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**Intuition as Epistemological Path (Dharma)  
To Nirvana or Awakening (Ontological State)**

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**HOJA DE APROBACIÓN DE TESIS****Intuition as Epistemological Path (Dharma)  
To Nirvana or Awakening (Ontological State)****María de Lourdes Arboleda Vaca**

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In this thesis I pay homage and gratitude to the *Commentary by the Sixth Patriarch Hui Neng on the Diamond Sutra*, whose potent light touch and passes through our student minds.

To my parents Luis and Letty, with love.

María Arboleda, Quito, 2009.



The 6th Patriarch (Huineng) Tearing up Sutras, by Liang Kai  
(China, Song dynasty), <http://www2.kenyon.edu/Depts/Religion/Fac/Adler/Reln360/syl360.htm>

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## RESUMEN

Luego de su inicio, el Budismo dio origen a muchas escuelas. Al menos diez de ellas generaron el Budha Dharma Chino o Chan. Para algunas tradiciones del Chan, e estudio exhaustivo de los sutras y otros textos, y la insistencia en la meditación sin comprender el sentido de la iluminación, no son centrales. Enfatizan en el carácter directo de la iluminación (comprensión súbita). Este enfoque implica el reconocimiento de la budeidad como inherente a todos los seres y su potencial para Despertar. El Chan deriva del Budismo Mahayana y la noción de *Tathagatagarbha*, embrión de Buddha, implícita en el *prajña paramita* y en las doctrinas de *Bodhidharma*. Este trabajo intenta analizar los caminos epistemológicos del Chan. La intuición es un dharma en relación con los seres sintientes en camino al Despertar y con el Despertar mismo. El Mahayana conlleva la comprensión del Despierto sobre la iluminación-de-uno y la liberación del resto o de todos, es decir a la inmersión profunda del yo en los otros, el desprendimiento del self, el vacío (wu xiang). Esto se expresa en la metáfora del Bodhisattva (Avalokitesvara/Guan Yin) y su compromiso de compasión para liberar a todos los seres sintientes del sufrimiento y la rueda de las encarnaciones. Lograr la iluminación solo es posible por el desapego (wu zhu, dejar de aferrarse a los objetos y superar la dualidad). Este abandono es, en términos occidentales, un abandono del deseo. El Karma está sostenido por el deseo, consustancial a la naturaleza de los no despiertos y vivimos en la ilusión. La superación del deseo y de la dualidad – el acceso al vacío, la iluminación y el despertar—no se alcanza tanto por la vía de la razón lógica cuanto por otros caminos (no ideas, wu nian) vinculados a la intuición donde disciplinas como la dhyana, la repetición de movimientos o sonidos, paradojas a contestar (Gong an) y el éxtasis, lideran la suprema “comprensión” que conduce al “despertar súbito”. Una persona sin educación puede acceder a la iluminación y el potencial de todos los seculares para la realización espiritual, la cual consideramos fundamental para una expansión del

Budismo en el mundo, necesitado de aproximaciones y prácticas accesibles para alcanzar el Samadhi (realidad ontológica) como factor de paz, respeto y armonía en las sociedades.

Keywords: [Dhyana](#), [Budeidad](#), [Immanencia](#), [Intuición](#), [Compasión](#), [Subitismo](#).



## ABSTRACT

After its beginnings, Buddhism gave rise to many schools, at least ten of them, generating what is known as Chinese *Buddha Dharma* or *Chan Buddhism*. Some of *Chan* traditions consider that learning practices –exhaustive study of sutras and texts– and insisting on meditation are not as crucial as paths towards illumination, and emphasize on the direct character (comprehension) of the Awakening. Additionally, they highlight the immanent character and potential *buddhēity* in all beings to access Awakening. This approach derives from Mahayana Buddhism and from the notion of *Tathagatagarbha* or “Illumination Matrix” implicit in the *prajña paramita* and in the *Bodhidharma* doctrines. This dissertation intends to analyze the Chan’s path. Intuition is a *dharma* if it is placed in relation to sentient beings on the path to Awakening and with the Awakening itself of *Nirvana*. The Mahayana implies understanding the awakening being about the linking of the enlightenment-of-one to the liberation of the rest or of all, that is the deepest immersion of I in others, the detachment of the self, the emptiness (*wu xiang*). This is expressed in the metaphor of the Bodhisattva *Avalokitesvara / Kuan Yin* who made a commitment of compassion to help liberate all sentient beings from suffering and the wheel of incarnations after their awakening (*Shurangama Sutra*). Achieving enlightenment is only possible – whatever path one takes – by detachment (*wu zhu*, ceasing to hold on to objects and overcoming duality), or in western terms, an abandonment of desire. *Karma* is sustained by desire. Overcoming desire and duality – accessing emptiness, enlightenment and awakening – is not achieved so much through the path of reason-logic as by other paths linked to no-ideas (*wu nian*), through disciplines like *dhyana*, repetition (of movements or sounds) and paradoxes to answer (*Gong an*) that lead to the sumptreme comprehension of the Awakening. We refer to Hui Neng antecedents as an answer to Shen Xiu, in order to confirm that even a person without formal education can achieve illumination, enabling those secular the possibility to achieve the Spiritual Awakening, which I consider fundamental for the expansion of Buddhism

in a world in need of new accessible practices and approaches to achieve Samadhi and Awakening or *Nirvana* eventually, as means to peace reconstruction, respect and harmony among societies.

**Keywords:** *Dhyana, Buddheity, Immanence, Intuition, Compassion,.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Although Buddhism entered Latin America a long time ago, in reality its takeoff as a doctrine and a practice of self-realization and perfecting has been very slow on our continent, and in general, has been restricted to small groups of followers. However, in the last ten years, interest in Buddhism has grown notably and the number of communities of people who are studying and practicing its teachings has multiplied. Even so, in a country like Ecuador, it is still very difficult to find a master with solid and in-depth knowledge and experience, who can guide and sustain those wishing to enter into Buddhism. Moreover, the lack of serious texts and written information on the topic leaves interested people without proper references for study and consultation.

It is for these reasons that the Master's Program in Chinese Philosophy of the San Francisco University of Quito (USFQ), introduced as a collaborative effort with the University of Beijing, has been an invaluable tool for learning and immersion in Chinese (Chan) Buddhism, and through it in Indian Buddhism and Japanese Zen, together with the other major schools of Chinese Philosophy. As a Master's candidate, my interest in entering into the vast world of Daoism, Confucianism, the Theory of Yin-Yang and of Buddhism, as well as its historical threads, approaches and dialogues, has been philosophical, cultural and political. As a being in this world, my interest has been to embark upon a path of tranquility of peace, and if possible, a practice of self-realization and spiritual emancipation.

Upon reaching the end of this period of accelerated and intense study, I must confess that both purposes have been reached to some extent. At the beginning, my interest in Chan Buddhism or Chinese Buddhism was above all academic, given the fact that in Latin America, the works on Confucianism, Zen Buddhism, Indian Buddhism and

Daoism have circulated to a greater extent<sup>1</sup> than those of Chan Buddhism, which is virtually unknown. Nevertheless, through the characteristic which is at its essence and which is known as *suddenness* or *sudden awakening* and which in reality is not only an approach but also an important body of knowledge and practices, this school of Buddhism seduced my intellectual understanding and my personal orientation.

Among Buddhism candidates, it has been very common to require a discipline, a path, some protocols, which when practiced on a daily basis, make it possible to accede to the experiences that lead to enlightenment. On many occasions, the path – the method – has supplanted the objective. The masters of Chan Buddhism, possibly due to their education in the use of paradox, dialectics, holistics and poetry of Chinese thought, debunked the idea of “a method”, not to encourage its abandonment, but to make it possible to escape any orthodoxy that could freeze and therefore sterilize the path(s) of intellectual and spiritual emancipation for human beings.

Given the fact that all orthodoxies need guardians, declaring that the method is not the end and that there is not “one” route but “many” to attain enlightenment is made it possible to (re)think the remote and untouchable position of the Master. This can be appreciated in numerous examples. One of them is the case of the advanced disciple and future Master Huang Po who, upon arriving at the monastery of Nanquan Pu Yuan in 814, convinced of his wisdom, sat at the place of the master. Another example is in the celebrated anecdote of the slap that Lin Zi gave to his master Huang Po, who in turn used the practice of shouting at or striking his disciples as a way to produce within them a situation of stress or disconcert which could lead them to awaken, with this slap he confirmed that he was the master’s equal, before both broke down laughing.

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<sup>1</sup> Of course, this is within the context of limited dissemination, as I have said before, Confucianism, very widely spread in the West, has also been better known in Ecuador at least since the 1940s and 50s. The other three schools – Zen Buddhism, Indian Buddhism and Daoism – have been more popular in the past 10 years.

The demystification of the master in Chan Buddhism not only moves it away from orthodoxy and the cult of learning (and the rites of power associated with all learning), but also puts the emphasis on the role of the Master as that of facilitator and guard. At the same time, it puts focus on the capacity and commitment of the aspiring student or apprentice to find the way - because the nature of Buddha is in each and every one of us. And it is the degree of progress of each human being in approaching Buddha-ness which, in reality, determines the type or characteristics of their path. That is why there are many diverse paths, like the surprising one of Hui Neng, the town woodcutter who awakens suddenly when he hears the reading of Buddha's *Diamond Sutra* in the street. Or like others – for example Shitu Xiquian – who actually was born awakened but needed two masters – one Hui Neng and the other Qingyan Xingsi –for his enlightenment to be acknowledged in the sense of confirmed.

The trajectory of Hui Neng, who went from being a poor woodcutter to an “Awakened One” and then became the sixth Patriarch, was that of a being absolutely devoted to facilitating the enlightenment of his disciples. The best testimony of his devotion are the “*Commentaries on the Diamond Sutra*”. His vision is a great metaphor of the emergence of a dramatic democratic understanding of enlightenment: it is not the inheritance of princes, officials, mandarins, or those who possess the means to dedicate their lives to the study and practice of meditation (*dhyana, chan*), but rather all beings have the capacity to attain enlightenment, because the nature of Buddha is in everyone. In addition, the mere fact that after Hui Neng – named the “sixth patriarch” – the institution of the patriarchy is ended at his hand, reveals the emergence of an orientation that is more removed from hierarchies and which, little by little, through centuries of conflicts and shifting preferences, begins to find an expression that is closer to the practical expression of spirituality.

This work quietly expresses my own route of approaching Chan Buddhism and especially the schools which, beginning with Hui Neng, define and refine the theory of “sudden awakening”. Thus, in the first chapter I review the denial of illusion and the affirmation of the impermanence of the search for Enlightenment, as topics of Indian



Buddhism. The second chapter addresses the legacy of Bodhidharma in the introduction of Buddhism in China. The third chapter discusses the preparation of a theoretical framework for the emergence of Chan Buddhism. The fourth chapter explores the meanings of Awakening in the Diamond Sutra and the commentaries of Master Hui Neng. In the fifth and final chapter, I attempt to develop the hypothesis that one of the essential elements of Chan Buddhism is the relationships of the disciple with intuition and with other modes of attaining enlightenment other than that of logic. In my impression, following the traditions of India and China, the sutras are poems which teach us.

Together with Buddhism, immersion in Chinese philosophy has brought many other enlightenments to my life, many of them small jewels like those that from the hand of other monks illustrated the medieval knowledge texts. Entering into the teachings of this Master's Program has been like crossing a threshold. The path, the Way, still lies ahead.

Quito, September 15, 2009

## CHAPTER I

### DENY ILLUSION (THE I), AFFIRM IMPERMANANCE AND REACH ENLIGHTENMENT: BUDDHISM IN INDIA



Tibetan Mandala or Khil-Khor, Illustration taken from <http://lacomunidad.elpais.com/kefer3/2008/7/12/>,  
an article written by Rinchen<sup>2</sup> about Tibetan mandalas.

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<sup>2</sup> Rinchen says that some mandalas are created or visualized “as a pure land of Buddha”, that are offered to enlightened persons and/or spiritual masters to accumulate merits. See: <http://lacomunidad.elpais.com/kefer3/2008/7/12/>,

*“Buddhism has a very important message for the modern world. It is not a faith in an imaginary god or some deity to which all responsibility is granted. It is a faith in human beings. Buddhism gives total responsibility and dignity to human beings and makes them their own masters.”*  
Venerable Walpola Rahula<sup>3</sup>

- **Introduction: The myth of founding**

Buddhism is a philosophical doctrine based on the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama, prince of the Shakya clan in current Nepal, who lived between 563 and 483 BC, and became known as Buddha, a *Pali* and *Sanskrit* word that means “the awakened one.” Siddhartha Gautama, also known as Shakyamuni, the wise one of the Shakya, reached the state of “awareness” also called “enlightenment” through self-denial that enabled him to overcome ignorance (*avidya*) and attain knowledge and nirvana.<sup>4</sup>

After a sheltered life which prevented from knowing pain, decadence and ugliness and surrounded him with pleasures, beauty, wealth and power, the young prince married and had one child. According to history, when he was thirty years old he encountered pain, suffering, aging and death when he left the garden and met an old man, a sick man and a cadaver. Moved, Siddhartha abandoned his palatial life and his destiny as a prince and began an intense search for spiritual peace, first as a disciple of a wise ascetic beggar. This road would lead him to different paths and

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<sup>3</sup> Venerable Walpola Rahula, *Aspectos Fundamentales Del Buddhismo / Fundamental Aspects of Buddhism* – essay from the book, *Zen and Taming the Bull*. Translator: Alejandro Córdoba C. Revision by Ronald Martínez-Lahoz and Virginia Etienne. 1996. Reproduction of the Spanish translation with the permission of the Venerable Piyandana (1997) Code: FDD 010. Last revision Monday, March 13, 2000. Dhamma Dana Fund. See <http://sambodhi.iespana.es/aspectos.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> See: Shaughnessy, Edward. L., *China, the Chinese World: Beliefs and Rituals, Creation and Discoveries*, Editorial Blume, Barcelona, 2008. 108 pages. Various authors emphasize the prophecies which affirmed that, when Siddhartha Gautama was born, he would be a “chakravartin (he who turns the wheel), literally, a revolutionary: or, more precisely, a great political leader or a great wise man.” Shaughnessy, op. cit.

would end when he reached enlightenment, after a long period of meditation, in Godhi Gaya (India) and he was converted into an “enlightened” one or Buddha.

Therefore, Buddhism appears, primarily as a system of teachings oriented to one purpose: eliminating human suffering called dukkha in Sanscrit. This pragmatic orientation includes helping humans to attain peace and happiness, both as dimensions not conditioned by experience or phenomena of so-called reality.

*“It is precisely because persons of the world do not see their own essential nature that the teachings to see the essential nature were established. If persons of the world clearly see the original body of reality as it is, then it is not necessary to establish a teaching.”*

Commentary by Hui Neng on the Diamond Sutra<sup>5</sup>

On a philosophical level, Buddhism is a doctrine that clearly shows the conditioning of phenomena, the preeminence of changes (viparinàmadukkha), impermanence and insubstantiality of everything that exists. One of the key concepts of Western philosophy that does not exist in Buddhism, or more precisely, is considered an illusion, is the existence of self. On the contrary, although it has a concept of liberty – a central term in Western political philosophy – in Buddhist philosophy its significance is associated with ending suffering which is in reality liberation.

Buddhism shares with Western philosophies the altruistic ideal of renouncing and un-interest (detachment), love for all beings and the search for non-violence and peace but, in contrast to the majority of Western philosophies, it provides a way to reach them and a psychology for understanding them. The combination of teachings and practices that comprise this way are known as Dharma, which means “law, doctrine or truth”<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Version from the book by Thomas Cleary, *The Sutra of Hui Neng, Comments by Hui Neng to the Diamond Sutra*, Editorial EDAF, Madrid, 1999.

<sup>6</sup> See: <http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dharma> y <http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Budismo>

- **Reaching Buddha-ness**

During his life, Buddha affirmed that all sentient or rational beings, including animals, can reach Buddha-ness because the nature of Buddha is inherent to all. The Sanscrit term, Tathagatagarbha, comprised of the words, “tathagata” meaning Buddha and garbha meaning “storage place or embryo,” includes the idea of “wisdom, merit and virtue of Buddha [that] is deposited in each sentient being like the gold that is present in gold although it is surrounded by dirt and dust.” The Buddha-ness or nature of Buddha is within every rational being (Sheng: 1995)<sup>7</sup>.

- **The Four Noble Truths<sup>8</sup>**

The center of the Buddhist philosophy consists of what are known as the *Four Noble Truths*,<sup>9</sup> the *Noble Eight-fold Path* and the *Middle Way* which are compiled in the Indian scriptures called Tripitaka. The Truths are related to each other: dukkha, samudaya, nirodha and magga. Samudaya enables the appearance of dukkha or suffering, while nirodha allows the ending of dukkha; and magga includes the way that leads to the ending of dukkha. Maspero expresses it in the following way: “According to the nomenclature of the sacred books, the Four Noble Truths are: ‘suffering, the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering and the path to the cessation of suffering.’<sup>10</sup>

Therefore, the doctrine affirms:

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<sup>7</sup> The Nirvana Sutra says that all sentient beings can become a Buddha and that each rational being has always been a Buddha, therefore, when we speak of different levels – on one level rational beings and, on the other, Buddhas, who are at a higher level – but, from the point of view of Buddhas, all rational persons are Buddhas (Sheng: 1995).

<sup>8</sup> Master Sheng Yen, Chinese Buddhism and the Chan tradition, speech given in Bristol University, England, June 10, 1995.

