



"How to Take Refuge in Grand Master Lu"

There are two ways of taking refuge in Master Lu and becoming a disciple of the True Buddha Lineage:

1. By appointment

Make an appointment ahead of time to visit the True Buddha Tantric Quarter in Redmond, Washington, USA to receive direct initiation empowerment from Master Lu.

2. By writing

It is often not possible for someone who lives far away to come in person to take refuge. Those students who desire to take refuge can, on the first or fifteenth of any lunar month, at 7:00 a.m., while facing the direction of the rising sun, recite three times the Fourfold Refuge Mantra: "Namo guru bei, namo buddha ye, namo dharma ye, namo sangha ye" and prostrate three times.

On the first or fifteenth of every lunar month, at True Buddha Tantric Quarter, Master Lu performs a ceremony of "remote initiation empowerment" - to give empowerment to all the students who could not journey in person.

A student who takes refuge from a distance, after performing the rites at home, only needs to send a letter to the True Buddha Tantric Quarter stating that he/she is seeking refuge, together with his/her name, address, age, and a small fee for making offerings to the Buddhas. Upon receiving the letter, Master Lu will send a certificate, a picture of the master, and a note stating the level of practice he/she should start with.

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The Art Of Meditation

Preface

"Without cultivation, one remains a ghost."



The present writer is now 39 years old. I cannot say I am old, since I am not yet 60; I cannot say I am still young, for I am rapidly approaching 40. After another 40 years, I will be 80, which is commonly considered as a rare age. Come to think of it, the first half of my life is gone, after which my youth is going downhill with each passing day. The mere thought of this strikes fear into my heart.

Fortunately, when I was 26, by a miraculous chance, I came to know the causations and conditions of my previous lifetimes. Since then, I have been cultivating for 14 years, without relaxing my effort for a single day. Finally, I have realized the "External Eight Accomplishments", and will devote my remaining years to the cultivation of the "Eight Internal Accomplishments". I have confidence that I will attain my Buddhahood within the present lifetime. I have made a great vow of Bodhicitta to practice the Vajra-dharma. I am the

personal deity, realising Buddhahood in this lifetime--I have realized, and have experienced, all the necessary responses.

Now, in my eyes, the three thousand worlds appear to be as tiny as a little seed of grain. My original spirit can fill up the space in the ten directions, or contract to reside in a speck of sand. After full realization, the original spirit can leave from the crown of the head and fly to any Buddha lands and the ten Dharma-dhatu (Dharma realms). With the acquisition of the Divine Eye, I can see anything in the ten Dharma-dhatu. With the Divine Ear, I can hear, at any time, the teaching of Dharma. With Isvara (self-mastery and freedom), I am completely free to do anything without any obstructions. My original spirit can dive into water without being drowned, and dash into fire without being burnt. Now I can gate-crash the doorway of Hell, and transcend the law of Cause and Effect, no longer confined to the five forms of existence. When I reach Nirvana, there will certainly be miraculous phenomena appearing. I can now cure other people's illnesses, deliver sentient beings from misery, and practice any secret methods that have been considered impossible.

Since I have made the greatest Resolution of Bodhicitta, I naturally cherish a loving compassion for sentient beings. As the human birth is indeed difficult to come by, it is the greatest pity that one does not know the importance of cultivation with the human form. Once this human form is lost, you may not get it again in ten thousand celestial years! In addition, man's life is short and unpredictable--in a split of a second, a life may go off like a light. There have been countless people who died very young. Efforts in cultivation should start as promptly as putting out a fire.

In my view, sentient beings in the mundane world who are craving for high positions are just like maggots in a manure pit, rolling up and down, struggling to keep their heads above others'. These maggots die unenlightened! As these people are infatuated with positions, those who get it can never part with it; it is as if they are addicted to opium. Those who lose it are at the mercy of others like dead maggots. The loss and gain of social positions is no different from the rise and fall of the maggots. Why cling to such suffering? It is high time for them to cast aside ignorance and start cultivating.

There are also people who are crazy about wealth and profit. Putting money in the first place, they see nothing but coins--anything else is meaningless to them. With their business rapidly expanding, they are fully occupied day and night, without a moment to spare. Their life and energy are all thrown into fierce competition for profit, and as a result, they fall down to pieces, like the outer layers of bamboo shoots--till everything falls off and is buried. Among them, the successful ones achieve nothing except some luxury for their children and grandchildren. The unsuccessful ones get old before they know it! Afflictions fall upon them one after another, making their life very miserable indeed.

Even lower than these people are those who are bent on drinking, gambling and acting wrongly. Whatever they do or think is nothing but bad deeds, generating karmic hindrances. Not knowing about the terror of karmic retributions, they never stop doing bad deeds and they never start doing good deeds. Still worse, some people take pleasure in evil actions, such as killing, robbing, burning, raping and what not. The sufferings of sentient beings are increased, the methods of cultivation are

forsaken; there are no outcries against all this; no one teaches the correct way to cultivate.

Out of love and compassion for these sentient beings, I write these spiritual books to convert them. I have written forty-four (Note: At present time, this is over 114.) books explaining from the most preliminary to the most profound theories in Buddhism. This is the forty-fifth book about the true art of meditation. It is the essential method handed down by the lineage gurus, a secret way to attain Buddhahood. It contains all the celestial secrets and nature's mysteries. In this writing, I use a kind of language that makes the most profound truths intelligible to readers who will easily learn everything by heart. To realize my great wish to deliver sentient beings from misery, I explain the correct paths to the Truth in the hope that people with karmic affinity will get this book---they will practice everyday with instructions from erudite masters to arrive at an understanding of the right truths. If they practice sincerely the art of meditation, without pretence or falsehood, they will, in due time, attain realization, achieving the fruition of Buddhahood. They will arrive at the other shore to live in a realm of great bliss. This is my Great Resolution of Bodhicitta--to write spiritual books diligently for the salvation of sentient beings.

At present, though I practice at home, I am just like a monk. I live in the Ling-Xian Attic on the third floor of my house in Seattle, U.S.. I have enshrined an ancient bronze incense burner, and ancient mirror, a vajra bell and a vajra scepter. On the floor, there is a cushion. During my meditation sessions, with the Holy Red Crown on my head, and dressed in a kasaya, I recite the mantras, form the mudras, with incense

smoke circling above slowly and gently. On the table, the Chinese brushes, ink-stone and yellow rice paper are all spotlessly clean. In a calm state of mind, I feel as if I were in a fairy land.

In the attic I practice every day, chanting the sutras and sitting in meditation, never perplexed by mundane affairs nor troubled by anyone. After an incense burning session, I travel to the Heavenly Realms. When tired, I doze off for a few minutes; when refreshed, I ascend to the Heavenly states again. It is like what a verse describes; "Natural, unrestrained, and completely free, I feel like a personal deity clear and void. With incense burning, I view everything as empty. My original spirit embraces all Heavens and shines on the Truth as the sun and the moon."

Mr. Sanshan Jiuou (Mr. Three Mountains and Nine States, Grand Master Lu's spiritual teacher from the formless realm) once said, "Your god is your own original spirit, not the mind we use for thinking, nor the heart under the lungs. Spiritual powers are ability to evoke spirits and change into gods, the ability to embrace the Universe in one's spirit, and the ability to change into many forms with unpredictable powers. All enlightened masters know about this. Common people in the mundane world are never aware of it. Today Sheng-yen Lu writes about The Art of Meditation--it satisfies both Heavenly wishes and secular needs. His efforts are noble. A slander on him amounts to a slander on the Buddha, a sin which shall not be pardoned."

Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara (Kuan-Yin) came to tell me, "When I was teaching Maha Karuna Dharani a long time ago,

the Earth shook and showed six changed forms. Precious flowers rained gently all over the place. All Buddhas in the ten directions rejoiced and praised it. Demons and heretics were filled with terror. All those who joined in chanting the Sutra attained some fruition. Some became srotapannas (stream enterer-initial attainment), some sakrdagamins (once-returner--to return to this world once before gaining Buddhahood), some anagamins (never-returners) and some arhants. Some even became bodhisattvas of the first, second, third, or tenth ground. Numerous sentient beings made Resolutions of Bodhicitta. Today Sheng-yen Lu has written The Art of Meditation, which is similar to my Maha Karuna Dharani. Those who practice this method will be protected by all good gods who never leave the practitioner even for a second, including the Four Deva Kings, Devas, nagas, yaksas, asuras, garudas, gandharvas, kimnaras, mahoragas, kumarirupas. Besides, the God of the Soil, God of the Sea and Rivers, Gods of springs, of streams, of medicine, of forests, of horses, of water, of fire, of wind, of mountains, of earth, of palaces, etc. are all to give the cultivator protection."

Guru Padmasambhava, the first Patriarch of the Tibetan Tantrayana, told me, "In today's world, demons and evil spirits are lording it over. Nature's engineering is unpredictable, with untimely sunshine and rain, destructive winds and floods. Sacred Sutras are being burned to ashes; diseases and calamities are rampant, with wars fought here and there. If one does not know the correct Dharma, he or she is bound to fall into the bad states of rebirth (hell beings, hungry ghosts, and animals). Fortunately, Sheng-yen Lu has, in a timely manner, written these spiritual books teaching systematically the doorway to the Superb Tantrayana, from the most basic to the

most advanced. If someone practices wholeheartedly as The Art of Meditation describes, he will realize all forms of wisdom, arrive at meditative stabilization of purity, and understand the truths of the Universe, free from his karmic hindrances accumulated in the past thousand celestial years. If he can work out his original spirit, he will know all the truths about life and death, both in the past and in the future. He will then obtain all wisdoms denied to other people. Going further in his realization, he will acquire the fruition of Bodhisattva, see all the Buddhas and listen to their teachings, thus eliminating his karma since infinity."

Mr. Sanshan Jiuhou, Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara, and Guru Padmasambhava all appeared during my meditation, and left me the above instructions. I sincerely hope that those who get this book practice once a day unswervingly, and double their efforts as time goes on. They should by no means disappoint the Bodhisattvas who descended once again to deliver the sentient beings. This is great luck for all beings under the sun.

I tell my readers in sincerity that people with sharp intellect have not just practiced in one or two lifetimes, but in many lifetimes. People with Buddhist affinity tend to believe in Buddhism as soon as they hear the name of the Buddha-this is the result of cultivation in previous lifetimes. People without the affinity have not practiced previously, and tend to harbor certain doubts; but as long as they get closer to the Buddha every day and experience certain responses, they will naturally build their wisdom and arrive at the other shore as well. I hereby request my readers to cast away all attachment; keep your mind on the BuddhaDharma while living in the mundane world. If you can sit in meditation for one hour a day, you will

certainly be met by a golden lotus blossom when you pass away. You will certainly go to the Western Paradise. Isn't that wonderful!

May all sentient beings awaken to their True Nature!

Sheng-yen Lu

Ling-Xian Attic

Seattle, Wa. U.S.

June, 1983



The Art Of Meditation

Chapter One--Cultivation of the Mind

"The awakened Nature is innate in us, and can be realized by cultivation."

In most religious sects, such as Wen Xian-ming's Unification Religion, People's Church in the U.S., Lin Yun's Bon sect in Tantric Buddhism, or Brahmanism in India, they either practice heretical ways or go in for extreme leadership. Although they might be in vogue for a time, with numerous disciples, none of them advocate the cultivation of the mind. They are superficial and spread unchecked.

As regards, Islam and Christianity, there is some blind faith in one god; one is Allah and one is Jehovah. Their teachings are simple---as long as the believers do good, they all finally go to the Heavenly State. Such is the traditional belief among westerners and some people in Arabia. There is no cultivation of the mind. They only believe that there is a Heavenly State where they can finally go and remain eternally. When they pass away, the kind-hearted go to Heaven, while the evil souls go to Hell.

Confucianism, represented by Confucius, teaches etiquette as the ethical code. It does not encourage the cultivation of the mind either. It is still within the confines of distinguishing kind souls and evil souls.

Only Buddhism teaches people to become Buddhas by themselves; only Taoism teaches people to become gods by themselves. In this case, Buddhahood and god-hood is attained by one's own efforts to cultivate one's mind, not sent by a God high above the believers,

who are his children. If you practice Buddhism or Taoism, you can cultivate yourselves to become Buddhas or gods and gain complete freedom and self-mastery, which is "Realization". The mind-cultivating method is the ultimate superior Dharma. I call this Dharma of cultivation for Enlightenment upon firm ground, *The Art of Meditation or Meditation for Luminosity*.

The Pure Land in Buddhism has the adornment of the Seven Treasures (gold, silver, lapis lazuli, crystal, agate, rubies and carnelian); the Fairy Land in Taoism has jade cities and red palaces with thriving trailing plants and doorsteps broad and high. These pure lands and jade cities do exist, not only in Buddha lands, but also in every individual--it is the "Ling Tai" for Buddhists, and "Huang Ting" for Taoists. This place is on your face--the central point between the eyebrows, but slightly above the eyebrows. This central point is called "Heavenly Heart". If it emits golden-colored light, it means that the individual has achieved Enlightenment. (Those who are trained in observation of light would focus their attention to the light emitting from here.) If gold light is emitted, the person is a realized monk. If there appears red light, the person is a sage. Grey light foretells misfortune or bad luck. Black light predicts great tragedy or evil. If the light from the central point is focused, it means you have gotten the Truth. If you have the lights of the Buddha wisdom concentrated there, you become a Buddha by nature. If the light is not focussed but scattered, it is difficult to tell whether you will become a Buddha or a celestial. When the light is not focussed, your spirit is not concentrated, and cannot be its own master yet. Without self-mastery, you are still tied to the cyclic rebirths--which means that you have not realized and are far away from sublimity.

"Merging your own heart with the Universe Heart" simply means making your own "brow-point" conform to the Universe Heart. At the superficial level, this is to follow the Five Precepts and Ten

Virtues. The Christian and Catholic teachings encouraging people to do good are, in fact, teaching people to behave as required by the Universe Heart. This is the least that humans should do. When they fail to do so, they lose their human form and fall to the category of animals.

The cultivation of the Heavenly Heart, however, is not that simple. It is cultivation of one's nature, which goes right into the ego. It is genuine cultivation to "awaken to the One Mind, and see one's Original Nature under the lineage guru." We know that the light spot that concentrates at the brow-point is the celestial root of the Buddha Child. It resembles the Emperor-seated on his throne, with ministers and generals standing by on both sides, ready to take orders from their Emperor, never to go against him. This spot of light I am advising you to cultivate is that of which the Surangama Sutra says, "*Purified thinking is sure to ascend to Heaven.*"

Having read these lines, intelligent readers would know that what I am writing is the truth. *The Art of Meditation* relies on this spot of light to attain Buddhahood. This spot is not to be confused with the spot the Xian Tian Sect (in Taiwan) talks about, but a spot of light that gathers from meditation. So the light settles on the eyebrows center, but its force of concentration comes from meditation. It is also "Illumination of Quietitude". This method is the Heart Mudra--both natural and cultivated, since it is our original nature and original spirit which cannot be seen. People who practice this method must be most intelligent, and most calm and quiet.

Work all the spiritual light upwards to gather together at the brow-point to form one spot. The only secret is : visualize the Heavenly Heart of the Sun and the Moon.

The gold light at the central point is your true self. When your Heavenly Heart merges with that of the Universe, you become a Buddha. This present writer knows clearly that most sentient beings in the mundane world would mistake "the smelly skin bag"

for themselves. In fact, this "skin bag" is some false combination of various things on Earth; when the time comes, it returns to Earth. The real master is your soul, which in one realm of transmigration becomes a human, and in the next realm a pig, or a snake (that everyone is afraid of), or a bird, for all I know. This cyclic transmigration goes on and on, but never beyond the Six Realms of Existence. Therefore, I want my readers to know clearly that the form of our human body is temporary and illusory, and that we are living in a mundane world as ordinary men. We must see through this "smelly skin bag" and start cultivating now, so as to discover our true essence inside it.

Once the Six Harmonies are brought into one united whole, the Heavenly Heart will emit light, and your Original Nature will appear; which is your true ego. Your true nature is Buddha; your true nature is god. Don't be blinded by the Six Senses, the six objects of Sensation, or the Eight Consciousnesses, so as to forget your Original Nature.

I have a picture of myself in which my forehead is surrounded by some strong gold light, radiating quite some distance from the center. This picture was taken by Dr. Xia Yong-han from New York. You don't usually see such light, but it can occur when I suddenly concentrated for the camera. Your true ego reveals itself by rays of golden light radiating from the central point when you stare at the Void, hearing nothing, smelling nothing, tasting nothing, touching nothing, thinking no unhealthy thoughts, making no distinctions, with neither love nor hatred, with nothing to possess or abandon, treating all as equals.

Today is the latter period for the Dharma. Many strange religious sects are raising their heads, even among Christianity and Catholicism. These new sects have very irrational doctrines. There are also many collateral branches in Buddhism and Taoism. Some people indulge in empty talk about Buddhist doctrines, but have

achieved no realization in practice. They shout themselves hoarse, but to no avail. The Bon Sect in Tibet is such a group. The strange thing is that there are even people who support and advocate it, trying to turn backwards the Wheel of the Dharma—a disgrace to the cultivation of the mind in Tantrayana. The true doctrines of Buddhism have been gradually forgotten. Many masters are no longer aware of the "art of meditation", or the essence of Buddhist and Taoist doctrines. Some masters now specialize in delivering the souls of the deceased by chanting sutras, letting off fire crackers or singing like actors or singers. Monks are doing even worse; they are now professionals in taking part in funeral processions, seeing the coffin to the top of a mountain amidst drums and gongs. It is a great tragedy that Buddhism and Taoism, which are paths leading to Buddhahood or godhood, should have deteriorated to such a state!

There are people who have great affinity with Buddhism and Taoism and who search for true ways of cultivating, but they find not a practice site nor a correct method of cultivation of the mind or true nature. Temples and monasteries built for tourist purposes are getting bigger and bigger, but with few pious monks in them. Real practitioners have no say in these temples; things are drifting along with the Karmic wheel. Isn't that a shame!

Just at this time, the present writer intends to lay bare, unconditionally, the Heavenly Heart Method for the Illumination of Meditation, so that the correct doctrines come back to the world again, for the deliverance of sentient beings. This is like the emission of true Dharma light when Buddhism is waning. The illumination contains the essential teachings of Meditation, highlights of Tantrayana, and the greatest achievement of the Pure Land. The method takes the Land of Eternal, Tranquil Light as the final refuge, and attaches great importance to practice rather than empty talks on a theory. I do not make empty promises--whoever

practices it, be it a thousand or ten thousand, will all go to the Land of Eternal, Tranquil Light.

Remember: *Our Heavenly Heart should merge with the Heavenly Heart of the Universe.*"

When all the lights from the body condense at the Heavenly Heart (brow-point), that spot is our Original Nature. The awakened Nature is innate in us, and can be realized by cultivation. Empty talk brings no benefit. Don't miss this opportunity. I hereby issue this appeal to my dear readers!

*...from **The Art of Meditation** by Grand Master Sheng-yen Lu*

Translated and published by Lei Zang Si (Singapore), No.224 Rochor Rd.,
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The Art of Meditation

Chapter 2--Removal of Karmic Hindrances and the Four Preliminaries



"The four preliminaries are, in fact, the foundation of any school in Tantrayana."



The four preparatory practices will be discussed one by one:

I. The Fourfold Refuge

In your practice every day, first of all, visualize the look of your guru; also visualize the character "Om" appearing on your head and emitting white light shining upon it, the character "Ah" appearing at the throat and emitting red light shining upon the throat area, and

the character "Hum" appearing at the heart region and emitting blue light upon it.



Then recite : "Namo the Holy Red Crown Vajra Guru Lian Sheng" three times, with palms held together.

Recite the Fourfold Refuge mantra: "Namo Guru bei, Namo Buddha ye, Namo Dharma ye, Namo Sangha ye." You can recite this as many times as you like.

At the same time, visualize your guru or the Triple Jewels transmitting five-colored light shining upon your body, your own negative karma being expelled from your body as black smoke.



Recite the Bodhicitta mantra three times:

"From this point on, your student takes refuge in the Guru and the Three Jewels, right up unto Enlightenment, never to return. All good deeds, large or small, shall be retributed to all sentient beings,

so that we attain Buddhahood quickly."

For reinforcement, recite Master Padmasambhava's mantra:

"Om-ah-hum, be-dza gu-ru, peh-ma, sih-dee, hum seh." (a thousand times)

For reinforcement, recite Bodhisattva Kuan Yin's Heart mantra:

"Om, ma-nee pad-mee hum." (a thousand times)

For reinforcement, also recite the Green Tara mantra:

"Om da-le, du-da-le du-le, so ha "(a thousand times)

Verse of Transference of Merit:

*"Reinforced by Master Lien-Shen, with the Triple Jewels'
illuminosity to expel my karmic hindrance, all sentient beings and I
attain Buddhahood together and go to the Western Land of Great
Bliss."*

Then prostrate and retire.

II. The Great Mandala Offering

To remove your karmic hindrances, you need to make offerings to your Root Guru, to the Triple Jewels, and to the vajra protectors. This must be done because making offerings has the effect of reinforcing your achievement. The Great Mandala Offering, in particular, will please the Heaven above, the Earth below, the Four Continents of Sumeru, the Sun and the Moon. It is extremely effective.

What you offer are some grains of rice. Use five grains of rice to represent the Eastern, the Southern, the Western, the Northern and

the Central Mount Sumeru. First, put the five grains in the center of your palm, and form the Offering Mudra. Interlace your fingers (with hands back to back) so that the palms face upwards. Hook the index finger of the left hand over the middle finger of the right. Hook the index finger of the right hand over the middle finger of the left. Hook the thumb of the right hand over the little finger of the left. Hook the thumb of the left hand over the little finger of the right. Place your ring fingers vertically, back to back



Chant the Offering Mantra:

*"Om, sa-er-wa. da-ta-ga-da. ee-da-mook, gu-ru la-na, man-cha-la,
kan,nee-lee-ye,da-ye-mee.*

"

Raise the Mudra up to touch your forehead, and release the mudra. Put the rice grains in the right hand, and form the mudra again to touch your forehead. Toss the rice grains to complete the procedure.

III. The Great Homage

The Great Homage is the prostration ceremony to worship the Buddha. We should know that a pious prostration before the Buddha is enough to expel karmic hindrances; one thought of respect and reverence to the Buddha is a good act. When all this is

done with solemn rites, it is the Great Homage all cultivators must know.



Pay attention to how to hold your palms together. Use the Buddha Mudra for worshipping the Buddha. Join your palms together, fingers pointing up and brought together, but leaving a slight empty space between the palms.



In worshipping Bodhisattvas, use the Lotus Mudra---join your palms together with the fingers pointing up; then open the palms so that only the bases of the palms meet; the other fingers are spread out like an opened lotus.



Vajra Mudra

In paying homage to the Vajra Protectors, use the Vajra Handclasp Mudra-- Join your palms together, fingers pointing up. Spread out the fingers of each hand just enough to interlace the fingers, like a Vajra scepter.

So the palms are held in different ways in paying homage to different deities.

Visualization in paying homage to the Buddhas is also important. First, bring your palms to the crown of your head, visualizing white light entering your forehead. Then touch your throat chakra and visualize red light entering your throat. Touch your heart chakra, and visualize blue light entering your heart. Then, with some force, push your arms forward horizontally, and prostrate, touch the ground with your head and stand up. Form the mudras again and visualize as above, and then prostrate again. (editor's note: one prostration for each-Buddha, Bodhisattva, Vajra Protectors, using the respective mudras. End with Equanimity Mudra and a half bow) So much for the Great Homage.



Equanimity Mudra

IV. The Vajra-hearted Bodhisattva Method

This method has the most inconceivable power, which can expel the gravest negative karma since time immemorial and make your resolution to cultivate as strong as diamond. Success in following this method is tantamount to empowerment. Some masters specialized in the Vajra-hearted Bodhisattva Method, and attained fruition of Bodhisattva in a lifetime. This is the most important of the Four Preliminaries.

Join your palms together and recite:

"Namo Holy Red Crown Vajra Master Lian-shen." (three times)

Recite the Four-fold Refuge Mantra:

"Namo Guru bei, Namo Buddha ye, Namo Dharma ye, Namo Sangha ye."

Recite the verse for the Four Divine States of Mind (The Four Immeasurable Vows):

*"May all sentient beings have full happiness and causes for happiness. My loving kindness for them is boundless.
May all sentient beings leave their sufferings and causes of sufferings. My compassion for them is boundless.
May all sentient beings enjoy eternal happiness without suffering. My sympathetic joy for them is boundless.
May all sentient beings abandon love and hatred, and cherish equality. My equanimity for that is boundless."*

Recite the mantra to develop the Bodhicitta:

"Om, Bodhicitta, bie-dza, sa-ma-ya-, ah-hum."

Recite the Repentance Verse:

"All the bad karma I have committed in the past are due to my

greed, anger and ignorance. All that have been committed by my body, speech and mind, I now fully repent. Om, bie-dza, sa-ma-ya, su-dee-ya."

Use the Great Compassion Mantra Water or the Vajra Nectar (Kundalini Mantra Water) to sprinkle all over the practice site.



Visualize the Dharma body of the Vajra-hearted Bodhisattva, dressed in white, with a five-Buddha crown, in layers of skirts, precious ornaments from head to toe, seated in a moon shaped eight-petal lotus blossom. The right hand, in the Fiery Mudra, holds a Vajra sceptre to the heart chakra, while the left, also in the Fiery Mudra, holds a vajra bell to the left leg. At the heart chakra, around the eight-petal lotus, the wheel of the hundred-syllable revolves. The mantra wheel radiates white light, entering the practitioner's whole body. His heart will then radiate strong white light, which disperses all negative karma and unwholesome thoughts.

Recite the Hundred-syllable Mantra:

"Om, be-dza sah-do sa-ma-ya, ma-nu bah-la-ya, be-dza sah-do deh-lu-pah-deh-cha, zhe-jo mi bah-wa, soo-do ka-yu mi bah-wa, soo-poo-ka-yu mi bah-wa, an-nu-la-do mi bah-wa, sa-er-wa sid-di mi bu-la-ya-cha, sa-er-wa ka-er-ma soo-cha mi, ji-da-moo see-li-ren, gu-ru hum, ha ha ha ha hoh, bah-ga-wan, sa-er-wa da-ta-ga-ta, be-dze ma-mee mun-cha, be-ji ba-wa, ma-ha sa-ma-ya sah-do ah, hum, pei."

If you persist in practicing this method, the Vajra-hearted Bodhisattva will come and visit you, protect you and empower you to cleanse all your karmic hindrances, devils' hindrances and illnesses. Once free from negative karma, you feel fresh and relieved. The Bodhisattva enters you from your crown and merges with you. This is a sure path, leading to Buddhahood in this lifetime.



...from The Art of Meditation by Grand Master Sheng-yen Lu

Translated and published by Lei Zang Si (Singapore), No.224 Rochor Rd., Singapore 188447

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The Art Of Meditation

Chapter Three: The Struggle Between True Nature and Consciousness

The Zhan (meditation, or Zen) school in Buddhism stresses "the direct cultivation of the Mind and seeing your own original nature to attain Buddhahood". The most important thing in this doctrine is "to see one's original nature". At the very beginning, when Buddha Shakyamuni held a flower and smiled, Buddha Kasyapa became enlightened. Later, the doctrines passed on to Ananda. By the time of the 28th Patriarch in India, Buddhidharma was selected, who came to China and established the Zhan (or Mystic School), and he became the first Patriarch in China. Among the six patriarchs of the Zhan sect, the last patriarch, Hui Neng, was very noted for his development of the doctrines. The Zhan sect reached its heyday during the Tang dynasty, with Master Ma Zu at the head, who advocated "seeing one's original nature to attain Buddhahood". By the last years of the Song Dynasty, the Zhan Sect developed into a practice of studying enigmatic phrases as advocated by Master Gao Feng. (There is usually one enigmatic phrase in a mystic question, to which the answer is not based on logic or inference, but on some enlightened wisdom.) Gradually, the doctrine of "seeing one's original nature" was changed into "written Zhan" or "verbal Zhan", indicating a sharp decline of the Zhan sect. The studying of enigmatic phrases was splendid (for example, there are 1700 so-called "public cases" published in which witty but mystical dialogues are recorded for teaching purposes.), but the

true meaning of the enigmatic phrases is beyond ordinary people. To make your own nature appear, you have to understand the doctrine and engage in actual practice. It should be remembered that our True Nature is our Original Nature that transcends the actual form. The true nature we are talking about now resides at the Heavenly Heart (the brow-point); it is our "true face" which remains at the eye-brow chakra when the soul enters a rebirth. The spirit of consciousness resides in the heart down below, that is, the heart of flesh and blood, covered by the lungs. The spirit of consciousness is also called the "heart of dust". (Dust here refers to objects of the sense organs, which cause evil passions to arise in the heart and afflict it.), or it changes alongside the changes in our consciousness, such as unhealthy thinking, unwholesome ideas, the seven feelings and the six desires, stubborn views, or one-sided insight. It panics when taken aback, gets angry when slandered, saddens upon hearing some beloved one has passed away, and becomes intoxicated with beautiful women. These are the functions of the spirit of consciousness.

