhere and anytime, transforming the ordinary and mundane into the Path of Awakening. Prayer enriches our lives with deep spiritual connection and makes every moment special, manifesting the Pure Land here and now.

Prayer is an important practice that serves to internalize the ideals of the Buddhist path.

Prayer should be part of our spiritual journey, transforming confusion into clarity and suffering into joy. However, some mistakenly believe that the Absolute is separate and/or different from us. Believing this, their prayers ask for favors, such as health, salvation, fame, victory or the winning lottery numbers. They use prayer in order to manipulate their God to work for their benefit. Wanting Him to play favorites, they beg to be blessed by Him at the expense of others. However, this attitude defeats the power of prayer. We believe that in order for prayer to be effective it must be devoid of any self-centeredness and calculation, relying strictly on great compassion. It should be done to strengthen and open our hearts, and to benefit all beings. Buddhist prayer has nothing to do with begging for personal worldly or heavenly gains.

2. Buddhist Prayer Beads

<http://www.uwec.edu/greider/BMRB/culture/student.work/serfleel/>

Although many people may recognize a variation of these prayer beads among

today's newest fashion accessories, they carry a far deeper significance in the Buddhist culture. For this group of individuals, prayer beads, or *mala* beads as they are called in the Buddhist religion, represent a meditative tool. Their specific purpose may vary for different individuals, but commonly the beads are used to enhance 'goodness' and diminish 'toxins'. The overarching purpose of these beads from a true Buddhist perspective is to drive away evil and fill you and all beings with peace and bliss. In accordance with the active nature of *practice* in Buddhism, this material object is used as an accomplice for gaining merit on the path to enlightenment.

The origin of mala beads is rooted in the Hindu religion. Individuals who converted from the Hindu faith to Buddhism during its birth, transferred this devotional practice with them and it soon became a part of the Buddhist faith. The story of the beads' origin is as follows:

"Sakyamuni, the founder of Buddhism, paid a visit to king Vaidunya...Sakya directed him to thread 108 seeds of the Bodhi tree on a string, and while passing them between his fingers to repeat... 'Hail to the Buddha, the law, and the congregation'... (2,000) times a day (Dubin)."

Another interpretation of this prayer is 'om mani padme hum.' During recitation, this phrase is repeated over and over again according to how many beads are on a person's strand of mala beads.

Traditionally, there are 108 beads on a strand of mala prayer beads. This number is significant because it represents the number of mental conditions or sinful desires that one must overcome to reach enlightenment or nirvana. Monks usually have mala beads with 108 beads, where as a lay person may have a strand numbering in 30 or 40 beads. This difference in length may possibly be explained by understanding each person's distance traveled on the path to enlightenment. Commercial sellers of mala beads have also suggested that individuals just beginning this prayer ritual begin with a shorter strand of beads.

Just as variety exists for the number of beads, variety exists for the style, color, and material composition. Differences in the popularity and use of mala beads also exist cross-culturally. Typically, monks' mala beads are made of wood from the Bodhi tree. In Tibet, mala strands often contain parts of semi-precious stones. In this culture, the most valued strands are made of bones of holy men or lamas. Typically there are 108 beads divided by 3 large beads. The end pieces on these strands are "djore" (a thunderbolt) and "drilbu" (the bell). These end pieces represent the Three Jewels, or Buddha, the doctrine, and the community. In Japan, mala prayer beads are popular at social events such as funerals, weddings, and other ceremonies. Mala beads in Japan typically are 112 in number and made of wood. Additionally, the most coveted strands have been blessed by a monk. In Korea, the use of mala beads has been extensive. Their popularity diminished, however, during the period when Buddhism was banned from the country (1392-1910). In addition to the traditional 108 beads, Korean mala strands usually include 2 large beads, which are used during special prayers. In China, the use of mala beads was never really popular. They were used, but more commonly, they were used by the ruling

hierarchy as a status symbol.

Although the structure of mala beads may vary among individuals or groups of Buddhists, the overall purpose of all mala beads is to create a sense of tranquility and inner-peace for not only the individual, but for the community as a whole. In reciting the prayer, 'toxins' will leave and a sense of peace will enter making an individual that much closer to reaching nirvana.

3. Soul Food to Go: Meditation - The Foundation of Mental Prayer ...Fr Andrew Apostoli, C.F.R.

<http://www.envoymagazine.com/backissues/5.3/soulfoodtogo.htm>

If your spiritual life is to develop properly, you must learn how to meditate – the foundation of mental prayer. A great deal can be said about meditation, but we'll have to limit ourselves to some basic points. I'd like to approach it by sharing something of my own experience.

When I first entered the seminary, I was already used to saying formal prayers, such as my morning and night prayers and some devotional prayers out of a little prayer booklet. But somehow, the idea of meditation seemed complicated. There was talk of different methods and steps in the meditation process. Even the meditation book from which a reflection was read daily to the community in the chapel listed "meditation points" to consider. I felt a bit apprehensive!

Nevertheless, after going to a few organized meditation periods, I realized that this basic form of mental prayer came quite naturally. There was nothing to be afraid of! I began by simply thinking about Jesus in the Gospels, about His words and actions, or about some important part of my Catholic faith, such as the Mass or God's mercy. Then I found I wanted to talk to the Lord about what I was reflecting on.

In this way I came to realize that my thinking or reflecting (that's the actual meditation) was leading me to new awareness and insights about Jesus and the truths of my Catholic faith. These insights, in turn, were stirring up various feelings within me (such feelings are called sentiments or affections). The more I meditated and came to new insights, the more I was led to speak with the Lord in my own words, having a loving conversation heart-to-Heart (mine with His). And that, quite simply, was mental prayer.

The Rosary and Stations of the Cross

In fact, I came to realize that I'd actually known for a long time what it is to meditate. For example, I'd done it for years whenever I prayed the Rosary. When reciting each of the fifteen decades, we meditate on one of the joyful, sorrowful, or glorious mysteries or significant events in the life of Jesus and His Blessed Mother.

As I constantly meditated on these mysteries, they became more meaningful for me. I began to see Jesus' and Mary's love in each mystery, and gradually realized they have that same love for me, too. By meditating, I was growing to know and love them more personally.

A similar thing was happening when I made the Stations of the Cross. Meditating on fourteen scenes from the passion and death of Our Lord, I experienced feelings (those sentiments or affections) of deeper gratitude to Jesus for all He suffered for me. There were feelings of deeper sorrow for my sins as well, since they caused Jesus to suffer so much. This, in turn, moved me to be more resolved, with the help of His grace, not to commit these sins again in the future.

Judging, then, from my own experience, I would say that many of us Catholics first learn to meditate by simply reciting the Rosary or making the Stations. As we seek to deepen this part of our mental prayer life, a few practical points about meditation and mental prayer may be helpful.

Formal Prayer vs. Mental Prayer

First, mental prayer (also called the prayer of the mind) usually develops naturally from formal prayer (or the prayer of the lips), as my own experience shows. A comparison between these two types of prayer can be useful. Recall St. John Damascene's famous definition of prayer as "the raising of the mind and the heart to God." In formal prayer, when we focus on the words of the prayer with our minds, the heart is then moved to love God with the sentiments contained in those words.

For example, if we recite an "Act of Faith," the words prayed would logically stir up feelings or sentiments of faith in our hearts as we say something such as this: "God, You are all-knowing, and You reveal to us what we need to know and do to get to heaven. I believe in all that You have revealed to us! Please grant me a strong faith so that I will always believe what You teach us through Your Church."

In mental prayer, however, the focus is not restricted by the words of a prayer formula. Rather, the focus of meditation is usually on a story, such as an event from the life of Jesus; or a teaching He gave, such as a parable; or something from the life of a saint, such as St. Thérèse; or something contained in a good spiritual book. My mind isn't limited to the words, but moves through various details of the story or ideas contained in the teaching.

The mind, by reflecting on these details, can produce a far wider range of insights, which then stir more sentiments in the heart. The mind is freer to roam through this spiritual landscape. Thus the difference between formal prayer and the meditation of mental prayer is like the difference between reciting a poem, where each specific word is already given, and telling a story freely in your own words.

The Benefits of Meditation

Meditation as form of mental prayer has many benefits. One is a greater understanding and clarity regarding the teachings of our Catholic faith. By meditating, we go deeper into these realities and discover many valuable new insights that weren't obvious at first sight.

St. John of the Cross used the image of mining for precious metals to describe this spiritual activity. If "there's gold in them thar hills," then the more you mine, the more you'll find! The treasures of the Sacred Scriptures and other truths of our faith aren't always obvious on the surface, but they're limitless for those who bother to search for them.

Another benefit, as we've seen, is that our reflections stir up the vital sentiments of the heart so needed for loving and serving the Lord faithfully. These sentiments are really the most important fruit of mental prayer. They lead us to talk to God!

