
meditation enlightenment The Meditation School

Posted by phamdluan - 2008/11/18 23:44

vn-buddhism - Mesg from PhamDL...@aol.com From Sources of Chinese Tradition , Volume 1, Compiled by Wm. Theodore de Bary, Wing-tsit Chan, Burton Watson ~~~~~~ The Meditation school, called Ch'an in Chinese from the Sanskrit dhyana, is better known to the West by the Japanese pronunciation Zen. As a religious practice, of course, meditation was not peculiar to Ch'an; it had been a standard fixture in all forms of Buddhism, whether Indian or Chinese, from earliest times. Yet no other school attached the exclusive importance Ch'an did to meditation, not only as a method or means for intuiting Ultimate Truth, but indeed as an end in itself, as the Truth realized in action. Nor was any other school prepared to dispense as freely as did Ch'an with scriptural studies or philosophical discussion in favor of a purely intuitive approach to enlightenment. Therefore, where the names of other schools bespoke their scriptural authority (e.g., the Lotus or Flower Garland sects (Pha'p Hoa to^ng va` Hoa Nghie^m to^ng)) or their metaphysical position (e.g., Consciousness-Only or Dharma-Character sect (Duy Thu+'c to^ng hay Pha'p Tu+o+'ng to^ng)), Ch'an's derived from its meditative posture. From its distaste for book-learning Ch'an became known as the doctrine not founded on words or scriptures. It was rather a teaching transmitted from mind to mind, that is, from one master directly to his disciple, without the intervention of rational argumentation or formulation in conceptual terms. However, if in some ways Ch'an seems strongly individualistic and often irreverent and iconoclastic with respect to tradition, it is at the same time highly authoritarian and insistent upon the firmest discipline. Ch'an is, indeed, above all a religious discipline, and one which requires complete submission to the will of the Master, who alone can guide authoritatively and insure the correct transmission of the Truth. Ch'an teaches directly pointing to the human mind and becoming a Buddha just as you are, believing that the Buddha-nature is inherent in all human beings and that through meditative introspection this nature can readily be seen. By the Buddha-nature is meant the the Buddha-mind in its highest attributes and true essence, which transcends all distinctions of object and subject or duality of any kind. It is Emptiness, that is, empty of any specific character. The world of appearances, with all its specific characters, is but a product of the imagination. To penetrate the Buddha-mind, the great meditation masters variously advocated absence of thought (Vo^ Nie^m) in the sense that the mind should be freed from the influence of the external world. They taught ignoring one's feelings so as to eliminate all defilements and attachments. They also taught letting the mind take its course unhindered among phenomena, the latter being, after all, manifestations of the Buddha-mind. Whatever the approach, the fundamental method has been meditation. This is of two kinds, Tathagata Meditation and Patriarchal Meditation. The former, the Buddha's way of meditating, involves deliberations of the intellect, while the latter, as taught by the Patriarch Bodhidharma, requires no intellectual effort, but rather direct intuition of the Buddha-mind. The result of meditation is enlightenment, which may come suddenly or gradually. The major tradition has been sudden enlightenment preceding gradual cultivation, (Kie^n Ta'nh Kho+?i Tu) the idea being that cultivation of the religious life must be gradual and guided by Perfect Wisdom. To bring the mind into sharp focus and to make it alert so that it can immediately intuit Truth, which is everywhere, the mind must be emancipated from old habits, prejudices, restrictive thought processes, and even ordinary thought itself. The horizon must be lifted, the perspective broadened, and the aim always directed toward Ultimate Truth. To this end special methods have been devised to throw off intellection and imagination and to allow the pure mind to make its own discovery. Travel (which usually offers new experience), manual labor, working with nature, etc., are all accepted techniques. But the most commonly used method, especially from the eighth through the eleventh century, has been the public case (koan in Japanese, co^ng a'n), a question-and-answer method in which answers to a disciple's questions may consist of scolding, beating, or strange and illogical utterances. The purpose is to wake up, shock, and sensitize the questioner's mind, so as to help him discover the Truth himself. Ch'an attributes its mystic beginning to the Buddha himself, who, according to tradition, transmitted the doctrine to his pupil Kashyapa (Ca Die^p) by merely holding up a flower and smiling. Its founding in China has been attributed to Bodhidharma (Bo^ Dde^ Dda.t Ma), the First Patriarch, about A.D. 520. Questions have been raised about his historicity, but recent Chinese and Japanese scholarship has definitely established the fact that such a person was in China during the period 420-479. By that time, however, the meditation doctrine had already become widely accepted and practiced following its advocacy by An Shih-ka'o (An The^ Cao, A.D. C. 150). The doctrine of sudden enlightenment had also been advanced earlier by Tao-sheng (Dda.o Sinh, d. 434) and had aroused considerable controversy. The doctrine was ultimately transmitted to the Sixth Patriarch Hui-neng (Hue^ Na(ng, 638-713). At this time the school split into the Southern school of Sudden Enlightenment and the Northern school of Gradual Enlightenment. The Northern school, founded by Shen-hsiu (Tha^ n Tu', 605-706), soon disappeared, while the Southern school, founded by Hui-neng, has flourished to this day. The two people who perfected the doctrine of the Southern school were indisputably Hui-neng and his immediate pupil Shen-hui (Tha^ n Ho^i, 670-762). But who played the greater role is a matter of debate. Dr. Hu Shih (Ho^ Thi'ch), looking at the matter from a historical standpoint, maintains that Shen-hui was the key to the development of Ch'an in China. On the basis of newly discovered documents and historical records, he concludes that Shen-hui, in 734, swept aside all forms of sitting in meditation and replaced it with the doctrines of absence of thought (Vo^ Nie^m) and seeing one's original nature (Kie^n Ta'nh). In this way Shen-hui inaugurated a new Ch'an movement which renounced Ch'an itself and is therefore not Ch'an at all. According to Hu, most of the so-called Ch'an sects in the eighth century emphasized knowledge instead of quiet-sitting. The Ch'an masters from 700 to 1000 taught and spoke in plain language and did not resort to enigmatic words, gestures, or acts. The apparently illogical question-and-answer method and other bizarre techniques were not so illogical or irrational as they seem, but only methods of educating men the hard way, so that each individual would have to make the effort to learn for himself. Dr. D.T. Suzuki agrees with Hu that Chinese Ch'an had almost nothing to do with the Indian practice of dhyana (meditation). But he insists that instead of Shen-hui, it was Hui-

