

The Way of Self-Training

UNDERSTANDING THE WAY OF SELF-TRAINING

Buddhahood as flexibility of body and mind. When a feeling of “self-blessing” wells up as a result of practicing the way of love, your self-training will proceed as smoothly as a ski over snow. When self-training seems difficult, it is because you have forgotten to practice love—like trying to ski when there is no snow.

Self-training means to make the truth a part of you. The ability to read music does not make you a piano player. Similarly, knowing the truth does not make you a buddha. By practicing the truth so that it becomes a part of you, you become a buddha and life becomes brighter. In contemporary language, self-training is to make the truth a part of your subconscious.

First, let us ascertain what is meant here by “truth.” I call it “flexibility of mind and body.” The transcendental truth of the Three Dharma Seals, the creative truth of the Five Aggregates and the 84,000 teachings developed from them,—all seem to terminate in “flexibility of mind and body.” And the value of this truth or teaching is determined, it would seem, by the degree of “flexibility of mind and body” that is attained.

“Flexibility of mind and body” means that mind and body alike are to be supple. There is no stiffness anywhere in the body and no rigidity in the mind. The body moves freely, the mind moves freely, and successful blending of the two becomes “unhindered freedom.” This is precisely what characterizes a buddha. The words “flexibility of mind and body” are recorded in the *Larger Sukhāvati-vyūha*, and the saintly priest Dōgen once gave a forceful exposition of these words, even going so far as to speak of “stripping off mind and body.”

Loss of the Three Treasures by Buddhism. As explained above, there is a “true way” and an “expedient way” in Buddhism. Beginners are taught the expedient way. If taught the complete truth at once, they would find it difficult to understand and would not practice it. So it is divided into parts and taught. But since it is taught in parts, a situation is created in which people tend to forget the whole. Man has a tendency to remember only things he feels interested in and to reject the rest. Studying a part and becoming imbued with the idea that the part is the whole—this is the state of most contemporary Buddhist denominations. If Buddhists had followed Buddha’s spirit of the middle way and not forgotten to learn the whole, the present abominable confrontations between sects could not occur. In future, Buddhists must dissolve their denominations and return to the original, united, harmonious brotherhood, or they cannot truly say they have faith in Buddha. Though great stress is laid on the importance of embracing the Three Treasures—the Buddha, the dharma, and the brotherhood—where is this “harmonious brotherhood” we are supposed to embrace? The slogan that calls for “conversion to the Three Treasures” involves a grave misrepresentation.

Because they have forgotten how to distinguish between the expedient way and the com-

plete way, today's Buddhists have become, in this respect, morally atrophied. The expedient way as such is not bad, just as it is not bad to have elementary school before high school. But if an elementary school teacher should announce to the pupils, "Do not go on to high school," there would be a problem. The majority of religious professionals commit this mistake. This is why it is important to raise high the banner of "flexibility of mind and body."

If the people belonging to denominations cultivated a "flexible mind" and learned to understand the good points of other religions and denominations, the ugly factions that exist today would disappear. And studying the good points in other groups that your own does not possess will bring you toward the goal of Buddhahood that much faster.

Buddhism not a way of rigorous ascetic practice. The mistake of most modern religious groups is that they are overly inclined toward the mind and have forgotten the body. That Buddhism has from the outset been a way of mind and body together becomes clear even from considering the posture of meditation. Moreover, most of the precepts are concerned with teaching good body carriage. To forget this true way and teach that one can become a buddha through mental attitude alone is a grave mistake. People who forget to study the way of the body and concentrate only on the mind can never, no matter how hard they try, attain the state of buddhahood. So long as they do no more than lament "how difficult Buddhism is," there is no particular problem, but when the attitude changes to, "No man can expect to become a buddha—back to ordinary life for me," he falls into the pit of "human vanity." This kind of thing happened even as early as the period of original Buddhism, and the disputes between the Theravada and Mahayana Buddhists are a further manifestation of this. The person who takes this view has failed to become a buddha because he failed to go about it correctly, but arbitrarily decided that all men are like himself.

Buddha established "the way of mind and body in complementary relation" because he perceived that the body relaxes only if the mind is relaxed, and that the mind relaxes only if the body is relaxed. And only when the body-mind relaxation is perfected can "unhindered freedom" be attained. This is the true way of Buddhism, and when you follow this, Buddhism becomes quite easy. I believe there is no action more insulting to the Buddha than to give the impression that "Buddhism is too difficult, far beyond the capability of man." This is like holding up a picket sign at the entrance to Buddhism, "Too difficult. Do not enter." Buddha taught only what is possible to everyone. If only you make your mind and body flexible, you will immediately understand that this is what the state of Buddhahood is like. If you were told to "walk on one foot," then of course it would be a "difficult way." But as soon as you know that you are to "walk with two feet," then you find that it is an exceedingly "easy way." From one foot to two feet—do not make the mistake of thinking that the difference is merely twofold. Because of the "multiplication principle," this change from one foot to two makes walking the Buddhist way many times easier. This is the secret of the Buddhist "way of mind and body in complementary relation."