This writer often says that there is a suitable metaphor about the relationship between our true nature and the spirit of consciousness. The two are like two gods-the true nature is a good god, a Buddha, while the latter is a Mara, a devilish god. They are in a constant struggle for superiority. If the spirit of consciousness gets the upper hand, it would bully the True Nature and incite it to act with murderous intent, stopping at nothing. Such a person's True Nature is muddle-headed, whose light cannot focus at the Heavenly Heart. The person will definitely go to Hell in the nether world.

For people who practice meditation or concentration, their True Nature will reveal itself and stay at the Heavenly Heart, whose light will conquer the spirit of consciousness. The True Nature usually appears during concentrated mediation, with a strong beam

of light to control the spirit of consciousness. This light focuses at one point, and has spiritual powers and self-mastery, making everything ready for Buddhahood. This "art of meditation" has remained secret for thousands of years.

I always feel that, in this world, human beings are very much like mayflies, with an extremely short life to live. If they crave for pleasure, enjoy themselves to their hearts' content in the morning, but pass away in the evening, then life is indeed as empty as a bubble. Without their true nature ever appearing, they go on and on in the cycle of the six forms of existence, with countless rebirths and deaths, deteriorating with the passage of time. This is why I often advise people to practice. Without practicing, you have only a very short life to enjoy, as a mayfly does, rendering life insignificant or meaningless.

Today, I want to point out this following in particular:

The Heavenly Heart is the Land of Mind. The Land of Mind is the Pure Land. The Pure Land is the Land of Buddhas, where our True Nature resides.

The True Nature is the Spiritual Light, which is innate Qi (chi, or vital energy), which, in turn, is Tantric method, where Luminosity (enlightenment) resides.

The Inner Alchemy in Taoism-"taking the spiritual light for its use", takes "the Pure Land as its Refuge", and takes "the semen" as its basis. To put this in more detailed terms, the spirit relies on the spiritual light at the Heavenly Heart while the soul relies on the spirit of consciousness at the bodily heart. We have to cultivate the spirit to sustain the spiritual light, so as to conquer the soul and cut off consciousness. In ancient times, the secret method for Taoist

cultivation was to use the spirit to subdue the soul. In other words, use the True Nature to subjugate consciousness. In this sense, Buddhism and Taoism are closely connected to each other. I would like to point out the following in particular:

The Land of Mind Taoists cultivation is the method of the Pure Land Sect in Buddhism.

The Spiritual Light Taoists cultivation is the method of the Tantric Sect in Buddhism.

The Breathing Practice Taoists cultivate is the method of the Zhan sect in Buddhism. (Breathing is, in fact, the True Nature.)

For Taoists to retain the semen is like Buddhists following the precepts. With abundant semen, the spiritual light can focus, both the Land of Mind and the Pure Land will be solidified. In Taoism, this is called "the crystalization into a saint"; in Buddhism, it is "rebirth into the Pure Land" or "attainment of Buddhahood in the present life". In my own meditation, I can quickly make the spirit light concentrate at one point. This ability comes from long-time practice.

It is like a hen sitting on her eggs-the mild heat accumulates until the chicks break the eggshell to see the world. I tell my readers with great sincerity that if you practice meditation for a lengthy period of time, the mild heat will accumulate and the True Nature will show itself. This is not a question of belief or doubt, rather a question of whether you practice it or not. The appearance of the True Nature is like the little chicks breaking the eggshell to put out their heads. When Taoists realize the Way, they see the True Nature.

How is it that the spirit and the soul are respectively attached to the

True Nature and Consciousness? Let me explain as follows:
The spirit is Yang (positive, male, light), a gust of clear and light air, residing with the True Nature. The soul is Yin (negative, female, dark), a gust of foul, devilish air, residing with consciousness. If the spirit is strong, you go to Heaven to be a Buddha. When the soul wins over, you go to Hell to be a ghost. Taoists practice hard in order to exhaust the Yin, the soul. When the Yin soul is depleted, only "Pure Yang" remains. Patriarch Lin Dongbin (Northern Song Dynasty) achieved "pure yang" by this practice and became a celestial being.

I once visited some lineage master of Buddhism.

The master said, "You are a Mara of the heart."

A believer in Yi Kuan Tao criticized me, "You are a trying Mara."

Some lay men pointed at my nose, saying, "Superstition!"

Some jealous people shouted at me, "You spread fallacies to deceive people!"

However, how would they know the truth; there are not many people in the world who know these facts, and I am one of those in the know and the most real one at that. Facing a thousand accusing fingers I secretly practiced and practiced. Following the Pure Land teachings, I chanted Amitabha without interruption, and practiced without distracting thought, for a rebirth in the Buddha lands. Following the visualization method in Tantric Buddhism, I used the spiritual light to conduct an empowerment. Following the Zhan sect, I cultivated for the revelation of the True Nature and got to

understand all the Buddhist teachings, with nothing left unknown.
I take all things I saw in meditations as incarnations of things;
knowing all, I was neither moved nor joyous.

Once I met a handsome, spiritual child, standing before me with a lotus in his hand. Holding the lotus, he was standing on a lotus seat, dressed in celestial clothes, with a Holy crown on his head.

"Where did you come from, lotus child?", I asked.

"From the Maha Twin Lotus Ponds."

"It's a long way from the Western World. What have you come here for?"

"To deliver the sentient beings."

"What if they don't see your point?"

"All depends on their causations and conditions; at least one or two of them may have such conditions."

The child was not angry. He then jumped up and entered my crown, nowhere to be seen.

Thinking it over, I finally understood that I came from the Maha Twin Lotus Ponds, in the rebirth of a lotus child. That good-looking lotus child is no one but my True Nature. In this way, the True Nature is me; I am the True Nature. The Buddha is me; I am the Buddha!

That session of meditation gave me profound revelation. The lotus child came to this world to deliver the living beings, to set up the Ling Xian Sect to recruit all sentient beings, both the intelligent and the dull, who have the necessary conditions and causations to

study Buddhism and get to the other shore. Those whose karmic conditions are not very favorable can come and go as they like. Salvage one if only one can be saved; salvage two if two can be saved, all depending on karmic conditions.

In my previous life, over my head was a white umbrella covering auspicious clouds, with great-mirror luminosity, and I was wearing a red crown with strings of pearls and precious stones, holding a great Wisdom Seal in my right hand, a blooming Lotus Seal in my left hand, a white lotus flower between the thumb and middle finger, a string of prayer beads hanging upon my chest, ornamental pearls, jade, gems and other precious stones all over the body. I was covered by a luminous celestial cloak, standing on a white lotus, the whole body radiating strong light, majestic looking from head to toe.

This fact told me that I have made up my mind that I have nothing else to desire except salvaging the sentient beings. I am indifferent to worldly things. My life is one of cultivation and salvation of living beings.

*...from **The Art of Meditation** by Grand Master Sheng-yen Lu*

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TBSN Ebooks

The Art Of Meditation

Chapter Four...Visualization



"I often think that the life of a human is a drop of the True Nature, and that the light in the Universe fills up the six directions.--Master Sheng-yen Lu"



During my meditation, I usually first visualize my whole body as transparent, as luminous as colored glaze. Our body has three channels of blood; the middle, the left and the right, all straight and parallel, clearly visible. The middle channel is shaped like a loudspeaker, large at the top leading to the brain, and tapering off at the bottom. The left and right channels go to the head side by side with the middle channel, and then turn back to the nostrils.

Sitting in meditation, keep your mouth shut. Press the left nostril with the ring finger of the left hand, and breathe through the right nostril. Visualize that the luminosity of all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas fills up the whole Void, and that you are breathing in the luminosity through the right nostril. When breathing is sufficient, press the right nostril with your right hand. This time, the luminosity travels through the right channel to the place below the navel, and then enters the left channel, goes upward, and goes out through the left nostril.

All the karmic hindrances and black chi (prana) and all the devil's hindrances are washed away by the luminosity in the right channel,

and are expelled through the left nostril. (editor's note: This practice was later formalized by Grand Master Lu as the [Nine Round Breath Technique](#), and is used by True Buddha cultivators as a prelude to meditation)

Perform the practice three times; take in the luminosity from the right nostril, and expel the black chi through the left nostril. Then, press the right nostril with the ring finger of the right hand so as to let in the luminosity through the left nostril, which goes to the right channel to drive the karmic hindrances out through the right nostril. Now press the left nostril with the ring finger of the left hand, and follow the same procedure, but for different directions--take in the luminosity through the right, and let out the black smoke through the left. Perform this practice three times.

Finally, form the "meditation mudra". In a meditating position, put the two hands on your lap, with the left hand on the right hand and the two thumbs touching. Visualize the two nostrils, and inhale the luminosity. The breath enters the right and left channels(simultaneously), and the two merge below the navel chakra and enter the middle channel. When they get to the top of the crown, they are blocked and go back to the navel area. Then they ascend along the original channels until the black smoke exits through both nostrils. Also perform this practice three times.

The present writer knows that this practice is the initial training for meditation. It is a training for inhaling the light and exhaling the dark. The light from the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas pour into the body while the dark smoke of karmic hindrances are driven out of the body. Honestly, if you practice this and get to know all about the ins and outs, all your capillaries will emit light, because the light of all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas has entered your body, and

the black smoke inside has been eradicated. This spiritual power can wash clean all afflictions, ignorance, desire and other sins. Naturally, the fruition of Buddhahood will be achieved.

In addition, there are four visualizations:

1. Visualize the Root Guru appearing in the space before and above you, who sends down a beam of light to cover you up, so that you can sit still without fear.
2. Visualize the Root Guru moving onto your crown chakra, emitting strong light. Nectar from the light empowers you to fill up your body and eradicate all sins and hindrances. Black smoke exits from all capillaries, and then you feel relieved and peaceful, with great freedom.
3. Visualize the Root Guru turning into a drop of light about the size of a grain of rice. The light enters your body through the crown chakra to the moon disk lotus seat. Now the Root Guru is on the lotus seat above your heart.
4. Visualize the Root Guru growing bigger and bigger to the same size as you, so that you and the Root Guru become one. At this stage, you are the Root Guru, and the Root Guru is you. When the two become one, there is no more difference between your achievement and that of the Root Guru.

During each visualization, you must recite the Root Guru's Heart Mantra a hundred and eight times. This is the supreme method of visualization that all enlightened people practised; it is also the supreme method by which all Buddhas, out of kindness and compassion, radiate various types of light to embrace the sentient beings. It is an inconceivable method to attain Buddhahood and to subdue devils and eradicate karmic hindrances. It is the most solemn and secretive. Today I disclose this great method without

the slightest reservation. This is a great event in the human world, and a great event for the Ling Xian School.

In fact, this Tantric visualization is no different from the "refined thinking" in Taoism. In what follows, I will explain why this is so.

Light comes from the same wind (prana) from Heaven and Earth, Yin and Yang. This wind exists both in an individual and in the air. In either visualization or refined thinking, there is no response at the initial stage--it seems there are responses, but it also seems that there are not. However, in any event, if you persist in practicing for a hundred days, a light drop seems to suddenly appear from the Earth. This little light drop is the result of a hundred day's training. With this light drop, there will be some response. If one does not persevere in his practice, visualization will come to no avail.

Other people tend to think that, in our meditation, one breath lasts only one tenth of a second, but I think that one breath lasts as long as a hundred years. We should know that ordinary people's breathing is indeed very brief, but breathing in meditation lays the foundation for ten thousand years and stops you from falling into the cycle of thousands of births and deaths. Isn't that breathing long lasting? Ordinary people's breathing is emotion-based, and the Yang prana goes away with each passing day. After decline and death, what awaits them is the nether world and the cycle of the six realms of existence, with thousands of births and deaths. The practitioners' breathing is the Yang prana leading to the luminosity, never to decline or exhaust. This spirit and energy all concentrate at the crown chakra, which makes it easy for them to live long or to ascend to Heaven.

I often think that the life of a human is a drop of the True Nature, and that the light in the Universe fills up the six directions. We can

use this light drop in our meditation day after day---this will be inconceivable achievement of luminosity. Our practice should not cease even for a single day--any interruption in practice will result in the decline of the light. One can practice from the simple to the complex, moving from a crude manner to a more elaborate fashion, but never in an "off and on" style, let alone stopping altogether. Persist until all your body radiates strong light and your True Nature takes refuge in the Ocean of Truth. That is the final realization.

In my meditation, Master Padmasambhava told me that the meditation posture should be like that of Buddha, majestic and dignified. The back of the seat should be slightly raised so that the breathing is even and smooth. It is best to sit in the Full Lotus Position; if that proves difficult the Free Position will also do. The Meditation Mudra is preferred, although you can also form the Root Guru Mudra, if you are following his teachings. The two shoulders should be straight and on the same height. Remember that it is best to breathe evenly and gently; heavy breathing or gasping are not good. Keep your eyes on the tip of your nose, with the upper eye lashes fallen, or keep looking straight ahead without too much effort. Keep the tongue raised to the hard palate. This is standard posture for meditation.

The first problem that a beginning practitioner has is unceasing distracting thoughts. This is only normal. Beginners should not be afraid of distracting thoughts; whenever they rise, it is best to ignore them. If you have to deal with them, just trace their source and stop them where they rise. First stop the distracting thoughts and use visualization to prevent their continuing flow. This is what we call *"stopping evil thoughts and meditating on the truth"* in Buddhism, or *"tranquility and wisdom"*. With tranquility, you can

stop evil thoughts; with wisdom, you will emit light.

The meditation for luminosity is a great method leading to Buddhahood and godhood. All sages praise it. Sakyamuni says, *Meditate on one's mind and attain realization*".

Lao Zi, the sage of Morality, says, *"Inner visualization results in light."*

Master Padmasambhava says, *"Enlightenment goes with emancipation."*

Some people say that this light is neither inside our bodies nor outside, but pervades the thousands of worlds. I say that the light is both inside and outside and pervades both Heaven and Earth. When your light radiates in meditation, the light in the Universe will radiate in response to your light!

What is ridiculously childish is that some self-styled monks who have not realized this in their practice—who have never sitten in meditation, not do they know much about it, nevertheless ask people to believe in them. We can ask: *"What is there to believe in? What is the difference between such belief and Christianity or Catholicism? What is the use of it?"*

...from ***The Art of Meditation*** by Grand Master Sheng-yen Lu
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The Art Of Meditation

Chapter Five: The Active Original Spirit

Many people have asked me: "What is invocation?" "What is the relationship between invocation and meditation?" I offer the following explanation:

At first, my change from a believer in Christianity to Buddhism started with "the invocation of spirits". I had never formally practiced invocation, but when I knelt down the first time, I felt a movement of the spirits; in the twinkling of an eye, I received responses and understood what it was all about.

Spiritual invocation is a body-training method of the Taoist Dan Ding Sect, headed by the Golden Mother of the Yaochi Pond. The Golden Mother was one of the Five Reverends in Taoism which include: Mr. Dung Hua-di in the East (God of Wood), the Golden Mother of the Yaochi Pond in the West, the God of Fire in the South, the God of Water in the North, and Huang Lao in the Center. The Golden Mother of the Yaochi Pond was instructed by Mr. Dung Hua-di, who learned it from the eminent priest, Xuan Xuan. At first, the Golden Mother was teaching the body-training in Hua Lian; that was the beginning of invocation. As soon as I learned it, I begged instructions from her, who gave me the permission to spread it so that every practitioner, on account of their first invocation, attains some initial responses. In this way, many people will be shown into the Dharma gate for the Ling Xian Sect. (True Buddha School). So this body-training method is very popular at the moment. Many temples and monasteries practice it to encourage the first awakening of aspiration for Bodhi.

The present writer is aware that, because many people did see gods and ghosts during invocation sessions, they abandoned all attachments in the mundane world, and made up their minds to

leave home for spiritual cultivation. The method is still widely used only for the first awakening of aspiration for Bodhi at the elementary stage.

The "movement" during invocation is caused by the "air stream".

The "air stream" whirls around the practitioner, causing him to shake or jerk. In a session for spiritual movement, one sits patiently with his eyes fixed on the tip of the nose, hands on the chest, while chanting the name of "Golden Mother of the Yaochi Pond". If the mind can slowly and gently go into tranquility, after some time, an outside force will suddenly enter the body. (When the air stream of the gods goes into the practitioner's body, his own power and the outside power become one, making the original spirit active. At this point, the air stream appears to cause his body to move, resulting in "spiritual movement".)

As far as I know, "spiritual motion" has the following advantages: First, the body-training method was originally designed to keep one healthy and strong. Some people are too weak or suffer from chronic diseases. The "spiritual motion" from invocation sessions sets the body to exercising, thus curing the disease. This exercise is still used today, which is called "external cinnabar" method. (Cinnabar is what Taoists use in preparing Chinese medicine.) The "external cinnabar method" became a popular practice after the invocation of spirits was introduced.

Second, invocation of spirits can help you to overcome "daze and distraction". "Daze and distraction" can be a serious hindrance in meditation. Distraction means too many distracting thoughts that flash across your mind. Daze comes from the fact that your original spirit is not active, clean or clear because it is insensitive and apathetic. Generally, when the original spirit is befuddled, it is because the "Pure Yin" dominates. If you feel sleepy in your meditation, it is a state of daze; when this happens, your breathing is not real meditative breathing, but that of ordinary people. So if you

are in a state of "daze and distraction", it is better to invoke the spirits to wake you up. In this, "external cinnabar" comes before "internal cinnabar", since invocation of spirits can cure your "daze and distraction".

Thirdly, during invocation, if you carefully analyze the frequency of the responses, you can attain spiritual powers. This is to discover, by careful distinction, how frequently the air stream goes into your body. When "your own thinking" unites with the "god's thinking", you can get "knowledge of the most delicate". That is, when the Universe and man become one, he knows all about the past and the future.

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The Art Of Meditation

Chapter 6 Workings of the Five Aggregates

"Meditation for Universal Luminosity" is about Tantric teachings and a purified version of the Zhan Doctrines. However, knowledge of the correct teachings mentioned above is not enough. Without learning about the heretic teachings, the practitioner may easily be lured away by them and fall into the control by the devil of the five constituent elements of existence. These elements refer to the five aggregates (form sensation, perception, volition, and consciousness). If in practice one is reduced to a state of dead trees and cold ashes, without the slightest energy and vitality of the Earth, then he has fallen into the Yin Realm (the negative and dark realm). He will look weak and fragile, surrounded by some icy cold air. This indicates that his meditation has gone off the right track. In the Realm of the five aggregates and the Realm of Form and Desire, there are also many gods and ghosts who have some minor responsive powers. Those with the highest attainment are ghost celestials with fox celestials ranking in the middle. Ghost and fox celestials all have spiritual powers. Though they have not attained the perfect fruition, they enjoy themselves among great mountains and rivers. Most of them have meritorious retribution of 5001-000 years but have fallen into wrong teachings. So though with practice in meditation, they are not much different from ghosts and foxes. When the operations of the devil of the five aggregates transform into a kind of Dharma wheel, but its spinning makes one feel nauseated and dizzy. Sometimes you see many beautiful flowers of various colors falling from the sky, making you desirous of them. Or you see a vast span of ocean with great waves rolling in which

many living beings are struggling. Or you see the moon, on which celestial beings are coming and going. Or you hear some sounds, following which you see illusions one after another. Or you see palaces that are reflections from the illusions, to mention just a few examples.

Such photisms can be seen as hallucination of the mind, since everything is created by the mind, you don't have to bother about their truth. They belong to reflections of a tranquil mind. As all scenes change according to the states of mind, you should not be attached to any of them. Attachment will lead you astray and land you into the workings of the devil of the five aggregates.

In meditation and prostration, there are many collateral branches, such as Brahman in India, Yoga, and the Bon, which are not pure Buddhist branches. I remember when Bodhisattva Nagarjuna came to this world, he used expedient methods of Brahmin to establish all Tantric teachings, so that the Brahmins would accept them. The Indians were divided into four castes: Castries (Kings, warriors), Brahmins (Priests), Sudras (working men, slaves), and Candelas (the lowest class; outcasts who made their living by hunting, slaughtering cattle, or burying dead bodies, considered to be on a level with animals).

Accordingly, Nagarjuna devised expedient Tantric methods to deliver them, practicing the sutras with Ksatriyas, studying the sutras with Brahmins, using the Yoga sutras with Sudras, and using the Supreme Yoga sutras with the Candalas. So all methods are expedient- designed differently for liberating different people.

As far as I know, Brahmanism, Yoga, and the Bon worship natural idols. They worship the Sun when they see the Sun. They worship the Moon when they see the Moon. They worship the God of fire upon seeing fire, and worship the God of water at the sight of water. They worship the tree or the stone when they see one. They even worship birds and beasts. In their meditation, they worship

whatever idols or images they can conceive of. Few of them can stay away from devils.

There were Brahmins who worshipped the horse. The Buddhist patriarch had to go into Kuan-Yin samadhi, and change into a horse-headed Kuan-Yin to embrace and receive them.

There were aborigines who worshipped the pig. To save them, the Buddhist patriarch had to get into Buddha Vairocana samadhi, and change into Vajra Mother (Pig-crowned, concubine of the Yamantakrt, the principal Deity for Tibetan Supreme Yoga) to embrace and receive them.

There were also people who were fond of Yoga body-training. The patriarch had to go into Aksobhya Buddha's samadhi, and Amitabha Buddha's samadhi and transform into the Great Bliss Vajra and Red-Colored Kuan-Yin to embrace and receive them.

Today, there is a person called Lin Yun, who claimed that the Bon Religion (the Black Sect) is little known today and that he is the only Guru of lineage, thus doing a great disservice to Buddhism. Many people, including famous actors, actresses and professors, who are ignorant of the nature of the Bon Religion, are frightened by his sorcery and tend to believe that he is really a living Buddha of the Bon School. They are all taken in without their knowing. The Bon Religion, however, is out and out a heresy, worshipping an "Ox-head." In its early days, to liberate them, the patriarchs had to go into Bodhisattva Manjushri's samadhi and transform into the ox-headed Yamantakrt embrace and receive them.

Today, Lin Yun advocates the Bon Religion with ulterior motives, which deserve quenching. Now I warn you again here in the book that if you do not abandon the heresy and come back to the correct belief, I shall disclose all the teachings of the Bon Religion and then demolish them one by one, until you can not hide your true face any more. All my well-intentioned, repeated persuasion shows my sincere hope that you turn quickly back to practice the correct

Dharma. Wake up now to see your own True Nature. You have fallen into the mercy of the devil of the Five Aggregates!

As regards the "twin-body training" method, I think that it does not belong to Buddhism. To my knowledge, in the early days, when culture was not fully developed in India and Tibet, children matured at an early age and most people were meat eaters, so they had strong sexual desire. The "twin-body training" method was devised to give the Brahmins a chance to give vent to their lust. So this practice originally belonged to Brahmanism. When it was first introduced into Tantric practice, some people accepted it while others objected it.

Those who favored it would say that instead of using wisdom to see through sexual desire, it would better to use lust to quench itself, the realization of its uselessness would put an end to it.

Those against it would argue that once the monks fell into sex, they could never extricate themselves from it- its eradication was out of the question.

I think that few of the practitioners of the "twin-body training" method had attained fruition, instead many of them fell into the Realm of Form and Desire. So it would be better not to practice it, as it would lead to the workings of the devil of the Five Aggregates and the devil of sex.

There is a story which goes like this: Once a master who practiced the "twin-body training" was invited to a Bardo deliverance ceremony using Yoga Fire to collect food for hungry ghosts and to deliver the deceased souls. Though he had practiced the "twin-body training," he had not expelled his sexual desire, that is, he had not transformed his consciousness into wisdom, nor had quenched his lust to attain sublimity. Positioned on the Dharma Seat, he could not drive away from his mind the shadows of beautiful women.

This is like what a poem describes: "The enchanting desire is hard to bend. In a spring temple, a beauty is hidden, with charming

white legs and tender waist and arms. Her youthful face beams pink embedded in fragrant white. Her beauty brings forth envy, making the man wild with lust."

The master's hands formed the Food Mudra, but his thoughts were on charming ladies.

Tragedy followed quick!

His Food Mudra called forth a lot of beautiful girls for the food of the hungry ghosts. If the hungry ghost had been hungry for sex, they would be a wonderful treat for them. However, the ghosts were really hungry for food. Before they had satisfied their stomach, they were not in the mood for sex.

The next moment, the ghosts, pushing the pretty girls aside, went straight for the Dharma seat and dragged the master down from it, who fell on the floor head-on, unconscious. A few days later, he died, taken away by the ghosts.

This story can serve as a warning: in practicing meditation, we must not go heretic ways; in learning Buddhism, we must take the right teachings, never to go to the collateral branches.

In doing meditation, remember not to follow collateral sects, and not to practice whatever is comfortable to practice, because once the devil of the Five Aggregates takes control, you are bound to fall into the Realm of Form and Desire. The highest statues you can attain from it is a ghost celestial, lower than that of a fox celestial. It is fraud with erroneous paths and collateral roots and you must proceed with great caution.

However, in practicing Buddhism, different individuals have different causations, conditions and different interests, so they go into different schools. I think that these schools and sects have their own unique merits and we should not favor some and slight others. We can not say that some schools are superior to others. For instance, to me, the Zhan (phyana) Sect, Tantra Sect, the Discipline Sect, Dharmalakṣaṇa Sect, Three Sastra Sect, Tian-dai Sect,

Avatamsaka Sect, are all orthodox schools in Buddhism, and due attention should be given to the Kosa Sect and the Satyasiddhi Sect.

In addition, I regard the Transcendental Wisdom Sect, the Nirvana Sect and the Lotus Scripture Sect as rightful schools of Buddhism. Within the Tantra school, the Red Sect, the Yellow Sect, the White Sect, and the Flower Sect all have produced patriarchs one after another, and a large number of monks have distinguished themselves in realization or achievement. They are all rightful schools. All correct teachings and sects have their sources, with a clear line of lineage and development.

Only the Bon Religion does not deserve your faith, as it has no secret heart sutras or mudras and has just a few minor tricks and sorceries.

...from *The Art of Meditation* by Grand Master Sheng-yen Lu

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The Art Of Meditation

Chapter 7. Correct Responses in Meditation

Some people asked me: "Since there may be interference by the devil of the Five Aggregates and hallucination in meditation, photism and phonism are all workings of the god of consciousness, how do we distinguish correct and erroneous responses? How do we know that we are on the right path?"

According to my experience in meditation, the concentration lasts a long, long time with a period of tranquillity, and you feel a gust of warm air stream all over the body. Please remember that the air stream is not cold air of the Yin; if it is cold, you know something has gone wrong. In meditation, you feel comfortable all over and energetic and happy after it. Such a feeling is the initial response in meditation.

Secondly, you feel all the world is in a state of stillness-silence reigns supreme; you are sitting between Heaven and Earth, merging with the Universe. The dark and gloomy worlds have changed into worlds of illumination; and you are radiating light, shining upon the worlds, turning them into vast expanses of light. This is the second stage in responses. At this stage, the brow-point has opened and begun emitting gold light.

By the stage when the brow-point has opened with gold light, you feel full of vim and vigor, and sometimes you "exhale with a great sound," like the "roaring of a lion." You feel so strong and substantiated that you can just wear a shirt in icy cold seasons, take cold water baths or sleep in the open air in windy and snowy weather.

In this stage, you need no ceremony to consecrate a statue of a Buddha or bodhisattva; you just breathe out a gust of air, the

Buddha statue carved in wood or molded in clay would acquire spiritual powers. If you breathe out some air into water, the water would be good enough to cure illnesses. Such spiritual air can bring anything dead back to life. By the stage when the light at the brow-point can solidify, there will be more miracles-anything in the Universe can show responses once this true air is breathed into them;

The water can cure illnesses.

Talismans can fly to Heaven.

Consecrated statues assume spiritual powers.

The cultivator can know all causes and effects.

By the time when your seven openings (eyes, ears, nostrils, and mouth) are all radiating light, they are responding to the Seven Treasures Trees. This shows that your meditation has reached the state whereby you can go to the Western Paradise in a trance.

There, you see the ground is as bright as paved with gold dust, and the Heavenly palaces are built with lapis lazuli. You can see clearly all the Dharma realms in the Western Lotus Ponds which are all tangible. When the lights from the Seven Openings can solidify, the gold true Nature will appear, which constitutes the Gold-bodied Bodhisattva.

