The Taming of the Bull

Mind-training and the formation of Buddhist traditions

[How Buddhism adapts itself to its environment]

Essay and translations by Piya Tan ©2004

1 Introduction

This is a very brief introduction to the study of Comparative Buddhism, a systematic examination of how Buddhism develops after the Buddha in and beyond India. Here we will look at interesting meetings of ideas with regards to mental cultivation and examine important divergences of ideas in the very same area of spirituality. Buddhism is a living religion and anything living has to change, evolve and adapt.

As Buddhism grows even today, it is changing, evolving and adapting itself to fit into new countries and cultures, many of which it has never touched before (namely, Europe, the Americas, Australia and Africa). In many cases, only the external features, the packaging change, but in just as many cases, the contents are also replaced by new ideas and practices and stamped with a Buddhist label.

On the other hand, a strong undercurrent is drawing vital lifeblood from the Buddhist meditative tradition. The Catholics are openly and in growing numbers learning Buddhist meditation and catholizing it in an effort to revive their dying contemplative tradition.[1] They are absorbing Buddhist ideas just as the mediaeval Hindus of India "reclaimed" the Buddha. Centuries before, the mediaeval Christians have appropriated monasticism, rituals (incense, beads, chanting, etc) and marian worship from Indian religions. Will the day come when Buddhists lose touch with meditation and the Catholics claim patent rights to meditation?

In the light of the free market of religion, it is vital that a religion lives up to answer challenges by becoming appealing, meaningful and beneficial to others. But more important than being a commodity that is patronized by a global clientele, Buddhism must examine if it is spiritually meaningful and beneficial, that is to say, if one is living the spirituality of the Buddha himself for the sake of true happiness and liberation and not enjoying it as a product of a lucrative religious business.

The only way that the Buddha Dharma can live and flourish is through the calm and clear centre of our being. Without mental cultivation, there can be no real calm or clarity. This study starts off a special mini-series of studies related to mental cultivation and our role as living Buddhists and in keeping Buddhism alive. The other titles of the mini-series are:

SD 8.3 **The Radiant Mind.** On man's inherent goodness and spiritual potential.
SD 8.4 **Dhyana.** A brief study of *jhāna* and spiritual liberation.
SD 8.5 **The Layman and Dhyana.** Stream-winning can be won without attaining dhyana.
SD 8.6 **Laymen Saints.** On the ease of gaining awakening.

2 The skilful cowherd

One of the earliest similes for meditation practice is that of the calf, bull or ox.[2] This simile comes from **the Mahā Gopālaka Sutta** (M 33) and a shorter simile of the wild (or unruly) calf is found in the Commentaries, especially the one on **the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** (D 22) and **the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** (M 10).[3] As Buddhism spread throughout Asia, Buddhists in other countries of Asia, too, made use of this simile and made a famous set of pictures of the taming of the wild calf, sometimes called the "ox-herding"

[1] Around 2001, Santikaro Bhikkhu, a western monk pupil of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu (then living in the USA) was invited to Singapore by Catholics to conduct a series of classes on Buddhist meditation. Currently, there is a "Christian Meditation Society" in Singapore.

[2] Interestingly, these animals are ruminants, and the verb "ruminate" (chew the cud) also connotes "thinking, contemplating, meditating."

[3] DA 3:762 f = MA 1:247 = PmA 2:488 f = VA 2:405 f = Vism 268 f.

pictures.[4] The Vajrayana and the Chan (Korean *son*; Jap *zen*; Vietnamese *Thi'ên*) schools introduced a series of ten or eleven didactic pictures as a form of visual aid illustrating Buddhist spiritual progress. Let us examine in turn each of these two texts, that is, the Mahā Gopālaka Sutta, the simile of the wild calf, the Tibetan pilgrim's progress and the Chan bull-training pictures.

The Mahā Gopālaka Sutta (M 33) lists eleven qualities of a good cowherd as follows:[5]

(1) he knows the cows by their form and colour,
(2) he knows their distinguishing marks,
(3) he removes flies' eggs from them,
(4) he dresses their wounds,
(5) he fumigates the sheds (makes smoke to keep away biting insects),
(6) he knows where to ford (that is, where there is shallow water to cross a river),
(7) he knows the watering-places,
(8) he knows the pathways (to and from home),
(9) he is skilled in locating pastures,
(10) he does not milk the cows dry, and
(11) he pays special attention to the leading bulls. (M 33 = A 11.18/5:347-353)

The simile illustrates the conditions for the practitioner's spiritual development as follows:[6]

(1) the practitioner truly understands that all material forms are made up of the four primary elements (earth, water, fire, wind),
(2) he understands that karma is what makes one foolish or wise,
(3) he does not give in to sensual thoughts but knows how to get rid of them,
(4) he knows how to restrain his senses,
(5) he teaches the Dharma to others in detail,
(6) he discusses Dharma with other wise and learned monks,
(7) he joyfully pays attention to the Buddha's Doctrine and Discipline when it is being taught,
(8) he truly understands the noble eightfold path,
(9) he truly understands the four focusses of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*),
(10) he accepts support from devotees in moderation, and
(11) he shows friendly respect to senior monks and leaders of the Community through action, speech and thought both in public and in private.

These eleven qualities of a good practitioner are given in a *synchronic* manner, that is, they are cultivated at about the same time within the same life-time.[7] Items (1)-(2) deal with theoretical understanding of the Dharma; item (3)-(4) denote his mindfulness practice; items (5)-(7) concern his learning and teaching the Dharma; items (8)-(9) concern higher understanding of theoretical Dharma; and (10)-(11) are about moderate living and spiritual friendship.

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[4] If we go by the early canon, "ox" is clearly inappropriate since the original reference is to a "wild bull" (*kūṭa,-goṇa*), "wild cow" (*kūṭa,dhenu*) and "wild calf" (*kūṭa,vaccha*) (DA 3:762 f = MA 1:247 = PmA 2:488 f = VA 2:405 f = Vism 268 f).

[5] *Idha bhikkhave gopālako* (1) *rūpaññū hoti,* (2) *lakkhaṇa,kusalo hoti,* (3) *āsāṭikaṁ sāṭetā hoti,* (4) *vaṇaṁ paṭicchādetā hoti,* (5) *dhūmaṁ kattā hoti,* (6) *titthaṁ jānāti,* (7) *pītaṁ jānāti,* (8) *vīthiṁ jānāti,* (9) *gocara,kusalo hoti,* (10) *sāvasesa,dohī ca hoti,* (11) *ye te usabhā go,pitaro go,pariṇāyakā te atireka,pūjāya pūjetā hoti.*

[6] Given here are the paraphrased points. The Pali text is as follows: *Idha bhikkhave bhikkhu rūpaññū hoti, lakkhaṇa,kusalo hoti, āsāṭikaṁ sāṭetā hoti, vaṇaṁ paṭicchādetā hoti, dhūmaṁ kattā hoti, titthaṁ jānāti, pītaṁ jānāti, vīthiṁ jānāti, gocara,kusalo hoti, sāvasesa,dohī ca hoti, ye te bhikkhū therā rattaññū cira,pabbajitā saṅgha,-pitaro saṅgha,pariṇāyakā te atireka,pūjāya pūjetā hoti.*

[7] For a *diachronic* approach, see §3.