In fact, without these sentiments, we'd end up with a purely intellectual exercise, a mere reasoning process. Prayer requires talking with God, and that requires the sentiments.

In this regard, we should mention that beginners practicing mental prayer typically do much more reasoning or reflecting in the mind than speaking from the heart. But as time goes on, less reflection is needed to produce more sentiments. It's like the growth of a human friendship.

When friends first meet, they need to ask lots of questions and share lots of facts about themselves to get to know each other better. After the friendship has grown, however, there are fewer questions but a deeper knowledge and more intense love for each other. In fact, when the reasoning in prayer becomes significantly less and the sentiments in the heart begin to predominate, it's usually a sign that we've come to the third state or kind of prayer, called affective prayer (or the prayer of the heart).

Finally, the meditation of mental prayer helps us form the resolutions we need to grow in the love of God and our neighbor by a more conscious and consistent practice of the Christian virtues. Our meditations, in the light of the Holy Spirit and with the assistance of His grace, give us insights into how to apply the values of the Gospel, Church teachings, and the wisdom of the saints to our own daily lives. For all these reasons, the meditation that provides a foundation for mental prayer is a must for growth in Christian holiness!

Fr. Andrew Apostoli, C.F.R., is a priest of the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal, St. Felix Friary, 15 Trinity Plaza, Yonkers, NY 10701

4. E-sangha, Buddhist Forum & Buddhism Forum -> Topics in Buddhism -> Beginner's Buddhism

alex

I have some questions about Buddhist prayers. My background is with Christianity, in which prayer's are directed to a specific deity. They sound a little like letters, sometimes, like "Dear Lord, Thank you for this day. Amen."

I'm wondering what a Buddhist prayer sounds like, and how it works? Praying to a deity is often asking for intervention. Do Buddhists pray to deities?

I have more questions, but I'm not sure how to word them. I know so little about this topic right now that it's hard to find a place to begin. If anyone can give me more information, I'd really appreciate it.

Also, as a side note, is there anywhere on this forum that provides a pronunciation key? That might sound a little silly, but I'm positive I'm saying some of the Sanskrit or Pali words wrong.

NewPearl

Prayers allow one to repent past transgressions and vow not to repeat them. They are also a means of ritually communicating with Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. While there are no prescribed times of prayer, Buddhists usually pray daily in the morning and/or evening, as well as before meals. Many Buddhists use prayer beads as a guide when reciting Buddha's name. The 108 beads on a traditional rosary are often divided into four sections of 27 beads, with each section being marked by a smaller bead. The tied off ends of some rosaries have three little beads together signifying the Triple Gem. The cord stringing all the beads together can be said to represent the strength of the Buddha's teachings. Prayer bracelets of fewer than 108 beads are also frequently used.

Prayer in Buddhism is not intercessory in nature. One does not ask Buddhas and Bodhisattvas to intercede or intervene. They do not have the power to grant things. Prayers are out of homage, respect, adoration, and repentance.

dharma

Hi Alex,

NO Buddhists who understand Buddha-dharma EVER pray to deities, or god!

In Buddhism, you learn Buddha-dharma, the teaching of Shakyamuni Buddha.

Dharma is the teaching of shakyamuni Buddha of how to liberate ourselves from sufferings and how to attain the enlightenment and become Buddha like him.

Buddha is a title meaning An Enlightened One.

Studying, learning, practicing and cultivating Buddha-dharma, you will have perfect knowledge, perfect wisdom, perfect compassion, and when you have everything perfect, you are enlightened. You achieved the Enlightenment and become Buddha.

There are many different schools in Buddhism. Just like in Christianity, there are catholic, protestant and all sort of traditions.

However, in Buddhism, we believe all schools of Buddhism are correct and can lead you out of sufferings and attain the enlightenment eventually.

I am in the Pureland Buddhism School, which I recite Buddha's names, recite Bodhisattvas' names, recite sutras and mantras. But I do not recite all mantras and all sutras. Just some main important ones.

After I recite Buddhas' and Bodhisattvas' name including mantras, I transfer my merits of doing this to other living beings in 6 different sufferings realms.

I'm going to list them from less suffering to the most suffering realms.

1. Gods realms
2. Asuras realms
3. Humans realms
4. Animals realms
5. Ghosts realms
- 6 Hells realms

Living beings are experiencing suffering in these 6 realms, but gods and dieties who rebirth in heaven because in their past life, they have done good things and now they have good merits to live a rewarding life in heaven experience less sufferings, but after certain time, the lifespan of gods and dieties would end and they will fall back down to other realms within these 6 realms.

Because of Shakyamuni Buddha's compassion, his rebirth here on earth to teach all living beings, to teach them Dharma so that they can follow and liberate themselves out of these sufferings and never again have to expereince the life cycle of rebirth and death sufferings and torturement within 6 suffering realms.

He wants all of us to be enlightenment, to become Buddhas like him, and Dharma is what the taught which will liberate you from sufferings and attain the enlightenment eventually.

Because gods and deities are not enlightened beings, we should not worship them, we don't worship them. We don't worship anyone. Not even Buddha.

Buddha is our teacher he teaches us Dharma, we are his students we learn his dharma.

When we bow to buddha, we are not worshiping him as god or idoling him. We bow to buddha to thank him for his great compassion teaching us, we respect him as a teacher.

Even though Buddhism does not focus on god, we do acknowledge that there are gods and gods are like any of us except they have more merits and have done more good deeds than us that what the reason why they rebirth into heaven and we rebirth in to this world human realms, other living beings are not as fortunate as human, they do more bad things in their past life, thus they rebirth as animals, ghosts, and hell beings experience MOST sufferings, MOST torturement to repay the bad actions they have generated.

I hope these sort of outline will help you understand a little more about Buddhism. If you have anymore questions or confusion you want to clarify, I would like to help you and explain the best of my knowledge. - Nammo Amitabha Buddha.

5. Dharma Crumbs - Bread Crumbs of Buddha Dharma, wandering down the buddhist path? Here are some bread crumbs on the path. Little snippets of the way. A Daily Buddhist Blog.

<http://www.dharmacrumbs.blogspot.com/>

I Like what Brian Massumi has to say about hope.

It seems like a pretty buddhist approach. No hope. No Fear. Recognizing how uncertain the display of mind is.

"I'd like to think about hope and the affective dimensions of our experience – what freedoms are possible in the new and 'virtualised' global and political economies that frame our lives. To begin, though, what are your thoughts on the potential of hope for these times?"

From my own point of view, the way that a concept like hope can be made useful is when it is not connected to an expected success – when it starts to be something different from optimism – because when you start trying to think ahead into the future from the present point, rationally there really isn't much room for hope.

Globally it's a very pessimistic affair, with economic inequalities increasing year by year, with health and sanitation levels steadily decreasing in many regions, with the global effects of environmental deterioration already being felt, with conflicts among nations and peoples apparently only getting more intractable, leading to mass displacements of workers and refugees ... It seems such a mess that I think it can be

paralysing. If hope is the opposite of pessimism, then there's precious little to be had. On the other hand, if hope is separated from concepts of optimism and pessimism, from a wishful projection of success or even some kind of a rational calculation of outcomes, then I think it starts to be interesting – because it places it in the present.

Yes – the idea of hope in the present is vital. Otherwise we endlessly look to the future or toward some utopian dream of a better society or life, which can only leave us disappointed, and if we see pessimism as the nature flow from this, we can only be paralysed as you suggest.

Yes, because in every situation there are any number of levels of organisation and tendencies in play, in cooperation with each other or at cross-purposes. The way all the elements interrelate is so complex that it isn't necessarily comprehensible in one go. There's always a sort of vagueness surrounding the situation, an uncertainty about where you might be able to go and what you might be able to do once you exit that particular context. This uncertainty can actually be empowering – once you realise that it gives you a margin of manoeuvrability and you focus on that, rather than on projecting success or failure. It gives you the feeling that there is always an opening to experiment, to try and see. This brings a sense of potential to the situation. The present's 'boundary condition', to borrow a phrase from science, is never a closed door. It is an open threshold – a threshold of potential. You are only ever in the present in passing. If you look at that way you don't have to feel boxed in by it, no matter what its horrors and no matter what, rationally, you expect will come. You may not reach the end of the trail but at least there's a next step. The question of which next step to take is a lot less intimidating than how to reach a far-off goal in a distant future where all our problems will finally be solved. It's utopian thinking, for me, that's 'hopeless'." - Posted by: Dave / 5/8/2004 08:50:42 PM

6. eBook - Free Download

Bhavana Vandana: Book of Devotion ...Compiled by Ven. H. Gunaratana

<http://www.urbandharma.org/udharma4/pali.html>

PDF file: 1.31 MB

From the introduction: The purpose of this book is manifold. One is to teach the users of this book of devotion how to pronounce Pali words correctly. The most effective way of doing so is to repeat the same thing over and over again. This book of devotion is made for daily recitation. We also intend to teach Dhamma through this devotional service, as the Pali language is used primarily to teach the Dhamma.