The aim of the self-training way is to make mind and body pliant. The training naturally

divides, therefore, into two aspects. The aspect centered in the use of a mystic formula or mantra has the mind primarily in view. The aspect centered in meditation puts the body at the forefront. In the mantra way, vocalization is central, and this way involves enshrining a symbol of deity. In the meditation way, meditation is central, and this involves purification. Thus the self-training way has four parts: the symbol of deity, the mantra, purification, and meditation. The symbol of deity and mantra form one yin-yang pair, purification and meditation another. Again, the symbol of deity and the mantra on the one hand, and purification and meditation on the other, constitute another yin-yang pair, the three pairs together manifesting the principle of the four limbs.

THE DIVINE IMAGE

The divine image in original Buddhism. The origin of the divine image lies in Buddha's character. One reason Buddhism spread is of course that the truth its founder taught was so lofty, but an equally important reason is that his character was so noble. The scene of his very first sermon at Deer Park is described in the *Mahāvagga*.

The five companions of his six years of ascetic practices remembered his abandoning such practices and leaving them. They had branded him a "degenerate" and had promised each other to have nothing to do with him. But when Buddha appeared before them, despite their vow, they unconsciously bowed low in homage, prepared a seat for him, and washed his feet. When one of them addressed him as "Gautama," Buddha's family name, he admonished them all, saying, "Dear bhikkhus, I am a buddha. You must not call a buddha by name."

From this you can tell how lofty Buddha's personality was. To have Buddha seated in the center of a circle and themselves around him, totally absorbed in his sermon—this was salvation itself to the disciples. Without special training in meditation, the disciples were able to experience a great salvation. Yet even without being personally present at the sermons, but just by picturing him in their minds and worshipping him, some disciples found salvation. Buddha's personality with its pliant mind and body had already made other people's minds and bodies relaxed. This was possible even before a sermon or self-training. This was the source of "the way of the divine image." Many saints have appeared in the world, but as a human whose "personality" was yearned for, none can surpass Buddha. This becomes clear just by looking at the remains of sculptural art in India, China, Japan, or wherever Buddhism has spread. It is amazing that one human being should have been so loved and esteemed.

Buddha himself the divine image. Statues of Buddha were already being carved and venerated while he was still alive. The question thus arises, did Buddha himself engage in worship? Buddhism is always supposed to be a way in which "all members are equal," so if worship is incumbent on us, it stands to reason that it must also have been necessary for Buddha. Concerning this matter, Buddha taught in the *Agama Sutras*:

"Not to have an object of worship for one's faith is a source of anxiety for man. The

truth I awakened to is the same Truth as that which all buddhas from the ancient past worshipped, and which I worship now. Buddhas of the future will doubtless also worship this same Truth. To those desirous of becoming a buddha I say, worship, honor, and serve this Truth."

Buddha's living faith thus becomes vividly clear. By "ancient Buddhas" he meant not only that there are many other planets in this universe inhabited by men, but also that on those planets, in addition to our own, buddhas have appeared and become the "eyes" of mankind. The divine being worshipped with one accord by the countless buddhas of the universe is the same God that Buddha worshipped so reverently.

Again, as Buddha stated concisely in a sutra with the Chinese title *Liao pên shêng ssû ching*, "Those who see the Truth, see me. Buddha is alive forever in the Truth." This is the reason that instead of Buddha's ashes, a piece of paper with the words "Poem of Truth" written on it is sometimes placed within an urn when a stupa is built.

Buddha directly worshipped the Truth. But Buddha's disciples worshipped Buddha rather than the Truth. The followers would thus seem to be making a mistake as to the divine image, but since Buddha himself has proclaimed that his true body is the Truth, Buddha is a "representative of the Truth," and this makes it very natural to worship the Truth through Buddha. Therefore it can be said that the "divine image" in Buddha's worship of the Truth and that of the disciples' worship of Buddha were essentially the same. The difference between the two corresponds to the difference between respecting one's country directly and respecting it through its national flag. Depending on circumstances, either is quite alright. But to think "In that case a flag is unnecessary" would be a mistake. By the same token, it would also be a mistake to jump to the conclusion that as long as we have the Truth, Buddha is not necessary. For man is an animal that can create an even higher culture through "symbolism."