Some people who realized had the following responses:

In Shaolin Temple (Henan, China), Bodhidharma sat for nine years facing the wall and then could hear the ants talking as loudly as thunders. Some people could hear distinctly what other people were saying a thousand miles away. This is because the spirit is in a valley, every sound echoing clearly around. Meditation practitioners can hear anybody talking distinctly as long as he brings that person into his thought.

Some people in meditation had white light appearing before their eyes and felt they were sitting between clouds. They could not find themselves because they had transformed into transparent bodies.

This is a good sign, and it is called "body of transparency, white in and out." It shows that one's karmic hindrances have all been eradicated. With all this removed, one can ascend to the Heavenly Realms or even the Pure Land of Buddhas without difficulty. Still, others felt in meditation that their body had changed into some dense mist which was ascending swiftly, as if they themselves were suspended. This is also a good sign. If you go up, you are going to Heaven. If you sit still for a long time, you can expect to become a Buddha or a celestial being.

If the lights at the brow-point condense into pearls and jade and are stored in some part of the body their little grains will condense to become sariras after cremation. The lights at the brow-point has a platinum color, and the dense mist is multi-colored, but they all become sariras.

The present writer makes bold to say there that I have indeed got correct responses in meditation. If they are vague, blurred, minor responses, I will not take them seriously. One must be confident that he has really got responses, not things in a dream, for experiences in dreams do not count as responses.

I know of a person, who, after a session of meditation, felt shivering cold, his face grey and pale, enshrouded by some dark mist. He could see gods and ghosts. He could play certain magic tricks, and go to the nether world or Heaven. He could hear gods and ghosts reporting to him and therefore practiced divination. His spiritual powers, however, were negative, which, despite their similarities with the positive powers, belonged to non-celestial practices. Such powers usually result in the fruition of becoming an official in the nether world after death.

When you get responses in your meditation., I will send you my congratulations as you are going to become a Buddha or a celestial being. However, correct meditation should take place in the right place. This is a very important point. I have written a chapter

'Monks live in a clean realm of cloud and water' in the book On Secret Methods to Transcendental Powers, which is about how to choose a place for meditation. Once the place is chosen, where to set up the shrine is also important. It must be a quiet place, with no other people's interference. The shrine should be solemnly adorned. Statues of Buddhas and your personal deity should be installed. There should be also Sutras and Scriptures in the shrine. You can put a sarira pagoda, vajra scepter, and a vajra bell, in front of the statues, or put the instrument of ceremony inside the pagoda. You can place a cleaned conch before the statues which means fulfillment. A more elaborate shrine will have some feathers of the peacock, a vajra sword, or a lotus streamer. Such a shrine can induce immediate reverence and joy in the practitioner who would sit for a long time in its solemn atmosphere.

The shrine must be in an orderly arrangement and cleaned daily. All containers should be clean and can be of gold, silver, copper, or porcelain. Offerings include water, rice, lamp, flower, incense, fruit, cakes, and candles. The Five Offerings represent the five contacts, the Eight Offerings indicate immovability by winds from eight directions. Each time you make offering, recite the Offering Mantra to empower it. You can visualize a small flower which transforms itself into numerous flowers, forming an unlimited sea of clouds so that all the Buddha lands can receive your offerings. Such offerings can produce wonderful merit.

The Offering Mantra goes like this: "Na-mo-luo-na-cha-ye-ye, na-mo-bah-chiah-wa-die, bie-cha-sa-lo, bu-lo-ma-da-nee, da-ta-chia-da-ye, ya-er-ha-die, sa-ye-hsin-bu-da-ye, die-ye-ta, om, bien-zi-bien-chi, mo-he-bien-chi, mo-he-bien-chi, mo-he-dee-cha-bien-chi, mo-he-ha-bee-ye-bien-chi, mo-he-po-dee-zhi-da-bien-chi, mo-he-po-dee-mian-zo-ba, hsin-cha-mo-na-bien-chi, sa-er-wa, chia-ma, ya-wa-lo-na, bee-so-da-na, bien-chi, sa-ho."

We install a seat in front of the Buddha statues. Some people carve

the symbol of the Buddha on the seat, some carve a Swastika (use Vajra scepters to form a cross); still others carve an eight-petalled lotus flower. The more careful people put "good-fortune grass" on the seat, the kind of grass that the Buddha sat on during realization, to indicate that the Vajra is never to break, but to bring good fortune all the year round, and that devils dare not make trouble. The cushion is thus put on the grass, with the back raised two inches. Now the seat is properly installed. The present writer always sets a great round mirror in front of the seat, which reflects the seat, but not the Buddha statues. Some secret mantras in Sanskrit are written on the edge of the mirror. This mirror, reflecting the practitioner, has the power to subdue devils. Practice meditation when one's original spirit is clear and bright, fresh and happy. Before it, take a bath, put on light clothes or Kasaya, light up some sandal wood incense, then mount the seat. You can sit as long as you please-ten to twenty minutes at first, one or two hours later, or even longer if you are not busy. When you have practiced enough, correct response will appear. Correct responses will be attained after long practice, Since the Buddha and sentient beings are closely related. When merit and wisdom are accumulated as much as the sea, The Dharma wheel turns to reveal the Truth.

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The Art Of Meditation

Chapter Eight---Evidence for External Empowerment

I once heard some Esoteric masters criticizing some Exoteric master: "Could you become Buddhas just by reciting the name of the Buddha and singing? Still a long way to go!" Some Exoteric masters criticized Esoteric masters: "You practice all sorts of strange and bizarre ways. You say you radiate lights. Is that true?" As the Exoteric and Esoteric teachings advocate different ways of practice, there is inevitably misunderstanding between the two schools, and rejection and criticism are unavoidable among masters who do not know the true meaning of the other.

I would make the following distinction between the two schools, in terms of internal power and external power.

For Esoteric practice, you become a Buddha in the present life, mostly by internal power plus a minor portion of external power.

For Exoteric practice, you get a rebirth in the Buddha land mostly by external power, plus a minor portion of internal power.

Moreover, Buddhist teachings have always regarded Taoist teachings as heretic (worshipping gods and ghosts), which is not a correct attitude. Taoist practitioners also have rank distinctions. The highest in rank are gold celestial beings, next below are heavenly celestial beings, further down are Earth immortals, and then below that are ghost immortals. Gold celestials rank equal with the Four Nobles, also out of the cyclic realms of existence. Buddhism and Taoism have comparable realms. The Heavenly celestial beings are

the various gods in Heaven; the Earth Immortals are gods in this world of endurance, while the ghost immortals are gods in all the realms.

In whatever way you practice, as long as the right thought dominates and the concentrated mind can emit lights, your meditation will in due course get blessed by external power, so as to achieve realization. Practice in keeping with the teachings will certainly produce responses. This is what I make bold to tell my readers here. The reason is that all the Buddhas are kind and compassionate; if they do not bless and embrace those who practice honestly, how could they claim to have the greatest kindness and the greatest compassion?

Esoteric masters say that "to become a Buddha in the present life" is direct, whereas "to get rebirth with you karma" in the Pure Land teachings is indirect. However, in practicing Esoteric teachings, we also need external force for empowerment. I shall write about this in the next chapter. What follows is a discussion on empowerment by external force in the Pure Land.

The Pure Land teachings were brought to China by the Indian monk Buddhacinga (232-348) during the East Jin Dynasty and the Northern and Southern Dynasties. He first taught the doctrine to Tao An, and later Master Hui Yuan (334-416) established a school. When Master Hui Yuan was reading sutras in the Sutra Attic, he found a short version of the Amitabha Sutra. (The original was too long: Sutra protected by all Buddhas who praise the inconceivable merit of the Pure Land.) The sutra talked about birth into the Pure Land by reciting the Buddha's name. Master Hui Yuan believed that this was very easy, and set up the Pure Land School for its practice.

The Amitabha Sutra says: "Sariputra, if a kind man or kind woman hears about Amitabha, and recites his name for one day, for two days, for three days, four, five, six or seven days, without distraction of the mind, when that person passed away, Amitabha and other Buddhas will appear before that person; if the person's mind is not confused, he/she will be born into Amitabha's Land of Great Bliss."

This paragraph from the Amitabha Sutra makes practitioners believe that the Pure Land Way was very easy, and for this reason, the Pure Land Sect thrived. A second reason was that the Pure Land Way could be practiced by anybody, at any time, and at any place, relying on the blessing by other powers rather than one's own. This made it extremely convenient.

However, I would believe that it is also very difficult to practice the Pure Land teachings. The difficulty lies in "the mind is not confused" and "without distraction of mind". When we are passing away, the six types of deceased relatives will surely come to meet us, devils produced by our karma will also come to fetch us, and on top of that, our family members will be crying and wailing. Under such circumstances, very few people could keep their mind unconfused and get rid of all distractions. Though we say this Dharma gate is convenient, it is not so easy to be born in the Buddha's Pure Land without great concentration power.

What is the power we need in order not to be distracted or confused? It is no other than meditation power. That is why I say that if you have not practiced meditation power, your mind will be confused and distracted, making it difficult to go to the Western Paradise.

In fact, in the Western Paradise, there are three hundred sixty trillion, one hundred nineteen thousand and five hundred Amitabhas by the same name. In the Buddha lands, there are four lands and nine grades, corresponding to the nine grades of aspirants to Amida's Pure Land. The highest is the Land of External, Tranquil Light, where those with Perfect Enlightenment (rank 13), and Wondrous Enlightenment (rank 12) live--that is the land for Buddhas. The next highest is the "Land of Non-Hindrances as the true reward for the performance of meditation practice", where those of Equal Enlightenment live (ranks 8, 9, 10, 11). Next is the "Land temporarily established for those who have destroyed major evil passions, thereby attaining emancipation from delusions to be dealt with". These are Bodhisattvas and arhants from rank one to rank seven, considered as the highest birth of the highest class. The lowest is the land where ordinary people and sages live together. From the middle birth of the highest class, down to the lowest birth of the lowest class is the Realm that Dharma Kara created by his great vows of compassion, for transformation bodies. All those still with karma live in this land. This is not a high state. The transformation bodies need practice, meditation and reciting the name of Buddha, need to visit the various Buddha lands, and need to make offerings to Buddhas in the ten directions. To put it simply, the Land for ordinary people and sages is a "preparatory class" for Buddhahood and Bodhisattvahood.

I feel that if Pure Land practitioners also learn to practice meditation, then they can practice visualization, in addition to recitation of Amida's name, thought of Amida, and looking at Amida's statue. The self-power from meditation and Amida's embracing power will merge to take the practitioner to the Western Paradise without any doubt. Meditation for luminosity in particular is very effective, and, if Pure Land practitioners also practice

meditation, they will certainly go to the Western Paradise. This is: "Meditation without Pure Land teachings will go astray in nine cases out of ten. Meditation plus Pure Land teachings will be like a tiger with horns." This is to say that both of them are important.

Here is how I describe how to do visualization:

Visualize yourself as Amitabha, standing on a lotus seat in red clothing, holding a golden lotus in the left hand, right hand downward with fingers straight together to form the Mudra of compassion. On your right stands Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva (Kuan Yin), in white, with the left hand hanging down, and the right hand holding a white lotus in full bloom. On your left stands Mahasthamaprabhata Bodhisattva, in pink, with the right hand hanging down, and the left hand holding a bell. Visualize further that over your own Amitabha, there are auspicious clouds, in which a Buddha is sitting on a lotus seat which, is the Bodhicitta of your own Nature. The lotus stem under the flower goes from your crown to your pubic region.

Recite four times the fourfold refuge mantra: "Namo Guru be, Namo Buddha ye, Namo Dharma ye, Namo Sangha ye."

Recite the text for Bodhicitta generation, according to your own vows.

Now recite: "Hum" nine times, and say it loudly just once, to show that the crown is smashed open and is emitting the five-colored lights of the Buddha. In the lights appear the incarnations of the Three Nobles in the Western Paradise (Amitabha Buddha, Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva and Mahasthamaprabhata Bodhisattva), and the auspicious clouds begin to illuminate. The stem of the lotus

seat for the self-Nature Bodhicitta is also radiating strong white light, going right to the pubic region through the crown.

At this stage, one moment the five-color Buddha lights go up; the next moment the white lights go down to the pubic region, until they become a kind of circulation. This will happen seven times.

When this is completed, recite the mantra in concentration, "Om, Y-ma, loh-nee, ze-din-deeh-ye, sa-he". Recite this mantra 108 or 1000 times.

Now, recite the verse of Merit Transference: "When I am about to pass away, may all hindrances be eradicated. May I go and see the Buddha, and transcend life and death, and may I, like Buddha, deliver all beings from suffering."

This brings the session to a finish.

The present writer knows, however, that the most important thing about practice is to do it every day without interruption. Don't do it every tenth day! Take the practice for your daily official homework. What is particularly important is your single-mindedness; don't follow your inclinations. If your thoughts are kept away from worldly affairs, you will naturally develop an affinity with the Buddhas and celestial beings. A combination of the Pure Land teachings and meditation is the most wondrous method. Daily perseverance will sooner or later bring forth responses and blessing from the Buddhas and celestial beings.

If Esoteric masters criticize the Exoteric masters, the former is to blame. If Exoteric masters criticize Esoteric masters, it is the former that is to blame. If Buddhist criticize Taoists, the Buddhists are to blame. The reason for all this is that, although cultivation

methods are different, the difference lies only in the amount of self-power and other power. The Esoteric practitioners also use external force for empowerment, and have no reason to laugh at Exoteric cultivators. Nor is the reverse acceptable.

*...from **The Art of Meditation** by Grand Master Sheng-yen*

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The Art Of Meditation

Chapter 9. The Three Stages in Meditation

By the time you have no thought ever arising in your meditation, all of your affinity and causation have completely disappeared. You can not even know where you are yourself. This is a first stage in meditation. It is called "the Heaven entering the Earth", or "everything returning to its root". The responses both in body and in mind come and go alternately, sometimes rising and sometimes falling, like in the void, your boundless body ascending to Heaven. Sometimes you feel that you are surrounded by thousands of layers of clouds. In the dark, you come and go without a trace, even your shadow nowhere to be found.

The Taoists would say that this is "true air stream going up to the brow point". When your spiritual lights gather at the top, right at the brow point, you naturally feel triumphant and complacent. This is the kind of state you are in during the first stage of meditation, which comes by itself. This is a great liberation of the body and mind--which is, in fact, "initial quietitude" of "concentrated spirit entering the air stream". The longer you stay at this stage, the more spiritual lights go to Huang Ting (three centers of mind, heart and spleen) as nourishment, the more the invisible lights accumulate. Gradually, the practitioner can go into "initial quietitude" as soon as he sits straight. As far as I know, the Taoist "initial quietitude" is roughly identical with the Fourth Dhyana Heaven in Buddhism.

When you have cultivated well enough in the first stage, you enter the second "absolute quietitude". By now, as an enormous amount of the spiritual lights has accumulated, they can move, which is

called "the self-motion of spiritual lights" or "self-motion of brow point". The self-motion, however, is different from self-motion after death.

Their difference is:

Practitioner>>spiritual lights>>motion when alive>>living spirit>>go to Heaven

Ordinary people>>soul>>motion when dead>>dead soul>> go to Hell

For people who practice meditation and who have realized the spiritual lights beginning to move when they are still alive; this is living original spirit. Original spirits with self-mastery certainly will go to Heaven. For ordinary people, the souls are dead when they are alive, and start moving when they die. So they are not masters of themselves and will certainly go to Hell. Such is the essential difference between practitioners and laymen. This is also what I meant when I said "Without cultivation, one remains a ghost." in the Preface.

During the second stage, in the state of "self-motion of the brow point", you can understand what Lao Tzu meant by "doing without action". Since the brow point moves by itself, not by any action, it is self-motion without action, or "motion without intention". Doing without action" by Lao Tzu is not intelligible to ordinary people.

When you reach that state, however, understanding comes by itself- the brow point lights start moving without our asking them to do so, so it is intent without intention, "doing without action". I believe my readers understand by now. This motion is the cream of the

5000 Word Moral Text by Lao Tzu. No one can understand it without meditation.

When the spiritual lights at the brow point move, your whole body is luminous. Even if you sit meditating in the darkest room at night, it will be bright as day. The Taoist teachings describe it by "Direct the eyes to the palace of water to receive the best from the Sun." At this point, without your intent, the spiritual lights dazzle everything--the sun and the moon can be reversed, time is turned backward--you can see your previous lives. You acquire the five transcendental faculties of a Buddha--the ability to know the former lives of yourself and others, the Divine Eye, capable of seeing anything at a distance, the Divine Ear, capable of hearing any sound at any distance, the ability to know others thoughts, the ability to go anywhere at will and to transform oneself of objects into anything at will. There is nothing strange about the appearing of these five transcendental faculties. Some monks try to find faulets with transcendental powers. Ther is nothing wrong with transcendental powers, for they are generated by themselves in meditation when the spiritual lights at the brow point start moving. They are "doings without action", "intent without intention" by self-motion of the spiritual lights. Some monks criticize them for two reasons:

One, they are afraid that laymen will cultivate these powers, "putting the cart before the horse".

Two, these monks are unqualified monks who know nothing about transcendental powers as they have not reached this stage.

I tell my readers honestly that the Buddha says: "The mind is generated when it is free from any thought of attachment." That means "doing without action". "The mind is generated when it is

free from any thought of attachment." is an important teaching in the Diamond Sutra, which means the same thing as "the self-motion of spiritual lights at the brow point". By now, my readers probably have understood everything.

I am not foul-mouthed by nature; much less do I want to curse monks, since they represent the Buddha, one of the Three Jewels. They are also said to represent "cleanness". I should not use abusive language about them in any event. However, there are times when I could not curtail myself and I do let loose a torrent of abuse. I am not going to curse the high-ranking monks or true Taoist priests; I respect them and prostrate before them. It is the secular monks and heretic priests that I want to curse. There are unpromising monks who also practice sorcery and play dirty tricks. I simply cannot stand that, because they are defecating on the Buddha's head! My comments on and curses of them are not sinful, but meritorious!

These secular monks and heretic priests should read this book. If there is anything they don't understand, they should come and ask me. They should cultivate sincerely and honestly. They should not go round asking for huge sums of money, alms-book in hand, just on account of their bald head, instead of on account of the merit of their practice. They are only interested in building temples, or concerned with business from morning til night. They renounced home life, but don't keep the precepts. All this is infuriating! The secular monks should be pushed down on the floor before the patriarchs and given a sound beating of 500 planks, naked. It makes one sick to see these sanctimonious monks running wild everywhere.

There are also cross-eyed heretics, such as Lin Yun and Cai Cao-qi and the like, and offsprings of masters and demons with some supernatural tricks, who should read this book as they are totally ignorant of meditation for luminosity. They should cleanse their heart, repent and stop fooling people with witchcraft and sorcery. They should wake up, stop harming people, and start practicing genuine teachings to avoid karmic retributions. My reprimand stems from my profound loving kindness. If you stubbornly cling to your evil practice, you are unworthy of my repeated persuasion with good intentions to save suffering beings. If you have any questions, please contact me by correspondence, and I will certainly give you detailed instructions to guide you to realization.

Honestly, I don't want to use such abusive language to them, and I could have let them go in the endless cycle of life and death hhhh. But a Bodhisattva has the aspiration for supreme enlightenment for the welfare of all. If I don't succour them from the karmic cycle, who will? This is our meditation for luminosity, a doctrine for salvaging the dead and protecting the living. If I don't teach them, or don't save them, my Bodhicitta will never be at ease. Is this my selfishness? If I concealed the doctrine today, I would not be a Bodhisattva! I used bad language, at the risk of my life, in order to save them.

Going further for "self-motion of the brow point" and "doing without action", you reach the third stage of meditation: the "amalgamation of Heaven and Man". At this stage, your mind is attached to nothing; it is called "brow point bathing". "Bathing" here is wondrous, meaning that the individual is completely merged with Heaven and Earth, realizing all Dharmas. By now all your karmic hindrances are expelled by the illumination of Heavenly lights, and as a result, you attain full enlightenment. This is the

ultimate revelation from meditation. This chapter tells practitioners everything about "meditation for luminosity". Whether it is the Taoist "ultimate void", the "correct thought" of the Pure Land Sect or the "spiritual lights" of the Esoteric school, they are all realized without exception. I have disclosed the secret of secrets. If sentient beings do not wake up after this, there will be nothing else that can cure them.

I make the following distinctions once again:

Stage I: Initial tranquility, when the spirit is concentrated at the brow point.

Stage II: Absolute tranquility, the brow point moves by itself--doing without action

Stage III: Amalgamation, the brow point bathes and everything is realized.

By Stage II, you begin to have transcendental powers. By Stage III, when all karmic hindrances are eradicated, you begin to have the ability to destroy all evil passions. Now you are a fully qualified Buddha, never to return to the six lower states of existence.

...from ***The Art of Meditation*** by Grand Master Sheng-yen Lu

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The Art Of Meditation

Chapter Ten--Wisdom in the Threefold Contemplation



"...the Middle Way is 'to control your thoughts and purify your mind, expel confusion to understand the truth, to awaken to one's Original Nature, so as to transcend life and death.'"

In this world, there is a very special supra-worldly method of cultivation-the "meditation for luminosity". This is the top secret to transcend this human world. As long as the practitioner follows the teachings step by step, sooner or later he will understand the truth. In due course he will understand everything and have a clear grasp of the three perspectives in Buddhism: contemplation on the void of all existence, contemplation on the temporariness of all existence and contemplation on the truth of the middle way.

The ten spheres of Dharma, including the Four Noble Realms (Buddha, Bodhisattva, Solitary Realizer and Hearer) and the six secular realms (gods, human beings, demigods, hungry ghosts, animals and hell beings), can all be regarded as "empty". Due to birth, old age, disease and death, no life can escape impermanence. Every form of existence is only momentary. According to existentialism, if I myself don't exist, then the Four Noble Realms and the six secular realms do not exist either. All Dharmas are empty. All forms of existence are empty. That is why a Buddhist verse says: "All things are impermanent. This is the Dharma for all things. Whatever is produced is also destroyed. Tranquil extinction is pleasure."

In Buddhist practice, the first question to ask is: "What does the attachment hinge on?"



The Buddha says: "Don't get attached to appearance, but follow the six kinds of practice by which a Bodhisattva attains Buddhahood (charity, observing precepts, perserverence, effort, meditation and wisdom). This means that one should be above all appearances, and understand the truth about Heaven and Earth. Look at everything without attachment to appearance, until nothing can be attained and nothing can be said. This is what the Diamond Sutra says: "No attachment to anything is practicing charity. You should have no thought about your merit in charity. You perceive no appearance of others, of yourself, of sentient beings, of a universal self. The four appearances are all seen as empty. This is the perspective of emptiness or void."

In Buddhist practice, the second question to ask is: "How to practice?"



The answer is: practice the temporary perspective. All appearances are to be seen as visionary and illusory, so that you practice with an attitude of neither taking anything or giving up anything. That is to say, you take everything as neither empty nor substantial. We all know that mountains, rivers, and the land in the Universe are not free from formation, evolution, decay and destruction. All appearances are temporary. Take human beings for example. Humans are composed of "earth, water, fire and wind". As soon as impermanence comes, these four elements disintegrate. The human body is something temporary. The essence of our practice is to establish everything on this temporariness. Genuine practice is to dwell on the temporariness without paying attention to appearance or action, until we finally transcend the formation and decline--cultivating the genuine by contemplating on temporariness. This is the "perspective of temporariness".

In Buddhist practice, the final question to ask is: "What is the conquest of the mind?"

The Buddha says: "Practice the Middle Way to generate a pure mind." The Buddha's verse goes: "Everything created by causes and conditions is empty. Its name is a false name. This is the teaching of the Middle Way." The Middle Way is an extraordinary understanding, which transcends time and space, but amalgamates all Dharmas. One can not get the mind of the past, the present or the future. It is the self-nature that generates the wisdom body--the realization of the Middle Way.

To put it simply, the Middle Way is "to control your thoughts and purify your mind, expel confusion to understand the truth, to awaken to one's own mind to reveal one's Original Nature, so as to transcend life and death."

My own insight on the three perspectives is:

The perspective of emptiness is one of wisdom.

The perspective of temporariness is one of attaining birth in the Buddha's Pure Land.

The perspective of the Middle Way is one of Self-Nature.

For instance:

Secret practices for wisdom, samatha, the empty gate of the Tian Tai Sect, returning to the true nature--these belong to the Perspective of Emptiness.

Mahayana tantra, samapatti, the gate of existence (of the Tian Tai Sect), practice gate, gate of the accompanying appearances--these belong to the Perspective of Temporariness.

The Mahayana Tantric Mind, Dhyana, the Bodhi gate of both emptiness and existence in the secular world, the gate of mind creating everything, the Nirvana gate of neither emptiness nor existence, the gate of non-obstruction--these belong to the Middle Way.

*"There is a verse on the Middle Way
Things created by causes and conditions
neither live nor die;
they are both continuous and impermanent;
neither coming nor going;
they are neither the same nor different
and defy all non-serious doctrines.
Respect what the Buddha says;
Tranquility is wondrous.*

Generally speaking, meditation practitioners should first practice the perspective of the Void, viewing everything as empty. Then practice the perspective of temporariness--though we know everything is empty, we still establish all practice upon the void.

This is to cultivate the temporary body in the void. Knowing that everything is both empty and temporary, we neither get attached to anything nor destroy anything. That is the Middle Way. Some people have remarked that the perspective of the Void makes your cultivation efficient and effective--so that void is void, so is temporariness, and so is the Middle Way. The perspective of temporariness enables you to make most use of the effectiveness--so that temporary is temporary, and so is void, and so is the middle way. Practicing the Middle Way, as well as the other two perspectives, the benefit is self-evident.

Master Padmasambhava says: "*Practice the perspective of the void, and the five aggregates become illusory.*"

This means that form is like illusory light, sensation is as floating bubbles, perception is like a racing wind, volitional activities are like wild horses, and consciousness is an empty dream. We have to cultivate until we forget perception, volitional acts, form, sensation and consciousness--the five aggregates all disappear-- then everything is empty and pure.

Master Padmasambhava says: "*Practice the perspective of temporariness to leave the four appearances.*"

This means that you perceive no appearances of others, of yourself, of sentient beings, or of the universal self. Once you stay far away from their appearances, you are above the appearance of life and death, and naturally, you recover your pure state from contamination.

Master Padmasambhava says: "*Practice the Middle Way in order to control your mind for internal realization.*"

If you channel the void and the temporary into the nature of the Dharma, then nothing is contaminated and your true nature is independent and free. This means that you abandon temporariness

though in the midst of temporariness, and abandon void though in the midst of void, so that you understand the mystery of true emptiness and non-appearance. This is called "purification of your self-nature to attain Buddhahood".

I remember when I was in Taiwan, and I asked a master of great virtue the real meaning of the Three Perspectives. This master was a patriarch in Taiwan. His answers were very superficial and could not bring out the real meaning. In fact, if you have not reached the state of samahdi in your meditation, you can never understand their profound meaning. The true meaning can not be explained in words; it is to be experienced by those who have made great achievements is samahdi.

In Seattle, a master came to see me from Los Angeles.

I've come especially to ask about the meaning of the Three Perspectives."

"Why don't you ask your own guru?"

He is not clear either. I asked him again and again, but with tears in his eyes, he said that he didn't know either."

"Why don't you ask other masters?"

"I did, but this time it was me who was in tears, because I couldn't understand their answers!"

"So why did you come to ask me, a layman?"

"Because in a dream in the middle of the month, an old woman came to tell me that Sheng-yen Lu is in Seattle--why don't I go and ask him? In my dream, I asked who the old woman was, but she transformed into a rainbow on which sat Bodhisattva Kuan-yin. So you see it was Bodhisattva Kuan-yin who instructed me. Here I am to beg for enlightenment on the Three Perspectives."

I told the master: "The six organs and the seven openings are in fact one organ; the spiritual lights and the brow points are also one and

the same thing; the Three Perspectives are actually one Perspective--it's for the convenience of practice only that we set up the three aspects. Ordinarily, masters who have not entered samahdi can not acquire a deep understanding of it. Superficial practice is just a formality which does not produce much effect. Only by going into samahdi can you achieve something."

The master asked me again: *"How does one go into samahdi?"*

"I'll write a book called The Art of Meditation. If you study and practice diligently, you will understand the great wisdom in the Three Perspectives."



The Art Of Meditation

Chapter 11. The Light of the Third Eye

There are many monks and Taoist priests of long standing who have misgivings about "spiritual powers." Whenever they hear that someone has seen something, they would give a snort of contempt, believing that someone has been led astray by devils and has hallucinations. Naturally, in "seeing something," there may be illusions caused by nerve disorders and there are people who try to please the public with claptrap. When facts are mixed with falsification, it is hard to distinguish the sham from the genuine.