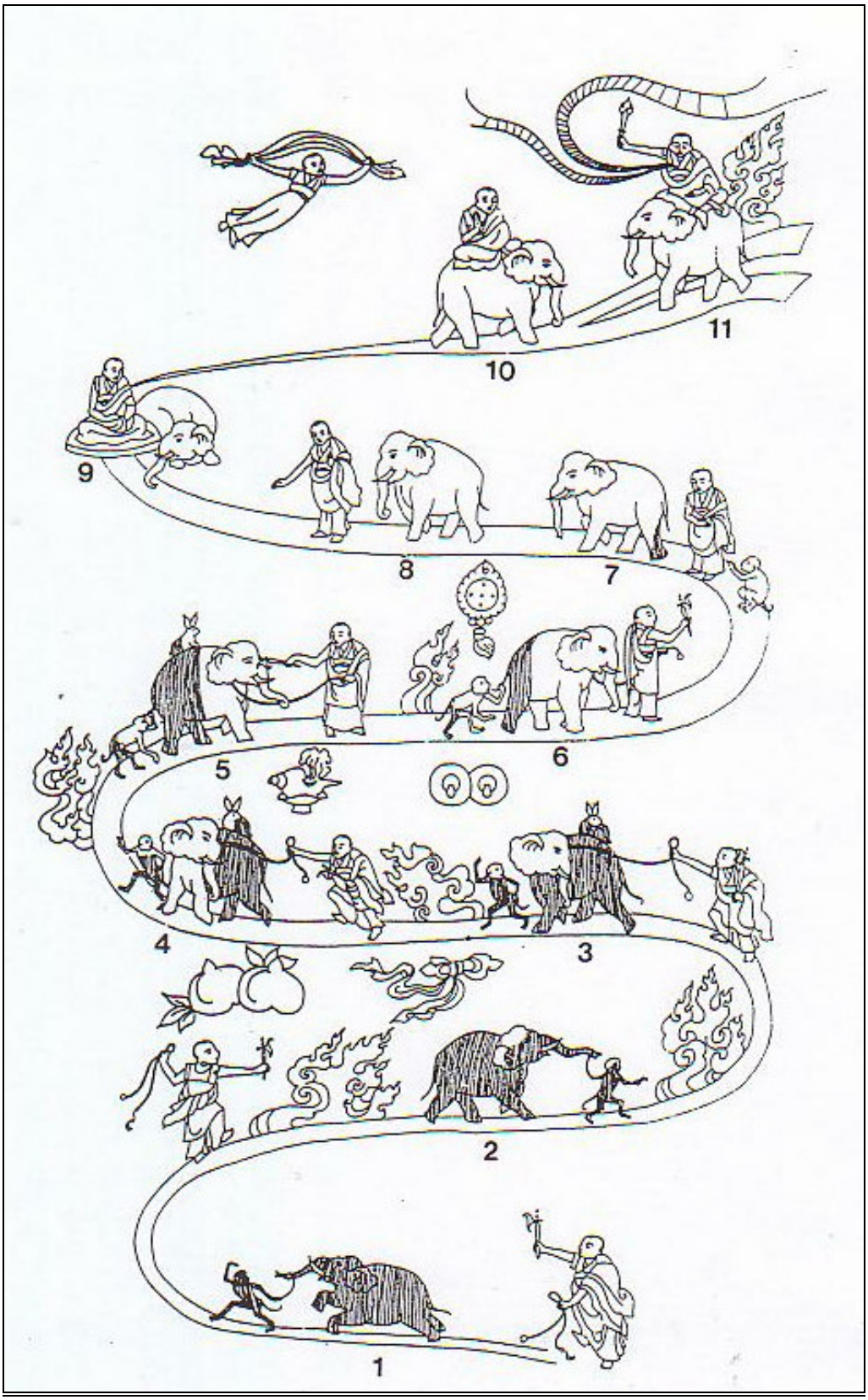

Figure 1. The meditator's progress (Tibetan tradition)
For a colour poster with explanations, see http://www.ngakde.com/samatha.htm.

3 The pilgrim's progress

A teaching similar to the simile of the Mahā Gopālaka Sutta (M 33) is found in the Vajrayāna depiction of the practitioner's progress on the spiritual path. The Vajrayāna model however is a *diachronic* one, that is, it depicts progressive stages of development. It is depicted as a pathway traversed by a monk (the meditator), a black elephant and a black monkey in eleven stages. The elephant represents the mind and its blackness is the "sinking of the mind" or torpor (Tib *jingwa*, Skt *nirmagnata*, Pali *middha*). A wild elephant is dangerous; so is an untrained mind. The elephant's footprint, which is very large, here represents mental defilements. The black monkey ("scattering of the mind" or restlessness: Tib *gopa*, Skt *auddhatya*, Pali *uddhacca*) leads the elephant: restlessness results when our mind runs after worldly things.

The explanation of the Tibetan meditation picture simile is as follows:

(1) A monk (the meditator), holding a rope (mindfulness) (Tib *denpa*; Skt *smṛti*, Pali *sati*) in his left hand and a goad (full awareness) in his right, runs after an elephant led by a monkey. Here the meditator has no control over his mind.

(2) He almost catches up with the elephant.

(3) The monk throws a noose around the elephant's neck and it looks back; the mind is beginning to be restrained by mindfulness. The rabbit on the elephant's back represents torpor which has by then become subtle.

(4) As the elephant (the mind) becomes more obedient, the rope (mindfulness) needs less pulling.

(5) The elephant is being led by the rope and the hook, and the monkey follows behind. There is less restlessness now; mainly full awareness is used.

(6) Both the animals follow behind and the monk does not have to look back (he focusses his attention continuously on his mind); the rabbit (subtle restlessness) has disappeared.

(7) The elephant is left on its own doing without the need of rope or hook; the monkey takes leave. Torpor and restlessness—both mild—ocur only occasionally here.

(8) The elephant, now completely white, follows behind the man; the mind is obedient and there is no torpor or restlessness but some energy is still needed to concentrate.

(9) The monk sits in meditation while the elephant sleeps at his feet; the mind is able to concentrate without effort for long periods of time and there is great joy and peace. The flying monk represents zest and lightness of the body.

(10) The monk sits on the elephant; he now finds true calm (Tib *zhine*, Skt *śamatha*, Pali *samatha*) and needs less energy to concentrate.

(11) In the last stage, the monk on the elephant's back holds a sword (the realization of emptiness, *śūnyatā*) and cuts off the two black lines representing the obstacle to full knowledge (*jñey'āvaraṇa*) and the defiling obstacle (*kḷeś'āvaraṇa*). The term *āvaraṇa* is a synonym for *nīvaraṇa* (mental hindrance) (D 1:246, Sn 66 1005, Nc 379, Divy 378). The monk is here practising insight meditation (Tib *lhagthong*, Skt *vipaśyanā*, Pali *vipassanā*) and on his way to the perfection of wisdom.

Fire appears at different stages of the path. This represents the energy necessary for meditation. It gradually diminishes at the calm stages as less energy is needed to concentrate. It flares up again at the last stage when the monk is practising insight.

4 The taming of the wild calf

Buddhaghosa, in his commentary on the well known description of a meditator, regarding one "who has gone to the forest, or to the foot of a tree, or to an empty house"[8] in **the Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas** (D 22; M 10),[9] gives the following simile of the taming of a wild calf. This passage is found in a number of other Commentaries.

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[8] *Araññ a,gato vā rukkha,mūla,gato vā suññāgāra,gato vā.* "Empty house" is sometimes rendered as "empty place".

[9] D 22.2/2:291 = SD 13.2; M 10.4/1:56 = SD 13.3.

This monk's mind, which was for a long time scattered among such objects as visible forms does not like to enter the path of meditation (*kamma-ṭ,ṭhāna,vīthi*), but runs along into a wrong path like a chariot yoked to a wild bull.[10]

Just as a herdsman who desires to break a wild calf which has grown up on the milk of a wild cow would remove it from the cow, and having sunk a large post at one side would bind the calf with a rope. Then that calf of his, struggling this way and that, unable to run away, would sit down or lie down close to the post.

In the same way, this monk who desires to train the corrupt mind which has grown up from long drinking the pleasures of the senses such as visible forms, should remove it from sense-objects such as visible forms, and having gone to the forest, or to the root of a tree, or to an empty house, should tie it to the post of the meditation object of the focusses of mindfulness by the rope of mindfulness.

Then that mind of his, even after it has struggled this way and that, not finding the mental object it previously indulged in, unable to break the rope of mindfulness and run away, indeed sits down and lies down close to that very mental object through access concentration and full concentration.

Hence, the ancients (*porāṇā*)[11] said:

Just as man would tie to a post a calf that needs to be tamed,
Even so here should one tie one's own mind tightly to the object of mindfulness.
(DA 3:762 f = MA 1:247 = PmA 2:488 f = VA 2:405 f = Vism 268 f)

5 The taming of the Zen bull

The oldest statement of the parable of the taming of the wild calf that we know of is the short verse of the ancients. This short verse is expanded by Buddhaghosa in his commentaries. The Chan and Zen Buddhists of east Asia developed the same idea, probably based on an older identical source,[12] and depicted the meditator's progress through a series of beautiful drawings.

At least four versions of the bull-taming or ox-herding pictures of the Chan (or Zen) tradition have been identified. They are those by (1) the Chan Master Ching-chu (Seikyo) [5 pictures], (2) the Chan Master Tzu Te Hui (Jitoku Ki) [6 pictures], (3) the Chan Master Kuo-an Shih-yuan (Kaku-an) [10 pictures] of the Sung dynasty, and (4) by an unknown painter, probably 16th century [10 pictures].

A number of versions were also done by Japanese Buddhists, the most wellknown is perhaps the reproduction of Kuo-an's pictures by Shubun, a 15th century Zen monk and one of the greatest black-and-white painters of the Ashikaga period. (Shubun's pictures are today kept in the Shokokuji, Kyoto.)[13]

The author of the Chinese prints reproduced here is not known. The 1585 edition has a preface by Chu-hung and each picture is preceded by Pu-ming's poem.[14] A summary of the ten pictures are given here:

(1) "Undisciplined." The untamed mind is unruly.
(2) "Discipline begins." Preliminary efforts in meditation.
(3) "In harness." The meditator"s mindfulness increases.

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[10] Cf MA 2:82, 4:198.

[11] **Buddhaghosa**, who flourished in the 5th century CE, tr the Sinhala Comys (going back to the 3rd cent BCE) into Pali. "The Ancients (*porāṇā*), anonymous great masters, referred to in the passage quoted above (and in numerous other places in the Pali Comys), may belong to an even earlier date than the Sinhala Comys themselves, ie earlier than the 3rd cent BCE. In this passage, the last verse, attributed to these Ancients, contains in miniature the simile of the calf. Thus the story of the taming of the bull can perhaps be traced back to a period even earlier than the third century BC" (Rahula 1978:16). See Buddhaghosa's introd to his Commentaries & W Rahula, *History of Buddhism in Ceylon,* 2nd ed, Colombo: Gunasena, 1966: xxiv ff.