<sup>9</sup> Truths the “Awakened one” preached following enlightenment in the Deer Park of Sarnath (India).

<sup>10</sup> See: Maspero, Henry, Taoism and Chinese Religions, Editorial Trotta, Madrid, 2000, page 265.

- The truth of the existence of suffering
- The truth that suffering has a cause, desire.
- The truth that if we eliminate that cause, suffering will be eliminated.
- The truth that to eliminate that cause, there is the Noble Eight-fold Path.

*“From the name and the way as a required condition comes consciousness. From consciousness as a required condition comes contact. From contact as a required condition comes sensation. From sensation as a required condition comes desire. From desire as a required condition comes clinging. From clinging as a required condition comes becoming. From becoming as a required condition comes birth. From birth as a required condition come old age, death, crying, regret, pain and desperation. Such is the origin of this whole mass of anxiety.”*

(Digha Nikaya 15<sup>11</sup>)

The Second Noble Truth, the origin and appearance of dukkha (dukkhasamdayaariyasacca), which refers to other important concepts: attachment, greed and sensual desires, of existence and continuity. This “thirst”, which comes from the false idea of an “I” is an enormous force that drives the whole of existence.

- **Nirvana as liberation**

The origin of suffering is the “illusion of I that leads to the desire to continue being, the ‘thirst’ for living, to use that solid Buddhist expression.” “To achieve the destruction [of suffering] there is only one Way, the Noble Way preached by Buddha, that leads to salvation.” “In this way, one ‘enters into the stream which, through four stages, leads to freedom from the need to be reborn after death; one gets out of the cycle of transmigration to reach a designated unconditioned existence called Nirvana” (Maspero: 2000: 266).

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<sup>11</sup> Quote from <http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nirvana>

*“Nirvana is a word that means ‘cessation’. That is, Buddha affirmed that it is possible to cease that cyclic existence. While there is no cessation, our common experience of the world is called Samsara or the world of phenomena.”<sup>12</sup>*

The Third Noble Truth affirms the possibility of eliminating dukkha (dukkhaniroddhaariyasacca) which leads to Nirvana, a Sanskrit word that means ‘extinction of desire’ (Taähakkhaya) and is sometimes called the Ultimate Truth or the Ultimate Reality. Buddha said: “Oh bhikkhus, Nirvana that is reality, is the Noble Ultimate Truth.” In another place, he says: “O bhikkhus, I taught them the Truth and the way that leads to the Truth”.<sup>13</sup>

Referring to this state, Buddha says:

*“Oh bhikkhus, there is a state of unborn, unproduced, unconditional, attached. If the unborn, unproduced, unconditional and unattached did not exist, there would be no escape for the born, produced, conditioned and added. But, because the unborn, unproduced, unconditional and unattached does exist, there is freedom for the born, produced, conditioned and attached.”*

Udana, p. 129, Colombo 1929, quoted by Walpola Rahula, op. cit.

For Ven. Walpola, it is necessary not to confuse “the state of ultimate reality that is Nirvana” with the Western synonym of ‘Liberty’ (Mutti, Sanskrit mukti) because “Nirvana, absolute freedom (vimutti) is to remain free from all evil, greed, hate and ignorance” and, even more, “freedom from all conditions of relativity, time and space.”<sup>14</sup>

Reaching Nirvana, therefore, implies breaking with the conditionality that produces phenomena, dependent causation or *paticca samuppada* (Sanskrit), a concept presented in the Mahanidana Sutra or “Discourse of the Causes.” The concept of

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<sup>12</sup> Quote from <http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nirvana>

<sup>13</sup> Samyuttanikaya IV (PTS), p. 369, Quoted by the Ven. Walpola Rahula, op. cit.

<sup>14</sup> Walpola Rahula, op. cit.

patika samuppada “explains how beings are trapped by ignorance in a vicious circle that makes them constantly perceive reality incorrectly. It is a chain that should be understood in a circular manner and does not refer only specifically to the duration of a human life but also to common functioning of the mind minute by minute.”<sup>15</sup>

- **Prajna and the Noble Eight-fold Way or the Middle Way**

The *Noble Eight-fold Way* (Ariya-Atthaägikamagga), expressed as the *Noble Fourth Way*, is the way that leads to the end of dukkha. It is also known as the *Middle Way* (Majjhima patipada) because it avoids extremes: the search for happiness through affection and attachment to pleasures of the senses as well as the self-mortification of asceticism and indulging suffering. The Middle Way produces vision, knowledge, tranquility and enlightenment.

There are eight principles: “The first two principles correspond to wisdom, the third, fourth and fifth to ethics and the sixth, seventh and eighth to meditation. All of those factors are important in the Buddhist way, and depending on the school, tradition or master, some are emphasized more than others.”

- ⇒ Right Understanding (sammàdiññhi)
- ⇒ Right Thought (sammàsàekappa);
- ⇒ Right Speech (sammàvaccà);
- ⇒ Right Action (sammàkammanta);
- ⇒ Right Livelihood (sammàjìva);
- ⇒ Right Effort (sammàvàyàma);
- ⇒ Right Concentration (sammàsati); and
- ⇒ Right Mindfulness (sammàsamàdhi).<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> See: <http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Budismo>

<sup>16</sup> Taken from the article by Ven. Walpola Rahula, op. cit.



According to Venerable Sahgarakshita, “this path can be understood also as the ‘Triple Path’, given that the eight classic factors can be sub-divided as three”. For Walpola, they are “the three ideas of Buddhist training and discipline (tisikkhà): ethical conduct (sìla); mental discipline (samàdhi); wisdom (prajñà)”.<sup>17</sup>

*In the same way that it is not possible to advance in Meditation if our life is not based on a solid ethic, the ‘flowering’ of Wisdom also is not possible without practicing Meditation. However, we should not confuse this kind of wisdom with what is currently understood as knowledge.” “If Jñana is the right knowledge, the act of learning, concerning spirituality, is called Prajna in Buddhist literature. Prajna is Wisdom.”*

Venerable Shangarakshita: 2008<sup>18</sup>

Venerable Shangarakshita explains that “according to Buddhism, there are three progressive levels of Prajna: Wisdom that comes from listening; Wisdom based on thought; and, Wisdom based on Meditation. This last level, of Wisdom based on meditation, assumes reaching wisdom in the full sense. It is the Wisdom of enlightenment that Buddha Shakyamuni reached under the Bodhi tree that produced ‘Putting into Motion the Dharma Wheel.’<sup>19</sup>

- **Buddha, Dharma and Sangha: the Three Jewels and the Five Precepts**

The Three Jewels are part of the Buddhist way: the Buddha (the guide), the Dharma (discernment) and the refuge of the community of disciples or Sangha. The monks follow a training method called Vinaya, which is included in the Tripitaka or

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<sup>17</sup> Venerable Sahgarakshita, Compassion and Wisdom are “The Two Wings of Dharma.” See: <http://lacomunidad.elpais.com/kefer3/2008/7/12/la-compasion-y-sabiduria-son-las-dos-alas-del-dharma-> (Written text by: Rinchen July 20, 2008).

<sup>18</sup> Rinchen writes: The Venerable Sangharakshita, distinguishes two contrasting understandings designated by the Sanskrit terms, “vijñana” and “jñana”, that come from the same root, “jña”, that means to know. Sangharakshita says: “Jñana sees things as they really are, Vijñana sees them only as they appear to be. Jñana is free from greed, hate and ignorance; Vijñana is totally trapped in them, Jñana is transcendental; Vijñana, wordly. Jñana has the nature of Nirvana; Jijñana, that of Samsara.” See: <http://lacomunidad.elpais.com/kefer3/2008/7/12/la-compasion-y-sabiduria-son-las-dos-alas-del-dharma->

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

compendium of Buddhist scriptures and contains more than 250 precepts of life. Among them, the five basic precepts to be followed are:

- Do not intentionally harm living creatures
- Do not take what has been not been given
- Do not use incorrect sexual conduct (damaging to others or to oneself)
- Do not speak in a hurting manner (lie, be rude, brag, gossip, be vain)
- Do not ingest toxic substances (that alter the mind and risk breaking other precepts)

*Buddha exhorted his disciples to be a refuge for themselves and not to seek help or refuge some where else. He taught, stimulated and encouraged each person to develop themselves fully and to work for their own freedom as, through their own intelligence and effort, human beings have the power to free themselves from all slavery....He affirmed: "You should make the effort by yourselves as the Tathagatas only show the way."*

Quote by Ven. Walpola Rahula, op. cit.

- **Dukkha and happiness in the fullest meaning**

Dukkha, which we have seen means suffering and pain, is the opposite of the word sukha which means happiness, welfare, tranquility. The Ven. Walpola Rahula warns of the need to understand this word in its fullest meaning as a complete concept of the Buddhist philosophy in which it has a "philosophical meaning and a much broader sense" as it "includes the ordinary meaning of 'suffering' but also includes profound ideas such as 'imperfection', 'impermanence', 'emptiness', 'insubstantiality' and 'conflict' and even 'happiness.' According the master Walpola, Dukkha can be seen from three perspectives: as ordinary or common suffering (dukkha-dukkha); as change (viparinàma-dukkha); and, as conditional states (saækhara-dukkha)".<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Visuddhimagga (PTS), p. 499; Abhidarmasamuccaya, pp. 36-38 (ed. Pradhan, Santiniketan, 1950, quoted by Walpola, op. cit.).

It is very important to paid attention that the idea of dukkha includes happiness. “Dukkha does not make the life of a Buddhist sad and painful. On the contrary, the true Buddhist is happy and does not suffer from fear or anxiety. He is always tranquil and does not get upset or depressed by changes or problems; he accepts things as they are. Buddha never was sad or depressed and his contemporaries always describe him as a man ‘always smiling’ (mihitapubbaægama)”.

However, “Buddhism does not deny happiness in life. On the contrary, it allows different forms of happiness, material and spiritual, for lay persons as well as monks. But all of them are included in dukkha. Included in dukkha are even the purest spiritual states of dhyàna, which are reached by practicing the highest level of meditation and are free of any shadow of suffering, in the common meaning of the word. Therefore, they can be describe as just happiness; as well as the state of dhyàna which is free of feelings, pleasant as well as unpleasant, and which is pure equanimity and conscience, - even these high levels of spiritual states are included in dukkha. Not because they are suffering or in pain, but because they also are conditioned, subject to change, impermanent and insubstantial.”<sup>21</sup>

The most important philosophical aspect of the First Noble Truth is found in the third form of dukkha or conditioned state (saækhàra-dukkha). For Buddhism, beings are “a combination of physical and mental energies in constant change which can be divided into five constituents (pañcakkhandha)”, which sustain attachment.

The first constituent is that of the material (rùpakkhanddha) which includes all aspects of the material: solidity, fluidity, heat and mobility, and their derivatives (upàdàya-rùpa) which include the five sensory organs (eyes, ears, nose, tongue and body) and the corresponding objects in the external world (visible forms, sound, smell, touch and even some thoughts or ideas, which are objects of the mind).

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<sup>21</sup> Venerable Walpola Rahula, op. cit.

The second constituent is that of feelings (*vedanàkkhandha*) which we sense through contact by our sensory organs and the mind – which is the sixth sense in the Buddhist philosophy – with the external world and which can be agreeable or disagreeable or not agreeable or not disagreeable. Feelings are obtained through contact by the eye with a visible object, by the ear with sounds, by the nose with odors, by the tongue with flavors, by the body with tangible objects and by the mind with mental objects, thoughts or ideas.

The third constituent is that of perception (*saññàkkhandha*), obtained as with feelings, through contact by faculties with the external world. The fourth constituent is that of mental forms (*saækhàrakkhandha*), a total of 52, which include all volatile mental activities, good and bad, that produce karmic effects such as will (*chanda*), determination (*adhimokkha*), attention (*manasikàra*), confidence (*saddhà*), concentration (*samàdhi*), wisdom (*prajñà*), energy (*viriya*), desire (*raga*), repugnance or hate (*patigha*), ignorance (*avijjà*), vanity (*màna*), idea of self (*sakkàya-diàåhi*).

The fifth constituent is that of the conscience (*viññàäakkhandha*), thought of as a reaction based on the activity of the six faculties (eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind) and an external phenomenon. The visual conscience is, for example, the eye as the base and a visible shape as its object.

The combination of these five constituents is what we call a being. They are themselves *dukkha* (*saækhàdukkha*). A being or “I” does not really exist behind these five constituents. There is no immobile author behind the movement. There is only movement. In other words, there is no thinker behind the thought. The thought is the thinker. If the thought is removed, there is no thinker.

Box

**HAPPINESS IN THE WORLD OF BUDDHA<sup>22</sup>**

The Ven. Walpola Rahula affirms that “Buddha is always represented, in paintings and sculptures, with a happy and serene countenance, without any trace of pain or suffering. The Theragàthà and Therìgàthà, two ancient Buddhist texts, are full of happy and content expressions of Bhudda’s disciples, men and women, who found peace and happiness in his teachings. The king of Kosala once commented to Buddha that, unlike disciples of other religions, whose appearance was generally gaunt, coarse, pale, emaciated and not very attractive, Buddha’s disciples appeared ‘joyful, ‘jolly (haååhapahaååha), jubilant (udaggudagga), enjoying the religious life (abhiratarùpa), satisfied (pìaitindriya), free of anxiety (appossukka), serene (pannaloma), peaceful (paradavutta) and lived with an agile mind (migabhùtena cetasà), that is, without conflict of worries. The king added that this healthy disposition was due to the fact that “these venerable persons certainly had understood the full meaning and the greatness of the teachings of the Fortunate one, etc.”

**(Majjhima-Nikàya II (PTS), p. 121, quoted by the Ven. Walpola Rahula, op. cit.)**

<sup>22</sup> Illustration from <http://lacomunidad.elpais.com/kefer3/2008/7/12/>

- **Movements and schools**

The Buddhist doctrine, transmitted orally and based on disperse scriptures, was compiled about 100 BC in what is known as the *Pali Canon*. The doctrinal body of the Pali Canon, known as Theravada Buddhism, the lineage of the ancients, or Hinayana. Theravada Buddhism focuses on the study of the philosophical part of the Canon, the Abhidharma.

Henry Maspero points out that “in India, beginning with this fundamental doctrine, two grand religious currents were formed called the Small Vehicle and the Big Vehicle”, Hinayana and Mahayana. “Individuals preach salvation through the teachings of Buddha but in different ways. In the Small Vehicle, followers seek salvation for themselves. The Great Vehicle affirms that you have to go farther, that salvation through the Small Vehicle is only a stage and that some day all persons should save not only themselves but other living beings to reach the state of Buddha.”<sup>23</sup>

On the other hand, in the Mahayana the *Madhyamaka* and the *Yogacara* schools were established.

- The Madhyamaka or “Middle Way” school, born in the second century AD, is based on the developments of the Indian master Nagarjuna who proposed reaching wisdom through finding the middle way.
- The Yogacara or “only awareness” appeared in the sixth century AD with the developments of the master brothers, Asanga and Vashubandhu, who sought to overcome dualism, proposing the identity between reality and the mind.

Emphasis on the way results in all schools being called “vehicles.” Theravada Buddhism is found in southeastern Asian countries such as India, Sri Lanka,

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<sup>23</sup> Maspero, op. cit., p. 266.

Thailand, Burma (Myanmar), Laos and Cambodia. Mahayana Buddhism is found in China, Japan, Korea, Mongolia and Tibet. “Around the seventh century AD, Tantric Hinduism was introduced into China and Tibet. This fusion would create what is called Tantric Buddhism or Vajrayana. Its followers refer to it as the third vehicle.”

Beginning in the fourth century AD, Buddhism of a devotional nature appeared in China, Tibet and Japan that emphasized faith and wisdom which was influenced by the Yogacara (Mahayana) school: Buddhism of the Pure Land or Pure Land. This school, which originated in China, with the White Lotus school, was established by Hui-Yuan about 400 AD. Pure Land Buddhism is based on reciting mantras<sup>24</sup> and meditation, in the reincarnation of the Pure Land, the development of self-power and other-power and the preeminence of karma in our lives to free us which requires the compassion of Amitabha Buddha.

Influenced by the Madhyamaka schools as well as the Yogacar school after the sixth century, Chan/Zen/Zon Buddhism appeared in China, Japan, Korea and Vietnam. Chan Buddhism emphasized the intuitive character of wisdom. An Indian monk named Bodhidharma, who arrived in China about 470 AD, was the first patriarch of the Chan school. The school uses the Lankavatara Sutra and sitting meditation (Chinese: tso-chan; Japanese: zazen) as its center. Its method includes the use of paradoxical language (Chinese: gung-an; Japanese: koan) and inquiry through questions (Chinese: hua-toy). The Chinese word, Chan, derives from the Sanskrit, dhyana, (meditation) although, in reality, refers to a mental state.

Beginning with the conversion to Buddhism of the Tibetan king, Songsten Gampo, in the seventh century AD, a type of Buddhism developed in Tibet of a magical and symbolic nature resulting from the merger with the Bon religion of that country and influenced by Tantric Hinduism. Philosophically, it emphasized the Madhyamaka way of the master Nagarjuna. This school spread to Nepal, Mongolia, Bhutan and China.

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<sup>24</sup> In class, Master Professor He demonstrated how to recite different mantras, among them the mantra Namó Amito Fo, one of the best known in the world.

Tibetan Buddhism emphasized the study of sacred texts, reciting mantras and devotion to a guru.