The Urban Dharma Newsletter Archives:

<http://www.urbandharma.org/nlarchives.html>

The Los Angeles Buddhist-Catholic Dialogue:

<http://www.urbandharma.org/bcdialog/index.html>

Support "Dana" UrbanDharma.org:

<http://www.urbandharma.org/udharma6/dana.html>

The Urban Dharma Newsletter... May 18, 2004

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0. Quotes...

After silence that which comes nearest to expressing the inexpressible is music. - **Aldous Huxley** (1894 - 1963)

The whole problem can be stated quite simply by asking, 'Is there a meaning to music?' My answer would be, 'Yes.' And 'Can you state in so many words what the meaning is?' My answer to that would be, 'No.' - **Aaron Copland** (1900 - 1990)

1. The paradox of the Shakuhachi

<http://www.calmcentre.com/sounds/shak/shak.html>

The shakuhachi, or Zen flute, is the traditional Japanese bamboo flute. In the hands of a master, it produces the most extraordinary, subtle, sensual music - prized as being almost perfect for relaxation and meditation.

The first paradox

Any way you look at it, the shakuhachi or Zen flute is an extraordinary instrument. From the moment of its conception it is extraordinary. At daybreak in the dead of winter, a Japanese master craftsman sets out into the frozen bamboo groves in search of the perfect culm of bamboo. He might rummage through hundreds of acres before settling on a single stalk of yellow-green bamboo - as tall as a six storey building, yet with only one small section (typically 55 cm long) suitable for his instrument. Then, applying a combination of experience, intuition and a little good luck, he begins to craft his masterpiece ...

The Zen flute is possibly the simplest non-percussive instrument ever conceived. It has no keys or pads

like a western flute, no reed like a clarinet or saxophone, no strings like a guitar or violin, no mechanisms inside like a piano or organ; it doesn't even have a mouthpiece like the recorder. It simply has five finger holes - fewer than the penny whistle or almost any other wind instrument - and one end cut to form an angled blowing edge. Despite this simple construction, the Zen flute (in the hands of a master musician) can produce an inconceivably broad range of musical sounds - from pure, flute-like notes, to tones that are every bit as complex and expressive as the human voice. [There are moments on The Masters of Calm when you will be unaware of the segue from Zen flute to human voice.]

Being able to produce such complex and expressive music - as haunting and as enchanting as you will ever hear - from an instrument so basic, is the first paradox of the shakuhachi.

The second paradox

The Zen flute came to Japan from China some time in the 8th century. At that time, the shakuhachi was constructed from the middle section of a bamboo culm. Around the 15th century in Japan, the instrument was adopted by a sect of Zen Buddhist monks - all of whom were samurai - as a tool of **meditation**. (They knew that the playing of it relaxed both mind and body, aiding their spiritual pursuits.)

It was during this period that the Zen flute began to be constructed from the spiked root section of the bamboo - as it is today - so the instrument could double as a particularly ferocious weapon. This probably explains the Zen flute's long association with the martial arts.

The second paradox of the shakuhachi is the way history's most revered instrument of peace and tranquillity once doubled as a weapon for samurai monks.

The third paradox

Unlike with other instruments, there are no child prodigies in the shakuhachi tradition. Not one. This is understandable, since the instrument is not only immensely difficult to excite, but also takes many years of dedicated training to attain a standard where you would perform.

The Zen flute is not like a recorder: it has no mouthpiece as such, and simply blowing in one end will not produce a sound. To play a note, your lips and mouth must become part of the instrument (how appropriate for an instrument known as the Zen flute!). And it is this "oneness" of instrument and player that permits so much flexibility in pitch, tone, colour, and loudness of playing.

Part of the discipline of mastering the Zen flute is learning to deal with the frustrations inherent in learning to play it. That is why much of its study is dedicated to "forging the mind-body" - developing the intuitive, spiritual side of the performer as much as the musicianship itself. Playing the shakuhachi in this context is called *suizen*, or "blowing Zen". To blow Zen, one requires great breath control; yet, after years of training and practice, the shakuhachi player strives not to try to control the breath at all. Instead the breath is observed. The player "watches" the breath with a concentration that consumes both the observer and that which is being observed - the player "becomes" the breathing.

2. The Meaninglessness of Zen in Shakuhachi: Suizen and Honkyoku - Shakuhachi Society of British Columbia

<http://www.bamboo-in.com/a.html>

According to the fundamental experience of Zen the aspect of shakuhachi (Japanese vertical 5-holed bamboo flute) in relation to Zen is meaninglessness, but the playing of Honkyoku occupies a unique position in religious world music. Sui-zen (blowing zen, or blowing meditation) is the practice of playing

the shakuhachi bamboo flute as a means of attaining self-realization. The monks of old Japan who practiced suizen were called Komuso, or Monks of Nothingness and Emptiness (Ko: emptiness, mu: nothingness, so: monk or priest). These monks belonged to a Rinzai Zen Buddhist sect called Fuke-shu, named after the legendary Tang Dynasty Chinese monk who first used a bamboo flute as a meditation tool. The pieces on which suizen are based are called Honkyoku, or original pieces and were basically solo, with a few exceptions. In playing honkyoku the state of mind was the most essential element, rather than musical enjoyment, therefore it wasn't music per se. Indeed, it was prohibited for Komuso to play with O-koto (horizontal harp) and Shamisen (three-stringed banjo-like instrument) in those days. The monks blew shakuhachi for their own enlightenment not for entertainment. However, since Zen Buddhism puts no accent in devotion to a deity or god, their music contains no sense of praise of faith. This is what is so unique about suizen as opposed to other religious musics. It was not a practice connected as closely to the life and death struggle as tea ceremony, martial arts, or meditation was; which may lessen its meaningfulness in relation to the Zen experience. But it was close enough to spirituality to have an impact on the religious landscape of Japan. Today, honkyoku has evolved (some say devolved) into music which is both profound and beautiful in its expression.

Very few people today actually understand or practice suizen in its true form. But honkyoku has turned out to be one of the most popular forms of music in the contemporary music scene today (in and out of Japan). There are various reasons for this. Many who have passed down the traditional honkyoku in modern times were not professional Shakuhachi players insisting on keeping the practice of suizen by playing only Honkyoku. Since these were mostly intellectuals isolated from the central musical scene in modern Japan where radical westernization took place, they concentrated on nurturing the spiritual side of Honkyoku. But it was only a matter of time until western musical ideas affected honkyoku as well, which ironically was important to its survival. New forms of Honkyoku began to appear which were much more dynamic and lively but still based on the original ideal of suizen. Hideo Sekino said, "When we conceive The Art as the underlying spiritual representation of the ancient legend of the Komuso, the modern creation of Honkyoku might have been the very effort to revive the dying legend from the overwhelming westernization in modern Japan."

Shakuhachi and Bushido

After the death of Hideyori Toyotomi in ca.1610 the Tokugawa family came under control ushering Japan into the Edo period, an unprecedented stretch of peace which lasted 250 years. This was the golden age of the Shakuhachi and other Japanese arts which enjoyed support from the government, forming the base of today's "traditional Japan". During this time, the Shakuhachi underwent a transformation from a 6-holed, thin piece of bamboo, to the 5-holed, root-ended bamboo flute that is most common today. Many samurai at that time who's masters were defeated by Tokugawa were forbidden to carry swords and were left homeless. These were the "ronin" (masterless samurai), many of whom joined the ranks of the Komuso monks for spiritual focus as well as a chance to carry a weapon again, namely, the club-like Shakuhachi. Earlier, this sect of monks (formerly known as Komoso, straw mat monks) attracted various riff-raff and beggars; but since the establishment of the Fuke-shu with its strict code of discipline (and support from the Tokugawa government), membership became exclusive to only those with samurai ranking, and the use of Shakuhachi was limited to only the Komuso. They travelled from place to place on pilgrimages to the various Komuso temples throughout Japan, playing their Shakuhachi for alms and meditation, concealed from the outer world by a large basket-like hat (tengai) that completely covered their faces. They were given special passes by the government which allowed them free access across any border in Japan and on boats across bodies of water. Consequently, many Komuso were used by the government as spies.