Accepting symbolism. Animals do not have words or letters. Lacking symbolism in this sense, they have no developed education. The reason man is man is that he quickly learned to utilize symbolic forms and create words and letters. This is the foundation of human civilization today. Therefore, even in the world of religion, symbolism should be widely utilized. This is the basic principle at work in all statues of Buddha and must be acknowledged as the true meaning of all worshipped images in every Buddhist sect. To put it more simply, if you have a significant motto you want to hold before yourself, it will be better for you to write it on paper and hang it on the wall rather than to store it in your mind. If you can understand this, you should also be able to understand why the divine image is adorned and worshipped.

There was a time when the ministers of Christianity looked contemptuously upon the Buddhist divine image as a form of "idol worship." But eventually they became aware that they were worshipping the cross, and now they hardly ever mention the subject.

The practice of love as glorification of the divine image. To adorn an object of worship and symbolize the unseen God is a precious path natural to men. It should be clearly understood, however, that this adornment is not just a matter of pleasing ourselves.

Whether it be a family Buddhist altar or an altar in a temple, half of it is meant as a love practice towards others. To adorn the object of worship in a way identifiable to others is to "give Buddha" to the other's mind.

Though today's Japanese Buddhism could hardly be more stagnant, the temples of Nara and Kyoto attract many tourists. The priests may be dozing, but the throngs come uninvited. Starting with Emperor Shōmu (A.D. 701-756) who built the Temple of the Great Buddha of Nara, why did so many philanthropists build such magnificent temples and Buddha statues? It was not so much to leave indications of their self-training as to cultivate faith in the multitudes. The fact that people are still drawn to them today, a thousand years later, is a testimony to the depth of the practice of love to which the ancient Buddhists devoted themselves. The phrase "temple Buddhism" suggests the derogatory term "absentee priest" which in turn means a "hollow temple," but that these temples are contributing something to enrich the minds of people in today's world cannot be denied.

To have a Buddhist altar, even a small one, installed in the home is a wonderful thing. It is a restful haven for the elderly, a place of education for children, and a place where the couple can express their love for those who have gone before. The altar should have in the center a divine image clearly symbolizing Truth, and on the step in front of it, a statue of Shakyamuni Buddha should be enshrined. For unless Buddha and the Truth are together, it is hard for people to be content. Man wants to satisfy his intellect as well as his emotions. Truth satisfies the reason and Buddha satisfies the emotions. "Buddha is a symbol of the Truth." This one sentence explains everything.

A word of explanation should be added about the tradition that accompanies the adorning of the object of worship. It is traditional to offer the "three complements" of light, flowers, and incense. The light symbolizes wisdom, the flower compassion, and incense virtue—or, in other words, "freedom, love, and faith." One might use words like these when presenting these offerings:

In offering the light, I worship the buddha within me,
With the flower, I worship the buddha within all others,
And by offering incense, I worship my father Buddha.

Worshipping your own buddha-nature, worshipping the buddha-nature in others, and worshipping Buddha the father—this, I believe, is the whole of Buddhism in a nutshell. That is why these three symbols are called the "three complements." As you face the altar, place the light on the right, the flower on the left, and the incense in the center.

MANTRA

Sutra chanting as hearing Buddha's explanation of the dharma. Directly connected with worshipping the divine image is the important practice of chanting the mantra. This can be called a reenactment of the joy of listening to the preaching of Buddha. Just as the adornment of the divine image arose naturally from worshipping the Buddha, sutra chanting developed from the "joy of listening to the Truth."

"Truth" exists always and everywhere, but unless it appears in words, it might as well

be nonexistent. Buddha's enlightenment was to grasp the Truth of the universe as "words," and preaching is to present the Truth as "words."

When you understand that "Truth has value only when it is in words," then whether it be words within the mind or vocalized words it will be readily understood that great effort must be made to put the Truth into words. This is the reason for the birth of mantra practice.

We should understand that there are two different kinds of mantra. One is an explanatory kind and the other a motto-like type. Most sutras are explanatory. But in addition there are motto-like, short "words" selected for repeated chanting, for example, *Namu Amida butsu*, *Namu Myōhō Renge Kyō*, *Namu Daishi Henjō kongō*, and *Om mani padme hum*. The purpose of the two kinds is different, so I will call the former "sutra chanting" and the latter "incantation." Generally, when one speaks of "mantra," it means "incantation," but properly speaking "sutra chanting" is also mantra. Moreover, there is no harm in calling the words we use in daily life "mantra" if they are "words of truth" that bring about pliancy of mind and body.