[12] See for example Rahula 1978:16, 80.

[13] See D T Suzuki, *Manual of Zen Buddhism*, London: Rider, 1974:127-144.

[14] This is the version reproduced in Rahula's *Zen and the Taming of the Bull*, London: Fraser, 1978, not the one by Kakuan, as the book claims! For different applications of the bull-taming pictures, see Fauré 1991:50.

(4) "Turns around." The meditation object is clearly seen.
(5) "Tamed." The mental hindrances begin to disappear.
(6) "Unimpeded." Concentration continues; joy arises.
(7) "Non-interference." The concentrated mind needs no effort.
(8) "All forgotten." The higher levels of consciousness.
(9) "The solitary moon." Joyfully seeing reality.
(10) "Both vanished." Enlightenment.

The various traditional pictures showing Buddhist meditation progress have one thing in common. They show that the mind can be purified. In fact, the "original mind" is by nature pure but is tainted by adventitious (external and accidental) defilements (A 1:10). **The Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra** (ed Nanjio, pp 77 222) speaks in the same terms regarding the Tathāgata,garbha (sometimes a synonym for the "Store Consciousness" or the original mind).[15] The aim of being a Buddhist is to "go back" to that original mind, free of any notion of "sin" or God-idea, but using the best tool we have—our mind!

6 Chan and early Buddhism

One of the most important and major developments in Buddhism after the Buddha is that of Chan Buddhism. From the Sanskrit *dhyāna* (Pali *jhāna*),[16] comes the Chinese cognate "chan-na" (禪那), later the final syllable was elided to become "chan" (禪).[17] "Chan" refers both to the cultivation techniques and to the school itself. However, Western scholarship generally use "Zen" as an umbrella term for this tradition of East Asia and its derivatives in the West.[18]

The traditional teachings of Chan are remarkably close to early Buddhism as represented in the Pali Canon. Such well known texts as **the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** (D 22), **the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** (M 10) and **the Ānâpāna,sati Sutta** (M 118) have this stock passage:

> Here, monks, a monk[19] who has gone to the forest or to the foot of a tree or to an empty house, sits down, and having crossed his legs and keeping his body upright, establishes mindfulness before him.[20] (D 22.2/2:291; M 10.4/1:56; M 118.17/3:82)

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[15] On the controversy over Tathāgata,garbha (that it is not Buddhist), see Hubbard & Swanson 1997:7 f & Matsumoto in Hubbard & Swanson 1997:165 ff; also 325-328.

[16] For etymology and usage of *dhyāna/jhāna,* see "Dhyana," SD 8.4(3), 2005.

[17] Korean *Seon* (simplified *Sōn*), 선; Japanese *Zen*, 禅; Vietnamese, *Thi'ên*. "Until the early Tang Dynasty chanshi 禪師, or 'Chan master,' meant a monk adept at meditation, though it did not specify what sorts of meditation he was practicing. Some monks were called Dharma masters (fashi 法師), some were called Scriptural masters (zangshi 藏師), some were called Disciplinary masters (lushi 律師), and some were Meditation masters. These titles could be applied to a monk (or nun) of any school, since they denoted one's methodological focus rather than one's ideological leanings" (Lusthaus 1998:13).

[18] This innocuous bias is mainly due to the West's modern discovery of Zen through the writings of DT Suzuki and others and also the predominance of the living Japanese Zen tradition and the almost extinct Chinese Chan. Here I have used "Chan" as the umbrella term since historically, it was Chan that first arose in China and then spread beyond to become Seon, Zen and *Thi'ên*.

[19] DA on **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** with the identical context here says that "monk" (*bhikkhu*) indicates "whoever undertakes that practice…is here comprised under the term *bhikkhu*". See Dh 142; also Dh 362, 260-270. Cf the Bhikkhu Vagga (ch 25) and the **Brāhmaṇa Vagga** (ch 26) of Dh.

[20] *Parimukhaṁ*, lit "around the mouth," here always used idiomatically and as an adverb, meaning "in front": so U Thittila (Vbh:T 319, 328), Walshe (D:W 1995:335), Soma Thera (1998:42 f digital ed), and Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi (M:ÑB 2001:527). The Vibhaṅga explains it as "at the tip of the nose or at the centre of the upper lip" (Vbh §537/ 252): see important n to §18(1). **Where to watch the breath?** Ajahn Brahmavamso however says that *parimukha* does not mean "just on the tip of the nose, or on the lip, or somewhere in from of your eyes…[but] just means [to] make it important." (2002:58). "Often people are told when meditating to watch the breath at the tip of the nose, but actually many people find this is a distraction. If you look at the suttas, the Buddha never tells us to watch the breath in a physical place. He says to know that you are breathing in and to know that you are breathing out. The important

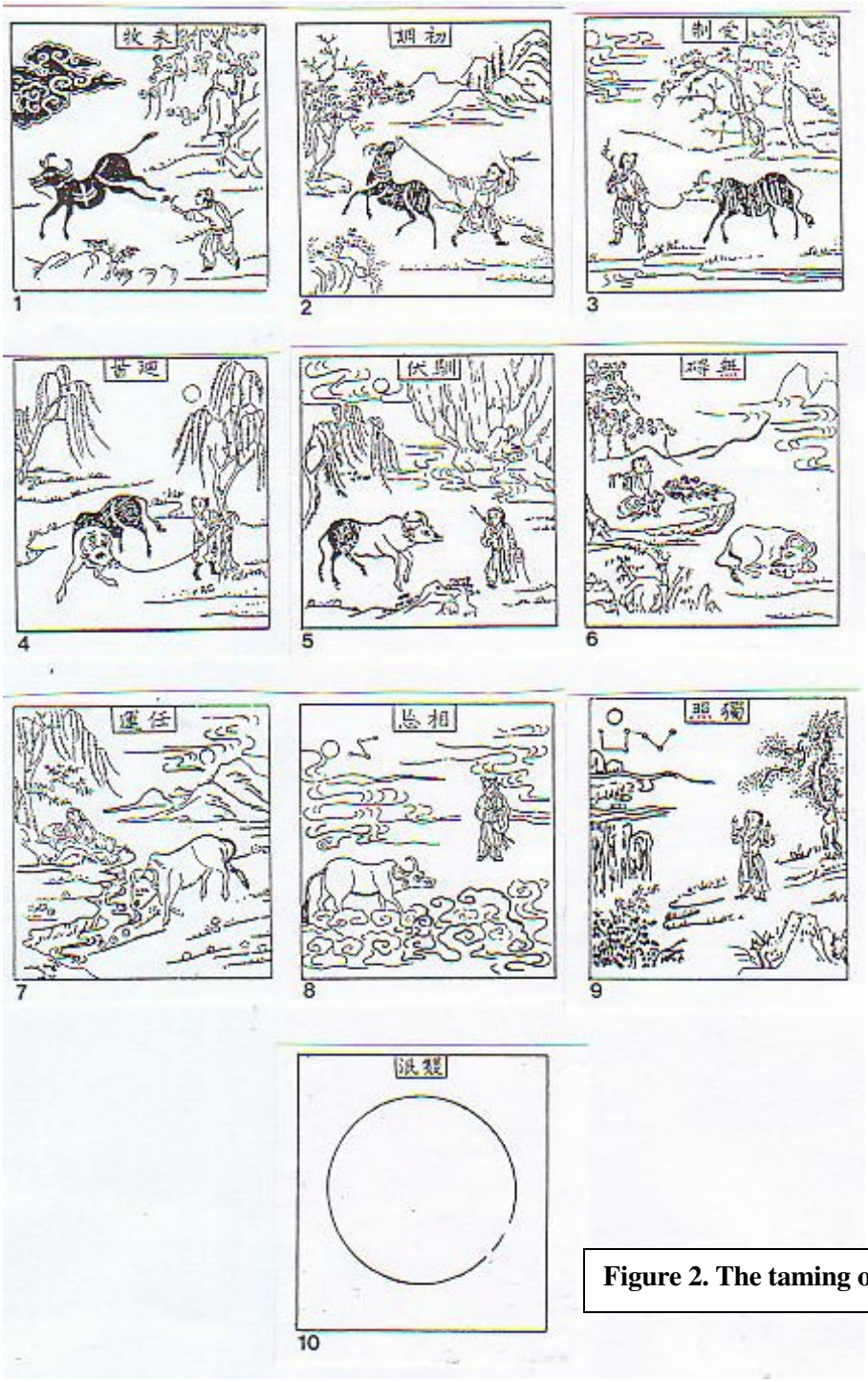

Figure 2. The taming of the wild bull

This passage reflects the essence of not only the Chan **sitting practice** (坐禪 *zuochan,* Jap *zazen*) but also Chan aesthetics and art in East Asia.[21]

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thing is to note it in time. So: 'Am I breathing in at this time, or am I breathing out at this time?'" (Ajahn Nyanadhammo, "The Spiritual Faculties," 1999:3).