The influence of Zen on the spiritual and aesthetic landscape of Japan was profound. Zen which simply means "meditation" (from the Sanskrit 'dhyana') appealed to the intellectual, ruling class, therefore was supported and permeated just about every art form at the time. From Zen came the ideas of spiritual selflessness and concentration of the mind. In the Samurai tradition of Bushido (Warrior Way) one dedicated his entire life to the protection and well-being of his master and was trained in such a way as to merge totally with one's weapon (e.g. the sword) as well as the environment and the opponent so as to have victory over him. When many of the samurai's swords were confiscated by the Tokugawa Shogunate,

the Ronin found it very easy to fit into the Komuso way since the concentration needed to learn Shakuhachi was similar to their sword training, and, the shape of the Edo period Shakuhachi resembled a hand held weapon, and no doubt was used as one as well! In the daily life of the Komuso monks, the day included morning zazen (sitting zen), suizen, begging, and martial arts training. In the rural Aomori district of northern Tohoku, Japan, one of the most famous schools was the Kimpu School (Nezasa-ha) which developed a unique technique of breathing called "komi-buki" or "concentrated or packed breath", where an intentional steady, pulse-rhythm is created while blowing the Shakuhachi by contracting and relaxing the diaphragm. It is said that it came about when after the Komuso Monks finished a hard training in their martial arts, which included jujutsu (soft technique) and kenpo (sword play) they would play their shakuhachi immediately afterwards, and the pulsing sound would be from their shallow breath and fast beating hearts. A lesser known fact was shakuhachi's connection with the Shogun's Ninja (surveillance/assassin) force, a subject which deserves more research. One famous Ninja named Sugawara Yoshiteru who became a komuso first in Kyoto and then in Edo often dedicated his performances to the Tokugawa Daimyo. Due to his skills as a Ninja, Sugawara became something of a small daimyo himself. He was permitted to build his own temple in Niigata, which became Echigomeianji. He composed the piece Echigomeian-hachigaeshi.

Perhaps the most significant 20th century honkyoku persona was Watazumi-do So who combined a martial arts-like physical regimen complete with detailed breath exercises with Shakuhachi practice. His disciple, Yokoyama Katsuya is one of the most important professional shakuhachi players focussing on transmission of Honkyoku today.

During the Meiji Reformation, the Fuke-shu of Komuso was abolished and many secret characteristics of this group were lost. Because of this historical loss we'll never know entirely the reality of the Komuso. However, their instrument, the Shakuhachi has survived the westernization policy of the Meiji government. Its use as a religious instrument (hoki) is now a musical one (gakki) utilizing western musical scale as well as Japanese, and played in ensembles, a practice which was previously prohibited.

Today, in our post-modern age, shakuhachi music is appearing to those hemmed in by their material world. There is a renewed interest in a wholistic approach to playing shakuhachi where mind, body, and spirit are developed along with musical ability. People like Riley Lee in Australia give breath and honkyoku workshops all around the world and seek to integrate the whole person with one's environment and playing, just as the Komuso of old did. Many contemporary musicians are looking back at and discovering the beauty and enormous expression of traditional instruments, and the traditional style of playing Shakuhachi. Shakuhachi music uses many notes which do not fall within the standard western musical temperament. It makes active use of "non-musical" sounds or noise such as blowing, windy sounds, simulated animal sounds, as well as no sound, or the silence between the notes (ma), which is a very important element in performance and symbolizes emptiness, selflessness, the basis of the life motto of the Komuso "Coming from nowhere, going to nowhere like the wind". It also expresses that all things are related in this intricate web of change we call life.

3. Shakuhachi in Perspective - Shakuhachi Society of British Columbia

<http://www.Bamboo-In.com/Perspective.html>

When you become a student of Shakuhachi, you also become a member of an international community. This community extends throughout the world. It consists of hundreds of your fellow students. Because we have chosen to study this special instrument called Shakuhachi, we have much in common with other members of this community. As a group, these commonalities set us apart from other players of other musical instruments. These differences will become increasingly apparent to you in the areas of attitude, purpose, and method. In spite of our commonality, there are within the Shakuhachi community, great differences of opinion, attitude and interpretation. It is important that we recognize these differences and make every attempt to understand them and to learn from them. It is also important to keep a sense of

perspective. We are talking about differences between people, all of whom are doing their best to play shakuhachi. This means the greatest differences should be accepted with the tolerance and good faith reserved for family and close friends. For the beginner, the questions arising from the differences with other shakuhachi schools is difficult to answer. In order to better understand this problem, we must begin by looking at Shakuhachi from the outside.

In our society, Shakuhachi is an obscure, mysterious flute from the East that is occasionally heard on martial arts movies and atmospheric background music for the TV shows like X-files and and movies of Kurosawa. But the fact that this flute was used in this manner, chosen over any other flute or instrument shows the mood-creating power of the shakuhachi. No other instrument can achieve the deep, mysterious sound like the Shakuhachi. Mahatma Ghandi, upon hearing the mystic sound of the shakuhachi called it "The Voice of the Dead". The legendary jazz saxophonist, John Coltrane travelled to Japan once to procure and learn Shakuhachi to deepen the spiritual quality of his music. The famous minimalist composer and Zen Buddhist, John Cage, also travelled to Japan to study Shakuhachi under the legendary Shakuhachi master, Watazumi-doso, who inspired his infamous "silent" piece, 4 minutes and 33 seconds, Cage's purest statement of no-self. Its inherent exotic nature is definitely one of the more seductive qualities of the Shakuhachi, but lack of education limits its popularity. Statements such as "Shakuhachi utilizes no rhythm or timing in playing the music", tend to add to the mystery and confusion surrounding the Art. Ask around, many people have probably heard the sound the Shakuhachi but few have ever heard the name and have any real knowledge about it.

Outsiders see Shakuhachi as small and cohesive, but insiders see it as large and diverse. This dichotomy is a fundamental cause of confusion and questioning for new Shakuhachi students.

A major barrier to understanding comes when students try to reconcile the two aspects of Shakuhachi into one comprehensive view. This process does not yield successful results in this instance because both viewpoints are different and both are true. One is not more correct than the other, and neither can be subverted. Understanding can only come when the student's awareness grows large enough to encompass and accept all aspects of Shakuhachi. This is a learning process. It is difficult, takes a great deal of time, and requires enormous effort on our part. Remember, if Shakuhachi were easy to learn, easy to do, and easy to understand, it would by its own nature be of limited value. It is precisely because of its deceptive complexity and the resulting difficulty in learning even the most fundamental precepts that we find it to be of such profound importance.

The learning process inevitably begins with the students trying to fit themselves into the Shakuhachi world and fit Shakuhachi into the rest of the world. This produces some very important questions for which we shall attempt to provide at least partial answers. These questions we often verbalize in many different ways. However, most of them are variations on the same three basic questions. The first is: "Is there more than one kind of Shakuhachi?" The answer to this question is "No". Shakuhachi in its fullest sense is the product of the audio-spiritio lives of Japanese Zen monks and the musicians who inherited the tradition from them. It represents the culmination of Spirit and Nature unifying in bamboo, breath, and man. It is not static but dynamic, changing and organic. Shakuhachi is the legacy of the Japanese soul and is as singular and unique as a fingerprint.

The second question is: "Is there more than one way to practice Shakuhachi?" The answer to this question is "Yes!". There are many kinds of Shakuhachi music one can practice ranging from honkyoku (original Zen solo pieces) to sankyoku (ensemble music), to minyou (folk music), to classical, jazz, and blues.

The third basic question naturally follows: "So, which way should I study? or "Which is the best style?" The true answer to either of these questions can only be found within yourself. Beyond its physical manifestations, Shakuhachi is essentially an intensely personal experience. Therefore, the style that is best for you is quite simply the one that feels best to you, the one that provides you with the most personal satisfaction.

To find your way, I suggest the following three steps:

1. Train hard, concentrate on the basics. Condition your mind and body. Absorb everything you can from your sensei.
2. As your skill and confidence levels increase, attend seminars, try other teachers, and play with as many people as you can. Above all, keep an open mind!
3. When you find that special teacher (and this may happen more than once in your career) follow your heart. Do what you feel to be right. Train for yourself first! To do less is to be dishonest with yourself and others.

Within the last few years there has been an unprecedented rise in the interest of the shakuhachi around the world. A great deal of research, much discussion has thus far resulted. Much is yet to be learned from this process, but two things are certainly true: Shakuhachi is a living, growing Ga-hoki (Musical/Spiritual Instrument) for today's world and the physical aspects of Shakuhachi, as beautiful and seductive as they can be, are only the outward manifestations of what is importantly a real and direct way to improve the quality of our lives.

4. The Bamboo Way (Chikudo) ...by Mary Lu Brandwein

<http://www.emptybell.org/brandwein.html>

Sound is a Door....¿To Where?

In Asia there are many disciplines that can be studied as a "Way," such as Kado (Flower Way), Chado (Tea Way), Shodo (Calligraphy Way), Kyudo (Archery Way), Bushido (Warrior Way), Chikudo (Bamboo Way). These all sound very esoteric, but in reality a "Way" is *NOTHING SPECIAL* and is not limited to specific Asian disciplines.