neng who brought on the revolution, a revolution aimed at the identification of wisdom (prajna) and meditation (dhyana). The Ch'an masters understood prajna not as rational knowledge but as intuition. In fact it was Shen-hui's over-rational interpretation of prajna that led to the decline of his influence on the historical development of Chinese Ch'an. Later developments such as the questions-and-answers were not rational exercises of the mind but methods conducive to prajna intuition. Thus, according to Suzuki, Ch'an is not explainable by mere intellectual analysis. In any case, the transmission of Ch'an continued without interruption until there were seven sects in the ninth century. After the eleventh century only three sects, two of Lin-chi (La^m Te^') and one of Ts'ao-tung (Ta`o Ddo^ng), survived. Together they have exerted a tremendous influence on Chinese Buddhism at large. The Lin-chi sect was founded by Patriarch I-hsuan (Nghì~a Huye^`n) of Lin-chi (d. 867) and the Ts'ao-tung sect had Liang-chieh of Tung-shan (Ddo^ng So+n Lu+o+ng Gio+`i, 807-869) as its First Patriarch and Pen-chi of Ts'ao-shan (Ta`o So+n Bo^?n Ti.ch, 840-901) as its Second Patriarch. Hence came the name Ts'ao-tung (Ta`o Ddo^ng). Early Lin-chi masters frequently used the lightning method of scolding and beating disciples, while early Ts'ao-tung masters preferred the question-and-answer or case method. ===== VN-Buddh...@saigon.com - <http://saomai.org/~binhp/vn-buddhism> Let's introduce VN-Buddhism to everyone who has the Buddhist spirit.

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