

Tiantai Calming-and-Insight Meditation

Lecture Series

Part Two

The Six Gates to the Sublime

Teachings by:

Venerable Master Jing-Lian

Tiantai Calming-and-Insight Meditation

Lecture Series – Four Parts

1. Smaller Calming-and-Insight Meditation

--- The Essentials of Buddhist Meditation

2. Unfixed Calming-and-Insight Meditation

--- The Six Gates to the Sublime

3. Gradual and Sequential Calming-and-Insight Meditation

--- Explanation of the Sequence in The Perfection of Meditation

4. Perfect and Sudden Calming-and-Insight Meditation

--- The Great Calming-and-Insight Meditation

Origination

Tiantai Calming-and-Insight Meditation has a huge system and profound theory. My thoughts are with enthusiastic novice practitioners who are at a loss when approaching it, thereby flinch from it. This is rather regrettable. Veteran practitioners are normally unable to grasp the crux, making it difficult for a breakthrough to improve their skills.

While it may appear that Tiantai Calming-and-Insight Meditation's methods are simple, the profound teachings as a basis behind it is hardly realised. So in order to accomplish Tiantai Calming-and-Insight Meditation, not only does one need to delve deeply into the teachings, one needs to have the concrete cultivation method.

In view of this, we hope that the lessons this time can incorporate both theory and cultivation; then we will live up to Tiantai Calming-and-Insight Meditation's reputation of 'Excellence in Both Theory and Cultivation'.

Lastly, let us dedicate the merits of these lessons to all sentient beings in the dharma-realm; and hope that all virtuous ones who have the causes to hear these lessons, have accomplishments in calming-and insight-meditation; be enlightened together and are generous in sharing their knowledge.

Jing-Lian

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Written in Taipei Xindian Wuyunju

Preface

After Tiantai Calming-and-Insight Meditation lecture series Part 1, Master continues with Part 2 – The Six Gates to the Sublime.

After hearing The Smaller Calming-and-Insight Meditation, practitioners should already have the preliminary knowledge and actual cultivation foundation on starting their practice. If you would like to go a step further, you can continue with the cultivation of The Six Gates to the Sublime.

Altogether there are ten chapters in The Six Gates to the Sublime. These ten chapters explain separately how one can attain nirvana through the cultivation of any one of the gates – counting, following, stabilisation, contemplation, turning and purification; cultivation of the individual gates and the realisation; how to cultivate according to one's convenience and suitability; how to use the six gates to counteract obstacles that arise from the cultivation; as long as one cultivates one gate skilfully, the other five gates are incorporated into it; the differences in outcome of people with different faculties cultivating The Six Gates to the Sublime; what the phenomena of Bodhisattvas, people with great faculties and great beings with penetrating faculties, are like when they cultivate The Six Gates to the Sublime; and the four types of realisation signs from cultivating the nine chapters in The Six Gates to the Sublime.

The Six Gates to the Sublime is supreme; it encompasses all meditation methods regardless of Hinayana, Mahayana or Vajrayana. As long as we can integrate and penetrate The Six Gates to the Sublime, we will have unimpeded understanding of all methods. Hence after listening to the eight lessons, apart from enhancing in us the confidence in the teachings of The Six Gates to the Sublime, we cannot help having immense respect for Great Master Zhizhe who has the reputation of 'Little Shakyamuni of the East' – a title that is absolutely true! So long as we repeatedly reflect and practise the contents in these ten chapters, I believe it will help in our understanding and the skill of our self-cultivation; just like Master has always emphasised 'Skill will move along with your view'. Now you will have a deeper experience and realisation of this.

Next we have two more books in the lecture series- 'Explanation of The Perfection of Meditation' and 'The Great Calming-and-Insight Meditation'; we are looking forward to it. There is no better way to show our gratitude to Buddha's teachings and Master's guidance than to make a vow to dedicate the merits from our actual self-cultivation to all sentient beings.

If you need the latest recordings of the lessons or the original transcript, you can download, listen or browse at Master's website. You can email us if you have any questions for Master that is related to meditation; our fellow practitioner will convey it to Master on your behalf.

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Lectures on The Six Gates to the Sublime

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The Six Gates to the Sublime
Lecture 1
Teachings by Venerable Master Jing-Lian

Venue: Tai Pei Buddhist Centre
30 June 2009

Lecture Contents

- **Brief Introduction of The Six Gates to the Sublime**
- **Explanation of Title**
- **Chapter 1 - The Six Gates to the Sublime in Relation to the Dhyana Absorption**
- **Chapter 2 - The Six Gates to the Sublime in Terms of Sequential Development (Cultivate Counting)**

Namo Amitabha Buddha to everyone!

We know that there is a total of four parts in 'Tiantai Calming-and-Insight Meditation': Part 1 is perfect and sudden calming-and-insight meditation, known as 'The Great Calming-and-Insight Meditation' with ten volumes. Part 2 is gradual and sequential calming-and-insight meditation known as 'The Perfection of Meditation' also with ten volumes. Part 3 is smaller calming-and-insight meditation known as 'The Essentials of Buddhist Meditation', which has been covered in our last lecture. Part 4 is unfixed calming-and-insight meditation, which is what we are going to present this time – 'The Six Gates to the Sublime'.

Sequence of Practice in the Four Parts of Tiantai Calming-and-Insight Meditation

Which of these four parts of meditation to start cultivating with? Normally we start with 'Tiantai Smaller Calming-and-Insight Meditation'. We understand from the earlier lecture that it contains the twenty-five prerequisites for calming-and-insight meditation cultivation. When these prior conditions are met before you start cultivating, you will not have all kinds of mistakes and can attain calming-and-insight quickly. The second part to cultivate is what we are presenting this time – 'The Six Gates to the Sublime'. As it encompasses all meditation methods, as long as you have accomplishment in The Six Gates to the Sublime, it is equivalent to having accomplishment in all meditation methods. 'The Perfection of Meditation' is next; and lastly is 'The Great Calming-and-Insight Meditation'. Follow this sequence and cultivate part by part.

We have already presented 'The Smaller Calming-and-Insight Meditation'. For 'The Six Gates to the Sublime', we will complete it in two times, each time there will be four lectures. Subsequently we hope to complete 'The Perfection of Meditation' and 'The Great Calming-and-Insight Meditation'. In this way, Tiantai Calming-and-Insight Meditation will be supreme! If you can accomplish all the four parts of Tiantai Calming-and-Insight Meditation, you will not be baffled by all meditation methods as it encompasses all calming-and-insight meditation methods – 'four dhyanas and eight meditative absorptions', practice of non-Buddhists, Hinayana meditation, Mahayana meditation, Vajrayana meditation. Therefore we hope that we can complete it.

Now we will explain why 'The Perfection of Meditation' is known as 'gradual and sequential calming-and-insight meditation'. It is known as such because it explains most systematically and most sequentially the attainment of perfection of meditation (dhyana paramita). It is part of 'The Great Treatise on the Perfection of Wisdom', under the section 'The Perfection of Meditation'. Great Master Zhizhe explained it most clearly and most comprehensively.

Tiantai Smaller Calming-and-Insight Meditation is actually the essence of volume 2, 3 and 4 of 'The Perfection of Meditation'. Great Master Zhizhe specially extracted it out to explain the way to start the cultivation of meditation; hence it is the most suitable for novice practitioners.

As for 'The Great Calming-and-Insight Meditation', it focuses more on the development of ideology of calming-and-insight meditation. Why is it known as 'perfect and sudden calming-and-insight meditation'? 'Perfect and sudden' refers to the non-duality of initial and final; as such there is

absolutely no sequence. Such a method is not suitable to start cultivating with. Ultimately there is no duality, so it is suitable as a final practice; that is why it is put at the end.

Now we are going to explain why 'The Six Gates to the Sublime' is known as 'unfixed calming-and-insight meditation'. This is because the meditative absorption realised is unfixed; and the fruit realised is also unfixed, it depends on the intention of your practice. If you practise with mundane intention, you can only realise mundane meditative absorption; if you practise with supramundane intention, you can realise supramundane meditative absorption. That is why it is known as unfixed. Moreover the signs of realisation are not the same. There is so-called sequential realisation, interrelated realisation, reverse-oriented realisation, perfect-and-sudden realisation, semblance of perfect realisation, and genuinely perfect realisation. That is why it is known as unfixed calming-and-insight meditation. It gives rise to the realisation of different meditative absorptions, different fruits of realisation and all kinds of different signs of realisation.

Brief Introduction of The Six Gates to the Sublime

There are a total of ten chapters in The Six Gates to the Sublime. We will first have a rough introduction of the contents of all the ten chapters before explaining the individual chapters in detail. After the simple introduction, we will have an idea of The Six Gates to the Sublime.

Chapter 1 is '**The Six Gates to the Sublime in Relation to the Dhyana Absorptions**'. This chapter explains the relationship between The Six Gates to the Sublime and other meditation methods. It compares the meditation in The Six Gates to the Sublime with other meditation methods. In so doing, we will realise that The Six Gates to the Sublime is the foundation of all meditation methods. More importantly, if you wish to attain enlightenment, you cannot attain it through the mundane and non-Buddhist meditation practices. However you can do so through The Six Gates to the Sublime; moreover it is possible through every gate. This is why it is known as 'sublime'. Anyone who wants to be enlightened has to do so through The Six Gates to the Sublime. There is not a single holy man from the three vehicles – Shravaka (hearer) Vehicle, Pratyekabuddha (solitary realiser) Vehicle and Bodhisattva Vehicle – who has attained enlightenment without The Six Gates to the Sublime.

Chapter 2 is '**The Six Gates to the Sublime in Terms of Sequential Development**'. This chapter mainly explains the cultivation signs and realisation signs of The Six Gates to the Sublime. For instance, the first is counting the breath. How do you cultivate counting the breath? How long should you cultivate counting the breath before attaining the signs of realisation of counting the breath? So firstly, we will explain what cultivation of counting is, then what realisation of counting is. Secondly, we will explain what following the breath is – what is cultivation of following, what is realisation of following. Thirdly, we will explain stabilisation; subsequently contemplation, turning and purification. There are cultivation signs and realisation signs for all the six gates. With these signs you will know at which stage of cultivation you are at; and whether you have attained realisation of that gate. Only when we are able to do this, can we go further to explain how to use the six gates flexibly. The Six Gates to the Sublime has a total of six cultivation signs and six realisation signs.

Next, we will explain the sequential occurrence wherein each gate gives rise to another. For instance, you cultivate counting the breath and when you attain realisation of counting the breath, you can progress to the second gate of following the breath. Then sequentially enter into stabilisation, contemplation, turning and finally purification. What is the purpose of the sequential occurrence of the gates? According to, first counting, second following, third stabilisation, fourth contemplation, fifth turning, sixth purification; this sequential occurrence are as steps leading to one's entry into the Path. It is like climbing up the steps from level one to reach level two; and from level two to three, all the way to level six.

Chapter 3 is '**The Six Gates to the Sublime in Accordance with Suitability**'. This chapter explains the skilful way of concrete cultivation according to your convenience and suitability. Once we are very familiar with the practice in Chapter 2, we will know how to use The Six Gates to the Sublime flexibly, according to the suitability and convenience of your present state. For instance, when you cultivate following the breath and you are always unable to attain calmness of the mind; then you can change to cultivating counting the breath. Sometimes you cultivate calming and sometimes insight. You must be able to know out of the six gates, which gate is the most suitable for you at that time.

Chapter 4 is '**The Six Gates to the Sublime as Means of Counteraction**'. This chapter is also very important. It explains how you can skilfully use The Six Gates to the Sublime to eliminate the three delusions – delusion arising from imperfect perception, delusion arising from the immense variety of duties in saving sentient beings; and delusion arising from primal ignorance. You can also eliminate the three obstacles– the obstacles of delusion which accompanies retribution, the obstacles of emotions; and the karmic obstacles from the previous lives. How do you use The Six Gates to the Sublime skilfully to eliminate the three obstacles? For instance, you can use contemplation gate and turning gate to counteract the obstacles of delusion which accompanies retribution; use purification gate to counteract the obstacles of karma from the previous lives. The methods for counteraction are explained in detail in this chapter.

Chapter 5 is '**The Six Gates to the Sublime in Terms of Mutual Inclusion**'. Mutual means every gate has the other five gates incorporated into it. For instance, the counting gate has all the other five gates – following, stabilisation, contemplation, turning and purification, incorporated into it. So with every gate mutually incorporating the other five gates, a total of thirty-six gates can be induced. When you cultivate one gate, it is equivalent to cultivating all the other gates as they are mutually incorporated.

Chapter 6 is '**The Six Gates to the Sublime in Terms of Identities and Differences**'. This chapter explains that The Six Gates to the Sublime can be cultivated by ordinary people, non-Buddhists; Shravaka (hearer) Vehicle, Pratyekabuddha (solitary realiser) Vehicle and Bodhisattva Vehicle practitioners. However, due to differences in intentions, faculties and understandings of wisdom, the fruits are different.

Chapter 7 is '**The Six Gates to the Sublime in Accordance with Reversed Orientation**'. This chapter explains about the flexibility in the usage of The Six Gates to the Sublime in orientating reversely all Mahayana merits like the six paramitas, the four methods of pacification, etc. This is exactly the Bodhisattva practice of disciplining oneself in the Buddhist teachings in order to benefit others. In

some sutras and shastras, this section is known as 'Reversed Orientation Dharani', which refers to how all Mahayana merits are orientated reversely. Chapter 1 to 6 above are cultivated by all three vehicles - Shravaka (hearer) Vehicle, Pratyekabuddha (solitary realiser) Vehicle and Bodhisattva Vehicle; however, this chapter is meant for Bodhisattvas only. As long as you are able to reverse orientate, generating all the merits of Mahayana from The Six Gates to the Sublime, you are on the Bodhisattva path of benefiting sentient beings. This is very important to Bodhisattvas as in a split second you can reverse orientate, generating the merits of Mahayana completely.

Chapter 8 is '**The Six Gates to the Sublime According to Contemplation of the Mind**'. This chapter explains that you need not follow the sequence; simply contemplate on the nature of the mind and you would have perfected The Six Gates to the Sublime. However this is not the cultivation for ordinary people; Great Master Zhizhe specially explained it for practitioners with great faculties.

Chapter 9 is '**The Six Gates to the Sublime According to The Perfect Contemplation**'. This chapter is even greater; it propagates how perfectly sublime, inconceivable and exceptional The Six Gates to the Sublime is. This is meant for Bodhisattvas with penetrating faculties. We have always heard about the description of this perfect contemplation – one is all, all is one. Complete integration of all things (dharmas), enter infinite cultivation methods. This chapter tells us how to cultivate the perfect contemplation of The Six Gates to the Sublime to enter this inconceivable Mahayana phenomenon.

Chapter 10 is '**The Six Gates to the Sublime in Accordance with the Signs of Realisation**'. The nine chapters in front present different methods of cultivation of The Six Gates to the Sublime. They mainly explain the signs of cultivating the cause. Every chapter teaches you the method to cultivate The Six Gates to the Sublime; and also teaches you how to use, reverse-orientate and contemplate. However, Chapter 10 focuses on the signs of realisation; it explains in detail the different signs of realisation. There are a total of four signs of realisation. Firstly, 'sequential realisation' is Chapter 1 and 2 of The Six Gates to the Sublime. Secondly, 'interrelated realisation' is Chapter 3, 4, 5 and 6. Thirdly, 'reversed-oriented realisation' is Chapter 7. Fourthly, 'perfect-and-sudden realisation' is Chapter 8 and 9. In addition, it also explains what the signs of semblance of perfect realisation are, and the genuinely perfect realisation signs. The differences between the two types of signs are also explained, so that the signs with semblance will not be mistaken for the genuine signs of realisation; otherwise it can be dangerous.

When we finish reading the contents in these ten chapters, we will know that the book on The Six Gates to the Sublime not only has a tightly organised system, it also has rich contents. Most importantly, it explains in detail the part of calming-and-insight meditation cultivation that is the most mysterious, most profound and most difficult to understand.

Ordinary calming-and-insight meditation is unable to explain such a mysterious part but The Six Gates to the Sublime is able to do so; explaining the part on the realisation of The Perfect Contemplation. It is beyond the reach of our sixth consciousness; that is why it is known as inconceivable. It is so inconceivable that it is beyond our thoughts and words. Nonetheless, Great Master Zhizhe explained it very clearly in simple context. He used very simple style, words and descriptions to explain the part that is extremely profound and the most difficult to understand, in

order to teach us how to enter such a state. Hence it is indeed an indispensable calming-and-insight meditation book within the Chan School. Since ancient times, these two books – The Six Gates to the Sublime and The Smaller Calming-and-Insight Meditation (The Essentials of Buddhist Meditation) have been classified as the highest level guide for sitting meditation cultivation. If you wish to cultivate calming-and-insight meditation, you definitely have to start from The Smaller Calming-and-Insight Meditation before proceeding to The Six Gates to the Sublime. Great Master Zhizhe had incorporated all meditative absorption methods through The Six Gates to the Sublime; so when we learn this method, it is equivalent to having learnt all methods of meditation. It is that supreme and precious.

Explanation of Title

Next we will explain the title of this scripture. What is ‘The Six Gates to the Sublime’? ‘Six’ is number; using number to explain the contents of meditation methods. What about ‘sublime’? It means subtle, mysterious and inconceivable. What is the most subtle and most inconceivable in this world? It is nirvana; so ‘sublime’ here refers to nirvana. Every gate in The Six Gates to the Sublime can lead us to the attainment of nirvana. This ‘gate’ refers to a path leading to nirvana; that is why it is known as The Six Gates to the Sublime. As to how sublime each gate is, we will look at Chapter 1 which explains clearly.

Chapter 1 The Six Gate to the Sublime in Relation to the Dhyana Absorptions

Let us take a look at Chapter 1 ‘The Six Gates to the Sublime in Relation to Dhyana Absorptions’. This is to explain how supreme and precious The Six Gates to the Sublime is, through its relation with all dhyana absorptions.

First, rely on ‘counting’ as a gate to the sublime. Why is ‘counting’ a gate to the sublime? This is because through relying on counting the breath, one gains the ability to manifest the four dhyanas, the ‘four immeasurable minds’, and the ‘four formless absorptions’. The four dhyanas and the four formless absorptions is what is known to us as the ‘four dhyanas and eight meditative absorptions’. Non-Buddhists also cultivate the four dhyanas and eight meditative absorptions but they are unable to attain nirvana; at most they reach the highest level of the four dhyanas and eight meditative absorptions of ‘neither perception nor non-perception absorption’. These non-Buddhists thought that this stage is nirvana. Since there is neither perception nor non-perception (there is no more coarse thoughts but faint thoughts remain), they thought that this phenomenon is nirvana. However after you have cultivated The Six Gates to the Sublime, you will know that this is not nirvana although there is neither perception nor non-perception. At this stage, as long as you are aware that this is not nirvana, you definitely can attain the fruits of the Shravaka (hearer) Vehicle, Pratyekabuddha (solitary realiser) Vehicle and Bodhisattva Vehicle. Therefore, this is the reason that ‘counting’ is a gate to the sublime; you can attain nirvana simply through counting your breath.

We can also attain nirvana with following the breath. **So ‘following’ is the second gate to the sublime.** Relying on following the breath can give rise to the ‘sixteen superior phenomena’. Actually

we want to explain the sixteen superior phenomena this time but the organiser hopes to complete the four calming-and-insight meditations. As the sixteen superior phenomena will be mentioned in 'The Perfection of Meditation', we will explain it in detail when we present it then. Relying on the sixteen superior phenomena, one can manifest realisation of nirvana. The last absorption in the sixteen superior phenomena is the 'contemplation of renunciation'; if one has awareness of this neither perception nor non-perception absorption; and does not attach to it, one goes a step further to attain nirvana. That is why 'following' is a gate to the sublime.

'Stabilisation' is the third gate to the sublime. We can also attain nirvana through stabilisation. As a result of stabilising the mind; the **'five-wheel dhyanas'** is generated. What is the five-wheel dhyana?

The first is **'samadhi of the wheel of earth'**, which is so-called the 'preliminary ground meditative absorption'. Meditative absorption progresses from coarse thoughts to faint thoughts before entering the 'realm of desire meditative absorption'. Going a step further, one enters the preliminary ground meditative absorption. This is not the first dhyana; it is the foundation for bringing forth the first dhyana. It resembles the earth which is the foundation of all things; samadhi of the wheel of earth is the foundation of all meditative absorptions. That is why it is known as samadhi of the wheel of earth.

Normally when you have realisation of the preliminary ground meditative absorption, all kinds of roots of goodness signs will be generated. We have explained all kinds of roots of goodness in the lectures on The Smaller Calming-and-Insight Meditation. Normally it is especially easy to generate the roots of goodness of past lives when we reach the preliminary ground meditative absorption. This is known as **'samadhi of the wheel of water'**.

The third wheel is known as **'samadhi of the wheel of empty space'**. After you have realised all kinds of roots of goodness signs, you can enter dhyana one, dhyana two, dhyana three and dhyana four; and within these meditative absorptions, you contemplate all things (dharmas) arising from causes and conditions are devoid of any inherent nature and are comparable to empty space. As empty space is formless, the emptiness that you have realised is also formless; that is why empty space is used as an analogy and it is known as samadhi of the wheel of empty space. This is when you already have very deep experience and realisation of emptiness, viewing emptiness like the empty space.

What will happen next? You will be able to see that the illusions arising from imperfect perception are like the empty space, devoid of any inherent nature. You will not be afraid of these illusions as you have the wisdom to know that all things (dharmas) arising from causes and conditions, are devoid of any inherent nature. We can then eliminate all such illusions. At this point of time it is known as **'gold-dust samadhi'**. We use gold-dust as an analogy for the wisdom of emptiness; this is the real wisdom which can eliminate illusions arising from imperfect perception.

What kind of phenomenon will we enter when illusions arising from imperfect perception are eliminated? We will enter vajra-wheel samadhi and then be enlightened. So the fifth wheel is **'vajra-wheel samadhi'**. That is, you have transcended the four dhyanas and eight meditative absorptions, and when you enter the ninth sequential absorption to the 'diamond samadhi'; you are able to

eliminate all afflictions in the three realms and enter nirvana. At this point of time, it is known as vajra-wheel samadhi.

All these five originated from 'stabilisation' and ultimately lead to realisation of nirvana. That is why 'stabilisation' is a gate to the sublime. It is sublime because through the cultivation of stabilisation you can attain nirvana. The sequence to reaching nirvana is – you start with coarse thoughts, followed by faint thoughts, then you attain the realm of desire meditative absorption, followed by the preliminary ground meditative absorption. At this point of time all kinds of roots of goodness will be generated; especially more so during the preliminary ground meditative absorption. Then you can deepen your meditative absorption skills to enter first dhyana, second dhyana, third dhyana and fourth dhyana. While in this meditative absorption, bring forth the wisdom through contemplation. What is this wisdom? It is the wisdom of - all things (dharmas) that arise from causes and conditions are devoid of any inherent nature. Then use this wisdom of emptiness to eliminate the illusions arising from imperfect perfection; once these illusions are eliminated, you can attain realisation of nirvana. This is the result of relying on stabilisation. Hence 'stabilisation' is a gate to the sublime.

The fourth gate to the sublime is 'contemplation'. This because the cultivation of contemplation can give rise to the nine reflections, the eight recollections, the ten reflections, the eight liberations, the eight bases of ascendancy, the ten universal bases, the nine sequential absorptions, the lion-sport samadhi, the 'over-leaping' samadhi, the 'practice' dhyanas, the fourteen transformational minds, the three clarities, the six super knowledges, the eight liberations, attain the samadhi beyond sensation and thought (this is the diamond samadhi that we have mentioned earlier); then enter nirvana. Hence 'contemplation' is a gate to the sublime.

The fifth gate to the sublime is 'turning'. If we use our wisdom to skilfully analyse all things (dharmas) arising from causes and conditions, we will know that they are devoid of any inherent nature; there is no conditioning power of the mind and the conditioned phenomena. When both the conditioning and the conditioned are gone, you will be restored to the original mind. This is 'turning' as a gate to the sublime.

Once you have been restored to the purity of your self-nature, then that is 'purification' as a gate to the sublime. If you can realise the fundamental purity of all things (dharmas), then you gain the realisation of the dhyana of the fundamental nature. On account of attaining this dhyana, practitioners of the two vehicles can experience an absorption-based realisation of nirvana; bodhisattvas will attain the great fruit of enlightenment. There are nine types of great dhyana – the dhyana of the fundamental nature, the all-encompassing dhyana, the difficult-to-access dhyana, the universal-gateway dhyana, the good-person dhyana, the dhyana of all practices, the dhyana which dispenses with affliction, the dhyana of bliss in this world and other worlds and, the dhyana of purity. It is normal not to understand all these. Starting from the first gate of counting, there is the four dhyanas, the four immeasurable minds, the four formless absorptions; till finally the nine types of great dhyanas; they are all comprehensively covered in The Perfection of Meditation which will be explained in detail when we present them in future.

The purpose of reading out this big segment is to let everyone understand how supreme The Six Gates to the Sublime is. It covers all schools of meditation; from the non-Buddhist cultivation of four

dhyanas and eight meditative absorptions to the Hinayana fruit of realisation of nirvana; all the way to the Mahayana fruit of realisation of Bodhisattva. All these are attainable through The Six Gates to the Sublime. So now we know why The Six Gates to the Sublime is so supreme. This is Chapter 1.

Chapter 2 The Six Gates to the Sublime in Terms of Sequential Development

Chapter 2 is 'The Six Gates to the Sublime in Terms of Sequential Development'. This chapter explains most clearly the sequence in the cultivation of The Six Gates to the Sublime. Starting from the cultivation of counting, then realisation of counting, cultivation of following, realisation of following all the way to the last cultivation of purification, and realisation of purification. There are a total of twelve sequences. We will practise one round the contents of these twelve sequences in these four days; and we have to be very proficient before we can enter Chapter 3 'The Six Gates to the Sublime in Terms of Sequential Development', that is, using The Six Gates to the Sublime flexibly according to your convenience and suitability. So the pre-condition is that you have to be very clear about the sequences of these twelve procedures first. The twelve sequences are the cultivation of counting, following, stabilisation, contemplation, turning and purification; the realisation of counting, following, stabilisation, contemplation, turning and purification.

Now we are going to explain in detail how to cultivate counting; as long as you cultivate according to this procedure you will be able to realise The Six Gates to the Sublime very quickly. Therefore this chapter is actually the most practical chapter. It is also the chapter that explains most clearly about the cultivation of The Six Gates to the Sublime.

Sequential occurrence is when one gives rise to another; from counting all the way to purification as a gate to the sublime, occurring sequentially. So it is from the cultivation of counting until realisation of purification.

Cultivation of Counting

First is cultivation of counting. How to cultivate counting the breath? Once you are seated, harmonise your breath first, relax your mind. Then slowly count from 'one' to 'ten'. Focus your mind on the numbers and do not allow it to wander off and become scattered. Breathe naturally; do not control your breathing. Inhale naturally, then exhale; count 'one' after exhaling. Then inhale again and exhale; after exhaling count 'two'. Then inhale again and exhale; after exhaling count 'three'. Then continue with counting four, five, six, seven, eight, nine and ten. So count from one to ten; count after exhaling. Do not count while inhaling or exhaling but **count when you have finished exhaling**. This is the method of cultivating counting.

The key point is to harmonise your breath first. There are four characteristics of breath; we have mentioned it in our last lecture on 'The Smaller Calming-and-Insight Meditation'. So if you find that your breath is not harmonised, like '**windy breathing**' – your breathing has loud sound, just like when you are down with flu and blocked nose; you will find it very difficult to attain meditative

absorption with the sound. You are not counting this 'windy' breathing and neither are you counting 'uneven' breathing, you are counting 'breath'.

'Uneven' breathing is when there is no sound in your breathing, but your breath is stagnated, not smooth. What is the cause of this? This is because you have not inhaled completely before you exhale; and you have not exhaled completely before you inhale. After a period of time, your breathing becomes very uneven. If you are counting this 'uneven' breathing, then your breath will easily be stagnated. Hence we have to harmonise the 'uneven' breathing before we start counting; otherwise we are counting the 'windy' breathing, 'uneven' breathing and 'ordinary' breathing.

What is **'ordinary' breathing**? It is when your breathing is very smooth and your breath has no sound, but it is not fine and subtle, your breath is still very coarse. If you are counting 'ordinary' breathing, you will be tired after a sitting. Therefore, when you discover that you have 'windy' breathing, 'uneven' breathing or 'ordinary' breathing, you definitely have to harmonise your breathing till you have 'subtle' breathing before you start counting. Remember we are counting the breath, not the three types of breathing that is not harmonised.

How do we harmonise these three types of breathing? Firstly, **relax your mind and body**. Then **visualise the breath filling up the entire body**; then **every pore in the body inhaling and exhaling together**. If you do not visualise the entire body filled with the breath, then some places may have the pores breathing while some may not have.

After doing this for some time, the earlier signs of 'windy' breathing, 'uneven' breathing and 'ordinary' breathing will disappear. This is because the breath has been diffused, filling up the entire body; moreover it has been harmonised. When the pores in the entire body inhale and exhale together, it is equivalent to having harmonised the breath till it is very subtle, faint, indistinct and smooth; and there is no sound in your breathing. This is known as **'subtle' breathing**. When you start counting your breath at this time, you will enter following the breath very quickly, enter meditative absorption very quickly, followed by attaining stabilisation.

When you cultivate counting the breath for a long time and still find it difficult to attain meditative absorption, it is because you have not harmonised the breath. As long as you have harmonised the breath, you can attain realisation of counting very quickly. So the key point is to harmonise your breath first; then you will not be distracted, tired, have stagnated breath; and more seriously having cardiac pain after a sitting, and then it is difficult to stabilise the mind. So these are the shortcomings of not harmonising your breath. Therefore you must harmonise your breath to 'subtle' breathing before you start counting.

Realisation of Counting

As long as you harmonise your breath and count from one to ten, you do not have to count very long before your breath gradually becomes faint, and your thoughts gradually become fine. You will breathe only once in a long time because your breath will gradually become faint. Perhaps following this, as you count one, two, threeyour breath disappears because your thoughts gradually

become faint, your breath gradually becomes fine such that you only inhale once in a long while. So should you continue counting now? When you count one, two, three your breath is gone so how do you continue to count four? You are not able to count as your breath has become so faint, just like it is going to stop, do you understand? Hence you naturally reach the realisation of counting without any effort. Is this not simple?

Our thoughts go along with our breath. The faster our breath is, the more misleading thoughts we have. So if we can gradually harmonise our breath, our thoughts will gradually become slow and faint; our thoughts will also become less. Hence when your breath is very faint, the feeling is like your breath is going to stop; it is so faint that you are unable to continue counting. At this point of time, we have attained realisation of counting.

Therefore, while you are counting the breath, you have attained realisation of counting when – you do not have to count deliberately, the numbers do not break; coarse misleading thoughts have lessened or even disappeared, fine misleading thoughts are still there but they are unable to interfere with your counting. Although a thought may arise or you may sigh once in a long time, it will not interfere with your counting, that is, the numbers do not break though you do not generate the thought to count. You will feel that your mind is naturally counting the breath from one to ten, you do not have to put any effort into maintaining the counting of your breath; your breath gradually becomes weaker, thoughts become faint. This is realisation of counting.