The purpose of the scriptures is to explain the Truth, but many sutras are in "poem" style. Both now and in the past, poetry has served one purpose. When man is deeply touched, an impelling desire arises to share that emotion with others. It becomes necessary to entrust this emotion to simple, melodious "words." Poetry is not simply for the purpose of conveying a message but also so that one may recite alone, and others too may recite, thus making it possible to savor the stirring emotions for a long time.

I doubt that Buddha himself wrote and left behind poems, but within the scriptures there are many "Buddha poems." When reading them today, one is struck by their outstanding literary style not to mention the depth of their insight into the nature of truth. Regrettably they are available only in the original or in Chinese translation, so they are not suitable for people of other languages.

At any rate, there are many poems transmitted in the scriptures, poems that anticipate our recitation, but of course the whole of scripture is worthy of recitation, both in terms of literary value and in terms of truth. Sutra chanting is also beneficial to quieting the mind. Even when you are burdened with anxieties, sutra chanting will make you forget them. Though you may not understand the meaning of the scripture, the chanting helps you to recapture serenity. This is because you accept sutra chanting as "Buddha's words." When you sense sutra chanting as listening to "Buddha's explanation of the dharma," then even though you may not understand the words of the sermon, Buddha's virtue will enter your breast. That in itself is an invaluable benefit of sutra chanting. For adorning the divine image and reciting the sutra before it brings to a climax the virtue of the manifestation of Buddha.

Incantation as a way of self-hypnosis. In addition to sutra chanting there is the practice of "incantation." Emphasis is placed on repeated recitation of a very short mantra. This is very effective for concentration of the mind, but the aim is rather to purify the deepest layer of the subconscious. When the same word is repeated over and over, you enter a state of self-hypnosis. Then the deepest layer of the subconscious, which usually will not

easily open its mouth, opens wide. When the Truth is poured in at that time, it penetrates into the deepest layer of the subconscious, so that even after the incantation has stopped, the Truth keeps working and will determine the man.

I once heard of a Hollywood actor who was afraid to fly in a plane. Because of the nature of his occupation, this frequently caused great inconvenience. He therefore went to a hypnotist and got rid of this phobia. Drinking and smoking habits can also be cured by hypnosis. The subject is led into a hypnotic state, and a suggestion is made. If the suggestion is, "You love to ride on planes," the airplane hater will become an airplane lover, and if it is suggested, "You can't even stand the sight of liquor," he will become a liquor hater. Man's mind is such that it is easily changed by suggestion.

Incantation is a form of "self-hypnosis." To have another decide what will be suggested to you is in principle not a good thing, though there are doubtless exceptions. The reason it is not good is that it hurts your character. No one wants a robot-like personality. From beginning to end, self-hypnosis acts only in accordance with one's own will, so there is no robot-like tendency. On the contrary, your power of self-control is strengthened, so this should be greatly encouraged. Everyone has experienced at one time or another the difficulty of curing a bad habit. This difficulty is due to weak self-control, but when you study the way of self-hypnosis, this difficult problem can easily be solved. This is what incantation does.

Repetition of the same word is a way of inducing hypnosis, and the word you habitually recite is not some other person's word but the word of Truth itself. So while reciting, you are not only led into a state of hypnosis but are being given a good suggestion where there is no robot-like danger. There is no mistake in saying that the divine image is adorned to correctly guide this "suggestion" so that a more effective result can be obtained. One may even go so far as to say that as long as the enshrined divine image is correct, it does not matter what the incantation word is. The incantation word is used as a means to induce hypnosis, and "suggestion" will be received chiefly from the "object of worship." Indeed, because of this fact, one understands better how important it is to adorn the divine image, and similarly, that it does not matter if we do not know the meaning of the incantation. Chanting incomprehensible words actually speeds the entrance into the state of hypnosis.

Therefore, it is not always necessary to know the meaning of the incantation word. But the object of your worship, the divine image, must become increasingly clear or, like a kite with a broken string, your subconscious will be blown away in directions you can neither predict nor control. Be warned that a grave danger is concealed in the failure to achieve clarity as to the divine image. That there are many mentally disturbed people among incantation practitioners is most unfortunate. Leaders must take heed and be careful.

Words of mystic power in the practice of love. Mantra practice is a way of manifesting the "value of words." This value should be made use of not only in sutra recitation and incantation but also in the words we use in our daily lives. When the words "Good night" are accompanied by the thought, "May Buddha's protection be with you", which is the spirit of a mantra, then it is a splendid "mantra practice." It is not only a bestowing of

the Truth on the other party but also a gift of Truth to oneself. Even in conversation, use only words that brighten both oneself and others. It is said that during a difficult trial the judge addressed the accused with a gentle term. This one gentle word so touched the accused's heart that, with tears in his eyes, he confessed everything. To read good books is also mantra practice. When you read a good book, its spirit becomes a part of you. In this sense, there is no greater gift than to present good books to others.