[21] The essence of Chan aesthetics is nature, simplicity, harmony and spaciousness.

Another basic Chan tenet is that of the "original face," "original mind" or "original nature," that is, one's true nature hidden away by the ever-changing, evanescent series of identities that one takes from life to life. This is not a conception of any permanent entity, but a statement of one's "original sinlessness" as found in the **the Pabhassara Sutta** (A 1.6.1-2),[22] a text in **the Accharā Saṅghāta Vagga** (A 1.5/1:8-10).[23] In this short remarkable text, the Buddha declares that our mind is intrinsically pure and bright (*pabhassara*), that is to say, our "original nature" is that of good and light. In other words, we are not born in sin and that evil is not in our nature. Understandably, since evil is not our nature, to persist in committing evil would only bring on conflict or suffering. As such, the purpose of the spiritual life is for one to return to this original pure goodness.

1 Monks, this mind is radiant, but it is defiled by adventitious impurities [that "arrive" through the sense-doors].

The uninstructed [ignorant] ordinary person does not understand things as they really are.

Therefore there is no mental development for the uninstructed ordinary person, I say![24]

2 Monks, this mind is radiant, and it is freed from adventitious impurities [that "arrive" through the sense-doors].

The instructed [wise] noble disciple understands things as they really are.

Therefore there is mental development for the instructed noble disciple, I say![25]

(A 1.6.1-2/1:10; also 1.5.9-10/1:10)

The Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra (p77) identifies the radiant mind with the *tathāgata,garbha*, "the Buddha-embryo" or the awakening-potential, and says that it is "by nature radiant, pure, pure from the beginning (*prakṛti,prabhāsvara,visuddhy'ādi,visuddhā*). It is "naturally pure but appears to be impure as it is defiled by the stains that arrive" and is "enveloped in the garments of personality-factors, (sensory) elements and sense-spheres, and soiled with the dirt of attachment, hatred, delusion and imagining (*parikalpa*)" (p222).[26]

The Chan masters are often depicted as living the moment, letting go of the past and of the future. Here is an example of a Zen anecdote about the Zen Master Dae-ju.[27]

One day, a Sutra Master came and he questioned Zen Master Dae-Ju. "I understand that you have attained Satori. What is Zen?"'

Dae-Ju said, "Zen is very easy. It is not difficult at all. **When I am hungry, I eat; when I am tired, I sleep.**"[28]

The Sutra Master said, "This is doing the same as all people do. Attaining satori [Zen enlightenment] and not attaining are then the same."

"No, no, people on the outside and on the inside are different."'

The Sutra Master said, "When I am hungry, I eat. When I am tired, I sleep. Why is the outside different from the inside?"

Dae-Ju said,

"When people are hungry, they eat. Only the outside, the body, is eating. On the inside, they are thinking, and they have desire for money, fame, sex, food, and they feel anger. And so when they are tired, because of these wants, they do not sleep. So, the outside and the inside are different. But

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[22] See "The Radiant Mind," SD 8.3(6), 2005.

[23] "The chapter on the finger-snap."

[24] *Pabhassaraṁ idaṁ bhikkhave cittaṁ tañ ca kho āgantukehi upakkilesehi upakkiliṭṭhaṁ. Taṁ assutavā puthujjano yathā,bhūtaṁ n'appajānati. Tasmā assutavato puthujjanassa citta,bhāvanā n'atthî ti vadāmî ti.* Qu at MA 1:167; DhA 1:23; NmA 1:22; PmA 1:242; DhsA 68.

[25] *Pabhassaraṁ idaṁ bhikkhave cittaṁ tañ ca kho āgantukehi upakkilesehi vippamuttaṁ. Taṁ sutavā ariya,sāvako yathā,bhūtaṁ pajānati. Tasmā sutavato ariya,sāvakassa citta,bhāvanā atthî ti vadāmî ti.*

[26] Qu by W Rahula 1978:98. See "The Radiant Mind," SD 8.3(14).

[27] He was a pupil of Ma-tsu Tao-I 馬祖道一 (709-788), the 35th Zen patriarch.

[28] A similar quote is attr to Lin-chi (Linji Yixuan) 臨濟義玄 (d. 866): "When hunger comes, I eat my rice. | When sleep comes, I close my eyes." See Dumoulin 1988:201.

when I am hungry, I only eat. When I am tired, I only sleep. I have no thinking, and so I have no inside and no outside."[29]

7 Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta

Dae-ju's dramatic spirituality typifies a very important teaching in early Buddhist training, that of "full awareness" (*sampajāna*). The classic statement of this practice is found in **the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** (D 22) and **the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** (M 10):

Furthermore, monks,

(1) while walking, a monk understands, 'Walking';
(2) or, while standing, he understands, 'Standing';
(3) or, while sitting, he understands, 'Sitting';
(4) or, while lying down, he understands, 'Lying down'.

In whatever way his body is disposed, that is how he understands it. (D 22.3/2:292 = M 10.6/1:56)

Furthermore, monks, a monk,

(1) while going forward or back, he is fully aware of what he is doing;
(2) while looking forward or back, he is fully aware of what he is doing.
(3) while bending or stretching, he is fully aware of what he is doing.
(4) while carrying his upper robe, outer robe and bowl, he is fully aware of what he is doing.
(5) while eating, drinking, chewing and tasting, he is fully aware of what he is doing.
(6) while voiding or peeing, he is fully aware of what he is doing.
(7) while walking, while standing, while sitting, while asleep, while awake,[30] while talking, or while remaining silent, he is fully aware of what he is doing. (D 22.4/2:293; M 10.8/1:57)

Another key teaching in Chan Buddhism is found in the sayings of none other than the legendary founder of the Chan tradition himself and the 28th patriarch, **Bodhidharma** 菩提達摩 (d 535)[31] who proclaims

A separate [special] transmission outside the scriptures;
Depending not on words and letters;
Pointing directly to the human mind
Seeing into one's nature, one becomes a Buddha.

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[29] A free tr by the Providence Zen Center, USA.

[30] "When asleep, when awake" *sutte jāgarite.* Comy glosses *sutte* as *sayane,* "lying down, sleeping". *Sutte* is often erroneously rendered as "falling asleep," which is *niddaṁ okkamati.* Similarly, *jāgarite* refers to the state of being awake, not to "waking or rising from sleep" (*pabujjhati*). "The practice of mindfulness focused on sleeping means one uses the old experience, now past, of having been asleep as the focus of superpower mindfulness **now**. It is mindfulness taking an old experience as it object. This may sound pedantic to you now, but it becomes crucially important, as you will see when I explain the focus of mindfulness on the *citta* (mind-consciousness)." (Ajahn Brahmavamso 2002:26, 32-34).

[31] According to Chan legend, **Bodhidharma** arrived in Canton, China, by sea in 526. When invited to the court of the Liang emperor Wu, Bodhidharma presently left when he found the emperor more concerned with merit than wisdom. He headed north, reportedly crossing the Yangtze river on a reed, and arrived at the Shaolin temple. When he found the resident monks weak and defenceless against raiding bandits, he taught them martial arts that evolved into the Shaolin system. He then sequestered himself in a cave for 9 years, sitting in meditation facing the cave wall. Once, enraged at his drowsiness, he ripped off his eyelids and cast them away. They then sprouted into tea plants. It is said that his legs withered away because of his prolonged sitting. This episode is the origin of the Chan meditation doll, best known by its Japanese name of the Daruma doll. Bodhidharma is said to have died at 160 and was buried at the Shaolin temple. On the same day, however, one of the temples monks on his journey back met Bodhidharma heading west holding up one of his sandals. On hearing the report, the temple monks opened the tomb and found only one sandal inside! See also *A Dictionary of Buddhism*: Bodhidharma.