Many learning paths can be added to the list and actually anything can be studied as a "Way." A new foreign language, a new baby, a musical instrument (without previous experience), sewing, gourmet cooking, dancing, law practice, a new career, school, can all be studied as a "Way." Anything really can be a "Way." Actually what makes the difference is the attitude we bring to our study. In this article I will discuss my study of sound as a "Way," in particular studying the Japanese Bamboo Flute (the Shakuhachi) for the last 14 years.

First, let's see what exactly a "Way" is. A "Way" is the *disciplined, long-term study of **anything** that challenges our childhood-developed self-concept of who we are.* If we choose something to study that we have interest in but know nothing about and even think we have no talent for, there are real possibilities for learning from it.

When we approach our new study there are basically two attitudes with which we can broach it:

1. A Goal-Oriented Attitude or
2. A "Mirror" Attitude.

A Goal-Oriented Attitude

The Goal-Oriented Attitude is about getting to a pre-established goal and struggling towards it. However, in always looking towards the goal and trying to get there as soon as possible we constantly dissipate our

energy by the longing for and the looking towards the goal. We are consumed with our struggling for a certain outcome. Our energy is not all present with what we are doing because one eye is always on the goal in the future. This attitude is a no-nonsense, let's get the job done attitude. We plow right through to our goal.

A "Mirror" Attitude

The "Mirror" Attitude is about studying our chosen discipline with awareness, using the experience of the new learning as a mirror to see ourselves in the process of learning as we meet with difficulty, the longing for the goal, discouragement, fatigue, disappointment, doubt, fear, frustration, anxiety, and resistance to seeing and hearing. We will also surely meet criticism, success, and failure. We will be awakened to the need for discipline, for perseverance and for constantly nurturing the sound. This new undertaking offers us a chance to see ourselves in a very different, fresh, new situation and the awareness and self-knowledge gained here can be clearer because the experience is so different from our ordinary life. Then this new self-knowledge, if we are willing, can be applied to the other areas of our life which, because we are used to them, have become blind spots.

Following the "Way" our *ideas* of our own identity are challenged, e.g. I am not a musician; I can't play music.

Our *ideas* of how we learn are challenged, e.g. I am a fast learner; by this time I "should" have already mastered this.

Our *ideas* about what we already know are also challenged, e.g. I already know how to hear, breathe; I already know myself.

Many of our cherished ideas and opinions are challenged in this new situation. These ideas are born from our core belief, that is a basic decision made as a small child about how life is and how we are...many of our problems with life and ourselves come from these decisions. In challenging these dearly held beliefs, unbelievable fear and terror is aroused.

We bring the "Mirror Attitude" to all this. There is an inner awareness developing more and more. All of our *ideas* produce emotions and challenging these beliefs also produces emotions and they are reflected in our tight muscles and those muscles affect the sound; they affect our performance. These inner hidden *ideas*, our core belief are ideas of who we really believe in truth that we are. They are our favorite poison thoughts, believed to be the deepest truth about ourselves. These ideas are easy to discover if we develop an attitude of watching the mind and the exact muscles that the ideas pinch. They are our constant companions, but most of the time they come and go like lightning just beyond our consciousness.

The more we know ourselves, the more deeply our sound will communicate to others as we play. One who knows how to listen, hearing only one note that I play, will know exactly my level of self-awareness and compassion. This one note will communicate where am I playing from: the mind, the heart, the solar plexus, the gut, the whole body. Is the sound coming only from the flute as an instrument playing music or is my body/mind/heart also sounding through the flute, the flute as my body? Am I playing from the origin of my being, which is the origin of your being too? How can one come to this?

Attention, attention, attention

First, realizing I don't know; I am not aware. I don't really hear or know how to breathe or know myself...being willing to start to look and feel.

The Japanese bamboo flute offers numerous opportunities to encounter ourselves as we try to learn: just the first difficulty of making any sound, trying to develop the characteristic harmonics in the sound, savoring the imperfection of all sound, developing dexterity and correct pitch (which is like walking on

quicksand), learning the scales, acquiring the ability to bend the sound low enough and high enough and to quarter and half note certain notes. Then there are the special sounds: "muraiki" (air sound), "soraiki" (empty sound), "kubi futi" (shaking), "koro koro" (a kind of fluttering sound), "kara kara" (a kind of trill), alternate fingerings for special effect, ability to maneuver with speed, to say nothing of learning to read the music.

The sound develops over time and it is a lifelong endeavor with the sound always changing, always becoming what it will be. Each person's sound is different and very personal.

The Shakuhachi can play all kinds of music, but perhaps it is easier to notice and be aware and practice in this way with the "Honkyoku" (meditation music). The word "Honkyoku" means the original tuning or the original music for this instrument, but it can also mean music or sound from the origin of being. This music is not really performance music as such; rather it is "sacred" music meant to be played in a meditation hall for people meditating (zazen) and by one who is meditating (zazen). Its rhythm is many times fairly free, lyric melody is not present, no harmony is present. The lone bamboo sound emphasizes sound color, total sound, volume and movement within each sound and from one pitch to another. "Honkyoku" is meant to entice the ears, the body and the mind to pay attention, to be present to the sound, but also to all that is. It is impossible to guess how the phrase will end or when or what will come next. The whole body can become an awake ear, a receiving organ, if we slowly choose to open our body to hearing. There can be no longer an inside and an outside. There is no end to sound, surrounding and compenetrating sound...only totally alive hearing, no ideas of "I like this; I don't like this." When there is thinking there is no real hearing.

Learning to listen to music, learning to play music is a process of learning to hear and to savor the sound and the feeling of sound, even our "imperfect" sound. Without this the sound can not change or improve.

So let's try this as a listening exercise:

1. The eyes draw the attention more easily; they are greedy, so, close them or put them out of focus.
2. Putting your attention on the surface of the skin, breathe in through every pore on the body surface, slowly feeling the whole surface. Letting the sound in through each pore, feeling the vibrations of sound on the whole surface of the body and then within the body. Listening with the whole body causes a momentary forgetting of your name and how much money you owe. Only this, hearing.
3. Hearing only; feeling the sound enter the ear; feeling the sensations of the sound on the surface of the skin and its effect on the internal organs.
4. Letting the sound be a house and surround you and be inside of you.
5. When a thought comes, notice it, look at its content, feel its effect on the body and then return to the hearing and the physical sensation of the sound.
6. Let your energy be carried by the sound; ride it; surrender to the sound.
7. Sound is a door, a "formless field," a background that allows for the seeing and experiencing in the foreground of the emotion-thoughts and the body and also allows for the experiencing of a deeper truer Self.
8. The mind will rebel in fear; watch it; feel what it does to the body and therefore to the sound.

(This can be experienced for a fraction of a second or longer. Typically we would flip in and out of this experience depending on the hold that our thoughts have over us.)

9. In playing, feel the sound arise from the whole body as the energy concentrates, feel the strength of the abdomen, the diaphragm expand and contract, and the lungs empty and fill, the throat open, the resonance of the sinuses and feel the taste of the sound in the mouth. Taste the sound in the mouth; savor it in the mouth the way you savor an expensive wine; feel its vibrations on the fingers. The Honkyoku on the shakuhachi or slower pieces on a wind instrument are particularly helpful here because a note is not just struck, but followed through and sustained and many things can happen or not happen within its texture and space and all the while there is hearing, experiencing, thinking...

Can you play and do this as much as possible? When there is emotional upset, can you play anyway? How does anger alter the sound? What is the difference between an angry Ab and a sad Ab or an aggressive Ab and an empty Ab? How does the body differ when it makes each one of them? If I play when I am sick, what can I learn about my sickness from my sound? How does the feeling of making the sound differ?

If I play when I am disappointed or tired, where can I feel in the body the disappointment or the fatigue? Can I reside in the physical sensation of these emotions with the help of my flute sound? Can I be more comfortable with their discomfort in my body? Can I slowly be more comfortable with the whole range of the emotions and feelings of being human? Can I just live it and let it be and put it all into my sound and still savor it all? Savor the humanness? Slowly over time, just a little more today? now? Can I?

Then what does the shakuhachi sound do to my body, to my mind? Does it change anything? Does it heal? Slowly over time what happens?

The sound, the playing is a way to be alive, to experience our thoughts, our emotions, our false selves and our true Selfslowly awakening....slowly accepting....slowly experiencing more and more within the context of an ever wider total sound.... world sound.

Sound is a door.....

I situate this piece within the Zen Koan: I want to live forever; I must die.