## Guan Yin, the Goddess of Compassion

“Among the redeeming Buddhist figures that became popular in China during the Divisive Period, none is so loved and widely adored as Guanyin, the Goddess of Compassion. Guanyin (“Who contemplates sounds”) is the Chinese name of the bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara (He who sees with compassion”), very popular in the all of the Buddhist world. In south Asia and Tibet, he is often presented in the masculine form.

However, beginning with the fourteenth century AD,

“Chinese figures of Guanyin were almost exclusively feminine.



Image:  
300 x 571 - 72 KB - jpg -  
[www.testrffic.com/resultfiles/9506GuanYin\\_Co...](http://www.testrffic.com/resultfiles/9506GuanYin_Co...)

She frequently appears as a stylized feminine figure with a flowing tunic holding a container with nectar of compassion and a willow branch to rid of illness. Also, she can

appear holding a child, a symbol of power for granting a blessing to children. She helps the Amitabha Buddha as he tries to enable beings to reach the Pure Land. Another manifestation of the Goddess has her with a thousand eyes and arms which symbolize her ability to see all dangers and help those who invoke her in a moment of need.”

Text: fragment from  
Shaughnessy, Edward L.,  
*China, The Chinese World: Beliefs and Rituals, Creation and Discoveries*, Editorial Blume, Barcelona, 2008, p.110.

- **Love, compassion and Buddhism wisdom**

The practice of love and compassion by all living beings is the bases of Buddhist teachings. Compassion and wisdom are intimately linked to the Buddhist way of life.

For humans to become perfect, according to Buddhism, one should equally develop two qualities: compassion (daruää) and wisdom (paññà). In this context, compassion means love, friendliness and tolerance, that is, noble qualities related to feelings and the heart while wisdom represents the intellectual aspect or qualities of the brain . . . Therefore, to be perfect, one should develop both aspects equally well. This is the goal of the Buddhist way of living. Because of this, a good Buddhist, while understanding that things as they are through intelligence and wisdom, is full of love and compassion towards other sentient beings.

**CHAPTER II**

**BODHIDHARMA AND THE PATH OF THE FOUNDATION OF CHAN**

**BUDDHISM**



Bodhidharma, <http://www.taringa.net/posts/info/1848672/Bodhidharma---Biografia.html>

- **The story of Buddhism in China**

The Chan is one of the most popular traditions of Chinese Buddhism. It is considered that the early forms of Chan Buddhism began to become visible around the 6<sup>th</sup> Century, related to the influence of various *sūtras* or sacred texts of Mahāyāna Buddhism, of Indian origin. Among the main texts that founded this current are the *Prajñā pāramitā* (the section of the canon of Mahāyāna which contains various *sūtras* like “of the Heart” and “of the Diamond”), *Awakening Faith* attributed to Asvaghosa, the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* or the *Lankavatara Sūtra*<sup>25</sup>.

It is generally held that Buddhism entered China during the third century B.C. According to some theories, missionaries sent by the emperor Ashoka through the silk trade route talked of its existence. In fact, chroniclers of the Han Dynasty refer to the existence of Buddhist cults in the Ganges Valley. These same sources associate Emperor Huang-Di (246-209 A.D.) with monks coming from India on an evangelizing mission<sup>26</sup>. Once it had traveled the silk route, Buddhism continued toward the south through the ports, particularly Guangzhou (Canton)<sup>27</sup>. Another version attributes the entry of Buddhism to the emperor Ming-Di (1st Century), who is said to have dreamed about the figure of Buddha, which was interpreted as a sign from heaven to worship a new god. Ming-Di sent a great delegation to the west to find signs of the message. Upon returning from India, this delegation brought many monks and two Buddhist wise men. Later, dozens of monks and bikhus would arrive following the same route.

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<sup>25</sup> Morvane, *La importancia y alcance del Budismo Chan*, 2008, source:

<http://morvane.lacoctelera.net/post/2008/07/13/la-importancia-y-alcance-del-budismo-chan>

<sup>26</sup> “*Bodhidharma: Fundador del Budismo Chan de China*”, Revista Despertar,

<http://www.buddhachannel.tv/portail/spip.php?article4342>

<sup>27</sup> Ming Zhen Shakya, “*El Séptimo Mundo del Budismo Chan, Una Guía para Principiantes de la Historia, la Psicología, y Práctica de la Escuela del Sur del Budismo Chan*”, Chapter 4, Translated by Rev. Yin Zhi Shakya, OHY and la Rev. Chuan Ming Shakya, OHY,

<http://xuyun.zatma.org/Spanish/Dharma/Literature/7thWorld/7thworld-chapter4.html>

In China, Buddhism encountered both elements that hindered and those that fostered its acceptance. The difficulties came above all from one of the most important reigning philosophies, Confucianism. The notion of detachment (familiar, social and political) encouraged by Buddhism were not compatible with filial piety, the cult of the ancestors, respect for hierarchy and governors, and the adherence to rules and procedures, (the base of social-political responsibility) at the heart of Confucian thought. The facilitating elements, on the other hand, derived from the character of the other great Chinese philosophy, Taoism, which was much closer to Buddhist ideas, as a more liberal doctrine removed from worldly affairs.

In the year 335, under the Xin Dynasty of the East, the wise man Budhojhang, the translator of great works into Chinese, among them the *Dhammapadha*, won official recognition of Buddhism. In 405, *Kumarajiva* arrived, who contributed a great quantity of Buddhist canonical works and gave origin to currents that emphasize the intellectual knowledge of the doctrine. In the year 546, the scholar *Paramartha* arrived, and dedicated himself to the spread of Mahayana. These were two hundred years during which – perhaps due to an excess of zeal in learning about the new doctrine – a path of erudition and intellectualism that separated Buddhism from the people and maintained it as a matter for the expert sciences of the Court, where many fine discussions took place. According to a number of authors, these were the central reasons for a search which led to a marriage of Indian Buddhism with Chinese idiosyncrasy. This syncretism where reason and practice, reason and intuition meet, was possible thanks to the thought of *Bodhidharma* and on this foundation, *Chinese* or *Chan Buddhism* was developed.

The greatest splendor of the Chan was to occur during the Tang Dynasty. But it was in the 9th Century when the name Chan was adopted. At the beginning, Chan was called generically “the practice of enlightenment”. During the Sung Dynasty, there is an introspective reaction on the practice and seated meditation (tso-chan) begins to be favored as the primary method. In a practical way, since Chan is to delve into the

fundamental nature of the mind, this school would develop different methods to achieve the sudden or spontaneous realization of Nirvana. These methods include both seated or walking meditation, as well as the development of paradoxical questions and any facet of daily life, from cooking to artistic activities. The objective of all of this is that the practitioner abandon his slavery to conceptual thought as the direct path for achieving Nirvana.

- **Bodhidharma in China**

The presence of *Bodhidharma* goes beyond that of a historical person and dovetails with the myth. In fact, there is very controversial historical evidence about the figure of *Bodhidharma* (known as *Da-Mo* in China). Nevertheless, although some erudite figures put his existence in doubt, we want to restore in this essay the cultural and prophetic importance of the person and his story/myth in the founding work of Chan. As in other cases, the numerous myths and legends constitute – in and of themselves – relevant parts of its doctrine<sup>28</sup>.

According to two Buddhist texts<sup>29</sup>, *Bodhidharma* was born in Kanchi, capital of the Pallava kingdom (southern India), around the year 440. He was the third son of King Simhavarman and Brahman by birth. Converted to Buddhism at a young age, he was

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<sup>28</sup> The mythic influence of Bodhidharma transcends the esoteric and philosophical. It is said that when seeking Enlightenment in the cave, seated in front of the rock wall, he was distracted by the vision of a beautiful woman who in reality was the temptation of Mara. In order to stop the mental flow and overcome with exhaustion, he decided to rip out his eyelids. After a long time (nine years according to the legend) and having achieved his goal, he drank a pacifying drink made from some leaves growing in the area where his eyelids had fallen, and this plant was later known as tea. For that reason, he is painted or represented with bulging, lidless eyes. “*Bodhidharma: Fundador del Budismo Chan de China*”, *Despertar Magazine*, <http://www.buddhachannel.tv/portail/spip.php?article4342>

<sup>29</sup> Dao-Xuan, *Biographies of Exemplary Monks*, written around 645, and Dao-Yuan, the *Annals of the Transmission of the Lamp*, written circa 1002. Cited in “*Bodhidharma: Fundador del Budismo Chan de China*”, *Despertar Magazine*, <http://www.buddhachannel.tv/portail/spip.php?article4342> These are considered to be the most authentic sources.

taught by Prajnatarā, and it would be that teacher who encouraged him to travel to China. Since in that time the trade route was closed because of the Hun invasions, *Bodhidharma* embarked in the port of Mahabalipuram, traveled around the southern cone of India and the Malaysian peninsula, and took about three years to arrive at the port of Nanhai, in southern China, around 475, according to the version of Dao-Xuan<sup>30</sup>.

In that time, China was divided into the Wei Dynasty in the north and the Liu Sung Dynasty in the south. It is said that the northerners were more intellectual and learned, and not given much to practice as compared to those in the south. *Bodhidharma* supposedly visited several Buddhist monasteries<sup>31</sup>. Dao-Yuan, who places the arrival of *Bodhidharma* in 520, some 45 years later, claims that he was invited by Emperor Wu of the Liang Dynasty to Chienkan, the capital, for an interview that became one of the canonical anecdotes of Chinese Buddhism and which at that point established an orientation different from that of the Buddhism offered by *Bodhidharma*. The story goes that in response to the Emperor's concern about his enlightenment, which he hoped to earn through his deep piety and efforts to win merit, *Bodhidharma* spoke of "a special transmission outside of the scriptures, not at all dependent on words or letters, aimed directly at the soul of man, contemplating his own nature and achieving the state of Buddha."<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> In Morvane's opinion, the appearance of Bodhidharma caused an incredible impact. According to this author, the contemplative history of Bodhidharma transmitted the fundamental principles of Sunyata, or "contemplation of the emptiness of the world", which the Mahayana teaches and which gives rise to the wu-wei-che-ren or state of "true man without position," the state of Buddha. Bodhidharma took his teaching together with the sword that Prajnatarā – according to the legend – gave him together with the doctrine, to firmly cut all ties with the world and not rely on a purification of the mind in a simple internalization that is more like Hinayana. Morvane, *La importancia y alcance del Budismo Chan*, 2008, source: <http://morvane.lacoctelera.net/post/2008/07/13/la-importancia-y-alcance-del-budismo-cha>

<sup>31</sup> Various authors testify to the existence of thousands of temples and Buddhist monks and nuns during this period. At least 2000 temples in the south, officiated by a clergy of some 36,000 monks and nuns and around 6,500 temples in the north with 80,000 monks and nuns.

<sup>32</sup> There are those, like master Ming Zhen Shakyā, who claim that the mission of Bodhidharma to look "outside of scripture" should be attributed to the literary anarchy that affected Buddhism. See Ming Zhen Shakyā, op. cit.

According to the legend<sup>33</sup>, the following dialogue took place between *Bodhidharma* and the Emperor Wu of the Liang Dynasty, which had promoted Buddhism and built many temples and monasteries:

**Wu:** I have done many good deeds, how many merits have I earned toward my admission to Nirvana?

**Bodhidharma:** None

**Wu:** What, then, as a Buddhist, should my goal have been?

**Bodhidharma:** Empty yourself of yourself.

**Wu:** And who do you think you are?

**Bodhidharma:** I have no idea.

For Ming Zhen Shakya, in “The Seventh World of Chan Buddhism,” this dialogue shows that there are no merit-worthy or non-merit-worthy deeds, and surrender (kenosis or the absence of ego) is the goal of Buddhist practice, and that the Buddhist Nature cannot be obtained intellectually. In Chan, to enlighten oneself is to experience enlightenment. According to the tradition, another quote by *Bodhidharma* is: “The original reason for my coming to this country was to transmit the Law, in order to save the confused. A five-petal flower opens, and the production of the fruit will come by itself.”<sup>34</sup>

After his meeting with Emperor Wu, *Bodhidharma* crossed the Yangtze River and settled in the north, near Pingcheng, with the monks who moved with the emperor to the new Loyang capital on the banks of the Lo River. This happened in 494, according to Dao Xuan. One year later, the Emperor ordered the construction of the famous temple of Shaolin, on Mount Sung, Honan Province, to the southeast of Loyang, where *Bodhidharma* settles and carries out a practice that becomes one of the most famous of his life. In effect, it is said that *Bodhidharma* sat to meditate in front of the rocky wall of a cave, on the Shaoshi peak of Mount Sung, a kilometer away from the temple. Because of that he was known as Pikwan Po-lo-men, or “The

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<sup>33</sup> Described by Ming Zhen Shakya, op. cit.

<sup>34</sup> “*Bodhidharma: Fundador del Budismo Chan de China*”, Revista Despertar, <http://www.buddhachannel.tv/portail/spip.php?article4342>



Brahmin who looks at the wall”<sup>35</sup> and is recognized as the first patriarch of Chan Buddhism. During his stay in Loyang, *Bodhidharma* supervises several monks, among them Hui-ko,<sup>36</sup> who would become his successor and the depository of the sacred cloak and bowl, relics which *Bodhidharma* had brought from India, and a translation of the Lankavatara Sutra, which would play a central role in his teachings.

*Bodhidharma* tried to teach without words. One monk called Huiko (of an intellectual nature) approached him repeatedly asking for instruction. But *Bodhidharma* (the blue-eyed Barbarian) consistently ignored him. In an effort to prove his sincerity and get the master's attention, Huiko cut off one of his arms. Thanks to that, he achieved his goal. With a perfected vision of reality, he went to live among the poor (Ming Zhen Shakya: op cit).

In 528, *Bodhidharma* died and his remains were buried in the Tinglin temple, near Loyang. Legend has it that three years later, an official who was walking through the mountains of central Asia found him walking towards India. He carried a staff with a single sandal hanging from it. This encounter sparked curiosity among the monks who went to the Master's tomb and verified that it was empty and there was only one sandal inside<sup>37</sup>.

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<sup>35</sup> Revista Despertar, op. cit. For his part, Ming Zhen Shakya (op cit.) uses the following metaphor to describe the meditation of the Bodhidharma: “silently absorbed in the universe that presented itself to him on the superficial plane of a whitened wall.”

<sup>36</sup> Legend has it that Hui-ko cut off his arm as a testament to his firm will to reach enlightenment.

<sup>37</sup> Some non-traditional sources claim that Bodhidharma is the father of the martial arts of Shaolin, based on his supposed authorship of the scroll I-Chin-Ching, a treatise which contains instructions of a psycho-physical nature, including exercises intended to facilitate asceticism toward higher states of awareness but also for self-defense during missions carried out in areas infested with bandits or when under political persecution. These texts are classified within the exoteric collection and are part of the Chan that would come about mainly after the Sixth Hui-Neng Patriarch. “*Bodhidharma: Fundador del Budismo Chan de China*”, Revista Despertar, <http://www.buddhachannel.tv/portail/spip.php?article4342>

**Box****NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN CHINESE BUDDHISM**

Regarding the differences in the cultural setting and the political systems for the adoption of Buddhism in China, Ming Zhen Shakya<sup>38</sup> presents other factors by way of explanation, which are summarized below:

In the northern cities, cradles of power and learning, the ruling class, the Confucians, had reaffirmed their political dominance after the fall of the Qin dynasty and rejected the Buddhist scriptures as a collection of “Barbaric” superstitions, diametrically opposed to their “sophisticated” beliefs. The Confucians preached the virtues of collective identity, the need for individuals to subordinate their own interests to those of their family and clan. There was, then, a collective responsibility and understanding. In this group-oriented system, the Buddhist notion of one’s own autonomy was subversive. The intellectuals, whose learning was financed by their families, looked at the model of Buddha with alarm. The idea that a noble, educated man could abandon his inalienable birthright to live as an itinerant vagabond seemed incomprehensible. And moreover, reincarnation and karma were strange concepts to them. The warriors did not find any merit in the system of non-violence; and the landowners or feudal lords, whose fortunes depended on their servants, did not feel very comfortable with the idea of thousands of beggars meandering through their feudal estates. All of

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<sup>38</sup> Ming Zhen Shakya, *The Seventh World of Chan Buddhism, a complete intermediate level review of the origins, psychology and practice of Zen Buddhism*, Chapter 4 – Origins of the two main schools of Chan. <http://xuyun.zatma.org/Spanish/Dharma/Literature/7thWorld/7thworld-chapter4.html>

these reactions were predictable: for any upper class, a classless society has very little to offer. In the rural areas of the excessively populated northern cities, where the long and harsh winters were the stage for many tragedies, those who controlled the granaries controlled the destiny of all, gods and people. Buddhism could not go very far while the ruling class preached against it.

In the south, the scriptures were received as a variation of the Taoist philosophy. In the rural south, where food was abundant all year round and the markets were not monopolized, salvation through individual effort, asceticism and the separation of parents and children were already legitimized by the Taoist ideal. A nature of non-violence was the indispensable characteristic of a man of Tao. On the other hand, the notion of reincarnation presented a challenge, as they believed it was possible to obtain immortality in the present life. Begging was not looked at as a good occupation for anyone; but given the fact that the man of Tao was not, by definition, a Confucian aristocrat, these were people predisposed to working. Being of such a humble position, the man of Tao did not require the additional modesty and humility to be obtained through the spiritual exercise of begging.