The rejection of the Third Eye by many monks or Taoist priests is due partly to the difficulty to tell the sham from the genuine and partly to the fact that some practitioners have not yet reached the state of the Third Eye. Since they are not in that state, they think it is impossible. Thus ignorance often gradually develops into malicious slanders on those who have realized.

For example, back at home, many monks only too often say: "That man is out of his sense." Some Taoist priests often say: "There is no such thing under Heaven!" Other people often say: "Yah, the gentleman who talks about gods and ghosts." Still other say: "Ah, you mean that man. He is the Number One Swindler in the whole world. He says he can go to the Western Paradise of Great Bliss. What a lie! I don't believe that."

There are too many people who cursed me or criticized me in newspapers and magazines by quoting me out of context. Lay people accused me, intellectuals cursed me, masters and Taoist

priests cursed me -- which became louder and louder. They drove me to the United States. They went on criticizing me.

To tell the truth, even if people of the world cursed me, I have practiced to the point of not getting angry. Some people might say that this boy has become insensitive and gotten used to curses. That is not the case. The real reason is that among all the people in this world, I am the only one who has got the truth, who knows that there are indeed six transcendental faculties, and who knows how to practice to attain them. I am the prophet. Even if people nailed me on a cross as they did to Jesus, I would be still convinced of my truth, for I have indeed realized and I am not afraid of death. For me, death only means the death of my physical body, but my original spirit is a Buddha.

I feel deeply that be it a Buddhist master or a taoist priest or any practitioner for that matter, he must be born in the Buddha's Pure Land, or become a celestial being. If there is the slightest doubt, he will be sure that he is not practicing the Right way or not effectively enough, and that he needs improving. Frankly, he must be absolutely certain that he can accomplish his way before he passes away. Only this can be considered successful.

If in his lifetime, he only teaches the public and lectures on the Sutras, does good deeds and offers alms, builds temples and chants the Buddha's name, but has never realized in his practice, it is hard to say that he can attain the fruition of Buddhahood or Bodhisattvahood. To my knowledge, he is better than a lay man in that he may go to Heaven to enjoy himself, but he cannot be said to be fully enlightened. Today the monks and priests who criticize the acquisition of the Third Eye are mostly secular monks and secular priests, and do not know how to achieve perfect realization.

I have always been advising other people to practice hard for enlightenment. If you don't practice but hope for perfect realization, you will get nowhere -- nothing comes so cheap in this world. It is utterly useless to criticize other people's realization. Why don't you also try and see what happens? When one of these days you also become enlightened and get to know that what Sheng-Yen Lu says is true, you will stop cursing me and instead come to prostrate before me, asking me to be your guru. Honestly I don't like to appear superior to others. If, when you have realized, you do an obeisance to the sky three times, chanting "Namo Guru bei, I take refuge in the Holy Red Crown Vajra Guru," I will be quite content.

This book, *The Art of Meditation* is a great set of important teachings which will show you how to acquire the Third Eye. For example, a lay man is a secular animal walking on two legs. On the surface he is alive, but his original spirit is dead. Now, I can use this method to bring your original spirit to life, and enable it to communicate with the Living Buddha. Using the meditation method, conditioned by my great Bodhicitta resolve, I have passed these teachings to all sentient beings. I use these secrets (of body, speech, and mind) to communicate with the Three Secrets of the Buddha.

My teachings, like a thunder strike, can strike a living body to death, and can bring a dead original spirit back to life, enabling the practitioner to feel immediate responses and see the truth. After a period of cultivation, not only can he acquire the Third Eye, but also attain the six transcendental faculties, achieve self-mastery of the original spirit and obtain Buddhahood in this life. This is what really counts.

Many Buddhist masters and Taoist priests criticize me, saying there is no such thing in this world. Now I explain as follows:

The light of the naked eye -- light of the secular men, seeing nothing. So they say there is no such thing in the world.

The spiritual light -- light of the self-nature of the enlightened, like a huge torch of wisdom, seeing things other cannot see.

Practitioners with only the light of the naked eye are pitiful, because they have no idea about the wonderful use of the Third Eye. All their life, their cultivation and recitation of the Buddha's name stay on the surface and as a result, without realization, they are totally ignorant of the mystery of mysteries. Having renounced home-life, they are no different from house-holders. Knowing nothing about the mind-mudra (the absolute mind-essence transmitted from master to disciple), they work hard on superficial imitations. Without the transmission of the mind-essence, even if you attain birth in the Buddha's land by fluent recitation of the Buddha's name, you will still have to study my "Mind-mudra for Universal Luminosity." Only then can you acquire Buddhahood or Bodhisattvahood.

The greatest shame is that monks of extremely narrow vision and with no spiritual lights, laugh at those who have got spiritual lights and regard its existence as impossible. They should know that such grave doubts constitute the demarcation line between the Buddha and ordinary human beings. With doubt or suspicion, one can never go to the Buddha's Land, whether he is an Exoteric, Esoteric, or Taoist. I sigh with deep feeling that such monks cannot become Buddhas in their present life. I feel sorry for them.

I believe that Sangha is indeed one of the Three Jewels. The earlier term, "harmonious Sangha" was a name of respect to show that three monks were cultivating together in a quiet site, discussing things over and making great efforts. According to the Buddha's teachings, one's mind must be pure and all thoughts must be pure, this makes the Sangha a Jewel. Monks represent pure belief, pure volition, pure practice, pure thought, pure acts, pure precepts, and skillful use-- these constitute genuine renunciation of home life. A Buddhist monk is one with a resolve of Bodhi, or the incarnation of a Bodhisattva who is willing to come to liberate the suffering beings. He is supposed to be a fine example for the sentient beings as well as their supervisor, who uses forty-eight thousand Dharma doors to expel 48 thousand kinds of worries. If most monks are able to do all this, they naturally form the treasure Sangha, who, living in the dirty and vicious world, transcend the Three Realms and never get contaminated. Such monks should be respected.

But now the times have changed. Some of these monks left home for various reasons other than spiritual cultivation. For example, they left home because they suffered some setback in their relationship with their girl friends, or because they failed in their business, or because their children would not support them in old age, or because of poverty and illness, or because they came to redeem a vow, or because they had a mental disorder, or because they have a solitary proclivity, or because they wanted to escape from military service, or because they are old. At first, they didn't know the real purpose of leaving home; if they got to know what it means to be a monk later, it would be acceptable. If they never understand it and don't practice diligently, only trying to escape from worldly troubles, they all deserve a sound beating. For there is no use in their home-leaving, only to increase their sins; they go to the Avici Hell to suffer interminable pains, never to be born again.

Buddhist monks must practice the authentic Dharma. They should be well versed in the 12 volumes in the Three Divisions (sutra, precepts, and commentaries) of the Buddhist doctrines. With each correct thought, you are one step forward along the Buddha's teachings; when every thought is correct, you are enlightened on the Buddha's teachings. Monks should study the correct insight and right wisdom and energy in authentic practice for final enlightenment. They should on no account slander the correct Dharma and correct insight, or criticize the correct wisdom, or often use abusive language against others. They should not indulge in wrong ideas or unhealthy thoughts, such as labeling others' realizations as false because they themselves have not realized. All this goes against the correct Dharma.

What I want to tell my readers is that: by following my "art of meditation" in your cultivation, you change your naked eye-sight into spiritual light, and grow the Third Eye at the browpoint; as long as you earnestly practice meditation for a hundred days, you will certainly have spiritual responses. As we know, after a hundred days' practice the best air slowly gathers at the brow-point; when there is enough of it, the *Yang* fire will appear. This fire in water is what the Taoists call "water and fire benefiting one another." When there is enough fire, the spiritual light will automatically emerge. The original spirit controls the fire going up and down so that the original *Yang* (positive) gradually does not show itself with the air only coming in without going out, until there is only the substantial. When sufficient substance has accumulated, the practitioner becomes a Buddha, who can see everything and have all spiritual responses without seeking them.

...from *The Art of Meditation* by Grand Master Sheng-yen
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The Art Of Meditation

Chapter Twelve---Merit in Making Offerings

Before every session of meditation, you should light up incense and put offerings before the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and Vajra protectors. The meaning of the different offerings is:

- water = merit
- flower = charity
- incense = precepts
- lamp = endurance
- anointed incense = efforts
- food = concentrated meditation
- music = wisdom

You don't have to offer all of these for every session -- sometimes just one of them and other times several.

Each time I make offerings, I hold a plate with an apple in it and visualize that the apple has transformed into millions of apples like mountains of apples across the Void which change into clouds of apples. I also visualize that the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas have accepted my apples with joy and all Buddhas in the ten directions have accepted my offering. This visualized offering is the most effective of all.

Many students don't even know the basic offering ceremony though they took refuge in me several years ago. We should understand that we make offerings with sincerity. We offer these things to the Buddha from the bottom of our heart. Even if it is just a cup of

water, we should perform pious visualization. Such sincere and heart-felt offerings produce great, far-reaching merits.

Some students of mine would ring me up when someone is ill in their family: "Master Lu, please make an entreaty for me to the Buddha." There are many people every day who ask me to request many things from the Buddha. They seem to think that I am a favorite of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas who only accept requests from me. In fact, this is not the case. It is best for you to make your own supplication to the Buddha. You should make offerings for your supplications. You can supplicate on anybody's behalf, such as children for parents, parents for children, the subordinates for their superior, sister for brother or brother for sister, wife for husband, or husband for wife. Do remember to make offerings and perform visualization for any supplication, so as to make it first-rate merit. It is also acceptable if you ask your guru to supplicate on your behalf, but for the best effect, you must make your own offerings and prostrate together with your guru; don't just say casually: "Master Lu, please supplicate to the Buddha for me." If you don't make any offerings, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas wouldn't think it is an appropriate ceremony and it is up to them whether to bestow blessings upon you or not. It may become an "empty entreaty." If I buy the fruit for the offerings, then it is my offering, not yours; its merit goes to my credit instead of yours. Again, it may become an "empty entreaty." The merit in making offerings does not depend on how much you offer or how expensive the things you offer, but on whether "it is empty." As long as it is not "empty," it is meritorious. Meritorious offerings turn ill luck into good luck and change setbacks into success, making everything happen the way you wish.

Your Tantric shrine must be solemnly adorned. Solemnity of the Buddha statues, the Buddha banners, the neat arrangement at the shrine and the treasure offerings, can induce joy and reverence in

the practitioner. The solemn adornment itself is a kind of offering; the fine quality of offerings is also a virtue. All this goes to generate first-rate merit.

Offerings can be divided into three categories:

Offering food, lamp, tea, and beautiful things is called external offering or visible offering.

Offering one's life, gold, silver, and jewelry is called internal offering, or invisible offering.

The best offering is "mind offering," such as pay deference to your guru, showing filial piety to parents, showing respect and sincerity to others, practice the six Paramitas (charity, observing precepts; endurance, efforts, meditation, wisdom), save sentient beings, observe the precepts, sit in meditation every day, never to give up one's resolution to cultivate; ready to suffer on behalf of the living beings. Holding the palms together before the Buddha is also "mind offering" and is meritorious.

Generally speaking, we start with the external offering, and then move to internal offering and finally practice the "mind offering," or perform the three offerings simultaneously. Remember to visualize, transforming the offerings into thousands of thousands of offerings, until they fill up all the Dharma Realms in the ten directions, and all the Buddhas are overjoyed to accept this. This ceremony is very virtuous. If you just shout out: "Master Lu, do me a favor" and you don't make any offering, nothing will come out of it. It is all right that I make the request on your behalf, but you have to get the offering ceremonies correct as elaborate rites are part of the merit. Casual requests alone would get no wish satisfied.

I have been making offerings for many years. First of all I make offerings to the Buddha. Second I make offerings to Bodhisattvas. Thirdly, I make offerings to the Vajra. Fourthly to the Devas. Fifthly to the ghosts and gods. Finally, to Raksasas (ogres). I believe all the suffering beings in the six realms of existence are

relatives of the Buddha, and I make no distinction among them. I hope that all the suffering beings awaken to the aspiration of Bodhi and become Buddhas in the future. That is why I even make offerings to Raksasas.

As a result of this special offering, once in my meditation, some dark green light appeared and an Asurah King (a demon) came to see me. This king was terrible-looking -- very, very tall, hands and feet like iron claws, with long and protruding teeth, the human skulls of strange shapes hanging upon his chest. He had six eyes, three on the right and three on the left, all looking very angry. Above his head, there is a threefold head; the middle is kind-looking, the other two all have a long tongue in a motion of licking blood. The king had many hands, each holding a shining lethal weapon, an awe-inspiring figure altogether.

The Asurah King said: "I hereby present a sword to you, respectful priest."

"What for?"

"You've made offerings to the Raksasas."

"What's the use of the sword?"

"Very useful. Listen:

"Demons of Desire and Aggregates are shouting and screaming day and night.

The gold sword made in Heaven is to wipe them out.

Now is the time to grow plums and sandalwood.

The ultimate tranquillity breeds righteous atmosphere.

Spreading the Dharma to sentient beings is Integrity.

To annihilate heresies and demons,

We Asurahs should come and help."

The Asurah King took the sword out, golden lights dashing to all directions.

"What a treasure sword!" I exclaimed.

Before I finished, the King placed the sword in front of me and

disappeared. Today, whenever I go into concentrated meditation, there will be a sword high above my head. The demons are all frightened out of their wits and take refuge in me. I got this treasure sword just because I made offerings to Raksasas.

In tantric practice, there is the arrangement of Eight offerings (from right to left): conch, fruit, anointed incense, lamp, unlighted incense sticks, five white flowers, soapy water, running water or boiled water. The mantra for this offering is: "Om, ya-li-ye, zhen-ba-la, sian-da-ye, sha-ba-le-wa-la, bie-cha, ya-gan, ba-deng, bu-bie, du-bie, ya-luo-chie, jien-die, nee-wen-die, shi-da, bu-la-dee-cha-ye, sa-ho."

The mudra for this offering must be taught in person.

Originally, desire to make offerings came from monks and priests themselves. In whatever they were doing (moving, living, sitting, and sleeping), as long as they held deference for the Buddha, they would generate the resolve to make offerings. Offerings had been very effective. Intentioned offerings are external; unintentional offerings are internal; both types are meritorious. In this world of ours, making offerings is one way of cultivating; it has been passed down from generation to generation and is inconceivably effective. It is not correct not to make offerings. Some people hold that the Buddha is in our mind and that it is the mind that counts, and that making offerings is only a formality quite outside the mind. They are not wrong, but such enlightened people are rare after all. If all ordinary people ignore making offerings, there will be anarchism in the Buddha Dharma. If all rituals are abandoned, sentient beings may lose their bearings and very few could ever attain enlightenment.

In sum, practitioners in meditation must make offerings; otherwise, they are considered to have committed "offense of disrespect."

*...from **The Art of Meditation** by Grand Master Sheng-yen Lu*
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The Art Of Meditation

Chapter 13---The Secret Empowerment I Received

Many years ago, one of my students asked me if the Ling Xian Sect belongs to the Esoteric School. I laughed heartily and said that it is Esoteric. Why is the Ling Xian Sect Esoteric? Because I learned all Dharmas and know all dharmas. I practiced Taoism, Exoteric Buddhism, and Esoteric Buddhism. My experience is hitherto unknown in this world. What I know is the greatest Dharma Assembly of all teachings. I founded this Ling Xian Sect. I secretly received empowerment from my root-guru Living Buddha. As most of my doctrines are Esoteric, my sect naturally belongs to Esoteric Buddhism.

I remember when I met my guru the first time, he was amused at my name. After sitting quietly for a little while, he summoned me to the shrine. He told me what I was in my three previous life-times and asked if I knew about them. When I told him I did, he told me I had the best propensity and had shocked the world. He also said that although he was known as the Living Buddha, he was not as famous as me. When he asked me if I would like to take refuge and be empowered and instituted, I said "Of course." I was moved by the fact that being a patriarch of a school, he was so modest and unimposing.

So, in front of the Tantric shrine, the guru invoked the blessing from Kundali (the personal deity in Esoteric Buddhism), dipped the mantra into the nectar, and passed the nectar to me. The attendant on his left tried to take it and pass it to me, but the guru waved him back and handed it to me himself. With great respect, I took over the nectar and drank it. The guru told me that all the karmic hindrances in the three periods (past, present, and future) are eradicated and that I would see my own self-nature.

After that, the Guru took five grains of rice and put them into my left palm. He taught me the Offering Mudra and the Hundred-Words Mantra. He taught me the mantra literally sentence by sentence. Then he told me to go into Samadhi. Once in Samadhi, I was flying in the empty space above the Universe, with the Guru flying before me. When I tossed a grain to the West, the West became covered with lotus flowers in full bloom. When I threw a grain to the East, there appeared many Dharma treasures with solemnity and luminosity. When I threw a grain to the South, a group of monks started chanting mantras in Sanskrit. When I dropped a grain North, there appeared numerous Buddhist canopies and banners, adorning the various Buddhas. The last grain was dropped into the Center, and with a loud "Hum," there appeared a Buddha land, with Mahavairocana in the middle, who stretched his arm to touch my head.

My guru was pleased and took a flower from before Buddha Vairocana and gave it to me. I took the flower to show that I had taken the Guru's "Mind Mudra" (Mudra of the Buddha-mind, as a certification of one's enlightenment, the mind-essence transmitted from Master to disciple), and then I gave it back to the Guru, who offered it to the Buddha. The Guru said to me, "Now I have passed the Heart Mudra to you, you are to develop it and return to the Guru who will offer it to the Buddha. This is the non-extinct Heart Mudra of the True Dharma. As the Diamond Sutra says, Buddha Dipamkara, instructing Shakyamuni Buddha, said "you are to become a Buddha in the future." Now I am going to say the same thing: "You are to become a Buddha in the future."

Then the Guru put his hand upon my head, and pressed with some real force, shouting "Om Hum." I felt an air stream coming down from the crown to the heart area. My heart became an eight-petal lotus flower, with a Sanskrit word "Hum" in the middle. My lotus flower became whiter and whiter and more and more beautiful. The

Root Guru's force, like some dazzling light, radiated from his hand to my heart, turning it into a treasure of luminosity.

When the empowerment session was completed, the Root Guru showed me how to form the various mahamudras one by one, part by part. This was called Sima-bandha (establishing boundaries). The Root Guru said: "As there are always demons to make trouble to the practitioner, it is necessary to establish boundaries to prevent their invasion. So mark out Heaven Boundaries in Heaven, Earth Boundaries on Earth, Wall Boundaries in the shrine, Net Boundaries on your body. You should learn the Vajra Sword and the Vajra Fire. Make your surrounding a Vajra City so that no demons can attack you."

Now the Root Guru taught me more mantras which I might use later in teaching the Dharma. The Guru told me that in the years to come after the heyday of the Exoteric Buddhism, the Esoteric School would become popular. When the Esoteric lights appear, some black demons would come to make trouble, luring certain people into collateral branches. At that time you must stand out and make the lion's roar to distinguish the wrong from the right. In passing to you the mind-mudra of the Correct Dharma, I disclose this great secret to you. I want you to develop the Ling Xian Sect, help the disciples to generate great resolve of Bodhi, and remove all the sufferings and afflictions for the sentient beings.

The Root Guru then chanted the four-fold refuge mantra and I chanted after him. He also recited the mantra to develop the Bodhiscitta, and I recited after him. Then the Guru told me to go into Samadhi once again. He did too. Once again we were flying in the five directions above the Universe. There dwelled five Buddhas: Mahavairocana Buddha in the Center, representing the Buddha Department; the Eastern Buddha representing the Vajra Department; the Southern Buddha representing the Treasure Department; the Western Buddha representing the Lotus Flower

Department; and the Northern Buddha representing the Karma Department. At this moment, the Five Buddhas started radiating strong lights, with me in the center, very much like a joint empowerment. The Dharma stream of wisdom poured upon me from five directions. The Five Wisdom lights were used to eradicate the five impurities--not only the body, speech and mind were purified, but also the god of consciousness was cleansed. During the empowerment by all Buddhas, I found my original nature celestial, my body transparent and crystal; I could not see myself for the whole body was a sea of light continuously dashing out to the Void.

Coming out of Samadhi, the Root Guru said: "Wonderful! Great perfection!" I said to him:

"Thanks for the reinforcement from you and all the Buddhas."

The Guru remarked: "Causes and conditions have made this inevitable. All is pre-arranged."

I asked: "Apart from this affinity, am I going to take refuge in other gurus later on?"

"Yes, after my tranquil extinction," my Guru replied without the slightest displeasure. "You are my direct lineage of mind-mudra. This method of lineage is little known to the outsiders. After I go into tranquil extinction, you can write about it in your books, which will be a good certification. I have many disciples. You are one of my secret lineage students. You may understand later why I did all that today. Don't forget this lineage!"

I said: "Of course not. I'll remember it."

"All right. Everything is perfect now. You can go and become a Buddha now."

I came out of the shrine with great respect.

This was what happened when I was young. I was so lucky to receive secret empowerment from the Living Buddha. This past event was disclosed only once in one of my many spiritual books,

but the procedure was not explained. It was unknown to my disciples, even to my family. When the Living Buddha was performing the empowerment, there was only one person around by the name of "Hamadacheyi," a disciples of the Living Buddha. He was puzzled wondering why the Living Buddha was so cordial and kind to me. When the ceremony was over, Hamadacheyi was amused and overjoyed, telling me: "This is the longest empowerment ever. I've never seen the Living Buddha so happy. You are somebody special."

I studied all major doctrines and understood the essence of each: Taoism, Exoteric Buddhism, Esoteric Buddhism, and Christianity. Today, using both compassion and wisdom, I set up the Ling Xian Sect, to convert the sentient beings. This is why I say "There is no such thing as Dharma. Nor is there such thing as Sect. I talk about Sects today. They don't really exist."

Whichever student can understand my Dharma teaching in this verse, he has got my mind-mudra. All human lives have their causes and conditions. Since I have the greatest vows to fulfill, my Dharma is unprecedented. I am not to liberate one person, but all the suffering beings. I am not only to spread the supreme Dharma, but also to develop expedient methods.

The Living Buddha breathed his last. When he was cremated, the sun was bursting with strong white light surrounded by white clouds in the shape of a great mirror. Auspicious lights shot up from Earth to Heaven. Many sariras were found from the ashes. During those years in the United States, I practiced secretly many doctrines, giving more time to "meditation for luminosity." Many foreigners came to take refuge; Ph.D's and M.A.'s, lawyers, and physicians, all came to study Buddhism. Such affinity was magnificent. Now a Dharma banner flies high in Seattle, U.S.A.; the Ling Xian Sect is showering compassion and kindness. All this is a great merit in the history of deliverance by the Living Buddha.

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The Art Of Meditation

Chapter 14---What Is Meant by Wild Fox Zhan?

Practitioners in meditation often believe that they are training their breathing or air-stream, thinking that they will have realized when their own air-stream merges with that on Earth and in Heaven to start Universal circulation. This is what we call "wild fox Zhan" (not: specious meditation, based on a story about a Tang Dynasty priest teaching Zhan to a fox) in the phenomenal world. Some people who do air-breathing exercises and inhaling and exhaling exercises are still juggling with breathing, whose final achievement never goes beyond that.

Mister Li Bing-nan, a lay-Buddhist in the middle of Taiwan who had been lecturing on various sutras for years, was originally a practitioner of "wild fox zhan," but later gave up the evil practice and started learning the Pure Land.

Is "universal circulation" also "breathing?" In fact, no; it is a "rational." Meditation for luminosity takes "rationale" as its fundamental and "breathing" supplementary. In the final analysis, it is the mind that counts. In other words, only when there is not thought arising can there be tranquillity; only when there is no intention can there be eternity. The mind in meditation is the center of the Universe and the residence of all secrets of Nature. We know that the Earth and Heaven and stars are changing every minute; the 360 degrees of revolution of the Universe goes with the elapse of time. Only those who have realized remain in a state of "eternity with no intention."

I want to tell meditators how to avoid falling into collateral branches or "Wild Fox Zhan." "Wild Fox" meditation is phenomenal and has its form; correct meditation is formless. Man is in fact related with heaven and Earth. The meditator should not

exert himself in seeking; unhealthy ideas must be expelled. If the man is as still as a tree, the spiritual air-stream will return, and the light of the true Nature will appear. This light of the True Nature is what Taoists call "the innate breath or "innate energy."

From the initial meditation to the profound concentrated meditation, all the states are experiences that are formless. The Taoist practice, called Water and Fire, is actually also "Wild Fox" in nature. The True Nature, on the other hand, is luminous all over the heart chakra, automatically free from all worries, and automatically high above the worldly affairs. The Taoists speak the importance of "internal cultivation," "breathing cultivation," "gathering Chinese herbs" and "Holy foetus." All these practices belong to "Wild Fox Zhan."

By now some readers would think that Sheng-Yen Lu is arrogant and presumptuous. The Taoist practices such as "gathering Chinese herbs" and "generating Holy goetus" are the essentials for centuries and Taoist masters have always followed those doctrines. How could you obliterate them at one stroke? No, I am not writing them off. I am only saying that they are supplementary and that the phenomenal "Holy foetus" is not as good as a nominal "Holy foetus." The so-called "innate breath" does not really exist as some air-stream, but a name for the nominal True Nature.

We should know that "Wild Fox Zhan" also talks about revolution of the Universe. One revolution is completed in one day. There are two hours in one day when Heaven and Earth meet. These two hours are the best time for meditation. This is when the kan (water) and Li (fire) points meet in the Chinese Eight Diagrams for divination. They are exactly from 11 to 1 o'clock at mid-night. The difference between other hours and the midnight hours is that during the mid-night hours the Positive and Negative meet and merge, but not in other hours. So, if this is the case, and if the cultivator observes this teaching, it would mean that there are times

you can go into Samadhi and there are times you can not. That means further that you sometimes change into a celestial being and sometimes a ghost. It is true that Taoist books on Chinese pellets all record the two periods for meditation, yet "Samadhi at fixed moments" would mean that the cultivator is at the mercy of the revolution of the Universe and that he can never attain self-mastery. Though the teachings in those Taoist books can produce some effect, they nevertheless don't go beyond "Wild Fox" type.

I feel that among the many methods of meditation, the most natural is the best. For example, you can sit in meditation any time of the day, regardless of those moments when Heaven and Earth meet. The Universe does revolve, but as long as the mind remains peaceful and undistracted, you can certainly see that the positive harmonious air-stream is generated and then you are in control of all things, instead of being controlled by them. You can sit in meditation any time of the day, thus changing the other hours into "elastic mid-might" hours.

True meditation must be very natural and unconstrained. If you rigidly adhere to classic teachings, you degenerate into "Wild Fox" branch and indulge in meaningless arguments. If you feel constrained in your meditation, the Universe remains the Universe and you remain yourself; the Universe controls you, but not the other way around. Once you enjoy freedom and self-mastery, Heaven and Earth and in complete harmony and lasting peace, with everything going well, like rivers flowing continuously or green grass being gently swept by a little breeze.

Here lies the difference between the correct meditation and heretic meditation. I want to tell my readers sincerely that in the eyes of a Buddha who is enlightened, what many monks practice is no better than "Wild Fox Zhan." Some people who have been doing good will go to Heaven after death only to become gods; the high-ranking are gods with conceit, the middle-ranking are gods in angry

state of mind, and the low-ranking are gods with greed. These gods have become gods because they have been doing good, yet in the eyes of the Buddha, they have not realized. The God in Christianity Jehovah is a god with great conceit. I came to see this point long ago when I was reading the Bible.

From the first meditation Heaven to the fourth meditation Heaven, and further to concentrated meditation, the cultivator is still practicing with attachment. He is already a Holy man above the mundane world, but he is still the Lower Heaven, belonging to the Realm of Desire. So in the eyes of Buddhas, when the cultivator is attached to anything, he is not enlightened, but is within the boundary of "Wild Fox."

Many celestial beings have cultivated to go to the "Non-Thought Heaven;" when they reach the "Abode of Limitless Consciousness," the mind no longer exists, and they reach the "Abode of Limitless Space," where time and space no longer exist. That will be the Heaven of Neither Perception nor Non-Perception, which is the highest of the Three Realms. However, if one falls into the one-sided Emptiness (characteristic of Hinayana), there is still the attachment of one-sided emptiness, and because of that, it is not perfect enlightenment.

So in meditation for luminosity, there is no room for attachment. Put it in simple terms, the cultivator must be completely natural and unconstrained, progressing from motion to stillness, from cold to warm, from scattered to focused, from distractions to single mindedness; the breathing is clear and fresh; the original spirit goes to the brow-point. He does not rigidly follow formal procedures, nor the classic teachings, but he gets responses without seeking them, gets things verified without testing them, gathers without collecting, and does everything methodologically without deliberate use of methods. He has correct vision, correct insight, but no unhealthy thoughts-- he lets everything happen naturally.