We will practise this today. Later let us see if we can attain realisation of counting in a short time.

Warm Up Exercises

Let us invite two fellow practitioners to the stage to demonstrate the warm up exercises, to stretch our muscles and bones before we start our meditation.

Will everyone please stand up; let us loosen our muscles, bones and joints. Firstly, move your head up and down three times, then turn your head to the left and right three times. Slowly tilt your head close to your left shoulder and right shoulder; also repeat this three times. After this, turn your head clockwise and anti-clockwise three times each. As you turn slowly, you will hear cracking, popping and snapping sounds; these are areas which are usually obstructed and these movements can loosen the obstructions in the neck.

After turning the head, let us rotate the shoulders backward three times then rotate forward three times. Then raise both your hands and rotate your wrists to loosen them; also clockwise three times and anti-clockwise three times. When you have finished rotating, fling your hands.

Next, it is waist exercise; turning a big circle. Start from the front, then to the right, back and left; turning a circle in this way. Turn clockwise three times and anti-clockwise three times. Let us loosen the knees too; put your hands on top of your knees and turn clockwise three times and anti-clockwise three times.

Then we loosen our legs. Lift up the heel of one of your legs with your toes touching the floor. Then turn clockwise three times and anti-clockwise three times with this leg; after this, kick your leg. Then change to the other leg and repeat, turning clockwise three times and anti-clockwise three times before shaking your leg. We can sit down after this.

Muscle Stretching Exercises

Next we are going to stretch the leg muscles. In the beginning it is tough stretching your muscles but if you stretch slowly and frequently, your original cross-legged sitting posture can become the half lotus sitting posture; the half lotus sitting posture can become the full lotus sitting posture. So you must be very patient in loosening the muscles; they may be a little tight and painful in the beginning but it does not matter as this is very normal.

Put the sole of your feet together and bring them as close to your body as possible. Then put your hands on your knees and bounce the legs. Start from the left knee and bounce eight times – 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 then press down hard once. Repeat four times. Then change over to the right knee – 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and press down hard once. Repeat four times. This will help to stretch your leg muscles.

After this, bounce the two legs together. Put both hands on both knees and bounce – 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 then press down. Also repeat this four times. In this way, the inner muscles will be more stretched, making it easier to cross your legs when you sit down later.

Today we will stop our stretching here. We will add a little every day, otherwise it may be too painful and you may not turn up tomorrow. So we will add a new step every night over these four nights. Most of us are not able to get past our legs, right? Firstly, the stage of bearing with the legs is difficult to endure; hence with stretching the muscles, it will allow us to sit longer and overcome numbness, aches and distending pains.

Beginning Meditation

We will now sit down. Before we start, loosen your belt; loosen any part of your body that feels restrained and then remove your spectacles and watch.

Firstly, cross your legs. It depends on whether you want to be in the half lotus posture, full lotus posture, cross-legged sitting posture or sitting upright. After crossing your legs, form the customary meditation hand pose - open your hands and lay the open left hand on top of the right hand so that they fit together, and draw them in towards the body; then the tips of the thumbs touching one another lightly, do not exert any pressure. Then slowly rotate your body clockwise seven to eight times. After this, straighten your spine, level and open your shoulders. Straighten your head and tuck in your chin. Then expel the turbid breath three times – inhale slowly through the nose, exhale slowly through the mouth. When exhaling, visualise all blockages in the energy channels in the entire body opening up and turbid breath (black, sick and filthy breath) is expelled from the body. Then

hold the tongue up lightly with the tip against the palate, near the teeth. After this, open the eyes moderately, that is, close the eyes enough to block off the light from outside.

Counting the Breath Practice

We will practise the earlier method of counting the breath. Count 1 when you have finished exhaling. Do not control your breath; inhale naturally like how you normally do, then exhale, count 2 when you finish exhaling. Count from 1 to 10 then repeat counting from 1 to 10. If you feel that there is sound in your breath, the breath is not smooth or is coarse, we have to relax our body and mind first; fill the entire body with breath, all pores inhaling and exhaling till your breath is smoother and faint before you start counting the breath.

Emerging from Meditation

Firstly relax your thoughts, come off from the earlier counting the breath. Then open your mouth to expel the turbid breath three times. Inhale through your nose, open your mouth and exhale slowly. Visualise the breath dispersing from the numerous energy channels, that is, the entire body's breath dispersing. Inhale and exhale slowly, visualise the breath dispersing from the entire body. Again, inhale and exhale slowly.

Next, slowly rotate your body clockwise 7 to 8 times. Then move your shoulders, hands, head and neck. Then extend both legs, rub the entire body's pores with both hands. Next rub your hands together till they become warm; and cover both eyes with these warm hands, then open your eyes. Then massage the entire body from head to toes; areas where you have earlier felt numb, aches and distending pains need to be massaged more. You have to massage till there is no more discomfort in any parts of the body; when the energy and blood circulation in the entire body is very good, you can then emerge from meditation.

Let us thank our two fellow practitioners for the demonstration.

Now we will finish our lesson for today. Tomorrow we will explain in detail again the 'seven-point posture' because previously when we spoke on having the five root energies entering the central channel, some people did not know what the energies are – the five root energies, downward-moving energy, balancing energy, pervasive energy, upward-moving energy and life-sustaining energy. So tomorrow we will explain further what the five root energies are, their positions, functions and their relationship with the poses. Why they can eradicate afflictions, eradicate the five poisons and enable the five predominant elements energies – earth, water, fire, air and space, to enter the central channel. We will explain all these again tomorrow; and then cultivate and practise how to enter following the breath from counting the breath; and how to attain stabilisation. We will stop here today.

Dedication: May I dedicate this merit to all sentient beings; may I and all sentient beings attain the state of enlightenment.

The Six Gates to the Sublime
Lecture 2
Teachings by Venerable Master Jing-Lian

Venue: Tai Pei Buddhist Centre
1 July 2009

Lecture Contents

- **Chapter 2 - The Six Gates to the Sublime in Terms of Sequential Development (Cultivate Following, Stabilisation)**
- **Introduction of the Five Root Energies**

Namo Amitabha Buddha to everyone!

Today, from counting the breath we will enter following the breath. We have already introduced cultivation of counting and realisation of counting yesterday. Everyone has also practised counting the breath and then how to attain realisation of counting the breath.

Cultivation of Following

After you have attained realisation of counting the breath, your thought is faint and breath is weak; at this point of time, you do not feel like counting anymore, you will feel that the numbers are very burdensome. You have counted till your mind is gradually calm so if you have to specially raise the thought to continue counting, you will find that the numbers are burdensome instead. This is when you can enter the stage of following the breath. It is precisely when you count till you do not feel like counting and there is no need to count anymore because your mind has been very well harmonised, your breath is weak and thought is faint. Hence, now put your thought on your breath, it is needless to continue counting because your mind is already very calm. Synchronise your thought and breath, that is, your thought follows the inhalation and exhalation of your breath. Your mind is very clear of the movement of your breath and follows the movement. This is precisely the 'cultivation of following' which is also known as following the breath.

Realisation of Following

Cultivate following the breath in this way till your thought and breath are integrated. When this happens, you have attained 'realisation of following' which is precisely realisation of following the breath. Originally your thought synchronises with your breath - inhale, exhale, inhale, exhale, and then gradually your thought and breath will be integrated; this is what is known to us as 'interdependence of mind and breath'. When do you attain realisation of following the breath? When the mind and breath are interdependent, you have attained realisation of following the breath. Since the thought and breath are integrated, you will be very clear of the condition of your breath. As your thought follows the breath, you will be perfectly clear as to whether the breath is long or short, cold or warm, coarse or fine. At this point of time, you know that you have attained realisation of following the breath.

Cultivation of Stabilisation

The thought gets finer as it follows the movement of the breath in and out, till finally it is so fine that you almost cannot feel its movement. At this point of time you have entered the stage of 'stabilisation'. It means that now your mind does not grasp anything; neither does it grasp counting the breath nor grasp following the breath, it simply stabilises there. This is known as 'cultivation of stabilisation'. When the mind and breath are interdependent, you will still feel the breath coming in and going out. Then slowly the breath becomes so faint, like it is almost stopping; this means that you have entered the stage of stabilisation. This is reached very naturally. You will understand when

we practise later. From counting the breath to following the breath till stabilisation; actually this is reached naturally. Counting your breath till you do not feel like counting, you enter following the breath; then you feel your breath coming in and going out, gradually your thought and breath will be integrated. Next, your breath seems like stopping, your breath and thought become very weak, almost stopping. This is when you enter stabilisation.

Realisation of the Realm of Desire Meditative Absorption

After entering stabilisation, your thought is just stopped there, occasionally there are misleading thoughts arising. Do you know? You know. You inhale once in a long time, do you know? You also know. However you are not affected by the interference; the strength of your thought is very strong. Although you know the arising of misleading thought and know that you are still breathing, your mind is not affected by the interference. Then continue to reinforce the strength of your thought. When your thought becomes more and more focused, your body will suddenly straighten up. This is what is known to us as the dharma of absorption embracing the body. Congratulations! You have attained realisation of the realm of desire meditative absorption! Normally no matter how you adjust your posture, you are unable to sit so straight, your body is either too tight or is concave. Now you are able to naturally straighten up; moreover, you are able to sit for a long time without getting tired. If your body straightens up once in a while and after a short sitting you have backache, then that is not the realm of desire meditative absorption.

So when do you attain realisation of the realm of desire meditative absorption? It is precisely when your body not only straightens up naturally, but your thought also seems to be subdued by a force; naturally misleading thoughts do not arise. So you do not have any thought in the present moment but you are clearly aware of the situation around you. You also know that you are sitting in this lecture hall, know that you still have breath; misleading thoughts arise occasionally but you are not affected by the interference, and your body does not tire out regardless of how long you sit. With this, you know that you have attained realisation of the realm of desire meditative absorption.

Realisation of the Preliminary Ground Meditative Absorption

Slowly, your sense-organs will gradually lose their responses, followed by your body also loses its feelings. So when you are sitting there you will feel that your hands, head and the entire body have disappeared. At this point of time, many people are too afraid to continue sitting; they are afraid that they will disappear. What a waste! We have to congratulate them for having attained realisation of the preliminary ground meditative absorption. Earlier on when you have attained stabilisation, your mind stopped there, without any misleading thought. Then you attained realisation of the realm of desire meditative absorption; your misleading thought is subdued by a force, there is no more thought. Since there is no more misleading thought, all discrimination that arise from such thought will also stop. What does this mean? For those of us who have read 'The Shastra on the Door to Understanding the Hundred Dharmas', we will know that the twenty-four 'activities dharmas that are non-interactive with the mind' arise from the discrimination of the sixth consciousness. Hence now the concepts of number, space and time disappear in a split second. Why

is it so? This is because the sixth consciousness has gone into direct perception. Since there is no misleading thought, it will not give rise to the discrimination of the sixth consciousness; so the present concepts that arise from the discrimination of the sixth consciousness will all disappear. Therefore, your present feelings and body will disappear. What we mean by 'disappear' is not the physical disappearance but the absence of feelings or responses. Although you are sitting there and your hands are not moving, you will have the feeling that your hands are not there, and your body is not there too. Hence when the body and mind disappear, it is known as preliminary ground meditative absorption.

Enter First Dhyana, Realisation of Stabilisation

If you are able to maintain continuous deepening of the stabilisation phenomenon by letting your mind remain continuously unmoving, then you will feel light, peaceful and blissful. At this point of time you have entered the first dhyana, known as 'realisation of stabilisation'. So when do you attain realisation of stabilisation? Strictly speaking, when you enter the first dhyana you have attained realisation of stabilisation.

We will stop our practice here today. We start our practice from yesterday's session of counting the breath, next try to enter following the breath; then we attain stabilisation. After stabilisation, try to see if we can be extremely focused; when your body is straightened and you do not feel tired, you have attained realisation of the realm of desire meditative absorption. Continue sitting till your sense-organs lose the responses and the body also loses the feeling, the entire body and mind disappear in a split second. You have attained realisation of the preliminary ground meditative absorption. Once lightness, peace and bliss arise, you have attained first dhyana. This is a very simple way to distinguish; so you know very clearly at which stage of the meditation you are at when you are sitting for a long time. Later we will practise this together.

Five Root Energies

Yesterday we promised everyone that we will explain what the 'five root energies' are. The seven-point posture of sitting meditation can enable the five root energies to enter the central channel. So what are the five root energies? We will explain it now.

The five root energies are also known as the five elements energies. They are classified as karmic energies; they are impure, whereas the central channel is classified as wisdom energy. We can let the impure karmic energies enter the central channel through the seven-point posture; what will be the effect? The afflictions that are generated from these karmic energies can easily be moderated and subdued. As long as the five root energies can enter the central channel, the five poisons that normally arise from the five root energies will not be generated. In Mahayana, the five poisons are greed, anger, ignorance, pride and doubt; in Vajrayana they are greed, anger, ignorance, pride and jealousy. If the five root energies do not enter the central channel, they will easily lead to the generation of misleading thoughts. These misleading thoughts include all the afflictions – fundamental afflictions and derivative afflictions. Hence as long as you are able let the five root

energies enter the central channel, the misleading thoughts and afflictions that arise from the impure karmic energies will subside.

Next we will explain the importance of the seven-point posture and its relationship with the five root energies entering the central channel; and also the relationship with our meditative absorption and generation of wisdom. Or for those who like to cultivate kundalini, which posture is it related to? We will now explain further.

Five Root Energies	Downward-moving energy	Balancing energy	Pervasive energy	Upward-moving energy	Life-sustaining energy
Position	Root chakra	Navel chakra	Reproductive organ chakra	Throat chakra	Heart chakra
Posture	Sitting cross-legged	Customary meditation hand pose	Straighten spine, level and open shoulders	Straighten head, chin tucked in	Tip of Tongue touches palate lightly, eyes moderately opened
Eliminate Affliction	Jealousy	Anger	Ignorance	Greed	Pride
Five Predominant Elements Energies Enter Central Channel	Predominant earth element energy	Predominant air element energy	Predominant water element energy	Predominant fire element energy	Predominant space element energy

Let us take a look at the five root energies. The first posture is sitting cross-legged. If you are able to sit in a full lotus pose, the effect is the best. We have previously explained that the full lotus pose is the most stable. In 'The Shastra on Prajnaparamita Sutra', it is also mentioned that if you can sit in a full lotus pose, there are five benefits: The first benefit is your mind will not be distracted, it is easily subdued. The second benefit is that it is the most stable posture. The third benefit is that demons are fearful when they see this posture so if you simply sit in this posture, demons will be afraid when they see it. The fourth benefit is that the seven-point posture is different from other the non-Buddhist meditation posture. (During that time in India, there were many non-Buddhists who also meditated but there was not a single posture that was similar to the seven-point posture. If you have practised meditation from other Indian religious sects or yoga, you know that there are so many meditation methods. Simply the positioning of the hands, there are so many different ways. You can put both hands on the knees, this way or that way, or you can gently put the palms facing upward, or can also put your hands on the knees in this way.....there is just not a single posture that is similar to our Buddhism seven-point posture. For one who knows this, when looking at you in a seven-point posture, he knows that you are not cultivating yoga or other Indian religious sects, but Buddhism seven-point posture.) The fifth benefit is that you can attain stabilisation easily. So these are the five benefits of the full lotus pose.

Earlier did we mention that when you enter first dhyana, you will obtain lightness, peace and bliss? Before you obtain this, there are some preparatory skills – you must be in a full lotus pose for at least more than an hour, your legs are not numb and your bones are not sore. Only then can you obtain the lightness, peace and bliss of the first dhyana. So sitting cross-legged is very important.

For Vajrayana practitioners, if they can be in the full lotus pose, the energies, channels and drops of the subtle body can be purified most easily. Why is this so? This is because sitting cross-legged will allow our **downward-moving energy** to enter the central channel. That is why we say that the seven-point posture can eradicate afflictions, or moderate and subdue the afflictions, that is, to allow the five root energies to enter the central channel.

Where is the downward-moving energy? It is located at the root chakra. Now where we sit cross-legged, the root chakra is right at the bottom, it is the part that touches the meditation mat.

What is the function of the downward-moving energy? It is in charge of excretion. The downward movement of body fluid and blood depend on this downward-moving energy. What is the force that pushes you to clear your bowels and bladder every day? It is the downward-moving energy; moreover it has the ability to control. Why is it that you can end the clearing of your bowels and bladder anytime? It is the control of the downward-moving energy.

Sitting in a cross-legged posture can eradicate jealousy. So if we often sit cross-legged to meditate, our jealousy will naturally decrease slowly.

In relation to the five predominant element energies, sitting cross-legged allows our predominant earth element energy to enter the central channel; so it is equivalent to purifying our five predominant element energies. The five predominant element energies are originally turbid, but when they enter the central channel, they can be purified.

In addition, do we feel warm after meditating for a period of time? We will feel a little heat in the body but not perspiring; we feel warm. We call this a sign of warmth. Why is there a warm sign? It is an indication that your downward-moving energy has entered the central channel. If you often meditate, you will feel that your body starts to feel warm even though you have not sat cross-legged for too long. This is the indication of your downward-moving energy entering the central channel.

After sitting cross-legged, we will then put our hands in the customary meditation hand pose. We put our left hand on top of the right palm, in the centre; the palms are facing upward. Then the two thumbs touching one another lightly; do not exert any force otherwise we can be easily nervous. Why do we put our hands in the customary meditation hand pose? When the two thumbs touch each other lightly, it enables our left and right energies to exchange circulation; then it will be easy to obtain lightness and peace. So the customary meditation hand pose is also very important. After this, we position them below the navel.

After putting our hands in the customary meditation hand pose, we bring them close to the body and put them below the navel. Why do we put our hands below the navel? It is because this will allow the **balancing energy** to enter the central channel. Where is the balancing energy located? It is at the navel chakra; that is why we put our hands here.

What is the function of the balancing energy? It is in charge of digestion. After the food enters the body, it goes through digestion and then the nutrients are distributed to different organs in the body. This is the effect of the balancing energy.

As the balancing energy is in charge of digestion, it is the fire that is needed to help in the digestion of food. In the traditional Chinese medicine, it is known as vital gate fire. What can the vital gate fire do? It can clear blockages in the seventy-two thousand channels in our body. For those who want to cultivate energies and channels, to clear the blockages of the channels, you have to depend on the balancing energy's effect. Hence if the balancing energy can enter the central channel, the blockages of the channels in your body can easily be cleared.

For those who cultivate kundalini, once the blockages in the channels are cleared, it will be easy to give rise to kundalini. Therefore the balancing energy is closely related to the cultivation of kundalini. We know that with the cultivation of kundalini, one is able to attain meditative absorption and great bliss. This is due to the generation of kundalini; there is non-duality of emptiness and bliss. One can remain in this meditative absorption phenomenon and give rise to the phenomenon of great bliss. This is related to the balancing energy. So as long as your balancing energy can enter the central channel, so-called bliss in meditative absorption and kundalini can be easily generated. Earlier we spoke about the downward-moving energy which can only give rise to the warm sign, but is unable to generate kundalini. If you wish to give rise to kundalini, you have to put in more effort.

Once the balancing energy enters the central channel, the affliction of anger can be eradicated. If we always meditate with the customary meditation hand pose, our anger will get less and less because after the balancing energy enters the central channel, the misleading thought that arises from this karmic energy will naturally be gone. Then the anger that arises from the misleading thought will be moderated and subdued. So you just have to do your meditation and you will realise that your temper gets better and better; anger, resentment, vexation, jealousy and harm will get less and less. This is definite because our balancing energy has already entered the central channel; it naturally has the effect of moderating and subduing anger.

From the viewpoint of the five predominant elements energies, it can allow our predominant air element to enter the central channel. It means that it can also purify the predominant air element.

Next, we have to straighten our spine, level and open our shoulders. Let us first talk about the importance of straightening our spine. If you are unable to straighten your spine, hunching your back like this, with your chest sunken; meditating in this way will easily cause gastric problem or indigestion. This is the shortcoming. However if your spine is too straight, you can easily suffer from excessive internal heat. So it has to be just right. The spine is straight but not too straight, you do not exert too much force; but it is also not sunken. This is the way to straighten your spine.

However during the sitting, some people will slant to the left, some will slant to the right. Some will hang their head down or bend backward. All these will have shortcomings. We will now explain it separately.

If during sitting the body slants to the left, at the point of cultivating stabilisation, he will experience bliss, but it vanishes very quickly. After it vanishes, your greed will increase instead. So when looking at someone's meditation posture, if he always slants to the left during each meditation, we know that his greed will get stronger and stronger. He belongs to the sentient beings with stronger greed.

Some people will slant to the right. At the point of slanting one feels that it is very bright in front. However this brightness does not last, it vanishes immediately. This will increase one's anger. So we know that if one always slants to the right, one's temper will worsen.

Some will tilt their body forward. As a person slowly tilts forward, he will feel that his mind is not so distracted, but this feeling will also vanish very quickly. Then he will go into a state of ignorance; so it will increase his ignorance. If he keeps lowering his head and leans forward, his ignorance will keep increasing. He will always be suspicious, jealous and unhappy when he interacts with others. It will also hinder his life-sustaining energy as it presses on it when he leans forward.

Is it good to lean backward? When leaning backward, at that point emptiness manifests but it also vanishes very quickly. After it vanishes, he becomes arrogant; so the more he meditates in this way, the more arrogant he becomes. This is the shortcoming of leaning backward in your meditation.

Therefore we definitely have to straighten our spine, do not lean to the left, right, forward or backward. So we have to straighten our spine and align our nose to our navel so in this way it is not skewed. So this is concerning straightening our spine.

We level our shoulders and then open them. The inner part of the shoulders does not press hard against the body; there must be a space at the armpits. Why is it so? There is a torpid-minded channel under our armpit, so if you press against it, you will easily be torpid-minded.

Straightening our spine, levelling and opening our shoulders will allow the **pervasive energy** to enter the central channel. Where is the pervasive energy located? It is at the secret chakra or known as the reproductive organ chakra; positioned at the same level as our reproductive organs.

What is the function of the pervasive energy? It has a very important function; it is able to allow our energy to pervade the entire body. Remember we practised harmonising our breath yesterday? First we visualise our entire body is filled with energy and the pores inhaling and exhaling together. It is the effect of the pervading energy that allows the energy to pervade the entire body. Hence when the pervading energy enters the central channel it can eradicate all illnesses related to the circulation of energy. All illnesses can be moderated and overcome, or the shortcomings of energy cultivation can be eradicated. Therefore it is very important to our self-cultivation.

As long as our pervasive energy can enter the central channel, our blood circulation will be very good; our metabolism will get better and the speed of our blood vessels will also be normal. What is the meaning of normal blood vessel speed? Your heart will be very healthy; you can easily cultivate non-duality of the mind and energy. Vajrayana practitioners hope to attain the non-duality of the mind and energy, the integration of both. In order to do so, the pervasive energy must enter the central channel; otherwise, thought, breath and energy are all separate, unable to integrate. Once the pervasive energy enters the central channel, you can attain non-duality of the mind and energy very quickly. Therefore, remember to straighten your spine, level and open your shoulders so that the pervasive energy can enter the central channel very easily.

All our body actions like walking, standing, sitting and sleeping; or you want to shake, stand up and go to and fro a place, all these actions are the effect of the pervasive energy.

When the pervasive energy enters the central channel, our affliction of ignorance can be eradicated; allowing the predominant water element energy to enter the central channel.

Our next pose is straightening our head and tucking in our chin. We have mentioned before that the purpose of tucking in our chin is to press on the two arteries on the neck to slow down the blood flow. When the blood flow slows down, our misleading thoughts will stop easily. When the misleading thoughts stop, we can attain meditative absorption easily, followed by the arising of the wisdom of non-discrimination. Therefore the pose of tucking in our chin is very important. We certainly have to press on these two arteries on the neck so that we can attain meditative absorption and develop wisdom very quickly.

Straightening the head and tucking in the chin will allow the **upward-moving energy** to enter the central channel. Where is this energy located? It is at the throat chakra, so pressing on the arteries on the neck is related to the throat chakra.

The most important effect of the upward-moving energy is related to the throat. What is the throat in charge of? When we eat, drink, breathe, talk and sing; these activities need to pass through the throat. These are the effects of the upward-moving energy.

When the upward-moving energy enters the central channel, the affliction of greed can be eradicated. Allowing the predominant fire element to enter the central channel will purify the predominant fire element.

Next, touch the palate lightly with the tongue. Hold your tongue up and lightly touching the palate near the root of your teeth. You must not exert any force otherwise you will have sore throat after the meditation.

This is very important; Taoist practitioners call this pose 'building the magpie bridge across the milky way' (from a Chinese myth). Most importantly, this pose serves as a connection between the conception channel (front midline channel) and the governing channel (back midline channel). The governing channel runs from the 'cinnabar fields' (energy centre in Taoism) downward to the back of 'tail gate' (an acupuncture point near the tailbone) all the way to the top of the head, go across the head and down to the upper lip; and it stops there. The centre of our mouth is empty so there is no connection. The conception channel runs from the cinnabar fields upward all the way to the lower lip; and it stops there as it cannot go further. So one channel stops at the upper lip and the other channel stops at the lower lip; the centre of the mouth is empty. As such the governing channel and the conception channel cannot connect; so touching the palate lightly with the tongue serves as a connection between these two channels. In this way Taoist practitioners can do the practice on opening up both the conception and governing channels.

Hence touching the palate lightly with the tongue is extremely important. As long as you put the tongue at the right place, saliva will keep flowing down; moreover the saliva is sweet. Do not spit out

this saliva; Taoist practitioners even gargle with this saliva, they call it 'saliva gargle' – swirl the saliva in the mouth and then swallow it in three mouths. It can moisturise the internal organs; it is extremely nourishing. So you will certainly be healthier with meditation; simply swallowing the saliva will moisturise your internal organs. Thus touching the palate lightly with the tongue is extremely important.

Then open your eyes moderately, that is, close your eyes enough to block off the light from outside. Why do you do this? This is to allow the **life-sustaining energy** to enter the central channel easily. Where is the life-sustaining energy located? It is at our heart chakra.

The life-sustaining energy is in charge of our breath. It can transport all energies to the doorway of our six sense-organs – eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind; that is why all the sense-organs can function. More importantly, it can maintain our lives; we are still alive because of the life-sustaining energy. Once the life-sustaining energy leaves our body, we are dead. When the foetus starts to develop in the mother's body, when life begins, the life-sustaining energy is the first in the implantation. It is also the last to leave the body; one dies when it leaves the body. That is why it is known as the life-sustaining energy.

Once the life-sustaining energy can enter the central channel, regardless of what you try to visualise in your cultivation, it will be easily clear. Very often someone would ask, "Why it is that I cannot visualise whatever I try to visualise or even if I can visualise, it vanishes in a while?" It is because your life-sustaining energy did not enter the central channel. As long as you touch the palate lightly with the tongue in your meditation; after the life-sustaining energy enters the central channel, anything that you visualise will be clear and sustained. So the life-sustaining energy is related to our visualisation.

If the life-sustaining energy can enter the central channel, our affliction of pride can be eradicated. Hence our pride will slowly be reduced and the predominant space element can enter the central channel.

The above explains the reasons for us to use the seven-point posture. After the analysis, we will understand the extreme importance of this posture; we certainly have to follow the procedures to reach the standard for every pose; try our best to allow the five root energies to enter the central channel. In this way we will be able to have many attainments easily, including meditative absorption, visualisation, and wisdom.

We are particular about having the seven-point posture done in a very standard way because once your body is harmonised, your channels will be harmonised as they are on the body. When your channels are harmonised, your energy will be harmonised. Why is it so? This is because energy flows through the channel. When your energy is harmonised, your mind is easily harmonised. Yesterday we spoke about your breath becoming weaker when you are counting your breath; your thought also becomes weaker, misleading thoughts also become less. So where does this harmonising of the mind come from? It comes from harmonising the breath. As long as your breath is harmonised, your energy is harmonised, and your mind will be harmonised. When your mind is harmonised, your mind will not be easily scattered; you can focus on your conditioned phenomena. Regardless of whether

you are now counting or following your breath, cultivating stabilisation or contemplation, you can maintain it very well. That is why you can easily attain meditative absorption with this posture. When the body is harmonised, the channels are harmonised; when the channels are harmonised, the energy is harmonised; when the energy is harmonised, the mind is harmonised. When the mind is harmonised, you can focus easily so you can attain meditative absorption easily and develop wisdom. This is about the seven-point posture for meditation, so now we know the importance of the seven-point posture.

Now we can start our practice. We will start from yesterday's counting the breath; enter following the breath, till stabilisation. Depending on your ability, let us see what kind of meditative absorption you can attain.

Let us invite our two fellow practitioners up here to lead us in the earlier warm up exercises. Warm up exercises are also very important. You have to bear with the discomfort in your legs during meditation because your muscles have not been stretched out. If your muscles and bones are loosened, your muscles are soft; then you can sit cross-legged well and attain meditative absorption more easily. Can everyone please stand, we shall have some movement before sitting.

(For **Warm Up Exercises** – please refer to Lecture 1)

Muscle Stretching Exercises

Next we will sit down. Please sit down. Put the soles of your feet together and bring them as near to the body as possible. We will start pressing from the left knee. Put your left hand on your left knee; bounce it eight times then press it down. Repeat this four times. Straighten your hand when you press down. After we have finished, we will change to the other side. Similarly, bounce eight times and press down. Pressing down means using your hand to press the knee down as far down to the floor as possible; it is best to touch the floor. In this way, later when we sit cross-legged we will be able to sit longer; so we certainly have to bounce the leg muscle to loosen it. After we have finished, we bounce the two legs together. Put both hands on both knees, bounce eight times and press down hard, as far down as possible. Repeat this four times.

Today we will add one more movement – hold your left leg up. Like what we did earlier, bend your left knee, straighten your right leg; then put the back of your left leg on top of the right thigh; press your left knee down with your left hand; bounce eight times and press down hard. Repeat this four times.

After we have finished this four times, carry the leg up from below with both hands; then bring it as close to the body as possible. The leg that is carried is level; bring it up horizontally as high as possible; then draw it close to the body. Next, with the hands still holding the leg, rock it left and right to increase the effect; the muscle will loosen even more. Then we turn our ankle because we tend to feel the pain at the ankle after emerging from meditation right? So let us loosen the muscle now. Turn clockwise once and anti-clockwise once will do.

Next, bend your left leg, turn it facing out and place it on the outer left side of the body, as close to the body as possible. Then hold the knee with your left hand and bounce it eight times; and put the leg upright. It does not matter if there are any difficulties like the back of your leg hurts or if there is pain anywhere else. Wherever it hurts is where the muscle is tight; that is why you have discomfort in your legs during meditation. So we try our best to loosen it then it will be easier for us to start our meditation.

After we have finished, we change over to the other side. Bend the right leg and put it on the straightened left leg; then press it down hard eight times. Repeat this four times. Next, carry the bent right leg with both hands horizontally; try to hold it level and higher and then bring it close to the body four times. Next, rock it left and right to loosen the muscle. Then turn the ankle clockwise once and anti-clockwise once to loosen the ankle muscle. Next, place the bent leg on the outer right side of the body, hold the knee and bounce eight times; end with putting the leg upright.