There is the quiet experiencing and appreciation of the moonlight, all of nature, all of life...aliveness. Yet again, the sadness that all things must end; all life dies. Here is our chance to experience our own sadness and appreciation and feel nature and our own death a little. What are your thoughts when you hear/play this piece? What effect do they have on the body? What feelings arise? How does your body produce these feelings? What muscles are affected and what do the nerves do and what does your energy do? Can you stay with only hearing/playing at times? Does fear sneak into the hearing that you, as you know yourself, could be lost forever...or perhaps that you are not really who you think you are? Where do you feel the fear? Can you just feel that fear quietly for a little, resting in it too?

Listening in this way is really death to the self you know yourself to be; can you do it just a little...and then a little more and more? Can you come to a new hearing, a new playing?

Sound is a door...

5. Welcome to the Melbourne Shakuhachi Centre ...David Brown

<http://www.shakuhachi.startyourweb.com/pages/>

Welcome to The Melbourne Shakuhachi Centre

Nestled in the idyllic setting of the Montsalvat Artist's Community, the Melbourne Shakuhachi Centre has provided musicians with the finest quality professional flutes, instruction and valuable information for the past twenty years.

Master-instrument maker David S. Brown, has consistently crafted flutes of rare and unique beauty suited both to the traditional and contemporary Shak enthusiast. Winner of the coveted WOSTEP International prize for Horology (watch and clock-making) and 5th Dan practitioner of Aikido; David's talent fuses the exactness of watchmaking and the intuition of 34 years of Aikido experience. David's flutes have received acclaim from Shakuhachi masters and players worldwide including; Tadashi Tadjima, Yokoyama Katsuya and Riley Lee. Riley has used David's flutes consistently for recordings and concerts and been a constant supporter of the centre. In fact, every shak performer Australia-wide has used David's flutes.

The Shakuhachi is the simplest of musical instruments, but in the hands of a master musician however, the flute is capable of an immeasurable variety of dynamics and timbre. The long diminishing notes, coupled with unusual techniques and almost inaudible grace notes, produce beautiful, haunting melodies. Phrases are played to the full ability of one's breath. The sound has a distinct Zen flavour, depicting with skillful simplicity the beauty of nature.

One very striking feature of shakuhachi playing is the wonderful use of movement and physical gesture in performance. This is because fine pitch and timbre control is achieved through the repositioning of the blowing edge to a consistent embouchure. Moving the flute in space also provides the musician with visual and tactile cues to monitor these finer parameters of sound control. Sideways movements of the head, tilting of the flute and head are all common techniques seen in shakuhachi playing. These movements are interpreted from the score as fingering patterns written to sound another pitch; tilt and headmovements are then used to compensate the pitch resulting in specific timbre and dynamic effects.

Unlike the Western flute, the shakuhachi appears basic and economical. In reality, first impressions can be very deceiving. Shakuhachi are masterfully constructed from carefully selected pieces of bamboo. These pieces have seven nodes in careful proportion to hole placement and the overall length of the flute. As the nodes converge towards the root-end of the flute the colour of the bamboo darkens, the diameter of the bore narrows as the thickness of the bamboo base increases. A gentle curvature adds a pleasing aspect of movement to this form. Five large open holes allow for cross, half, quarter fingerings for accurate microtonal control of pitch. In fact several Ryu (schools) of shakuhachi have categorised up to 60 divisions of the octave so tuning control now becomes a life's journey, not a constraint.

6. New Life From Ruins: Zen Celtic Sacred Songs and Meditations - Robert A. Jonas

<http://www.cdfreedom.com/cdfreedom/artist.asp?fromBrowseart1=870~Robert+A%2E+Jonas|robertjonas>

This CD fuses Celtic Christian songs from Ireland and Scotland with the shakuhachi, a Japanese bamboo flute. Featured Celtic vocalists Jacynth Hamill and Heather Innes weave their voices with the sound of Robert A. Jonas's Zen flute. Jacynth, Heather and Robert met in October, 2000 at a Buddhist-Christian conference hosted by His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Fr. Lawrence Freeman (Benedictine). Sensing a resonance between the haunting melodies of the shakuhachi and their ancient Celtic musical tradition, they performed before 700 people in Belfast City Hall.

In the following two years Heather and Jacynth joined Robert for several concerts in the Boston area, including three days in the studio to record "New Life from Ruins". On this CD, Heather and Jacynth reach down into the musical archives of their countries to bring alive the rich spiritual resources of the Celtic devotional tradition. Rooted in that ancient heart-centered place, they offer several pieces of their own composition.

The Empty Bell - Robert A. Jonas

<http://www.emptybell.org/home.html>

The Empty Bell is a sanctuary for the study and practice of Christian meditation and prayer. Our purpose is to learn about the history and practice of the Christian contemplative way as rooted in the Gospels, and to explore its common ground with other ancient Wisdom teachings. We give special attention to the Christian-Buddhist dialogue, to artistic expression of spiritual insight, and to the relationship between spirituality and stewardship of our bio-diverse natural world.

The Urban Dharma Newsletter Archives:

<http://www.urbandharma.org/nlarchives.html>

The Los Angeles Buddhist-Catholic Dialogue:

<http://www.urbandharma.org/bcdialog/index.html>

Support "Dana" UrbanDharma.org:

<http://www.urbandharma.org/udharma6/dana.html>

The Urban Dharma Newsletter... May 25, 2004

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0. Quotes...

The guitar is a small orchestra. It is polyphonic. Every string is a different color, a different voice. / **Andre Segovia**

Lean your body forward slightly to support the guitar against your chest, for the poetry of the music should resound in your heart. / **Andre Segovia**

1. "Zen guitar" will mean different things to different people ...by Clarelynn Rose/Heartwood Music

<http://www.heartwoodmusic.com/zenguitar.htm>

One of the cornerstones of Zen Guitar is that, as we are unique people, so will our experience with the guitar be unique. Each person discovers his or her own way.

In my experience, the practice of Zen guitar means many things.

Technique and Composition

Learning new technique arises out of need and direct experience. When you have a

musical idea that cannot be adequately expressed through techniques or tunings you already know, that is the time to experiment with new techniques or new tunings. These may be techniques or tunings you discover for yourself. Or perhaps you have heard someone else do something that deeply resonates with you musically. Often these ideas or tunings will come to mind when you are pushing your usual boundaries. Or they may resonate so strongly with you that they themselves inspire you.

In my own experience, I learned simply by playing what sounded good to my ear, using technique that feels very natural and comfortable to my own fingers. As I have needed to express more complex musical ideas, the technique has come very organically through practicing licks or techniques that were slightly beyond my grasp. If something doesn't come naturally, I figure it will always sound a little stilted and so look for another way to play it. Of course, sometimes someone will demonstrate a cool technique or tuning that completely captures my imagination, so even if it doesn't feel completely natural, I'll work at it to see if after a lot of practice it starts to feel right. But if it still feels awkward, the decision is always to drop it. Zen guitar is about finding a true, very natural voice, not about making every voice sound natural and true to a single individual!

The Breath

Before you start to play, take a breath. Just as in meditation, it helps you (and other listening to you) focus on the present moment and the music being played.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness has many aspects, extending to composing, practicing, and performing. In composing, it might mean being aware of the value of and using emptiness and space. It also means recognizing and valuing the peaceful, centered feeling that Zen guitar music can generate, whether the music is mellow or joyous. Another example is that mindfulness can foster a feeling of completeness with only one instrument. There is no need to fill up the spaces in the music and our minds with a lot of instruments or a driving drumbeat. In practicing guitar, another manifestation of mindfulness is to expect and even welcome mistakes. They contain wonderful ideas. And in performing, mindfulness can mean things like remembering to connect with the audience and to remain humble, recognizing ourselves simply as a conduit of music.

Personally, I use space in several ways. Most obvious is the use long pauses and sustained notes in many of my pieces. A different kind of space is letting compositions "breathe", taking as much time as they need to develop. Nothing is rushed, because if a composition is forced, it will sound forced. When practicing, I listen to mistakes and then decide whether or not to discard them. And in performing, I constantly remind myself that the true purpose of performing is for the benefit of others, connecting with people through a shared musical experience.

Humility

Playing Zen guitar is about exploring a way to communicate with others. Those of us exploring Zen guitar are blessed with an inclination towards music, a desire to play, and some level of natural talent. These are gifts to be shared with others. A second aspect of humility is to recognize that all things are our teacher, and that teachings that will allow us to advance in our study of guitar are all around us all the time.

An important lesson came from my Tai Chi teacher in China years ago. It is an old Chinese saying: "The ten thousand things (all things) become my teacher." That is, you have something to learn from every person and every thing. That includes beginning guitarists and even people who don't play guitar. One of my important lessons in playing guitar came from an autistic child who could hardly utter a word. The Zen guitarist tries to remain open to all teachers.

Heartwood Music

Heartwood Music is the label owned and operated by Clarelynn Rose, established in 1999 in Ukiah, California.