- **The Bodhidharma doctrine**

As we have seen, the main source of the doctrine of *Bodhidharma* was the Lankavatara Sutra. This gave rise to the Lanka school which later would be known as Chan. The Lanavatara centers around the nature of the mind and defends the direct and intuitive nature of reaching Nirvana<sup>39</sup>. For *Bodhidharma*, transmission or Enlightenment is practical and is intended for the salvation of everyone in the world (Doctrine of the Heart).

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<sup>39</sup> The first participants of the Lanka school were characterized by following ascetic or hermetic lives, living far from urban centers. La importancia y alcance del Budismo Chan, Morvane, 2008, source: <http://morvane.lacoctelera.net/post/2008/07/13/la-importancia-y-alcance-del-budismo-chan>

Studies of the relationship between Indian and Chinese Buddhism affirm that this concept of the transmission of “internal teaching” comes from the Buddha himself, whose disciple Kasyapa had awakened to Enlightenment on Vulture’s Beak mountain, when Buddha lifted a flower from his fingers, with a hint of a smile. After a prolonged silence, Kasyapa smiled as well and Buddha withdrew, understanding that his disciple had understood. The schools of Chan Buddhism attribute their origins to this experience.<sup>40</sup>

The bibliographic sources mentioned establish two lines of teaching of *Bodhidharma*: the “contemplation of the wall” and the four practices described in the Meditation of the Four Acts or four sermons<sup>41</sup>. These sermons are in line with the doctrine of the Mahayana of compassion for all beings and the necessary unchaining of scholars and mortals to liberate all of Humanity.

I. The first sermon establishes that the entrance to the Path is reached through reason (contemplation) and practice. Reason means understanding the essence through instruction (the need for a Teacher) and believing that all living things share the same nature of Buddha, abandoning illusion, entering into communion with all beings. The four practices are: accepting Karma; accepting the conditions

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<sup>40</sup> The doctrine of Mahayana encompasses the teachings of Buddha, preserved for his disciple Kasyapa, like the Doctrine of the Heart, which are different from those teachings preserved and spread by Ananda or the Doctrine of the Eye. Various texts affirm that it was Nagarjuna who gave Mahayana status and a body of doctrine, during the first century.

<sup>41</sup> According to Morvane, there are very ancient versions of the “Four Sermons”, since at the beginning of the century there were thousands of Buddhist manuscripts from the 7th and 8th Century, during the Tang era, in the Tu-Huang caves, which have been studied and translated. There are mentions of the Nirvana, Avatamsaka and Vimalakirti sutras. Morvane, op. cit. We are following this author’s synthesis of the teachings.

of existence; not seeking anything (killing desire) and practicing Dharma. That is, the Four Noble Truths.

- II. The so-called Treatise on the Lineage of Faith proposes that the search for the Buddhist nature beyond the Mind is absurd, and upholds the perfect identity of the Internal Being or the being of our own nature with Buddha. It also emphasizes the uselessness of good works, merit, erudition, orthodoxy (adherence to doctrine) and the recitation of the Sutras. The revelation of one's Nature is the only way to Enlightenment.
- III. The Wake-up Sermon describes the nature of Nirvana or the state of Enlightenment which comes after the total detachment from the appearances of this world, which generate within us the sensation of the agreeable and the disagreeable, through which the Karma is conditioned. Here he mentions the word dhyana and defines it as a state of life in which one remains unchangeable, unconditioned and awake, but at the same time devoted to charity without any kind of pity and renouncing the fruits of said state. The origin of suffering is the same as that of Nirvana, therefore suffering is exhausted in emptiness. There is a necessary connection between the Buddhas and mortals when he says: "Mortals free the Buddhas and the Buddhas free the mortals."
- IV. The Sermon on the Contemplation of the Mind reflects on contemplation as knowledge. If in the mind is found the root of all things, the Sutra of Nirvana says: "All mortals have a Buddhic nature. But it is covered with the darkness from which they cannot escape. Our Buddhic nature is knowledge: knowing and doing so that others know others. Realizing knowledge is freedom." Knowledge is helping others to self-knowledge. The total realization of knowledge is the liberation of all mortals. Three poisons infuse the mind and perdition: hate, greed and delusion. The Moral Way, Meditation and Enlightenment are the ways to counteract them. This is better explained in the six Paramitas, or Charity, Morality, Patience, Devotion, Meditation and Wisdom. Valuing meritorious works like building of monasteries, reciting the sutras, forgoing food or purifications,

without the discipleship practices is to fall into delusion and remain tied to karmic consequences (good-evil).<sup>42</sup>

- **Conclusions**

Chan Buddhism appears in China as a reaction to the excessive learning and intellectualism present in the Chinese Buddhism of the imperial courts of the time, and receives the direct influence of various schools focused on the study of sutras of Mahayana Buddhism, of Indian origin. Among the main texts which found this current are the *Prajñā pāramitā* (the section of the Mahayana canon which contains different sutras like the “Sutra of the Heart” and the “Diamond Sutra”), Awakening Faith attributed to Asvaghosa, the Vimalakirti Sutra or the Lankavatara Sutra.

These schools give rise to a new style of practice and of understanding teachings, focused on an intuitive and direct way to thus achieve the determined mental state (*samadhi*) which is prior to complete spiritual awakening or nirvana. This intuitive way is not detached from reason nor does it reject the presence of a master. In this way, although Chan includes the study of sutras and texts, the direct and intuitive character of its tradition relegates them to the background.<sup>43</sup> On the contrary, it encourages a direct disposition in the follower to establish at the present moment trusting in the innate wisdom of all human beings to realize their full potential. This notion is directly influenced by Mahayana Buddhism, and by the idea of the *Tathāgatagarbha*, or “womb of enlightenment”. This idea from the Mahayana, implicit in the *prajñā pāramitā* and later expanded in other sutras, underlines the innate character of Buddhahood in all living beings, which was to be a crucial influence on Chinese Buddhism.

The radical importance in this idea is that it gives laypeople the potential to be on as high a spiritual level as a monk, and this would be fundamental in the expansion of

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<sup>42</sup> Brosse, Jacques. 1996. *Los maestros Zen*, Bayar Editions, Paris. 1999, edición en español.

<sup>43</sup> Feng Youlan. 1989. *Breve Historia de la Filosofía China*, Ediciones en Lenguas Extranjeras, Beijing.

Mahayana and Chan. This Buddhism is focused on cultivating the mind or meditation (Chan). The “School of Meditation” (School of Chan) introduces a new approach in which the cultivation of the mind itself becomes the center of Buddhist practice. The Chan is not tied to dogmas, temples, or ritual; it is a special disposition for life and how to live it (Mortante: op. cit.).

Finally, it is clear that Chan is the particular Chinese way to achieve the Buddhist goal of seeing the world as it is, that is, with a mind that does not have any binding thoughts or feelings (trishna, no mind, wu-xin), a state of conscience in which thoughts occur without leaving a trace. As opposed to other forms of Buddhism, Chan claims that this mental freedom cannot be obtained through a gradual practice, but rather should arrive through a direct and immediate idea (In Chinese, *tun-wu*, in Japanese, *satori*). Thus, Chan abandons the theories and systems of spiritual practices and communicates its vision through the method of direct indication. Its teachers respond to all philosophical or religious questions with non-symbolic words or actions. The response is the action as it is, and not what it represents.

## CHAPTER III

### PREPARING THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHAN 禪 BUDDHISM



Altar of Maitreya, Northern Dynasty (386–534), province of Hebei, China.  
[http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arte\\_budista](http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arte_budista)



- **Kumarajiva and his translation work**

The implanting of Buddhism is considered by many authors<sup>44</sup> to be one of the most significant occurrences in the history of China, given the profound influence that it had on religion, art, philosophy, literature and even politics. Buddhism had been born 600 years earlier in Nepal, around the figure of Siddhartha Gautama, called The Buddha. According to a number of historical sources, Buddhism spread rapidly in China in the first five centuries of our Era, with periods of greater or lesser speed, and one of the reasons for this expansion was its successful joining with the two major sources of Chinese religion and philosophy, Confucianism and Taoism. In effect, authors like Feng Youlan (FYL: 1989: 310) see in the *chan*<sup>45</sup> a form of Buddhism that *made contact* with Chinese thinking and developed in tandem with its cultural and philosophical tradition.

Buddhism arrived in China as a result of the commercial trade that it had engaged in with India for centuries through the Silk Route, which was intensified during the time of the Han<sup>46</sup>. It is now thought that in the year 65 AD, an imperial prince participated in Buddhist ceremonies and that Emperor Han Ming Di (58-75 AD) founded the first Buddhist monastery in China called the White Horse, near Lo-yang (FYL: 308; Brosse: 14-18). Various analysts attribute a stronger tie to Buddhism with Taoism because of the similarity of their philosophical notions, especially the binary ones like

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<sup>44</sup> See Feng Youlan: 1980: 308-310. Other authors with a similar opinion are Brice Parain: 1972, Madeleine Biardeau: 1972, Jacques Brosse: 1996 and Francois Jullien: 2000.

<sup>45</sup> Chan, a Chinese term that transcribes the Sanskrit dhvāna or meditation, a practice inscribed in Brahmanism and yogacara, is the term used to denote the most important permanent school of Chinese Buddhism. Meditation is the center of Chan Buddhism, a spiritual discipline that leads to knowledge or prajna, meditation pacifies the spirit, introspection reveals the ultimate or true reality, the nature of Buddha, reality which is found beyond the senses and the phenomenal and is consubstantial with all beings.

<sup>46</sup> Many sources claim that the arrival of Buddhism in China happened even before this date. According to Wikipedia, one of the oldest and fully confirmed dates happened in the province of Gansu, between the 5th and 4th Centuries B.C. [http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arte\\_budista](http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arte_budista)

emptiness, the being/not-being (“*you*, being, 有 – *wu*, not being, 无”) or detachment and *wu-wei* or the withdrawal from society (Biardeau: 105-112).

Buddhism was introduced in China above all thanks to the relationships between the Han Empire and Central Asia; it infiltrated into China over land and sea, and went spreading through the communities along the Blue River basin, due mostly to the center that was created in that area to translate Buddhist books. In addition, Buddhism had a considerable number of missionaries who contributed to the dissemination of ideas. Through all of these means, in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century A.D. the Buddhist communities of the lower Blue River valley grew until they coalesced around the capital of the kingdom of the Northern Wei, *Lo Yang*. There is documented historical evidence that in this time, the Wei sovereigns were fervent Buddhists. However, three centuries later, by 518 AD, China had thousands of Buddhist temples and monasteries<sup>47</sup>. Politically, this expansion was considered to be a danger, and economically a threat, which is why the Emperor Wei Tai WuDi persecuted them (Parain *et al*: 324 ff; Brosse: 14 ff)<sup>48</sup>.

This was also the time when the stories about the arrival in China of the Hindu master *Bodhidharma* began, who was to become the first patriarch of Chinese Buddhism, although his existence borders on myth. Bodhidharma supposedly arrived during the reign of Emperor Lian WuDi in southern China, year 527 A.D., after landing in Canton. Having converted to Buddhism, Liang WuDi called Bodhidharma to the palace, but after a short and unfruitful interview, the master left Lo Yang and headed for Chao-lin.

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<sup>47</sup> Brosse claims that the existence of such a large number of Buddhists “would have worried the ruling regime!”

<sup>48</sup> The Hindu master Bodhidharma is considered to be the first patriarch of Chinese Buddhism. He supposedly arrived during the reign of Emperor Liang WuDi in southern China in the year 527 and landed in Canton. Bodhidharma was a bearded monk with blue eyes. Converted to Buddhism, Liang WuDi called Bodhidharma to the palace, but after a brief and fruitless interview, the master left Lo Yang and headed to Shao-lin..

During the long period of wars and disintegration of the Empire known as the six kingdoms which lasted until the advent of the short Sui dynasty (589-618), Buddhism won greater influence. With the 30 years of the Sui government, China re-encountered a unity which would be extended by its successors, the Tang dynasty, which reinstated Chinese hegemony in Central Asia and India and reestablished Chinese relations in the vast arc from Indonesia to the Middle East.

As Nicole Vandier-Nicolas states: "In the middle of the 6<sup>th</sup> Century, established in the Pamir from which it could watch Tibet, Arabian Iran and India, China was the referee of Asia. It had relationships with the Middle East through the Persians and Arabs, maintained trade relations with Indonesia and enjoyed immense prestige throughout the Far East. Sure of its strength and projection, the China of the Tang opened up to foreign influences and embraced, together with the ideas, other religions. At the beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup> Century, the great Emperor Taison (626-649) received Nestorian Christianity and *Mazdeism*. The Uygher Turks introduced *Manecheism*, and in response to its contact with Islam, the Chinese civilization reacted by reaffirming itself" (Vandier-Nicolas in Parain et al: 330).

China then had intense exchanges with cultures, religions and philosophies. From them, the one that developed the most was Buddhism. "The exchange of pilgrims and missionaries intensified between India and China. The Chinese Buddhist thinker, *Hiuan Tsang* (569-664), traveled through Central Asia to India and brought to his native country a conglomerate of philosophical treaties. After him, another great pilgrim, *Yi Tsing*, followed the sea route to India and returned via the Sumatran Empire of Srivijaya, also carrying many manuscripts. Thanks to the enormous work of the translators, and thanks especially thanks to Hiuan Tsang, who was able to translate from Sanskrit into his native language with remarkable exactitude, the Chinese could initiate themselves first hand in the most authentic forms of Indian thought."<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Vandier-Nicolas in Parain et al: 304 - 331.

**Box****BIOGRAPHY OF KUMARAJIVA**

Taken from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia<sup>50</sup>

“Kumarajiva (Skt; Jpn Kumaraju) (344-413 A.D.) was a scholar and translator of Buddhist texts into Chinese. His true name was Ragorah Swuami Kilandha. His father, Kumarayana, son of a minister of one of the kingdoms of India, gave up his right to the hereditary position as minister to become a monk. His mother was Jivaka, the youngest sister of King Kucha in one of the kingdoms of Central Asia.

When Kumarajiva was seven years old, his mother gave up the secular life in order to enter the priesthood and traveled with him throughout India and other countries, deepening their knowledge of Buddhism. First he studied Hinayana Buddhism and later received instruction in Mahayana Buddhism, with Shuryasoma as his teacher. When he returned home, he began to spread Mahayan Buddhism and his reputation extended into China.

In the year 328, Fu Chien, governor of the Chin Dynasty, ordered General Li Kuang to invade Kucha and other countries, and to bring Kumarajiva upon his return to the capital Chan-an. Li Kuang took Kumarajiva prisoner, but on the way home decided to remain in Liang-chou, where he kept Kumarajiva prisoner for 16 years. Finally, Kumarajiva ended his journey to Chang-an in 401 AD, at the invitation of Yao Hsing, a ruler of the late Chin dynasty. There he is named master of the nation and immerses himself in the translation of Buddhist scriptures.

**Translations**

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<sup>50</sup> <http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kumarajiva>

According to the collection of texts related to the Tripitaka, he translated 35 works in 294 volumes, in just 10 years. Prominent among his translations are those of the Lotus Sutra, the Larger Wisdom Sutra, the Smaller Wisdom Sutra, the *Vimalakirti Sutra*, the Benevolent King Sutra, the *Amida Sutra*, the Ten Divisions of the Monastic Rules, the Treatises of Great Perfection and Wisdom, the Treatises of the Middle Way, the Treatise in One Hundred Verses, the Treatise on the Twenty Gates and the Treatise on the Completion of Truth.

Kumarajiva's translations were praised by later generations, for their excellence and clarity. They profoundly influenced the subsequent development of Buddhism in China and Japan. Kumarajiva also left many disciples, over three hundred according to some sources."

During the interregnum, a number of scholars translated various Sanskrit texts using the method of analogy. Later, this method was abandoned because of the confusion and controversy that it generated. In the 5<sup>th</sup> Century, one of the most prolific translators was *Kumarajiva*, a Hindu monk who had arrived in Chang'an, China, in the year 401. It is thought that China went through many vicissitudes before finding enough Buddhist texts and scriptures, and that in this scenario the translations of Kumarajiva were very important, since he spoke Chinese and Sanskrit fluently and had a solid Buddhist education as the son of a monk prince of India, and a Buddhist lay princess of Kucha, a territory annexed to China.

Kumarajiva adhered to the School of the Middle Way which advocated the theory of the three levels of the dual truth which displaced the thought about distinctions (no distinctions): "the truth in the highest sense consists of saying that things are neither *you* nor *wu*, nor not *you* nor not *wu* and that the middle way is not unilateral and not not unilateral" (Zhang, Erdi, cited in FYL: 313). When one reaches the third level of

truth, one cannot affirm anything. That is, one arrives at silence<sup>51</sup>. Kumarajiva and his disciples are credited with translating fundamental works of Chan Buddhism like the “Diamond Sutra”, the “Teachings of Vimalakirti”, the *Mahaprajnaparamita* and various treatises of our master *Nagarjuna* (Brosse: 15-16). We will look at some of these philosophical cruxes related to this scenario.