Great, we have finished our suffering. We will add another small section tomorrow. There is more to come, we will end here today.

Now we will sit according to the seven-point posture, and practise the individual pose in the standard way.

(For *Beginning Meditation*, please refer to Lecture 1)

Counting the Breath Practice

Now we will count the breath from one to ten. Inhale and exhale through the nose, do not exhale through the mouth. Breathe naturally, inhale, exhale, count 1; then breathe naturally, inhale, exhale, count 2. This is cultivation of counting. Then you count till the numbers are continuous without interruption; and misleading thoughts do not interfere with the thought of counting the breath. At this point of time you have attained realisation of counting.

Following the Breath Practice

You will feel that the numbers are redundant; then you enter following the breath. What is following the breath? It is when your thought follows the breath moving in and out. This is following the breath, cultivation of following. Then cultivate till your thought and breath are integrated. This is realisation of following, realisation of following the breath.

Cultivation of Stabilisation Practice

Next, slowly your thought and breath will stop. This is cultivation of stabilisation. If you can meditate till your misleading thoughts naturally do not arise and your body is straightened, this is the realm of desire meditative absorption. If you meditate till your body and mind vanish, this is preliminary

ground meditative absorption. If lightness, peace and bliss arise, this is attainment of first dhyana. Since everyone is at a different stage, we will not be able to synchronise the practice; we can only explain the key points. Let us start our practice now.

(For *Emerging from Meditation*, please refer to Lecture 1)

Let us thank our two fellow practitioners for the demonstration.

I have just seen your meditation posture and made a little adjustment. Some had their head bent down, their body tilted forward and their head also tilted forward. Majority did not straighten their spine; I think there is a problem with the way you sat on the meditation mat. You placed your entire buttocks on the mat, right? Placing both the buttocks and legs on the mat is wrong. We only place a small part of our buttocks on the mat; the legs are outside the mat. Our meditation mats are four fingers high; so sitting on the mat with the legs outside the mat will elevate the buttocks. This will make it easier for you to straighten your back. If you meditate at home, you have to sit in this way. If you place both your legs and buttocks on the mat, you will find it difficult to straighten your back because it is a flat surface. Remember to sit in the correct way when we meditate tomorrow.

In addition, some fellow practitioners were too tensed. Although their thumbs were touching, their hands were hanging in the air, and their bodies were very stiff. This is also wrong. With our thumbs touching lightly, bring the hands close to the body and put them gently on the legs, below the navel; not hanging in the air. If the hands are hanging in the air, your body will be very stiff and tensed; you will feel very tired after a short sitting. Tomorrow I will help everybody to adjust the posture a few more times so that you will practise with the standard posture at home. However, normally it takes a year to have a standard posture if you are not exceptionally diligent. So it is normal that your posture is not standard now, just need to adjust a few more times.

We will end our lesson here today. Tomorrow we will proceed to explain the other three gates to the sublime – contemplation, turning and purification. After explaining this, we will practise. If we still have time, we will talk about what we have to take note of during meditation; and also to answer your questions. This is the contents of the lesson tomorrow.

Dedication: May I dedicate this merit to all sentient beings; may I and all sentient beings attain the state of enlightenment.

The Six Gates to the Sublime
Lecture 3
Teachings by Venerable Master Jing-Lian

Venue: Tai Pei Buddhist Centre
2 July 2009

Lecture Contents

- **Questions and Answers**
- **Chapter 2 - The Six Gates to the Sublime in Terms of Sequential Development (Cultivate Contemplation, Turning, Purification)**

Namo Amitabha Buddha to everyone!

We will answer questions first before starting our lesson.

(Q) May I request Master to compassionately disclose this: What is it like when the thought is extremely focused? Can Master please describe it?

(A) It is precisely when your mind is neither torpid-minded nor distracted; it is extremely focused on the conditioned phenomenon. Regardless of whether your current conditioned phenomenon is counting the breath, following the breath, or any others, you are extremely focused on the cultivation method; you are not distracted or torpid-minded. This is known as being extremely focused. You should understand this description.

(Q) What is kundalini?

(A) Yesterday we talked about the five root energies, there are some which are related to kundalini. In Vajrayana or yoga, kundalini is a compulsory cultivation; it has a special cultivation method. In the first lecture, we introduced that The Six Gates to the Sublime covers all meditation methods. It includes non-Buddhist, Hinayana, Mahayana and Vajrayana meditation methods. As such, we would explain with examples. Moreover, among the fellow practitioners who attend the lesson, there are also those who cultivate Vajrayana, insight meditation and Hinayana meditation. So the scope of our lesson is broader. We even quote examples from non-Buddhist sources and Taoism. This is to show why Great Master Zhizhe's 'The Six Gates to the Sublime' is so supreme. There is not a single meditation method that is not covered in the scope of The Six Gates to the Sublime. Hence in our lesson, we may talk about yoga, Taoism or Vajrayana; as long as it is related or it touches on it, we will try to explain clearly. This is because there is also The Six Gates to the Sublime in Vajrayana; the only difference is the cultivation method. Those fellow practitioners who have cultivated it before will know. Therefore we know that The Six Gates to the Sublime covers an extremely wide scope indeed.

What is kundalini? It has a special cultivation method. We can explain it properly only if you are cultivating it. Very simply, it is known as kundalini in yoga. According to yoga, at our root chakra there is a mystical serpent in deep sleep for thousands of years; the cultivation is to awaken it. For Vajrayana, the position for cultivating kundalini is at the so-called 'yantra' position, which is four inches below the navel. At the yantra position there are two inverted triangles; with visualisation you can quickly light up the kundalini. This is the Vajrayana cultivation. We can only share up to here.

(Q) Keep having a lot of saliva then swallowing the saliva. Is this a sign of restlessness?

(A) Yes, it means that you have not attained meditative absorption. After your breath becomes faint and thought gradually becomes still, you will not keep swallowing saliva. Fellow practitioners who have had experience of meditative absorption will know; when your thought becomes so faint like it is going to stop, your tongue which is originally touching the palate, will roll to the back and touch the palate. At this point of time, breathing through the mouth and nose is so faint that it is not possible for you to continue swallowing saliva; there is not much saliva too as the tongue has been

rolled up and touching the palate. So if you keep swallowing saliva, it shows that you are restless and have not attained meditative absorption.

However yesterday we talked about the benefit of saliva; it can moisturise our internal organs. So from the viewpoint of health, this is a good sign; better than having a dry mouth and tongue, right? Actually our tongue has always been touching the palate; this is not only when you are cultivating calming-and-insight meditation that you put your tongue there. This makes your body very healthy and your conception channel and governing channel clear. You can try to experience it, see where your tongue is normally placed.

(Q) Do we breathe till the breath reaches the cinnabar fields?

(A) We said that your thought follows your breath. Whether your breath reaches the cinnabar fields depends on each individual; whether your breath is deep or shallow. Normally if the breath is very short and shallow, you can only inhale up to the thorax, it will not move down to the cinnabar fields. You inhale to the lungs and then exhale. We call this thoracic breathing; your breath can only reach the thorax but not abdomen. Such a person has a short breath and will always pant; he is relatively unhealthy because his breath is not deep and long.

There is a method to practise – put your hands on your abdomen; then inhale and as you inhale bulge your lower abdomen. Try to inhale as full as possible, then exhale, compressing your lower abdomen. Practise in this way for a period of time, normally three months, and you can change from thoracic breathing to abdominal breathing. At this point of time it will be cinnabar fields breathing. Your body will be healthier when you change to cinnabar fields breathing because your breath is deeper and longer. When you inhale, your breath enters from the nose, passes through the thorax, the diaphragm to reach the cinnabar fields. As you breathe in more air, the air can better transport nutrients to the entire body and discharge waste matter. Hence the body will be healthier. So through practice, we can transform our breathing to cinnabar fields breathing.

Can the breath go deeper? It can go deeper after we attain initial lightness and peace. It can continue moving to the soles of your feet. This is known as ‘gushing spring breathing’. You will find the gushing spring acupuncture points at your soles of your feet pulsating. For instance, if upon inhalation you can feel the gushing spring acupuncture points pulsating, you know that the breath has reached your soles; you are now doing gushing spring breathing. Hence our breath can reach as far down as the soles of our feet.

How deep can the breath go? Earlier we mentioned that to harmonise the breath, we have to visualise the breath pervading the entire body and the pores in the entire body breathing together. I suppose most fellow practitioners did not feel the pores breathing. Under normal circumstances, breathing through the pores happen only when you are sweating; the pores are opened enabling the sweat to be expelled. However the pores are closed during other times. After meditating for a period of time, the pores on the entire body of the practitioner will be breathing. So how do you know that you are breathing through the pores? If you are wearing clothes that are made of non-breathable materials and you start to feel warm, that is roughly the time your pores start to breathe; then you know you are breathing through the pores. When ordinary people wear clothes that are of man-

made materials, they feel good; their skin does not feel that the pores are unable to breathe. For a practitioner who has cultivated till the pores are breathing, the clothes that he wears must be made of breathable materials like full cotton or silk; otherwise he will feel that the entire body is stuffy. This is because a portion of his breathing through the mouth and nose has been transformed to breathing through the pores.

There is another way to gauge – see if there is any body odour from his body. Regardless of whether he sweats, does not bathe for days or under any other circumstances, there is no body odour. As a portion of his breathing has been converted to breathing through the pores, the breathing through his mouth and nose is not very obvious; his breathing seems non-existent. Normally his breathing is faint, very slow, fine and long, even; very long and deep.

Earlier on we explained how deep the breath can go. The breath can go even deeper, penetrating the bone marrow, known as 'bone marrow breathing'. In the martial arts films that we have watched, we have seen how a person can practise till the energy penetrates the bone marrow, which is the deepest part. Once the energy penetrates the bone marrow, he can then expel all turbid or toxic energy, so he will be very healthy. After he dies, regardless of how long, his bones are white and even feel like shiny and transparent. For ordinary people, when we do bone collection after three years, the bones are all yellow and black, right? However if you practise till the energy has entered your bone marrow; after the bone marrow has been purified, the bones will not become yellow and black. In Taoism, there are names given to them. When the energy penetrates the bone marrow, it is known as 'washing the bone marrow'; breathing through the pores is known as 'removing the hair'. So when we hear the name 'removing the hair, washing the bone marrow, we know that the practitioner is already able to have the energy penetrating the bone marrow. Therefore the question: Do we breathe till the breath reaches the cinnabar fields? It will depend on where your inhaled breath can reach.

(Q) Is it difficult to hold the tongue up and touch the palate lightly?

(A) It is not difficult, just leave the tongue there. We have mentioned earlier that actually your tongue is normally placed there; it is not difficult to hold it up. Perhaps you either did not find the right place or you are too nervous, the tongue is too stiff; that is why you find it difficult to hold it up. Just relax and place it there lightly, then the saliva will continue to flow out. It is not so difficult, right?

(Q) Why do I tremble when I sit cross-legged?

(A) I do not think that it is trembling as we only sat for twenty minutes. However if we have continued sitting, both legs may be numb or aching. Why do your legs feel numb or aching after sitting for some time? This is because of neuromuscular tightness and also your mind is not calm, it is still very distracted with many misleading thoughts. In addition, there is trembling like you have mentioned. That is the reason why we have to do warm up exercises and stretch the muscles before sitting down. If you do this preparatory work, you can sit for a longer time without numbness or aches. Aches and numbness of the legs will naturally disappear when the blood circulation is normal and you meditate till your body and mind are both empty. Once the obstructions of the energies and

channels in the legs are cleared, you will be able to sit for long without feeling tired, or numb and aching.

Some people will sit till the entire body sweats; for some the longer they sit the colder they feel. For those who ever practised qigong, 'spontaneous breathing and exercise' or 'spiritually activated breathing and exercise', though they are meditating they may start to shake, or some may see all kinds of light or see Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. All these are states of body constitution transformation; do not be alarmed, it is alright! As a result of meditation, the body starts to have some transformations. Why are there transformations? It shows that the body was originally unhealthy and it is now making adjustments. As long as you do not grasp such phenomena, they will disappear naturally when the body has been adjusted; so do not be alarmed. Do not think that such phenomena happen because you start to meditate. It is not related to meditation, it is because there are originally some problems with you; these problems are just released upon meditation. There is nothing wrong with meditation. We have mentioned that the seven-point posture is even feared by demons; moreover one can attain meditative absorption, develop wisdom and attain Buddhahood from it. How can it be problematic? So certainly it is because the practitioner has not harmonised the body; perhaps the four predominant element energies are not harmonised or the internal organs are ill; and these are released through meditation. As long as you harmonise it, or consult the doctor or take medication if you need to; all these manifestations will naturally disappear. It is an adjustment process; once your body has been adjusted these manifestations will naturally disappear. Hence do not be afraid to continue with your meditation; there is no need for this.

(Q) Good day to you compassionate Master. As I meditate I felt my face bloated and stiffened; was it because my thoughts were too strong?

(A) I think it was your body that was too stiff! You did not relax your body, and your face was also not relaxed that was why it became stiff.

(Q) Sometimes such phenomenon will disappear with visualisation.

(A) That was because you have relaxed or you have shifted your thought to visualising your phenomenon. So you have shifted your attention, you did not feel that it seems so stiff. You have shifted the object of attention.

(Q) In the morning there was an hour of practice. I realised that my mind was in disarray for thirty to forty-five minutes. My mind started to settle down after this period of time. Is the time of disarray too long?

(A) Of course it is too long! It is normal for your mind to be in disarray when you first start your practice. After all when we first start our practice, we are either distracted or torpid-minded; this is normal. We have to go through a process of harmonising the mind.

Why do we feel distracted or torpid-minded? It is mainly because our thought and breath are separated. When we attain realisation of following the breath, your thought and breath will be integrated as one. Only then will the phenomena of distraction and torpid-mindedness disappear

slowly. Prior to this, as your thought and breath are separate; this is known in Taoism as the non-unification of mind and energy, your breath functions by itself and your mind continues to have misleading thoughts, be in distraction or restlessness. These phenomena will disappear when you attain realisation of following the breath, your mind and breath are unified. So if you are in disarray for thirty to forty-five minutes when meditating, it shows that the phenomenon of distraction is very serious.

(Q) When attending a meditation retreat, I felt that the duration was too long. Due to boredom, it was easy to give rise to evil thoughts and cravings. Are beginners suitable for long meditation? Is there a need to repent? Or view it as impermanent?

(A) It is not suitable for beginners to start meditating for very long. Is there a need to repent? Need to repent as there are past karmic obstacles hindering the ability to attain meditative absorption, lightness, peace and bliss. You have this karma so now you find it difficult to cultivate meditative absorption, and your mind is confused and perturbed, moreover you keep having evil thoughts. Therefore you need to repent.

View it as impermanent? This is also good. Everything, regardless of whether you feel that the duration is too long, or all kinds of feeling in your body, or distractions, or your evil thoughts, or cravings.....that is, there is greed, anger and ignorance; view the self-nature of all afflictions as empty because they arise and cease. Everything that arises and ceases is impermanent, its self-nature is empty, devoid of self. So are evil thoughts scary? They are not scary, why? Their self-nature is empty; one moment good thought arises, another moment evil thought arises, the next moment greed arises; this shows that it arises and ceases, otherwise how can it keep changing? If it really exists, when an evil thought arises, it will not disappear, but it disappears after a while. Later, greed arises; greed also does not really exist otherwise it will not disappear, but it disappears after arising. It is precisely telling you: This is impermanent; its self-nature is empty. This is also a counteractive method; your ability to view impermanence is very good too.

(Q) After meditating for a while I started to feel hot, not warm; I started to sweat but not profusely. Is this normal?

(A) Like what we have mentioned earlier, this is also a process of body adjustment. When there is dampness in the body you will sweat. If it is not due to the hot weather and you sweat abnormally, then it shows that there is dampness in your body; this dampness is expelled from the body during meditation.

Let us clarify the earlier question on whether it is suitable for a beginner to meditate for too long. Indeed it should not be too long; this is very important. Especially for beginners, do not meditate for fifty minutes or an hour in one sitting. For those who do not have any foundation, attending a ten-day or seven-day meditation retreat or a seven-day Buddha-recitation retreat will find that they have to bear with the discomfort of sitting for so long, the mind is either distracted or torpid-minded, the result is also not very good. With regard to the cultivation of calming-and-insight meditation, having the correct concept and method is extremely important. Therefore we have to explain it clearly.

Beginners can start with twenty or thirty minutes but are not suitable for more than an hour. Normally the duration of your meditation is similar to the duration of your walking meditation or rest time. For instance, if you meditate for half an hour, you will do walking meditation or rest for half an hour. However if you meditate for more than an hour, you have to double your walking meditation or rest time. That is, if you meditate for an hour in this sitting, you need two hours of walking meditation or rest time, not one hour. You have to double your rest time with increasing duration of meditation. If you meditate for two hours, you may have to rest for four hours. More importantly, beginners must not meditate for more than a total of four hours a day. Then rest more, exercise more or do walking meditation. In the beginning do not be intrepidly diligent! If whenever you are free, you just sit cross-legged, then do not exercise or rest or do walking meditation, you will have illness related to meditation. This is wrong diligence, not right diligence; so the timing has to be well allocated.

Someone asked, "Should I continue to bear with the discomfort if I do not feel like meditating?" Whether to bear with the discomfort depends on whether you can take the sufferings.....(joking). Just like us, we get into the state very quickly after we start the meditation. If you have practised for a period of time, when you begin your meditation you will start to feel your body warming up, and feel a condensation of energy, then your mind feels extremely quiet and your body also feels good. It is as if your entire body is enveloped in very warm energy and your body feels warm. When the stream of energy disperses and you can no longer focus your thought, it is time to emerge from your meditation. If you continue with the meditation, you will find it difficult to endure as the energy has been dispersed, and it is difficult to gather it back. It shows that you can only meditate for that long with the energy in your body. Thereafter you are just enduring with the discomfort, the effect is not good. Therefore, when you feel that the energy in your body has been dispersed, and you start to have misleading thoughts, it is time to emerge from the meditation. So should you continue to endure? It depends on the duration of this state. Depending on individuals, it may be twenty or thirty minutes before you are unable to focus your thoughts; then it is time to emerge from meditation. We use this as a standard to determine the duration of your meditation.

(Q) Is it suitable to sit up and meditate if I am unable to fall asleep? Can meditation replace sleep?

(A) It depends on your skill. If you are not skilful enough, meditation cannot replace sleep.

So is it suitable to sit up and meditate if you are unable to fall asleep? Not suitable. First we have to know the reason for your inability to fall asleep. It is the upsurge of excess internal heat due to poor body condition- your mind is unable to calm down, your thoughts flow continuously even without you trying to think, and your head is dizzy. That is why you have insomnia. If you meditate at this point of time, the excess internal heat will get stronger; you will also not be able to sleep. People with insomnia should meditate before insomnia starts, and should not meditate after it starts, otherwise the excess internal heat will get stronger. Before sleeping, we meditate till the excess internal heat descends, that is, fire heat descends and kidney water ascends. In traditional Chinese medicine, this is known as the harmony of heart and kidney; it indicates that the body has been harmonised. At this time, you will be able to sleep very easily. So you should meditate before sleeping; it is not suitable to meditate after the insomnia starts.

Under what other circumstances and time is meditation not suitable? We have to know this too.

What is the most suitable time for meditation? The most suitable time is early in the morning, when you have sufficient sleep and are revitalised. If you meditate at night when your body and mind are so tired, you will easily fall asleep or be torpid-minded. The effect of meditating when the body and mind are very tired is no good, so we should not try to meditate when we are very tired.

Do not meditate after we have lost our temper. The channels and energies in your body are in disarray when you lose your temper, so meditating at this time is harmful to your body instead. What about meditating when we are very happy, is it suitable? This is also not suitable. When your body is extremely stimulated, the channels and energies are also in disarray. So we have to remember not to meditate after fury or great joy.

Do not meditate after consuming alcoholic drinks. Also do not meditate right after sexual intercourse of husband and wife; need an interval of an hour. It is even stricter in Taoism; you need an interval of twelve hours. Why? Sexual intercourse of husband and wife will cause the energy in the body to be in disarray. Taoists practise gathering of energy; when the energy in the body is in disarray, it is not suitable to gather energy. Taoists will have to wait for twelve hours before they can practise kung fu or meditate. This afternoon there was lightning and thunder, the yin-yang energy was in disarray; it was also not a suitable time for meditation.

Taoists feel that the most suitable time for meditation is between nine and ten o'clock in the morning; and between three and four o'clock in the afternoon. We mentioned that in Taoism they practise gathering of energy; these are the best time to gather energy, why? During these timing the sun is neither too gentle nor too strong; it is the best for gathering energy and the most beneficial for health. It is said that you can easily obtain the genuine energy at these time.

In yoga, it is said that the spiritual influence is the strongest at four o'clock in the morning. So you wake up at this time to clear your nose as in yoga, there is a practice of using your breath to clear the channels. Once the channels are cleared, you can meditate or practise yoga; this is the best time to do so. This is as a reference, so we can have the various schools for comparison.

As for ourselves, we have mentioned earlier that it is best in the morning when we have sufficient sleep and have been revitalised; it is less likely for us to be torpid-minded. This will allow our thoughts to be clear and be more vitalised for the entire day.

(Q) Someone asked, "In Vajrayana, it is considered unsuitable to meditate at 11pm-1am and 11am-1pm; there can be negative physiological and psychological changes. Can we meditate at these timing?"

(A) During 11pm-1am and 11am-1pm (ancient Chinese system of measuring time in two-hour subdivisions), the energy is relatively unstable as it is the time of yin-yang intersection. We know that 11pm-1am is when the energy starts to become yang, and 11am-1pm is when the energy starts to become yin. From 11pm-1am, the yang energy starts and is at its weakest; and it gets more yang through the hours all the way to 11am, this is when the yang energy is the strongest. From 11am-

1pm, the yin energy starts and is at its weakest; and it gets more yin through the hours all the way to 11pm, this is when the yin energy is the strongest. So is it not better to meditate in the morning? Because yang energy gets stronger and stronger; yang energy is the strongest before 11am. Then after noon time, yin energy gets stronger and stronger.

Therefore some people also asked, “Can I recite the Great Compassion Mantra at night? Can I meditate at night? Can I chant the Original Vows of Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva Sutra? Will there be other sentient beings?” At this time the yin energy gets stronger and stronger; after dusk it is also when the sentient beings of the other realm begin to be active. Sentient beings in the realm of departed spirits and ghosts start to be active at this time; they will be out in large numbers after dusk, all the way to the middle of the night.

If your body is healthy and you have righteous thoughts, you can meditate at any time. If your body is very weak, your aura and energy is low, and you practise spontaneous breathing and exercises, spiritually activated breathing and exercises or the like; your channels become very sensitive. Then when you recite the sutra, chant the mantra, meditate or practise breathing and exercises, you may feel that there is something disturbing you. Perhaps there is sickness in your body, your energy and aura is originally weak, moreover the strength of your thought is weak, so it is easy to sense the sentient beings from the spiritual world. We human beings are half yin and half yang, immortals are purely yang, and sentient beings from the spiritual world are purely yin. So when your yang energy becomes weaker, yin energy becomes stronger, are you not closer to their aura? This is why you are able to sense them. If you have this kind of body constitution, do not meditate at midnight or at night; meditate in the morning when the sun is very strong.

Let us go back to the question of whether you can meditate at 11pm-1am and 11am-1pm? We have mentioned earlier that if you are very strong, and have a forthright and upright character, it is okay to meditate at these times. However, if you are worried, you can start in the day, do not meditate at night. Meditate in the day for a thousand days then it will be fine. As you are a beginner, both body and mind are not very stable yet, in addition, if your body constitution is the kind that we have mentioned, you will have interference. So as a precaution, meditate for a thousand days in the daytime, by then your body and mind would have been harmonised, then you can meditate at any time. As long as your meditation method is right, your body will get stronger, and your energy and aura will get stronger too. Then you will not have interference. This is also very important so we have to specially explain it.

We have also explained earlier that if you are too hungry, do not meditate as it is easy to get gastrospasm. If you overeat, you can get gastremia during meditation. The former will cause distraction while the latter will cause torpid-mindedness; both situations are not suitable for meditation. If you do not overeat, you can meditate after more than half an hour after a meal. If you overeat, you have to prolong the time before starting.

Apart from not overeating, do not eat food that is too refined, eat coarser food. Food that is too refined has more seasoning. In Taoism, it is said that this will cause flatulence. When you meditate, you will pass wind easily, so your meditation is not effective.

If you sweat profusely during meditation, dry your body with a dry towel first. Do not continue to meditate with a wet body; the dampness will be absorbed back into the body through the pores. This situation will happen more in summer. If it is too cold in winter, wrap your body with a woollen blanket. Do not wear too many layers of clothes as you will feel bound up. If you wear layer by layer from the inner wear to the woollen top and the leather jacket, you are all wrapped up till you find it hard to breathe.

In the past some meditation masters have shared with us their experiences; we can use it as a reference. With regard to food, just like what we mentioned earlier, do not eat too much otherwise it makes you torpid-minded; too little food makes you distracted. As for types of food, food that contain predominant earth element, that is, they grow in the soil like potatoes and sweet potatoes; will make you torpid-minded if you eat too much of it. Foods that belong to the predominant fire element are like chilli, food of a stimulating nature like your favourite curry; you can eat a little but not too much as too much of it can make you easily distracted. Eating too much meat makes you torpid-minded. What if I only eat vegetables? Eating only vegetables make you easily distracted. With regard to our drinks, in yoga milk is good, but too much of it makes you torpid-minded. What about drinking coffee and tea? You will be easily distracted.

When the weather is too hot, you will be easily torpid-minded; if the weather is too cold, you will be easily distracted. Meditating on a rainy day makes you easily torpid-minded; meditating when the sun is too strong makes you easily distracted. With regard to the four seasons, in spring and autumn you will be easily torpid-minded; in summer and winter you will be more easily distracted. With regard to light, we have mentioned earlier that when you meditate the light should not be too strong or weak. If it is too dark, you will be easily torpid-minded; if the light is too strong, you will be easily distracted.

If you wear too much clothes, you will be easily torpid-minded; if you wear too little, you will be easily distracted. With regard to colours, bright colours like red, reddish orange, yellow and orange make you easily distracted; dull colours like blue, green and black make you easily torpid-minded.

With regard to eyes, we have mentioned earlier that if your eyes are closed you will be easily torpid-minded; if your eyes are opened you will be easily distracted. That is why we have our eyes moderately opened. With regard to the pulse, a weaker pulse makes you torpid-minded; an overly strong pulse makes you distracted. When you are tired, you are easily torpid-minded; too excited and you will be easily distracted.

With regard to the three poisons of greed, anger and ignorance; when you are ignorant you are easily torpid-minded; when you are filled with greed and anger you are distracted more easily. People who are fat are easily torpid-minded; thin people are easily distracted.

As we have mentioned earlier, in order to eliminate torpid-mindedness and distraction, up to which stage do we have to meditate? We have to attain realisation of following the breath before the phenomena of torpid-mindedness and distraction can disappear slowly.

You may ask, “For how long do I have to meditate to attain realisation of following the breath?” It depends on the good roots of your past lives. If you are not very diligent, normally six years is enough. If your calming-and-insight meditation method is right and you are very diligent, you do not need six years. Normally it takes six years to harmonise your thought till you reach the state of meditative absorption. If you are undisciplined in your cultivation and your method may not be right or you are also not very diligent, you need six years. However if your method is right and you are diligent, just like cultivating The Six Gates to the Sublime, you do not need that long. Under normal circumstances, regardless of your meditation methods, you need six years to settle your thought, three years to settle your breath, and one year to achieve the standard posture naturally once you sit down. This is the situation if you are not very diligent; but if you are very diligent then you do not need that long, you can attain it very quickly.

We will answer the rest of the questions tomorrow, alright? We have a tight schedule so let us categorise and arrange them today before we answer them. There may be some repetition in the questions or some questions may not be very complete; so we will modify them so that the questions sound good and the answer will also be good.

We have to explain and practise The Six Gates to the Sublime in four nights, which is very rushed; but do not be too worried as we will continue with the balance of the lessons in the next round. After each lesson there will be forty minutes of practice time. We will keep repeating the practice; in the future Tiantai Calming-and-Insight Meditation curriculum we will keep repeating the practices too.

Now we can only introduce the method of practice; you need to spend time practising each step of the skill. We can only explain the method clearly, and tomorrow we will explain the correct method for normal practice so that you can practise individually when you go back. In case there is any question before the next series of lectures which is more than two months later, you can go online and ask, I will clarify your doubts so that you can continue with your diligence. Otherwise if you are frightened off by some phenomena and are too afraid to continue, then it will be a pity.

We keep emphasising that The Six Gates to the Sublime is very safe, and it is a rapid realisation calming-and-insight meditation method; there is definitely no problem with it. If there is any problem, it has to do with the individual; either there is a problem with his bodily health or his disposition. In the process of cultivation, his body needs to be adjusted; and the seeds of afflictions and bad habits in the eighth consciousness will break out. We have mentioned earlier that there are good and evil roots manifestations; especially when the evil roots manifest you will encounter all kinds of situations, which is normal. As both your body and mind need to adjust, there is a process of adjustment; it is normal to have all kinds of manifestations. Hence we must not be afraid, if there is any problem, go online and ask. It should be alright in this way.

Cultivation of Contemplation

Today we will go into ‘Cultivation of Contemplation’; first counting, second following, third stabilisation and fourth contemplation. At the point of attaining stabilisation, ask yourself why you

want to cultivate meditative absorption. What exactly are your motive, resolution and objective? In the cultivation of stabilisation, when you attain stabilisation, there are all kinds of state of stabilisation – realm of desire meditative absorption, preliminary ground meditative absorption, first dhyana, and many others. We also know that we can develop supernatural power from stabilisation; normally you have to cultivate till dhyana four to develop supernatural power that is indisputable, which is real supernatural power. However if you have not even attained first dhyana and you claim to have supernatural power, then normally that is not real supernatural power. Perhaps it is the supernatural power of spirits, ghosts, etc. So you have to attain fourth dhyana before you can attain real supernatural power.

Hence you have to ask yourself your objective of cultivating meditative absorption. Do you just want to attain meditative absorption? Is it to attain the lightness and peace of first dhyana? Or is it to attain the supernatural power of fourth dhyana? Of course these are not the objectives. Even if you can attain all kinds of meditative absorption and have lightness, peace and bliss, or your body and mind are calm, this is a kind of good feeling; or developing supernatural power is a very fun phenomenon; but they cannot develop into wisdom. You simply have high skills but are unable to develop the wisdom of emptiness and liberation; so your cultivation does not stop here. When you generate bodhicitta, you want to benefit sentient beings but are you able to do so? How to help sentient beings be liberated if you yourself are not liberated? How to help sentient beings be enlightened when you yourself are not enlightened? How to help sentient beings become Buddha when you yourself are not Buddha? Regardless of the wisdom, compassion or infinite skilful means to help sentient beings, at this point of time you do not have such abilities; you just have the meditative absorption skills which is not even sufficient to benefit yourself and others. Hence at this point of time we have to turn back and contemplate.