After I have realized, all I want to do is to tell the whole world these great teachings. I have the enthusiasm to salvage this suffering world. To do so, I have had to begin from the very beginning. I started from writing books on invoking spirits or some spiritual powers and gradually came to discuss Buddhism and Tantric teachings proper. These expedient ways are paved with good intentions to deliver sentient beings. I was also conscious of the fact that ordinary people could not understand what I was trying to achieve. However, patience is needed on the journey of seeking the Truth. To succor all sentient beings from the samsaric cycle and to save this mundane world, we have to have perseverance, teaching minor things first to slowly prepare the way for the Buddha's Dharma. I am not afraid that certain people will misunderstand me, either Buddhist Masters, or Taoist Priests, Catholic priests or pastors; if they can understand me, so much the better; if they don't, it's their business.

This Art of Meditation is a great doctrine concerning directly life and death. Its birth is a great event in the whole world. In practicing meditation, adjust your breathing in the initial tranquillity. In regulating your breathing, the lights turn back to the brow-point which emit golden lights. At this point, your own true nature appears. When your own mind is associated with the mind of the Universe, you let all connections go, withdraw the god of consciousness and see clearly the right path you should take. By then your worries are all gone, and you become a sage of fearlessness.

At the initial stage of meditation, the most important is to "concentrate your spirit."

At the middle stage, the most important is to "keep your mind empty."

At the last stage, the most important is to remain in "eternal tranquillity."

The most natural way is to eradicate all hindrances and press ahead step by step. Spiritual changes at the brow-point will occur naturally. All spiritual changes and supernatural powers are the operations of the brow-point. "The foundation lies in the tranquillity of Mind and regulation of breathing while responses come from the Nothingness of Mind and condensation of breathing." This sums up all secrets in concentrated meditation. It is not too difficult to "awaken to the One Mind and see one's Original Nature." Difficulty lies in the fact that you don't practice, or you don't practice with perseverance. I have the feeling that the worst weakness in human beings is their lack of perseverance; that those who do cultivate follow all kinds of wrong teachings; and that there are people who want to ascend to heaven in one day's practice. On top of this, there are also people who practice Buddhism in appearance, but their heart is dirty and despicable. These contemptible people make me sick, but there is nothing we can do. Human beings are human beings; you may feel sick about them, but you still have to liberate those who have the affinity from previous lives.

To attain Buddhahood, one has to awaken to the One Mind and see one's Original Nature. The "meditation for luminosity" is a great doctrine both in Heaven and on Earth, which contains countless, priceless "pearls and jade pieces," waiting to be dug out by those who have the wisdom.

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The Art Of Meditation

Chapter 15---Tantric Practice of Meditation (1)

When a practitioner has attained "perfect realization," his own Original Nature will appear and he will become a Buddha, feeling that "between Heaven and Earth I am the most revered one."

In his concentrated meditation, he can invite all Buddhas to empower him by shooting up great lights which flash three times. When all Buddhas in the Ten Directions see that someone has attained "Perfect Realization," they will inevitably come to the shrine to celebrate, flashing beautiful lights; Buddhas and Bodhisattvas circle around the Shrine three times and then stay in the space.

At the moment, the heaven Gate is opened, and many celestial maidens come out of the Heaven Gate to scatter flowers on the practitioner. The Flying Musician Gods will play heavenly Music and all Heavens will shower great Dharma rain and great nectar. Flying maidens will dance and the Eight Kinds of Gods and deities (Devas, nagas, yaksas, asuras, garudas, gandharvas, kimnaras, and mahoragas) will come to cheer. A rainbow appears to beam down beautiful lights, and great sound of Dharma thunders and Dharma drums rumbles across the Earth. All Buddhas praise the inconceivable "perfect realization."

Among the Eight Kinds of Gods, the devas and nagas spout out clean water from their mouths, the garudas fly around to protect the Dharma, the yaksas hold scepters to protect the Dharma, the gandharvas spray fragrance, the Musician Gods come to play music, Python Gods and Flying Generals all come to offer protection.

How great the "perfect realization" is! As the practitioner knows that he has realized, he should work even harder for the ultimate

Enlightenment of humanity, and use all kinds of expedient methods to embrace all human beings so that they too become Buddhas. To consummate the aspiration, the practitioner can flash out three rounds of strong lights, chanting "Hom! Hom! Hom!" Suddenly, all the beings from the Ten Spheres of Dharma appear in front of the practitioner, walking around the Shrine seven times. Then they stay quietly down there to listen to his lectures on the Dharma, each getting their own stage of fruition.

The ten groups of beings include your parents in the past seven life times and parents of the present period; your spouses of the past seven lives and your wife of the present; your children and grandchildren of the past seven lives and those of the present; your brothers and sisters of the past seven lives and those of the present; your friends, teachers, and students of the past seven lives and those of the present. No matter whether they are born from an egg, or from a womb, or from heat and moisture, or a miraculous birth, no matter whether they are Asuras, or hell beings, or hungry ghosts or animals, they all come together at your feet impelled by the Dharma force of the "Perfect Realization."

Perfect realization benefits yourself.

Great Bodhicitta benefits others.

So these are the stages of fruition in Tantric cultivation of meditation: to attain perfect realization, to generate great Bodhicitta, to embrace all sentient beings with affinity, and teach those beings without affinity.

The feeling that "I am the most revered one" is by no means conceit, but the kind of lofty aspiration that "Who else except me would deliver the suffering beings? Who else except me would go to Hell to save the Hell beings? The Realized one is not only willing to be born into and stay in the mundane world for a long period, but also ready and willing to stay in Hell for the sake of liberating the Hell beings. At this moment, you are an enlightened

Buddha, with Buddhas of the past period above you, Buddhas to-be in the future period below you. This is a state that links up the past, present, and future periods, which is called "vertical amalgamation of those periods at one moment." This state breaks down the barriers of time and generation, transcending time and space.

Thanks to the "power to be anywhere to do anything at will," you can come and go freely in all the worlds, in the ten directions: upward, downward, central, East, South, North, West, past, present, and future. All these worlds are amalgamated, thus breaking down the barriers of space. This state transcends space, called "horizontal amalgamation of ten directions." By now neither time nor space exists, and you are in a Dharma Realm Dhyana.

In a Dharma Realm Dhyana, the world does not exist, nor is there difference in time or space. The practitioner himself no longer exists, with his own luminosity resembling Void, and this is the amalgamation of the self and the Universe. Some people say this is "Dhyana to return to the Ocean of Mahavairocana." In Tantric practice, the practitioner's body changes into a mass of light, and the Buddhas from above change into spots of light which flow into the practitioners' mass of light. Thus, the whole Universe is just a mass of light-- no more difference among the Universe, the practitioner and the Buddhas from the Ten Directions.

This is what happens when a practitioner attains Perfect Enlightenment in the Ocean of Light of the Dharma Realm, the small self and the big self amalgamate, and the Self-Nature merges with Buddhas from the Ten Directions and with the Universe. This is what the Diamond Sutra describes: "There is no form of self, of others, of sentient beings, nor of Universal self." There is only the Void, with no self or others, male or female, superior or inferior, nothing! In this Realm, there is no Buddhahood to attain from above, no Dharma to practice in the middle, no sentient beings to liberate down below.

As far as I know "the Great Void" is a proof of "perfect enlightenment," but the Self-Nature can reappear in the Void. This is a rebirth after Enlightenment, a return to the "world of endurance," in order to save the sentient beings and become Buddhas together with them.

Please note, my dear readers, that I hold equality between the Buddha and myself, making no distinction in between, for the claim "I am the most revered one" is a claim for the amalgamation of the Buddhas in the ten directions and Myself.

There was once a presumptuous man who told me the following:

"I am the most revered one, so I need no more cultivation."

"Why is that?" I asked.

"If I go on practicing, I would be superior to the Buddha."

"What are you now then?" I asked again.

"No one is my equal."

His three answers are all faulty. With the first answer, though there is the Realm in which one can feel "I am the most revered one" as discussed in this chapter, something is wrong with "I need no more cultivation" which shows he has not realized. For when the self-nature becomes a Buddha, the highest realm no longer makes any distinction between self and others, and the self-nature of all Buddhas in the ten directions becomes one and the same thing, returning to the Ocean of Mahavairocana. "I need no more cultivation" shows he has not reached the other shore and that "I am the most revered one" is also false.

With the second answer he is even more ignorant. It not only shows that he has not returned to the Ocean of Mahavairocana, but shows that he still makes distinction between the Buddha and himself. he does not know that the Empty Nature is equal. His remark, typical of off-springs of demons, shows his conceit as well as his ignorance of Buddhist teachings.

The third answer, "No one is my equal" is a favorite phrase of the

Maras. Such people are crazy or have been led astray by devils. Not long afterwards, this person did have a nerves breakdown and was sent to an asylum. Asylums are filled up with super great men who "are the most revered."

This chapter is about what happens when one reaches the highest Realm in Meditation. I want everybody to understand that the ultimate goal is get to the Ocean of Mahavairocana where everybody is equal. Human beings are confused about the self-nature; after enlightenment, they return to the Ocean of Mahavairocana, to become "the most revered," never again to fall into the cyclic forms of existence.

Then, coming out of the Ocean of Mahavairocana, the self-nature shows itself again. Out of benevolence and compassion for the sentient beings, you come back to the human world to save the suffering beings by compassion and wisdom. Whatever the methods, as long as you can put the sentient beings onto the correct path, they are skillful, expedient methods.

I feel deeply that the ultimate goal for all practices is the Realm of "Great Void Samadhi" (in which everything is empty, formless and desireless), the state that the Taoists call "The Ocean of Nothingness" ("An Illumination Sea of Dharma Realm"). All sentient beings are imperfect before realization. Once they reach that Realm, they understand the equality of the Buddha Nature. As I take pity on today's spiritual cultivators for their ignorance, I have first described the highest, the most extraordinary Realm of cultivation.

*...from **The Art of Meditation** by Grand Master Sheng-yen Lu*

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The Art Of Meditation

Chapter 16---Tantric Practice of Meditation (2)

There is a master in the United States who has renounced home-life to become a monk, practicing Exoteric Buddhism. When I first visualized him, I saw he was a monkey in his previous life, and he looks exactly like a monkey: a narrow-face, pointed ears, a flat nose, and raised lips. I calculated his achievement in cultivation, and found it is zero-- he has really achieved nothing at all.

This master left home when he was very small, so it is amazing that he has done nothing in his cultivation. In his practice, he has just learnt beating drums and gangs, chanting or singing some mantras. Whenever he was invited to lecture on buddhism, he would tell some boring stories. Once he was invited to Canada by the World Buddhism Assembly, and his lecture was like a lullaby, with everyone in the audience dozing off. What a disgraceful monk! What a shameless cultivator!

What he has done all his life includes: building temples, running schools, asking for alms, running money-making Buddhist services, preaching and chanting, or delivering the souls of the dead-- all very superficial, and no cultivation of self-nature. Such monks have my pity and sympathy because they are businessmen monks.

Some day, I am going to teach and convert him. If he learns earnestly, that is the bloom of a Buddhist seed. If he clings to his old ways, that means he does not have such fortune. As he was reborn from a monkey in the forest, he has to practice "the Secret Dharani of Vipulagrabhe Maniprabhe Tathagata."

This Dharani method had the following origin. There were once three Brahmin celestial beings who lived and practiced in the forests of the Treasure Mountain. Although they learned quite a

number of celestial methods and tricks, they had not transcended life and death, that is, had not attained perfect enlightenment. Time passed day by day, all wasted, so the Brahmin beings were perplexed and greatly worried. One day they made the great resolve of Bodhi that if they attained enlightenment, they were willing to teach and convert all living beings in the forests. (That is why the master I mentioned should practice the Dharani.)

Buddha Shakyamuni got to know the Bodhicitta of the three celestial beings and appeared in the sky to preach to them the Secret Dharani of the Great Treasure Attic. Since then the three celestials cultivated accordingly, until in the end, they became three beams of strong white light which went right into the earth. From there, three bamboo shoots came out, which, when ten months old, split open by themselves. Out of the bamboo stems, jumped three gold children looking very handsome and majestic. The children sat in full-lotus position under the bamboos, went into concentrated meditation, and became enlightened. They all attained Buddhahood.

The three bamboos in the forest became three Attics adorned with the seven treasures. At that time, there appeared in the sky the golden text of the mantra of "the Secret Dharani of Vipulagrabhe Maniprabhe Tathagata," with the Buddhas from the ten directions also in the sky, praising the wonderful effect of the mantra.

The three celestial beings transformed into golden children and then became Buddhas. This is how the Secret Dharani of Vipulagrabhe Maniprabhe Tathagata came into being.

Those who want to practice this method have to install the gold statues of these three Buddhas, with Mani Flower Banner Buddha in the middle, Nana Mani Taghata on the right, and the Vajra Super Spring Taghagata on the left. The three statues must be exactly like Shakyamuni, golden color all over, covered by the Buddhist surplice (Kasaya). They are sitting in the full-lotus position amidst

a circle of lights, forming mudras with both hands which hold a pagoda made of the seven treasures. The three Buddhas may look exactly the same, and only have different names.

The practitioner, sitting in front of the three Buddhas, radiates light from the syllable "Hum" at his heart.

Then recite the four-syllable wisdom mantra: "Cha, Hom, Bong, He."

Then invoke the three Buddhas by saying: "The seven-treasure attics are in my heart, where dwell secretly the Mandaras.

Inconceivable is your power to bestow empowerment, sincerely I request you to embrace me."

At this moment, the practitioner visualizes that the lotus flower at his heart has the golden syllable "Hum" shining. Visualize further that the three Buddhas change into three spots of golden light in response, which go right into the lotus flower at his heart through the crown, to merge with the golden light of his own. Visualize, again and again for a long time, that the three spots of golden light go into your heart to merge with your own light.

After visualization, recite the three Buddhas' root mantra: "Namah sarva tathagatanam, Om, vipula garbhe, mani prabhe, tathagata, nidar 'sane, mani mani, suprabhe, vimale, sagara, gambhire, hum hum, jvala jvala, buddha vilokite, guhya, dhistita, garbhe, svaha" seven or forty-nine or one hundred and eight times:

Then recite the "heart mantras" three times"

The heart mantra: "Om, mani, jari, hum."

The after-heart mantra: "Om, mani dhari, hum phat."

The all-embracing heart mantra: "Om, mani ze-cha, hum."

The verse of Transference of Merit for this practice is:

"May the merit and virtue accrued from this work.

Help me to become Buddha of the Seven-Treasure Attics.

I will deliver all sentient beings from misery without exception,

And get them to live in the Buddha's Land."

For this practice, you can prepare yourself a seven-treasure pagoda, inside which are the mantras written in Sanskrit. During each session of practice, hold the pagoda in your hands; this can speed up yogic responses.

This method not only can help all sentient beings in forests, but also benefit all sentient beings of the four modes of birth. A virtuous person who goes in for it should write in Sanskrit "The Mantra of Vipulagrabhe Maniprabhe Tathagata," and put it on banners, on the wall of the shrine, on paper or silk, on all the ceremonial gateways. If sentient beings see them, touch them with hands or body, or hear of them, or even the dust or ash falls on the passers-by, their grave sins of all kinds may be dispelled.

Besides, you can go to the top of a mountain and recite this Dharani to the four directions of the forests-- all sentient beings you can see, including birds and beasts, can remove their sins; birds and beasts will get away from the four modes of birth and go to live in the Buddah's Land. Even the most serious sinners can have their sins removed: such as those who have committed the five rebellious sins (killing one's father or one's mother, killing an Arhat, causing the Buddha's body to bleed for which one must go to Hell, causing disunity in the Buddhist order, slandering the correct Dharma, or any since serious enough to send one to Hell) and also those who do not support their parents and slander the correct Dharma.

The sutra also says that those who hear their mantras will be immune to diseases in the following parts: teeth, tongue, eyes, ears, head, throat, hands and feet, waist, heart, liver, kidney, lungs, spleen, and diseases such as malaria, paralysis, dysentery, rheumatism, leprosy, and tinea among others. If you have any of them, you will recover from it very soon. This "Secret Dharani of Vipulagrabhe Maniprabhe Tathagata" is inconceivably mysterious and excellent. This Dharani belonged to Mahavairocana and came

into the world from the heart of Shakyamuni Buddha to transform the three celestial beings. Later, it has been practiced by cultivators to achieve enlightenment.

According to my research, when Shakyamuni was turning the wheel of Dharma, the Vajrapani broke the ground with the scepter, from where a Seven-Treasure Attic arose with three Tathagatas inside, who were no other than the three celestial beings who had attained perfect enlightenment. This served as a prelude and a turning point for Shakyamuni to preach the Dharma.

I know clearly that the master I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter has left home-life physically but has never renounced it in his mind, as what he has been thinking is nothing but "business." His cultivation only stays on the surface and has never got onto the right track. His god of the eye is weak and he has the characteristics of those who go to Hell. Today, I didn't disclose his Dharma name hoping he will turn a new leaf in his cultivation. He should cultivate his self-nature and refrain from Karma of speech. Don't use abusive language all the time; accumulate some virtue for the sentient creatures, who will also feel happy, fortunate, and satisfied.

I have not renounced home-life physically, but in my mind I have in fact done so. I follow the Bodhisattva practice, also recite Dharanis, and practice any great teachings that suit me. I have realized in my actual practice and know the great secrets. I have got self-mastery both in body and in mind. Now as the king of Dharmas, I spread the Dharma to all corners of the earth.

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The Art Of Meditation

Chapter 17---Tantric Practice of Meditation (3)

One day I visited a lay Buddhist Jiang at his place and he asked me to teach him the Dharma. Afterwards, in our chat, Jiang told me:

"Grand Master Lu's teaching of the Dharma is like that of Mahavairocana, illuminating the whole land of endurance. These teachings can save both humans and the world, can deliver both oneself and others from misery, and benefit both ghosts and men. You are really superior to those priests."

I hastened to show my modesty: "I'm afraid I don't deserve all that. I feel flattered."

Jiang then said: "As a human being, of course life and death are matters of primary importance. However, if you want to spread the Dharma, you need the aid of money. Money is also one of the rare treasures in the world. Do you agree to that, Grand Master Lu?"

"Yes, I do. In the merit of alms-giving, there is the money-giving. To handle all these services well, you also need money. But to Buddhist practitioners, this money must come by proper means, and used properly, with no waste, no greed, no obsession."

"Grand Master is right," Jiang said. "But the earthly people don't think that way. In today's world, money comes before anything else. For example, those rich people who have not even received primary education are given honorary Ph.D. degrees by certain universities. The rich are always the chairmen or presidents certain universities. The rich are always the chairmen or presidents of all kinds of committees, though everybody knows their money came by tricks or by force. The rich can easily catch the attention of the Government. They are invited to attend the most important meetings, though they have no learning to speak of. The rich can spend huge sums of money on election campaigns, like buying the

committee membership or congress membership. As long as you have money, you can bring a dead person back to life-- those in jail can be reinstated with money."

"You are quite right," I agreed. "This is a time when the rich hooligans are in the seats of honor."

"Why don't you make a lot of money to build monasteries and temples, Grand Master?"

"I'm building the Ling Xian Attic in the States."

"That's peanuts. Other people are building temples all over a mountain, and yours is just a tile-roofed little hut. Your teachings are well-known the world over, but without a mountain of monasteries to back it up, the brilliance of your teachings can not be brought to the full."

"What you say is certainly reasonable, but my interest is not there. There will be people who are build temples and monasteries, but I am not one of them. I am to write spiritual books and propagate the Dharma. I don't know whether those who put up temples and monasteries have true Dharmas, but when there are places for practice, there will be cultivators. Big monasteries don't guarantee great teachings; it is the people who have realized that really count. The earthly people often attend to trifles to the neglect of essentials. Their line of argument is not worth debating."

"Grand Master, I know you are not interested in money or wealth, and have lived a thrifty life. But, may I make bold to ask: Are there methods to amass wealth?"

I burst into laughter and Jiang was flushed. Then I told Jiang that there are such methods which also belong to Jambhala's practices in Tantric Buddhism. The practitioner has to worship two Wealth Deities. If these wealthy Deities are properly worshipped, your wealth will flow in continuously. Once you are rich, you can raise your head and speak louder; you will be respected, put in the seat of honor, and even when you fart, everyone will say it is "fragrant!"

The first Wealth Deity is the Yellow Jambhala, whose body is yellow, sitting in a half-lotus position, with the left leg bent, and right leg dangling. There is a conch lotus vase on the Dharma seat (to represent fulfillment). The Deity has one head and two arms, with a fine-Buddha crown covered with precious stones, three necklaces of pearls. He looks wealthy and important, with a slight angry touch on his face (wealthy people are always awe-inspiring). He holds an S-shaped ornamental object (in Chinese it means "as you wish") in his right hand and in his left a mongoose that spits out treasures. He is dressed in Heavenly clothing of colors, with jade bracelets on hands and feet. This is the Dharma form of the Yellow Jambhala in Tantric Buddhism.

The second Wealth Deity is the Black Jambhala, in a standing position, the right leg bent, and the left straight. he has one head and two arms, the right hand holds the top of a skull in front of his chest as a blood container, and the left hand holds a mongoose too. On his head is a crown of five skulls in the shape of the five-Buddha crown; around his neck is a string of 50 pray beads made of human skulls. Dressed in tiger's skin, with five-color snakes as bracelets on hands, feet and neck, he shows anger on his black face. This is Dharma-form of the Black Jambhala.

In Tantric Buddhism, there are other Wealth Deity practices such as Red Raksasa Practice, Dakini Practice, Bag Jambhala Practice, and the Five-Jamabhala Practices. All these can be used to accumulate money and wealth. Here I shall discuss only the Yellow Jambhala Practice and the Black Jambhala Practice. As long as the proper procedures are followed, wealth will come as one wishes.

I have said that to amass money and wealth, one should worship the Yellow and Black Jambhalas whose statues look as described in the above paragraphs. According to Tantric teachings, the Yellow Jambhala has his right big toe hurting a lot. As long as the practitioner requests from the Buddha some secret nectar to relieve

the pain of his right big toe, the Yellow Jambhala will become compassionate and his mongoose will spit out jewels and gold coins in a shower, and endless bank notes.

As far as I know, the Black Jambhala has an affliction in his chest which is very hot and he is perplexed by having too much money. As long as the practitioner requests from the Buddhas some nectar to pour into his chest to cool him off, he will feel pleased and his mongoose will also spit out silver, gold, and treasures, whose dazzle will make the earthly people burst out "Long live the Wealth Deities!"

First, recite the invocation mantra: "Om, bie-cha-sha-ma-ya, cha," three times.

Sit quietly and visualize the Jambhalas ascending and visualize the Dharma form of the Jambhala as the case may be (that is the Yellow Jambhala if one worships the Yellow Jambhala).

Remember, the Yellow Jambhala radiates yellow light and the Black Jambhala black light. Both look angry. If you worship the Yellow Jambhala, recite his heart mantra: "Om, Jambhala, cha-leng-cha-na-ye, sa-he," 108 times.

After that, recite the response mantra of Wealth Deities: "Om, zhen-long-moo, sa-he," 21 times.

Now, you stand up, hold a cup of water for offering, form the three-mountain mudra with your left hand, and the sword mudra with your right hand. Then recite the nectar mantra: "Om, sa-er-wa-se-die, hum," three times.

Visualize that your Jambhala is standing before you.

If you are worshipping the yellow Jambhala, sprinkle the nectar on the big toe of his right foot.

If you are worshipping the Black Jambhala, sprinkle the nectar onto his chest.

Now recite the verse of praise to the Wealth Deities: "I express my reverence to all Wealth Deities who vow to bring benefit to all. You

give us money, wealth, and treasures to relieve sentient beings of poverty and suffering. Your merits are extensive and perfect, beings both in Heaven and on Earth sing you high praise."

In Wealth Deity practices remember the following two most important points:

First, in worshipping Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, your mind offenses will be overlooked by most of them, for this is their great compassion for sentient beings-- as long as the offenses are unintentional, they tolerate them with a smile, and no anger rises. In worshipping Vajra gods, however, no mistake is allowed and everything must be done according to the rituals. Wealth Deities belong to Vajra gods and no negligence is to be tolerated in your worshipping. Otherwise, instead of bringing you some benefit, they may bring you misfortune. If the worshipping is not properly done, or if you show any indolence, calamities may occur. Remember this by all means!

Secondly, to the Yellow Jambhala and the Black Jambhala, make offerings of grape wine, fruit, incense, tea, flat cakes, and biscuits. Other offerings include gold and silver containers, jewels, plants and other things. But remember, grape wine must be offered. Make your offerings every day without stop. In Wealth Deity practices, you have to practice the "four preliminaries" first, which include prostration, mandala offering, the hundred-syllable-mantra, and the Vajra heart. All these should proceed according to the rules.

Jiang is a professor in Washington University and has a second job outside, but the family's income is just about the average.

Everybody has his abilities as well as limitations. Jiang cannot hope to match those high priests who can afford to build big monasteries. Good Gracious! University professors can never make as much as high priests. So Jiang wants to change his profession. I performed the Black Jambhala empowerment for him. He is going

to start a restaurant in the States, determined to make a lot of money!

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The Art Of Meditation

Chapter 18---Tantric Practice of Meditation (4)

Today, I have many students in Taiwan, a few of whom are "practicing the way to relieve the world." They use my teachings to help people out when they have misfortune, fatal disease, big changes in family, great loss of money, or no children. In their work to relieve people of their sufferings, I want them to adhere to one principle: the rich pay more, the poor pay less, the poorest get aid instead of paying. leave everything to the willingness of those you help. Don't impose anything on them, otherwise, it would not be "practicing the way to relieve the world," but "profit-making." Making a profit out of it would give other people a handle against yourself, and would be considered as doing a karmic deed. People like Zhang Huang-ming, Chen Zhang-xung, Liao Yu-cuen, Su Ar-lan, You Yin-shou, Zheng Yu-xin, Chen Fan-kun, Su Ji-jun are all my students and are "practicing the way to relieve people." Such people, however, must cultivate themselves every day. One day's negligence results in one day's karmic hindrance; ten day's negligence produces ten day's karmic hindrance; a year's negligence is a year's hindrances. They must not treat this lightly. They should know that to practice the way to help the world without knowing the Dharma or without cultivation is a grave sin in itself--it does not earn you any merit, nor does it help other people for you haven't got the necessary power. In that case, you are a charlatan, who will go to Hell after death. I tell my students to cultivate every day if they want to help other people. If they forget to cultivate on a certain day, they simply don't try to help others on that day, for it would be a sure seed for going to Hell if they did. Besides, the thing that I hate most is "blackmail." Most charlatans like to frighten people out of their wits first, so that they can ask for

a lot of money from them. This is like a trick in "repairing a pot"--make the hole bigger first and then repair it. If I get to know that any of my students is playing this trick, I shall have it exposed upon evidence without any consideration for their feelings. I am impartial and incorruptible. I encourage those who do good and whip those who go wrong. If they don't want to be my students any more, they can send back their refuge certificate and I will not be bothered by what they do. If they go to Hell after death, that is their business, and I won't be encumbered. As for now, I have to keep an eye on them.

In using talismans to cure illnesses, there is an incantation which must be chanted by those who "practice the way to relieve the world." The incantation goes like: "From the primeval state of the Universe, when Earth was about to be distinguished from Heaven, our ancestors like Huang Di tasted many herbs for medicine. The human body is first attacked from inside by the seven emotions and the six desires and then from outside by external factors. There are a hundred and one diseases, some of which we are conscious of and some not at all. With the sincerest respect, I request the speedy arrival of our ancient sages who will examine the symptoms in and out, and cure the patient with quick effect. I sincerely request the sages to bless men with peace. This is at the order of the Primeval Compassionate Reverend. Carry it out now, please!"

The practitioner should recite this incantation forty-nine times a day, and after the recitation, inhale one breath from the East, one from the south, one from the West, one from the North, and before exhaling it, drink the water with "the Incantation of the Heavenly Doctor." After practicing this every morning for one year, one can cure illnesses by reciting: "The contact be established. Heavenly Doctor! Your love for sentient beings is as great as Heaven! All illnesses are driven away as soon as the breathing comes. This is the order of the Holy Heavenly Doctor! Carry it out now!"

After the recitation, blow one breath out into the water, which the patient drinks and gets recovered then and there. The practitioner must observe strictly the morality of cultivators. If he violates it, he will not be tolerated by Heaven or Earth, and will have to report in writing to the gods in Heaven and Earth. Please bear this in mind by all means. Should anything go wrong, the practitioner will be struck by thunder and will definitely go to Hell.