The uniqueness of the mantra practice is that since it is centered on "words," it is highly transmittable. For one's mantra practice to change into love practice is a joy. This is exactly the same as the sense in which "adornment of the divine image" is directly connected with love practice. Using good words is a way of bringing to fulfilment the complementary relationship of making oneself bright and cheery and making others feel the same.

The Mantra in the way of good health. Mantra practice is not only a way of building up the mind but also of building up the body. To recite means to take deep breaths and vocalize strongly, and this in itself is directly linked to health. Melodious recitation requires strength in the *tanden* and long, strong exhalation. These are two indispensable conditions of the way of good health. Many people find that their health improves after they take voice lessons. This too is part of the purpose of sutra reciting and incantations. Consequently, people who really participate in sutra reciting and incantation must make an effort to straighten their posture, hold high their clasped hands, tuck in the chin, and place power in the *tanden*. The inhaled breath must of course also be strong and deep, and vocalization must be bold, long, and smooth. Sutra chanting provides wondrous benefits as a way toward good health, so the mantra way, with its principle of multiplication evident in the mutually beneficial effects of body and mind, should increasingly demonstrate its value.

PURIFICATION

Meaning of the word "effort." In the foregoing consideration of the divine image and mantra, the mind was in the forefront and the body in the background, but as we turn to purification and meditation, the body comes to the fore and the mind plays the minor role.

"Purification," which here refers to bodily purification, means the health way in our daily lives and has long been characterized by the word "assiduity." It might not improperly be called an "assiduity way," but the risk is that many would then interpret it simply as "effort." I venture to call it, therefore, a way of bodily purification. In the "Eightfold Noble Path" and the "Six Precepts for Deliverance," Buddha does mention "assiduousness," but what he has reference to is not simply "effort." "Assiduousness" points precisely to the practice of the way of good health. For a long time, most Buddhist scholars misconstrued the meaning of this term, but strangely enough, ordinary people knew exactly what it meant. This is proof that the influence of outstanding Buddhist leaders from times past still lives on today.

Athletes undergo strenuous practice on the field. If they are great athletes, their efforts

are not limited to the practice sessions. This great effort always is carried over into their daily lives. They must be diligent in carrying out a strict regimen that covers every aspect of their lives, including such things as cold baths, exercises, getting to bed early and getting up early. If they led slovenly lives, all their practice on the field would be useless.

Meditation is, then, like the effort of an athlete on the field, while "assiduity" resembles the effort the athlete makes in his daily life. One cannot say which of these two is the more important. To attain the goal, both must be practiced. It is also to be emphasized that meditation and assiduity form an inseparable yin-yang pair.

Long ago, when I was an apprentice priest, I was often sent on errands to a neighboring Zen temple. Morning or evening, the priest always smelled of liquor. He loved to tease me by offering me his "tea of wisdom." This priest had a stroke when he was only a little over fifty years of age and died without being able to engage in his final meditation. How meaningless is meditation without assiduousness!

We Buddhists have what we call "assiduity cooking," and it is common knowledge now that this is a way of cooking that entails abstaining from fish and meat. But its true value does not seem to be fully understood. Abstinence from animal food is directly connected with nonkilling and puts into practice the teaching of Buddha to esteem all living things. But Buddha did not necessarily prohibit the eating of meat and fish. Whenever a priest received an offering of food in his begging bowl, it was understood that he would accept it gratefully even if it contained meat or fish. As long as the animal was not killed especially for him, it was permissible. Thus Buddha is said to have eaten animal food too. But since many people observed the precept against killing, their chances of eating meat were no doubt extremely rare.

To abstain from animal food for the sake of the practice of love was the spirit that animated Buddha, but another important reason for this abstention was to maintain health. Buddha set forth many precepts regarding food, but he seems to have emphasized food precepts more for the sake of health than for the sake of love. He drew attention to many points that concerned not only food but all phases of life involving health. That his teaching had this outcome is only natural after his six years of profound Yoga experience. But today's Buddhists seem for the most part to have forgotten this spirit. Buddhism, which should be a "way of body and mind," has fallen into a one-sided "way of the mind."