Turning back and contemplate is precisely entering the seventh ‘cultivation of contemplation’. Since the attainment of stabilisation is not your objective, then you have to begin contemplation amid the meditative absorption. How to cultivate contemplation? As you find that stabilisation is not enough, you want to go a step further, so at this point of time from the third ‘stabilisation’ you enter the fourth step of ‘contemplation’.

Now you begin contemplation amid the meditative absorption. What do you contemplate? Now when you contemplate your body, you will discover that it is like a banana tree. Banana tree looks concrete but if you peel it layer by layer, the centre is empty. The situation of our body is similar to the banana tree – skin, flesh, muscles, bones If you analyse it one by one; is the skin your body? No. Is the flesh your body? No. Are the muscles and bones your body? No. Dismantle the parts individually and finally there is no body; just like when you peel the banana tree layer by layer, the centre is empty. Therefore, regardless of whether there are thirty-two or thirty-six unclean substances, the body is just a composition of these unclean substances. If you analyse individually, are the eyes your body? No. Is the heart your body? No. Is the liver your body? No. Analyse it one at a time, you will realise that they are all not your body. So where is your body? The conclusion is that there is no body. So at this point of time, we contemplate our body as similar to the banana tree, which is illusory, unreal.

Actually this is not too difficult. Fellow practitioners who meditate rather well will have this feeling, that is, after five to ten minutes of meditation, you will feel that your body is left with a mass of energy; there is no body weight and this mass of energy is penetrable, not concrete; it has become an extremely light mass of energy. If you take a peep, you will realise that there is a vast expanse of whiteness just like white mist and you do not feel your body. So to experience the non-existence of the body, you can feel it at this time; it is actually not so difficult. It does not matter if you do not have such feeling; you just contemplate your body as similar to a banana tree. Analyse it one at a time, you will see that the parts are not the body; and finally there is no body. This shows that the body is not real in existence.

Similarly when we look at the external mountains, rivers and the earth, as long as your mind is calm and you stare at the mountains for some time, they will be left with the shadows only, perhaps there are a few types of shadows; then you will understand that the mountains do not really exist. You can try practising in this way, eventually there will only be shadows left. Likewise with our body, eventually in your meditation, you will be like what is described in the book as 'like cloud, like shadow'. Like clouds which are penetrable; like shadows which you can step on but the shadow does not feel the pain; the feeling is as such. So the body will be like cloud, like shadow.

Next, contemplate our thought. Although the thought is already very faint, once in a long while a thought will arise and disappear. What does this indicate? It indicates that it arises and ceases, so your thought does not really exist, it is like water flowing in a waterfall. In the sutras and shastras, our thought is often described as water flowing in a waterfall, flowing continuously. The restless nature of our thought is also like that, one thought after another, a flutter of misleading thoughts; just like the water flowing continuously in a waterfall. Though the waterfall is always there, does the water change? Yes, the water flows down and flows away; although the waterfall is always there, the water that keeps flowing down is not the original water. What does it show? The waterfall arises and ceases, it does not really exist. Likewise with our thought, it keeps arising and disappearing; also proving that our thought does not really exist.

What about our breath? The breath has become very faint. Although the breath is very faint, it is indistinct, or you inhale once in a long while. However it is like the wind in the sky, once it blows past, it is gone, right? You inhale once in a long while and exhale; it arises and ceases, it also does not really exist.

Therefore your body is like the banana tree, your thought is like water flowing in a waterfall, and your breath is like wind in the air; they do not really exist. So now where is 'self'? 'Self' is a composition of body, mind and breath. There is a 'self' here cultivating counting the breath, following the breath, cultivating The Six Gates to the Sublime. However the breath does not really exist, the body that is sitting here cultivating The Six Gates to the Sublime also does not exist. But we have a concept of the body, mind and breath combined to form a 'self' that is sitting here cultivating The Six Gates to the Sublime. Now that we have finally analysed that the body, mind and breath do not really exist, so does the 'self' really exist? The 'self' does not really exist! Basically there is not a real 'self' existing, so what can we attain? We can attain the realisation of the emptiness of 'self'

The body, mind and breath are things (dharmas) and they do not really exist. Do things (dharmas) really exist? So-called things (dharmas) do not really exist. In this way you can attain realisation of the 'emptiness of things (dharmas)'.

Hence what is cultivation of contemplation? It is contemplating with your wisdom – body is not real, it is like the banana tree; thought is not real, it is like water in a waterfall; breath is not real, it is like wind in the air. This is the cultivation of contemplation.

Realisation of Contemplation

Through this contemplation method, you can realise that the body, thought and breath are arising and ceasing, impermanent and do not really exist; as such you see the real nature of all things (dharmas). At this point of time you have attained realisation of contemplation. You contemplate the state of your body, mind and breath through wisdom and you can realise that all things (dharmas) that arise from causes and conditions are empty in self-nature. In this way you are awakened to the truth of the real nature of all things (dharmas). What is the real nature? It is the emptiness of 'self' and emptiness of 'things' (dharmas); all things (dharmas) are without self-nature. So at this point of time if you are able to experience and realise this, you have attained realisation of contemplation.

Since 'self' and things (dharmas) do not exist, so for the stabilisation that you have cultivated, where does it rely on for existence? We cultivate with our body, mind and breath; resulting in all kinds of meditative absorption states. Since our body, mind and breath do not have real existence, where does the stabilisation that you have cultivated rely on for existence? It does not rely on anywhere for existence. What does this show? The stabilisation that you have cultivated does not have real existence. All kinds of stabilisation states, regardless of the realm of desire meditative absorption, the preliminary ground meditative absorption, or all kinds of samadhi, they are arising and ceasing, impermanent, are not in real existence. In this way you will not attach to the state of stabilisation.

This is the contents of the cultivation of contemplation and realisation of contemplation.

Cultivation of Turning

Can you be enlightened by cultivating in this way? You still cannot be enlightened, right? Why is it that you cannot be enlightened? It is because you still have the contemplating mind and the contemplated phenomena. Contemplating – you use your wisdom of contemplation to contemplate the body, mind, breath and stabilisation and realise that they do not really exist. The contemplated – the body, mind, breath and stabilisation are your contemplated phenomena. As long as there is the contemplating and the contemplated, you are not enlightened; you have not understood your mind and have not seen your true nature. In our primordial nature, there is no duality; there is no duality of subject and object. Hence now we have to abandon contemplation and enter the stage of 'turning'.

Since there is still the contemplating and the contemplated, we will now contemplate whether this contemplating mind and the contemplated phenomena are really in existence. Is the contemplating mind really in existence? No, when I contemplate it is there but if I do not contemplate then it is not there. Now when I use the wisdom of contemplation to contemplate, it exists; but later when I take a rest, it does not exist. This shows that the contemplating mind does not really exist because it exists when you contemplate but it does not exist when you do not contemplate. It arises and ceases. If the contemplating mind really exists, it will always be there contemplating; it will not disappear, then that is really in existence. However, it is not like that, it disappears after you have finished contemplating. It shows that the contemplating mind is not really in existence. Are the contemplated phenomena really in existence? They are not because one moment you contemplate the body, the next moment you contemplate the mind, and then you contemplate the breath. It shows that they are not really in existence otherwise your contemplated phenomena will not keep changing.

Realisation of Turning

Since the contemplating and the contemplated do not really exist, then you do not have to continue grasping them. Earlier when we were cultivating contemplation, we needed to have the wisdom of contemplation to contemplate on the state of our body, mind and breath so as to understand that the objects of our contemplation are not really in existence. Now we turn back and contemplate again. Since the contemplating and the contemplated are illusory, do not really exist, then what should we do with the contemplating and the contemplated? Perish it! When the contemplating and the contemplated have perished; you will return to the origin, which is your self-nature. At this point of time, you have attained 'realisation of turning'.

Earlier when you turn back and contemplate again the contemplating mind and the contemplated phenomena, this is cultivation of turning. When the duality of subject and object have perished, and you return to the origin, your self-nature; then this is realisation of turning.

Cultivation of Purification

What is the state of our self-nature? Our self-nature is originally pure, right? After the duality of subject and object has perished, your originally pure self-nature will manifest; then you will see that your self-nature is originally pure.

Since the self-nature is originally pure, all things (dharmas) that arise from the self-nature are also originally pure, right? Since the conditioning power of the mind is pure, the conditioned things (dharmas) are also pure. What things (dharmas) do you give rise to? They are what we use every day – our six sense-organs come into contact with the six sense-objects, giving rise to the six consciousnesses. This is the eighteen realms of sense. The six sense-organs arise from your pure self-nature, are they pure? They are originally pure; these six sense-organs come into contact with the six sense-objects, are they pure? They are originally pure. The six sense-organs come into contact with the six sense-objects, giving rise to the six consciousnesses which are originally pure.

But why do we still give rise to afflictions in whatever we see and hear? This is because we give rise to the conditioning and the conditioned again. **As long as there is duality of subject and object, it is not pure.** With the conditioning and the conditioned, there is a 'self' looking at something. There is 'self' and there is things (dharmas), then there is discrimination, there is attachment; giving rise to greed, anger and ignorance. But they are originally pure, right? You say that this flower is beautiful but the flower is pure in itself. When you look at the flower you feel that you like it and want to buy it back! You have given rise to greed. This is not the shortcoming of the flower; the flower is innocent, right? The self-nature of the flower is pure; it is you who have given rise to discrimination, attachment to 'self' and things (dharmas); hence giving rise to greed, anger and ignorance, giving rise to afflictions.

Realisation of Purification

Through this analysis, we can eradicate all discrimination, attachment and misleading thoughts. The stage of cultivation is known as 'cultivation of purification'. When we have ceased all discrimination, attachment and misleading thoughts; it is 'realisation of purification'. In the cultivation of purification, we see our originally pure self-nature. Then through analysis that all things (dharmas) arising from our originally pure self-nature are also pure; we do not give rise to discrimination, attachment and misleading thoughts. When we really cease all discrimination, attachment and misleading thoughts, we have attained 'realisation of purification'. We have attained the originally pure self-nature.

Semblance Realisation, Genuine Realisation

However there is semblance realisation and genuine realisation. We have to examine whether our realisation of the non-existence of all things (dharmas) is genuinely an understanding of our mind and true nature. We will examine it now.

What is semblance realisation? Semblance means it is similar but not real; it is already very close but is not genuine realisation. Why do you have semblance realisation? This is the result of what you normally perfume in your cultivation. Perhaps when you were listening to the Buddhist teachings, you heard some views regarding self-nature; for instance, the Bodhi self-nature is originally pure, pure self-nature is like the emptiness of space, etc. The seeds of these well-known sayings are planted into your eighth consciousness; they are just phenomena of names. Now when you meditate till your mind is very calm, the conditioning power of the mind and the conditioned phenomena have perished, everything seems to be empty; the seeds of the well-known saying 'self-nature is like the emptiness of space, self-nature is originally empty' will manifest. Then you will think that you have seen the pure self-nature. No, that is only the phenomenon of thought of the sixth consciousness, understand? It is simply the manifestation of the pure aspect of the sixth consciousness. As you have meditated till the duality of subject and object perished, your sixth consciousness does not discriminate anymore; there is no more comparative perception, but has entered direct perception, which is the manifestation of the pure, direct perception of the sixth consciousness. The sixth consciousness is related to the phenomenon of thought. So this is actually

the manifestation of the phenomenon of thought, which is 'all self-nature is originally pure', understand? It is just the pure aspect of the sixth consciousness.

In The Shurangama Sutra, it is stated that 'preserve inner quietness, the shadow of differentiation of things (dharmas) still remains. 'Preserve inner quietness' is precisely the phenomenon wherein you feel that both the subject and object have perished, everything seems to be empty. 'The shadow of differentiation of things (dharmas) still remains' is precisely the manifestation of the phenomenon of thought of your sixth consciousness; you have not really seen your pure self-nature.

Actually it is very easy to differentiate between semblance realisation and genuine realisation. If once you emerge from meditation, there is manifestation of all your afflictions and bad habits; then you know that it is semblance realisation. In your meditation you feel that everything has become empty, thinking that you are enlightened, but once you emerge from your meditation you start to throw your temper and show your greed, do you think you have seen your self-nature? You simply feel the phenomenon of emptiness in your meditation but that is only the manifestation of the phenomenon of thought of the sixth consciousness. It is not genuine realisation, it is still afflictive.

However genuine realisation is different. Genuine realisation is wherein you have really seen the pure self-nature, giving rise to the wisdom of emptiness. This wisdom of emptiness is non-afflictive, that is why it can totally eliminate all afflictions in the three realms, attain nirvana and be liberated from life and death. Hence at this point of time in the cultivation of The Six Gates to the Sublime, you can be awakened, understand your mind and see your self-nature; in addition you can attain nirvana.

The afflictions and bad habits of one who has attained genuine realisation will not be so strong anymore. At all times, he is able to maintain a pure mind; his mind always remains in the state of purity. He will not discriminate, attach and have misleading thoughts.

So can one lead a life without discrimination, attachment and misleading thoughts? If one does not discriminate what one sees, eats or does not attach to anything, can one lead a life? He will be able to perceive even clearer than ordinary people; this is known as 'good discrimination'. The discriminating mind of an ordinary person is the comparative perception of the sixth consciousness; that is why there is duality of subject and object. This gives rise to afflictions and creation of karma. However for one who has seen the self-nature, he will always maintain purity; as he has seen the real nature of all things (dharmas), he knows that the self-nature of all things (dharmas) is empty, but these things (dharmas) seemingly manifest. They arise from causes and conditions. The self-nature of all things (dharmas) is empty, yet these things (dharmas) seem to exist as evident in the myriad of things in the phenomenal world; it is precisely 'empty yet not empty'. So emptiness is not purely emptiness; everything seems to exist but it is like in a dream, they do not really exist.

This is because the sixth consciousness has been transformed into the 'profound contemplation wisdom'; so he has good discrimination. Although he has good discrimination in all things (dharmas), he does not attach to them as he understands that the self-nature of all things (dharmas) is empty. He allows the existence of all things (dharmas) that is why in the empty nature, he can give rise to infinite skilful means to benefit sentient beings. This is the phenomenon of genuine realisation. That

is how he leads his life; he does not discriminate, attach or have misleading thoughts. When there is no attachment, it shows that the seventh consciousness has been transformed into the 'universal equality wisdom'.

So-called phenomenon of genuine realisation is good discrimination of all things (dharmas) but is not contaminated by all things (dharmas) and going a step further is the accomplishment of all things (dharmas). Bodhisattvas have attained the phenomenon of genuine realisation of the pure self-nature from which they are able to attain the wisdom of emptiness; then with immense compassion, they perform the six paramitas and the four methods of pacification to benefit sentient beings. This is the state of 'realisation of purification'.

Today we do not seem to have the time to practise meditation; but it does not matter, tomorrow we will try to find time to meditate. Tomorrow we will introduce Chapter 3 'The Six Gates to the Sublime in Accordance with Suitability'. This is cultivation according to your convenience and suitability. We have learned the contents of The Six Gates to the Sublime, how to practise, how to use it skilfully, how to use it flexibly; that is, to observe your present situation to determine which is the most suitable gate. We will explain this part clearly tomorrow, then when you go back you can practise flexibly; otherwise you will think that you definitely have to practise according to the sequence – first counting, second following, third stabilisation, fourth contemplation, fifth turning and sixth purification. Actually you can adjust according to your convenience; but the precondition is that you must cultivate and practise till you are very familiar before you can use it flexibly. If you are not familiar with the contents of The Six Gates to the Sublime and have not practised enough, you will not be able to use it well. We will explain this tomorrow.

We will end our lesson here today.

Dedication: May I dedicate this merit to all sentient beings; may I and all sentient beings attain the state of enlightenment.

The Six Gates to the Sublime
Lecture 4
Teachings by Venerable Master Jing-Lian

Venue: Tai Pei Buddhist Centre
3 July 2009

Lecture Contents

- **Chapter 3 - The Six Gates to the Sublime in Accordance with Suitability**

Namo Amitabha Buddha to everyone!

Yesterday we did not have time to meditate as we have spent too much time answering questions. As we have to make progress, we will find the opportunity in future to answer the rest of the questions.

I went through the questions that you asked yesterday and would like to clarify one particular question; we will touch on the rest when we have the opportunity in future. I would like to clarify the question on whether it is suitable to meditate at 11pm-1am and 11am-1pm; because in Vajrayana it is said that meditating at these times can cause negative physiological and psychological changes. We mentioned that fellow practitioners with certain conditions are unsuitable to recite the Great Compassion Mantra or the Original Vows of Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva Sutra at 11pm-1am. So yesterday there was a question on whether one can recite mantras and chant sutras at this time. If one cannot do so at this time, then what is the purpose of the eight classes of supernatural beings?

I think I was very indirect and implicit in my explanation, resulting in this misunderstanding. That was not my idea because all mantras and sutras can be recited and chanted at any time; the guardians of the teachings and the eight classes of supernatural beings will keep guard of the sutras. So how can one have interference? So this is certainly not the idea!

We suggested not reciting mantras and chanting sutras if one's body has certain conditions. We were not too explicit for fear of hurting people with such conditions. What we mean is that your body already has such conditions, for instance you practise some form of breathing and exercises or your channels are already very sensitive; your body is extremely weak, energy is extremely low and aura is extremely weak. Your mind is without right understanding and right view, doubtful, fearful and is afraid of interference; but you like to recite mantras and chant sutras in the middle of the night though your mental condition is already extremely unstable. So you feel there is severe interference. Under such situation, for your own good, we suggest that you do your practices in the day when the sun is the strongest. Hence build up your health first, exercise more and go out in the sun more. When your body has been adjusted and your mental condition is stable, then it does not matter. Once your body and mind have been harmonised, you can do your practices any time; there will not be any problem. So we want to clarify this in order to avoid the misunderstanding that we cannot practise in the middle of the night.

As for the other questions, majority seem to be from fellow practitioners who have not attended our previous lesson on The Smaller Calming-and-Insight Meditation. Our mp3 on this lesson is ready; everyone can obtain one as supplement. Some questions are related to our future lessons on The Six Gates to the Sublime; this will be explained in the later lessons. We have mentioned that the first part to learn is 'The Smaller Calming-and-Insight Meditation', the second part is 'The Six Gates to the Sublime', the third part is 'The Perfection of Meditation' and the fourth part is 'The Great Calming and Contemplation'. We hope to complete the four parts in an estimated time of two years. So for those who have missed the first part, please take a copy of the mp3 which contains all the preparations that are needed prior to the cultivation of calming-and-insight meditation. Moreover it also explains very clearly on how to harmonise your body, breath and mind. Most of the questions yesterday were on the situations arising from the non-harmonisation of body, mind or breath; these

are explained in The Smaller Calming-and-Insight Meditation. When your body is too tensed, too relaxed, your mind is too torpid-minded, distracted etc; how you should handle all the situations that arise are all explained very clearly in The Smaller Calming-and-Insight Meditation. As such, we will not spend too much time on this.

Furthermore, beginners who are new to this lecture will find the contents a little profound and the speed a little fast. This is because five years ago we have already conducted lessons on The Smaller Calming-and-Insight Meditation and The Six Gates to the Sublime. We do not want to repeat the contents of what we have taught then. Moreover it is also to facilitate the learning of fellow practitioners who have started to cultivate this method five years ago. So this is the reason for us now to explain more in-depth, widen the scope and increase the speed. However, do not be worried as we have about another two years to complete the four parts of the calming-and-insight meditation. Each time during the lesson we will practise meditation; we want to practise on the spot all meditation methods related to Tiantai Calming-and-Insight Meditation. As our schedule is very tight now and we have not completed the contents of The Six Gates to the Sublime; we will complete Chapter 3 today and the rest of the seven chapters will be completed at the next round of lectures. We will repeat the practice of The Six Gates to the Sublime during every lecture in the next round. So even if you are a beginner, do not be unduly worried as during the lectures we will keep repeating the practices from the beginning.

Chapter 3 The Six Gates to the Sublime in Accordance with Suitability

As we have a tight schedule, today we will go directly to Chapter 3 ‘The Six Gates to the Sublime in Accordance with Suitability’. This chapter explains how we can flexibly use the methods that we have learned in The Six Gates to the Sublime. We learn The Six Gates to the Sublime with the hope of rapidly attaining meditative absorption, followed by developing wisdom or even attaining realisation of nirvana. How can it be so rapid and effective? You have to know the skilful way to cultivate The Six Gates to the Sublime in order to achieve the best result.

What is so-called skilful is to practise every method till we are very familiar with them; then we can use them in accordance with our convenience and suitability to harmonise our mind. So we have to practise the different methods individually for a few days. For instance, after practising counting the breath for a few days, practise following the breath; after practising following the breath for a few days, practise cultivation of stabilisation; after a few days, practise cultivation of contemplation; after a few days, practise cultivation of turning; after a few days, practise cultivation of purification. After practising each one for a few days, repeat again – first count, second following, third stabilisation, fourth contemplation, fifth turning and sixth purification. Repeat for a few times and you will know which is more suitable for you. So from then on, you just concentrate on cultivating the method that is the most suitable for you; you will be able to rapidly attain meditative concentration, develop wisdom and attain realisation of nirvana.

If you are not skilful, when you cultivate counting the breath, you may think that you have not attained realisation of counting the breath, and will continue to count your breath for the rest of your life without any attainment. This is not skilful. Or if you cultivate following your breath, you may

just be observing your inhalation and exhalation for the rest of your life without any attainment. So if you are not skilful, regardless of your diligence you will be wasting your effort; it will be a pity. Hence having the right method is also very important.

Repeat a few times and find the method that is most suitable for you. If counting the breath is the most convenient and suitable method for you; henceforth use counting the breath to calm your mind. If you find yourself attaining meditative absorption fastest through following the breath, then use it to calm your mind and so on. Similarly with stabilisation, contemplation, turning and purification; see with which method you are able to attain meditative absorption fastest, use that particular method to calm your mind. This is in accordance with your convenience and suitability; there is no need to cultivate according to the sequence. This is the meaning of 'in accordance with suitability'.

How do you know whether this is suitable for you? There are three signs to gauge whether the method is suitable for you. For instance, when you are counting the breath or following the breath or cultivating contemplation or cultivating purification, you are able to rapidly attain 'body relaxed, breath harmonised, mind calm' – your mind is very tranquil, your breath has been adjusted to subtle respiration which is faint and undefined; body is at ease, not irritable, can sit still, no back pains and aches; there are no obstacles of the body. Then this is a suitable method for you; choose this method. Henceforth, use this method as it allows you to attain your goal most rapidly; you should be able to reap the most benefits with this method.

On the contrary, if you feel distracted, torpid-minded or have all kinds of obstacles when you cultivate with this method, you have to change to another method. For instance, though you have been counting the breath for quite a while, you still feel distracted or torpid-minded; then you should stop counting the breath and change to following the breath or any other method instead. As you have already practised all the methods for a few days and have repeated them a few times, you should know which method is more effective for you.

Anyway, the most suitable method is one which can calm your mind; you can use this method for a long period of time, otherwise you have to change to another method. So this is so-called skilful, that is, cultivate The Six Gates to the Sublime in accordance with your convenience and suitability.

If the mind is peaceful and stable, definitely there is attainment. What can you attain? You can attain meditative absorption and develop wisdom; that is why the method is very important. As to the sequence of meditative absorption, we will explain in the lecture on 'The Perfection of Meditation'; we will explain the four dhyanas and eight meditative absorptions. That is, you are able to start from coarse abiding and entering subtle abiding, then to the realm of desire meditative absorption, the preliminary ground meditative absorption, and then attaining first dhyana, and even second dhyana, third dhyana and fourth dhyana. You can attain all these meditative absorption signs and develop wisdom amid the meditative absorption.

If after attaining meditative absorption you are unable to progress further, for instance, you have already attained the realm of desire meditative absorption, though after cultivating for a long time you are unable to progress to the preliminary ground meditative absorption; or you have already

attained preliminary ground meditative absorption but are unable to attain first dhyana even after a long cultivation; perhaps you have not skilfully cultivated The Six Gates to the Sublime. You have to look for the most suitable method of cultivation again.

Next, we will explain how to continue with the cultivation of The Six Gates to the Sublime according to the depth of our meditative absorption to further develop our meditative absorption. This means that after attaining meditative absorption you are unable to progress further; you have to continue with the cultivation of The Six Gates to the Sublime according to the depth of your meditative absorption at that time, otherwise it is a pity.

Therefore when you attain coarse abiding, subtle abiding or after you have attained the realm of desire meditative absorption and you are unable to make progress after a few days or even a few months, or for a long time; then you have to cultivate The Six Gates to the Sublime from the beginning again. Very mindfully, cultivate counting the breath; and if you do not make progress, cultivate following the breath; if you do not make progress, cultivate stabilisation; if you do not make progress, cultivate contemplation; if there is no progress then cultivate turning; and if there is no progress, cultivate purification. Experiment with all these six methods; if there is any method that allows you to make sudden progress in your meditative absorption; then continue your cultivation with this method. Your meditative absorption will improve rapidly with this method. This is when you have shallow meditative absorption.

If you are in deep meditative absorption, you have to observe within this deep meditative absorption, where is the hindrance? Are you not able to enter following the breath from counting the breath? Or are you not able to enter stabilisation from following the breath? Or which one is it? So we also have to start from counting the breath; cultivate counting the breath for a period of time and if you are able to progress, you will attain meditative absorption of following.

If after attaining meditative absorption of following you are unable to make progress in your meditative absorption, you have to skilfully cultivate following, stabilisation, contemplation, turning and purification. Cultivate these five one by one again. Cultivate these five till you are able to progress in your meditative absorption. Then you will be able to enter from the meditative absorption of following to the meditative absorption of stabilisation.

If after attaining meditative absorption of stabilisation you are unable to make progress in your meditative absorption, you have to skilfully cultivate stabilisation, contemplation, turning and purification. Cultivate these four till your meditative absorption skill gradually deepens; your contemplative mind (wisdom of contemplation) will naturally develop. Although you are using the stabilisation method, you will naturally realise that all things (dharma) that arise from causes and conditions are devoid of any inherent nature and are comparable to empty space. This indicates that your stabilisation sign has disappeared and you have entered meditative absorption of contemplation.

If after attaining meditative absorption of contemplation for some time and you are unable to make progress, you have to skilfully cultivate contemplation, turning and purification again. Cultivate these three till your meditative absorption gradually deepens, and your wisdom will also naturally deepen.

What do you contemplate in the cultivation of contemplation? Contemplate your body, mind and breath. At this point of time, through contemplation of your body, mind and breath, you will realise that all things (dharmas) are illusory, not real, just like what you see in a dream. You will then not attach to all things (dharmas) as you have seen their true nature, that is, the emptiness of 'self' and the emptiness of things; all things (dharmas) are originally devoid of any self-nature. At this point of time you will reflect on the origin of the mind and enter the meditative absorption of turning; you enter from contemplation to turning.

If after attaining meditative absorption of turning for a long period of time and you are unable to make progress, you have to skilfully cultivate turning and purification again. At this point of time you should skilfully turn back and contemplate on the origin of the mind and experience the pure self-nature, till your meditative absorption progresses and the meditative absorption of purification develops. You will then naturally enter from turning to purification.

If after attaining meditative absorption of purification for a period of time without making any progress, we should skilfully eradicate discrimination, attachment and the delusional mind; and experience the pure self-nature. It means to cultivate purification again till the meditative absorption of purification gradually arises; then suddenly, as if breaking through, there manifests brilliant clarity. At this point of time, you understand your mind and see your true nature, really develop uncontaminated wisdom, completely eradicating the afflictions of the three realms. Then you attain nirvana, which is genuinely seeing your true nature.

The above is a simple explanation of the application The Six Gates to the Sublime according to convenience and suitability. As long as you apply it skilfully, you can increase your meditative absorption merits and develop wisdom, even attaining the state of nirvana. The main point of Chapter 3 is on how to use The Six Gates to the Sublime flexibly. Cultivate every gate individually for a few days and repeat them for a period of time. Then you will know which one is more suitable for you, and use it to cultivate till you attain meditative absorption.

If you are in shallow meditative absorption and are unable to make progress for a period of time, repeat cultivation of The Six Gates to the Sublime again. You will then know which one to practise to overcome the hindrance of your meditative absorption. Continue cultivating with that one.

If you are in deep meditative absorption, for instance, when counting the breath you go into deep meditation but are unable to progress to following the breath, then you will have to continue to cultivate once again counting, following, stabilisation, contemplation, turning and purification till you are able to breakthrough your meditative absorption; then you can enter following from counting. If you are in meditative absorption of following for a period of time without any further progress, then cultivate following, stabilisation, contemplation, turning and purification till you are able to breakthrough your meditative absorption. If you are unable to breakthrough stabilisation, then cultivate stabilisation, contemplation, turning and purification. Do you understand this? You start from where you are unable to breakthrough and cultivate once again all the way to the end. If you are at counting the breath unable to enter following the breath, there are six gates to cultivate. If you are at following the breath unable to enter stabilisation, there are five to cultivate – following, stabilisation, contemplation, turning and purification. If you are at stabilisation unable to enter

contemplation, there are four to cultivate – stabilisation, contemplation, turning and purification. If you are at contemplation unable to enter turning, then there are three to cultivate – contemplation, turning and purification. Repeating your cultivation in this way will allow you to breakthrough very quickly. So your meditative absorption will continue to deepen till you see your pure self-nature, develop uncontaminated wisdom and have realisation of the fruit. In order to do so you need to cultivate skilfully.

Today no matter what we have to practise meditation once again as yesterday we did not have time to meditate after answering the questions. After the lesson yesterday, many fellow practitioners said that they hope to be able to practise again today. Moreover, we have one more exercise on muscle stretching that we have not completed.

Now let us invite our two fellow practitioners to the stage to demonstrate for us. Please stand up for some warm up exercises.

Muscle Stretching Exercises

Let us all try to sit on the floor instead of the mat so as to facilitate the stretching.

Open up our legs as wide as possible. We will work separately on the left leg, from the outer side to the inner side then to the centre. Start from the outer side of the left leg, and press down hard with bouncing action for eight times. Repeat four times. This will slowly help to loosen the tight muscles so that later when you will not need much effort to sit cross-legged. Next we will do the same for the inner side of the left leg; bounce eight times and repeat four times. Then we go on to the centre, that is, bend your body and bring your head towards the left leg; eight times and repeat four times. Next hug your left leg with both hands and bend your head as far down to your leg as possible and count to ten. Is it painful? Next we change to the right leg. Similarly, start from the outer side of the right leg, bounce eight times and repeat four times; next bounce eight times on the inner side and repeat four times; then to the centre, bounce eight times and repeat four times. Lastly, hug your leg and count to ten.

There is one more, bend your head and body straight forward and bounce eight times; then hold your feet with both hands, count to ten and move your head up.

After we have finished, move our legs in this way to loosen them as we have stretched very tightly just now. Move our left leg, then our right leg; now we are ready to sit cross-legged for meditation.

It is tough right? Our goal is to achieve a full lotus pose so we have to work a little harder to stretch out the muscles. When you go back, stretch your muscles every day before your meditation, you will find it easier to sit cross-legged; so your hard work is worthwhile.