I advise all my students who are "practicing the way to aid the suffering beings" to cultivate the secret methods of the Medicine Tathagata. Here I make a special point of writing out the sequence of the secret practice of the Medicine Tathagata. The cultivation will help in the treatment of diseases:

First, recite three times the invocation mantra: "Om, bie-cha-ma-ye, cha! I request the presence of the Medicine King Buddha of Light from the Eastern Vaidurya World." Sit quietly for three minutes.

The practitioner then visualizes that the Medicine Buddha is sitting, in full lotus posture, on the moon disk of an eight-petal lotus flower, dressed in white, with hands holding an alms bowl or a pagoda. The Medicine Buddha is blue all over, bright and transparent like colored glaze. Visualize that the heart of the Medicine Buddha emits a beam of strong blue light which goes right into the heart of the practitioner. The practitioner then recites in his heart: "Homage to the Guru. I take refuge in Grand Master Lian Sheng, master of lineage. Homage to the Buddhas. Homage to the Dharma. Homage to the Sangha. Disciple so-and-so take refuge in the Medicine King Buddha of Light. My sole wish is that you accept me as your disciple, and that my karma and illnesses be removed, and there will be blessing and long life, peace and harmony in the family, peace in the world, security and happiness for all sentient beings, devils and demons eradicated, and the Dharma is realized. Not only I myself but all sentient beings enjoy

comfort and happiness both in body and in mind."

Now the practitioner visualizes that the blue light from the heart of the Medicine Buddha shines not only on himself, but on all sentient beings behind him. Due to the blue light, the sentient beings also have their diseases removed and enjoy comfort and happiness. All those who accept the blessing will enjoy good health forever.

Then the practitioner recites the heart mantra of the Medicine King Buddha: "Die-ya-ta, om, bie-ka-zi-ye, bie-ka-zi-ya, ma-ha-bie-ka-zi-ye, la-cha-sa-muo-ka-dee-hei, sahe," 108 times.

Then the practitioner chants the heart mantra of the Medicine King Mother: "Om, da-lie, du-da-lie, du-lie, sha-er-wa, zhuo-la, sha-er-wa-du-ka, bu-la-sha-ma-na-ye, saha," twenty-one times.

After that, visualize that you yourself are the same as the Medicine Buddha and facing all sentient beings in the world, your alms bowl or pagoda emits strong blue light, which, like nectar, rains upon all sentient beings who benefit from the nectar and jump with joy. You yourself, like the Medicine Buddha, have come to relieve the sentient beings of their illnesses.

This completes the visualization and you stand up.

Now recite: "Homage to the Buddha of the Ten Directions.

Homage to the Dharmas of the Ten Directions. Homage to the Sangha of the Ten Directions. Homage to all Buddhas of the past, the present, and the future of the Ten Directions. Homage to my Personal Deity the Medicine Buddha," three times with one prostration after each recitation.

Verse for Transferring Merit: "Disciple so-and-so, having taken teachings from the Holy Red Crown Vajra Master Sheng-Yen Lu, I now plead the Medicine Buddha to empower me so that I may realize as quickly as possible. Then all sentient beings and I will have diseases removed, enjoy comfort and happiness, and have increased blessing and wisdom. In whatever I do, I will be as effective as the Medicine Buddha and reach the perfection of self-

mastery with soul and mind purified."

Those who practice the secret method of the Medicine Buddha should also observe the morality principle. Those who awaken to self-nature will become celestial beings or Buddhas. However, there is always a seamy side in human beings and there are scums among Buddhist and Taoist practitioners. Among the disciples in our Ling Xian School there must be degenerates hidden somewhere. I should not always talk about the bright side while covering up the dark side. Those degenerates not only stain the lofty image of our school, but also tarnish the reputation of the Grand Master. I will never tolerate any disciple who goes against our precepts.

The practitioner must have perseverance in cultivating the Blowing Incantation of the heavenly Doctor or the Secret Method of the Medicine Buddha. This perseverance is a very ordinary kind of determination; however, if it is made to play its part, it generates some profound, ever-lasting truth-- perseverance is the King in any cultivation, without which nothing can be realized.

Money-seeking is what charlatans are after. A great compassionate mind without thought of self is a realized state of mind which benefits both oneself and others. This is the basis for cultivation.

Among those who "practice the way to help the sentient beings," anyone who conforms to it is in the right; anyone who goes against it is heretic. My students should consider carefully whether they are doing the right thing or not.

Practicing the correct belief, one may suffer a little but, but finally will attain Buddhahood.

Practicing heresy, one may enjoy himself for a while, but finally will go to Hell.

That is where the difference lies!

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The Art Of Meditation

Chapter 19---Tantric Practice of Meditation (5)

In this world, some people are born with wonderful root of goodness while others are poor in meritorious root. Take intelligence for example, some people learn things very quickly while some other people don't remember a thing after a hundred repetitions. Some people can read quickly while some others read very slowly or feel dizzy. Wisdom is partly innate. The most intelligent practitioners can quickly achieve enlightenment whereas the slow ones have to understand things bit by bit.

Do not think, however, that this is unfair. Indeed, this is all determined by one's karma. Karmic retribution is fair and just, entirely based on what one has done--nothing is added; nothing is discounted.

In the present life, there are people who use various methods to cultivate wisdom. To my mind, the best way to enhance one's wisdom is to cultivate Bodhisattva Manjushri's secret method. Bodhisattva Manjushri has a serious-looking image of a child, with a treasure crown, and precious stones all over. The right hand holds a sword to show that his wisdom is as sharp as a sword, and the left hand forms this mudra: the thumb presses on the middle and ring fingers, with the index and the little fingers pointing up.

Bodhisattva Manjushri is partly yellow and partly red, one head on two shoulders, sitting in a full-lotus posture. He is Number One Bodhisattva representing wisdom in Buddhism. His title is "Great Wisdom Dharma Prince Manjushri."

I record the ritual of practice as follows:

First recite the four-fold refuge: "Homage to the Guru. Homage to the Buddhas. Homage to the Dharma. homage to the Sangha." Then recite "Dhi" three times, which sends out strong light, to request the

arrival of Bodhisattvas Manjushri. At this point the mudra to use is the Vajra Samadhi Mudra: the index, middle and ring fingers of the right hand are put on top of those fingers of the left hand palm to palm. The thumb of the left hand is put on the little finger of the right hand and the thumb of the right hand is put on the little finger of the left hand.

Using the Samadhi Mudra, the practitioner recites the verse and the mantra to generate the Bodhi-mind: "All sentient beings and I take refuge in the Buddhas, the Dharma, and the Sangha. Let us generate a mind of compassion, kindness, joy and non-possession, and realize the three secret practices of my Guru. Om, puo-dee-chi-da, bie-cha, sa-ma-ya, ya-hum."

In your visualization, you see a mountain which is the Bodhimanda in the Tien Tai Mountains for Bodhisattva Manjushri. At the top of the Mountain sits a Bodhisattva, dressed in yellow and red.

Holding a sword of wisdom, pointing to the sky, he sits on an eight-petalled lotus flower at the mountain peak. he looks like a beautiful child, ornamented with precious stones from head to toe.

When you see this image, you recite the mantra: "Om bie-cha,-sa-may-ya, cha." Bodhisattva Manjushri changes into a ball of yellow and red lights, goes into the practitioner by the crown point and then reaches his heart chakra and sits on the heart Lotus Seat. Then Bodhisattva Manjushri gradually grows bigger and bigger until his body fills up the body of the practitioner.

At this moment, Bodhisattva Manjushri is you and you are Bodhisattva Manjushri. The mudra to use now is that of the Dharma Prince Manjushri: the right hand holding the sword of wisdom and the left hand with the thumb upon the middle and ring fingers and the index and little fingers pointing to the sky. The head turns slightly downward to look at the sentient beings to give them the light of wisdom.

The practitioner recites: "Hum! Hum! Hum!" His whole body

radiates yellow and red lights.

Now, with the greatest respect and sincerity, you recite the Heart Mantra of Bodhisattva Manjushri: "Om, ah-la-ba-ja-ma-dhe," one thousand and eighty times.

After the recitation of mantras, one can go on to offering procedures.

The verse for transferring merit goes: "May my wisdom increase to the amount of Bodhisattva Manjushri. I will spare no effort to deliver the sentient beings from misery and get them born into the Pure Land."

According to the Sutra, those who practice Bodhisattva Manjushri's rituals and recite his mantras whole-heartedly can let out light of great wisdom and after a month's cultivation, they can have their mind purified, and can hear mystic music and their looks will become the most handsome. They are also spared from the cyclic existence for a thousand Kalpa (aeons). Those who bear the heart mantra will finally get to know the past and the future, transcend life and death, and acquire the knowledge of all former existence of self, and others. After a hundred thousand sessions of cultivation, you acquire great wisdom; with two hundred thousand, you achieve Bodhisattvahood with wisdom deep-rooted and a full understanding of Dharani; with three hundred thousand, you can visit Manjushri's Buddha Land, listen to his lectures on the Dharma, and become the second incarnation of Bodhisattva Manjushri.

I highly recommend this practice because it can develop great wisdom. Those who want to propagate the Dharma must follow Manjushri's secret practice. The mantras must be recited silently; visualization comes before recitation of mantras. The main purpose of visualization is "concentration," that is, channeling the mind into one situation, which can easily lead to "direction observation" and finally to nothingness.

Recently a Belgian reader wrote to ask me about the lineage of my Tantric sect and for a photo of Grand Master Lu's Dharma body. My answer is: in the history of the Esoteric School, the patriarchs are different in different sects. For the Red Sect, the first patriarch was Buddha Ardarma. The second was Buddha Vairocana. The third included the five Vajras in the five directions. The fourth was Buddha Shakyamuni. The fifth was Vajrapani. The sixth was Vajra Genaibudar. The seventh was Vajra Xiersonhar. The eighth was Master Padmasambhava. Now it is the thirty-second and the thirty-third. In my own Tantric meditation, I got empowerment and instructions from Master Padmasambhava who appeared in my meditation. This is the most secret training of a Vajra master. Then I also cultivated in the White Sect. In Tibet, there is the Karmajachu Sect and its first patriarch was Deroanlichian. Now it is the twelfth patriarch Tai Situpa with the Dharma name Barmadunyue Rinchewanpo. I developed a relationship with the 16th Karmapa and got blessings from him. Besides, I also got to know Master Li Ting-guang from the Yellow Sect. I even had contact with the Dharani Sect. As a result, my lineage has a variety of characteristics, from the Red, White, Yellow, and Dharani Sects and others. Master Padmasambhava from the Red Sect is my Dharani Vajra teacher who conferred me the Holy Red Crown and the Dharma name "the Holy Red Crown Vajra Master Lian Sheng." I wear the five-Buddha crown: Buddha Vairocana in the center, Buddha Akobhya in the East, Buddha Ratnasambhava in the South, Amitabha in the West, Buddha Amogasidhi in the North; the Center is the Buddha Department; the East is the Vajra Department; the south is the Treasure Department; the West is the Lotus Department; and the North is the Karma Department. Two dragons offering peaches are embroidered on my Red Crown, which represents the Buddha of Longevity. On the two ribbons are embroidered the Six Syllable Mantra "Om Mani Padme Hum." My

underclothing is black, symbolizing that my inner consciousness I know the ultimate reality; my robe outside is of coffee color which represents the precepts. My right hand holds a three-pointed vajra scepter, the upper-half of which symbolizes all Buddhas of the three periods (past, present, and future) and the lower-half of which symbolizes sentient beings of the three realms. My left hand holds a vajra bell which symbolizes sweet sound, wondrous possession and non-possession. Hanging over the chest is a string of 108 prayer beads, which is a sacred number in Buddhism. I attach a lot of importance to the six-syllable mantra because it is Bodhisattva-Kuan-Yin's wonderful heart mantra, and has inconceivable merit which is applauded by Buddhas of the Ten Directions. This mantra is a treasure in the Three Divisions of the Buddhist scriptures (the teachings, the precepts, and the commentions) and has the merit of the six Paramitas (charity, observing precepts, perseverance, energy, meditation, and wisdom)

Being crowned has the following ten advantages according to the Bkabhgre (a Tibetan collection of sutras): 1. remove any harm by devils and demons; 2. remove any illness from heat, cold, wind or inflammation; 3. deliver people from sufferings caused by war, floods, and fire; 4. enjoy benefit for the present life such as blessing, fortune, and long life; 5. eradicate worries caused by greed, anger, and ignorance; 6. remove your sins in violating the precepts; 7. remove your karma and help you to reach the ten stages of spiritual cultivation; 8. close the doors to the three lower forms of existence; 9. liberate the sentient beings in the six forms of existence; 10. help you to gain Buddhahood if you chant the mantra thousands of times.

Five-Buddha Crown -- purified Self-Nature

Dharma-robe -- purification of body.

108 prayer beads -- purification of speech.

Scepter in the right hand -- the three periods and three realms.
Bell in the left hand -- non-possession but wondrous possession.

For my Dharma-characteristic, Guru Padmasambhava gave me the name "the Holy Red Crown Vajra Guru Lian Sheng, the saint." I am now the secret ruler of the Vajra Mantra Realm, born into the earthly world, but immovable by slanders from the eight directions.

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The Art Of Meditation

Chapter 20. Realization of the Pure Land Practices

Before I came across Esoteric Buddhism, I took refuge to Exoteric Buddhism. After I started practicing the Esoteric method, I have never stopped practicing Pure Land Buddhism. In fact, the Esoteric practice deepened my understanding of the Pure Land teachings and taught me the true meanings of the school. All this strengthened my efforts in cultivation so that in due time I saw the ocean of wisdom and realized Enlightenment.

I have one strong point: that is, perseverance. In the ten years of practicing Pure Land Buddhism, I did not miss a single session. Every day I chanted the Buddha's name and recited the mantras without a day's break. This has been my daily homework. Like with the daily three meals, when the time comes, I would put aside anything on hand and begin my homework no matter where or when.

If I am in a hotel, I will stand before a window and chant the Buddha's name and the sutras. If I am held up by visitors, I will do my homework as soon as they leave no matter how late it is, before I go to bed. I have practiced Pure Land Buddhism like this every day, every month, year after year.

After each homework session, I usually recite a long text of transference of merit: "Your disciple Sheng-Yen Lu is now an ordinary man, who, subject to life and death, with heavy karma, has to transgress between the six forms of existence with endless misery. Now I have got to know the truth; knowing the great merit of the sacred name of Amitabha, I chant the name wholeheartedly and wish to be born in your Pure Land. Please be compassionate

and take pity on me and accept me as your disciple. I have never seen the brilliant characteristics of the Buddha. Could you make an appearance before me so that I could have a look at you? I also want to see Bodhisattva Kuan-Yin and Bodhisattva Mahasthamaprapta, and all other Bodhisattvas. In your Buddha Land, everything is pure, majestic, beautiful, and bright. How I wish to see the Pure Land and Buddha Amitabha!" This is how I have practiced Pure Land Buddhism all these years either at home or abroad.

I know of course that there exist four pure lands in the Western World of Ultimate Bliss: 1. the land of eternal and tranquil light; 2. the land of non-hindrance as the true reward; 3. the land of convenience (temporarily established for those who have destroyed major evil passions but have minor delusions to be dealt with); 4. the land where the ordinary people and sages live together. The land where ordinary people and sages live together is meant for the nine grades (beings are divided into nine grades according to their development in the previous and present lives) who are lotus born. The land of convenience is meant for the highest class of the advanced stage up to Bodhisattvas of the Seventh Stage. The land of non-hindrance as true reward is meant for Bodhisattvas of equal enlightenment from the eighth stage to the eleventh stage. The land of eternal and tranquil light is meant for Bodhisattvas of Perfect Enlightenment of the twelfth stage.

When I prostrate, I do so whole-heartedly to the land of eternal and tranquil light, to Buddha Amitabha, to the pure and wondrous Dharma body, and to all Buddhas from all Dharma realms. I prostrate whole-heartedly to the land of non-hindrance as true reward, to Buddha Amitabha, to the fine-dust ocean body, and to all Buddhas from all Dharma realms. I prostrate wholeheartedly to the land of convenience and the land where ordinary beings and sages live together, to Buddha Amitabha, to the emancipation perfection

body, and to all Buddhas from all Dharma Realms.

Later, when I started to study Esoteric Buddhism, I would do my homework for Pure Land first before the homework for Esoteric. I found that there is very little difference between them. Their methods are different, but the truth is the same. There are different levels of depth for both, but I can harmonize them in a coherent whole. This way, the practitioner is like a "tiger with wings" that can both run and fly.

Pure Land Buddhism was founded by Master Hui Yuan (334-416) of East Jin Dynasty. The essential scriptures include: Amitabha Sutra, Amita Yurdhyna Sutra, and the Book of the Eternal in Time. There are five methods of practice in Pure Land School as follows:

1. Recite the name of the Buddha-- this is a practice from the view of life and death. Most of ordinary students of Buddhism just chant the name of the Buddha. This is also the most basic cultivation. The highest fruition for this cultivation is to be born with certain karma into the land where ordinary people and sages live together. They acquire Buddhahood in the Western Paradise. This is fruition of candidacy and relies entirely on outside forces for acceptance.

2. Recite the name of the Buddha while keeping it-- chant the name of the Buddha while thinking of the Buddha. This is more advanced than just reciting the Buddha's name. While chanting the name, you keep in mind the kindness and compassion of Amitabha. Since it relies entirely on outside forces, the ultimate fruition is not great. The practitioner can not become a Buddha in the present life and has to wait to see the Buddha when his lotus blooms.

3. Recite the name of the Buddha while looking at his picture-- beginning to move from Exoteric to Esoteric practice. The picture of the Buddha is printed in the mind so that the chanting and the mind now merge. When the nature and form are united, the practitioner will see Amitabha on a gold lotus and will sooner or later realize. Though still relying on outside forces, the practitioner

can generate his own power by looking at the Buddha's picture. He will be born into the land of convenience.

4. Recite the name of the Buddha in visualization-- this follows the sixteen visualizing methods described in Amita Yurdhyana Sutra, which is a great exercise in concentrated meditation. With this training, one enters the stage of Zhan and Tantrayana. During this stage, the practitioner is no longer attached to form; once one is above form, the ultimate fruition is then the land of true reward. If one is not yet free from form in visualization, then is it still like looking at the picture of the Buddha, which means that the sixteen visualizing methods did not produce their effect. As a result, the practitioner still goes to the land of convenience.

5. Recite the name of the Buddha while meditating on the ultimate reality. This is cultivation in accordance with the "three perspectives" of "emptiness," "temporariness" and "the Middle Way," the wisdom of which was discussed in a previous chapter of this book. This method can guide sentient beings to Nirvana by any expedient ways and is the most successful Pure Land practice. In due time, the practitioner sees his own self-nature, becomes a Buddha in this life, and goes to the Land of eternal and tranquil light.

In what follows I describe my own method of practice by which I harmonize the Exoteric and Esoteric teachings:

Prostrate to the picture of the "Three Sages" in the West.

Light up the incense and make offerings as the rites prescribe.

Sit in a full-lotus posture in front of the picture or statue of the Three Sages in the West and control my thoughts and cleanse the mind.

Recite the four-fold refuge: "Homage to the Guru. Homage to the Buddha. Homage to the Dharma. Homage to the Sangha."

Generate the Bodhicitta. (It's a vow to liberate oneself and deliver others from suffering.)

During visualization, form the Buddha Mudra, like a lotus flower that does not bloom yet, by joining your palms together, fingers pointing up and brought together, like ten petals of a lotus. Visualize the Western Paradise, Amida Buddha in the middle, Bodhisattvas Kuan-Yin, and Mahasthamaprapta on his left and right, who are approaching you, smiling, and emitting three beams of white light. The lights come from the lotus seat of Amitabha, the treasure bottle of Kuan-Yin and the lotus flower in Mahasthamasprapta's hand. These lights empower the practitioner with wisdom which helps him to eradicate his sins and karma. After that, the practitioner recites: "Na-mo-ya-lee-ye, er-da-ba-ye, da-ta-cha-da-ye" ten times; then recite: "Namo Amitabha" three times; then recite: "Amitabha" a hundred, thousand, or ten thousand times. Upon completion of the recitation, change the mudra into a full-bloom lotus mudra: join your palms together, fingers pointing up, only the bases of the palms meeting, like a lotus flower blooming, symbolizing that you can see the Buddha when your lotus blooms.

Now visualize yourself: you become an Amitabha in red, sitting on a lotus seat. The Buddha and yourself merge, becoming one with all the brilliance and the 32 physical characteristics of the Buddha. At this stage, the mantras give you empowerment, plus those from the three beams of light and the continuous recitation of the Buddha's name. Then, you yourself emit boundless light, and sentient beings from the ten directions come to you to be converted, who will each achieve his fruition.

This is to benefit yourself as well as others.

When everything is perfectly done, come out of concentration and prostrate to the Buddha another three times.

This method of mine can help one to remove the ten evils: killing living beings; stealing; committing adultery; telling lies; uttering harsh words; using words that cause enmity between two or more

persons; engaging in idle talk; greed; anger; and ignorance. This method also enables one to follow the ten paramitas: charity; observing precepts; perseverance; energy; meditation; transcendental wisdom; expedient means; vow; power; wisdom. The result is to achieve the ten stages of fruition: the stage of joy; the stage of freedom from defilement; the stage of emission of the light of wisdom; the stage of glowing wisdom; the stage of difficulty in overcoming; the stage of the manifestation of reality; the stage of going far; the stage of immovability; the stage of wondrous wisdom; and the stage of Dharma-cloud.

Among the Buddhist masters I know, a few can only recite the sutras and chant the name of the Buddha. They have learned a whole set of deliverance rituals; at ordinary times, they prostrate, chant and sing; at Dharma assemblies, they put on such an act. All this is utterly useless if they have not realized in the cultivation of self-nature. For it is nothing but acting in an opera-- speaking without sincerity. Please remember, though, that reciting the sutras and the Buddha's name without sincerity will send the practitioner to Hell; those who use Buddhist rites to make money will also go to Hell. I hope they will start practicing both the Pure Land teachings and Esoteric teachings.

Today, this great method of practice is disclosed which is a blessing to those who believe in it; if they can keep at it they will certainly become Buddhas. If you persevere in your practice every day and do not gain Buddhahood, I, Sheng-Yen Lu, will be held responsible.

*...from **The Art of Meditation** by Grand Master Sheng-yen Lu*

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The Art Of Meditation

Chapter Twenty One--Realization of the Taoist Practice

"The ultimate highest realms of both Buddhism and Taoism are in fact associated." Many students of Buddhism would not hear of Taoism without accusing it of being "heretical".

Is Taoism heretical? My answer is both "yes" and "no".

I have been with many Buddhist masters when they visited the home of their disciples who worship Bodhisattva Kuan-yin, but also worship Saint Mary, and also Na-zha, the god of children. Once, upon seeing all the gods, the master frowned and told his disciple then and there; "We worship Kuan-yin only, not the gods of heresy. Saint Mary and children's gods are gods of heresy. We must not confuse Buddhas with gods." The master did not even prostrate, looking very arrogant and contemptuous to Saint Mary and Na-zha. In front of the gods, he scolded the disciple and told him to worship Kuan-yin and Dharma protectors only, and asked him to leave the rest to other people.

In Nantou (Taiwan), there was also a family who believed in every god. In their house shrine, they worshipped Sakyamuni, the Medicine Buddha, Amitabha, Kuan-yin, and Mahasthanuaprapta; besides, they worshipped the Jade Emporer (the Supreme Deity of Taoism), Golden Mother of the Jade Pond, the Supreme Gentleman (Lao Zi-604-531 B.C.-founder of Taoism), the Treasure Heavenly Sage, the Patriarchs of the Eight Diagrams, among others. At the lower tiers, they worshipped the Prince of the Emporer of Wu Fu, the town god, the local god of the land, the tiger god, the seventh god, the eighth god, and other gods. In short, most of the gods that you can name were all there for worship. What was more strange is that they even worshipped spirits from the other world. The

worshipped everybody except Jesus Christ and Allah.

One day, a Tantric master visited this family. As soon as he was inside, he let loose a torrent of abuse, shouting at his disciple that all the gods, big and small, from the Jade Emperor to the little spirits, should go away at once, for they did not belong to Buddhism. They must be given away, either to temples, sculpture shops or to friends. The banners, magic drawings, and gods' clothing were, therefore, piled up at the door and set on fire. The master was in a very bad temper, and the motley gods were "sent back to Heaven."

In another home, there was such a collection of scripture that even included affected writings like *Collection of Worldly Advice*, *Supreme Jade Sutra*, *Goddess of Land Sutra*, *Supreme Yang Sutra*, *Supreme Yin Sutra*, *Gold Mother Sutra*, and many magazines and travellogues. All these were burned to ashes by the master.

According to him, all these odds and ends were written by "spirits and ghosts", or fabricated by men.

Concerning these two events (and many other similar events), I would make no criticism of the master, nor defend the various gods. What I want to say is this: there are different levels of depth among Taoists. For the profound ones, their theory is mystic and their realm of enlightenment is no trivial matter. The shallow ones are superstitious polytheists who are only after money and wealth. I have read *Flying Voyage Out of Misery* by the respected Buddhist He Kan-ru. There is this exchange in the book.

Question: *Do students of Buddhism not salute to the Heavenly Gods?*

Answer: *We human beings have lived in the three realms for a long period of time. We know that the gods of the Five Mountains (Taishan, Hengshan, Huashan in Hunan, Huashan, Hengshan in Shanxi and Songshan), the town god and the kitchen god are all officials in the realm of cause and effect. How is it possible that we*

don't salute to them! If you meet them, you can salute to them by kowtowing as the ordinary people do; we do the same when we condole our elders. As for the elaborate salutation by prostration, it is used before the Three Sages to show great respect to the Buddhas."

Master Yin Guang had this to say, *"Though nobody was present in your secret room, gods and spirits from Heaven and Earth know everything. Though initial thoughts are invisible and blurred, it is as clear as daylight which are sinful and which are meritorious. If one is conscious of that in his cultivation, his deeds will be good and there is no room for evil."* I hold that we Buddhist believers should respect gods and spirits. Though we know that they are of a lower rank, we should still put our hands together to pay them respect. At the same time, we make the distinction clear between the Buddhas and gods, and between our ways of worshipping them. There is no need at all to use abusive language.

Nowadays, the gravest misunderstanding of Taoism by the religious circle is the belief that Taoism is a superstitious belief in many gods, a blind practice for good fortune; its believers know nothing but praying for money and wealth, let alone methods of cultivation. So, between men and gods, gods are high above, while men have a blind faith in gods. As a result, some bad believers of very low level make use of people's blind faith to swindle them out of their money or women. They cheat people by telling their fortune, promising to pray for children or a longer life on their behalf, or promising to eradicate their karma, or any other tomfoolery.

However, apart from all this superstition, Taoists indeed have their methods of cultivation for enlightenment.

For example, in Taoism, the Supreme Gentleman (Lao Zi) and the Pristine Heavenly Sage, the Treasure Heavenly Sage, are like Buddhas of the three times in Buddhism.

Mu Gong (wood) in the east, Gold Mother (gold) in the west, Huo De (fire) in the south, Shui De (water) in the north, and Huang Lo in the center are like the Buddhas of the Five Directions in Buddhism.

In Taoism, there are great teachings on how to end the cycle of birth and death by sending the original spirit to Heaven. However, among the worldly people, there are too many of them with bad conditions and too few of them with good conditions; some Taoist masters and monks are not interested in cultivation, but become swindlers who perform superstitious rituals. They know neither how to practice the Eight Methods for Internal Tranquility. This is why Buddhist believers do not appreciate the Taoist believers and label them all as heretic. We should know that the Taoist "quiet sitting" goes back earlier than Buddhist meditation. There have been more Taoists who have achieved Enlightenment--they will never lower in rank, never return, and never again fall into the cycle of birth and death--just like Buddhas.

So, I would divide Taoism into two parts:

The Heretical Way-superstition that makes use of gods and spirits
The Correct Way-the correct method of true cultivation and ultimate enlightenment.

In his quiet sitting, the Taoist practitioner realizes, in countless breathing cycles, that all the ten thousand gods are in fact residing in his own body. He then directs all his vital energy back to the brow point. When this vital energy condensing at the brow point shows itself, it becomes golden light. By the time the practitioner's mind resides at the brow point, when he has severed all his causations, when all the Consciousnesses are removed and hindrances are all eradicated, he has fully realized. From the initial sitting quietly for concentration until the appearance of "the Land of Eternal Tranquil Light", the Taoist practice does not differ, in any substantial way, from Buddhism.