Heartwood Music donates 10% or more of profits to environmental education programs, with over \$500 donated to date. The goal is to raise another \$425 in 2004, bringing the cumulative donation total to over \$1,000.

Recipient programs include the Forestry Institute for Teachers (FIT) and the Redwood Valley Outdoor Education Project (RVOEP). Through her work as a forester, Clarelynn has been part of the governing boards of both organizations, and she believes very strongly in the need to financially support quality, hands-on environmental education.

Heartwood Music's two albums, *The Redwood Sidhe* and *Elegant Tern*, reflect Clarelynn's unique life experiences in the woods, in China, and at the Buddhist monastery. A self-taught fingerstyle guitarist, Clarelynn lives in California's redwood country.

While living and working in China between 1985 and 1993, Clarelynn taught herself Mandarin Chinese. Her two-and-a-half years in China included work with the Chinese Academy of Forestry in Beijing, conducting thesis research on forest management in southern China, and teaching English in Sichuan and Zhejiang Provinces. She currently serves as an advisor to the Research Center for Women & Management of Natural Resources of the Linan Forestry College in Zhejiang Province.

As a practicing Buddhist who has taken the five precepts, Clarelynn finds time for daily chanting and meditating. She attends the Abhayagiri Monastery (Ajahn Chah tradition) in Redwood Valley and the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas in Talmage, California. In 2001, she returned to China on a consulting job for SmartWood and while there made a pilgrimage to Putuo Mountain in China, where she wrote *Song of Putuo Mountain*.

2. Forever Zen ...Craig Smoot

http://www.black-label.com/zen_gtr.htm

I initially created this page years ago as an information resource based on the teachings of PHILIP TOSHIO SUDO that I discovered in his book ZEN GUITAR. His book showed me "The Way" to help me help myself in order to attain my musical goals and find the true musician inside.

Below is just a sample of what you'll find in Phil's fantastic book, ZEN GUITAR. It's a synopsis I came up with for my own personal use, but it contains all of Phil's primary points as found within the book's pages (reprinted with permission). I hope you get as much out of it as I have.

Zen Guitar - The Twelve Points of Focus

1. Spirit

A. Don't ask, practice.

Practice properly... and the rest falls into place.

B. Seven times down, eight times up.

NO defeatist thoughts; visualize "burning away" any negative thoughts as if they were words on a piece of paper.

C. The only opponent is within.

Obstacles are not what matter, but rather, how we respond to them does.

2. Rhythm

A. Above all, always feel the "one"!

You cannot feel rhythm with your mind; you must feel it with your body.

3. Technique

A. Play without having to think about technique.

Your main focus should be on playing with the proper spirit.

B. First, you must have something to say.

Sometimes a player with crude technique has more to say than one with impeccable technique. Whose song is more uplifting?

4. Feel

A. Zen is known through the ears and heart, not the rational mind.

The correct "Way" is found in the spirit of the expression and its depth, not its complexity.

B. Do not allow knowledge to interfere with the naturalness that music demands.

Just play. If it feels right, it is right.

5. Perfection

A. Don't be too self-conscious when playing.

When the mind becomes too preoccupied with what the hands are doing, it shuts out the music inside.

B. Overcome self-consciousness through practice.

With practice, our muscles develop their own intelligence to the point where thought and action occur simultaneously (i.e., second nature).

C. Perfect practice makes perfect!

6. Mistakes

A. Learn from mistakes as soon as they happen.

Incorporate them into the artistic process, and use them as a spring-board into new areas of discovery.

B. Remember: Accidents can hold the key to innovation.

7. Stages and Plateaus

A. Your path is like scaling a wall with no visible top in sight.

Think like a rock climber; sometimes you may have to move laterally or even down a

step before moving upwards.

B. Remember: Two steps forward, one step back is still progress.

It's all a part of your advancement towards becoming a better musician. The spirit remains the same; only the strategy differs.

C. Stay focused on the here and now.

The further you climb, the longer the plateaus (i.e., ruts) can get. So don't look ahead to where you want to be, or look back to say, "I've only come this far?!?" You can't make long-term progress conform to your timetable.

D. It has to happen naturally.

A flower blooms when its ready. Let it be!

8. Discipline

A. The key to self-mastery lies in discipline.

Do what has to be done, when it has to be done, as well as it can be done, and do it that way every time!

B. Do what has to be done...

Don't confuse self-discipline with self-denial. The right thing done in the wrong spirit (i.e., for the wrong reason) will manifest itself in other problems along the path. If you have to ask what has to be done... don't ask, practice!

C. When it has to be done...

The time is now! Start with one task, no matter how small, and get it done. "Attack the corners" – the little things that stick out – then work your way in towards the bigger things.

D. As well as it can be done...

If you are going to take the time to do something, do it right. There is no sense in practicing half-heartedly. Allow for plenty of time as to ensure that you are able to do the job right. High quality does not come of haste.

E. And do it that way every time!

The mark of true discipline lies in its consistent application. The key to overcoming

the pressure is to not think of having to do it right all the time; just do it right one time: This time, right now!

9. Limits

A. Recognize and accept your personal limits.

Test them, push them, and finally, know and accept them so that you can begin to work around them.

B. Do not dwell on the unattainable.

Some things are simply not in our destiny. If the seed you've been handed grows into a lemon tree... then make the best damn lemonade you can and have fun doing it!

C. Know what works best for you.

But above all else, you must be natural, yet always of the mind to try and learn new things.

10. Follow-through

A. Goals met are not ends, but merely points along the path.

In a hundred-mile march, 'ninety' is about the half-way point. Without the proper follow-through, all that preceded can be lost.

B. Do not focus on the goal.

Focus only on the process by which you arrive at the goal. Let your spirit follow through to the other side of the moment, because failure to do so cuts your spirit short. Let your mind flow smoothly and without hesitation at all times.

11. Taste

A. Don't compromise your own taste for the sake of appealing to a wider audience.

Not everyone is going to like what you have to say with your music – to each their own. Play the truth and it will remain the truth for listeners to discover when they are ready.

12. Collaboration

A. Always endeavor to find harmony.

Subjugate your own ego for the greater good, and allow others to lean on you as you yourself lean on them.

B. Company

Surround yourself with professionals who are committed to excellence, and passionate about what they do. Beware of egotists who degrade your work, and sycophants who flatter you to cover their own mediocrity. When someone in the unit is unprofessional, incompetent or indifferent, you are the one who suffers.

C. Vision

A project with no vision yields mediocre results at best, and usually wastes everyone's time. When visionary ideas conflict, know when it arises from true artistic differences and when it stems from bruised egos – work to find a consensus. Always put the greater good of the band first, and do nothing to dilute the strength of the final vision.

D. Chemistry

A band isn't merely a group of individuals, but rather, a whole that exceeds the sum of its parts. The right chemistry cannot be bought, forced or manufactured – it just happens. It's not a science, and no one really knows why it happens, but when it does, you feel the presence of something divine, and everyone who's there knows it. This kind of chemistry defines a great band.

Zen Guitar - The Twelve Common Missteps

1. Self-Doubt

A. Play what you are meant to play.

Not necessarily what you want to play. All you can ever do is be yourself and play your song.

B. Regain your sense of starting over through your "Beginner's Mind".

Trust in the truth of naive musicianship; there you will find what you are meant to play. Get back to your basic root foundations when the music was innocent, unself-conscious and was played with egoless expression. Lose your bearings and let your openness lead you to new ones.

C. The Way of Zen Guitar is within you!

You must discover the key to unlock it.

2. Instant Gratification

A. Training twice as hard does NOT mean you'll get there in half the time.

That's like thinking, "If I stay awake twice as long, I can live a year's time in six months." Progress on the path will not come at any rate other than what is natural. You can't live a year's time in anything but a year's time.

3. Ego

A. Maintain a healthy ego balance.

You must have enough ego to have a strong sense of self, but too much ego will lead you off the path. Have faith in your abilities, yet have enough sense to take praise and flattery with a grain of salt just as you would with the criticism you receive.

B. Don't let your ego over-inflate.

Talking trash about others or talking highly of oneself usually stems from an ego that feels so small it must inflate itself through public attention. Displaying "False Modesty" is insincerity that usually stems from an overly large ego. Just knowing who you are and what you can do should be all the ego you'll ever need.

C. Don't let fame and/or riches become ends unto themselves.

Integrity of your music should come first! The Way of Zen Guitar is through "Spiritual Riches", not material riches. In the end, power and money are like footprints on the beach as compared to the Way – here one moment and then washed away.

4. Halfheartedness

A. To move down the path, you must commit your heart to training.

The only way to do this is to truly love it. All the effort you put into it should only increase your joy. If not, then something is seriously wrong.