Now you can sit on the meditation mat, but your legs are not on the mat; only your buttocks are on the mat, your legs are outside the mat. This is the correct way to sit. Later when you are meditating, I will help you to adjust your posture. Do not be shocked as you may be focused.

(For *Beginning Meditation* – please refer to Lecture 1)

Cultivation of Contemplation and Realisation of Contemplation Practice

Now we will practise cultivation of contemplation. How to cultivate contemplation? Contemplate with our wisdom. Firstly contemplate our body. Our body is made up of skin, flesh, muscles, bones, and many others; it is the composition of thirty-six substances, just like the banana tree, not real. When the banana tree is peeled layer by layer, the centre is empty. Now we analyse individually the thirty-six substances that make up the body, eventually we will discover that the body does not exist; it is simply the composition of thirty-six unclean substances, the body is not substantial. Secondly, contemplate our thought. Our thought is like the flowing water in a waterfall, arising and ceasing, arising and ceasing without stopping. Hence our thought does not exist. Thirdly, contemplate our breath. Inhale, exhale, inhale, exhale, just like the wind in the air; it blows and it is gone. Hence it also does not exist.

Contemplating in this way we can reach a conclusion – body, mind and breath are not real. Since the body, mind and breath are not real, where is 'self'? As 'self' is a composition of body, mind and breath, so if the body, mind and breath are not real, where is 'self'? Actually there is no 'self' right? Then we can attain realisation of the emptiness 'self'. Body, mind and breath are part of all things (dharmas); since body, mind and breath are not real, all things (dharmas) are also not in existence. We can attain realisation of the emptiness of things (dharmas). This is cultivation of contemplation.

If through such observation we are able to see thoroughly that the body, mind and breath are impermanent and their self-nature is empty, then we are able to realise the real nature of all things (dharmas), which is the emptiness of 'self' and emptiness of things (dharmas). At this point of time we have attained realisation of contemplation.

Cultivation of Turning and Realisation of Turning Practice

Can we be awakened to the truth by cultivating in this way? We still cannot as there is still the contemplating mind and the contemplated phenomena. We have not really seen the real nature. As long as there is duality of subject and object, then it is not the real nature. Hence now we have to abandon the cultivation of contemplation and enter the stage of cultivation of turning. How to cultivate turning? Turn back and contemplate again, does the contemplating mind really exist? This contemplating mind exists when we contemplate but does not exist when we do not contemplate, showing that it does not really exist. When our mind starts to contemplate, it exists; when the mind does not start to contemplate, it does not exist. This shows that it is impermanent, it arises and ceases. The contemplated phenomena are also the same; when we contemplate our body, mind and breath, one moment we contemplate our body, the next moment we contemplate our mind and then we contemplate our breath; they do not really exist. This is the cultivation of turning.

Since the contemplating mind and the contemplated phenomena do not really exist, both the contemplating and the contemplated (duality of subject and object) will perish at this point of time. Then we are able to return to the origin, return to our self-nature. At this point of time we have attained realisation of turning.

Cultivation of Purification and Realisation of Purification Practice

Since we have returned to our self-nature, what is the state of our self-nature? Our enlightened self-nature is originally pure. When we see our original self-nature, this is cultivation of purification.

Since our original self-nature is originally pure, all things (dharmas) that arise from this pure self-nature are also originally pure. So when our six sense-organs encounter the six sense-objects, giving rise to the six consciousnesses; they are all originally pure. With such understanding, we will not discriminate, attach and have misleading thoughts. Extinguishing all discrimination, attachment and misleading thoughts is the cultivation of purification.

All the way till the total eradication of discrimination, attachment and misleading thoughts, then we can attain realisation of purification. We will remain in our originally pure self-nature.

(For ***Emerging from Meditation*** – please refer to Lecture 1)

When you practise your meditation back home, remember to use the toilet only after half an hour after emerging from the meditation, unless it is very urgent. Similarly, do not take a bath right after emerging from meditation; you need to rest for half an hour before taking a bath.

Let us thank our two fellow practitioners for the demonstration.

We will end our lesson here today. Our next lecture will be in September; we will continue and complete the rest of The Six Gates to the Sublime then.

Dedication: May I dedicate this merit to all sentient beings; may I and all sentient beings attain the state of enlightenment.

The Six Gates to the Sublime
Lecture 5
Teachings by Venerable Master Jing-Lian

Venue: Tai Pei Buddhist Centre
22 September 2009

Lecture Contents

- **Chapter 4 - The Six Gates to the Sublime as Means of Counteraction**

Namo Amitabha Buddha to everyone!

Today we are introducing **Chapter 4 ‘The Six Gates to the Sublime as Means of Counteraction’**.

Through the earlier chapters, we already have a general understanding of the cultivation methods of The Six Gates to the Sublime. We have to practise each gate individually and repeat the practice continually according to the sequence. Only when we are very proficient in the contents of The Six Gates to the Sublime can we use it flexibly. When we should cultivate stabilisation, when we should cultivate contemplation, when we should cultivate counting the breath, when we should cultivate following the breath, when we should cultivate contemplation, turning and purification; when we are very proficient in every gate we can use it flexibly.

What we are introducing today ‘The Six Gates to the Sublime as Means of Counteraction’ is used when we are already very familiar with The Six Gates to the Sublime, to counteract all kinds of obstacles that we will encounter in our cultivation.

We know that all sentient beings are originally Buddha, but why are they not now? This is because of the three types of obstacles.

Three Obstacles		Six Gates to the Sublime as Means of Counteraction	
Retribution-related obstacles	Distraction	Counting gate	-Counting the breath to harmonise the mind
	Torpid-mindedness, scatteredness and laxness	Following gate	-Following the breath to harmonise the mind
	Body and mind anxiety	Stabilisation gate	-Relax body and mind -Cultivate stabilisation to control the thoughts
Affliction-related obstacles	Greed	Contemplation gate	-Cultivate the nine reflections, the initial contemplation of the eight liberations, the two bases of ascendancy, contemplation on impurity
	Anger	Contemplation gate	-Contemplation of loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, equanimity
	Ignorance and heterodox views	Turning gate	-Contemplate on the twelve causes and conditions, returning to the original nature of the mind
Karmic obstacles	Darkness	Purification gate	-Mindful of pure light emitting from the thirty-two marks of a Buddha’s transformation-body, provisional purity
	Evil thoughts	Purification gate	-Mindful of the reward-body of a Buddha with omniscient knowledge, perfect purity
	Evil Phenomena	Purification gate	-Mindful of a Buddha’s Dharma-body of non-arising and non-ceasing, fundamental purity

1. Retribution-related Obstacles

The first of the three obstacles is retribution-related obstacles wherein retribution has already been manifested. Now when we start the cultivation of calming-and-insight meditation, the moment we

begin our meditation we are either distracted or torpid-minded. These are retribution-related obstacles. When our state of mind is better, we are easily distracted; when our state of mind is not good, we are torpid-minded. Therefore regardless of the duration of meditation in a single sitting, most of the phenomena that are manifested are a mixture of distraction and torpid-mindedness. Why are there such situations? Although we hope to attain single-mindedness quickly, why do these phenomena of distraction and torpid-mindedness keep manifesting? It is because of past lives perfuming, all the way to this life. We know that we will first have afflictions, then creation of karma before having retribution. Why do we have manifestations of such retribution which keep obstructing our attainment of calming-and insight meditation? This is related to the bad habits and afflictions of our past lives.

Since these are already manifested as retribution, how then do we observe ourselves to determine whether we belong to the category that is more distracted, torpid-minded or nervous? Normally retribution are categorised into these three types; and when these three situations happen, which gate in The Six Gates to the Sublime should we cultivate to counteract? We have to first understand the details of each retribution-related obstacle.

Counteracting Distraction

If we analyse according to personality, some people are naturally more distracted, they find it difficult to concentrate; their minds tend to work faster, that is, they are unable to calm their thoughts, there are lots of thoughts emerging at any time. Since they are normally like that, when they meditate, the situation is similar. This is related to the bad habit of distraction that was perfumed over many lives and aeons, and it is manifested when you meditate in this life.

Buddha has told us, “Those who are abundant in primary ideation and mental discursion, one should teach them to count the breath.” So we know that for someone who has a stronger distraction personality, what kind of counteraction should he cultivate? It is the **cultivation of counting the breath** as counteraction. For someone who is strongly distracted, when he starts to practise, he is definitely unable to count completely from one to ten. He counts one, two, three..... and his mind starts to wander off. He has a personality and bad habit of having particularly lots of misleading thoughts. Or he may continue to count up to more than ten, twenty, or thirty! From the viewpoint of personality, this shows that he has an extremely strong distracted mind.

What does ‘primary ideation and mental discursion’ mean? We will know the meaning if we have read ‘The Shastra on the Door to Understanding the Hundred Dharmas’. It means ‘examination and investigation’. There are four unfixed Dharmas belonging to the mind. The first is examination, and the second is investigation. What is examination? It is coarse discrimination. Fine discrimination is known as investigation. So for those who are abundant in ‘primary ideation and mental discursion’, it indicates that they have extremely strong bad habit of examination and investigation; which means they have a very strong discriminating mind, from coarse to fine discrimination. When their six sense-organs encounter the six sense-objects, they can discriminate very quickly the good and bad, the beautiful and not beautiful, and then can decide on their choice very quickly. Their response is very fast because they have abundant thoughts. That is why the moment they hear or see something, they can discriminate very quickly and draw conclusion.

Therefore, they have continuous misleading thoughts when they meditate; we know that they belong to the category of people with strong distraction. At this point of time, let the mind abide in counting the breath; practise slowly, when the mind wanders off, bring it back continually. This is a mind training process; do not be afraid of the mind wandering off, for as long as you continually focus your body and mind, misleading thoughts will gradually decrease. So counting the breath is the best counter measure for abundant misleading thoughts; as long as you practise continually, misleading thoughts will naturally decrease and eventually disappear. This is the first situation of retribution-related obstacles, wherein distraction is extremely strong and misleading thoughts are abundant.

Counteracting Torpid-mindedness and Laxness

The second type of retribution-related obstacles is a personality that is naturally stronger in torpid-mindedness. Such a person is the exact opposite of one whom we have mentioned earlier wherein distraction is stronger. A strongly torpid-minded person is lazy to use his brain, the opposite of a strongly distracted person who has unceasing misleading thoughts. For instance, regardless of where they are, people with this personality trait can snore in less than five minutes; unlike some who are unable to sleep when they are travelling in a car or travelling on holiday. This is because such people are not used to using their brain, their thoughts stop very quickly; coarse misleading thoughts stop quickly but fine misleading thoughts remain. When one attains stabilisation, misleading thoughts are genuinely subdued by the meditative absorption; but in this situation wherein torpid-mindedness is strong, fine misleading thoughts still remain. This is with regard to personality.

There is a particular situation that can develop during meditation. When one starts the cultivation from counting the breath, coarse misleading thoughts will slowly decrease and will be left with fine misleading thoughts which do not affect our numbers. He will gradually enter a situation where there is no thought as the coarse misleading thoughts have been subdued. At this point of time, he will go into a seemingly torpid-minded, neutral state. He is not asleep but his sixth consciousness is not clear, it has fallen into a beclouded and obscure state. This is the manifestation of the second type of retribution-related obstacles, which appear when there is no misleading thought.

If you attain stabilisation directly and enter contemplation quickly, then you will not fall into a torpid-mindedness and neutral state; otherwise when your coarse misleading thoughts gradually decrease and you fall into a beclouded and obscure state, the sixth consciousness becomes unclear. As a result of the sixth consciousness falling into a beclouded and obscure state, you will feel drowsy but are not really asleep, you may even have dreams. Some people may have the experience of a situation of not having any thought but at the point of seemingly falling asleep, he can have day dreams; this is precisely the manifestation of the second type of retribution-related obstacles. This is also because the sixth consciousness has fallen into a kind of beclouded and obscure state; at this point of time, his body and mind are unable to focus. At the same time it is accompanied by scatteredness and laxness as the mind is unable to focus. When we are torpid-minded, our mind will not be able to focus well, so it is close to a beclouded and obscure state.

What should you do at this time? There are two situations happening – first is torpid-mindedness, almost falling asleep; second is a state of scatteredness and laxness because you have fallen into a

torpid-mindedness and neutral state. As a result, your mind is unable to focus. When these two situations happen, we know that it is the manifestation of the second type of retribution-related obstacles. How do we counteract at this time? **Cultivate the following gate** as a counteraction. Now we harmonise the mind and follow the breath. The mind follows the inhalation and exhalation, that is, when you inhale, your thought knows the inward movement of the breath; when you exhale, your thought knows the outward movement of the breath. Your thought follows the movement of the breath. This is known as following the breath. It is to have very clear illuminative contemplation, not allowing your mind to have the slightest distraction. Practise slowly in this way and if you are able to be extremely focused in your practice, you can counteract the state of neutral and torpid-mindedness. As your thought focuses on movement of the breath with illuminative contemplation, at this time you must strengthen your skill of illuminative awareness so as to counteract the laxness of the mind. Therefore when such situations happen, we will cultivate following the breath; as a result the mind can be focused and it can counteract scatteredness and laxness.

Counteracting Body and Mind Anxiety

The third situation is the state of anxiety of the body and mind; this is what we call the nervous personality type. We can tell such a personality from his more perfectionistic traits; he will not take any matter casually or just about right, it has to be absolutely clear otherwise he is unable to perform. Just like when we start counting the breath from one to ten, he is afraid of not counting well so he has to ask very clearly – Where should the thought be located? What should the breathing be like? He will make himself very nervous, and eventually ends up controlling the breathing. He is unable to focus on counting the breath as he is distracted with examining every single small detail. We will use the seven-point posture as an analogy. Due to his personality, he may take three months solely on the adjustment of the posture, as he hopes to clarify on every single small detail. So when you teach him the method of counting the breath, he can have eight hundred questions; he has to make it so clear before he feels at ease to count the breath. He makes himself so tensed with such personality trait. This is from the viewpoint of personality.

In the process of meditation, this situation can also happen. For instance, after a long sitting your body will become very stiff; unwittingly developing a kind of stress; or if our posture is not right, our muscles can be tensed and we feel stressed; or if we are fearful and not at ease, our mind can be stressed. When you hear too much negative information about meditation, for instance, people advising you to be careful, not to be possessed by the demons in meditation etc, causing you to be restless and suspicious in your practice; your mind will be tensed and stressed. So regardless of your body feeling stiff or tensed; or your mind is fearful and not at ease, we know that this is due to your retribution-related obstacles. This belongs to the third kind of retribution-related obstacles.

At this point of time we will counteract with the **stabilisation gate**. Earlier on three or four fellow practitioners had said that they felt chest tightness, chest pain and heart discomfort after meditation. These are caused by tension and stress; either their body or their mind is not relaxed. So what should they do now? Loosen your body, relax your frame of mind, harmonise your breathing; and then cultivate stabilisation by focusing your mind at a point. Previously we have practised a few different methods of cultivating stabilisation; now we will specifically refer to ‘thought control

stabilisation’ – look at your thought, when you realise that a thought has arisen, stop it immediately, do not continue to grasp it.

So now you just need to relax your body and mind, and harmonise your breath, be highly alert of your thoughts. Once a thought arises, stop it immediately and it will disappear. Actually it will disappear on its own but you were not aware of it in the past; now that you are alert, you are aware of it arising. Later when another thought arises, you will notice it and do not let it continue. If you do not have this skill of illuminative awareness, you will have a pile of thoughts; grasping one thought after another. It may be five minutes later that you discover that you have been thinking so much and feel that it is too late. ‘Do not be afraid of thoughts arising as long as you are aware of them’. Do not be afraid of the continual arising of misleading thoughts; just do not be too slow in being aware of them. So now we maintain high alertness, once a thought arises, you can discover and stop it; it will disappear then it is not possible for you to continue thinking.

This is a very relaxed cultivation method, you do not have to be bothered about the breath; you also do not have to count the breath. Some people become more tensed when counting the breath, they will control their breath; eventually the breath becomes not smooth. If this happens, you should not continue counting. Hence this is the best method to relax your body and mind; you do not have to be bothered about putting your thought on the breath, and the in and out movement of the breath. Otherwise you can have eight hundred questions, right? Questions like – At which place does the inhaled breath stop? Where do you exhale to? There are many different methods, some breathe in from outside the body all the way to the sole of the feet; some will visualise the breath at the sole of the feet, then exhaling the breath through the nose to the ground in front. He may have heard too much complicated information; so when we say to have the thought following the breath, he will start to think of where the breath should begin and end, making himself very tensed. So, disregard everything! Do not bother about the numbers and also the direction of the breath, just look at the thought in a relaxed manner. This can eliminate all tensed situation in our body and mind. Cultivate in this way for a period of time and the tensed feeling will be eased and your fear and restlessness will also be eliminated. Therefore we use the stabilisation gate to counteract tension in the body and mind.

These are the three situations of retribution-related obstacles. In the midst of meditation if you are distracted and have many misleading thoughts, counteract with counting the breath. If you are torpid-minded and neutral and in addition scattered and lax, counteract with following the breath. If your body and mind are tensed, you feel stressed, then counteract with the stabilisation gate. This is counteracting the three retribution-related obstacles separately with counting the breath, following the breath and stabilisation.

2. Affliction-related Obstacles

We have mentioned earlier that all sentient beings are originally Buddha; why are they not now? This is because there are three obstacles – The first type is retribution-related obstacles; they are situations that have already been manifested. The second type is affliction-related obstacles. They are fundamental afflictions and derivative afflictions. From ‘The Shastra on the Door to Understanding the Hundred Dharmas’, we know that fundamental afflictions together with major-

grade derivative afflictions, intermediate-grade derivative afflictions and minor-grade derivative afflictions make up a total of twenty-six. Now it is impossible for us to explain with examples every single fundamental and derivative affliction; we just need to know how to counteract these afflictions individually in our meditation, regardless of whether they are fundamental, major-grade, intermediate-grade or minor-grade derivative afflictions.

We can summarise all afflictions into fundamental afflictions – greed, anger and ignorance, which are the three poisons. Summarising the three poisons further, it is greed. Everything comes from greed. The basis of greed is ignorance, thinking that there is ‘self’. With ‘self’, it gives rise to greed, anger and ignorance. Then it develops into finer derivative afflictions. Hence we will base on the three fundamental afflictions of greed, anger and ignorance to explain with examples.

Affliction-related Obstacle – Greed

If during meditation you continually recall situations of the past, and you cannot help refraining from giving rise to craving in your mind; then we know that the affliction-related obstacle of greed has arisen. Or in the midst of your meditation, you plan certain matters that you crave for; or the sudden emergence of phenomena of the five desires of sight, sound, smell, taste and touch, causing you to have craving. Or you feel very comfortable in your meditation and you attach to the comfortable feeling; or you may have all kinds of phenomena in your meditation, and you attach to them. All these are the arising of affliction-related obstacle of greed. What should you cultivate at this point of time? **Cultivate the contemplation gate** as counteraction. We have mentioned earlier about what to do when you have craving. Counteract with ‘Meditation on the Impurities of the Human Body’.

The contents of the contemplation gate is abundant; in future when we lecture on ‘The Perfection of Meditation’ we will introduce all the contents like the nine reflections, the eight liberations, the eight bases of ascendancy and all kinds of different contents. We will then explain in detail the cultivation of every contemplation gate; now we will give a general introduction. When your greed arises, you can cultivate the contemplation gate. This includes the nine reflections which is precisely Meditation on the Impurities of the Human Body. Cultivate the nine reflections first; we have introduced this before. Also cultivate the first of the eight liberations – the initial liberation; and the second base of the eight bases of the ascendancy; and our earlier practice of the Meditation on the Impurities of the Human Body. Counteract different types of greed with the different gate of contemplation.

Affliction-related Obstacle – Anger

The second is when anger arises. How do you know whether you have the obstacle of anger arising? In the process of meditation if you suddenly think of all kinds of unhappy matters or your enemies and your mind is filled with resentment; or there is interference of external conditions or people, the range is very wide. For instance, when you are already very quiet in your meditation, suddenly there is a loud ‘bang’ and it startles you; or if someone shouts out your name loudly you will also get a fright because your body and mind are in a kind of meditative absorption; or something happens outside and it keeps disturbing you, the more you sit, the angrier you get and you feel like rushing

out to reason with the personall these and the like situations will cause you to give rise to anger, vexation.

If the situation is more serious, it can cause our channels to suddenly become very chaotic. Hence when we have practised self-cultivation for a period of time, or we have meditated for a period of time, it is especially important not to lose your temper. If you lose your temper, your energies and blood will counterflow very quickly, causing the entire energies and blood to be in chaos; as such you will experience great discomfort. Prior to self-cultivation you do not have such problem; just like ordinary people who lose their temper, curse in rage and yell, they do not feel any discomfort after the incident, there is no repercussion.

However practitioners are different because eventually even very fine thoughts will cause intense vibrations in their energies and channels. So at this point of time, very fine afflictions will have very great impact on your body and mind. This is because now that you are cultivating calming-and-insight meditation or doing self-cultivation, your body and mind are already extremely tranquil; your energies and blood have been well harmonised, your energies and channels are in the normal path, functioning very smoothly. Now when you get angry or lose your temper, the normal functioning has been interrupted. Eventually your energies will go into the very fine channels, and these very fine channels are unable to be harmonised quickly within a very short time. Ordinary people do not have any repercussions after losing their temper as their energies only flow to very coarse channels; they are unable to flow to very fine channels. So after losing their temper they do not feel any discomfort because they do not have to harmonise the energies.

Energies, channels and drops of the subtle body are mutually functional. When the flow in the channels of the body is very fine, the energies will become finer, and the drops of the subtle body will be more purified. Actually Mahayana refers to this as body, speech and mind. Hence we certainly have to harmonise our body, speech and mind or; energies, channels and drops of the subtle body in order to realise the fruit of calming-and-insight meditation. When we cultivate calming-and-insight meditation, our energies, channels and drops of the subtle body are slowly making adjustments. So at this point of time, we will not be able to withstand strong emotional impact; the response will also be very intense.

Therefore in the event that suddenly there is a loud sound or something happens and it causes your anger to arise, you must not continue with your meditation because you will not feel comfortable. At this point of time, emerge from your meditation and what should you do? Look for a small towel and rub it all over your body. Rub till the skin on your entire body turns red, and it is best to sweat a little. In this way you will be alright, otherwise you will have discomfort for a long time, perhaps for a few days. Some people will have headache, the entire body just does not feel right, and this can last for a few days.

If you perform this urgent treatment quickly, then there will not be any repercussions because the energies that develop from anger will cause chaos in our energies and channels and it will run wild to the coarse and fine channels. However when you rub in this way, the energies will be dissipated and you will not have any problem. If you let it remain in your body, it will continue to cause problem and you will have discomfort for a long time. So what we are saying is that, in case you give rise to anger in your meditation and feel great discomfort, emerge from the meditation quickly and rub

your skin quickly as an emergency measure. This is very important because majority of the people who meditate will encounter this situation, so you have to know this emergency treatment.

Or you suddenly recall fighting a legal battle with someone in the past. During meditation, all seeds that are stored in the eighth consciousness in the past will all break out, especially seeds of affliction. They will break out one by one; hence you must know how to handle.

Earlier on we have also mentioned about anger. Counteract anger with Compassionate Mind Contemplation. Here we say it in a broader sense, that is, you can cultivate contemplation of **loving-kindness, compassion, joy and equanimity**, etc. Therefore we also use **contemplation** to counteract affliction-related obstacle of anger.

Affliction-related Obstacle – Ignorance and Heterodox Views

During meditation heterodox understanding and views can suddenly emerge, why does this happen? This is because the seeds of heterodox view that you have planted since your past lives have broken out; resulting in the sudden great heterodox views. Then you start to have doubts in the Buddhist teachings (Dharma), your master, the cultivation method, fellow practitioners and dharma centre. If you do not overcome these heterodox views, you can easily fall into the non-Buddhist ways.

So at this point of time you can counteract with **cultivation of the turning gate**. Why is there generation of ignorance and heterodox views? This is because you do not understand the ultimate truth of all things or the truth of life.

The scope of the gate of turning is very broad; it depends on the type of heterodox understanding and views. If you do not believe in cause and effect, and transmigration of the three times, then you should **contemplation on the twelve links of dependent origination**. In this way you can return to the origin, the source of ignorance and heterodox views. What is that? It is the delusion about the ultimate truth of all things! If you have very strong heterodox understanding and views of the non-Buddhists, just like the non-Buddhists who fall into the four extremes – exist, non-exist, neither exist nor non-exist, exist as well as non-exist. Only with the Buddhist teachings (Dharma) can one transcend the four extremes; the ultimate attainment is one that is beyond the four extremes. As long as you are still within the four extremes, they are all heterodox views of the non-Buddhists.

What we normally perpetrate is having the duality of subject and object, do you understand? This is because originally there is no thought within our pure, enlightened self-nature. Our true nature has no thoughts, our true nature is free from thoughts; there is no conditioning and the conditioned. With the arising of a single thought of ignorance about the ultimate truth of all things, it starts the conditioning and the conditioned. With this delusion the eight consciousnesses are activated and the self-witnessing division of the eight consciousnesses will then give rise to the function of perception, so it has a perceiving division. With your perceiving function, what do you want to perceive? It is to perceive the so-called phenomena of the six sense-objects. Hence there is a conditioning and the conditioned. The conditioned is the perceived division. There is the conditioning and the conditioned, so this is the duality of subject and object. All of us have that now! We have the conditioning power of the mind and the conditioned phenomena, otherwise how do we know what we have seen and heard? Normally when we have duality of good and bad, we have already fallen into the duality of

subject and object. We certainly want the good and reject the bad; there is already duality of the conditioning and the conditioned. This is actually the greatest heterodox view and ignorance about the ultimate truth of all things.

So to break such ignorance and heterodox views, we have to cultivate calming-and-insight meditation. Let your sixth consciousness remain in direct perception without discrimination. We have always mentioned about the conditioning power of the mind and the conditioned phenomena perishing, just like we have mentioned it when we lectured on the turning gate, right? Only when the conditioning and the conditioned have perished, can you return to your self-nature; the originally pure self-nature will then be able to manifest, which is the gate of purification. Now the greatest ignorance of the ultimate truth of all things is having the conditioning and the conditioned. So we have to cultivate till the conditioning and the conditioned have perished; then the perceiving division and the perceived division will return to the self-witnessing division (self-witnessing division is the essence of the eight consciousnesses). Then we will return to the originally pure self-nature. So as long as we return to the gate of purification, our true nature will manifest. When we know that our self-nature is originally pure, we can eradicate the ignorance of the ultimate truth of all things. At that point of time our true nature has no thoughts, our true nature is free from thoughts. Then we will not fall into the realm of duality of the conditioning and the conditioned, subject and object.

This shows that as long as there is generation of ignorance and heterodox views, we cultivate the gate of turning; we will then be able to return to our original self-nature very quickly. When our true nature manifests, we have entered the gate of purification; you will know that our self-nature is originally pure, the ignorance of the truth of all things will be eradicated. Hence when the affliction-related obstacle of ignorance and heterodox views arise, we counteract with cultivation of the gate of turning.

This is the second type of obstacles – affliction-related obstacles. We have explained with examples of greed, anger, ignorance and heterodox views.

3. Karmic Obstacles

The third type is karmic obstacles. These have not been manifested. Earlier on the first type is retribution-related obstacles wherein retribution has already been manifested as your current life's personality and bad habits. Karmic obstacles are the karma accumulated from your previous lives to the current life that have not manifested. They will manifest when we are cultivating calming-and-insight meditation now; we refer to it as 'manifestation of karmic obstacles'. They will hinder our calming-and-insight meditation progress. There are three situations.

Karmic Obstacle – Darkness

The first type is known as 'karmic obstacle of darkness'. If during our meditation, there is a phenomenon of sudden murkiness and state of loss in our mind or before our eyes, we know at this point of time karmic obstacle of darkness has arisen.

What kind of karmic obstacle is this? It is karmic obstacle of ignorance. Your past karmic obstacle of ignorance is stronger, so when you meditate now there is darkness before your eyes; you are unable to contemplate at all or your contemplation is not clear. When this happens you know that karmic obstacle of darkness has manifested.

What should we do? Counteract with the **gate of purification**, that is, **recall pure light emitting from the thirty-two marks of a Buddha's transformation body (nirmanakaya)**. This situation is like the room is originally dark and now when you activate the switch to the light, suddenly it becomes illuminated. So by recalling in this way it is like darkness has disappeared with illumination; this can counteract karmic obstacle of ignorance. Darkness and illumination cannot exist at the same time, so as long as there is illumination, darkness will disappear; therefore they are one and the same right? Just like what we have mentioned earlier on ignorance about the ultimate truth of all things. This is one and the same as realisation of the truth. When you are ignorant of the ultimate truth, you have no realisation of the truth; when you have realised the truth, your ignorance about the ultimate truth is gone. The same principle applies to darkness and illumination. When you recall the illumination of Buddha, darkness will be eradicated.

In Vajrayana there are also many such cultivation methods. Roughly it is about visualising a bright spot at the chest emitting light. Kalu Rinpoche had transmitted a simple and effective method. Everyone either chants Guan Yin Bodhisattva or the Six Syllable Mantra; so we visualise at our chest, a tiny Guan Yin (Avalokiteshvara) sitting on a four petal lotus. Do not ask me for the colour of the lotus. Lotus can have many colours – white, yellow, red, fuchsia, violet and mixed colours. You also do not ask me for the size of the tiny Guan Yin. That is not the key point. The key point is Guan Yin emits light; illumination can eradicate the obstacle of darkness. So we visualise Guan Yin sitting on a four petal lotus, emitting light; illuminating the entire room. If your mind is broader, you can expand the illumination to fill the entire universe, and fall asleep in this way. Visualise in this way before you go to sleep every night, your karmic obstacle of darkness can be eradicated very quickly. As you visualise in this way whenever you are free, and with the light emitting from Guan Yin, there is Guan Yin's blessings; and since it is transmitted from Kalu Rinpoche, there is his blessings inside; hence it is rather effective in counteracting this karmic obstacle of darkness; you can try. You maintain this visualisation in your mind and fall asleep; sleeping within this illumination.

This is when the first karmic obstacle of darkness manifests, we should counteract by recalling the pure light emitting from the thirty-two marks of a Buddha's transformation body.

Karmic Obstacle – Evil Thoughts

The second type is karmic obstacle of evil thoughts. A fellow practitioner once asked this question: When he was meditating, evil thoughts kept flowing out and no matter how, he could not suppress them. We know this is the manifestation of the karmic energy of evil thoughts. There is no origin, the evil thoughts suddenly arise inexplicably during meditation; all kinds of evil thoughts flow out and no matter what they cannot be driven away. So you keep giving rise to evil thoughts in your meditation, what is it equivalent to? You keep creating bad karma of the mind with all kinds of evil thoughts. This is karmic obstacle of evil thoughts.

Where do the evil thoughts come from? They are karmic seeds of past sins stored in the eighth consciousness erupting when you cultivate meditative absorption now; manifestation of the karmic seeds. Many evil thoughts keep erupting; though you know it should not be so but you have no choice, they just keep flowing out.