Buddhism invariably a way of body and mind. The way of good health emphasized by Buddha is not merely an "expedient way" to attain enlightenment. Just as it is wrong to say "enlightenment for the sake of health," so is it wrong to say "health for the sake of enlightenment." In the case of a couple, a woman is not a woman for the sake of the man, nor is the man a man for the sake of the woman. Neither is an object or a means. If by some mistaken notion, one mate should be used as a means, a family hell would result. Again, in the case of mind and body, neither is an object or an instrument. To deviate from this is to deviate from Buddha's Buddhism. Man's body and mind are united like a husband and wife. This was discovered by Yoga and brought to completion by Buddha. Indeed, where there is no correct physical health, there can be no correct mental health. To put it simply, enlightenment is but the working of the brain. Depending on how the

brain's formation changes, one's thoughts will change. And the brain is but a part of the body. When the body undergoes a change, the brain cannot help but change. When I was young, I believed that even if the body got drunk, the mind would stay sober. One night after having wine and dined at a member's home, I started to drive back along Seattle's coastal drive. The ocean was on the right-hand side of the highway, so going off the road could have meant curtains. But no matter how I tried, the car kept straying to the right. That night I learned by experience how false it is to say, "Even if the body is intoxicated, the mind will stay sober." Finally, I stopped by the side of the road and took a brief nap. Since then, I have followed Buddha's precept not to become intoxicated.

Again, when the mind is not right, correct health cannot exist. Though you may say you are going to make yourself healthy, it is the mind that has to make this decision, so if the mind is headed in another direction, the way of good health will lose all meaning. This can be understood from the fact that even among Buddhist disciples, there are many with poor health even though Buddhism itself is so imbued with the health way. Physical health thus begins with the mind, but at the same time the mind is determined by the health condition of the physical brain, so again a healthy mind begins with a healthy body. There is no end to this kind of interrelation. It may be called a "circular principle."

Entreaty to Buddhist organizations. Styles of living today differ greatly from those of Buddha's era. Buddha's precepts and health way were meant for the mode of life of his day, so some of his precepts are unnecessary today. Take for example, the precept "Partake of food only in the morning, not in the afternoon." In those days there was no electricity, so I imagine people went to bed much earlier than now. Buddha, who perceived that intestinal stasis was one of the greatest enemies of health and truth-seeking, naturally taught this precept with this in mind, but conditions are much different today. To practice rigidly the precepts of Buddha without taking this changed state into consideration does not necessarily mean you are a faithful Buddhist disciple. To practice a health way suitable to today's mode of living, however, is to be a true practitioner of the precepts and a truth-seeker. This means that the words of the precepts need to be revised.

I frequently caution people not to eat canned foods. Of course, Buddha never said such a thing, but knowing that canned foods are a cause of intestinal stasis, I am just following the spirit of Buddha's teaching. Accordingly, in my discussion of the way of good health, I have ventured to give warnings about matters Buddha himself did not mention.

In this sense, there are two important changes I wish to recommend for today's Buddhist temples. One is to provide a fasting dormitory, and the other, to provide a water practice hall. These two are not easy to practice at home. The fasting dormitory should be so equipped that fasters can live there for the entire period of their fast. It would be perfect if the water practice hall were equipped with a strong water-jet facility and a hot-cold bath area.

To help people of today who have been exposed to devitalized, unnatural foods, fasting is the best method. Even in the olden days when food was natural, fasting was an indispensable course for truth-seekers. Even Buddha was able to become Buddha only by virtue of repeated fasting. How much more so in this age of unwholesome food inunda-

tion! Fasting has become many times more necessary than in the past. When you fast, the blood becomes purified, the brain becomes sharp, the personality improves, and you become able to eliminate most diseases. To the ladies, I will add that the skin also becomes beautiful.

Buddha has cautioned against "extreme asceticism" because it breaks down health and damages the brain. He always encouraged what would improve the health and brain. In this sense, suitable fasting is a marvelous method. But there are many difficulties when one tries to do it at home, so I hope the temples will help make fasting possible for the people.

There is nothing that gives such instantaneous improvement to blood circulation as the water practice. Buddha too was a water practitioner, and in Japan the very word "practitioner" instantly brings to mind a man standing under a waterfall. This is also difficult to practice at home, so I hope the temples will provide the opportunity. Try practicing meditation right after water practice. The effect will be several times greater than meditation alone. I would stake my life on it that fasting and water practice should be encouraged for all. Do not imagine them to be rigorous practices. I do not encourage extremes, because they destroy the brain and health. The "effort" I speak of is meant to benefit the brain and health. There is no other way for man to attain happiness.

ZEN MEDITATION

Meditation and the removal of stiffness. When asked, "What is the purpose of meditation?" my answer is always, "It is a way to take away the stiffness of body and mind." I think there is no way to express more simply the meaning of "meditation."