B. Check your spirit.

To do so you must find those words of conviction that you live and die by that are tattooed deep down in your heart and soul that exclaim: "This is who I am, and this is what I believe!" No matter how simple or philosophical they may be, if you're willing to write them on a blackboard 10,000 times... then you know you mean it with your whole heart. What you say can put you right back on the path.

5. Overearnestness

A. Pursue the Way sincerely, but don't try too hard.

Overearnestness is the opposite of halfheartedness. Don't push yourself onto an audience without allowing the listener any space to come to them. Even if you make a good first impression, chances are the audience will lose respect for you very quickly.

B. Pace yourself.

Like those who are so eager to lose weight that they rush into a new workout routine and injure themselves, players must also learn to pace themselves. An overearnest spirit is like pouring beer into a glass too fast, foaming over without control. You must learn how to fill the glass exactly to the brim.

C. Study hard, but stay relaxed.

Self-control is the key.

D. The measure of mastery is NOT through what you show...

But rather, what you hold back. Beware of the common misconception that an excessively loud volume level equates to passion and intensity. If you must play at loud volumes, learn how to properly harness that power and control it like a veteran jockey controls a race horse. Although we feel the power, a measure of restraint shows through.

6. Speed

A. Music is NOT a race for points to see who can get the most notes in.

Speed is a byproduct of technique – not an end to be pursued in itself. It is far more important for a musician to understand tempo, timing, pacing and quickness.

B. Tempo...

Like a car, if you play a song too fast you're giving it too much gas, and if you play it too slow the tune wobbles like the wheels coming off an axle. A song played at just the right speed feels like a well-built car taking a corner with the driver in full control.

C. Timing...

Having a sense of the moment – a feel for exactly when to strike. A punchline delivered a moment too soon or a moment too late can kill a joke's impact. The

same goes for notes played in music.

D. Pacing...

How one plays within the tempo is pacing. Against a slow tempo, a certain guitar run may sound fast, whereas against a fast tempo, the same run sounds slow. Think like a baseball pitcher – after a series of slow pitches, a fast- ball looks that much faster. Know when to speed up and when to slow down.

E. Quickness...

Quickness is the speed of thought-to-action, not necessarily speedy technique. There is NO haste in quickness, only pure control. It's like saying in hind- sight after a verbal misunderstanding, "What I should have said was..." When we're quick, thought and action happen simultaneously.

7. Competition

A. Know the difference between healthy and unhealthy competition.

Healthy competition can help us learn more about ourselves – how far we can go, how we respond to pressure and where we need to improve. Unhealthy competitive attitudes used as a means to prove yourself to others or for self-motivation creates disharmony, and shows your insecurity. Should you feel a need to prove yourself in this way, check your ego. What are you trying to prove and why?

B. Measure yourself against your own standards and capabilities, not of others.

There will always be people with more talent, and there will always be people with less. Learn to accept your place with humility and grace, not smugness or jealousy. Witnessing talent greater than yours should inspire you to find your own path in life, not discourage you because you may not be able to follow that person's path. If you must inject competitive spirit in your training, channel it towards the opponent within.

8. Obsession

A. Do NOT think, breathe and live guitar 24 hrs. a day, 7 days a week!

Think, breathe, live and then play guitar. If all you know is the guitar to the exclusion of everything else around you, your playing will be empty. Relate your guitar playing to the world at large and vice versa. The golfer who only sees the tree as an obstacle, the sand only as a trap, and the water only as a hazard may indeed be a skilled technician, but will never reach the level of artistry. What you bring to your playing is the sum of what you are.

9. Mishandled Criticism

A. Learn how to take criticism in the same way you should give it.

If you must criticize at all, do so in the spirit of building up, NOT tearing down. When taking criticism, learn and benefit from that which is given in the spirit of building up, and ignore the criticism that attempts to tear you down; do not allow anything to pierce your armor. Remember, critics can be quick to find fault with anything, but empty when it comes to providing an alternative.

B. No matter what you do or how respected you are, you can't please everyone!

"I don't know the secret of success, but I do know that the secret of failure is trying to please everybody!" –Bill Cosby

C. Learn to recognize the different kinds of critics:

People whose criticism stems from a difference in taste...

Just because someone else's taste is different doesn't mean it's better.

Those who criticise in hindsight without knowing the whole story...

It's easy to play "Monday-morning Quarterback" and quite a different matter to be on the field facing the blitz.

Those whose criticism stems from ego...

Either to show how clever they are, or due to their own insecurity. Through cutting others they seek to make themselves look better.

D. Don't beat up on yourself.

Even if you think you know your flaws, there is no need to advertise them. Most people wouldn't have noticed anyway. Use your training to become your own best critic. Then, no one can tell you what you don't already know.

10. Failure To Adjust

A. Make the most out of a bad situation.

Some things are just out of our control – breaking a string, blowing a fuse, etc. How you react to the unexpected reveals your true spirit. Learn to fall like a cat – on your feet.

B. When things fall apart; make art!

If the power goes out on you during a gig in the middle of a song, lead the audience in a giant sing-along until power is restored. Sometimes we're lucky and sometimes we're not. Then again, luck can be a matter of attitude. It's all in how you look at the situation – is the glass half-empty, or half-full?

11. Loss Of Focus

A. You can't chase two rabbits at once.

Try to avoid distraction and stay on course. Whenever we lose our point of focus, we can usually blame either a lack of concentration or a lack of commitment.

B. Lack of concentration...

The Way of Zen Guitar is to fight the short attention span. An exercise that zen masters use to develop concentration is to sit quietly and count SLOWLY from one to ten. Should anything interrupt their count – a stray thought, hearing a noise, or even the sound of their own breathing – they must start over from one.

C. Lack of commitment...

Follow through on what you commit to do. If you commit to mastering a lick, then do NOT move on to something harder until you have done so. Tend to polishing your own path rather than looking for a better one to follow. When we look around to see what other people have and where they are going, we lose focus on what's important: What we have, and where we are going! Yes, there is more than one path to the top of the mountain, but the only one that will get you there is YOUR OWN. The farther you go on your own path, the more you will understand every other path, for at the end... they all converge.

12. Overthinking

A. The answer lies in action; not words.

Don't over-analyze things to death. Sometimes the best strategy is, "Ready, FIRE, aim." Go ahead and do it first – make adjustments later.

3. The Zen Guitar Dojo

http://www.maui.net/%7Ezen_gtr/

The Zen Guitar Dojo is the living vision of musician, author, composer and teacher

Philip Toshio Sudo. The Zen Guitar Dojo is a place to be.

Based on the spirit and principles of the Japanese dojo, it is a participatory community that seeks to elevate the human spirit through music. The Zen Guitar Dojo is a gathering place for artists who want to explore the possibilities of cyberspace under the umbrella of the Zen Guitar philosophy.

4. Zen and the Art of Guitar: A Path to Guitar Mastery (Book and CD) ...by Jeff Peretz

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0739028170/wwwkusalaorg-20/>

Editorial Reviews/Book Description ...Join performer and teacher Jeff Peretz on a musical journey that will open your mind and improve your guitar playing in ways you've never dreamed of. Using the practice of skill cultivation, one of the principles at the heart of Zen philosophy, you'll discover ways to develop your powers of concentration, "let go" as a player, and become a complete guitarist. Along the way, you'll learn about the history of Zen; the application of Zen to rhythm, melody, and harmony; and new ways of thinking about familiar musical elements. You'll find Zen and the Art of Guitar a musical learning experience unlike any you've ever encountered.

Amazon.com - Reviewer: from San Diego, CA USA ...The examples in this book work. By breaking down the study of the guitar into 3 main elements (rhythm, melody and harmony), Jeff Peretz has laid out one of the clearest methods of understanding how to improve your guitar playing. Each example has a well defined goal and a step by step process to get you there. The companion CD is great because it allows you hear what each example is supposed to sound like. Being someone who has practiced meditation for 15 years, I found the meditations in the book relevant and on the money. As I read through the history of Zen and played through the examples I couldn't help but wonder what took so long for a book like this to be written.

Amazon.com - Reviewer: from Boston MA, USA ...Not only is this book a great read but it also has some of the most inventive musical exercises I have come across. Unlike the book Zen Guitar (which I also recommend) this book is a real "how to" study in letting go and letting it all hang out. Non guitar players will love the way the Zen process is presented. Guitar players will find the exercises challenging yet accessible. It's about time that someone wrote a book about Zen and guitar playing for the musicstand and not just the coffee table. The breathing exercises and meditations are clearly explained, the history of Zen is brief but informative but the musical ideas are what makes this a must own guitar players and a cool book for anyone who interested in getting more out of whatever they do.

The Urban Dharma Newsletter Archives:

<http://www.urbandharma.org/nlarchives.html>

The Los Angeles Buddhist-Catholic Dialogue:

<http://www.urbandharma.org/bcdialog/index.html>

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