- **Qing Tan movement and the development of Buddhism**

The Buddhiquetzalsm that was introduced in China was very evolved in terms of doctrine. After the fall of the Han dynasty and China’s entrance into a period of division and anarchy, the empire was divided into three kingdoms, and after the short Xin kingdom, the northern part of the country was left in the hands of Hun hordes. From 317 to the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> Century, the Imperial government was rebuilt, but power stayed in the hands of successive, weaker dynasties. Despite this, Chinese culture was preserved thanks to the efforts of large family groups, who encouraged the development of the arts, logic and philosophy.<sup>52</sup>

This is confirmed by Ana Gonzalez, who says that during those times of war, Chinese culture and fine arts reached high levels of refinement. The study of the humanities was encouraged by the court, and was aimed towards the realm of theory. Thus, for example, the study of logic served to help one enter into metaphysics, given that the symbol manifested the essence of things. For that reason, a school was founded which set its primary goal as finding out about the mystery of the absolute: The School of Mystery, whose followers based their beliefs on the “Book of mutations.”<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Vandier-Nicolas in Parain et al: 331 - 335.

<sup>52</sup> Toward the end of the 3rd Century, in the midst of this current, the Huan Hue School of Mystery appeared. Alan Watts, "*El camino del Zen*", Chapter 4, [Origen y desarrollo del Zen](#). Editorial Edhasa: Barcelona, 2003 [2ª edición]. ISBN 84-350-2714-7

<sup>53</sup> The School of Mystery gave great importance to the study of the Absolute, perceived of as lacking existence, as opposed to the visible world, a non-being. And that non-being is what founds the

In order to sustain this thought trend, it was necessary to have a good command of dialectics, and so the School of Mystery organized debates and dialogues about political, mystical or metaphysical topics. This practice, which was considered to be art, was called *Qing Tang* or “Pure Conversions”, and was a stimulus for the rebirth of Taoism<sup>54</sup>.

The *Qing Tan* or Pure Conversion movement expressed a progressive reversal of Confucianism and a rebirth of philosophical Taoism. “The elites were interested in metaphysical questions and let themselves be won over little by little by the influence of Buddhism”. Taoism and Buddhism seemed to find themselves philosophically joined because of their “methods of asceticism which reveal the Absolute.” In fact, in the first centuries, the translations of the Buddhist doctrines relied on Taoist notions and concepts, especially those of Zhuang Zi, which was a topic of controversy for scholars from the Buddhist, Taoist and Confucian schools<sup>55</sup>.

The *Qing Tan* or Pure or Fine Conversion movement records many of these dialogues of scholars around the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century AD. The use of analogy for translating Buddhist terms into Chinese caused a number of Taoist concepts to be incorporated into Chinese Buddhism. Thus, bodhi (enlightenment) was translated as *dao* 道 and nirvana as *wu wei* 无为. Another place where these currents meet is the repudiation of violence by Taoists and Buddhists. The Taoists, as we have seen, are not always non-violent, as they reach their goals by means of non-interference (*wu-wei*) while Buddhists, with their theory of compassion, have a similar outlook. From

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beginning of all beings, it is the regulating principle of the universe. The disciples proposed differentiating between the substance of the Absolute and the manifestation of the Absolute, so that both the being and the non-being are two aspects of the Ultimate Supreme, and neither of them is conceived without the other.

<sup>54</sup> González, Ana, *El budismo y la revelación de lo absoluto: La escuela del misterio*, <http://mundofilosofia.portalmundos.com/el-budismo-y-la-revelacion-de-lo-absoluto-la-escuela-del-misterio/>

<sup>55</sup> Vandier-Nicolas in Parain et al: 317 - 335.

all of this complex and subtle exchange, there was born a Buddhism with its own personality, the Chan or Chinese Buddhism (Brosse: 14-19; Parain *et al*: 324; Watts<sup>56</sup>).

The Golden Age of Buddhism took place, according to Parain et al (330-331), between the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> Century and the mid-8<sup>th</sup> Century. During this period, scholarly schools were founded, an academy was founded in Che Kiang, anti-intellectualism penetrated the movement, making it possible to spread further and the Chan expanded into Japan and the rest of the Far East. According to Fen Youlan (312), two schools stood out in terms of importance: the Mahayana or School of the Universal Mind (Nature of Buddha), known in China as *xing zong*<sup>57</sup>, and the School of the Middle Path or School of Emptiness, known as *kong zhong*. For the *xing zong* school, nirvana is found in identification with the Nature of Buddha (“universal mind”), whereas the School of the Middle Way or Emptiness *kong zhong*, uses the method of “negating the negated”. When all is negated, one arrives at the same situation, proposed by Zhuang Zi, of “sitting in the void.”

- **Seng Zhao and The School of Emptiness**

Seng Zhao (374-414) was a Buddhist master who was a member of the School of Emptiness. As with Dao Sheng, Seng Zhao was a student of Kumarajiva. He was originally from Chang’an, and in his adolescence, a Taoist follower of Lao Zi and Zhuang Zi. It is said that at 15, he read the Teaching of Vimalakirti and converted into a Buddhist monk. His works, compiled into the Zhao Lun or “Essays of Seng Zhao”, are considerable despite having died before the age of forty: it is considered to be a synthesis of Chinese thought with Indian thought.

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<sup>56</sup> Alan Watts, *op. cit.*

<sup>57</sup> For this school, xing or nature is equal to xin mind. FYL: 312



Partial to the use of paradox “to express the unexpressable”, Seng Zhao wrote three treatises that had a great later influence on the inalterability of things, the void and *prajna* and wisdom as not knowing. Dumoulin affirms that Seng Zhou was aimed at an empirical and immediate perception of the truth. For Seng Zhao, the truth could not be obtained either with word or with reasoning, but rather through direct experience (Dumoulin, cited by Brosse: 17).

One of the treatises of Seng Zhao is called “There is no unreal reality”, in which he says that it is impossible to concede the being of things and at the same time deny their existence. Thus, the *you* (to be, 有) is not far from the *wu* (not being, 无). They are united by a tie of equivalence.

*“All things have that which makes them not be you and also they have that which makes them not be wu. Because of the former, they are you, and at the same time not you. Because of the latter, they are wu and at the same time not wu. Why is this? Supposed that the you is really you, so then it must be you forever and should not have its you because of a convergence of causes. Suppose that the wu is really wu, then it must be wu forever and should not have its wu because of the dissolution of causes. If the you owes its you to the causes, then the you is not really you...But if all things are wu, then nothing can be produced. If something is produced, then it cannot be totally nothing...If we want to affirm that they are wu, there is no real existence of this you. If we want to affirm that they are you, they have their shapes and figures. Having shapes and figures is not the same as wu, and not being truly you is not the same as you. Since this is the case, the principle of “no unreal reality” is clear.”*

*Zhao Lun*, cap. II, citado por FYL: 315.

In another essay dedicated to analyzing the immutability of things, Seng Zhao affirms the permanent changing of things and at the same time the existence of immutability. Although mutable things, those that existed in the past and that do not reach the present, do not exist as they were (Mr. Fan Zhi, coming back converted to a monk is

Fan Zhi but is not Fan Zhi), this does not mean that they vanished together with the past. They were you in the past but they are not you in the present.

*“The effect is not the cause, but thanks to the cause is the effect. And the fact that, existing the cause, the effect therefore exists, shows that the causes do not vanish in the past. The cause has not descended nor has it vanished. Thus the theory of immutability is clear.”*

Seng Zhao, citado por FYL: 316.

This reflection by Seng Zhou implies the theory of the double truth and the three levels of knowledge: at the level of common sense, it is true to affirm that things are *you* and permanent and *wu* and mutable. In a second (higher) sense, it is true to affirm that things are not *you* nor *wu*, neither permanent nor mutable. But there is a third sense, where wisdom is not knowledge and this is *prajna* (*Zhao Lun*, Chap. I, cited in FYL: 316)

As opposed to vulgar knowledge which refers to an object outside of the subject, *prajna* transcends the subject-object relationship and transports us to the One. *Prajna* explores the unexplorable and therefore is un-knowledge or enlightening knowledge in that it coincides with its object and clarifies the true character of things, which does not reside in any character in particular. *Prajna* apprehends the ultimate truth and constitutes the Awakening (Parain et al: 328).

Seng Zhao was associated with the School of Emptiness Kong Zhong or the School of the Middle Path, which spread through northern China. His co-disciple Dao Sheng, who we will see in the next section, was a member on the other hand of the School of the Universal Mind or the Nature of Buddha Xing Zon, which expanded into southern China. In any case, as FYL indicates, Dao Sheng and Sheng Zhao are central keystones whose merit is in the fact that they prepared the theoretical-philosophical framework for Chinese or Chan Buddhism.

- **Dao Sheng: Sudden Enlightenment**

It is said that Dao Sheng (355-434) was an enlightened Buddhist, a student with Sheng Zhao. He first studied at Pengcheng, where he stood out for his intelligence and eloquence and then traveled to Chang'an where he joined Kumarajiva's group. Together with that master, he produced a new version of the Lotus Sutra and was one of the translators of the *Teaching of Vimalakirti*. At the end of his life he taught at Lu Chan, the main center for Buddhist studies of the time. The works of Dao Sheng have not been conserved, they are known through later notes and commentaries, like for example the Treatise of Huiyuan "On the explanation of retribution", the *Bian Zong Lun* or "Discussion of the Essential" of Xie Lingyun and the *Guang Hong Ming* or "More collections on Buddhism," of Dao Guan.

The ideas of Dao Sheng were so innovative that initially they were very misunderstood, which earned him an expulsion from the Buddhist community until it was proven that the statements that the masters had considered heretical were also included in Buddhist canonical texts which had still not been translated. Dao Sheng was, then, reinstated.

Dao Sheng applied the Taoist ideas of *wu wei* (action that happens without effort) and *wu xin* (no mind) to Buddhist metaphysics of the karma. No karma implies acting spontaneously, without any deliberate effort, without discrimination, that is it implies *wu wei*. When one practices *wu wei*, they are applying the *wu xin*. When one applies both, the *wu wei* and the *wu xin*, one does not have a desire nor attachment to things. Since the effect or retribution of *karma* is due to attachments, their *karma* will not give rise to any retribution (Feng Youlan: 318).

One of the controversial theses of Dao Sheng was that of the universality of *Buddhanness* or the nature of Buddha (all beings possess it) including those "without

faith” or *icchantika* that are not aware that they have it. Since the nature of Buddha is One – Indivisible, the Awakening is sudden, that is “it is achieved through sudden enlightenment.” The conversion into Buddha implies identifying with the *wu* or universal mind that transcends forms and figures. Unity means unity with the totality of the *wu*. Enlightenment is something beyond the you. “Upon liberating oneself from illusion, one returns to the primary, and upon returning to the primary, one achieves the original.” This final state of achievement is for Dao Sheng *nirvana*.

The ideas of Dao Sheng on the universality of the nature of Buddha contradicted the version of *Parinirvana Sutra*, as it was known then in China. When the *Parinirvana Sutra* was translated in its entirety and it was learned that it contained this same thesis, Dao Sheng was reinstated.

Dao Sheng was also a cultivator of the Chinese dialectic. For him, nirvana and *samsara* are not two different things, but rather the reverse or inverse of each other. Neither is the phenomenal world totally different from the nature of Buddha. Enlightenment is the bridge to the *wu*: when one is enlightened, the you becomes nirvana. Enlightenment cannot be sought outside of *samsara*. The world of Buddha is not in another place, it is in the present world, in the “here and now”).

Dao Sheng claimed that Buddhahood was obtained through a sudden enlightenment, an idea which is opposed to the gradualist thesis of *jian* which held that to reach the nature of Buddha one must accumulate studies and practice. For Dao Sheng, accumulated practice and study only manage to prepare the way, but are not enough to awaken in Buddha. There are no intermediate steps (Feng Youlan 318 ff., Anne Chen: 320). Brosse (18) affirms that with his theory of sudden awakening, Dao Sheng overcomes the dualism of the *samsara* and nirvana, of phenomena and ultimate reality, of the nature of Buddha and emptiness (*sunyata*), with which he becomes the precursor of the sixth Huineng patriarch, who would live 300 years later. We do not see Buddha because he is inside us, we see him when we discover him

inside us. The *wu wei* is the way for spontaneous, direct attainment, without the intervention of the mind or the truth (Brosse: 18).

*“...by reaching the other shore (that of nirvana), if it is reached, it is not reached. Not reaching and not not reaching are in reality reaching...If you see Buddha, you don't see Buddha. When you see that there is no Buddha, in reality, you see Buddha.”*

*Dao Sheng, cited by Brosse, 18.*

Dao Sheng, who claimed that the symbol should be discarded once the idea has been understood, is considered by Feng Youlan (323) as a bridge between Mencio (all men can be a Yao or a Shun, the nature of Buddha is in all) and the Neoconfucianists. Dao Sheng and Seng Zhao would inspire the emergence of the Northern School, founded by Shen Xiu (-706) and the Southern School, established by Huineng (638-713). Huineng would become the sixth *chan* patriarch. But we shall leave that for another essay.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE MEANS OF ACHIEVING AWAKENING IN THE DIAMOND SUTRA, THE COMMENTARY BY THE SIXTH PATRIARCH 六祖 HUI NENG 慧能



The mummified body of the Sixth Patriarch Hui Neng,  
Taken from <http://www.sinc.sunysb.edu/Clubs/buddhism/huineng/content.html>

- **The influence of Hui Neng (慧能) on the consolidation of Chan 禪 Buddhism**

*“When the Buddhas are confused they are common beings;  
When the common beings are enlightened, they are buddhas”.*

Hui Neng, Commentary on the Diamond Sutra<sup>58</sup>

Hui Neng (慧能), known as the sixth patriarch of Chan Buddhism, is of immense philosophical and religious importance which is recognized historically. He lived from 638-713, during the Tang Dynasty (619-906), considered to be the golden era of Chinese culture, during which the imperial patronage protected the development of Buddhism which had been introduced from India various centuries earlier. Due to the support of the emperors, the principle Buddhist texts and cannons were translated into Chinese, and various schools worked intensely to adapt the Buddhist teachings by “accommodating” Buddhism within Chinese philosophy and culture.

The *Platform Sutra* of Hui Neng tells of his life and teachings. Hui Neng was born in Xinzhou, currently in the district of Xinxing, Guangdong (廣東南海) Province, in the south of China, his family name was Lu. Hui Neng’s father, who was a government official, died when he was very young, this brought poverty upon him and his mother, he thus worked as a woodcutter and heavy laborer. Upon completing one of his

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<sup>58</sup>See commentary in the book: *“The Sutra of Hui Neng, Hui Neng’s Commentary on the Diamond Sutra”*, Thomas Cleary version, Arca de Sabiduría, Translated by Alejandro Pareja, EDAF, Madrid, 1999.



tasks, he heard the Diamond Sutra (金剛經) being recited and attained enlightenment.

When he was 25 years old, Hui Neng went to the East Mountain to study with the fifth Great Patriarch, Hwang-yan (Hongren 弘忍), who recognized Hui Neng's spiritual development. After receiving transmission of the Patriarchy's symbols, robe and bowl, he retreated to a place in the South of China. In 676 he settled down in the Baolin Monastery of Caoxi, in Guangdong province, where he taught for the rest of his life<sup>59</sup>.

The teachings of Hui Neng constitute one of the founding heritages of the *chan and Zen* Buddhist traditions in Asia (Chinese and Japanese Buddhism). As Thomas Cleary (1998) and Mario Poceski (1992) note, Hui Neng was the last Patriarch or Founding Grand Masters. Hui Neng's best known work is the Platform Sutra.

"Highlighting the importance that Hui Neng occupies in the Zen tradition is the fact that the chronicles of his life and his discourses form the only document of similar characteristics that deserves the honorable name of *sutra* or *scripture*, which is traditionally reserved in Buddhist literature for the teachings of Buddha" (Cleary: 1998). The Rev. Yin Zhi Shakya made a similar affirmation with regards to the Platform Sutra "it is the only manuscript that has been honored with the name Sutra or Script, a word that is only used for Buddha's teachings, in Buddhist literature, as they were narrated by Ananda"<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> See: Poceski, Mario, *Sun Face Buddha: The Teachings of Ma-tsu and the Hung-chou School of Chan* [*The Sun face Buddha: the teachings of Ma-tzu and the Hong-chou School of Chan*], Fremont, CA: Jain Publishing Company, 1992. Translated by Benito Carral into Spanish. <http://www.baolin.org>

<sup>60</sup> Rev. Yin Zhi Shakya, OHY, *The Sutra of Hui-Neng, The Grand Master of Zen*, translated into Spanish by Hortensia De la Torre (Yao Feng), [http://www.acharia.org/sutras/tabla\\_de\\_contenido.htm](http://www.acharia.org/sutras/tabla_de_contenido.htm)  
 Web page of the HY order (The Hsu Yun Order of Chan/Zen Buddhism)  
<http://www.xuyun.org/Spanish/Dharma/Home/home-index-sp.html>  
 Also see: <http://www.hsuyun.com/> and <http://www.huineng.org/>

Mr. Wong Mou-Larn, who first translated the Platform Sutra into English: “the *Sutra Spoken by the Sixth Patriarch on the High Seat of the Treasure of the Law* (Nanjio's Catalogue No. 1525) which records the sermons and the sayings of Wei Lang (638-713), the most famous Dhyana Master of the Tang Dynasty. It may be of interest to note that of all the Chinese works which have been canonized in the Tripitaka, this standard work of the Dhyana School is the only one that bears the designation of 'Sutra,' a designation which is reserved for the sermons of Lord Buddha and those of great Bodhisattvas. Hence, it is not without justification to call it, as some one does, 'the only Sutra spoken by a native of China.’”<sup>61</sup>

The teachings of the Platform Sutra are “relatively simple and refreshingly direct” says Poceski, which didn't stop a wide variety of people meeting to listen to the teachings “erudite Confucians, as well as eminent monks, including a master of the Canonical Buddhist texts from India” (Cleary: 1998). Using simple words, given that he was not an erudite man Nui Neng taught “the simultaneous cultivation of *Samadhi* or concentration and *prajna* or wisdom, as well as the teaching of *no thought*.” He emphasized seeing ones true nature (jian-xing), which one achieves through non-attachment, homelessness and the absence of thought (dualistic)<sup>62</sup>.