The cause of any kind of "physical disorder," any form of "mental abnormality," can be concisely explained in the one word "stiffness." So in case of sickness or worry, first think of getting rid of the "stiffness." This was the reason for the development of my "Eightfold unified way." When the supply of oxygen is inadequate, no matter how well one eats, the nutritive value cannot be burned completely. This causes the blood to become sticky and the nerves to become unbalanced, with the result that blood circulation becomes sluggish. Therefore, a breathing method was established. Without correct nutrition, the bones, flesh, and nerves cannot be renewed, so they become aged and harden. That is why a diet method was established. When the skin weakens, excretion of toxins become inadequate and causes autotoxis which in turn causes blood clotting. Consequently, a skin care way was set up. Unless exercises are done correctly, opportunity to rectify dislocation of the joints is lost and rigid muscles cannot be loosened. Therefore a body alignment method was set up. Thus these "four conditions for the way of good health" were established to take away all "physical stiffness" and regulate blood circulation from all angles.

When the sense of freedom is lacking, a state of mental suffocation arises and causes mental rigidity. This called for the establishment of the way of deliverance. When the joy of creating is lacking, the mind becomes dark from disappointment, so a mind-only method was set up. When the practice of love is not satisfactory, the mind is seized by a

feeling of loneliness and shrinks in on itself, so the way of the practice of love was established. When self-training is not complete, the self cannot be settled and is disturbed by changing circumstances, so the way of self-training was established. Thus these "four conditions for enlightenment" were established to ascertain the causes of mental rigidity and secure the free, unhindered mind.

The "Eightfold unified way" can be further dissected and divided into countless laws. But no matter how minute or detailed it becomes, in all its aspects it always comes down to simple release from stiffness. Consequently, whether this method is to be adjudged superior or inferior can be decided by how effective it is in removing stiffness.

Why is it that man likes beautiful pictures and music? It is because they melt away the stiffness of the mind. The value of a picture or piece of music can be determined by how much stiffness they have the power to remove. This is the context in which the absolute value of "meditation" is established.

The acme of practice of the way of body and mind in reliance on the multiplication principle. Meditation begins with the adjustment of posture and breathing. As a result of adjusting the posture, blood circulation improves. In consequence of regulating the breath, the blood is purified. When blood circulation and blood quality improve simultaneously, the multiplication principle goes into action and washes away the stiffness of the body. The effectiveness of the combined power of proper breathing and meditation posture can be glimpsed by the use of a sphygmomanometer. People with a tendency toward high blood pressure will immediately see a decline of 5 or 10 degrees, proof that rigidity has been removed from the blood vessels. Irregular heart beat will become regular and peaceful without fail. For cancer no fast proof of improvement is possible, but if meditation is practiced twenty minutes daily for several weeks, an improvement can be seen.

After adjusting posture and breathing, we need to turn next to "mind adjustment." "Mind adjustment" is to regulate the feeling of freedom and love. Forgetting my true self, which is by nature free and unhindered, am I being carried away by desolate thoughts? Has the true aspect that I love all and everyone loves me been forgotten? To the degree that one's feeling of freedom and love is corrected, stiffness of the mind is removed. Worry, anger, contempt, arrogance, greed, hate—all these are sources of mental rigidity. When they start to permeate your mind, the mind loses its freedom and your face becomes gloomy. The degree to which stiffness of the mind has been removed can be determined to some extent by testing one's brain waves or blood, but the simplest test is to measure the breathing.

A change in man's mental state is always reflected in his breathing. Mind and breath are directly connected, so when the breathing becomes irregular, the mind becomes restless, and when the mind is agitated, the breath becomes irregular. "Breath is a barometer of the mind." A deep, peaceful sleep is an indication of deep and good breathing, and more than anything else, good breathing is a manifestation of a "serene mind."

Meditation is like a deep sleep except that instead of lying down, you are sitting up. That is the only difference.

Meditation involves one multiplication principle as between posture and breath, another

as between the feelings of freedom and love, and a third constituted by the combination of these two multiplication principles. Meditation takes away the stiffness of the mind at the same time it takes away the stiffness of the body. The mind and body mutually eradicate each other's stiffness and build up a flawless "mind and body without stiffness." That is precisely what it means to be a buddha—to be released from all restraints to enter a state of unhindered freedom and to manifest the highest joy and exercise of one's capabilities.

Nothing conforms more closely to body and mind as related by the multiplication principle than meditation. That is the reason it develops the supreme state of unhindered freedom. It is no exaggeration to say that all one's self-training throughout life is but a preparation for better meditation. For all life's affairs are but a quest for the sense of unhindered freedom which meditation makes it possible to realize at the highest level. That is why Buddha placed "meditation" at the very end of his Eightfold Noble Path.