The Taoist cultivator is told to keep the precepts, practice wholeheartedly, set the breathing onto one thing, and turn this one thing into nothing. The so-called "doing by not doing" (action by non-action) is the true knack of cultivation Lao Zi wrote about in the Tao Te Ching (Principles of Morality). A tranquil mind and stable breathing is the result of genuine cultivation. In due course, all Buddhas would bless and empower the practitioner, so that the combination of internal power and external power will make the self-nature show itself-that is nothing but "awakening to the One Mind and seeing one's Original Nature.". Again, there is not much difference between Taoism and Buddhism.

To my mind, the essential points in Taoism are as follows:

1. The tongue is put against the hard palate, so that Heaven (upper part) and Earth (lower part) are connected.
2. The eyes are fixed on the tip of the nose, so that the eye is the focussing agent of the original spirit.
3. The breathing gradually gets finer and finer, so that one's vital energy is concentrated.
4. When the only thought is the thought of nothing, the correct thought appears.

If one sits quietly like this, one's original radiance automatically merges and carries all the water and energy to the brow point.

When this happens, any fatigue will disappear in a second's tranquility. This is much like some good sleep, after which one feels full of vitality. Of course, sitting quietly is not sleeping; it is a mind-controlling method between sleeping and being awake, between ascending and descending, between separation and unification. Sitting quietly is more on the side of ascending and unification, and is a genuine method of cultivation leading to Buddhahood.

The Buddhist contemplation on emptiness is the Taoist "no thought."

The Buddhist contemplation on emptiness is the Taoist "non-existence."

The Buddhist "Middle Way" is the Taoist "ultimate voidness".

My own experience is: when the mind is absolutely tranquil, everything will start moving by itself. This moving is not visible, but invisible spiritual moving, during which the so-called vitality, energy and spirit all turn back to go to the brow point. When no thought arises, the correct thought appears by itself; the Heavenly Secrets start moving; the Dharma wheel starts moving. This movement brings forth the birth of a Buddha or a Bodhisattva. The "action by not acting" finally leads to the great achievement.

The ultimate highest realms of both Buddhism and Taoism are, in fact, associated; the realized Taoist never return to the cycle of birth and death, the same as with Buddhist cultivators. This has been proven in my own practice.

...from ***The Art of Meditation*** by Grand Master Sheng-yen Lu

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The Art Of Meditation

Chapter 22. Prajnaparamita Hrdaya Sutra: A Realized Realm

Prajnaparamita Hrdaya Sutra reads:

Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva had practiced the prajnaparamita for a long time. He says that if you take the five aggregates as empty, you can eradicate all sufferings. Shariputra, you should know that form is no different from void and void is no different from form. Form is void and void is form. Feeling, perception, volitional behavior, and consciousness are also like this. Sharishi, please remember that all things are void. They neither come into being nor go into destruction; they neither become defiled nor can be cleaned; they neither increase nor decrease. Consequently, there is no form in the void. There is no feeling, perception, volitional activity or consciousness. Nor is there the eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue, the body, or the mind. Nor color, sound, smell, taste, touch. There is no longer the realm of vision, nor the realm of consciousness. There is neither aging and death nor the end of aging and death. There is no more of sorrow, cause of sorrow, cessation of sorrow, or path to liberation. There is neither wisdom nor acquisition. Everything is acquired precisely by non-acquisition. Bodhicitta is achieved by non-cultivation. This is the true prajnaparamita. Due to the prajnaparamita, there is no hindrance in your mind. Thanks to the absence of hindrance, there is nothing to be feared. You are far away from confusion and illusion, and will go into nirvana in the end. All Buddhas of the three times achieved the anuttara-samyak-sambodhi by practicing the prajnaparamita. It can be seen from this that the Prajnaparamita

Hridaya Sutra is the most effective mantra, a wisdom mantra, supreme mantra, and unequaled mantra. The Sutra can move all sorrow. This is absolute truth. For this reason we should chant the Prajnaparamita Hridaya Sutra. Say this mantra now: "jie-ti, jie-ti, pra-jie-ti, prasang-jie-ti, bo-di-sa-po-he."

From ancient times up to the present day, there have been many high ranking monks who gave explanations to the Sutra. Their explanations have been merely literal interpretations of the written text. Possibly, however, not all of them have noticed that this is a description of a realm that has been once realized. Today, it has dawned on me that this Sutra is a record of how one felt upon realization. I say this because if you read the Sutra after you have realized, you would experience a mutual affinity of "So this is it." The following is what I felt:

"Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva" refers to all Bodhisattvas who have realized and enjoy self-mastery.

"Has practiced the prajnaparamita for a long time" means when you reach the very depth of concentrated meditation where great wisdom emerges.

"When you take the five aggregates as empty, you can eradicate all sufferings"-- This is the most subtle point of the entire Sutra. It is also the contemplation on the void in the three contemplations. There are other ways to reach this realm. One is the practice of "the return of the spirit" and the other is "return to the void after removing all karma."

"Form is no different from void and void is no different than form. Form is void and void is form. Feeling, perceptions, volitional activities and consciousness are also like this." -- This is the most enlightened observation and most subtle wisdom about the realm of form.

"All things are void. They neither come into being nor go into destruction; they neither become defiled nor can be cleaned; they

neither increase nor decrease. There is no more of sorrow, cause of sorrow, or path to liberation. There is neither wisdom nor acquisition..."-- This is a description of the state of Dharmakaya (essence body) of all Buddhas: the tranquil state of the complete extinction of passions and freedom from the cycles of birth and death.

"Due to the prajnaparamita, there is no hindrance in your mind. Thanks to the absence of hindrance, there is nothing to be feared. You are far away from confusion and illusion." -- To realize is to reach the other shore, to reach the Ocean of Mahavairocana, to see the emptiness of the Dharma Realm. This is the purification of the eighth consciousness, and consequently there is no hindrance in the mind and there is nothing to be feared.

"They neither came into being nor go into destruction"-- Like a mirror, though it shows up forms of illusion, these forms in fact neither come into being nor go into destruction.

"They neither become defiled nor can be cleaned." -- Since these forms are illusionary without birth or death, it goes without saying that there is no defilement or cleanness to talk about.

"They neither increase or decrease." -- Like the water in the rivers, they come and go, flowing here and there, but with neither loss nor gain.

"To achieve the anuttara-samyak-sambodhi" -- This is exactly staying in "the realm of perfection when there is one mind without thought; there is nothing to lose in practicing the method of illumination." When one is far away from confusion and illusion, one's mind is not movable and can stay fixed on practice.

"jie-ti, jie, pra-jie-ti, prasang-jie-ti, bo-di-sa-po-he." -- This is the heart mantra. The first jie-ti is "the attachment to the idea that human beings have unchangeable forms." The second jie-ti means "attachment to the notion that all things have unchangeable forms." Put together they refer to attachment to the above both notions. The

third jie-ti is the attachment to the notion that all sentient beings have real forms. The fourth jie-ti is the attachment to the notion that sentient beings have no real forms and that only things have real existence. The essence of this mantra is to eradicate the attachment to all the above four notions, so that, one can liberate himself as well as others and finally attain perfect enlightenment. I could say that the Prajnaparamita Hridaya Sutra is nothing but a realm of meditation under full self-mastery. In this realm, you start from the feeling that everything outside is empty, so that you stay away from the six objects of sensation and perception (color and form, sound, odor, taste, tactile object, and mental object) and keep under control your six sense organs. Then, it becomes a realm of void in which there is "no thought outside the realm and no realm outside the mind." This is contemplation of wisdom. Inside oneself, the Buddha lights fill up one's entire body to purify his original nature. As a result, the minds of the past, the present and the future merge into one-- a realm in which "there is not thought beyond the event and no event beyond the mind." In this realm one can attain perfect enlightenment and eradicate all sorrow. This is also the work of light emanation from the brow-point-- everything comes by itself, as "acts without acting." Intuitively, since you are away from confusion and illusion, you feel that there is no difference between tranquillity and extinction, and that there is no distinction between the Buddha and yourself, and that there is nothing in the Dharma Realm. The sentences "There is neither form nor non-form. They neither come into being nor go into destruction. They neither get defiled nor can be cleaned. They neither increase nor decrease" constitute an understanding experience of such a realm. It shows one has entered the gate leading to the greatest liberation. At this point, one's Buddha nature merges with all the Buddhas in the dharma nature, after which one never returns to fall into the cycles of birth and death. This is

ultimate realization.

Our meditation of luminosity is the best method for meditation, which teaches people to start with "initial tranquillity," move onto luminosity at the brow-point, and finally merge with Buddhas from the ten directions. Following this method, you can become a Buddha directly. Only this method is detached from speech and form. We should treasure it for it is priceless.

Since I have attained realization, I always feel that my thinking is extraordinarily clear in my quiet sitting, staying stable in Samadhi. The samadhi light of the Original Nature illuminates the earthly world, with nothing unseen, nothing unfelt. Great sympathy goes to all sentient beings under Heaven, who are utterly unaware of birth and death-- practitioners who fall into wrong teachings or heresy are found everywhere; some tell great lies, slandering Buddhas and the sacred teachings; some even claim to have killed a certain Buddha or wiped out a certain school of thought; few people practice step by step as prescribed, but want to reach the sky in a single bound. In fact, the different ways of practice predetermine the final respective fruitions. I would list them as follows:

To practice the Ten Meritorious Acts of the lowest grade-- to be born as a human again. (Note: the ten acts are: avoid killing; avoid stealing; avoid committing adultery; avoiding telling lies; avoid slandering; avoid frivolous talk; avoid rude or harsh speech; greedlessness; tolerance; right view.)

To practiced the Ten Meritorious Acts of the middle grade-- to become an Asura.

To practice the Ten Meritorious Acts of the highest grade-- to become a celestial being.

To practice the Fourfold Noble Truths (the truth concerning sorrow, the cause of sorrow, the cessation of sorrow and the path to nirvana.) -- to become an Arhat.

To practice the Twelve Causations Method (the causations are:

spiritual ignorance; blind volition; consciousness; mental functions and the formation of physical elements; the six sense-organs; contact with external objects; sensation; desire for pleasure; grasping what one desires; the state of existing; birth; old age and death) -- to become a Pratyeka Buddha.

To practice the Six Paramitas (charity; observing the precepts; perseverance; energy; meditation, and wisdom)-- to become a Bodhisattva.

To practice "objectless compassion" (the compassion of a Buddha which, based on the realization of the void, arises without perceiving any object)-- to become a Buddha in the present life.

According to my observation, in the present world, practitioners of small "root of goodness" make up the great majority while people with great "root of goodness" are difficult to find. Ordinary people can never understand my realization. Commoners with little intelligence, be they masters or ordinary monks, can never fathom my depth of understanding, nor can those who have practiced for Bodhisattvahood for a long time. It is an unparalleled event in the present age that I have realized " the meditation for luminosity" in the teeth of repeated slanders. In the world today, there are only methods to urge people to do good so as to be born human again or to join the celestial beings. The truly great methods of cultivation are nowhere to be found. It can be seen from this that people with great "root of goodness" are really rare nowadays.

The "meditation of luminosity" advocated by our Ling Xian Sect came into being in the right time. not only can it initiate beginners, or facilitate the intermediate practitioners, it can also help the most advanced cultivators to attain ultimate realization. It is much clearer now than ever which Dharma door is superior. The meditation of luminosity is unequalled.

For this I have composed the following verse:

***Most superior is the meditation of luminosity,
Which can hardly be fathomed by ordinary men.
Embraced by the land of eternal tranquil light,
One can become a Buddha here and now.***

*...from****The Art of Meditation*** *by Grand Master Sheng-yen Lu*
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The Art Of Meditation

Chapter 23. The Equality of Tantrayana and Sutrayana

All along I have held that all sects are equal excluding "heretical groups." I hold in respect the Abhidharma sect and the Satyasiddhi Sect in Hinayana, let alone the various sects in Mahayana, such as the Zhan Sect, the Discipline Sect, the Avatamsaka Sect, the Dasabhumika Sect, the Samparigraha Sutra Sect, the Nirvana Sect, the Vijnapti-matrata Sect, the Prajnaparamita Sect, the pure Land Sect, the Suddharma Pundarika Sect, and the Tantric Sect.

I also regard Taoism as equal.

I also respect Christianity, Catholicity, and Sects worshipping celestials and gods.

The Ling Xian Sect, the sect I have founded (please note, my reader, that it is a sect, not a religion that I have founded) embraces the Taoist Sect, the Pure Land Sect, the Zhan Sect, and the Tantric Sect, merging all their teachings. It takes Taoism for its internal cultivation, the Pure Land for its external cultivation, the Zhan for its concentrated meditation, and Tantrayana for its final realization. The ultimate attainment is, without doubt, the most extraordinary transcendence. My students and my readers are advised to ponder deeply over its underlying principle.

My "equality view" of all sects has won the appreciation of a senior Tantric cultivator, whose letter to me is quoted here:

You have received empowerment and instructions from the Living Buddha of the Tibetan Tantric Sect: this is something one does not easily get. Many years ago, I had a close relationship with the Ruler of the Red Sect Dudjom Rinpoche, and received from him the "thousand-Buddha Empowerment" and a relation formation

empowerment of Master Padmasambhava, and a luminous Dharma empowerment some time later. I once studied Taoism when I was young. Recently, Daxidu Rinpoche, came over to propagate the Dharma, and I received "the Second Karmapa Empowerment." I have studied and practiced various teachings, but I always hold Tantrayana and Sutrayana in equality; in fact, I make no distinction among the various teachings and the many sects. All I want to do is to attain Nirvana. Whenever a Dharma King of any sect holds an empowerment assembly, I would go and attend it on most occasions. This Dharma King of the White Sect is very young, much younger than me. However, since he is the Ruler of the White Sect, he must be protected by the Dharma protectors; it is only right for me to prostrate before him. More basically, he is a good teacher and an incarnation of a living Buddha. All those who know all about Tantrayana should be modest and honest.

At the mention of Tantric masters, many Exoteric masters would consider it beneath their dignity to look at you. Here I enclose in the letter a piece of news which says that, a Tantric master who came here to give lectures on the Dharma, went to see an Exoteric master before anything else to show his respect for Sutrayana. If, on the other hand, an Exoteric master came here to lecture, would he visit a Tantric master? I am sure he would not, for these masters are extremely conceited.

Now let me say something about Taoism. When I was young I studied teachings of various sects, such as the Dragon Gate Sect, the Mao Shan Sect, the Liu Ren Shen Gong Sect, and the Shen Da Sect. Many masters were fond of me, saying that I would attain great achievement later. However, some of the Taoists had other spirits attached to them and were not advanced at all in their cultivation. What I was after was great teachings which would enable me to transcend birth and death. Naturally, I refused to accept those masters' instructions.

Your skill in talismans and Taoist techniques filled me with admiration. It can be said that you are the most revered in the world. You will be Number One wherever you go, because your teachings are first-rate as you were a student of Mr. San Shan Jiu Hou. Orthodox and effective talismans are nowhere to be seen today. You are the only one among the holy who can evoke the Six Ting Six Jia Mudra characteristics of Mr. Dong Hua Di.

Here in our place, quite a few people practice heretical talismans. Some people cannot be penetrated by knives and have become hatchet men for the underworld. Worse still, some people use talismans to compel beautiful girls to go to bed with them. The Bon Sect is always up to such tricks. Fortunately, there are still people like you to uphold the correct Taoist teachings, who constitute the mainstay for the just cause.

You know all about Tantrayana, Sutrayana, and Taoism, and you have responses in all of them. You say you are a "miscellany." I say you are the greatest Ocean of Dharma nature, into which thousands of rivers ultimately flow. From my life time study of Buddhism, I know only of one person who is truly "miscellaneous," that is Shakyamuni Buddha. He studied Mahayana and Hinayana, Sutrayana, and Tantrayana, and even Brahmin. Not only did he know about them, it was he who let them be known to the world. He knew about the 13 sects in Buddhism. So he could be considered to be Number One Miscellany.

The Ling Xian Sect you have founded makes no distinction between celestials and Buddhas. This "theory" may bring pressure upon you, for the earthly sects will label it as "departing from the classics and rebelling against orthodoxy." Such is the superficial view shared by ordinary people, who are short-sighted. In fact, your character Xian refers to gold celestials who are equal with Bodhisattvas, not just gods. Ordinary people do not have the required intelligence, so you need not at all expect them to

understand you. You should be content as long as all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and the gold celestials understand you. You once talked about being "calm, clean, care-free, and happy-go-lucky;" that is a strong evidence for your realization.

I remember there was once a book called Combined Sect of Celestials and Buddhas, which caused quite a bit of debate at the time. The superficial question was how celestial beings and Buddhas could ever go together. Common people could only stay on the surface in their thinking. Wu Chong Xu and Liu Hua Yang, two realized Taoists, were also once under attack from Buddhist believers. I have always had a hunch that people with advanced ideas are invariably under attack. However, you should feel comforted, since you are indeed a great deal ahead of them, particularly in your judgement of what is right and what is wrong. As they can not match you in any respect, all they can do is to heap slanders upon you, calling you mara, or devil. It is a common practice of these earthly people to wantonly defame others. You can simply ignore them.

I had some personal experience with the doctrines of the Wu and Liu Sects. They were genuine. They could attain the sixth supernatural power: consciousness of the warning of vicious propensities. They had no problems with the other five powers either. They could completely break away from lust. As regard the Bon Sect, you know a great deal, and I too, know that it is a primitive superstitious heresy in Tibet, which does nothing but bring calamities to people by various dirty tricks.

As regard the question of whether there is geomancy in the Tantric School, well, I have not come across the phrase "Tantric geomancy" in my reading of all the classics, current or ancient, on the doctrines of the Tantric School. Shakyamuni handed down Tantrayana which was carried forward and developed by Master Padmasambhava and Bodhisattva Nagarjuna, who had never heard

of "Tantric geomancy" either. From this one can see that Mr. Lin Yun's claim for Tantric geomancy is invalid, which tried to peddle heretical teachings under the name of the Tantric School. Genuine geomancy should belong to us Chinese; it was handed down by the Taoists. In geomancy, again, you are the number one expert. You are the successor to the Qing Cheng Sect in Taoism.

I deeply feel that among the multitude of people in the world, you enjoy the greatest "root of goodness" and have been instructed by intelligent teachers. You first leaned the "abrupt method" (for sudden fulfillment or enlightenment) and later got the "gradual method" (spending a long time accomplishing meritorious practices). Now you can enter a Buddha's realm as you like. At this stage it is likely that you are subjected to many tests. I hope you remain "calm, clean, carefree, and happy-go-lucky" and spread your great doctrines all over the world.

Wish you perfection and freedom from hindrance!

Vajrayana disciple

Kao Nan-bao

With hands cupped

This letter holds Sutrayana, Tantrayana, and Taoism equal. I tell all practitioners honestly that there is only a difference in realms among all schools of doctrines; no other difference exists. And besides, at the very final stage of cultivation, all these doctrines are in fact identical; if they are not, I Sheng-Yen Lu, am the greatest liar. Buddhas of one school and Buddhas of another are also in correspondence. In the ultimate supreme realm, all differences and factions, who believe that the various doctrines are not connected and who always praise their own sect to the sky while censuring all other sects.

Such a mentality is very much like that of a Christian, who tends to believe that God is the only savior, and that all others are Maras like Satan. The same is true of Islam which believes that Allah is the only ruler and that all others are Maras. This is also the case with some Buddhists who believe that Buddhism is the most superior and Taoism is heresy. In Japan, disciples in the Nichiran Sect only chant "Hoke-kyo" (lit.: "Homage to the Sutra of the Lotus of the Wonderful Dharma" once recited by Sage Nichiren (who was named post-humorously Rissho Daishi by Emperor Taisho) and that only the Nichiran Sect is true Buddhism and all other sects are incarnations of Maras.

Everybody says that what he has got is the best and what others have is nothing. This is a common disease among under-enlightened ordinary people. I would say that I accept any doctrine that is correct and I believe that all correct doctrines are closely connected and have mutual responses. The most important thing is to know what is orthodox and what is heretical. One can attain enlightenment with one doctrine and can attain enlightenment with several doctrines. This is the crux of the matter.

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The Art Of Meditation

Chapter 24. Another Evidence for Remote Spiritual Healing

A certain Miss Ding who lives in 7 Ice House Street, Hong Kong, wrote me a letter of thanks, which reads:

March 23, 1983

Grand Master Sheng-Yen,

On the 12th of last November, I received the two talismans and have used them according to your instructions. That is, after they were burnt, they were put into water. Besides, a Tantric shrine has been set up, and day and night I form the great mudra for calamity-eradication and chant the Great Compassion Mantra, retributing all merits to my wife Yu-ying and my son Fan-xing. It is several months now since I started, and both of them have recovered a lot. Due to grave karmic conditions and hindrances, they still need grand master's blessing and help. And of course it takes time as well.

In the past few days, I have carefully observed both of them. I can say they have been very quiet as if they have completely recovered. So I write this letter immediately to let you know. I first express my heart-felt thanks and then ask for instructions on how to study Buddhism for a better life.

My gratitude can not be adequately expressed by this piece of paper which is a token of how grateful I feel.

Sun Jia-liang sends his regards to Grand Master,
With Dharma pleasure

Ding Lian

This letter is a wonderful proof. Yu-ying and Fan-xing are two patients who have long been suffering from mental disorder. Mr. Sun Jia-liang is a disciple of Master Yin Shun. Sun Jia-liang wrote to his Master Yin Shun who was in Taiwan in his attempt to save the two patients. Master Yin Shun asked Master Ming Sheng to write back to Hong Kong to tell Mr. Sun Jia-liang my address in the States.

After I was contacted, I also set up a Tantric Shrine in my house and used "the secret trace vajra method" to heal them. I formed the great mudra for calamity-eradication 108 times every day. The secret method worked as flying rainbows of spiritual healing: rays of red light flew across the Pacific Ocean to reach the patients. Now they have completely recovered. This is very good news. No words can describe how happy I felt.

However, when one case is finished, another beings. My "salvation program" seems never to come to an end. When the people are ill, I feel as if I myself was ill. To say other people is as urgent as putting out fires-no delay is allowed.

My dear reader, here is another letter:

April 4, 1983

Grand Master Lu,

Three days ago, I ordered your book Spiritual Healing by Flying Rainbow and wrote to ask for your address. The book dealer wrote back saying that you are not at home these days. So I am writing this letter to earnestly request your help. My wife, Hong He, and I are both teachers in a province-run middle school, in the southern part of Taiwan. Hong He is a graduate, with honors, of the English

Department of a Normal University, 34 years of age, born at the fifth watch, 25th, March, in the year of the tiger.

After marriage, we had a baby and we were very happy. However, just before the Spring Festival this year, the most unfortunate thing occurred. My wife was at home reading books by Miss Xi Mu-rong (an artist from Xiu Zhu Teachers School) and by Miss Zhang Xiao-feng (famous writer from Ming Yang Medical College), she was intoxicated, and began to live in a world of illusion. For example, she regretted that she didn't give our child a happy childhood. Her thoughts ran wild, jumping from one thing to another. She no longer studied after classes, nor would she do any knitting or travelling. She indulged in fantasy; in her dreamland, she is infatuated by Xi Mu-rong and Zhang Xiao-feng, craving for a way of life like theirs-writing as they do, painting as they do, socializing as they do. Why was it that she can't do anything like that? Why was she so stupid, clumsy, knowing nothing else except teaching English at a middle school?

Thinking like that for days and days, she lost control of herself. She trembled and was frightened as she thought that she was as good as disabled. Her nerves could no longer support her; she couldn't fall asleep at night. She began to take sleeping pills which didn't help much. I tried to comfort her, encourage her, and told her to be tough and strong, forgetting them all, but to no avail. The images of the two writers pursued her, appearing at inconceivable places and at inconceivable hours. She was becoming very thin and pail, and didn't want to do any work, not even her teaching job.

Doctors have been called in, but she would not respond to any treatment. Various divinations have been sought, but to little avail. One divination a month ago indicated that two female ghosts are trouble her. This is quite right. The two ghosts are not Xi Mu-rong and Zhang Xiaog-feng; that was her own fantasy. We were told to pray and we did, and again nothing happened.

I have read many books by Grand Master and know that Grand Master has great super-natural powers. I intended to draw my own talismans according to those in your book *Spiritual Healing by Flying Rainbow*, but I was afraid that I don't have much cultivated power to make them effective and that I was not confident enough as I have never done it before. All I can do now is to write this letter to request the Grand Master for help. Please, Grand Master, set up a Tantric shrine and use the most secret method to help my wife to break away from the two ghosts and recover her previous graceful bearing. Please, Grand Master, help her to get away from the control of the two shadows of Xi Mu-rong and Zhang Xiao-feng, find herself again, regain confidence in herself, and live a normal life once more.

I beg you, Grand Master, to accept my request at any event. If she recovers, I shall repay you for such kindness. Please trust us that we are honest workers in education and will not cheat you. I wonder if Grand Master would save the whole family of us. I am fully occupied now, teaching at school, doing household chores, taking care of my wife, and looking after my child. I feel I won't be able to stand this any longer. I pin the only hope on you, Grand Master, for now I don't trust anybody else. If Grand Master comes to help and frees my wife from the mercy of the two ghosts, I shall worship Grand Master's photo and remember your kindness for the rest of my life.

Let me beg the Heaven and Grand Master once more. Thank Grand Master for your blessing. If possible, let me know when you return home. I should pay you a visit in person.

Best wishes!

Chen Chang-qing

I have these points of explanation to make about this letter:

First, there are many kinds of mental disorder patients and they are most complicated. There are now countless people suffering from this who have recovered with help of my spiritual healing. There are a train-load of them. But what I want to make clear here is this: it is difficult to fully recover if they have been ill for more than eight years, because the nerves have been too tired for too long-an overused spring loses its elasticity. Even if they do recover, they may look a bit slow-witted. I hope my clients understand this. Second, when one is enchanted by something (anything), it is possible to lose control of one's nerves, for instance by reading, examinations, love, career, drinking, spotless cleanness, religion and sitting quietly. This happens when your own mind can't control itself. To avoid all this, you must live a regular and normal life, with normal sleep, normal food and drink, normal recreation activities, so that you are the master of your own life. When anything gets abnormal, you must immediately adjust it. If you can't return to normal by yourself, consult a doctor for treatment, both physiologically and psychologically. Please do not delay it. The longer it is delayed, the more trouble it will bring. Third, recently, there are more and more readers who ask me for "remote spiritual healing" and in my tantric shrine the number of Eight characters (in four pairs, indicating the year, month, day and hour of a person's birth used for fortune-telling) increases daily. I evoke my powers day and night, and perform the sessions as prescribed. There is one hope in my heart-all sentient beings, after recovering their illness and sufferings, study Buddhism, and all of them will attain supreme achievement. This is my sincerest hope.

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The Art Of Meditation

Chapter 25. Talisman Healing of Asthma and More

My student, Pei Cun, wrote me a letter in beautiful Chinese calligraphy, in which he mentioned great responses of Spiritual Healing by Flying Rainbow. I am elated by the letter. To make the evidence convincing, let me quote the letter in full:

March 26, 1983

Grand Master,

On March 14th I got Grand master's heavenly letter which flew here from Seattle in the United States. After a close reading of it, tears rolled down my cheeks I suddenly felt a warm current filling up every bit of my body- every cell seemed to be blessed by Grand Master's light. This is the first letter I have ever got that is written by Grand Master yourself. As I read it, it was as if I saw Grand Master's kind face. I felt I am fully content, totally satisfied.

On the 15th, I did as Grand Master instructed. I fasted for breakfast, lunch, and supper, took a bath and began the sitting session at ten o'clock in the evening. I felt so light all over, as if floating like a fairy. I felt so comfortable in the mind, my vital energy mounting to its full capacity. I brought my palms together in front of my chest, feeling some kind of electric charge at the tip of the ten fingers. In fact, my fingers sometimes danced and bent by themselves, and the two hands occasionally paid obeisance to the Buddha by themselves or formed some mudras. The movements of the hand were gentle and graceful, natural and precise. All of this is

indeed inconceivable. Now I knew I had evoked the spirits. Here I enclosed a traveler's check which was not used when I was abroad. My wife Li Fang-na would like to take refuge in Grand Master. (She often reads your books and studies Buddhism. She also wants to take refuge in Grand Master. She is kindhearted and is better qualified than me to take refuge.) At the ceremony, please buy some offering and incense for the Buddha, the rest of the money is for the postage of the certificates.

In mid-February, my young brother had a serious attack of asthma. All the doctors he saw and the medicine and injections he took produced no effect. Then I bought your book *Spiritual Healing by Flying Rainbow*, and copied from the book the talismans for curing asthma. He took one in the morning and another in the evening. Now he has fully recovered and has not had any more attacks. This shows the effectiveness of talisman healing. As Grand Master says, "sincerity and energy can break up gold and stone"-this is absolutely true. Grand Master's talismans are unequalled, very much like those by our ancient Holy men.