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Also see: “the *Sutra Spoken by the Sixth Patriarch on the High Seat of the Treasure of the Law* (Nanjio's Catalogue No. 1525) which records the sermons and the sayings of Wei Lang (638-713), the most famous Dhyana Master of the Tang Dynasty. It may be of interest to note that of all the Chinese works which have been canonized in the Tripitaka, this standard work of the Dhyana School is the only one that bears the designation of 'Sutra,' a designation which is reserved for the sermons of Lord Buddha and those of great Bodhisattvas. Hence, it is not without justification to call it, as some one does, 'the only Sutra spoken by a native of China’”. Wong Mou-Lam, *The Sutra of Hui Neng*, Translator's preface, Shanghai, 21<sup>st</sup> of November 1929, published in March 1930.

<sup>61</sup> Wong Mou-Lam, *The Sutra of Hui Neng*, Translator's preface, Shanghai, 21<sup>st</sup> of November 1929, published in March 1930.

<sup>62</sup> Poceski, Mario, op. cit.

- **The universalism of the Buddha nature in the Platform Sutra**

The simplicity and freshness of Hui Neng's teachings are not solely derived from or consequence of his lack of education, but in our opinion one of the central messages that this master contributed to humanity: The possibility that everyone, without exception, can reach their own Buddha nature through any path, including intuition or sudden enlightenment.

With Hui Neng, the true Buddhist path becomes not one but many paths, and among other things, a departure from promoting scholarship to generate understanding towards the practical application of the teachings. This brings about the rupture of three prisons. The first rupture is of the prison of *expert knowledge* or scholarship, given that even the illiterate woodcutter Hui Neng, could attain enlightenment.

The second break from the prison of dogma is the idea of a preferential and exclusive *path*, as all the paths are capable of taking a sentient (aware) being to understanding and enlightenment. For some authors, on Chinese Buddhism, *dhyana* takes the place of *vinaya*. However Rev. Kong Ghee accepts that one of the distinctive characteristics of Chinese or Chan Buddhism is *meditation* or *dhyana*, saying that "this is not established in the scriptures."<sup>63</sup>

The third breakage is the notion of group separation, social classes and cultural or ethnic identities, because even a poor "indigenous" person from the border region, could attain enlightenment. The forth break has to do with the separation between knowledge or theory and practical living, given that even while Hui Neng lived in the

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<sup>63</sup> Rev. Kong Ghee, *El Sutra de Hui-Neng, Sutra spoken by the 6th Patriarch on the high seat of the "Treasure of Law"*, Preface to the English Translation, Third moon of the year Ting lu, Buddhist Calendar 2,500 years (1930).

monastery, he still did manual tasks such as “cutting wood and sifting rice”, and this did not impede his flow of wisdom.



Illustration taken from the Diamond Sutra, Wikipedia, [http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sutra\\_del\\_diamante](http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sutra_del_diamante)

- **The Main Teachings Of Hui Neng On Diamond Sutra - Vajrachédika-sutra**
  - 金剛經

a - Locating the Diamond Sutra within the Buddhist canon

The sutras are the fundamental writings of Buddha, considered to be a transmission of his words. The *Diamond Sutra*<sup>64</sup> belonging to the Mahayana school, is one of the

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<sup>64</sup> Sutrās are the fundamental discourses of Buddha, considered to be a transmission of his words.

four canonical texts that make up the gender of the Perfection of Wisdom or *prajñā pāramitā*, whose sutras are aimed at the teaching of detachment. The concept of the Perfection of Knowledge or *prajñā pāramitā* is also one of the aspects of the personality of a bodhisattva, whose generic name is paramitas. The Sutras of Perfect Wisdom also include the *Diamond Sutra*, the Heart Sutra, the Guirnalda Sutra and the Lotus Sutra.

According to the British Library, the Diamond Sutra was discovered at the beginning of the 20th Century by oriental scholar Sir Marc Aurel Stein (1862-1943) in a cave in northeastern China, and it is believed that it was part of a library hidden there around the year 1000 A.D. It is the oldest printed book in the world, and was printed in 868 A.D., during the Tang Dynasty, which ruled from 618 to 907 A.D. The Tang royal family adopted Buddhism, which encouraged its integration into Chinese culture.

The complete name of the Sutra is “The Perfect Knowledge Sutra of the Diamond that Cuts Through Illusion”. In Sanskrit the name is *Vajracchedikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* ; while in Chinese it is 金剛般若波羅蜜多經, abbreviated as 金剛經, Pinyin: *jīn gāng bōrě-bōluómìduō jīng* or *jīn gāng jīng* By staging a conversation between Buddha and the monk Shubhuti, one of his eminent disciples, the Sutra discusses the nature of perception in order to dismantle the constructs of the mind, using the resource of the paradox to overcome the limitations of logic, which characterizes Buddhist teaching. For Buddhists, the contradiction of the paradox is a way that is part of the teaching, and encourages one to keep moving forward and above all to consider that both perspectives are equally valid.

Since it is very difficult to understand due to its theoretical flight, Hui Neng’s commentaries on the Diamond Sutra are invaluable. As the Sixth Patriarch said, “if

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students in later ages have doubts upon reading this scripture, those doubts will disappear when they read this interpretation.”<sup>65</sup>

## Box

### EXPLANATION OF THE TITLE OF THE DIAMOND SUTRA

*by So Mok Sunim*

**Sutra:** the way of Truth, directly to the Great Dao. This Sutra is a strong and sharp sword of wisdom, which can cut through ignorance, suffering, anguish. It is the shore beyond peace and happiness, that is, Nirvana. It is the Sutra that can lead us to Nirvana.

Its zenith is true emptiness. Its body is non-residing (non-concentration). Its use is mysterious existence.

**Diamond:** lighting bolt, something sharp and bright.

**Prajña:** Wisdom of the light that banishes the darkness of ignorance.

**Paramita:** Nirvana. This sutra is the sutra for achieving Nirvana through the wisdom of the diamond (clean, hard, sharp, precious). Nirvana is the place where there are no afflictions, anguish or anxiety.

Taken from: *Comentarios de So Mok Sunim al Sutra del Diamante*, translation and notes: Kungang Poep Sa Nim, see: <http://www.czba.org.ar/docs/SUTRA%20DE%20LA%20PERFECCI%D3N%20DE%20LA%20SABIDUR%CDA%20DEL%20DIAMANTE.doc>

<sup>65</sup> Hui Neng, “*El Sutra de Hui neng y Comentarios al Sutra del Diamante*”, Thomas Cleary edition, Editorial EDAF, Madrid, 1999, p. 137.

## b – Teachings of the Diamond Sutra

Hui Neng says that the purpose of Buddha in the Diamond Sutra was to help “people to understand the numinous and see the essential nature”. In his understanding, this sutra, “has as its source the non-form, as substance that which is not lasting, as function the subtle being.” When with great compassion Buddha tries to get Subhuti to let go of his preconceived and narrow notions of reality, the nature of enlightenment and the non-duality of the transcendental conscience, the master talks about the “perfection of knowledge” as such, he denies that reality can be penetrated with words and concepts (preconceptions) and denies that reality is made up of things, which are only illusions. This is what the name of Diamond alludes to, which makes it possible to reach the perfection of wisdom by cutting through illusion.

The Diamond in this sutra consists in this way of a metaphor of the truth. “The Diamond”, affirms Hui Neng, “is very sharp by nature and can cut anything. But although the diamond is very hard, the horn can break it. The diamond represents the Buddhist nature, the horn represents afflictions. As hard as the diamond is, the horn can cut it; as stable as the Buddhist nature is, afflictions can alter it.” However, “although afflictions are insoluble, knowledge of the *prajna* can destroy them....those who understand this principle clearly understand the essential nature.”<sup>66</sup>

The Diamond Sutra addresses the doctrine of *sunyata* or the unreality of all phenomena, objects, perceptions and thoughts, compared with ephemeral illusions. The sutra encourages detachment from these things through the transcendence of perception. Thought belongs to a limited state of consciousness; on the contrary detachment assumes union with the essential. Alan Watts states that for Hui-neng, a man with empty consciousness is no different from “a log or a stone” and since “our nature is something fundamentally “clear and pure”, “the true mind is non-mind (wu-

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<sup>66</sup> Hui Neng, op. cit., p.. 139.

xin) which means that it should not be considered to be an object of thought or action.”<sup>67</sup>

The Diamond Sutra also mentions four types of characteristics: the non self, the non-others, the non-sentient-beings and the non-life<sup>68</sup>. The non-self refers to our own existence. Non-others refers to those with whom we are in opposition or contact. The characteristic “non-sentient beings” refers to not only the inexistence of self but also the non-existence of all sentient beings throughout the universe. Finally, the fourth characteristic, of non-life, describes the process that leads from the desire for a long life to the lack of concern for the duration of one’s life and in fact the lack of any concern at all for time.

Outside of the body and the mind, there is no sense of self. In reality, it is the mind which experiences the experience of self. Then, what is the mind? It is a tireless, continuous flow of thoughts. We have to release the mind, let go of the thoughts and impressions that are constantly revolving in our minds.

*Thoughts come and go by themselves, for through the use of wisdom there is no blockage. This is the □amadhi of prajna, and natural liberation. Thus is the practice of the “absence of thought” [wu-nien].*

Hui Neng, Commentary on the Diamond Sutra

Meditation is the path through which one accesses the non-self, mentioned in the Diamond Sutra: with it, one can realize that the self is something insubstantial

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<sup>67</sup> Alan Watts, "El camino del Zen", op. cit.

<sup>68</sup> [http://spanish.dharmadrum.org/budismo/budismo.aspx?cid=C\\_00000066&ccid=C\\_00000131](http://spanish.dharmadrum.org/budismo/budismo.aspx?cid=C_00000066&ccid=C_00000131)



(without substance), it is non-existent; it exists only in the sense of the body, the needs of the body, and the constant flow of thoughts.

Others exist through the illusion of the self. We experience ourselves in opposition to others due to our own sense of self. Therefore, if there is no self there are also no "others". In addition, if the self does not exist, then neither do sentient beings. Buddha said that even after having saved all sentient beings, there are really no sentient beings who have been saved. Sentient beings have been saved but one does not sense having saved them. If the sense of saving sentient beings existed, and if there are sentient beings to be saved, then there is still the existence of a self (illusion).

"And nonetheless, although innumerable beings have been led to Nirvana, no being has been led to Nirvana. Why? If a Bodhisattva should come to perceive a "being", they would not be called "enlightened being" (Bodhisattva)...except perhaps for Buddha. He himself, the being of enlightenment (enlightener), is composed of those two contradictory forces: wisdom and compassion, but his capacity to combine them is "the source of his greatness."

Hui Neng, Commentary on the Diamond Sutra

All sentient beings are attached to life (the existence of the self from the perspective of time), they desire to live for a long time and – even more so – avoid death; this leads them to seek a sense of security in their lives. For this reason the fourth characteristic is non-life. If the self does not exist, then the duration of our lives is not important at all. For those who have managed to overcome the illusory notion of the self, death is not a transition. Those who have achieved the experience of the non-self are not afraid to die.

Hui-neng compares the Great Emptiness with space, and calls it great not because it is empty but because it contains the sun, the moon and the stars. Emptiness unites existence and non-existence, affirmation and denial, eternity and annihilation, and therefore it is non-duality. The Diamond Sutra affirms that all things and every thing are empty. As master Nagarjuna taught, “emptiness is the non-difference between yes and no.” Simultaneous negation. Meditation or *dhyana* consists of being aware that our nature is like space, and that the thoughts and sensations come and go within this “original mind” like birds in the sky, without leaving a trace. As his school was that of “sudden awakening”, for Hui Neng there are no stages of growth. Being awake means being totally awake, because, since the nature of Buddha has no parts or divisions, one does not become aware of that nature little by little.

The last instructions that he gave to his disciples contain an interesting key for the later development of the method of teaching through “questions and answers”:

*“If upon questioning you someone asks about the being, answer with the non-being. If they ask about the non-being answer with the being. If they ask about the common man answer by talking about the wise man. If they ask about the wise man answer by talking about the common man. Through this method of opposites in reciprocal relationship, the understanding of the Middle Way is achieved. To each question that is put do you, answer by speaking of its opposite.”*

Hui Neng, Commentary on the Diamond Sutra

Hui-neng died in 713, and after finishing the transmission of the Buddhist Patriarchy, because he considered it negative and encouraging of envy and crimes, the chan continued developing. Finally, it must be said that with this sutra, Buddha exercised his compassion not only with the delivery of a text to be understood and studied with the mind, but as an oral vehicle which, in and of itself, can cause enlightenment in the person listening. That is, literate or

illiterate people (the poor), as was Hui Neng himself. Subhuti and Hui Neng are examples of having been enlightened upon hearing the word of perfect wisdom of the Buddha Sakhyamuni. With this sutra, Buddhism obtained a vehicle within reach of all.

- **Hui Neng's commentaries on the Diamond Sutra.**

*"If you understand your true mind, you will understand for the first time that this Sutra (Diamond) is not written with letters".*

Hui Neng, Commentary on the Diamond Sutra.

Hui Neng said: *"Seeing, is the purpose of life"*.  
Master Ming-Chiao, quoted by Thomas Cleary, 1999.

Hui Neng in his *Commentary on the Diamond Sutra* describes the word *sutra* "as the expression of the wise, which teaches those that listen, to transcend the profane and realize the sacred, stopping confusion forever."<sup>69</sup> According to tradition, the Diamond Sutra was pronounced by Buddha in Sravasti. The Diamond is the hardest and sharpest object, which cuts illusions and lies, it is a metaphor for *Prajnaparamita*.

If this is true, one also has to note that the Hui Neng's commentary on the Diamond Sutra constitute a sutra within the Sutra, given that they have the unlimited potential to show us elements of understanding and enlightenment. I will now present some transcendental lessons that the Sixth Patriarch Hui Neng gave in his Commentary.

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<sup>69</sup> Rev. Yin Zhi Shakya, *op. cit.*, [http://www.acharia.org/sutras/tabla\\_de\\_contenido.htm](http://www.acharia.org/sutras/tabla_de_contenido.htm)

## 1. Buddha is not outside of ourselves

To avoid the danger of conceiving the Buddha as an external reality to each of us, Hui Neng pronounced in his Commentary<sup>70</sup> to help his students “possess the sutra of the inner mind and clearly see for themselves the pure Buddhist mind” (Comments page 138).

## 2. The True Source is unchanging

Hui Neng’s comments help us to understand that “the source is beyond the true or the false”<sup>71</sup>.

For Hui Neng, “the material forms are uncountable, all of them we call living beings”<sup>72</sup> but there is One source. Not seeing this creates confusion, habit, deviation and obsession. The “confusion causes the creation of karma of all types, habit causes constant and repetitive routines, a deviated mind is unstable, and the opinions drive one to obsession”, but when “the inner mind is pure and the outer mind is pure” or “when there is no digression from thought to thought, this can is called dominating the mind.”<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> We follow the version Commentary on the book: “*The Sutra of Hui Neng, Commentary by Hui Neng on the Diamond Sutra*”, Thomas Cleary version, Arca de Sabiduría, as translated into Spanish by Alejandro Pareja, EDAF, Madrid, 1999.

<sup>71</sup> Commentary, op. cit., 147.

<sup>72</sup> Commentary, op. cit., 149.

<sup>73</sup> Commentary, op. cit., 148.

### 3. The Teaching depends on the different faculties of the person

For the Sixth Patriarch, if it is true “the source is more than the true or false” and “the vehicle is neither big nor small”, “teaching and liberation come about depending on the different faculties of each person”.

Cleary (1999) cites, that this was reaffirmed by Master Ming-Chiao using these words: “Those whose natural potential is sharp, will receive the profound, those whose natural potential is foolish and asleep will receive the superficial.”

### 4. We enter nirvana through the sublime heart of nirvana

Hui Neng gave privilege to the paths of intuition or contemplation of Buddha Nature. “The awakening, he says, shows that all living beings in the universe have the sublime heart of Nirvana, which makes them realize it by themselves.”

Nirvana means, in this context, purity, a conviction that there is goodness in all human beings. We all have the capacity to enter into “Nirvana without remainder” as the mind of Buddha is impartial, does not discriminate and is all-encompassing (that is to say that it includes all of us). The mind of Buddha “wants to enter into complete Nirvana, pure and without remainder and cross the sea of birth and death with all living beings”<sup>74</sup>.

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<sup>74</sup> Commentary, op. cit., 150.

#### 5. The Buddhist Nature does not distinguish an I or a being

Hui Neng comments that the Diamond Sutra establishes as illusions or manifestations of the ego, linked to the creation of karma and afflictions, the creation of four images: I, a being, a *person* or a *personality*. The *I* does not exist, nor the *being*, *person* or *personality*” “There are people that understand and practice this but they maintain a feeling of achievement, which creates a self image known as the religious ego. Only when one is freed of the religious Ego can one talk of liberation through extinction.” And later he points out “when all the confused people have understood their own essential nature, they will know for the first time that Buddha does not hold an image of himself nor possess self-awareness.”