The first line, "A separate [special] transmission outside scriptures," refers to the Chan teaching that satori (awakening) can only occur through a direct experience of reality not through scripture study or book learning. Although this sounds like a novelty unique to Chan Buddhism, this is a central teaching in early Buddhism, where there is much emphasis on mental cultivation (*bhāvanā*) through constant mindfulness and full awareness (*sati,sampājañña*). **The (Nava Purāṇa) Kamma Sutta** (S 35.146), for example, declares:

> These, monks, are the foot of trees;[32] these are empty houses.[33] Meditate,[34] monks! Be not heedless! Regret not later! This is our instruction to you. (S 35.146.9/4:132)

8 The parable of the raft

The early Buddhist attitude to the direct experience of the Dharma is clearly reflected in **the Alagaddūpama Sutta,** where practitioners are exhorted to put scripture learning in proper perspective and priority given to a direct experience of reality:

> "Monks, I will show you how the Dharma is comparable to a raft, that is for crossing over [the waters for the far shore], not for the purpose of grasping. Listen and pay close attention, I will speak."
>
> "Yes, venerable sir," the monks replied.
>
> The Blessed One said this:
>
> "Monks, suppose a man in the course of his journey saw a great stretch of water, whose near shore is dangerous and fearful and whose far shore is safe and free from fear, but there is no ferry or bridge for going across to the far shore.
>
> Then he thinks: 'There is this great stretch of water, whose near shore is dangerous and fearful and whose far shore is safe and free from fear, but there is no ferry or bridge for going across to the far shore.
>
> Suppose I collect grass, wood, branches and leaves, and bind them together into a raft, and supported by the raft and using my hands and feet, I go safely across to the far shore.'
>
> And then the man collects grass, wood, branches and leaves, and binds them together into a raft, and supported by the raft and using his hands and feet, goes safely across to the far shore.
>
> Then when he has gone across and arrived on the far shore, he might think thus:
>
> 'This raft has been very helpful to me, since supported by it and using my hands and feet, I went safely across to the far shore. Suppose I were to hoist it on my head or bear it on my shoulder, and then go wherever I want.'
>
> Now, monks, what do you think? By doing so, would that man be doing what should be done with the raft?"
>
> "No, venerable sir."
>
> "By doing what would that man be doing what should be done with the raft? Here, monks, when that man has gone across and arrived on the far shore, he might think thus:
>
> 'This raft has been very helpful to me, since supported by it and using my hands and feet, I went safely across to the far shore. Suppose I were to haul it onto dry land or set it adrift in the water, and then go wherever I wish.'
>
> Now, monks, it is by so doing that that man is doing what should be done with that raft.
>
> So I have shown you that the Dharma is comparable to a raft, which is for crossing over [the waters to the far shore], not for the purpose of grasping.
>
> Monks, having known the parable of the raft, **you should abandon even the Teaching, how much more that which is not the Teaching**![35] (M 12.13-14/2:134 f)

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[32] "Those are the foot of trees," *etāni rukkha,mūlāni.* "Foot" here is usually single, like "bottom".

[33] Sometimes rendered as "empty place".

[34] "Meditate!" *jhāyatha,* lit "cultivate *jhāna.*" Syn *bhāvetha* (2nd pl). "cultivate!"

However, such an approach of Chan iconoclasm comes with a great cost. Unlike the other major schools of East Asian Buddhism that legitimizes their existence and teachings by centering themselves around a particular Mahāyāna text, the Chan tradition, in rejecting the scriptures as final authority,[36] had to resort to other means of legimitization of its authenticity, that is, **the lineage of patriarchs**.

> The transmission histories, like all other Ch'an works, were intended to function as catalysts for the enlightenment of the readers by exposing them to examples of true religiosity and perfected behavior. In addition to this lofty goal, these texts had two other purposes of a propagandistic and quasi-historical nature: (1) to glorify the sages of the past and thereby legitimize the status of their living disciples and (2) to rationalize the origins and existence of the Ch'an School itself. The latter is of greater importance here, since one of the tasks undertaken by the Northern School[37] was to establish Ch'an as a legitimate—in its own eyes, *the* legitimate—school of Chinese Buddhism.
>
> This task was rendered difficult by the fact that Ch'an lacked any single underlying scriptural tradition from which it could trace its descent. Unlike the Tien-t'ai School, for example, which used the *Lotus Sutra*, or the Pure Land School, which revered the three Pure Land scriptures, the Ch'an School did not have any specific canon that might provide the answers to its particular religious dilemmas. On the contrary, the very existence of Ch'an was based on a reaction against the excessive reliance on scriptural study, and the school seems to have purposely avoided identification with any specific scriptural tradition. Instead, Ch'an presented itself as a "separate transmission outside the teachings" and cautioned its followers "Do not rely on words!" True, as a meditation school, Ch'an grew out of centuries of Chinese Buddhist religious practice, but as a school, nonetheless, it had to establish its own identity separate from—and yet somehow superior, in its own terms, to—the other Chinese Schools. It did this by formulating the "transmission of the lamp" theory. (McRae 1986:75 f)

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[35] *Dhammā pi vo pahātabbā pag'eva adhammā*. Comy takes *dhammā* here to mean "good states", ie calm and insight (*samatha,vipassanā*), citing **Laṭutikôpama S** (M 1:455=66.26-33) as an example of the teaching of the abandonment of attachment to calm, and the Mahātaṇhāsaṅkhaya S (M 1:260 f=38.14) as one of the abandonment of attachment to insight. Bodhi, however, is of the view that "*dhamma* here signifies not good states themselves, but the teachings, the correct attitude to which was delineated just above in the simile of the snake." (M:ÑB 1209 n255). See Introd.

[36] Suzuki humorously observes: "Zen claims to be 'a specific transmission outside the scripture and to be altogether independent of verbalism,' but it is Zen masters who are the most talkative and most addicted to writing of all sorts." (Introd to Zenkei Shibayama's *A Flower Does Not Talk,* Rutland, VT: Tuttle, 1971:9)

[37] "Chan begins to denote a specific doctrinal and meditative ideology around the time of Hui Neng 慧能 (638-713). Although Chan tradition describes a transmission by five patriarchs culminating in Hui Neng as the sixth patriarch, as noted above, that transmission is more fiction than fact. Hui Neng's followers established the Southern School of Chan, which unleashed a polemical tirade against the Northern School. Since the Northern School disappeared about a thousand years ago, our only source of information on these schools had been the prejudiced accounts of the Southern school until the discovery at Dunhuang early in the twentieth century of Northern School documents. We now know that many different versions of lineage histories were circulated, and, more importantly, that the positions attributed to the Northerners by their Southern rivals were grossly inaccurate and unfair. In fact, the Northern School had initially been the more successful of the two, but its success led to its ultimate ruination, since its growing dependence on Imperial patronage made it a vulnerable target during times of Imperial persecution of Buddhism. The Southern School, because it had taken root in remote areas less affected by actions of the Central government, survived the persecutions relatively intact." (Lusthaus 1998:13 f). For transmission lineages see Lamotte 1988a:206-212, 696-699.

Like Hui-neng,[38] **Deshan Xuanjian,**[39] too, was recorded as having destroyed sutras. When Deshan gained an insight into the truth of Chan, he immediately took out all his commentaries on the Diamond Sutra, once so valued and considered indispensable that he had to carry them whenever he went, and set fire to them, reducing all the manuscripts to ashes. He exclaimed, "However deep one's knowledge of abstruse philosophy, it is like a piece of hair flying in the vastness of space; however important one's experience in worldly things, it is like a drop of water thrown into a bottomless abyss."

Some scholars, like W Rahula, understandably disapprove of such "extravagant, overbearing and unneccessary exhibition of an enthusiast lacking in calm and balance rather than the reaction of a man of 'awakening'" (1978:20). However, Deshan's religious exuberance is clearly understandable in the spirit of **the Alagaddûpama Sutta**, since one who has a high level of spiritual attainment would not be tied down by the word of the truth but be compassionately guided by its spirit. Unlike an academic who stands naked without his texts and references, the spiritually awakened one stands by own direct experience of the truth. He has need of neither holy books nor man-made records since he has internalized their essence.

Hui-neng tearing up sutras. Water-colour by Liang-k'ai. 12th century.

9 Origin of Chan

One of the best known legends invented by the Chan school to legitimize its origin and authenticity is that of the golden lotus and Mahā Kaśyapa.[40] Heinrich Dumoulin, a Catholic priest and scholar of Buddhism, summarizes this legend thus:

> *The T'ien-sheng Record of the Widely Extending Lamp* [a chronicle of the Sung period][41] is the work of an industrious lay disciple of the Rinzai school. Without naming the previous Buddhas, this chronicle begins with Śākyamuni and narrates the memorable event to which the Zen school ascribes its origins. According to this account, once, during his sermon on Vulture Peak, the Exalted One held up a golden lotus blossom[42] to all those assembled. Only Kāśyapa understood, and smiled. According to book 2 of the chronicle, which is probably the earliest version of this well known episode, "the World Honored One thereupon turned to the assembly and said, "I possess the True Dharma Eye, the Marvelous Mind of Nirvāṇa. I entrust it to Mahākāśyapa." (Dumoulin 1988:8)

This story is of course apocryphal: it is not found in the Pali Canon nor any of the early Mahāyāna texts. Such stories however serve a useful purpose: it helps to legitimize the Chan as a unique school directly descended from the Buddha himself. Other late chronicles such as *The Ching-te Record of the Transmission*

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[38] Caoxi Huineng 曹溪慧能 (Hui-neng, E'nō), also called Wei-lang (638-713).

[39] Deshan Xuanjian (Te-shan Hsuan-chien, Tokusan Senkan), ca 781-867. A Dharma-heir of Longtan Chong-xin. He gave transmission to Yantou Quanho and Xuefeng Yicun. Famous for "Thirty blows if yes, thirty blows if no." He appears in **Blue Cliff Records** 4, **Records of Silence** 14, 22, 46, 55, and **Gateless Gate** 13 and 28. He appears in the **Sayings and Doings of Dongshan** (**Dongshan yulu**) 37, 54, 56, 83. Previously a lecturer on the **Diamond Sutra,** he burnt his books after being awakened to Chan by an old woman selling teacakes. See Dogen's **Shinfukatoku**.