I am Grand Master's regular student, a disciple of the Ling Xian Sect. Taking Grand Master as our example, my wife and I are willing to devote all our life to study your teachings and the way you live. We dare not make haste in our cultivation, but rather make gradual but solid progress. In our future course of action, we rely on Grand Master's timely instructions on the right path, for a wrong step may land us in the Mara's realm and it is hard to turn back. If I have made any mistake, please point it out to me, for a strict teacher produces excellent students. Now I am studying Bai Du Mu. Everyday, I perform the four preparatory practices, recite the High King Sutra, and prostrate before the Buddha. I never forget my lessons, and I observe the precepts and always do good. I hope that by cultivating step by step, I can progress little by little, from the realm of form to the formless realm, and get empowered

in my meditation by the light from the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. The hard spots on my mother's body have miraculously shrunk a lot, particularly the one on her face. Everybody was amazed. To such great kindness, I dare not just say thanks; I must keep it firmly in my five internal organs.

Following Grand Master's instruction. I visited the Amida Temple on the Dongman Street in our city on March 24th to request a "water healing" for my mother's illness. The head priest that said "water healing" is a complex method for which he may not have enough power. After repeated begging, the head priest performed the "fortune telling cup" before the statues of Shakyamuni and Kuan-Yin with a thousand hands and a thousand eyes. Then divination indicated that I must abstain from meat and wine, and before the Buddhas in the temple, read the three volumes of Compassionate Samadhi Water Method five times each, and read the Deliverance Mantra five thousand times. Besides, my mother must come to the temple to make her own supplication and take refuge in the Three Jewels.

My mother originally did not believe in Buddhism. After I told her all about this, however, she agreed to go, much to our surprise. On Feb. 19th, lunar calendar, she officially took refuge.

Since I started worshipping Kuan-Yin Bodhisattva, there has been amazing effectiveness. My parents are gradually changing their attitudes, and beginning to believe in Buddhism. This is an effect produced by the fact that the book *Spiritual Healing by Flying Rainbow* has worked wonders. About the book, can I do exercises at ordinary times? If yes, what do I do with the paper after the exercises? For formal talismans, do I use ordinary paper or talisman paper (the yellow kind)? What about the ink? Can I just use the ordinary pine-soot kind or the vermilion kind?

Please forgive me for the lack of respect in asking so many questions which make the letter look like an exam paper.

Dharma peace!

Your student

Pei Cun

My student, Pei Cun, lives in the southern part of Taiwan. He writes a beautiful hand with Chinese brushes and works very hard at cultivation. He is really a promising young practitioner. His wife, Li Fang-na, studies Buddhism together with Pei Cun. She had great "root of goodness" and will be an extraordinary cultivator. Pei Cun's parents have never had any belief and opposed his belief in Buddhism. So at the beginning, Pei Cun had to prostrate to the Buddha behind his parents' back. However, since Spiritual Healing by Flying Rainbow cured her asthma and the hard spots disappeared, the parents' attitude has begun to change and they have taken refuge in the Three Jewels. This is a miracle of Spiritual Healing by Flying Rainbow.

There are a few points that deserve some special mention: First, talismans in Spiritual Healing by Flying Rainbow are valuable talismans that were once used by gods and celestial beings to save people in the world. Learners of them must be pious and study them with great respect. When drawing them, one must do it with respect as if gods were present, with correct rituals. Simply put, the rituals include: set the incense table, take a bath, prostrate to the sky, pray, draw the talisman with respect, and see off the gods. As long as you can move the heavenly gods to empower you by raining light on you, the talisman you draw will accomplish what it is meant to achieve. "Effectiveness comes from sincerity which can break up gold and stone." This is no exaggeration. Second, diseases like asthma and "hard spots" are hard to cure. Once you got them, you can never get away from them. Asthma is a chronic disease which wears the patient out. Hard spots can either

be benign or malignant. The benign ones are tumors and the malignant ones belong to cancer. Both cases call for operation. Cancer is a fatal illness at the mere mention of which people turn pail, for so many people die of heart trouble and cancer. I have experimented the talismans to cure cancer mentioned in Spiritual Healing by Flying Rainbow. They have cured quite a number of cancer patients. There was once a nurse in the hospital who had developed stomach cancer. Her hair was falling off and her eyes had sunk. She was about to die and the hospital would not take her in. After she had taken "talismans for cancer," however, her hair grew out again, and her muscles came back. She is now alive again. The Rong Ming General Hospital held a conference about this case. The nurse's brother is a teacher of music who teaches the piano. He came to me for help. There are many other cases where dying patients were brought back to life, but we have no space to list them all here.

Thirdly, the talisman patterns in Spiritual Healing By Flying Rainbow can be copied as exercises at ordinary times. It should be announced, though, that it is an exercise session. The paper used during the exercise session should be gathered together and burnt to ashes at a clean place. As talismans contain gods' symbols, names and teachings, they should not be disposed of casually. In drawing talismans formally, special attention must be paid to etiquette. When due courtesy is paid, gods and celestials will certainly come to shed light and sprinkle energy. If due courtesy is paid and gods or celestials don't come, they are to blame. If your ceremony is not done according to etiquette, it is your fault if gods do not arrive.

Fourthly, it is better to use yellow paper for talismans. The ordinary pine-soot ink is meant for ordinary purpose or ordinary diseases, while the vermillion ink is used to subdue evil spirits or demons. That is the only difference. Those who have learnt talisman skills

must understand the heavenly wishes, cultivate diligently and always do good; on no account should they do evil. They should know that good intentions are supported by gods while evil intentions are urged on by evil spirits. You may possess certain evil powers, but the evil is sooner or later conquered by the good. The evil doer will become an evil spirit after death and fall into Hell never to be born again. So if talisman practitioners follow evil ways, they come to a very miserable end.

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Chapter 26. The Root Guru Response Method

At present, there are more than 4000 students in Taiwan who have formally taken refuge in me. Abroad, there are a thousand of them who have taken refuge. (including Americans and Europeans) The number of my students have been increasing. This is happening when I have not openly announced that I will take students. I always accept students only when they have generated the aspiration for Bodhi themselves. I have never sedulously asked anybody to take refuge in me. The number of students does not matter to me. They may come and go as they like, since it is all decided by conditions. If they meet better masters alter, they can take refuge in that master as well.

I have a Dharma photo, with the five-Buddha crown on my head, dressed in the Three Robes, prayer beads hanging, the vajra scepter in my right hand and the vajra bell in my left. Now I live in the States; students in Taiwan would like to make a porcelain statue modeled on the photo. They asked for my opinion and my reply was "yes."

Some people held, however, that since Sheng-Yen Lu is still alive, it is self-importance to have one's own statue worshipped by other people, and that it is inappropriate to put one's own statue along side those of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. If that should be done, there will be a lot of gossip, which will defeat the original purpose. Other people said that a living person who accepts others' worship will have years of life taken off or misfortune will fall upon him. This is because among people prostrating to the Buddhas there are high-ranking priests and revered monks, and Sheng-Yen Lu cannot

very well stand their prostration to him. In their opinion, I should not have my statue made.

In fact, when I say it is all right, my explanation is as follows.

When the Vajra Master wears a five-Buddha crown, it means that the Buddhas from the five directions are staying on his head. The five Buddhas are: Vairocana in the center, Aksobhya in the East, Ratnasambhava in the South, Amitabha in the West, and Amoghasiddhi in the North. These are the Lord Teachers in the five directions. When they are on the head, it means that the five Buddhas are pouring water of wisdom into the Vajra Master. In this way, the Vajra Master becomes solidified, has supernatural powers equal to those of the five Buddhas, together with their wisdom, virtue, eloquence, and works for the benefits of all sentient beings.

When salient beings prostrate to a Master who wears a five-Buddha crown, it is equal in merit to prostrate to the Five Buddhas. So there is a verse that goes:

The dignity and power of the Buddhas in the five directions,
Subdue demons everywhere in the world.

When Vairocana Buddha appears on the crown,
Salute and prostration bring forth the Truth.

People tend to think that they are prostrating to Sheng-Yen Lu, in fact, they are not, they are prostrating to the Five Buddhas on my head. Among the five, any one Buddha is important enough to stand and accept the worship by sentient beings, including high ranking priests and revered monks, let alone Five Buddhas plus a fully realized master (one who has realized the Great Perfect Mirror-Wisdom). Considering all these aspects, sentient beings can of course worship my statue; it will not take away my happiness, instead those who worship me will be blessed. I can emit light to empower the worshipper. This is what is called "one person that has realized transforms into a hundred others."

Now I explain how to worship one's guru master: The photo in the crown are all the most revered, so their photos or statues may be placed high above. Light up the incense and pray. Offerings include: flower, incense, lamp, tea, fruit, rice, fresh water.

Recite the four-fold refuge:

- Namō Guru bei,
- Namō Buddha ye,
- Namō Dharma ye,
- Namō Sangha ye.

Recite: "I take refuge in the Ling Xian Sect and all the patriarchs in the past, and wish that all sentient beings will get peace and pleasure. I take refuge in the Five Buddhas and the Shrine, and wish that all sentient beings will get away from suffering. I take refuge in all Buddhas in the ten directions of the three times, and wish that sentient beings in the six forms of existence suddenly attain supreme enlightenment, and then take refuge in the Lotus Buddha Land."

Cupping his hands, the cultivator will visualize: "Master Sheng-Yen Lu, dressed in a black robe, with an outer brown robe, 108 prayer beads hanging in front of the chest, the vajra scepter in my right hand and the vajra bell in my left hand, a perfect countenance, slightly dignified. I am wearing a five-Buddha crown, a red crown, five Buddhas embroidered, with two ribbons hanging down bearing the six-syllable mantra of wisdom: Om Mani Padme Hum. Master Lu, sits on a lotus seat, you sit opposite."

"Visualize that at the brow-point of the Guru Master, a ray of white light comes out to shine on your own brow-point. This is the Great Perfect Mirror-Light, which will reduce your five aggregates and

the eight consciousness to absolutely nothing. Then, visualize that the throat area of the root Guru sends out a ray of strong red light, shining directly onto your throat, which reduces your greed and lust to nothing and great wisdom appears. Finally, visualize that the Master's heart area lets out strong blue light, which directly shines on your own heart, conquering your ignorance and reducing it to nothing."

At this moment, Master Sheng-Yen Lu in your visualization is no longer Sheng-Yen Lu, but Mahapadmakumara in the Lotus Land. Wearing a five-Buddha crown, Mahapadmakumara sits on a pure Lotus seat. He uses both compassion and wisdom to save sentient beings and to bring them benefit.

Recite in your heart, not audibly, the root mantra of Master Sheng-Yen Lu and Mahapadmakumara, 108 times:

"Om, ah, hum-guru bei, ah-ho-sa-sa-ma-ha-Lian Shen, siddhi hum. After reciting this mantra 108 times, sit quietly for a meditation session.

After the sitting session, prostrate to the Buddhas.

The root mantra can be interpreted like this: "Bodhisattva Kuan-Yin's compassionate heart mudra is my true vajra master. All sentient beings, from Heavenly beings to hungry ghosts, will get the vajra Dharma and will all go to Mahapadmakumara's Buddha Land."

In practicing "worshipping the root guru," one's mind must concentrate on the root guru.

Let no unhealthy thought arise. Visualize the Dharma appearance of the root guru.

Realize the "middle way" contemplation (all objects are both empty and non-empty, illusionary and non-illusionary).

Practitioners of this method will receive the light from Master Lu and Mahapadmakumara. They will be purified. Their self-nature light will ascend to merge with the light of the Dharma Realm. All

their bad karma will be eradicated. They will attain great Dharma wisdom and all the supernatural powers, turn consciousness into intelligence, and realize the supreme perfect enlightenment.

In the United States, I have a woman student by the name of Karin D. Sreenway. She practices "root guru response method" and got realized very quickly. She saw her own Buddha nature and the great perfect mirror light of the root guru. Extremely pleased she wrote a poem and a letter to me to show the realization.

The essential points in practicing this method:

1. Worship a picture or photo or a porcelain statue of the root guru.
 2. In visualization, keep your thought on his dignified bearing of the Dharma countenance and request empowerment by light from the root guru.
 3. All mantras must be recited silently (vajra recitation).
 4. Visualize first, and then recite the mantras.
 5. Offerings and prostration must be done according to the rituals.
- Prostrate to the Dharma body of the guru, with the five Buddhas on his head. This notion and its meaning are very important. The "root guru response method" is very important. Practitioners of this method all have had great responses.

*...from **The Art of Meditation** by Grand Master Sheng-yen Lu*

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Chapter 27. The Divine Hand and Spiritual Healing

Guang Hua, a reader who lives in Bukit Bruang in Malaysia, wrote a letter about "the divine hand" and "spiritual healing." The letter has its special significance and it is disclosed here in full:

Malaysia

March 3, 1983

Grand Master Sheng-Yen,

How are you! Please excuse me for this interruption of your quiet cultivation. As I am your faithful reader, I hope that Grand Master will find time for a reply and I would be very grateful.

This is what happened. One day in November, 1982, I saw five books of yours in the home of my best friend. Curiosity drove me to the point that I borrowed these five books from my friend. They are: Between Spirits and Myself, Self Vindication by Spirits, Super-Senses of Spirits, Invocation of Spirits, Mysterious Earth Spirits. When I started reading them, I was immediately fascinated. I could hardly put them aside. I read each of them twice at least. The more I read, the better I understood them and the clearer I got. All the queries buried in my heart all these years were answered all of a sudden. For the clearance of these long-time doubts, I want to express my greatest thanks to Grand Master. But for your great books, I was still uncertain about things in the Heavenly Realms. Then, I visited the bookshop for your books. As the saying goes, "Heaven doesn't disappoint the earnest person," I found as many as seven other books of yours. Each is equally significant and excellent. I love the books so much that I can hardly be away from

them for a moment. This strengthens my determination to turn my heart to the Buddha. I believe that in the world today many people are studying your books and they are generating Bodhi aspirations. This is a great virtue of Grand Master. You have converted more sentient beings than Shakyamuni Buddha, for if I read the classic Sutras, I may not become a believer. When I started reading your books, I became a believer at once. You are the Shakyamuni Buddha of today.

I sat quietly as you described. In the first sitting I did not get any response, however, I got some sensation after five minutes; I felt some electric current travelling along my hands. At first, the hands were shaking gently and then they began to dance in the air, as if they were no longer mine. They danced for about five minutes. The dance had its own rhythm and elegance, very much like forming a great mudra of a Buddha. Its delicacy and subtleness make me wonder of all this could really be true.

After each session of quiet sitting, my fatigue would completely disappear. May I ask why? During one of the sessions, it suddenly occurred to me to ask who was this spirit that had come to guide me. Surprisingly enough, (I had written out the names of various Buddhas and Bodhisattvas on a piece of paper), with my eyes closed, when I pointed a finger, it was very precise, without the slightest deviation from the center. The pointing act was entirely done by itself. After that I used this method to ask the Heavenly spirit for certain instructions. If the answer was "Yes," the hand would have a big movement; if the answer was "No," the hand would just move slightly. It turned out that 99 out of a hundred cases were correct. I am really telling you the truth. The one percent that was incorrect was due to poor transmission when my mind was not concentrated enough. May I ask, Grand Master, if this is the "divine hand?"

One day, because of my work, I felt a terrible pain in my arm in the middle of the night and I couldn't fall asleep. I had to get up and lit

up the incense to request the Buddha's help. Soon my hands started dancing, the left hand beating the painful right arm. This beating was done by itself (not by my intention), and it lasted for five minutes. Surprisingly, the right arm no longer felt any pain, and I fell asleep at once. The next morning found my arm fully recovered. This is indeed inconceivable. May I ask, Grand Master, if this is "spiritual healing?"

Ever since I started reading "spiritual books," I have been worshipping the Buddha, chanting the Buddha's name, reciting the Diamond Sutra, The Prajnaparamita Hrdaya Sutra, the Six-syllable mantra among others. I remember once when I was reciting the Prajnaparamita Hrdaya Sutra, I felt someone slap me on the head when I was at the words "Form is void and void is form. Sensation, reception, volitional activities and consciousness are the same."

This one slap made me understand many things. The whole world is temporary and illusionary. This truth of temporariness dawned upon me in a second. My God! It is very important to inspire practitioners with these four sentences. This is my personal opinion. I wonder if Grand Master would agree with me.

I have read "Truth of the Heavenly Secret," I wonder if it can be explained by "sensation, perception, volitional activities and consciousness are the same."

All right, I have written several pages. In fact, what I want to tell Grand Master can not fully be expressed in many more pages. Even if I wrote "Thank you" on all the paper in the world, I could not express adequately my respect to Grand Master.

I also know that I don't have much chance to receive a reply from you as you are very busy flying to Europe today, flying to America tomorrow and even to Africa (I hear). However, I shall wait and wait, one year, ten years; I will kneel down in gratitude even if Grand Master sent me a blank sheet of paper. I have also written a rhyme for Grand Master. This is an expression of respect. Please

don't throw it away.
The Shakyamuni for today is he,
Who is converting states in the ten directions.
Guang Hua prostrates three times to him,
Determined to follow his teachings.

Best wishes

Guang Hua

Regarding this letter, I make the following comments:
First, the letter says I am the Shakyamuni of today, but I don't think I deserve that. I am not qualified, for I am only a small practitioner who told the world his own experience in his cultivation. Today there are many, many people who have read my books, and there are also many people who have left home after reading my books. I can say very frankly that among the monks in Fuo Guang Mountain, many generated Bodhicitta after reading my books. They asked me if they should leave home or not. I told them "yes" or "no" according to their own causations. Many of the monks at the Fuo Guang Mountain got there after consultation with me. Here I wish them well and that they will awaken to their original nature and attain Buddhahood. Besides, there are even more people who have taken refuge in the Three Jewels after reading my books. This is due to my approach in writing: beginning with expedient and skilful means and gradually going onto "seeing one's own original nature." However, only Heaven knows how much I have suffered because of my approach!
Secondly Mr. Guang Hua's "divine hand" has got its foundation. The cultivation of "divine hand" usually takes ten years. It is a fairly simple training, but it takes a long time of tempering. The most subtle "divine hand" is to foretell by the sounds the joints

make. At the final stage of cultivation, you don't have to move the hand; you just listen to the sounds the bones make and you will know everything. This is absolutely true. I, Sheng-Yen Lu, would die the cruelest death in order to prove that this is the most superior divination under Heaven.

Thirdly, there are many "spiritual healing" methods. Any healing method by Heavenly energy is "spiritual healing." The curing of the pain by the left hand beating the right arm is also "spiritual healing." Drawing talismans is also "spiritual healing." Praying is one too. Drinking the great compassion water is "spiritual healing" as well. However, these methods can be easily used by quacks who seize the opportunity for wealth or women. So be careful to tell true practitioners from quacks. Trust the reasonable and ignore the irrational. Take care not to be taken in.

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The Art Of Meditation

Chapter 28. Responses to Good God's Foresight

Cultivators have thirty-six good gods to protect them if they do not go astray. Whenever something is going to happen, good or bad, these gods will come to inform them. This is true indeed. Quacks use the "ear reporting" method by which spirits and ghosts come to inform them of the good luck or ill luck.

Here I disclose a letter to show this is true.

Feb. 6, 1983

Grand Master Lu,

How are you! Let me introduce myself. My name is Xu Ren-yuan, from Chiayi county; it is a pleasure to be born in the same place as Grand Master. My family lives in Zhu Qi, Ja Yi county. I work in a hospital. I have read Grand Master's many books. Spiritual studies are useful for sentient beings and also opened up my spiritual wisdom. In February last year, when I was about to fall asleep for a nap, I saw that my grandma was dying, and that everyone in the funeral procession was distinctly clear. And I saw that her grave was facing the south, with a little road going from right to left. There was a vast expanse of scenery, at the end of which was a bird-like hill. When they were making holes on the coffin, a stream of air gushed out onto my face and I woke up. I felt this was too strange; it was not like a dream. My grandma was 92, but was in very good health. Why should I see those things? By the first half of July, lunar calendar, my grandma unexpectedly left this world when she was sleeping.

What was even more strange is that taking part in the funeral were

exactly the people I saw in that "dream," without exception. Grandma's grave was facing the south with a little road going from right to left.

There was indeed a vast expanse of scenery and a bird-like hill there.

On another occasion, I was getting a lift from a colleague going back to Ja Yi. As soon as I got on the car, I had a strong response that one of the tires would break. On the way, I told my colleague again and again to drive slowly for fear that one of the tires might break. When we were driving between Xin Ying and Hon Bi, we were stopped by the traffic lights. When the green light was on again and we were trying to go through, a tire was flat. We didn't even know when it happened!

I had many responses; they are countless by now. Each time I see something in a dream, it will come true within three or six months. My presentiments are also often correct—they always come true. I was born between 6 and 8 o'clock p.m. on Dec 2nd. From very early on, I have the habit of getting up at mid-night, without my knowing, and sitting in meditation. My family wonders why I sleep in a sitting position. Sometimes I am half awake. I don't know myself why I do this.

May I ask, Grand Master: what was I in my previous life, and why can I foresee and predict things?

Wish you Dharma peace!

Ren-Yuan

After I got this letter, I found, with my divine eye, that Xu Ren-yuan was a Zhan master in his previous life. This master often sat in meditation for sleep (called "never-lying-down pellet"). Some of the habits in the previous life were retained in the present life. So Xu often sat up at midnight, unconsciously. Such is causation

accumulated over the past lives.

The Zhan master in his previous life cultivated "good gods' foresight response" and he always knew what was going to happen soon. He often told other people's fortune and could predict many things. He actually make a furore. Though Xu Ren-yuan did not leave home for cultivation, he retains some of the abilities of foresight and prediction, due to his causation in his previous life. This is by no means strange.

"Good gods foresight response" is not a complex doctrine, but a by-product from cultivation. All practitioners who have attained achievement will experience some "foresight responses." Tantric practitioners concentrate all their vital energy, generate all kinds of virtue, and therefore get protection by all good gods. Due to this protection, the practitioner will know, beforehand, what is going to happen, for the kind gods will inform him.

What about spiritual children's ear-reporting? It is practiced as the following describes:

"On a day ending in the number of five, get a stretch of willow wood from a place in the east where water is constantly running. Get a Buddha-making sculptor turn the piece of wood into a man-like figure, about 8.6mm long, smart-looking, with clearly distinguishable eyes, and eye-brows, the left hand forming a positive mudra and the right hand forming a negative mudra with the hair worn in two coils. The figure is a child, dressed in robes. Use cinnabar mixed with human milk to write on a piece of yellow paper "heart, liver, lung, kidney, spleen," and put the paper into the hole dug into the body of the child. Put blood from a cockscomb or from a tortoise on his mouth. Then wait, till you hear that a child in the neighborhood dies or a woman has a miscarriage. Write on a piece of yellow paper the date of death of that child or baby, and put this piece of paper on the back of the idol."

On certain days of the year, memorial ceremonies will be held and

offerings will be made to the child in a quiet room. At the same time, the spirit-tracing mantra will be recited. It takes about forty days to complete the rituals when the spirit of the deceased child attaches itself to the willow wood and can show itself and can predict what will happen in the near future. This method is described in my book *Random Remarks on Spiritual Prediction*. Spiritual children's ear-reporting method was originally used by itinerant entertainers and had nothing to do with spiritual cultivation. But since it bears great resemblance with "ghosts reporting what will happen" and "gods reporting what will happen," it is described briefly here.

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The Art Of Meditation

Chapter 29. Beware of "Absolute Emptiness"

Here is a letter by a Taoist cultivator which may serve as a warning to some people:

Jan. 5, 1983

Grand Master Lu,

How are you? My humble surname is Lan and given name is Chao-li. Your name is heard everywhere like a thunder. I am often inspired by your books. I know you are very busy and often visit other counties. Excuse me for this letter, but I need your guidance badly, as I now find myself in a dilemma.

I feel ashamed and repentant to say that I am writing to you because I have failed in my Taoist cultivation, not because I have realized in my Buddhist cultivation to make the perfection more perfect, so to speak. Four years ago, I made up my mind to engage in spiritual cultivation. However my causal conditions must be very poor, for that was the time when Grand Master closed your door to new disciples. I had to enter another branch of belief. I happened to have read a book on Taoism. I have also read Quiet Sitting Method of Yin Shinzi. Then I practiced blindly for a while. It so happened that I got the vital energy misplaced. Now I am very weak and cannot concentrate my mind on anything. The most important reason is my bad habit of "reaching for what is beyond my grasp." Before the self-nature was cultivated enough, I made haste in my practice, not knowing the correct way to do it. So things went wrong. Now my body is withering. Everything is too late. I have

been lost for much too long. How could I plug up my energy again?

I know quite clearly that a man's life is but a hundred years' dream and it is better to cultivate oneself as early as possible. But where are the good teachers? I have consulted many masters, but here I am still circling around in ignorance. Now both my mind and body are "besieged," and nobody can save me. Grand Master Lu, you often met certain events which you say they are pre-arranged or coincidence or pre-determined. Do you really think that my failure is also pre-determined? I don't think so. Now I regularly recite the fixed karma mantra of Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva: "Om-ben-lo-muo-lin-tuo-ning. Sa-puo-ha." This mantra is used to break the fixed Karma. I am hoping to get out of the suffering, turn bad luck into good luck, so as to get on the right way and practice the correct doctrine.

I am strong-willed. Since Heaven has left me alive, I must get up, start again, and press forward along the path leading to transcendence of birth and death. After all, I have one failure experience behind me and I will proceed more carefully so as not to make the same mistake again. Now I need Grand Master's guidance. I hope Grand Master will not turn me down on the ground of no relationship between us, or I am too humble, or I am too defiled, or my karma is too serious. I am a man who really wants to cultivate. Please don't let me down. I am waiting for your instructions like a thirsty man waiting anxiously for a cup of water.

1. My body and mind are "besieged"; my mind is totally blank now. I don't know whether it is a demon that has got inside me or it is a wrong relative that has come to deliver retribution. Please instruct me on now to get out of this and return to normal.
2. I believe that my body and mind are defiled and I want to cultivate pure wisdom. Can I renounce home-life and become a monk?

As I have found that my karmic hindrance is grave, I want to purify my body and mind first and then think about saving other sentient beings. Is this the right path? If Grand Master cares to instruct me, I shall certainly follow your teachings and spread the Dharma. If in the future I attain achievement, I will never forget your instructions, but repay the four kinds of kindness about and aid those suffering in the realms below. This is my pledge and I will not go back on my words.

Taoist Peace.

This letter told me that Lan Chao-li has got into the state of "absolute emptiness." What is "absolute emptiness?" We have the contemplation of illusoriness and the contemplation of emptiness. But if you don't understand the essence of the two combined, you fall into "absolute emptiness." Once you fall into that conception, you tend to think that everything is false, everything is empty and you lose the meaning of existence, become bored with life itself; to you, everything is grey and everything is empty; the worst part of it is that your mind is totally blank, and you can't extricate yourself from it.

When you are in the state of "absolute emptiness," it is like having your energy misplaced or breath travelling in the wrong channel. Your energy can not be concentrated and there is nothing you can do. The energy is gone, and you are disheartened. Both the body and the mind feel greatly weakened as if you were disabled. This is a failure in Taoist cultivation. In this state, the best practitioner may go to the Realm of Air in the Formless Realm, the middle class practitioner may go to the lazy land, and the lowest may become a "heartless ghost."

To get out of this dilemma, you have to give up your previous cultivation. Remember, don't learn to fly before you can walk! Start with the four preparatory practices. Don't look down upon

"elaborate prostration," "great offering," "fourfold refuge," and "the Vajra heart." The first three are visible, but the Vajra heart is invisible. If you follow these four practices strictly according to the rituals described, the Buddha's light will surely bless you and eradicate your karma. Then the sense of "absolute emptiness" is driven away and you are filled with Dharma pleasure. These four practices are the basis for any other practice. Without the foundation, tall buildings can not be put up. The cultivation of the Vajra heart is especially important, for it can make you strong both mentally and physically.

Defilement of body and mind? Whose body and mind are not defiled? Nobody under heaven is spotless clean. If they are clean, why do they need to cultivate? So you are qualified to become a monk. Pure wisdom is the only true wisdom. I encourage you to renounce home-life to become a monk. You should not only renounce the world but also live in the world, not only to save yourself, but also to save other sentient beings. Your vow is the aspiration of a great Bodhisattva. It deserves encouragement. Bestir yourself, virtuous Lan Chao-lin, a future Bodhisattva! You have my blessings.

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