Why should you do? This is actually a process of purification, so we do not have to be afraid. You may be thinking that normally when you do not meditate nothing happens, but the moment you meditate all evil thoughts arise, like wanting to take revenge etc. Do not worry. These seeds have always been stored in your eighth consciousness and if you do not deal with them, they will not disappear on their own, right? So now that they have erupted, you realise that actually there are so many karmic seeds that have not been cleared up. Unknowingly you have gradually buried so many seeds, so they keep erupting now. Counteract with the **gate of purification** to clear up all the seeds of karmic obstacle.

Now how do we cultivate the gate of purification? **Recall the perfect and pure merits of a Buddha's reward body (sambhogakaya)** to counteract karmic obstacle of evil thoughts in the mind. Only a Buddha's reward body has the merits of perfection and purity, that is why we use Buddha's wisdom and merits of perfection and purity as counteraction. As long as you have continuous right thought, that is, recall the perfect and pure merits of a Buddha's reward body continuously; the earlier evil thought will not be able to exist at the same time. It is not possible for you to give rise to an evil thought and recall the merits of Buddha at the same time, both within one thought. You can only recall either a good or an evil thought within a single thought. So now you are replacing the original evil thoughts with recalling the perfect and pure merits of a Buddha's reward body; as long as you are able to recall in every thought without interruption, then the original evil thought will be gone, right? Hence counteract with this method; as long as you can maintain the right thought continuously, this evil mind will be eradicated. So do not be afraid of the eruption of evil thoughts, just transform them into pure merits.

Karmic Obstacle – Evil Phenomena

If all kinds of evil phenomena emerge during your meditation, we know that karmic obstacle of evil phenomena has manifested. There are many different types of phenomena because everyone has different karma and different karmic obstacles. There are terrifying ones, also those that cause you agony, or your body and mind feel coerced; lighter ones are agitation of the body and mind. So when our body and mind feel agitated and cannot meditate, we have to know that this is also a lighter type of karmic obstacle of evil phenomena. Heavier ones are like your body and mind feeling coerced, or there is agony at that moment. All these are manifestations of your karmic obstacle of evil phenomena.

Why do these situations happen? They are the result of your past and current lives karma, manifesting as evil phenomena when we cultivate meditative absorption.

At this point of time, we also **cultivate the gate of purification** as counteraction. We **recall the original purity, the non-arising and non-ceasing, pure self-nature of a Buddha's body of truth (dharmakaya)**. We use our pure thought to correspond to the originally pure, non-arising and non-

ceasing body of truth. We know that the body of truth is formless, so the pure self-nature of our mind is the body of truth which does not have any form. Although the body of truth is formless, it can manifest all forms, so all forms are actually the manifestations of the body of truth. Since the body of truth is originally pure, all its manifestations are also originally pure. So are there evil phenomena? There are no evil phenomena because everything is originally pure; they are the manifestations of the body of truth. When we recall in this way, evil phenomena will disappear. Therefore, we recall the original purity of a Buddha's body of truth to counteract the karmic obstacle of evil phenomena.

Today we have introduced using The Six Gates to the Sublime to counteract three types of obstacles. As long as we are able to use it flexibly, the six gates can eradicate three types of obstacles – retribution-related obstacles, affliction-related obstacles and karmic obstacles. After these three types of obstacles are purified, all merits in your self-nature – the three insights, the six supernatural powers will naturally be developed; like a Buddha's ten intelligent powers, four kinds of fearlessness and the eighteen unshared qualities can all be manifested. Hence the merits of all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and all the actions to fulfil one's vow for the perfect wisdom, made over many aeons can manifest naturally. There is no need to separately cultivate any other methods as our self-nature is originally complete with infinite virtues of capability. All these are unable to manifest because of the three obstacles. Therefore when these three obstacles are eradicated, our true self-nature and all merits that are originally complete will manifest naturally; there is no need to separately cultivate another method to enable the manifestation. You just need to cultivate till your pure self-nature emerges, then infinite merits and virtues of capability will manifest. Hence the ability to use The Six Gates to the Sublime flexibly is very important as it can counteract the obstacles to our attainment.

We will stop our lesson here today.

Next we will practise The Six Gates to the Sublime's counting the breath and following the breath. Tomorrow we will practise stabilisation, and the day after we will practise contemplation. The last day we will practise turning and purification.

(For ***Beginning Meditation*** and ***Emerging from Meditation*** – please refer to Lecture 1)

I adjusted everyone's posture just now. Firstly, there was a situation wherein some fellow practitioners leaned backward because their buttocks were not elevated; they have both their buttocks and legs on the mat. Secondly, many people lowered their heads. Were they sleeping or were they focused on counting the breath and following the breath? Many tilted their heads forward, only one person tilted his head backward. We must try to sit upright, that is, straighten our spine. Earlier on we have emphasised on the seven-point posture as it allows our energies to enter the central channel. Hence we have a stricter requirement for this posture. There are some methods which are not particular about the posture, as long as you are diligently focused on the methods. As we explain this method in greater detail, you will understand the importance of standardising this posture. You will understand that in order to attain meditative absorption, or develop wisdom, or have your energies and channels flowing smoothly; your posture has to be standard.

Therefore we will adjust your posture each time. We hope that you will use the tools for meditation well first. This is because when your buttocks are elevated, your spine will naturally be straight. If you sit on a flat surface, it will be more difficult to straighten your back. Otherwise you have to use a

lot of effort; then you will not be able to hold it for too long; you will have backache. So when we practise tomorrow, either you elevate with a towel; or you just put your buttocks on the mat, do not put your legs on the mat. If the floor is too cold, you may have to elevate with a towel. Try and see if your spine can straighten effortlessly so that you will not be tired. Also try to put your heads upright, do not lower to the front.

Let us thank our two fellow practitioners for the demonstrations.

Today we have lectured on Chapter 4, tomorrow we will lecture on Chapter 5, 6 and 7. The day after will be Chapter 8 and 9. On the last day, we will lecture on Chapter 10. In this way, we can finish The Six Gates to the Sublime in this round.

Dedication: May I dedicate this merit to all sentient beings; may I and all sentient beings attain the state of enlightenment.

The Six Gates to the Sublime
Lecture 6
Teachings by Venerable Master Jing-Lian

Venue: Tai Pei Buddhist Centre
23 September 2009

Lecture Contents

- **Chapter 5 - The Six Gates to the Sublime in Terms of Mutual Inclusion**
- **Chapter 6 - The Six Gates to the Sublime in Terms of Identities and Differences**
- **Chapter 7 - The Six Gates to the Sublime in Accordance with Reversed Orientation**

Namo Amitabha Buddha to everyone!

Today we will carry on with **Chapter 5 'The Six Gates to the Sublime in Terms of Mutual Inclusion'**.

'Mutual inclusion' means every single gate mutually includes the other five gates. For instance, for the gate of counting, it can include at the same time all the other five gates – following, stabilisation, contemplation, turning and purification. This chapter mainly explains two types of mutual inclusion – mutual inclusion of the very substance, and mutual inclusiveness whereby skilful cultivation generates superior progress. Every gate can include all the other five gates.

The first type is **mutual inclusion of the very substance**. 'Very substance' refers to the substance itself. It means the substance itself can include the other five gates, thus there are six gates to the sublime. Six times six is thirty-six permutations; there are a total of thirty-six gates to the sublime.

For instance, when you are cultivating counting the breath, it can randomly include the other five gates – following, stabilisation, contemplation, turning and purification. How to explain this? When we harmonise our mind by cultivating counting the breath, the substance itself is the gate of counting; you count from one to ten and repeat.

When your mind is counting, it has to follow the breath, right? You are counting the breathing, inhale and exhale, you count one; inhale and exhale, you count two. For your mind to count it has to follow the breath, this is the gate of following; hence it also includes the gate of following inside. What is following the breath? It is the mind following the movement of the breath. So similarly when you are counting the breath; you definitely have to follow the breath to count. Therefore it actually has included following the breath inside.

What is the purpose of counting the breath? It is to stop the restlessness in our mind. So is stabilisation included inside? It is also included, right? So you can attain stabilisation by counting the breath; as long as you count till the restlessness in your mind stops. Thus counting the breath can include stabilisation inside.

When you are counting the breath, you are clearly and distinctly aware of the mind that counts, the number and the breath; this is inclusive of the gate of contemplation inside. 'Contemplation' encompasses the wisdom of contemplation; while you are counting, you are very clearly and distinctly aware of these three – the mind that counts, the number and the breath. The gate of contemplation is included inside.

In the midst of counting if your mind is distracted, grasping the five desires, you know that the five desires are deceptive and false, and your mind is not affected; you bring your mind back to focus on counting the breath again. This is the gate of turning; it is equivalent to have included the gate of turning inside

When you are counting the breath till your body and mind are very still, you are far away from the five mental hindrances and the defilements associated with the coarse afflictions. At that moment your mind is pure. This is equivalent to have included the gate of purification inside.

Therefore we know that merely by counting the breath, all the other five gates are included inside. Similarly with the other five gates – following, stabilisation, contemplation, turning and purification; every gate is inclusive of all the other five gates. That is why there are six times six, a total of thirty-six gates. So this is regarding mutual inclusion of the very substance, that is, the gate itself already has the other five gates included inside.

The other mutual inclusiveness is known as **mutual inclusiveness whereby skilful cultivation generates superior progress**. The key point here is skilful cultivation. It means that as long as you are able to skilfully cultivate one of the gates of The Six Gates to the Sublime, you can progress and accomplish the other five gates.

Let us give an example. If you cultivate counting the breath well, you are able to progress and give rise to the other five gates. You just need to cultivate counting the breath and you can accomplish the other five gates.

When you harmonise your breath by counting the breath, counting from one to ten and your mind is not distracted; this is the gate of counting.

When you are counting well, that is when you count till your mind is very still; while you are counting you are very clearly aware of where the breath comes from, where it passes and where it stops and then it goes out of the nose from there. It means that you are clearly aware of every moment of your breath. Your breath enters through your nose, passes through your throat, heart and reaches your lower abdomen. When you exhale, the breath starts from the lower abdomen, passes through the heart, throat and goes out from the nose. As you count your breath, at the same time you are clearly aware of the incoming and outgoing routes of your breath. This is the gate of following.

So when you count the breath well you can progress and at the same time and accomplish the gate of following. Counting clearly from one to ten, this is accomplishment of the gate of counting. At the same time, having awareness of the in and out movement of the breath is the accomplishment of the gate of following. This is the meaning of ‘mutual inclusiveness whereby skilful cultivation generates superior progress.’ When you progress from counting the breath, the gate of following is mutually inclusive inside it; that is, you accomplish the gate of following when you are counting the breath.

It is the same with the other gates. When you count the breath till you can focus single-mindedly, not only can you concentrate on counting the breath, you do not give rise to misleading thoughts at the same time. At this point of time, you have accomplished stabilisation when you are counting the breath. Although you are cultivating counting the breath, you can accomplish stabilisation at the same time. Why? This is because being single-mindedly focused is stabilisation.

It is the same with the gate of contemplation. When you count the breath till skilful means arise, you will have the wisdom of contemplation; you are able to contemplate on the body, breath and mind knowing that they are non-existent, impermanent and, are arising and ceasing. So when you are counting your breath and you are extremely skilful, you can contemplate at the same time the arising and ceasing, impermanent, non-existence of your body, breath and mind. You have accomplished the gate of contemplation when counting the breath.

When you count the breath till not only you know that the body, breath and mind that you have contemplated are deceptive, and at the same time you also realise that the contemplating mind is also devoid of self-nature; you have accomplished the gate of turning while counting the breath. Just now you have the wisdom of contemplation, what do you contemplate? It is the non-existence of body, breath and mind. Is the contemplating mind real? It is also not real. Thus you not only know that the contemplated body, breath and mind are not real, but at the same time know the reality that the contemplating mind is non-existent and has no self-nature. Since the contemplating and the contemplated are non-existent, at that moment you will be far away from all thoughts and will not grasp any phenomena because you know that they are non-existent, even the wisdom of contemplation is non-existent. Hence at this point of time you can return to the origin. This is accomplishing the gate of turning when counting the breath.

When you count the breath till both the conditioning power of the mind and the conditioned phenomena have perished, and realise the pure self-nature of all things; this is accomplishing the gate of purification when counting the breath.

Therefore as long as you are skilful when counting the breath, you can accomplish all the other five gates. This is the meaning of mutual inclusiveness whereby skilful cultivation generates superior progress. We have used counting the breath as an example; the same principle applies to the rest – following, stabilisation, contemplation, turning and purification.

This is the contents of Chapter 5 – The Six Gates to the Sublime in Terms of Mutual Inclusion. There are two types of mutual inclusion – one is mutual inclusion of the very substance, which is the substance (gate) itself is actually inclusive of all the other five gates. The other one is mutual inclusiveness whereby skilful cultivation generates superior progress. As long as you are skilful, whichever gate you cultivate will lead to accomplishment of the other five gates at the same time. This is on the premise that you are already very familiar with The Six Gates to the Sublime, that is, you can have illuminative contemplation at any time, or you are able to enter into counting, following, stabilisation, contemplation, turning and purification at any time. Therefore, it will progress with your skills; theoretical progress will lead to progress in your phenomena.

As long as you cultivate The Six Gates to the Sublime skilfully, regardless of meditative absorption or wisdom, you can accomplish them and attain realisation of nirvana of the three vehicles. This is definite. Therefore we say that The Six Gates to the Sublime is extremely supreme. You can attain the fruit simply by counting the breath; that is why it is known as 'sublime'.

Chapter 6 The Six Gates to the Sublime in Terms of Identities and Differences

Earlier on we have explained 'sublime' in The Six Gates to the Sublime. It means nirvana. You can attain nirvana with any of the gates; moreover it is nirvana of the three vehicles; from Shravaka (hearer) Vehicle and Pratyekabuddha (solitary realiser) Vehicle of Hinayana to Bodhisattva Vehicle of Mahayana. Different resolutions, faculties and understanding of the wisdom will result in different fruits of realisation. This is what we are going to explain in Chapter 6 – The Six Gates to the Sublime in Terms of Identities and Differences.

Regardless of whether you are an ordinary person, a non-Buddhist or you are a Shravaka (hearer), Pratyekabuddha (solitary realiser) or Bodhisattva, when you cultivate The Six Gates to the Sublime, due the differences in the **intention, faculties and understanding of the wisdom**, the outcome is different.

Although having a common cultivation of The Six Gates to the Sublime, the outcome is different. Why is the outcome different? Firstly the intention is different. What is meant by different intention? It means that although you have the same understanding of the Buddhist teachings (Dharma), the resolution is different. For instance in the practice of the Four Noble Truths (because the Four Noble Truths practice is the most fundamental), in thinking about the truth of suffering, Hinayana practitioners will only think of their own sufferings while Mahayana practitioners will think of the sufferings of sentient beings. Hence with the same practice of the Four Noble Truths but with different resolutions – one thinks of himself only, the other one thinks of sentient beings. One has the resolution or intention of self-liberation while the other hopes to benefit all sentient beings.

What is the difference in faculties? Every sentient being has different faculties; some have an ordinary person's faculties, some have non-Buddhist's faculties, some have the hearer's faculties, some have the solitary realiser's faculties and some have the Bodhisattva's faculties. Due to differences in faculties, similar cultivation of The Six Gates to the Sublime will result in different outcome. Normally there are five faculties – ordinary person, non-Buddhist, hearer, solitary realiser and Bodhisattva.

What an **ordinary person's** faculties are like? An ordinary person has the most obtuse faculties for a practitioner. He may or may not be a Buddhist practitioner. However due to his faculties, his objective for cultivating The Six Gates to the Sublime is different.

If you ask him, "Why do you want to learn meditation?" He will say, "For the sake of my health because I heard that after meditation my health will improve, I will be full of energy and I can focus better." So he learns meditation to build up his health. This is an ordinary person's faculties. Or if you ask him, "Why do you want to learn this meditation method?" He answers, "I am very troubled and I have a lot of worries. I learn meditation because of my worries as someone told me that meditation can stop all worries." So he learns meditation because of his worries. This is an ordinary person's faculties.

In addition, he has heard about many meditative absorption phenomena, development of all kinds of supernatural power or can attain dhyana one, dhyana two, dhyana three, dhyana fouretc.

and all the individual phenomena. After hearing all these he starts to fancy and think, “How wonderful it is to attain these phenomena!” So he learns meditation because he wants to attain the different meditative absorption phenomena. Right from the beginning to the end, he learns meditation for his own sake; either for his own health, or to moderate and subdue his own worries, or to attain all kinds of meditative absorption phenomena, to develop supernatural power or the like.

Buddha said cultivating calming-and-insight meditation with an ordinary person’s faculties will have a certain outcome. What is the outcome? It is the accomplishment of demon-related karma. Why? The key point is ordinary people are all very fearful of death; so an ordinary person will cultivate for his own health, his mind or for all kinds of meditative absorption phenomena. If he cultivates counting the breath single-mindedly and if he really attains some meditative absorption like dhyana one, dhyana two, dhyana three, dhyana four, or the four dhyanas and eight concentrations; he will attach to all these phenomena because of his fear of death. Not only are ordinary people fearful of death, they are extremely attached to all things. This is the reason for the outcome of accomplishment of demon-related karma when he learns meditation. He will definitely encounter many situations.

Therefore when there are many situations arising during meditation, it is due to having an ordinary person’s faculties. Why? It is because he is too attached to things! During meditation, he is either engaged with his body, legs or, energies and channels; very attached to the feelings of the body. Whenever anything happens, he becomes tensed; he completely does not understand the real objective of calming-and-insight meditation. The objective of calming-and-insight meditation is to develop the wisdom of emptiness, it is for liberation – from self-liberation to helping sentient beings to liberate; this is attainable. However he is engaged with the feelings of his body all the time; that is why the result is accomplishment of demon-related karma.

If he is attached to all kinds of meditative absorption phenomena, he is also obsessed! The reason for him to be so easily obsessed is his mind. His mind not only hanker after life and fear death, he is very easily attached to all phenomena. Once there is any meditative absorption phenomenon, he will attach to it, and grasp it tightly unwilling to let go. Hence no matter how he cultivates, he is still engaged in the transmigration of the six realms. Why? This is because he is unable to develop the wisdom of emptiness from his meditative concentration to attain nirvana and liberation. That is why we say he accomplishes demon-related karma. This is an ordinary person’s faculties.

Once an ordinary person who learns meditation sits down to meditate, he thinks, “Today I will meditate till my body feels comfortable. This is good enough.” Therefore whenever he meditates he hopes to have the comfortable feeling, regardless of whether it is lightness, peace and bliss, or ease, or the smoothness of energies and channelsjust want to feel the comfort in meditation. Or he is satisfied when he has different phenomena in each meditation. This is an ordinary person’s faculties. Although he is here today to cultivate The Six Gates to the Sublime, he is actually engaged in the transmigration of the six realms.

The second type of faculties is that of a **non-Buddhist**. Non-Buddhists have sharp faculties; they are smarter than ordinary people. We know that the four dhyanas and eight concentrations are common to non-Buddhists; so if the non-Buddhists are intent on beseeching meditative absorption,

they can achieve it very quickly because they have sharp faculties. They will not take a tortuous route, they will cultivate earnestly so they can attain the four dhyanas and eight concentrations very quickly.

But, why are they known as non-Buddhists? Non-Buddhists seek the Dharma outside the mind or, their mind function outside the ultimate truth. Although a non-Buddhist has a very high level of skill, he can attain the four dhyanas and eight concentrations; he can never be liberated or enlightened or develop the wisdom of emptiness. Why is it that although he has meditative concentration, he cannot develop wisdom? It is because he has heterodox views so whatever he cultivates are heterodox ways; all his meditative absorptions are heterodox ways. This is seeking the Dharma outside the mind. He will not turn around and return to his self-nature to understand his mind and see his true nature. He is unable to do it; why is he unable to do so? The most important point is his heterodox views. That is what we have mentioned yesterday; he has fallen into the four extremes – exist, non-exist, neither exist nor non-exist, exist as well as non-exist.

Just like counting the breath, when he starts his meditation counting from one to ten, he will start to think. What does he think of? Does this breath exist or not exist? Is it permanent or impermanent? He will analyse all these. Regardless of what you analyse, it is within the four extremes.

In the Chan sect (Zen), there is a saying – ‘Beyond four extremes, neither the hundred’, you can really get a gist of it, know what self-nature is. ‘Beyond four extremes’, the four extremes are – exist, non-exist, neither exist nor non-exist, exist as well as non-exist. You have to go beyond these four extremes. ‘Neither the hundred’ – What is self-nature like? You can describe it in a hundred ways but these hundred descriptions can never be the self-nature because as long as you can describe, it is not self-nature. This is because it is beyond speech, words and mental perception; it is inconceivable. There is no way for your mind to think of that phenomenon, and there is also no way to describe it verbally or in words.

Therefore the Chan sect (Zen) also has this saying – ‘To say it is anything is to miss the mark’. To say that the self-nature resembles something, that is not right. As long as you are able to verbalise it, then it is not correct. The problem with non-Buddhists is that the result of whatever they analyse always fall on the four extremes. That is why they are not able to attain enlightenment and liberation.

Earlier on when we practised The Six Gates to the Sublime, we practised ‘cultivation of turning’; the mind that can count and the breath that you count are non-existent, right? After the conditioning power of the mind and the conditioned phenomena perish, we can restore our originally pure self-nature. But for a non-Buddhist, when he counts the breath he will start to analyse – Does the breath exist? Does the mind that counts exist? Is the mind permanent or impermanent? He is engaged with all kinds of analysis; therefore he will never be able to count till both the conditioning and the conditioned perish, allowing the pure self-nature to manifest. This is due to his heterodox views.

That is why we say his mind functions outside the truth. The truth is the wisdom of the ultimate truth of all things. Or he does not return to look for his originally pure self-nature, but look for it outside instead; known as seeking the Dharma outside the mind. Similarly, if as Buddhist

practitioners we seek the Dharma from the outside, then we are great non-Buddhists. Do not criticise others as non-Buddhists, we ourselves are non-Buddhists. As long as we do not seek within our pure self-nature, we are cultivating non-Buddhist practices.

Although non-Buddhists and ordinary people have different faculties, one has sharp faculties and the other has obtuse faculties, they have something in common – forever destined for transmigration within the three realms.

The third type of faculties is that of a **hearer**. Sentient beings with such faculties cultivate The Six Gates to the Sublime to attain nirvana for themselves, hoping to free themselves from the three realms quickly. Hearers mainly contemplate on the Four Noble Truths. Thus when a hearer is counting the breath, he is contemplating on the suffering of his body, breath and mind at the same time. This is the truth of suffering. If he is attached to his body, breath and mind, thinking that they are real, afflictions will arise. This is the truth of the cause of suffering. This is not right; he should not attach to his body, breath and mind, thinking that they are real. So at the same time he contemplates on the suffering of the body, breath and mind, and at that moment realise that the self-nature of suffering is empty (it is just produced by causal conditions, its self-nature is empty) but its fundamental is suffering. When we lectured on 'The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment' medium scope path 'Thoughts on Suffering', we mentioned that as long as you are still in transmigration, there is only suffering, there is no real happiness. Therefore the fundamental of transmigration is suffering. This is the scope of the truth of suffering.

Since he is cultivating the Four Noble Truths, so when he is counting his breath, he is also cultivating the Four Noble Truths. First he will think of the suffering of his body, breath and mind. If he attaches to these three, he will give rise to afflictions; this belongs to the scope of the truth on the cause of suffering. He has to realise that the self-nature of suffering is non-existent then will not give rise to afflictions. This is the truth of the cessation of suffering. If he understands this truth, then it is the truth of the path to the cessation of suffering. As long as when he is counting the breath he can understand clearly the Four Noble Truths, then he can attain the fruit of the Shravaka (hearer) Vehicle, that is, arhat. This is the reason for the ability to attain the fruit when counting the breath; as long as he has such thoughts, he can attain arhat through counting the breath. Since his resolution is to attain nirvana through cultivation of this method, he belongs to the faculties of Shravaka (hearer) Vehicle and he mainly cultivates the Four Noble Truth so the fruit of attainment of nirvana is that of the Shravaka (hearer) Vehicle.

The fourth type of faculties is that of a **solitary realiser**. He mainly cultivates the Twelve Links of Dependent Origination. Hence if he contemplates the Twelve Links of Dependent Origination while he is counting his breath, he will be able to attain the fruit of Pratyekabuddha. A person with the faculties of a solitary realiser likes to be alone, he does not like the masses and rowdiness; he likes quietness. He likes to cultivate alone, does not like to interact with the masses, he does not like to be in contact with anyone. Where does he like to hide himself? Deep in the mountains where there is no one there. What is he there for? He is there to be in contact with nature and observe nature. He will see flowers blooming in spring, trees starting to sprout, green and lush; in autumn leaves start to wither and drop. As a result, what truth does he realise? He will realise the truth of impermanence. He comes into contact with nature every day; he contemplates on arising and

ceasing, and impermanence, therefore he can attain the fruit of Pratyekabuddha. Regardless of whether there is birth of any Buddha, he can attain the fruit of Pratyekabuddha.

Now that he starts to cultivate counting the breath, he knows that the thought of counting the breath belongs to the link of 'becoming' in the Twelve Links of Dependent Origination. Becoming arises from grasping, grasping arises from craving, craving arises from feeling, feeling arises from contact, contact arises from the six sense-organs, the six sense-organs arise from name and form, name and form arises from consciousness, consciousness arises from formation, and formation arises from ignorance; he finds the root in this way. Everything happens from ignorance. Now that he is cultivating counting the breath he profoundly realises that counting the breath is also a dependent origination method (because he contemplates deeply on cause and effect, especially contemplating the changes in the four seasons, understanding the truth of impermanence); as long as it arises out of causes and conditions, it is devoid of any inherent nature and is comparable to empty space. As he has sharp faculties, when he is counting the breath he realises that the breath is also empty without self-nature, hence he will not attach to any phenomena. As long as he is able to maintain his skills, does not give rise to feeling and attachment, he can attain the fruit of Pratyekabuddha. Due to his faculties, though he is now cultivating counting the breath, he is able to attain the fruit of Pratyekabuddha through counting the breath.

The fifth type of faculties is that of a **Bodhisattva**. If you ask him, "Why are you here to learn The Six Gates to the Sublime of Tiantai Calming-and Insight Meditation?" He will reply, "I am cultivating for sentient beings!" Someone with the faculties of a Bodhisattva will think of sentient beings in every thought. He wants to have accomplishment in calming-and insight meditation quickly so as to benefit sentient beings with his meditative absorption and wisdom. So when he is here to cultivate counting the breath, he wants to count till he can understand his mind and see his self-nature, to attain the fruits of the Buddha path.

When he is counting the breath, at the same time he realises that the breath is non-existent. He counts from one to ten; he keeps in mind the arising and ceasing nature of the breath. He contemplates the inhalation and exhalation of the breath, knowing that they arise and cease one after another. He counts one, it ceases then two arises, two ceases then three arises Regardless of how he contemplates, when he is counting the breath he understands that the breath is not real, it is illusory. All things are illusory, so the breath is also illusory.

Is the breath life and death? It is not life and death. Is it nirvana? It is also not nirvana. Since it is not life and death, is there a need to eradicate life and death? There is no need to eradicate life and death. Since it is not nirvana, is there a need to enter nirvana? There is no need to enter nirvana. The breath is neither life and death, nor nirvana; therefore there is neither life and death to eradicate nor nirvana to enter. At this point of time when he is counting the breath, he understands the non-existence of life and death, and nirvana. Hence he does not abide in life and death; abiding in life and death is what an ordinary person does. He also does not abide in nirvana; entering nirvana is what hearers and solitary realisers do. Mahayana practitioners do not enter nirvana.

Therefore he does not abide in life and death, and nirvana; he has an impartial mind. He has the great wisdom of impartiality, he neither grasps nor abandons; there is no nirvana to grasp and also

no life and death to abandon. As such, what does he attain? As a result he enters the middle way; neither does he fall on the side of life and death, nor nirvana. This is what is known as non-abiding nirvana; this is different from the nirvana of Hinayana. Non-abiding nirvana is not abiding in life and death, and also not abiding in nirvana; but have the freedom to leave and return. A person with the faculties of a Bodhisattva can attain non-abiding nirvana just by counting the breath. He can enter the state of Bodhisattva all the way to attainment of the fruit of Buddha without any difficulties. This is the faculties of a Bodhisattva, he can attain the ultimate fruit of Buddhahood.

The examples above show that with a common cultivation of counting the breath, regardless of ordinary people and holy men, or Mahayana and Hinayana, there are differences in the result. This is the meaning of The Six Gates to the Sublime in Terms of Identities and Differences. This is with regard to counting the breath, but the same principle applies to all the other gates – following, stabilisation, contemplation, turning and purification. As a result of differences in faculties, cultivation with any gate will have different outcome. So this is the second, due to differences in faculties.

Thirdly, it is due to differences in understanding of the wisdom. Everyone has different understanding and realisation of the Buddhist teachings (Dharma). Everyone is attending the same lecture but each has different understanding and realisation of the teachings. Now everyone here is cultivating The Six Gates to the Sublime together, but due to the differences in understanding the wisdom, there will be differences in the result. With the same Buddhist teachings (Dharma) there can be different depths of understanding. This happens only to Buddhist practitioners; it does not apply to non-Buddhists as they do not know the contents of the Buddhist teachings (Dharma).

Chapter 7 The Gates to the Sublime in Accordance with Reversed Orientation

Chapter 7 is 'The Gates to the Sublime in Accordance with Reversed Orientation. This is an exclusively Bodhisattvas' cultivation, it is not a practice held in common with the two vehicles and ordinary people. 'Reversed orientation' means that if Bodhisattvas cultivate The Six Gates to the Sublime skilfully, they can have reversed orientation, generating all Mahayana merits like the six paramitas, the four methods of pacification, etc. The key point is still in skilful cultivation. As long as you cultivate The Six Gates to the Sublime skilfully, cultivating any gate can orientate reversely, generating infinite merits of Mahayana. The merits of Mahayana are mainly the six paramitas and the four methods of pacification; they are not held in common with the ordinary people, non-Buddhists, and the hearers and solitary realisers of Hinayana; they are exclusively cultivated by the Bodhisattvas.

Why is this not held in common with the hearers and solitary realisers? Since Hinayana practitioners can also realise the truth that all phenomena arising from causes and conditions are devoid of self-nature, and can also attain nirvana; then why is it that when they cultivate The Six Gates to the Sublime they are unable to have reversed orientation, generating all the merits of Mahayana? This is because although they can attain the contemplation of emptiness, they do not cultivate contemplation of the unreal.

So-called contemplation of emptiness is whereby one enters contemplation of emptiness through the contemplation of the unreal. That is, through understanding the illusory nature of all things in the phenomenal world, one enters the state of emptiness. This 'unreal' refers to everything in the phenomenal world arises through causes and conditions; its self-nature is empty. Hinayana practitioners can enter contemplation of emptiness through contemplation of the unreal; but thereafter they just enter nirvana; they do not give rise to infinite skilful means to benefit sentient beings. This is because they do not continue to cultivate contemplation of the unreal.