[40] See Dumoulin 1988:7-10. On problems of Zen origins, see Fauré 1993:44 f.

[41] This work is completed during the early 11th century in China.

[42] Said to be given by Mahā Brahmā.

of the Lamp[43] and *The Chien-chung Ching-kuo Supplementary Record of the Lamp*[44] introduce stories of 28 Indian patriarchs and 6 Chinese patriarchs until around the end of the T'ang period (618-906).[45]

Early Buddhism and the Theravāda, too, follow the lineage system (*paramparā*), but this is of monastic ordination, the purpose of which is to provide effective tutelage (*nissaya*) of discipline and training so that the candidate becomes a good monastic. Early Buddhism does not use the language of "transmission of the Dharma" in connection with this ordination lineage.[46] The Dharma is only truly transmitted when the monastic or pupil has realized sainthood,[47] or at least, understood the Teaching.[48] However, if we take language in its broadest sense as a means of communication, it is not difficult to understand that what the Chan tradition means by "transmission of the Dharma" is just this: that the person has attained a level of *satori* or Chan awakening.

However, despite this apparent overlapping of visions and doctrines, Chan Buddhism has one very uneasy difference with early Buddhism: its notion of enlightenment (Chin *wu,* Jap *satori*).[49] This uniqueness of Chan is succinctly explained thus

> The primary feature of this temporal continuity [of the Chan lineage] is its participatory nature: to receive certification of enlightenment from a Ch'an master is to join the succession of patriarchs and enter into dynamic communion with the sages of ancient times. The primary goal of this training is not an exalted state of spiritual attainment but reenactment of the archetypal drama that takes place between each patriarch and his successor. The "transmission of the mind with the mind" described in the anecdotes involving Hung-jen and Hui-neng, Bodhidharma and Hui-k'o, and eventually the historical Buddha and Mahākaśyapa, are scripts of the primal event in the Ch'an religious sensibility. The pristine moment of ancestral time was intended for repetition, over and over, with each teacher-and-student combination throughout the extended genealogy of Ch'an.
>
> (McRae 1992:353 f)

(10) Pointing to one's mind

The teachings of the last two lines of the Chan verse quoted above [7]

> Pointing directly to the human mind
> Seeing into one's nature, one becomes a Buddha,[50]

are also intimately connected with the spirit of early Buddhism. Indeed, one of the virtues (*guṇa*) of the Dharma as teaching is that it "to be personally known by the wise" (*paccattaṁ veditabbo viññūhi*), an

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[43] Compiled by the Chan monk Tao-yüan (of the line of Hōgen) and presented to the Northern Sung emperor in 1004 and published under imperial patronage in 1011.

[44] Completed in 1101 and published in 1103 by Fo-kuo Wei-po, a learned monk of the Yün-men Wen-yen (Jap *Ummon*) school.

[45] See Dumoulin 1998:8 f.

[46] W Rahula, a Sinhalese scholar monk, is very critical of this point: "…the very idea that the realization of truth can be transmitted and handed down in papillary succession like an oral tradition of teaching and that a custodian of Truth can be appointed in a line of hierarchy is absolutely repugnant to the spirit of Buddha's Teaching. A patriarch of a sect or a line of an order may certainly be appointed, but this belongs to the domain of institutional organized religion, and not to the realm of Truth. One should be extremely careful not to confuse the realm of Truth with the institutional side of a religion or a system." (1978:19)

[47] On the 4 types of saints—Stream-winner (*sotāpanna*), Once-returner (*sākadāgāmī*), Non-returner (*anāgāmī*) and arhat—see "Entering the Stream" (SD 3.3, 2004).

[48] See "Laymen Saints" (SD 8.5, 2005).

[49] *A Dictionary of Buddhism* defines *satori* as: "In Japanese Zen Buddhism, an intuitive apprehension of the nature of reality that transcends conceptual thought and cannot be expressed through 'words and letters.' There are various degrees of satori and students work to deepen the experience by constant training."

[50] It is clear here that "Buddha" does not refer to a historical teacher, Gotama Buddha, but to the state of enlightenment. For a discussion, see Rahula 1978:21.

experience that is also conveyed by verbs such as *sacchi,karoti*, literally meaning "to see with one's own eyes," that is, to realize, to experience directly and see true reality.

The most famous Chan innovation is perhaps **the *gongan*** (*kung-an*; Jap *koan*), sometimes called "Zen riddles." They are brief statements, stories or dialogues that Chan students ponder on to fathom their meaning, and in doing so, they try to break through their mental obstructions and predispositions that hinder them from awakening. The formal use of the *gongan* as a teaching device is first mentioned in connection with **Nanyuan Huiyong** (d 930).[51] The best known classic anthologies of *gongan* are the *Blue Cliff Records* (Piyenlu; Jap *Heikigan-roku*)[52] and the *Gateless Gate* (Wumenkuan; Jap *Mumonkan*).[53]

When properly used, *gong'an* are credited with helping students break down mental barriers to awakening. An example is the following, that is, number 43 in the *Wumenkuan*:

> Shou-shan held out his short staff and said, "If you call this a short staff, you oppose its reality; if you do not call it a short staff, you ignore the fact. Now quickly, say what it is![54]

The Pali Canon contains some cryptic koan-like teachings given by the Buddha, such as this one found in **the Māluṅkyā,putta Sutta** (S 35.95):[55]

> "When, Māluṅkyāputta, regarding what is seen, heard, sensed and cognized by you,
> in the seen will be only the seen;
> in the heard there will only be the heard;
> in the sensed there will only be the sensed;
> in the cognized there will only be the cognized,

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[51] Nanyuan Huiyong 南院慧顒 (Nan-yüan Hui-yung; Nan'in Egyō), also called Paoying Huiyong (d 930). **Fen-yang Shanzhao** 汾陽善昭 (Fen-yang Shan-chao, Funyo Zensho) (942-1024) of the Linchi 臨濟 (Jap *Rinzai*) school was the first to compile an anthology of koans, many of which he himself composed. These appear in the middle volume of the *Record of Fen-yang* (Fenyanglu). The use of the *gongan* is almost limited to the school of Linchi (d. 867). Other schools often criticized that such practices encourage "mere cleverness and wordplay rather than genuine enlightenment, and periodically answer-books have appeared purporting to give students an easy way to pass through the 'curriculum' and gain credentials" (*A Dictionary of Buddhism*: kōan).

[52] *Blue Cliff Records.* First compiled by **Xuedou Zhongxian** (Hsueh-tou Ch'ung-hsien, Secho Juken) (980-1052) and later expanded by **Yuanwu Keqin** (Yuan-wu K'o-ch'in, Engo Kokugon) (1063-1135).

[53] The Gateless Gate (Chin *Wu-men kuan*; Jap *Mumonkan*) is a collection of 48 koan anecdotes compiled by the Chinese Chan master **Wumen Huikai** (Wu-men Hui-k'ai, Mumon Ekai) (1183-1260) and published in 1229. These are encounters between various well-known Chinese Chan figures highlighting a decisive moment in their teaching. These condensed episodes are each accompanied by a short comment and poem by Hui-k'ai himself.

[54] "Students of Buddhist doctrine might recognize in this the teaching of the Two Truths of the Madhyamaka: the ultimate truth (its 'reality'), and the conventional truth ('the fact'). However much a student understands this doctrine intellectually, the kōan confronts him or her with the need to synthesize the two into a concise understanding of the application of the doctrine to an actual thing. To do so the student must break through to a new level of understanding." *A Dictionary of Buddhism*: kōan.

[55] This teaching is also given to the ascetic **Bāhiya Dārucīriya** (**Bāhiya S**, U 1.10/8). According to SA, in the form base, i.e. in what is seen by eye-consciousness, "there is only conciousness", that is, as eye-consciousness is not affected by lust, hatred or delusion in relation to form that has come into range, so the *javana* (impulsion) will be just a mere eye-consciousness by being empty of lust, etc. So, too, for the heard and the sensed. The "cognized" is the object cognized by the mind-door adverting (*mano,dvārâvajjana*). In the cognized, "only the cognized" is the adverting (consciousness) as the limit. As one does not become lustful, etc, by adverting, so I will set my mind with adverting as the limit, not allowing it to arise by way of lust, etc. *You will not be by "that" (na tena)*: you will not be aroused by *by that* lust, or irritated *by that* hatred, or deluded *by that* delusion. *Then you will not be "therein" (na tattha)*: the seen". For eye-consciousness sees only form in form, not some essence that is permanent, etc. So too for the remaining types of consciousness (ie the *javana* series, SPṭ), there will be merely the seen. Or, alternatively, the meaning is "My mind will be mere eye-consciousness, which means the cognizing of form in form. When you are not aroused by that lust, etc, then "you will not be therein"—not bound, not attached, not established in what is seen, heard, sensed and cognized. (See Bodhi S:B 1410 n75)

then, Māluṅkyāputta, you are 'not by that'.[56]

When Māluṅkyāputta, you are 'not by that', then you will 'not be therein'.[57]

When Māluṅkyāputta, you are 'not therein', then you will 'be neither here nor beyond nor in between the two'.[58] (S 35.95.13/4:73)

In the above exchange, the Buddha breaks through into Māluṅkyā,putta's intellectually-inclined mind with the use of "Dharma language" (as contrasted against "worldly language"). The Dharma language, however, is at best "conceptual" to the uninitiated or unenlightened, especially the intellectually-inclined. Indeed, when the Buddha teaches using Dharma language, it *sounds* the same to all his listeners but *means* different a thing to each of them!