How to meditate. The first step in meditation is to take the "praying hands" position and bow in respect to the seat where you are going to sit. Regard it as a seat where Buddha himself once sat. A cushion may be placed on the seat or mat at your option. Sit in a lotus position, a half lotus position, in Japanese style, or on a chair, as you please. The best way is to train yourself to be able to do it in any position according to your condition and the time and place.

The body frame and muscles should be adjusted before meditation, but when you are not prepared, do the following sitting exercises. Countless sitting exercises were developed within Chinese Yoga. The uniqueness of these exercises is that body alignment can be achieved easily while sitting.

1. Neck rotation. Relax neck and drop head forward. Rotate clockwise three times, counterclockwise three times, slowly like the hands of a clock.
2. Shoulder relaxation. Bend arms and lift elbows up sideways to shoulder height, horizontal to floor and push back, drawing shoulder blades together. Chin juts out and upward. Repeat three times.
3. Torso twist. Twist the spine as much as possible. Place both hands on the outside of right thigh, push and twist torso to right. Try to see your back. Reverse. Repeat three times.
4. Hip bending. Place hands on thighs, keeping spinal column straight, bending from the hips. Lean forward and back, three times each. To the right front and left back, three times each. Left front and right back, three times each. Right and left three times each. When body is inclined, put power into the *tanden*. When body is erect, release the power.
5. Abdomen squeeze. Place both hands on the *tanden*. Bend body forward while exhaling, and pull in abdomen as if you were squeezing the blood out of the *tanden*. Repeat three times.

On position of the palms, many mudras have been developed in Buddhism. This is a method whereby the mind is shaped according to the shape in which the palms are held. In this method stiffness of body and mind are effectively removed through putting the arms,

palms, and fingers into various positions. Of the numerous mudras, I will explain two that are representative. To make the body pliant, place your hands in your lap, palms up, letting the tips of the thumb and index finger of each hand touch to form the letter "O." To make the mind pliant, place both hands in the lap, palms up with the right palm on top of the left; again let the tips of the thumbs and index fingers form the letter "O," and draw the little-finger side of the hands into the lower abdomen. The sense of contact between thumb and index finger improves the breathing. This feeling of contact also accelerates the multiplication principles at work in body and mind, posture and breathing, freedom and love.

The points to remember for correct posture are: draw back the chin and pubic bone, pull up the head and chest, and relax the neck and shoulders. The shoulders should be horizontal and one shoulder should not be ahead or behind the other. Keep the nose and navel on the same perpendicular line.

Keep your eyes half open. Decide on a point one to three yards in front of you, and once your eyes are riveted on the point, do not let your eyes wander. Try not to blink.

As for breathing, in the beginning do the following "training breathing" about ten times. Inhale deeply, hold your breath, and with abdominal pressure exhale strongly. The key to exhaling is to squeeze the rectum tightly. During inhalation, imagine that fresh air is entering from the top of your head, proceeding down the spine, and entering your lower abdomen. When exhaling, imagine that the energy of the *tanden* is moving up the spine and emerging from the top of the head. After repeating the training breathing about ten times, continue steadfastly with long, smooth breathing. The breathing will become so quiet one cannot detect when an inhalation ends and an exhalation begins.

So much for the physical aspect of meditation. We turn next to the mental. Repeat inwardly some such words as the following:

"I now perceive that no phenomena in the universe really exist. I discern that I have neither body nor mind. There is no sin or evil in this world. I see in this moment my true self, a self overflowing with unlimited freedom and love. From the eternal past to this very day, I have been a buddha, radiating infinite life and light. I perceive that all the gods and saints who have ever appeared in this universe are identical with myself. I see that I love all from the bottom of my heart, and that all love me as well. Infinite freedom and love, infinite freedom and love, infinite freedom and love . . ."

Here, recite any mantra you find suitable. The recitation will gradually grow fainter, and the fainter it gets, the higher the state of unhindered freedom you attain. The recitation will naturally fade away and the mind lose all awareness. The body becomes infinitely clear, the mind infinitely transparent. Perfect cooperation between mind and body is attained, and the original self emerges. This is the embodiment of the most sublime beauty life possesses. This is indeed meditation. Meditation must be practiced at least twenty minutes a day in order to get results. It can be divided into two sessions of ten minutes each, one in the morning and one at night. Take a picture of yourself before you start meditation, and another picture, in the same pose, two months later. Show it to others, and they will tell you, after only a glance, that you have changed for the better.