Contemplation of the unreal arises through the contemplation of emptiness of all things. When Hinayana practitioners have already attained the emptiness of nirvana, within this emptiness, they do not give rise to the unreal again, that is, they do not give rise to the illusory unreal existence again. As a result when they cultivate The Six Gates to the Sublime, they are unable to orientate reversely, generating all the great merits of the six paramitas and the four methods of pacification. This is the reason why practitioners of the two vehicles are unable to generate all the merits of Mahayana.

After Bodhisattvas have attained emptiness, they know that all things are empty and all sentient beings are empty, but they do not attach to the emptiness; they let things follow their own course and generate great compassion, benefiting sentient beings through the six paramitas and the four methods of pacification. This is known as generating the unreal from the emptiness; that is, within the emptiness, follow the natural course of things and generate great compassion to benefit sentient beings.

Why is it known as 'unreal'? This is because all skilful means are illusory and unreal in existence; sentient beings whom a Bodhisattva benefits are also illusory and unreal in existence. He can share all Buddhist teachings (Dharma) but he knows that all Buddhist teachings (Dharma) are illusory; and all sentient beings with whom he dauntlessly benefits are also illusory. Although the self-nature of everything is empty, they are illusory; he still benefits sentient beings dauntlessly. He will not attach to the emptiness and can generate the unreal from the emptiness.

Now with regard to counting the breath, how does he generate the unreal from the emptiness? Prior to this he has already cultivated contemplation of emptiness, he knows that the self-nature of all phenomena is empty; hence when he is counting the breath, he knows that the breath that he is counting has no self-nature. Although the self-nature of the breath is empty, he can accomplish the thought of the breath, counting from one to ten with clear and distinct awareness. So this is generating the unreal from the emptiness. Self-nature of the breath is empty, this is emptiness; but it can also accomplish the thought of the breath, this is unreal.

Similarly, he can contemplate on the empty self-nature of the breath and at the same time know that the self-nature of the Four Noble Truths is empty. Although the self-nature of the Four Noble Truths is empty, he can master it and have clear and distinct awareness of it; then he can lecture in detail the Four Noble Truths for the benefit of sentient beings who have the faculties of the hearers so that they can attain arhat quickly. This is generating the unreal from the emptiness.

Similarly, upon knowing the empty self-nature of the breath, he knows the self-nature of the Twelve Links of Dependent Origination is empty; but he also masters it and shares it in detail with

practitioners of the Pratyekabuddha (solitary realiser) Vehicle so that they can be liberated and attain the fruit of Pratyekabuddha. Therefore he will not fall into emptiness; he can publicly share infinite cultivation methods and at the same time know their empty self-nature.

The same principle applies to the six paramitas and the four methods of pacification of Mahayana. When he contemplates on the empty self-nature of the breath, at the same time he also knows the self-nature of the six paramitas is empty; so when he practises the six paramitas, he will not attach to 'giving'. He will not feel terrific about whatever he has given away. Or if he observes the precepts very well, he will also not feel terrific. This is because he knows the empty self-nature of the six paramitas. However he will not stop practising the six paramitas just because their self-nature is empty; he will not attach to the emptiness, and is able to accomplish the six paramitas to benefit sentient beings. This is generating the unreal from the emptiness. This is precisely generating great compassion from emptiness. Although he knows that sentient beings and the six paramitas are unreal, he can accomplish the illusory six paramitas to benefit illusory sentient beings. This is how all Mahayana merits are generated through reversed orientation. This is with regard to counting the breath.

Similarly with the other gates of following, purification, contemplation, turning and purification; every gate can be reversed orientated to generate the six paramitas, the four methods of pacification and all other Mahayana merits.

This chapter mainly explains the relationship between the cultivation of The Six Gates to the Sublime and the six paramitas and four methods of pacification. That is why it is an exclusively Bodhisattvas' practice; only Bodhisattvas have the skills to generate the unreal from the emptiness.

We will end our lesson here today. Tomorrow our lecture will be more amazing. We will lecture on what people with great faculties cultivate – 'The Six Gates to the Sublime According to Contemplation of the Mind'; and also what great beings with penetrating faculties cultivate – 'The Six Gates to the Sublime According to the Perfect Contemplation'. We will conclude our lesson here today because we also want to practise The Six Gates to the Sublime. It gets more supreme as we listen to it, therefore we must resolute to accomplish, but for the sake of sentient beings. Then our resolution will be that of Mahayana. In this way, we will have the ability to be enlightened, to become Buddha.

Let us invite our two fellow practitioners up here to demonstrate. Similarly, later I will come down to adjust your postures, so do not be shocked. Let us all stand up and follow our two fellow practitioners.

(For ***Beginning Meditation, Emerging from Meditation*** and the Practice of The Six Gates to the Sublime, please refer the earlier lectures)

Let us thank our two fellow practitioners for the demonstration. Our lesson today will end here.

Dedication: May I dedicate this merit to all sentient beings; may I and all sentient beings attain the state of enlightenment.

The Six Gates to the Sublime
Lecture 7
Teachings by Venerable Master Jing-Lian

Venue: Tai Pei Buddhist Centre
24 September 2009

Lecture Contents

- **Chapter 8 - The Six Gates to the Sublime According to Contemplation Of the Mind**
- **Chapter 9 - The Six Gates to the Sublime According to the Perfect Contemplation**

Namo Amitabha Buddha to everyone!

Today we will introduce Chapter 8 'The Six Gates to the Sublime According to Contemplation of the Mind'.

This is the cultivation method of people with great faculties. Why is it cultivated by people with great faculties? This is because people with great faculties know the principle of 'everything is merely created by the mind.'

What is everything is merely created by the mind? Where does everything in the universe come from? They arise from our delusive mind. Where does the delusive mind arise from? It arises from a misleading thought. Our pure mind is originally free from thoughts, but with a misleading thought, it gives rise to ignorance about the ultimate truth; then the eighth alaya consciousness appears. The appearance of the eighth alaya consciousness results in the stately manifestation of the ten dharma-realms. Therefore everything in the universe is the manifestation of the eighth consciousness.

How does the eighth consciousness come about? It comes from a misleading thought. Where does the misleading thought come from? It comes from our pure mind. The pure free mind is originally free from thoughts, but once you give rise to a thought, ignorance of the ultimate truth of all things arises, and then the eighth consciousness appears. Hence the pure mind is the manifesting and the eighth consciousness is the manifested; and then manifesting everything in the universe; and now the eighth consciousness is the manifesting and everything in the universe is the manifested.

People with great faculties normally understand this principle and are skilful in following it. Very often people will ask, "Is the view or the skill more important?" If you are very skilful but your view lags behind your skill, it is difficult for your skill to progress further. Therefore your skill will move along with your view; your skill will progress with your view. If you have the view of 'All things (dharmas) arise from the mind, everything is merely created by the mind', and your skill can keep up with your view, then you are what we now refer to as a person with great faculties. So if you cultivate The Six Gates to the Sublime now, you just need to contemplate directly on the nature of the mind; there is no need to follow the sequence and you are complete with The Six Gates to the Sublime.

Earlier on we said you have to first-count, second-follow, third-stabilisation and then contemplation, turning and purification. People with great faculties do not need to follow this sequence; he just needs to contemplate directly on the nature of the mind. What is the nature of the mind? It is what we have mentioned earlier – pure mind. The enlightened self-nature is originally free from thoughts, but with a misleading thought, it gives rise to all things (dharmas). People with great faculties know this, so they just need to contemplate directly on the nature of the mind, looking for the origin of the mind directly; and then they can understand where all things in the universe are manifested from. He is very clear about the process of manifestation, so he is not deluded by the phenomenal world because everything in the phenomenal world is manifested from the eighth consciousness.

However, ignorant, confused and deluded sentient beings will attach to all things in the phenomenal world because they do not know that they are manifested by their own eighth consciousness. They

manifest everything from their consciousness, and then they attach to them; this is really very confusing. However, they need to have this view in order to see through everything. The stately manifestation of the ten dharma-realms is done by us. How are they manifested? If we go along with contaminated conditioning cause, transmigration of the six realms will be manifested. If we go along with pure conditioning cause, the four holy dharma-realms will be manifested. The ten dharma-realms (the six realms of transmigration plus the four holy dharma-realms) are manifested by our consciousness.

If we can find the self-nature of our mind directly, when we cultivate The Six Gates to the Sublime we do not have to follow the sequence; just contemplate directly on the nature of the mind and you will realise that the mind is precisely the six gates of counting, following, purification, contemplation, turning and purification. The conditioning mind is unreal and the conditioned phenomena are unreal; so we will not attach to all things because they are manifestations of our eighth consciousness. The conditioning mind is delusive, it is unreal; therefore all things that arise from the mind do not really exist, they are arising and ceasing. The delusive mind is arising and ceasing, hence all things that arise from this delusive mind are arising and ceasing too. As long as they are arising and ceasing, their self-nature is empty; they are impermanent and is devoid of 'self'. Understand this principle and we will not attach to all things or phenomena.

So when a person with great faculties cultivates The Six Gates to the Sublime, he will contemplate directly on the mind. When he is counting the breath, he will ask, "Who is counting? Is there a 'self' who is counting?" There is not a 'self' who is counting; it is the mind that is counting. So at this point of time, the mind is the gate of counting.

When he is counting, he has to follow the 'mind dharmas' before he can count. This is the gate of following. Practitioners who have read 'The Shastra on the Door to Understanding the Hundred Dharmas' will know that there are eight consciousnesses and fifty-one dharmas belonging to the mind. The eight consciousnesses are the mind dharmas; the fifty-one dharmas belonging to the mind cannot function alone, they have to follow the mind dharmas, they belong to the mind dharmas. Similarly when you are counting, you have to follow the mind dharmas; just like the dharmas belonging to the mind have to follow the mind dharmas before they can function. So while he is counting he knows where the mind that can count comes from. It comes from the mind dharmas; just like the dharmas belonging to the mind have to follow the mind dharmas before they can function. Hence at this point of time, the mind is the gate of following.

When he is counting he can also realise that the mind that can count is non-existent, the numbers that he counts are also non-existent. Since they are all non-existent, stop all the thoughts; then the mind does not move. When the mind does not move, it is stabilisation. Hence at this point of time the mind is the gate of stabilisation.

This theory is derived from the earlier statement of – The mind that can give rise to all things (dharmas) is delusive, it is unreal, non-existent. All things that arise from the mind are also arising and ceasing, they are non-existent. The same principle applies to counting the breath. The mind that can count and the breath that it counts are non-existent. Ordinary people will attach to the manifestations from their own mind because they do not understand the principle that the mind

that gives rise to all things (dharmas) and all the things (dharmas) that arise are non-existent. However if we have this view, understand that the conditioning and the conditioned, or the contemplating and the contemplated do not really exist, then we will not attach to anything. We will not attach to all things (dharmas), all phenomena in the universe that are manifested from our eighth consciousness.

We are so attached to phenomena, otherwise why would we give rise to afflictions? We treat all phenomena as really in existence. When you are angry with someone, he really exists in your thought. When you are angry with someone over certain matter, that matter is really in existence to you. However if you understand that everything is illusory, sentient beings are also illusory, what is there to be angry about? This shows that ordinary people will attach to any phenomena because they do not have such contemplative illumination. Perhaps they do not have the view or the skill; or they have the view but not the skill.

If you have not heard of such principle, that is, regarding how the pure mind manifests all things; then you definitely will not have such view. However if you have heard of such view but are unable to do it, it shows that you do not often contemplate in this way; that is why you do not have the skill to do it. So when a phenomenon arises, you attach to the phenomenon, though you know and have heard of 'The three realms are merely created by the mind, all things (dharmas) are created by the consciousness' but you are unable to do it; you are still attached to all phenomena.

Now that we are lecturing 'The Six Gates to the Sublime According to Contemplation of the Mind', a practitioner with great faculties will not attach to all phenomena. He will not be deluded and confused when any phenomenon is manifested. Now that he is cultivating The Six Gates to the Sublime, he knows that the mind is precisely The Six Gates to the Sublime – counting, following, stabilisation, contemplation, turning and purification; they are manifested by the mind! Earlier on we mentioned about the conditioning mind and the conditioned phenomena; The Six Gates to the Sublime is the conditioned phenomenon; therefore the mind is counting, following, stabilisation, contemplation, turning and purification.

We mentioned earlier that the mind is counting, so the mind is the gate of counting. When he is counting, he has to follow the mind dharmas in order to count; so at this point of time the mind is the gate of following.

When he counts till both the counting and the counted are non-existent, he will not attach to all phenomena. At this time he will not attach to the mind that can count and the numbers that he has counted. As such, all thoughts will stop; when this happens the mind has attained stabilisation.

So what happens after attaining stabilisation? The wisdom of emptiness can be manifested. Hence when the mind attains stabilisation, it can give rise to the wisdom of contemplation. At this point of time, the mind is the gate of contemplation.

With the wisdom of contemplation, he can eradicate the ignorance of thinking that everything really exists. If we think that everything really exists, there is 'self' and there is all things (dharmas); then there is attachment to 'self' and all things (dharmas). However a practitioner with great faculties

cultivating The Six Gates to the Sublime understands the reality (because he already has the wisdom of emptiness and uses it to contemplate) that all things are originally without self-nature; there is non-existence of 'self' and all things (dharmas). So at this point of time, he can eradicate the ignorance of thinking that everything really exists. Once the ignorance is eradicated, the self-nature will manifest. So at this time, the mind is the gate of turning; returning to the origin, to the self-nature.

With the manifestation of the self-nature, he will realise that the self-nature is originally pure; it has never been contaminated by the delusion and confusion that arise from ignorance. At this point of time, the mind is the gate of purification.

If he does not attach to all things and all phenomena that arise from the process that we have mentioned, the perceiving division and the perceived division will disappear, and return to the self-witnessing division which is the essence of the alaya consciousness. Then going back further, it is the generation of a single thought of ignorance. So once his ignorance is eradicated, can he not restore his originally pure mind? With such a view, if he applies the skill of perfuming continuously, he can attain what is so-called The Six Gates to the Sublime According to Contemplation of the Mind. It is through this theory that we can have this concrete experiential skill.

Starting from Chapter 8, in Chapter 8 and 9 we have already entered the system of Mind Only, expounding on the principle of everything is merely created by the mind. Through reflecting on this, we can return to our originally pure mind. For practitioners with great faculties, they just need to contemplate directly on the nature of the mind; they do not need to go through the sequence. This is Chapter 8 'The Six Gates to the Sublime According to Contemplation of the Mind'.

Chapter 9 is 'The Six Gates to the Sublime According to the Perfect Contemplation'. This is even more amazing and the skill is even more remarkable. This is the cultivation of great beings with penetrating faculties.

Great beings with penetrating faculties; what is the meaning of 'great beings'? A 'great being' is one who has already understood the mind and seen the real nature; an enlightened great Bodhisattva. Thus Chapter 9 'The Six Gates to the Sublime According to the Perfect Contemplation' belongs to the Bodhisattvas who have penetrating faculties, not to a Bodhisattva with obtuse faculties. Since he has understood the mind and seen the real nature, undoubtedly he can understand that the bodhi (enlightened) self-nature is originally pure, unwavering, non-arising and non-ceasing, complete, and can give rise to all things (dharmas). Therefore he is able to perform so-called the perfect contemplation.

In The Six Gates to the Sublime According to the Perfect Contemplation, what is the meaning of 'perfect contemplation'? It is to have complete contemplative illumination of all things (dharmas). What we have explained earlier, cultivating The Six Gates to the Sublime According to the Contemplation of the Mind, one is unable have complete contemplative illumination. As long as the practitioner contemplates directly on the nature of the mind, he can be complete with The Six Gates to the Sublime; but it does not contain all the other things (dharmas), therefore we cannot say that

it is complete contemplative illumination. Now what is so-called perfect contemplation is the ability to have complete contemplative illumination of all things (dharmas). On what basis can there be complete contemplative illumination? Both the view and skill have been attained. What view? It is what we have always heard 'One is all, all is one'. What is the meaning of this? 'One' refers to the essence of the mind; 'all' refers to all things (dharmas). Where do all things (dharmas) arise from? They arise from the mind. The mind can give rise to all things (dharmas) in the universe; the occurrence of all things (dharmas) originates from the essence of the mind. This is 'one is all'. When all things (dharmas) return to the self-nature, it is 'all is one'. This is assimilating back to the essence. Therefore, one is giving rise to all things (dharmas) from the essence and the other is all things (dharmas) return to the self-nature again. This is the meaning of 'one is all, all is one'. Where do all things (dharmas) come from? All things (dharmas) arise out of the mind, so the mind is the essence here giving rise to all things (dharmas) in the phenomenal world (this is 'all') but all things (dharmas) can go back to the essence again (this is 'one').

Since a great being with penetrating faculties has already understood the mind and seen the true nature, he can exude all things (dharmas) from the self-nature, and all things (dharmas) can return to the self-nature. There is not the slightest obstacle in this entire process; therefore he has the ability to have complete contemplative illumination of all things (dharmas). This is the meaning of perfect contemplation.

When he contemplates the mind, he can see all things (dharmas); this is arising from the essence. When he contemplates all things (dharmas), he can also see all minds. This is assimilating back to the essence. Similarly, when he contemplates enlightenment and nirvana, he can see all afflictions, life and death. (With a deluded thought, enlightenment becomes afflictions, nirvana becomes life and death.) On the contrary, when he contemplates afflictions, life and death, at that moment he can see all enlightenment and nirvana. (This refers to when having an enlightened thought, he is awakened to the truth that the self-nature of afflictions is empty; he is enlightened at that moment.) At the same time, he can also be awakened to the truth that within the originally pure self-nature there is originally no life and death; at that moment he is enlightened. Thus do you think enlightenment and afflictions are one or two entities? Is life and death, and nirvana one or two entities? They are one entity, right? The difference is in delusion and enlightenment. With a thought that is awakened to the truth, it becomes enlightenment and nirvana.

This is the state of a great being with penetrating faculties. This is how he leads his life every day. When he encounters all things (dharmas), all sentient beings and all phenomena, he just reflects according to reality, like how a mirror would reflect. There is not the slightest discrimination, attachment and delusion; because a mirror only has the function of reflecting, the mirror itself is unchanged. This mirror is an analogy of our enlightened self-nature. The image in the mirror is an analogy of the stately manifestation of the ten dharma-realms. So whatever he sees everyday are dreamlike, unreal; just like the reflecting function of a mirror, reflecting according to reality.

If we use a piece of small mirror to reflect the scene outside, you will realise that all the images in this room can be reflected onto the mirror. However this is just a small piece of mirror, right? The things outside are so big but they are all in the mirror; the things outside did not shrink and the mirror has not been enlarged but they are all reflected in the mirror. This is the function of our mind.

That is why we describe it with the expression 'Mount Sumeru in a mustard seed'. A mustard seed is so small yet it can contain the entire Mount Sumeru; they are mutually compatible, there is no obstacle at all. This is the principle. The function of our mind is to the mirror; it can reflect all things (dharmas) but the mirror remains unchanged, there is not the slightest obstacle. This is the way he leads his life every day; there is no discrimination, attachment and delusion.

Are the images inside or outside the mirror? We cannot say that the images are in the mirror, why? This is because if you break the mirror, you cannot find anything; it shows that they are not in the mirror. Then are the images outside the mirror? But they are clearly reflected in the mirror. Therefore you cannot say that these images are in the mirror nor are they outside the mirror. So this is the relationship between us and everything in the universe; they are neither inside nor outside.

So do you think that the images are one entity? Is it one or not one entity? You cannot say that they are one entity (not one) because obviously there is everything in the universe that is awe-inspiring, so you cannot say that there is only one. You cannot say that they are different (not different) because they are similarly the effect of the self-nature. Now we are talking about the 'middle way'; this is the contemplation of the middle way.

Since this is the state of great Bodhisattvas with penetrating faculties, his mind is like a mirror, it just reflects according to reality. The mirror is an analogy of our self-nature. 'Did not expect that the self-nature is originally pure; did not expect that the self-nature is originally non-arising and non-ceasing; did not expect that the self-nature is originally complete; did not expect that the self-nature is originally unchanging; did not expect that the self-nature can give rise to all things (dharmas)'. This is what the Sixth Patriarch Great Master Hui Neng said after attaining enlightenment. It is because he is a great Bodhisattva who has eradicated at least one grade of ignorance; he has already seen the self-nature that is how he knows that the enlightened self-nature is originally pure and unchanging.

Now when a great being with penetrating faculties cultivates The Six Gates to the Sublime according to the perfect contemplation, how does he contemplate? Since 'one is all, all is one', is his single-mindedness complete in itself with all the quantities of the ten dharma-realms, regardless of ordinary people, holy men, form or mind? At this time it is the gate of counting, why? Because the enlightened self-nature is complete in itself, therefore the stately manifestation of the ten dharma-realms is complete in itself. This is regardless of the quantities of all things (dharmas); they all belong to the gate of counting. It is just like our earlier analogy of the mirror; the mirror can manifest all images as the self-nature is complete in itself.

All the phenomena and all things (dharmas) in the ten dharma-realms follow our consciousness of the mind to manifest everything in the universe. This is precisely the gate of following. Our enlightened self-nature can give rise to all things; if we follow the contaminated conditioning cause, the six realms of transmigration will be manifested; if we follow the pure conditioning cause, the four holy dharma-realms will be manifested.

Although all things (dharmas) and all phenomena can arise and cease, change; they do not impede our self-nature. Why? This is because our enlightened self-nature is originally unchanging and, non-arising and non-ceasing. It is just like the mirror that reflects the reality, but the mirror itself is

unchanging; the images are not retained in the mirror because the mirror is originally unchanging and, non-arising and non-ceasing. This is the gate of stabilisation.

Before we attain stabilisation, our mind will follow the external phenomena, generating arising and ceasing, and changing because of lack of stabilisation power. However once we understand that the self-nature is originally unchanging, non-arising and non-ceasing (it is the external phenomena that are changing, arising and ceasing), everything in the phenomenal world is the manifestation of the consciousness of the mind; then we will not be deluded and confused by them. Everything is manifested by the consciousness of our mind, and we cling to them; then we give rise to discrimination, attachment and misleading thoughts. This is great confusion and delusion. However if we understand this principle, we will not be confused and deluded again, we will not give rise to ignorance again; then we can return to our self-nature. Therefore, even though in the external phenomena there is howling wind and torrential rain (difficult, dangerous situation), or roaring sea and surging waves (perilous situation), our mind will be unchanged; this is the state of our mind. This is because the mirror is originally unchanging, it simply reflects the phenomena as they are; the mirror originally has the function of reflecting, just like our self-nature originally has the function of perception; but we will not attach to the phenomena of the six sense-objects.

When a great being with penetrating faculties contemplates all things (dharmas), he can see the reality. What is the reality of all things (dharmas)? All things (dharmas) are originally without 'self'; as long as they arise from causes and conditions, their self-nature is empty. Therefore, originally there is no 'self' and things, that is, there is no existence of 'self' and all things (dharmas); this is the reality of everything, as such he will not be deluded. This is the gate of contemplation.

When he sees all things (dharmas) he can return to his self-nature. This is the gate of turning. When he encounters all things (dharmas) what will he do? Earlier on we mentioned about 'all is one', all things (dharmas) can return to the self-nature; this is precisely the gate of turning. Regardless of whatever he encounters or whatever phenomena arise, he will not discriminate, attach or have afflictions; he can return to his self-nature.

Although the ten dharma-realms are manifested, he is not contaminated. This is the gate of purification. Our enlightened self-nature is originally pure, our pure mind is originally free of thoughts; but with a misleading thought it gives rise to ignorance of the ultimate truth, then the eighth consciousness manifests the ten dharma-realms. Although now that the ten dharma-realms are manifested, he is not contaminated by the ten dharma-realms, he is able to return to his pure self-nature as he understands that the self-nature is originally pure; he is not contaminated by the ten dharma-realms. This is the gate of purification.

This explains how great beings with penetrating faculties cultivate The Six Gates to the Sublime According to the Perfect Contemplation. This is actually the state of perfection and sudden enlightenment.

'Perfection' means the ability to completely integrate and understand clearly all things (dharmas); there is no obstruction in all things (dharmas). There is no conflict, no contradiction, or mutual opposition; everything can be completely integrated into our own mind. Since all things (dharmas)

originate from our fundamentally pure mind, there should be no obstacle when returning to our self-nature. We have obstacles in all things (dharmas) because of discrimination and attachment; originally there is no obstacle.

Therefore when one is at the state of perfection and sudden enlightenment, regardless of principle (noumenal realm) or phenomena (phenomenal realm), there is no obstacle. Those who research on the 'Flower Adornment Sutra' have a favourite saying 'No obstacle in the principle, no obstacle in the phenomena, no obstacle in the realm in which principle and phenomena mutually penetrate, no obstacle in the realm of interdependence of the phenomena'. Since principle (noumenal realm) and phenomena (phenomenal realm) are individual entities, they are certainly without obstacles. As phenomena (phenomenal realm) arise from principle (noumenal realm), everything in the phenomenal realm can return to the noumenal realm. So the noumenal realm is certainly free from obstacles. We are referring to the noumenal realm here. The phenomenal realm is about phenomena, functions. We just mentioned about arising from the essence and then assimilate back to the essence. Hence the noumenal realm and the phenomenal realm are free from obstacles (no obstacle in the realm in which principle and phenomena mutually penetrate) because it has never been away from the function of the self-nature. Therefore the realm of interdependence of the phenomena is certainly free from obstacles. This is the meaning of perfection.

What is sudden enlightenment? It means that regardless of any cultivation methods, he does not have to follow the sequence as he has already attained the view; he just needs to enhance his skill to reach the state of perfection and immediate enlightenment, and the state of perfect contemplation. He is like a mirror, he leads his life in a relaxed and free manner; this is a kind of perfection and sudden enlightenment state. This is also the state that great beings with penetrating faculties are in.

There are people with obtuse faculties and people with penetrating faculties. What are they like? We must really be curious as to whether we have obtuse or penetrating faculties. We mentioned earlier that with penetrating faculties you do not need to follow the sequence in your cultivation. On the contrary, people with obtuse faculties need to follow the sequence in their cultivation.

Like in the Shravaka (hearer) Vehicle there are four paths and four fruits. You definitely have to attain the stream-entry path to reach the fruition of stream-entry, then the once-returning path to reach the fruition of once-returning, the non-returning path to reach the fruition of non-returning, and the arhatship path to reach the fruition of arhatship. Hence there are four paths and four fruits; need to have the path first before attaining the fruition. The sequence is extremely clear, strict and impartial.

As for Bodhisattvas, we are also very familiar. What are the stages of Bodhisattvas? We start counting from ten stages of faith. There are ten stages of faith, ten stages of dwelling, ten stages of conduct, ten stages of transference, ten stages of ground, and the stage of equal enlightenment. There are a total of fifty-one stages. So a person with obtuse faculties has to follow these stages. After completing the ten stages of faith, he enters the initial stage of dwelling, then stage two of dwelling, stage three of dwelling..... all the way till he completes the ten stages of dwelling. Then he starts the initial stage of conduct, stage two of conduct.....till he completes all the ten stages. Then

the ten stages of transference, the ten stages of ground; these individual stages are also extremely clear.

For a person with penetrating faculties, he does not have to bother with all these, can throw them into the Yangtze River or Yellow River. He does not have to follow the sequence. He can include one stage into another stage; so the ten stages of faith are precisely the ten stages of dwelling, the ten stages of conduct, the ten stages of transference, the ten stages of ground, and the equal enlightenment. We often hear this 'Once he starts the initial resolution, he accomplishes the wisdom of a Buddha'. This is what we are referring to; his initial resolution and the ultimate are actually one entity. This is because he has no sequence; so with one stage, all the other stages are included inside.

If from the viewpoint of the three disciplines of precept, meditative absorption and wisdom, a person with obtuse faculties will first observe the precepts with purity before attaining meditative absorption and then develop wisdom. What about a person with penetrating faculties? The three disciplines of precept, meditative absorption and wisdom are perfected together at one time. Precept is meditative absorption, is also wisdom; three is one, one is three. This is precisely 'one is all, all is one'. He can use it on any method of cultivation and attain the fruit very quickly. How envious! How we hope that we have penetrating faculties.

Not only can he include all stages in one stage, he can completely integrate everything. What with Hinayana having conflict with Mahayana or Vajrayana, this will never happen to him as he completely integrates everything. Hinayana is Mahayana and is also Vajrayana; one is three, three is one. If you give rise to conflict, contradiction or mutual opposition then you do not have penetrating faculties. If I say the Four Noble Truths is precisely Mahamudra, and is precisely Dzogchen; can you accept this? If you cannot accept it, then you have obtuse faculties.

We can observe further to determine the type of faculties that you have – do you have stronger obstacle of afflictions, or 'obstacle to wisdom resulting from regarding the seeming as real'? If your obstacle of afflictions is stronger than your obstacle to wisdom resulting from regarding the seeming as real, then you are inclined towards penetrating faculties. On the contrary if your obstacle to wisdom resulting from regarding the seeming as real is stronger than your obstacle of afflictions, then you belong to one with obtuse faculties. This is another way to differentiate.

Hence for someone with obtuse faculties, he definitely has to observe the precepts with purity before he can attain meditative absorption and then the wisdom of emptiness. Since his obstacle of affliction is lighter, he attains meditative absorption faster than a person with stronger obstacle of affliction and with penetrating faculties. Then his afflictions are subdued by his meditative absorption power, only then would his illuminative wisdom be manifested. Therefore he definitely needs strict and impartial sequence; observe the precepts with purity to attain meditative absorption before the wisdom of emptiness can be developed.

However a person with penetrating faculties uses his wisdom directly to eradicate; he does not need to observe the precepts.....explaining in this way seems have some shortcoming , it is like asking everyone not to observe the precepts, everyone will exclaim, "I have penetrating faculties!" As a person with penetrating faculties has relatively lighter obstacle to wisdom resulting from regarding

the seeming as real, he is enlightened once he listens to the sutra. As long as he is enlightened through a single thought, immediately he can say what the Sixth Patriarch Great Master Hui Neng said earlier. When he listens to the sutra, he is able to abide in and directly penetrate into the state in the sutra; hence he can be enlightened very quickly. Immediately he understands 'Did not expect that the self-nature is originally pure'. He does not have to put great effort into cultivating meditative absorption; he just needs to focus on listening to the Buddhist teachings single-mindedly. We said that skill will move along with view, as long as he understands the principle and is awakened to the truth, it means his view is already there, so his skill can be enhanced immediately. How does he attain enlightenment through listening to the sutra? It is because his obstacle to wisdom is light, understand? He has penetrating faculties.

A person with strong obstacle to wisdom resulting from regarding the seeming as real, cannot understand the teachings when he listens to it, or he will doze off or be distracted, somehow he will not understand, he cannot keep the teachings in his mind. However, normally he is a good person as he does not have strong afflictions and he is not very greedy; his temper is also very good. There are many such good people; they are ascetic and indifferent to fame and wealth. They are good husbands and wives and do not have much temper. This shows that their obstacle of affliction is lighter. However can they penetrate into the state of the sutra when they hear it? That will depend on whether their obstacle to wisdom is heavy or light. Hence we know from here the type of faculties that we have.