In a remarkable case, the Buddha uses such "intentional language"[59] to communicate with **a weaver's daughter of Āḷavī** (DhA 3:170 ff). When the Buddha gazed at her, she knew that he wanted her to approach him. The following dialogue—called the **the Four Questions**—ensued before the confounded congregation:

Buddha:	Where do you come from, young girl?	
Girl:	I know not, venerable sir.	
Buddha:	Where are you going?	
Girl:	I know not, venerable sir.	
Buddha:	Do you not know?	
Girl:	I know, venerable sir.	
Buddha:	Do you know?	
Girl:	I know not, venerable sir.	(DhA 3:170 ff)

The four questions mean respectively:

"Where were you before you were reborn here?"
"Where will you be reborn?"
"Do you know that you will surely die?" and
"When will you die?" (DhA 3:172 f).

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[56] *Na tena,* that is, one would not be aroused "by that" lust, etc.

[57] *Na tattha,* that is, one would not be "therein", i.e. in the seen, etc.

[58] "Be neither here…nor in between the two," *n'ev'idha na huraṁ na ubhayam antarena,* meaning that one would not be reborn anywhere. Comy rejects *in between the two (ubhayam antarena)* as implying an intermediate state (*antarā,bhāva*). However, a number of canonical texts apparently support this notion (see, for example, **Kutuhala,sāla S** (The Debating Hall), where the Buddha declares: "When, Vaccha, a being has laid down this body but has not yet been reborn in another body, I declare that it is fuelled by craving." (S 4:400; cf M 1:266, 2:157). Ajahn Brahmavamso: "Another passage which gives strong support to the 'intermediate' state is found in [A 7.52] which lists the seven types of non-returner together with similes. The first three types of anagamis are called 'antara,parinibbayin' and are likened to a spark flying off a hot piece of metal which cools: 1. just after falling off, 2. while flying up, 3. while falling down, all before establishing themselves on the ground. The implication is of a state between death and re-appearance in the Suddh'āvāsa" (personal communication). Brahmavamso also mentioned in one of his public talks in Singapore (2002) that his experiences of the dying (in Thailand) seems to strongly suggest the existence of the intermediate state. See John Ireland, U:I 128 n21 & Mahasi Sayadaw, 1981:13 f; also Bodhi S:B 1406 n53, 1411 n75. See also "Is rebirth immediate?" (SD 17, 2003).

[59] **Intentional language** (*saṃ*dh(,bh(((; Tib. dgongs-pa) or sa(dhy(,bh((((lit. "twilight language") is not only a protection against the profanation of the sacred through intellectual curiosity, and misuse of yogic methods and psychic forces by the ignorant and the uninitiated, but has its origin mainly in the fact that everyday language is incapable of expressing the highest experiences of the spirit (which could at best be hinted at through similes and paradoxes) (Govinda 1960:53, 102). Intentional language is neither symbolic in the conventional sense (for then even a non-Buddhist intellectual could "translate" it) nor is it ultimate (insofar as it has been written down and therefore subject to mere intellectual interpretation). It is a "third" language, a tertium quid, between the conventional expression and the ultimate understanding of the Dharma. Dh 348 is an interesting example of intentional language used by the Buddha in connection with Uggasena [11]. See also Bharati1965:164-184 (ch 6).

No one in the crowd who "listened" to the Buddha only conceptually understood his words—but the weaver's daughter understood him intuitively, answered the questions correctly and gained the Eye of Wisdom (paññā,cakkhu) that sees things on the ultimate (*param'attha*) level.

11 The mouths are moving![60]

Ajahn Brahmavamso, in one of his public talks in Singapore in 2005,[61] showed his humorous insight in a contemporary response to a well known Zen anecdote, that is, the Gateless Gate[62] case 29. Two monks notice a temple flag flapping. One argues that the flag is moving; the other argues it is the wind. The teacher comes along and declares both of them wrong: it is the mind that is moving. Centuries later, Ajahn Brahm, a forest dhyana master, comes along and declares all three to be wrong: their mouths are moving! (Modern commentary by this ignoramus: All the four mouths are moving! As for me, only my own fingers are moving over the computer keyboard, gazing silly at the pixels.)

Such living exchanges are a healthy way of stretching one's mental muscles to look beyond words and into one's own mind. It teaches one to go beyond conceptual language and dogmatic hard-heartedness, and experience the conditioned nature of the world, if not to taste not-self or emptiness itself.

Let us now look at the original story from the Mumonkan, and discover a surprise: that Huikai had after all anticipated us all! That's how dhyana masters work!

Wúmén'guān case 29: The Sixth Patriarch's "Not wind, not flag"

Ajahn Brahmavamso, in one of his public talks in Singapore in 2005,[63] showed his humorous insight in a contemporary response to a well known Zen anecdote, that is, the Gateless Gate case 29. Two monks notice a temple flag flapping. One argues that the flag is moving; the other argues it is the wind. The teacher comes along and declares both of them wrong: it is the mind that is moving. Centuries later, Ajahn Brahm, a forest dhyana master, comes along and declares all three to be wrong: their mouths are moving! (Modern commentary by this ignoramus: All the four mouths are moving! As for me, only my own fingers are moving over the computer keyboard, gazing silly at the pixels.)

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[60] This anecdote is also recorded in the Sixth Patriarch Sutra, ch 1. One day Hui Neng thought, "The time has come to spread the Dharma. I cannot stay in hiding forever." Accordingly, he went to Fa Hsing Monastery in Kuang Chou where Dharma Master Yin Tsung was giving lectures on The Nirvana Sutra.

At that time, two monks were discussing the topic of the wind and a flag. One said, "The wind is moving." The other said, "The flag is moving." They argued endlessly. Hui Neng stepped forward and said, "The wind is not moving, nor is the flag. Your minds, venerables, are moving." Everyone was startled.

[61] See *Dhamma Journal* 2004 5,1:13, or ch 14 of Brahmavamso's forthcoming book, *The Beautiful Breath*.

[62] **The Gateless Gate** (無門關 *Wu-men kuan* **(**Wúmén'guān); Jap *Mumonkan*) is a collection of 48 koan anecdotes compiled by the Chinese Chan master **Wu-men Hui-k'ai** 無門慧開 (Wúmén Huìkāi, 1183-1260) and published in 1229. These are encounters between various well-known Chinese Chan figures highlighting a decisive moment in their teaching. These condensed episodes are each accompanied by a short comment and poem by Hui-k'ai himself. Download from http://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/zen/mumonkan.htm.

[63] See *Dhamma Journal* 2004 5,1:13, or ch 14 of Brahmavamso's forthcoming book, *The Beautiful Breath*.

Wúmén'guān case 29: The Sixth Patriarch's "Not wind, not flag"

無門關 第二十九 公案 六祖[64]之 非風非幡
Wúmén'guān dì'èrshíjǐu gōng'àn Liùzūzhī fēifēngfēifān

因風颺刹幡。有二僧、對論。
yīn fēng yáng chà fān. yǒu èr sēng, duì lùn
A temple flag[65] [streamer] was flapping because of the wind. Two monks were arguing.

一云、幡動。一云、風動。
yì yún, fān dòng. yì yún, fēng dòng.
One said, "The flag is moving!" The other said, "The wind is moving!"

往復曾未契理。
wǎng fù céng wèi qì lǐ
They argued back and forth, but could not reach a conclusion.

祖云、不是風動、不是幡動、仁者心動。
Zǔ yún, bú shì fēng dòng, bú shì fān dòng, rén zhě xīn dòng
The Patriarch said, "It is not the wind that is moving: it is not the flag that is moving—it is your mind that is moving!"

二僧悚然。
èr sēng sǒng rán
The two monks were awe-struck.

Wumen's Comment

無門曰、不是風動、不是幡動、不是心動、甚處見祖師。
Wúmén yuè, bú shì fēng dòng, bú shì fān dòng, bú shì xīn dòng, shěn chù jiàn Zǔshī.
Wumen says: "It is not the wind that moves; it is not the flag that moves; it is not the mind that moves. How do you see the patriarch?

若向者裏見得親切、方知二僧買鐵得金。
ruò xiàng zhě lǐ jiàn de qīn qiè, fāng zhī èr sēng mǎi tiě de jīn.
If you see this deeply [If you truly understand this], then you will know that the two monks, buying iron, received gold.