#### 6. The Buddhist Nature does not differentiate any being

The ego is a notion referred to as the continual attachment to rewards or status and both notions are based on the belief that there exists a differentiation between beings. On the other hand, according to the Sixth Patriarch Hui Neng, in his Commentary on the Diamond Sutra, the Awake one spoke of the unity of all beings saying that “Buddha Nature of common beings has no difference” and that “when the buddhas are confused they are common beings; when the common beings are enlightened, they are buddhas.”<sup>75</sup>

What stops the common beings entering into Nirvana is the existence of 4 images. The *image of I* arises “when confused people depreciate everyone else because they are rich, cultured or of social class”. The *image of the person* is created when we

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<sup>75</sup> Commentary, op. cit., 151.

believe we are better than others because we practice “virtues” which others do not put into practice and are thus, conceited. Having the *image of a being* is when they attribute to themselves good things. “Discriminate between things, seize and reject, this is called having an image of the personality”<sup>76</sup>

#### 7. Without appearances and without reward: coming to and in emptiness

Hui Neng states that the Diamond Sutra establishes the absolute separation between the truth and appearances. The ten thousand beings we become in an illusion or appearance, but this illusion or appearance are not only fleeting, but they are bestowed with a kind of separate reality. Appearance sustains us in this dimension where reiterating ourselves comes from but at the same time causes blindness, confusion, and the continuous creation of karma.

“One should limit oneself to returning to purity and understand that all phenomena are empty”<sup>77</sup>

To understand emptiness, Hui Neng took the metaphor for the true nature of Space, unlimited. The Buddha Nature or emptiness, “essentially does not have an I nor person, nor being or personality that lives life” and is unlimited. “It discriminates nothing” and “is originally open, peaceful and unified”<sup>78</sup>.

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<sup>76</sup> Commentary, op. cit., 151 - 152.

<sup>77</sup> Commentary, op. cit., 154.

<sup>78</sup> Commentary, op. cit., 155

## 8. "The Ultimate absence of I"

The ultimate absence of I comes from "liberating oneself from the sense of subject and object" and understanding that each and every one of us are one with the Buddha nature, that the ultimate and essential tendency of the appearance is the realization of the ten thousand beings, including ourselves the sentient beings, while we are all included and extinguished or liberated in Buddha nature, but once this is realized, there is no liberation caused by anybody except that by the Buddha in (each one) of us.

The perfect indifference of the Buddhist Nature is the greatest generosity as it is an absolute selflessness that does not distinguish blood relationships, affiliations, classes, species or qualities. This is what makes a *Bodhisattva* become a *Mahasttva*. This perfect indifference is what makes, finally, the Universe function out of the greatest and most absolute generosity and compassion.

*Why? Because if the Bodhisattvas practice charity without noticing appearances, the rewards are incalculable".*

Buda Sakyamuni, Diamond Sutra, Comments  
by the Sixth Patriarch Hui Neng, op. cit., page. 153.





## CHAPTER VI

### INTUITION, DISPLACEMENT AND DISCERNMENT IN THE ONTOLOGICAL PATH OF SUDDEN AWAKENING



Prajnaparamita, converted into Goddess of Wisdom.

From Vessantara's book "Meeting the Buddhas"

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*If you only understand but do not act, there is the name without substance. If you understand the meaning and put it into practice, then both are there, the name and the substance. If you do not cultivate it, you are an ordinary mortal man; If you cultivate it, you are the equal of a wise man.*

*What does Sutra mean? It means a course; it is a path for attaining Buddha-ness. Each time that a person wants to be on this path, they must internally cultivate the application of the pranja to mark the ultimate end. If you can only recite it and cannot mentally act according to its teaching, then there is no sutra nor course to follow. If you see with veracity and act with veracity, then there is a sutra in your own mind.*

Heui Neng, Commentary on the Diamond Sutra.

During the 2500 years that have passed between the time when Buddha the Enlightened One entered into *parinirvana* (died), his life has been an inspiration for numerous people seeking spiritual emancipation and seeking to get away from passions, pain and confusion. Hui Neng, the sixth patriarch of Chan Buddhism, reaffirmed that the search for Awakening or Enlightenment (*Nirvana*) is born of this paid: “*Know, he said, that it is the passions which give way to awakening.*”

He also taught that if passions motivate the search for “awakening”, the five “aggregates” or *skandha* (shape, sensation, perception, mental projections and consciousness, which constitute a concrete individual), as well as “*passion, anguish, and torment*”, are annihilated in awakening, since the wisdom attained “*transforms the 3 poisons of existence*” (desire, anger and ignorance) into “*discipline, concentration and serenity*”<sup>79</sup>.

The master Sheng Yen (1995) points out that Chinese Buddhism emerged above all from the Indian tradition of *Tathagatagarbha*, which is oriented toward discovering inherent knowledge, much more than toward a logical method, structured through ideas, which seeks the truth from “outside”. All of the Buddhist schools in China

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<sup>79</sup> Huei Neng, *Platform Sutra*, written by his disciple Fa Hai.

uphold that the universality of the condition of Buddha in human beings, is their potential.<sup>80</sup> This is expressed in the concept of “embryo of Buddha” or *Tathagatagarbha* which is translated as Buddha = *tathagata* and embryo = *garbha*. The four main Chinese Buddhism schools relate to the *Tathagatagarbha* tradition. Of these, two schools emphasized the theory and two promoted the practice. Those oriented toward theory were the Tien-tai 天台 and Hua-yen 華嚴 schools<sup>81</sup>. Those which encouraged practice were the *Pure Earth* and *Chan* schools. These four schools constitute the foundation of Chinese Buddhism<sup>82</sup>. The ultimate objective of Buddhist practice is to contribute to awakening the largest possible number of human beings.

For Master Sheng, “the Chan is not Indian Buddhism”, but a Buddhism that is developed from a series of “revelations” contributed by Bodhidharma who, as we have seen, brought Buddhism from India to China (around 500 AD). Firstly, the practice gave the origin to the name chan 禪, a word which is derived from *dhyana*.

The Buddhism of Bodhidharma was based on a gradual practice of attaining enlightenment, *dhyana*, which had eight levels of Samadhi (tranquility of the mind) before reaching the ninth, which was enlightenment or nirvana.

In China it would have been the Tien-tai school, according to master Sheng, which adopted the practices of *dhyana*, the system of levels of *Samadhi* (tranquility of mind) and *vipassana* (contemplation, but introduced a notion that was not found in Indian Buddhism and it was the highest level – *samatha – vipassana* – that was reached, at the end “completely and instantaneously”. That is to say that the awakening is sudden.

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<sup>80</sup> Master Sheng says that according to the Nirvana Sutra, “all sentient beings can become Buddha because they possess the nature of Buddha”, op cit.

<sup>81</sup> <http://www.buddhistdoor.com/OldWeb/bdoor/archive/nutshell/teach74.htm#t744>

<sup>82</sup> Sheng Yen (Master), *Chinese Buddhism and the Chan tradition*, conference given at the University of Bristol, England, June 10, 1995.

**Box****THE NATURE OF BUDDHA IS INHERENT TO ALL BEINGS WITHOUT EXCEPTION**

Another concept that did not exist in India, according to master Sheng Yen, appeared in the Chan tradition during the times of the Fifth Patriarch (prince of the sixth century). This concept was that all existing objects, animate or inanimate, can attain Buddha-ness. Sakyamuni Buddha said that all sentient beings, including animals, could attain Buddha-ness, but he did not say that it could be reached by plants, rocks, etc. (In China) “this notion came from the Taoist tradition, especially the scriptures of Zhuang-zi 庄子, which have a naturalistic philosophy.”

Synthesized from Sheng Yen (Master), Chinese Buddhism and the Chan tradition, conference given at the University of Bristol, England, on June 10, 1995.

In most of the versions reviewed for this paper, however, the sixth patriarch Hui Neng (慧能) is the author both of the notion of sudden awakening as well as the questioning of the existence of “one” method (*dhyana*): the demystification of the method as a function of the existence of many methods was due to the preeminence of the end, the awakening, above the methods and due to the various levels at which human beings find themselves with respect to that goal.

These versions emerge from these and other teachings of Hui Neng in the *Platform Sutra* and in his *Commentaries on the Diamond Sutra of Buddha*. The crux of the first

sutra is the explanation of the Treasure of the Dharma, as its complete name reads, through the narration, through a narration of a game of juxtaposition of opposites – which is very inherent to Chinese thought – which have important ramifications for the understanding of enlightenment and the way to reach it. The play of opposites is presented in a dialogue between the poem of Chen Sieu, prior of the monastery of the fifth patriarch Hong Ren and the poem of the then novice Huei neng.

The poems form part of the famous story that tells how Huei Neng was acknowledged as an Enlightened One by the fifth patriarch Hong Ren. Hong Ren had ordered his disciples to write a poem that talked about their understanding of supreme wisdom (prajna) and the nature of Buddha. Chen Sieu, a prior of the monastery, considered to be the most advanced disciple, wrote:

“The body is like the boddhi tree,  
and the mind like a shining mirrors;  
we clean it hour after hour,  
so that the dust does not cover us”

When Hong Ren read the poem, he said that Chen Sieu, although very advanced, had still not reached a true comprehension of the subjects at hand. Huei Neng, at that time a novice who was doing manual and servicial tasks, listened to the poem being recited, and upon asking about its motive and author, asked – since it is said he was illiterate – them to write down his own poem:

“At the origin there was no boddhi tree,  
Nor any mirror;  
If there was nothing at the origin,  
What could the dust cover?”

With this poem, Huei Neng pointed out some new starting points for Chan Buddhism which, according to the narrative of the Platform Sutra, came from Buddha's *Diamond*

*Sutra* thanks to the hearing of which Huei Neng had reached Enlightenment. In the sermon dedicated to “*The Perfection of the Great Wisdom*” (“Maha Prajna Paramita”), which is included in the Platform Sutra, Huei Neng establishes an epistemological approach to Awakening: “*Benevolent listeners,*” he said, “*the wisdom of the Awakening is inherent to your nature.*” And he added: “*If we aren’t able to see it, it is because of the illusions secreted by our mind.*”

- **Understanding, displacement and discernment in sudden awakening**

When the understanding of Enlightenment is produced and leads to awakening, it is immediate, it has the speed of light. There is no *Bodhi* tree, nor awakening by phases, that wisdom which is attained is not something that can be deposited in something, rather everything is deposited in it (this is the notion of “vacuity” to which we will return later). Then, what is Awakening? It is only sudden. It is always sudden, regardless of what path it was that took us there<sup>83</sup>.

For this reason, enlightenment is, in the first place, an “understanding”. What must be understood is our true nature, “*the nature of beings as they are in truth (tathata)...the true Buddha.*”<sup>84</sup> Understanding is a threshold, a frontier. As with any place, it implies movement, travel, displacement. We achieve understanding by passing through the veils of ignorance thanks to an internal and personal journey that leads us to true knowledge. The metaphor for this journey is access to light, because the Enlightened can now see, can understand dynamics, processes, shapes and relationships that before had no explanation, or whose explanation was insufficient, surface or illusory. “*To see the essential nature is enlightenment*” (Huei Neng: Commentaries on the Diamond Sutra).

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<sup>83</sup> Brosse, Jacques, *The Zen Masters*, Bayard Editions, Paris, 1999, p. 83.

<sup>84</sup> *Legacy of Huei Neng*, conversation with Fa Hai, written by Tche Teng.

This displacement is what is expressed by the notion of *Paramita*, according to Hui Neng<sup>85</sup>: “*What does paramita mean? That word means ‘reaching the other shore’*”. Reaching the other shore means shedding ....appearances (...) all that is “*this shore*”. Therefore, seeing “*reality as it is*” requires “*having a great discerning and total wisdom with respect to all things, and shedding the appearances of birth and death – that is <reaching the other shore>*”.

The sixth patriarch also affirms: “It is also said that when the mind is confused, that is <this shore>. When the mind is enlightened that is <the other shore>. If you talk about that and you put it mentally into practice, then your own body of reality is imbued with *paramita*. If you talk about that but do not put it mentally into practice, then there is no *paramita*.”<sup>86</sup>

If enlightenment “leads to the other shore”, then it changes our position relative to ourselves and relative to everything that exists. If reasoning or reflection are exercises of the mind, understanding reflects this new position of knowledge to what is attained, first by way of intuition, that function of the mind which is often blocked by reason, and which then gives way to discernment. In possession of *pranja*, penetrating wisdom, we beings can discern.

“*What does prajna mean? Prajna is a Sanskrit word, interpreted as ‘penetrating wisdom’*. Penetration or discernment does not have a place for ignorant attitudes. Wisdom has the appropriate resources. Discernment is the substance of wisdom, wisdom is a function of discernment or penetration. If there is wisdom in substance, the function is discerning or penetrating and not ignorant; if there is no wisdom in substance, the function is ignorant and without discernment. It is simply to get rid of ignorance, of error, and of not being enlightened that we cultivate penetrating wisdom (Hui Neng)”.<sup>87</sup>

So, upon discovering true knowledge, human beings attain an “understanding”. After

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<sup>85</sup> Hui Neng, *Commentaries on the Diamond Sutra*, op.cit.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Hui Neng, op. cit.



understanding, knowledge is transmuted into wisdom. *Prajna*. “Wisdom, as the full realization of the ultimate knowledge of reality, is the goal of philosophy and classic thought in general”, says Jose Olives Puig (2006)<sup>88</sup>. To understand and to discern are equivalent to the wheel of thoughts that rolls along incessantly in our minds. For Buddhism, the torrent of ideas, ideologies, beliefs and points of view, the information that builds illusory realities about who we are and about everything that exists, hide the truth. Therefore, we need to quiet ourselves in order to be able to apprehend the true substance of our own true nature.

- **(Inherent) wisdom**

Secondly, it must be understood that what we seek is not outside of ourselves; what we are looking for is ourselves, who we are. This is expressed in the Buddha’s words upon awakening: “*Wonder of wonders! Inherently, all living beings are Buddhas, blessed with wisdom and virtue, but, because human minds have been mixed up by illusionary thought, we cannot perceive it.*” In this way, Buddhism is an ontology based on who we really are, a philosophy that inquires about the person (in reality) we are.

Humans, because of the illusions our minds create, live in pain and confusion. Awakening is awakening to ourselves, to our Buddha reality. The illusions that the mind “produces” form a type of veil that blocks humans from reaching true understanding.

This veiling function of the mind is shared by epistemologies of different schools in which understanding is a construction which, to a greater or lesser degree, requires

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<sup>88</sup> Olives Puig, José, *La Ciudad Cautiva*, Biblioteca de Ensayo, Ediciones Siruela, Madrid, 2006, p.

<sup>134</sup> The author adds that: “The cynical philosophers, like Demetrius or Diogenes....hold great similarities to the Taoist and Hindu scholars of the Far East.”

intellectual efforts to attain. In one extreme example, Marxist philosophy<sup>89</sup> calls “ideology” those “spontaneous” thoughts and constructions of humans whose purpose is to obscure reality to allow one class to dominate another. On the other hand, it calls science knowledge that “reveals” what reality really is. While all of these schools use a constructive epistemology, knowledge as well as the method for reaching it (methodology), Buddhism and other mystic schools consider knowledge as something that already exists and that the way to reach it must be built. This way, in the majority of cases, requires humans to make a great effort, which guarantees access to knowledge that we already have. It is not something the mind builds but what is un-covered.

- **Full Emptiness**

Buddhism questions the Western notion of emptiness as a void and postulates a void that holds everything, even the void itself. In this way, it is related to current ideas of astronomical physics about the cosmic void as a void that is full. “Emptiness does not mean (that) *nothing (exists)*,” states Huei Neng, “the void of the Spirit does not mean its destruction.” Vacuity is a means of connecting with all beings that appears when one abandons forms, thoughts, attachments, judgments and illusions (in the sense of untrue forms of reality). It is like the fundamental One and the Taoism without name, before there was a two, a three and ten thousand beings. Therefore, it can hold all. For Huei Neng, “the unlimited void of space contains the sun, the moon, the stars, the earth and all living beings, the six worlds (*samsara*), heaven and hell. All are contained in the vacuity.”<sup>90</sup>

But to be able to be with the ten thousand beings, in our nature it is necessary that “before we consider good or evil, just or unjust,” that we experience “neither attraction

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<sup>89</sup> By Carl Marx, founder of Didactic Materialism, XIX Century.

<sup>90</sup> Huei Neng. op. cit.

or repulsion.” “The only thing that is great is he who recognizes through practice the immense capacity of the Spirit that penetrates the *Dharmadhatu* (the world of the Law, the whole universe the unchangeable whole), in which phenomena are produced that are born and die.” (Huei Neng: *Maha Prajna Paramita*).

An awakened person experiences phenomena as emptiness and emptiness as phenomena. That is wisdom. Between a Buddha and ourselves, ordinary beings, there is essentially no difference except the condition of being awake or dreaming. In other terms, the mystic poet, San Juan de la Cruz wrote, “And life is just a dream and dreams, are dreams”. Our natural essence is the Buddha. And the Buddha is Emptiness.

The key of the “void” that can be full while empty is letting go of discrimination, of judgment. Huei Neng teaches that Buddha confirms the thought of reason and discrimination are the basis for illusion. The epistemology that Huei Neng reveals does not seek external proof of the truth as everything that exists is categorized as forms of illusion.

- **Levels of access to enlightenment**

If we are Buddha nature, what is the purpose of the doctrine, methods and teachers?