祖師忍俊不禁、一場漏逗。
Zǔshī rěn jùn bù jīn, yì cháng lòu dòu.
The venerable Patriarch could not hold back his mirth, teasing them for a while."

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[64] Orig Chinese text from: http://homepage1.nifty.com/poem-club/mumonnkan/mumonkanwoyomu.htm. I thank my wife Ratna for assisting me with the pinyin transliteration and translation of the Chinese. For an English tr, see Katsuki Sekida, *Two Zen Classics: Mumonkan and Hekiganroku*. NY: Weatherhill, 1977:26-137.

[65] "Flag," 幡 fān, a streamer, a long narrow flag.

Wumen's Verse 頌曰 sòng yuè

風幡心動	fēng fān xīn dòng	Wind, flag, and mind are moving:
一状領過	yì zhuàng lǐng guò	All are equally to blame.
只知開口	zhǐ zhī kāi kǒu	They only know how to open their mouths,
不覺話墮	bù jué huà duò	Unaware of their fault in talking.

12 Sudden awakenings

The Chan tradition is full of stories of the "sudden enlightenment" of various Chan masters. It is said, for example, that the Zen master **Reiun** worked on the Way for thirty years. Once when he was traveling in the mountains, he took a rest at the foot of a mountain and gazed at a village in the distance. It was spring at the time, and seeing the peach blossoms in full bloom, he suddenly was enlightened.

The Chan master **Xiangyan Zhixian**,[66] it is said, was in the habit of sweeping and weeding the grounds around the Sixth Patriarch's tomb. One day, as he emptied out his barrowful of weeds and pebbles in the backyard, a pebble hit a bamboo trunk with a resounding clunk. On hearing the sound he suddenly "awoke."

The Chan master **Wumen Huikai**[67] practised strict discipline and meditation on the koan *mu* for six years without success. One day, he heard the drumb-beat for meal-time and immediately was enlightened.

The Pali Commentaries are full of such Chan-like stories where monks and nuns apparently gain sudden insight and liberation. The acrobat **Uggasena**, for example, after doing 14 somersaults, lands on his feet on the top of a bamboo pole. Then he hears the Buddha's koan-like teaching and becomes an arhat:

> Let go of the front [future]!
> Let go of the back [past]!
> Let go of the middle [the present]!
> Cross over to the farther shore [nirvana]!
> With the mind released from everything,
> Suffer no more birth nor decay. (Dh 348; DhA 24.6/4:62 f)

The Suttas often mention the joyful serenity of the practitioner. A forest deva once asks the Buddha why the monks meditating in the forests, living only on a single meal a day, look very serene. The Buddha's reply is recorded in **the Arañña Sutta** (S 1.10):[68]

> They do not sorrow after the past,
> Nor do they long for the future.
> They keep themselves to what is before them—
> Hence their demeanour is so serene.
>
> Through longing for the future,
> Through sorrowing after the past,

[66] Xiangyan Zhixian (Hsiang-yen Chih-hsien, Kyogen Chikan), d 840 or 898. See **Gateless Gate** Case 3, **Kai-genroku 9**. Studied with Baizhang, received transmission from his Dharma-brother Guishan. See Dogen's **Gabyo**, **Soshi-sairai-no-i** and **Gyoji**.

[67] Wumen Huikai (Wu-men Hui-k'ai, Mumon Ekai), 1183-1260. Compiled the famous **Gateless Gate** (**Wu-menguan**, **Wu-men-kuan**, **Mumonkan**) collection of 49 koans. Published in 1229, and brought to Japan in 1254.

[68] A similar teaching is found in the verses of the 4 **Bhaddekaratta Suttas** (M 131-134): "Let one not return to the past, | Nor should one long for the future. | What is past is gone, | The future has not yet come. | One who sees into the present state | Even as it arises (moment to moment), | Let one know that, be sure of it, | Immovable, unshak-able" (M 131-134/3:187-202).

Fools dry up and wither away
Like green reed that is cut down. (S 1.10/1:5)

It is said that the elder **Bhagu,** while meditating, feels drowsy. He goes out of his room to go up to the cloistered walkway to do walking meditation and refresh himself. Just as he leaves his room, he falls on to the ground and there and then he gains arhathood.[69] Similarly, the aged nun **Dhammā,** who on her way back from an almsround, falls down to the ground, and at once becomes an arhat.[70]

The nun **Sīhā,** the niece of general Sīha, even after seven years of strenuous meditation, fails to win liberation. Utterly disappointed with her failure, she decides to commit suicide by hanging herself. Just as she puts the noose around her neck, she gains liberation as an arhat.[71]

One of the most dramatic stories of the saints is that of the nun **Paṭācārā**, who, on having lost all of her family, becomes mad. The Buddha heals her; she becomes a stream-winner and joins the Order. One day, while washing her feet, she meditates on the water that runs off her feet, flowing into the ground. Then going into her cell to retire, she takes a needle to put out the oil-lamp. Just as the light is extinguished, she gains liberation.[72]

The awakening of **Deshan** (Jap Tokusan) [8], a great scholar of the Diamond Sutra, is said to have occurred in a similar manner. Learning that there is such a thing as Chan, not relying on any scriptures and directly seeing into reality, he goes to the Chan master **Longtan Zhongxin**[73] for instructions. One day, Deshan sits in the open, deep in his practice. Longtan then says, "Why don't you come in?" Deshan enters and says, "It's pitch dark." Longtan lights a candle and holds it out. When Deshan is about to take it from Longtan, a gust suddenly blows it out, whereupon Deshan sees the light.

In all such liberation stories, the awakening (Jap *satori*) of the saints appears to be sudden. However, it is clear that they have laboured well (in this life or in previous lives) for that liberating moment, like a ripening durian that drops of its own accord when the time is right. By "sudden" here obviously is meant that one cannot know or plan when one would be liberated. One can only keep to one's practice, be mindful and the awakening process will takes its own course. On the other hand, since we cannot deliberately make them happen, all awakenings are sudden.

13 Buddhism as a family of religions and systems

Despite all the interesting parallels between the early Buddhism and Chan (and other post-Buddha developments of Buddhism), these parallels do not meet. Chan is a Buddhism in its own right and is the most Chinese of the Buddhisms of China, creating their own "sutra" (the Sixth Patriarch Platform Sutra) and lineage histories, and peculiar Chan practices, where

> Teaching techniques began to overshadow doctrinal content. At the heart of Chan training are the exchanges between teacher and student. Records, called *gongan* (Jap *kōan*) 公案, were compiled of classic encounters, and even these eventually became part of the teaching techniques, as they were presented to students as riddles to concentrate on during meditation. To disrupt the sort of idle or pernicious speculation that could prove a hindrance to enlightenment, abrupt and shocking

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[69] Tha 271-274; ThaA 2:112; cf V 1:350, 2:182; M 3:155; DhA 1:56, 133; J 1:140, 3:489; Miln 107. See **Upakkilesa S** (M 128) = SD 8.1(4), 2005.

[70] Thī 17; ThīA 23 f.

[71] Thī 77-81; ThīA 79.

[72] Dh 288 f; 113; Thī 112-116, 218 f; AA 552-560; DhA 8.12/2:260-270; ThīA 108-112. See DhA:B Introd §27, Synoptical Table & p50. The Commentarial accounts are confusing. The **Dhammapada Comy** says that she becomes an arhat after mindfully watching the water flowing into the ground. The **Therīgāthā Comy,** however, adds that she enters her cell and on putting out the oil-lamp, she wins arhathood. It is impossible for a person to gain awakening twice. However, from the canonical verses (Thī 112-116), it is clear that she only mindfully watches the flowing water, and becomes an arhat at the putting out of the lamp. See Piya Tan, "The Buddha and His Disciples" 9.13d (The Agony and the Ecstasy), 2004.

[73] Longtan Zhongxin (Lung-t'an Ch'ing-hsin), Jap Ryūtan (or Ryōtan) Sōshin (9th cent).

> techniques were employed, from radical statements such as, "If you meet Buddha on the road, kill him!," to exchanges punctuated by blows and shouts (all the more startling in the subdued monastic atmosphere in which they would unexpectedly occur). Linji's methods were designed to make students confront and overcome their mental and emotional habits and crutches, so as to become truly free and independent. Even dependency on Buddhism could be a crutch. Linji summarized his teaching with the phrase: "Don't be deceived." (Lusthaus 1998:15)

Clearly the "operating system" of Chan as evident here and that of early Buddhism are very different, and it is important to remember this when talking about Buddhism. As Buddhism spreads after the Buddha and beyond India, and adapts itself in different ways in different cultures answering different challenges, new forms and faces of Buddhism arise. Such "Buddhisms" have to be understood in their respective contexts. As such, when one speaks of *satori,* one should remember that it is not the *bodhi* of early Buddhism, and so on. The various philosophies and apparent contradictions of doctrine and practices are easier reconciled, or rather understood, if we look at them as belonging to different forms of Buddhism, albeit sharing the same ancient roots. In short, "Buddhism" is today a family of Buddhist religions and systems.

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