For Huei Nang, in spite of persons who associate the concept of “sudden enlightenment” with the easy road, with the door wide open, with “nothing to do”, this is not true in the majority of cases but only for those who are “ready”. This is the sense of affirmation that we should “seek refuge in the Buddha that is within us”, not in “others far from us,” but also the “difference between an Awakened one and a common being (...is) that one knows and the other ignores.”<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Huei Neng, *The Perfection of the Great Wisdom or Maha Prajna Paramita*, sermon presented on the Platform Sutra

From the Buddhist perspective, human beings are in a type of arch that goes from a simple “feeling being” (a common person) to a Buddha. This introduces the idea of different levels but also the existence of an essential content of Buddha in all beings, even if they still have not awakened to their enlightenment (Tathagatagarbha). According to the Tathagatagarbha system, all beings possess the Buddha nature. This is because the Buddha nature is within all of us as an embryo. But traveling the way to terminate this difference can require relatively long and hard work depending on the condition of each person.

The Chan emphasizes nurturing the *samadhi* to reach the point of Buddhism. Nurturing wisdom to awaken requires the “tradition”. Tradition, according to Olives Puig<sup>92</sup>, comes from the Latin *tradere* which means “transmission of the means of knowledge and spiritual awakening of a civilization.”

Therefore, because the Awakened one knows what it is and how to reach enlightenment, points out Huei Neng, “we should seek guidance from the awakened ones if we want to reach enlightenment.”<sup>93</sup> That is, that we can only be taught through Testimony. From whom, in themselves, is Testimony. The Master. The idea of carrying within oneself the Testimony of a good that all aspire to and which can be shared by others, is, for Olives Puig, the center of the ancient idea of an Authority (one who promotes the well being of others)<sup>94</sup>. And, this authority – not power – is the basis for respect and obedience for the Master.

The *Tathagatagarbha* School proposes that there are different levels in the way to Buddha. These levels are revealed by a person’s ability to “understand” and the “condition” of their potential for understanding/enlightenment. Huei Neng recognizes

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<sup>92</sup> Olives Puig, Jose. op. cit.

<sup>93</sup> Huei Neng, op. cit.

<sup>94</sup> Olives Puig, op. cit.

the different situation of human beings in reference to their awakening, how close or far they are from this goal. This distance is the characteristic that determines the way each person should follow.

The “Law of the Supreme Vehicle” for Huei Neng is found in the Sutras and the person who is “wise with superior faculties” will awaken just listening to it being read. “What does *sutra* mean? It means a course; a way to achieve Buddhiety. Each time a person wants to be on the way, he should internally nurture the application of *prajna* to determine the final end. If one only recites it and does not mentally act according to the lessons, there is not *sutra* or a course to follow. If one sees with truth and acts truthfully, then there is a *sutra* in his own mind”. (Huei Neng, *Comments on the Diamond Sutra*)

*“Now my fear is that persons of the world see Buddha outside of their own bodies or follow the sutra eternally without discovering the internal mind and without retaining the sutra internally. Therefore, I have compiled these “secrets of the sutra” to enable students to retain the sutra in their internal mind and clearly see for themselves the pure mind of Buddha far beyond an inconceivable number.”*

Huei Neng, Comments on the Diamond Sutra

But those who are ready are the minority. On the other extreme, the majority of beings, “with limited faculties” who, although “have a natural knowledge of the Supreme Wisdom and, from this perspective, are no different from the greatest wise persons.” “They are like plants whose roots are short (which) if a caught in great flood, are pulled up and do not grow again” (*Huei Neng, Maha Prajna Paramita*). What they are unable to do is put into the practice the lessons.

Jacques Brosse, based on the written lessons of some Chan masters such as Shítou (石頭) Xi Qian (circa 740), points out that many awakened persons often did not

realize their condition and needed a master to confirm it. They used what I call triggering, crystallizing or hastening practices of the conscience instead of enlightenment itself. Generally, there have been dialogues in which allusion substitutes for affirmation and paradox for reason. It is a game of questions and answers that is usually understood only by the Master, the Newly awakened one and the elite group of the *sanga*, the person who is closest to wisdom; it is a type of slang of wisdom. The dialogue that enabled the (re)confirmation of Shítou by Qing Yan Xing Si (660-740) falls into this category. Let us see:

“When he arrived (Shítou), Qing Yan asked him: ‘Where did you come from?’ ‘From Pao Lin.’ ‘What did you bring from there?’ ‘Something that already had been going on before the master Huei Neng.’

In effect, Shítou, the youngest of Huei Neng’s disciples had already been recognized by the sixth patriarch and then by the leader of the Pao Lin Monastery as a being in the Dharma (the Law of all being). Brosse points out that Qing Yan understood what Shítou wanted to say: “This something, he had since birth, but his master revealed it to him.”<sup>95</sup>

The well-known anecdote of Hiu-ke 慧可 and Bodhidharma 菩提達摩 also shows the purpose of the facilitation and careful observation of the Master. In the story, Huike said to Bodhidharma, “My mind is anxious. Please pacify it.” Bodhidharma replied, “Bring me your mind, and I will pacify it.” Huike said, “Although I’ve sought it, I cannot find it.” “There,” Bodhidharma replied, “I have pacified your mind.”<sup>96</sup> In reality, Hiu Ke’s mind was already calm. The Master’s facilitation is key: the awakened one understands and accepts; his word or opinion, his silence, his smile or – if we follow Ma Zu – his yell or slap, can help the disciple to “be aware” of his enlightenment.

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<sup>95</sup> Brosse, op. cit., page 100.

<sup>96</sup> Ferguson, Andy (2000). *Zen’s Chinese Heritage: the masters and their teachings*, Wisdom Publications, ISBN 0-86171-163-7, citado en [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dazu\\_Huike](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dazu_Huike)

Huei Neng wrote: "Those who at an early age have immediately developed superior faculties will understand when they hear the first time. Those who still are not able to discern can read or write many times without understanding what Buddha wanted to say; that is the reason for interpreting the significance of the wise person, to remove the students' doubt. If you get the essential message of this sutra beyond your doubts, you do not need an explanation.

The good things presented by the Realized ones from time immemorial are explained to eliminate the bad attitudes of ordinary persons. Sutras are the expressions of wise ones that teach persons who hear them to transcend the profane and perform the sacred, ending confusion for ever."

- **Dhyana or chan** 禪

Between these two poles -- those who are ready for enlightenment and only obtain it by listening to the word of wisdom and those who are far from it – the method and/or methods are essential. In all of the schools, the means by which the large majority of hopefuls reach enlightenment is *dhyana* or *chan* 禪. Buddha Shakyamuni himself reached awakening through *dhyana*, which in descriptive terms is generally conceptualized as "emptying our minds."

But these words are deceiving, especially for Westerners for whom the notion of emptiness is superimposed on that of vacuity, thus deforming it. Dhyana is a method to enter into concentration and to be able understand, through it, what is our true nature, our Buddha-ness, vacuity, to be able to awaken. So, *dhyana* is a path to vacuity, to obtaining *prajna* (wisdom). Parting from enlightenment, wisdom has, in general, a manifestation which can only be expansive.



The life of Buddha Shakyamuni itself is an example of this road and what is gathered along it. What is gathered are learnings, indicators of the effectiveness of the path, knowing what to do. Buddha began it by taking asceticism and austerity to the extreme, for example with the practice of prolonged fasting. But along that path he did not attain enlightenment, but rather near death. In a narration loaded with symbolism, it is said that when he drank the rice milk that a young woman offered him and gradually regained his strength, and from that lesson decided to combine austerity with indulgence. And by adopting the practice of *dhyana*, to which he dedicated himself exclusively for six years, he attained enlightenment<sup>97</sup>.

Contrary to what the theory of “suddenness” may make one believe (in a “direct” understanding), this only happens with those who are ready and the rest of the seekers, the majority actually, “must make an effort with all of their strength, even risking their lives to attain perfect enlightenment.” Thus, the accelerated path is for those who have developed wisdom. As Philip Kapleau<sup>98</sup> says, “the Buddhist scriptures, the Buddhist doctrine and the Buddhist philosophy are simply intellectual formulas of the chan and the chan is their practical demonstration.....the meaning of the rites and disciplines is to introduce a practice of concentration in order to exhaust intellectual discourse, based on breathing.”

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<sup>97</sup> The story of the enlightenment of Buddha was summarized from the text of Kapleau, Philip, *The Three Pillars of Zen*, op. cit.

<sup>98</sup> Kapleau, Philp, op. cit..



Dhyana or chan is the “door to liberation.” It is not emptying oneself, but installing vacuity within ourselves, or better yet, connecting with our true nature which is vacuity and which can contain-contemplate, all of what some translate as “thusness” (spanish: “asidad” o “talidad”), the notion of Tathata.

Nevertheless, all of the “suddenist” masters warn that one should not confuse the means with the end, that is to say that *dhyana* should not be made sacred. Therefore, masters must be vigilant, aware of the fact that the process leads to the end and not only to keeping a certain discipline. One of the most suggestive examples of teachings in terms of putting the end, enlightenment, in its place is found in the dialogue of Mǎzǔ 馬祖 (709-788) with the master Nan Yuen<sup>99</sup>. Seeing the young man sitting in meditation day and night, tells Brosee, the master who thinks that Mǎzǔ will go far, asks the disciple what objective he is pursuing, and he responds<sup>100</sup>:

“I am striving to become Buddha.”

The master picks up a piece of brick and begins to rub it like a stone. Disturbed, Ma cannot help from asking after a while,

- What do you want to do with that brick?
- I am polishing it to make a mirror.
- How can you hope to make a mirror with a brick?
- And you, how can you hope to become Buddha sitting here day and night?
- Then, what must I do?
- It is the same as with a buffalo hitched to a cart. If the cart doesn't move forward, what do you hit?

Mǎzǔ didn't know how to respond and the master continued:

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<sup>99</sup> *Les Entretiens de Ma Zu*, translation and notes by C. Despeux, París, 1980, cited by Jacques Brosse, op. cit., pp. 104-105.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

- Do you want to learn how to be seated in chan or to be seated like Buddha? If you want to learn to be seated in chan, you must know that the chan doesn't depend on the seated position nor the hanging position. If you want to learn how to be seated like Buddha, know that Buddha does not have determined characteristics. In the heart of the dharma of homelessness, you do not occupy yourself with obtaining nor attachments. If you sit like Buddha, you kill Buddha. If you are attached to the seated position, you will never attain the absolute truth."

In addition, the master Sheng says that "a being at the highest level of wisdom does not only incorporate all of the other levels, but also, through the totality of its embrace, the highest level even elevates the most basic Buddhism to a higher level. This is what is called the *Complete Teaching*."

- **Ethics from our Buddha nature**

Philip Kapleau says that "the figure of Buddha seated upon his throne of lotus, serene, stable, who knows all and encompasses all", emits "unlimited light and compassion." For Buddhism, according to what Buddha preached, existence has three characteristics: 1) everything that exists is impermanent and things emerge in a conditioned way (due to causes and conditions that make them appear or disappear); 2) life involves pain; 3) nothing is self-subsistent, all forms are empty in their essential nature. For Kapleau, this means that "they are patterns of energy in flux mutually dependent and at the same time they have a provisional or unlimited reality in time and space."

The result of enlightenment (awareness of the Buddhist nature of the human being) implies terminating all sense of opposition and separation with respect to everything that exists. For this reason, awakening also means ending the idea of a separate I. I is everything. Entering into this state of *connection* is what will give support to the Buddhist ethic.

Contrary to what some people who begin in Buddhism think, non-discrimination and non-judgment which is part of the connection of a human being with all that exists (unity-vacuity), does not mean the lack of ethics or a doctrine of amorality. There is a Buddhist ethic and the meaning of its precepts can only be understood after dedicated study and practice. According to Kapleau, the Chinese and Japanese Buddhist masters affirm that “only with total enlightenment can one truly know good and evil through and the power of the chan translate this wisdom into day-to-day actions.” It is for this reason that those who practice chan, which “enriches personality and builds character”, tend to have “a strong social sense and personal responsibility” at the same time that they have “spiritual freedom” and free will.

The foundation of encompassing all that exists and all beings, without judging them and without discriminating against them or damaging them (Vacuity), is the basis of compassion, and the knowledge that we are they. They constitute us. They are not an Other but ourselves. “The ten thousand things constitute (our) own nature”.<sup>101</sup>

- **The folding of Poetry in the Chan**

The sinologist Paul Demieville, cited by Brosse (1999), affirmed in his studies that “some masters of Chan were excellent poets.” Chinese Buddhism and poetry have traveled various sections of the road together. Vessantara points out that while “Indian literature included many enormously long (poetic) works, the development of fiction and the novel came much later to China, during the Ming Period, and was very influenced by the development of Buddhism. In ancient China, there was an emphasis on simplicity, and on a holistic rather than logical and analytical method in the philosophy of both literature and religion.”

In fact, Brosse cites Tai Chanluen, poet, who wrote that “the poetic spirit opens the

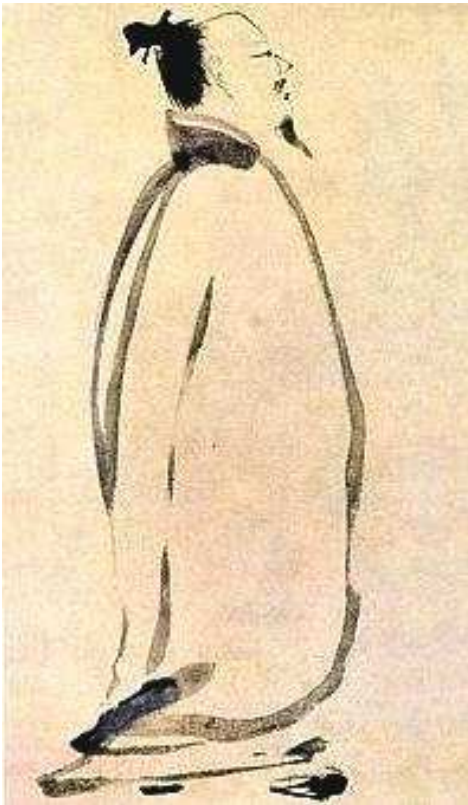
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<sup>101</sup> Huei Neng, op. cit.

doors of the Chan". He also affirms that the moment of splendor of classic Chinese poetry, during the peak of the Tang Dynasty, coincides with what is known as the Golden Age of Chan. Of the four great poets of the time, Wang Wei 王維, Bai Juyi 白居易, Li Bai 李白 and Du Fu 杜甫, the first two were Buddhists. Of these he highlights Wang Wei, scholar, musician and poet, who not only displayed his talent in poetry but was the creator of a new style of painting.



[http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/2e/Wang\\_Wei\\_001.jpg](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/2e/Wang_Wei_001.jpg)



<http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archivo:LiBai.jpg>



[http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tu\\_Fu](http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tu_Fu)

Other celebrated poets linked to Chan Buddhism and followers of Huei Neng are listed by Brosse: Yong Kia, Fa-Hai (editor of the Platform Sutra), Pen Tsing and Chen Huei, all of them masters. With them, Brosse highlights Pang Yun, who used poetry to present his conversations with different masters, and Lin Tsi and Hang Shang. From these currents a lyrical tendency would develop that identified poetic inspiration with the intuition of the chan 禪 (Brosse 1999: 90) and would extend into the Song Dynasty, where Li Tche Yi established that “between chan and poetry there is no difference” and that calligraphy and painting were a form of chan. Nevertheless, in line with the cyclical movement of yin yang, upon arriving at this extreme point of identification, Brosse points out that the chan “fell into the hands of the literate and aesthetic”, and thus, when in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century the poet Yen Yu wrote that it was possible to “treat poetry as one treats chan”, Buddhism itself entered into decay. We

believe that the artistic practices of the time, refined and erudite, constituted then an extremely intellectualized environment, the very terrain (that of erudition) from which Huei Neng had removed it with his democratic vision of the chan.

- **Final words: the Buddhayana**

Just as the insistence of Huei Neng that awakening is a sudden phenomenon cannot be understood except in reference to Buddha's experience of awakening, understanding the spirit of the Chinese school of chan 禪 is not possible without returning to its sources. And this is what masters like Huei Neng and Mǎzǔ 馬祖 make possible. Mǎzǔ 馬祖, among other teachings, vindicates the unity of the way, by reestablishing the doctrine of *Budhayana* or *Ekayana*, the only vehicle, "unique means of access that overcomes the division between Hinayana (Small Vehicle) and Mahayana (Large Vehicle), which in his judgment were introduced by Bodhidharma from the words of Buddha<sup>102</sup>. In effect, Mǎzǔ says, in one of the most beautiful texts of the Chan:

*"All of you have the conviction that the Spirit is the Buddha. Because the Spirit is Buddha, the grand master Bodhidharma came from southern India to China to pass on the doctrine of the unique spirit of Buddhayana and thus awaken us all. With the help of the Lankayara Sutra, the land of the Spirit of beings was marked with the seal of the only Spirit, innate within each of us. The foundation of the Lankayara Sutra is the fifth essence of the words of Shakyamuni and through the absence of method. Thus, those who seek the Law, should seek nothing. There is no Buddha outside the Spirit, there is no Spirit outside the Buddha. Do not get attached to good, do not reject evil, do not depend on the separation between the pure and the impure...All forms that you see are only visions of the Spirit. The Spirit doesn't exist in and of itself, it exists through forms. But when you talk of the Spirit, remember that phenomena and the Absolute are without reciprocal obstruction."*

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<sup>102</sup> Brsosse, op. cit., p. 108.

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