Therefore a great being with penetrating faculties can cultivate The Six Gates to the Sublime according to the perfect contemplation and enter the state of the self-nature. He just needs to abide in the self-nature, contemplate perfectly all things (dharmas), then he can completely integrate and understand clearly all things (dharmas); and enter infinite methods of cultivation. All things (dharmas) in his mind are like the reflection in the mirror, just like what we have explained earlier.

This is the contents of The Six Gates to the Sublime According to the Perfect Contemplation.

We will end our lesson here today. Tomorrow we will lecture on Chapter 10 'The Six Gates to the Sublime in Accordance with the Signs of Realisation'. From Chapter 1 to 9, we have introduced many different methods of cultivation; from ordinary people, non-Buddhists, hearers, solitary realisers, Bodhisattvas to people with great faculties and great beings with penetrating faculties. What are their signs of realisation? We will introduce the contents tomorrow.

Now we will practise first counting, second following, third stabilisation, fourth contemplation. We will practise these four. (Please refer to earlier lectures).

(For ***Beginning Meditation, Emerging from Meditation***, please refer to earlier lectures)

Yesterday a fellow practitioner asked whether we can take a bath immediately after meditation. It is best to wait for half an hour before going to the toilet and taking a bath.

Let us thank Venerable Jingtai and fellow practitioner Thomas for the demonstration.

Today everyone has a little feeling of the state of meditation; this is with regard to the posture and the contents of contemplation. There is great improvement. Tomorrow is our last lesson; we will practise the rest – ‘turning’ and ‘purification’ and explain Chapter 10 ‘The Six Gates to the Sublime in Accordance with the Signs of Realisation’.

We end our lesson here today.

Dedication: May I dedicate this merit to all sentient beings; may I and all sentient beings attain the state of enlightenment.

The Six Gates to the Sublime
Lecture 8
Teachings by Venerable Master Jing-Lian

Venue: Tai Pei Buddhist Centre
25 September 2009

Lecture Contents

- **Chapter 10 - The Six Gates to the Sublime in Accordance with the Signs of Realisation**

Namo Amitabha Buddha to everyone!

Today we will introduce the last chapter, Chapter 10 'The Six Gates to the Sublime in Accordance with the Signs of Realisation'. This explanation is based on the signs of realisation in the earlier nine chapters.

There are four categories of signs of realisation in The Six Gates to the Sublime. They are sequential realisation, interrelated realisation, reverse-oriented realisation and perfect-and-sudden realisation.

The first category is **sequential realisation**. This is the signs of realisation arising from the cultivation in sequence in the earlier Chapters 1 and 2.

The second category is **interrelated realisation**. This is the signs of realisation arising from the cultivation in Chapter 3 in accordance with suitability, Chapter 4 as means of counteraction, Chapter 5 in terms of mutual inclusion and Chapter 6 in terms of identities and differences. Why do we call these four chapters interrelated realisation? This is because there is no sequence in the cultivation methods of these four chapters, hence the signs of realisation are also unfixed, is an interrelated realisation phenomenon.

For instance, in Chapter 3 'The Six Gates to the Sublime in Accordance with Suitability', you determine the gate to cultivate based on the convenience and suitability of your current situation. Thus there is no sequence to follow. Unlike in Chapters 1 and 2, you start from counting the breath; then following the breath, attain stabilisation, from stabilisation you start contemplation, then turning and purification. You certainly have to cultivate according to this sequence; upon realisation, there is sequence in the signs of realisation. That is why it is known as sequential realisation. For interrelated realisation, there is no particular sequence to start your cultivation with. For instance 'in accordance with suitability' is to cultivate according to your convenience and suitability, that is, you cultivate everything (all six gates) once and feel which gate has the best effect; then each time you just cultivate with the selected gate.

Chapter 4 'The Six Gates to the Sublime as Means of Counteraction' also belongs to interrelated realisation. There are three types of obstacles that can happen; you cultivate the specific gate to counteract the type of obstacle that has arisen. So you do not have to start from counting the breath and follow the sequence of cultivation; you cultivate the gate that can counteract the obstacle. Since there is no particular sequence of cultivation, the signs of realisation are also unfixed. This is known as interrelated realisation.

We will explain with an example. When you are counting the breath you generate the sixteen kinds of sensation; this is the sign of realisation of counting the breath. Cultivating counting the breath will generate so-called eight kinds of sensation or sixteen kinds of sensation. After this happens, you enter first dhyana. This is the phenomenon of cultivating counting the breath; so this is the sign of realisation of counting the breath.

When you are counting the breath, if you suddenly see your internal organs very clearly; see your heart beating, lungs breathing.....the thirty-six parts of the body suddenly emerge; this phenomenon

only happens when you cultivate following the breath but it happens unexpectedly when you are counting the breath. You have attained realisation of the gate of following when you are counting the breath.

Sometimes when you are counting your breath very well, you can enter stabilisation. This is the gate of stabilisation. Although you are cultivating counting the breath, you can attain realisation of the gate of stabilisation.

Or when you are counting the breath, suddenly you see rotting, swollen dead bodies, all kinds of impure phenomena; or the image of a white skeleton suddenly appears in your mind. This shows that in the past you have cultivated 'Contemplation on the Impurities of the Human Body' and 'Contemplation on the Skeleton'. Although you are not cultivating them now, you are just counting the breath, the images will emerge; all kinds of phenomena of good roots will be generated. This is related to your past methods of cultivation. Just like all the situations that you encounter when counting the breath – rotting and swollen dead bodies or white skeleton etc; these belong to 'Contemplation on the Impurities of the Human Body' and 'Contemplation on the Skeleton'. This shows that you have attained realisation of the gate of contemplation unexpectedly when you are counting the breath.

Or when you are counting the breath, you suddenly generate the wisdom of emptiness and formlessness; as a result, you can return to the origin. This is attaining the realisation of the gate of turning when counting the breath.

Or when you are counting the breath, there are no more misleading thoughts and contamination of a discriminating mind; the pure mind emerges at that moment. This is attaining the realisation of the gate of purification when counting the breath.

The above are examples of counting the breath; cultivating counting the breath can lead to realisation of the other gates. Cultivating following the breath is also the same; it can lead to interrelated realisation.

Why is it known as interrelated realisation? It is precisely mutual realisation. When you cultivate this gate, you can also attain signs of realisation of another gate; this is the situation of interrelated realisation. If you cultivate Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6 that we have introduced earlier, the situation of interrelated realisation will be generated. Why does the situation of interrelated realisation arise? There are two reasons – one is due to the karmic cause of your previous life, phenomena generated by your good roots; the other reason is you do not follow the sequence in the cultivation, you have interrelated cultivation, so it gives rise to the situation of interrelated realisation.

The third category is **reverse-oriented realisation**. This is the signs of realisation of Chapter 7. Chapter 7 is 'The Six Gates to the Sublime in Accordance with Reversed Orientation'. Since you cultivate in accordance with reversed orientation, it gives rise to the situation of reverse-oriented realisation.

When we introduced Chapter 7, we mentioned that not only do you cultivate contemplation of emptiness (from contemplation of the unreal you enter contemplation of emptiness), you also cultivate contemplation of the unreal (from contemplation of emptiness you enter contemplation of the unreal). That is why you can understand the emptiness of all things (dharmas), and the differences of all things (dharmas). Understanding the overall characteristics of all things (dharmas) is emptiness; you can attain 'perfect knowledge'. Understanding the different characteristics of all things (dharmas), you can have knowledge of all things in their proper differentiation, that is, understand all things (dharmas) have infinite origination but their self-nature is empty. Hence you can concurrently attaining realisation of contemplation of emptiness and contemplation of the unreal. This is one of the situations of **'realisation of the understanding associated with reverse-oriented cultivation'**.

There are two situations in the reverse-oriented realisation. One situation is the understanding of the theory; this is classified as awakened to the truth through understanding. This is what we have mentioned yesterday about the view. That is, as long as all things (dharmas) arise from causes and conditions, their self-nature is empty; although their self-nature is empty, they can give rise to infinite origination when the causes and conditions are complete. This is having very clear understanding, having such a view.

But what about the skill? If you are also able to do so with your skill, then it is known as **'realisation of the practice associated with reverse-oriented cultivation'**. Just now was the understanding of the theory known as 'realisation of the understanding associated with reverse-oriented cultivation', that is, it is only awakening to the truth through understanding; but if your skill is able to completely keep up with your view, then at this time it is known as realisation of the practice associated with reverse-oriented cultivation, so-called there is already correspondence between understanding and practice, and then correspondence between the mind and mouth. Normally as a result of the proficiency in your skill, you do not have to raise a thought; all good merits will naturally be generated, and all evil will naturally be extinguished. This is the profound effect of reverse-oriented realisation. Due to the realisation of the practice associated with reverse-oriented cultivation, reverse-oriented realisation has already been attained, therefore there is the ability to reverse-orientate, generating all Mahayana merits; and all evil will naturally be extinguished. You do not have to give rise to a thought, it will naturally reverse-orientate, generating this effect.

At this point of time, through the mastery of one method of cultivation, you are able to master all methods of cultivation. We have always told you not to have a mixture your cultivation from the beginning; do not learn too much, you just need to penetrate deeply into one method and what will happen at the end? You will master all the methods. When can you achieve mastery of all methods through the mastery of one method? It is when you attain realisation of the practice associated with reverse-oriented cultivation; you can reverse-orientate, generating infinite cultivation methods. This is the time when you have one awakening to the truth; you have a hundred or a thousand awakenings to the truth. So at this point of time what phenomena are there? You will have infinite eloquence, skilful wisdom and infinite means. These are the features of realisation of the practice associated with reverse-oriented cultivation.

If you are able to achieve the ability to have a thousand awakenings through one awakening; or the mastery of all the methods through the mastery of one method, you can propagate any Buddhist teachings (Dharma), even those sutras and shastras that you have not learned before. Why is it so? This is because when you master one method you master all methods; and when you have one awakening, you have a hundred or a thousand awakenings to the truth. It can reverse-orientate and generate infinite methods; this is the feature. Therefore how do we check if we have attained realisation of the practice associated with reverse-oriented cultivation? We can tell from whether these merits have been generated.

If you only know the theory, then you have only attained realisation of the understanding associated with reverse-oriented cultivation. Like now we have already attained the understanding associated with reverse-oriented cultivation. Why? In Chapter 7 we mentioned that if you have the teachings in your mind, you have penetrated that state; then you have attained the understanding associated with reverse-oriented cultivation. With the understanding of the theory, what is left is the proficiency of the skill. Through continual perfuming till you can let things follow their own course, you do not have to give rise to a thought; then you have attained realisation of the practice associated with reverse-oriented cultivation.

The fourth category is **perfect realisation**. Perfect realisation is precisely perfect-and-sudden realisation. This is the signs of realisation attained through the cultivation in Chapter 8 'The Six Gates to the Sublime According to Contemplation of the Mind' and Chapter 9 'The Six Gates to the Sublime According to the Perfect Contemplation'. In perfect realisation, there are also two types of signs of realisation – semblance of perfect realisation and genuinely perfect realisation.

Semblance of perfect realisation signs is although you have not attained the state of genuinely perfect realisation but your state resembles the signs of genuinely perfect realisation, as you are still an ordinary person who has reached the stage of partial freedom from delusion but have not eradicated ignorance. This is **semblance of perfect realisation**. Then when would you have the signs of genuinely perfect realisation? It is till you eliminate one grade of ignorance and enter the dharma-realm of the one reality, then would you have genuinely perfect realisation signs. Therefore, whether it is semblance of perfect realisation or genuinely perfect realisation will depend on whether you are an ordinary person or have already eliminated ignorance. So the signs of semblance of perfect realisation look like, but are not, the signs of genuinely perfect realisation. This is the way to differentiate.

So what are the contents of the signs of genuinely perfect realisation of The Six Gates to the Sublime? There are two types – specific correspondences and general correspondences.

Specific correspondences is corresponding The Six Gates to the Sublime to the different stages of Bodhisattva practice. The ten stages of dwelling constitute the gate of counting, the ten stages of conduct constitute the gate of following, the ten stages of transference constitute the gate of stabilisation, the ten stages of ground constitute the gate of contemplation, equal enlightenment constitutes the gate of turning, and sublime enlightenment constitutes the gate of purification. This is making individual comparison between The Six Gates to the Sublime and the stages of Bodhisattva.

For **general correspondences**, there are three types – initial-level perfect realisation, intermediate-level perfect realisation, and ultimate-level perfect realisation.

Initial-level perfect realisation is when you have already eradicated one grade of ignorance. You have **entered the initial stage of dwelling of the perfect teachings of the Tiantai School**. At this point of time it is initial-level perfect realisation, which is the initial stage of dwelling of the perfect teachings of the Tiantai School, but in the differentiated teachings (the special teachings for Bodhisattvas) it is the first of the ten Bodhisattva stages to perfect enlightenment; one grade of ignorance has already been eradicated.

At this point of time, in a single thought, he is able to enumerate all the mental actions (actions of your thoughts) of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, hearers and solitary realisers throughout the world systems as numerous as indescribable numbers of atoms. And also enumerate infinite numbers of cultivation methods. Hence it is known as the gate of counting.

In a single thought, he is able to follow all the phenomena in the dharma-realm; therefore it is known as the gate of following. This is because he has no obstacle in the principle, no obstacle in the phenomena; no obstacle in the realm in which principle and phenomena mutually penetrate, no obstacle in the realm of interdependence of the phenomena. Therefore there is not a single phenomenon in the dharma-realm that he cannot follow; moreover he can accomplish it in a single thought.

In a single thought, he can enter all samadhi; and within the samadhi all delusive minds and afflictions will temporarily stop. Hence this is known as the gate of stabilisation. There are infinite methods of cultivation and infinite samadhi; there is not a single samadhi that he cannot enter and he can do so in a single thought. We can only focus on one conditioned phenomenon within a single thought and are not able to attend to the rest. However for a Bodhisattva who has eradicated one grade of ignorance, what can he do within a single thought? He can complete hundreds and thousands of samadhi in a single thought! From here we know how rich his single thought is. This is because it is originally complete in itself, and it is an originally existing function.

Within a single thought, he is completely enlightened to all phenomena; he is complete with all wisdom of contemplation. That is why it is known as the gate of contemplation. He is completely enlightened in every single thought because he has eradicated ignorance; whereas we are deluded in every single thought. Since he is completely enlightened in every single thought, when he encounters all things (dharmas), he has complete knowledge of emptiness, which is precisely the cultivation of contemplation of emptiness, attaining perfect knowledge or Buddha-wisdom. At the same time he cultivates contemplation of the unreal, attaining the Bodhisattva knowledge of all things in their proper discrimination. Hence when he encounters all phenomena, he is completely filled with the wisdom of contemplation; this is the wisdom of integration of non-existence (emptiness) and existence, the wisdom of the non-existence and existence without obstacle. Although the self-nature of all things (dharmas) is empty, it does not obstruct the arising of all things (dharmas), hence non-existence and existence do not mutually obstruct; this is known as the integration of non-existence and existence.

Non-existence and existence can be present at the same time because they are originally one entity. One is pointing to the emptiness of the self-nature; the other is pointing to the existence of origination which is illusory and unreal existence. Hence all things (dharmas) and phenomena are the integration of existence and non-existence.

Therefore a Bodhisattva who has eradicated ignorance does not take a one-sided view of all matter; but an ordinary person will either fall onto the side of non-existence or the side of existence. If you tell an ordinary person not to attach as it is empty, unreal; it is like a dream, bubble or shadow, he will then not attach and throw it away, falling onto the side of non-existence. Otherwise he is full of attachment, falling onto the side of existence, thinking that everything really exists.

When an ordinary person encounters all things (dharmas), he is unable to completely accept as at that moment he does not contemplate on the origination. We know that the arising of all things (dharmas) depend on whether the conditions are complete because all things (dharmas) arise from causes and conditions. They are not determined by you, me or anyone; they are determined by causes and conditions. However an ordinary person does not have the contemplation of origination so he is unable to accept them gladly. He will say, "This is not what I want so I cannot accept it!" At that moment he does not have contemplation of the unreal, does not understand the origination.

Therefore Buddha said, "Origination is very profound." Ordinary people are unable to see so deeply and far; they can only see their present self-interest and hope that anything that is in conflict with their self-interest will not appear. Every day they hope that their encounters are all favourable; none of the unfavourable ones should appear. Since they cannot accept the manifestation of karmic retribution, when will infinite karma created over aeons become ripened?

This shows that they do not have the wisdom of emptiness and are not good at contemplating origination. Hence existence (emptiness) and non-existence will forever be in conflict; there is no way to integrate. They do not have the contemplation of emptiness and the contemplation of the unreal; so they will attach to all things (dharmas) and all phenomena. This is because they are not good at contemplating origination so they are extremely attached, that is, they do not have the wisdom of contemplation of emptiness and contemplation of the unreal.

Now we are referring to the Bodhisattva who has attained the stage of initial dwelling. He has such wisdom; regardless of the manifestation of all things (dharmas) and all phenomena, there is no obstruction because he has this wisdom. Hence this is the gate of contemplation. He has the wisdom of contemplation of all things (dharmas), at that moment he understands according to reality, the emptiness of self-nature; and although they are empty, they do not obstruct origination. Hence he can accept them completely and lead his life according to circumstances, that is, he is good at contemplation of origination.

He can penetrate all things (dharmas) in a single thought; he has clear and distinct awareness. There is not a single thing that he does not understand. Moreover he is able to subjugate the deeds, words and thoughts of sentient beings with his supernatural power, restoring them to the origin. This is known as the gate of turning.

Bodhisattvas have supernatural power which they will not want people to know. They will use it without leaving any trace. Without supernatural power, it is not easy to benefit sentient beings. If they do not have the supernatural power of knowing all previous reincarnations of sentient beings, they will not know the karma that was created by them in the past lives for the kind of retribution in this life; then they will not be able to give appropriate advice to the sentient beings. If they do not have the supernatural power to know the thoughts of sentient beings, they will not know what the sentient beings are thinking about and their needs; otherwise what the Bodhisattvas think are good for the sentient beings may not correspond to their needs. Therefore great Bodhisattvas really need to have supernatural power to benefit sentient beings. For instance, if a sentient being is having difficulties in a faraway place, taking a flight there may be too late; if Bodhisattvas can reach there in a single thought, then they have the supernatural power to appear at will in any place.

Therefore, Bodhisattvas who have eradicated a grade of ignorance can use their supernatural power to subjugate the deeds, words and thoughts of sentient beings; benefiting infinite and limitless sentient beings. Moreover they can restore the origin, return to their self-nature. Yesterday we mentioned about the outflowing of all things (dharmas) from the self-nature, and all things (dharmas) will return to the self-nature again. There is not the slightest obstacle in between these two processes. Hence when encountering different sentient beings, different methods will flow out from their self-nature, and using their supernatural power to subjugate the deeds, words and thoughts of sentient beings.

However, they are not attached to all these; all things (dharmas) will return to the self-nature again. In a single thought, they can also accomplish all activities associated with Bodhisattvas but their minds are not contaminated. They will not think of – how terrific they are, what great Bodhisattvas with great bodhicitta they are, who they have benefited again, who and how they have subjugated the difficult non-Buddhists. Although they can benefit sentient beings, subjugate sentient beings with their supernatural power, their minds do not have the slightest contamination. This is the gate of purification.

They can accomplish all activities associated with Bodhisattvas but their minds are pure. They can propagate different teachings to people with different faculties, but they do not have the slightest contaminated by all things (dharmas). They will not specially praise any particular teachings as the best and all other teachings as useless or not worth cultivating. They will not say things to oppose any teachings because all teachings are completely integrated without obstacles. Regardless of propagating the teachings of Hinayana, Mahayana or Vajrayana, there is no difference to them because of their impartial minds. This shows that they do not have attachment to 'self', that is why they do not feel that they are terrific or great Bodhisattvas; neither do they have attachment to all things (dharmas). That is why when they propagate all teachings, they are completely integrated without any obstacle; there is not the slightest attachment. Therefore they can purify all Buddha-realms and cause all sentient beings to enter the three pure paths of the three vehicles. This is the gate of purification.

Hence as long as they have attained the stage of initial dwelling, they will have the ability to manifest the eight aspects of the Buddha's life to benefit sentient beings; just like what Buddha Shakyamuni did. As long as one grade of ignorance is eradicated, there is no need to completely eradicate all;

they will have this ability. They will then be reincarnated in a realm where their causes and conditions have ripened and propagate the teachings there.

This is so-called 'Realisation of The Six Gates to the Sublime which is inconceivable, indescribable and genuine, occurring at the initial level'. This is the state of Bodhisattvas at the stage of initial dwelling. This is known as initial-level perfect realisation.

What is **intermediate-level perfect realisation**? It is the rest of the **nine stages of dwelling, ten stages of conduct, ten stages of transference, ten grounds and equal enlightenment**. All these are known as 'Realisation of The Six Gates to the Sublime which is inconceivable, indescribable and genuine, occurring at the intermediate level'.

Lastly, **ultimate-level perfect realisation** is precisely Bodhisattvas at the latter stages of awakening of the mind manifesting **sublime enlightenment**. This belongs to the perfect teachings of the Tiantai School. The Tiantai School divides Buddha's teachings during his lifetime into four categories from the viewpoint of content – pitaka, interrelated, differentiated, and perfect teachings. Only the perfect teachings can result in the ultimate perfect enlightenment because all the forty-one grades of ignorance are completely eradicated. In the differentiated teachings, only twelve grades are eradicated (in the specific correspondences mentioned earlier, we are referring to the perfect teachings with forty-one grades of ignorance eradicated). So the ultimate-level perfect realisation that we are referring to now is with regard to the perfect teachings, that is, already attained ultimate, complete Buddhahood. At this point of time, they achieve exhaustive illumination of the entire dharma-realm. They attain the ultimate form of penetrative realisation through The Six Gates to the Sublime together with a universally replete utilisation of them free of any deficiency. This is precisely the 'ultimate-level perfect realisation of The Six Gates to the Sublime'. This is briefly the contents of perfect realisation.

So now we can have a summarisation. Let us look at the chart below.

	Chapter 1 The Six Gates to the Sublime in Relation to the Dhyana Absorption				
	Chapter 2 The Six Gates to the Sublime in Terms of Sequential Development				
	Chapter 3 The Six Gates to the Sublime in Accordance with Suitability	First 6 chapters are common to Hinayana and Mahayana, and afflictive and non-afflictive	First 7 chapters are restricted to phenomena	First 8 chapters belong to partial (non-perfect)	First 9 chapters are restricted to cultivation
	Chapter 4 The Six Gates to the Sublime as Means of Counteraction				
	Chapter 5 The Six Gates to the Sublime in Terms of Mutual Inclusion				
	Chapter 6 The Six Gates to the Sublime in Terms of Identities and Differences				
Not common to hearers, solitary realisers, ordinary people and non-Buddhists (Cultivation not in common)	Chapter 7 The Six Gates to the Sublime in Accordance with Reversed Orientation	Solely Bodhisattva cultivation			
	Chapter 8 The Six Gates to the Sublime According to Contemplation of the Mind	Chapter 8 is restricted to principle			
	Chapter 9 The Six Gates to the Sublime in Accordance to the Perfect Contemplation	Chapter 9 is solely for perfect			
	Chapter 10 The Six Gates to the Sublime in Accordance with the Signs of Realisation	Chapter 10 is restricted to realisation			

Let us look at the structure of the ten chapters of The Six Gates to the Sublime. 'They include not only common but also not-in-common, not only phenomena but also principle, not only partial but also perfect, not only cultivation but also realisation; every level is penetrated deeply'. From the structure we know how incredible Great Master Zhizhe is; he can completely encapsulate infinite and limitless cultivation methods into the ten chapters.

What is '**not only common but also not-in-common**'? Chapter 1 to 6 are common cultivation. They are common to Hinayana, Mahayana, afflictive and, non-afflictive. What is not-in-common? They are chapters 7, 8 and 9; cultivation meant for Bodhisattvas. Chapter 7 is an exclusive Bodhisattvas' cultivation, Chapter 8 is the cultivation for people with great faculties; Chapter 9 is the cultivation for great beings with penetrating faculties. Therefore they are cultivations that are not-in-common to the Shravaka (hearers), Pratyekabuddha (solitary realisers), ordinary people, and non-Buddhists. Hence they are known as not-in-common. This is 'not only common but also not-in-common'.

The seven chapters in front explain the phenomenal aspect; that is why it is known as phenomena (phenomenal realm). Chapters 8 and 9 purely explain the theoretical aspect; hence they are restricted to the principle (noumenal realm). This is the view that we emphasised on yesterday, which is the understanding of the theory; or the level of realisation attained. Therefore Chapter 8 is restricted to the principle, the theoretical explanation. This is '**not only phenomena but also principle**'. Hence the seven chapters in front are explanations restricted to the phenomena, and Chapter 8 is explanation restricted to the principle.

Chapters 8 and 9 emphasise more on theory; we know from our lesson yesterday that they explain the view. In order to have concrete experiential knowledge, you must be proficient in your skill. This is precisely perfect realisation, which was what we mentioned earlier, perfect-and-sudden realisation.

'**Not only partial but also perfect**', the eight chapters in front belong to partial. 'Partial' means is still not perfect; unable to completely integrate all things (dharmas). Chapter 9 is perfect contemplation, The Six Gates to the Sublime according to the Perfect Contemplation; it is solely perfect, perfect realisation. It is the state of perfect-and-sudden realisation. Therefore it is The Six Gates to the Sublime which is inconceivable, indescribable, perfect and sublime. So this is not only partial but also perfect.

'**Not only cultivation but also realisation**', the nine chapters in front are cultivation; chapter 10 is restricted to realisation. This is not only cultivation but also realisation.

'**Every level is penetrated deeply**', from not only common but also not-in-common, not only phenomena but also principle, not only partial but also perfect, not only cultivation but also realisation; the theoretical structure is so perfect and all meditation methods are included inside. We can see that when Great Master Zhizhe explained The Six Gates to the Sublime, he wanted to subsume into perfect-and-sudden realisation, as in Chapter 10. We can cultivate, have concrete experiential knowledge and understanding from the nine chapters in front, yet he wanted to explain the Six Gates to the Sublime more perfectly but bringing it up to the highest state. This is the structure of all the ten chapters of The Six Gates to the Sublime.

The complete lectures on The Six Gates to the Sublime will end here. Finally, we hope that fellow practitioners can use The Six Gates to the Sublime skilfully and flexibly; depending on whether you want to have self-liberation, or to help sentient beings gain liberation, you can be awakened to the ultimate truth and attain the fruits of your cultivation quickly. Our cultivation is certainly not for ourselves, right? Therefore at the same time we must make a resolution, we hope for the true teachings (Dharma) to prevail in the world. Although this is the degenerative times, we hope to propagate 'Tiantai Calming-and-Insight Meditation'; do not let it vanish in this era. Let us make a resolution together.

From the next lesson, we will introduce part three of 'Tiantai Calming-and-Insight Meditation', which is 'The Perfection of Meditation'. Its original name is "Explanation of the Sequence of the Perfection of Meditation". In this part Great Master Zhizhe explained in detail everything about the attainment of perfection in meditation, among which is the correct resolution that you should have in the cultivation of meditative absorption. Having the right resolution is very important; otherwise you may unknowingly be having the wrong resolution of hell, animal or hungry ghost. It also includes the preliminaries that you should have and the sequence of cultivation. It also lists out the mundane and the supramundane meditation methods; afflictive, non-afflictive and, 'afflictive as well as non-afflictive'. It categorises all the meditation methods and then explains in great details; as such it is very amazing. This is also the most supreme part of Tiantai Calming-and-Insight Meditation wherein it can encompass all methods of meditation. After having this skill and view, if we want to change to other methods of cultivation, we can easily have accomplishment quickly; because it is the foundation of all meditation methods.

Just like yesterday a fellow practitioner asked me, "When I am counting the breath can I chant Namó Amitabha?" I said, "Of course no!" You can chant Namó Amitabha anytime when you are walking, standing, sitting or sleeping, but once you start meditating, when you want to cultivate Tiantai Calming-and-Insight Meditation, you just have to count from one to ten obediently. If you chant Namó Amitabha, how are you going to count from one to ten? So you do not mix the cultivation of Buddha-recitation with Tiantai Calming-and-Insight Meditation.

Furthermore today a fellow practitioner called through his mobile phone asking, "How is the Pure Land sect cultivation method related to The Six Gates to the Sublime? Is there any relationship between the two?" I said, "There is a very closely relationship!" Then he said, "I cultivate the Pure Land sect method, how do I coordinate it with the cultivation of The Six Gates to the Sublime?" Then I explained it to him roughly over the mobile phone. As he feels that this is important; he hopes that I can repeat the explanation during the lesson; so now I will explain it again. I believe there are many fellow practitioners here who cultivate the Pure Land sect method and inevitably have this query – I cultivate the Pure Land sect method, chanting Namó Amitabha; how is it related to The Six Gates to the Sublime that I am learning now?

If you cultivate The Six Gates to the Sublime followed by Buddha-recitation, you will discover that it is different. Prior to this you may be giving rise to misleading thoughts while doing Buddha-recitation; why do you give rise to misleading thoughts? This is simply because there is no meditative absorption power. Moreover, the concept of 'self' also really exists, the name of Buddha also really

exists, and the Pure Land also really exists; none of them is illusory. So when you are reciting you are probably attached to the phenomena of 'self' and things; you are giving rise to attachment of 'self' and things.

Now when you have already cultivated The Six Gates to the Sublime, it is different, right? First counting, second following, third stabilisation; this belongs to the part of stabilisation. Contemplation, turning and purification belong to the part of contemplation. Now that you cultivate stabilisation and contemplation, when you chant Namó Amitabha, it will be different. This is because when you first counting, second following, you will then have stabilisation; so when you chant Namó Amitabha, will you have misleading thoughts? No, because you have already attained stabilisation so when you chant Namó Amitabha you will have stabilisation very quickly. With your practice of first counting, second following, third stabilisation, your skill is already very proficient, hence whether you chant Namó Amitabha now or recite mantra, you will attain stabilisation very quickly as you have the skill of stabilisation.

Contemplation, turning and purification are even more important. What do these three gates explain? Contemplate our body, breath and mind; and the phenomenon of stabilisation are not really in existence. What is 'turning'? The contemplating mind and the contemplated phenomena are not really in existence, then the contemplating and the contemplated will perish and the origin is restored. Then you enter the gate of purification, the pure self-nature will manifest. Hence will it be different when you chant Namó Amitabha now? As you chant, the gate of contemplation emerges, which is precisely there is no 'self' that is chanting, the name of Amitabha also does not really exist. This is the gate of contemplation. When you chant till the duality of the conditioning and the conditioned perished, it is the gate of turning, the origin has been restored. When you chant till the pure mind emerges, that is your 'Amitabha self-nature', 'mind-only Pure Land'. Is this not amazing?

This will help you to attain single-mindedness faster; in the past when your skill was fragmented, it was difficult to do so. With your frequent chanting, the duality of the conditioning and the conditioned will perish and your self-nature emerges, then what will happen? You will eradicate one grade of ignorance! In the past when you chant Namó Amitabha, with accomplishment you move on to the next life probably to the realm where ordinary people and holy beings live together. Now that you have eradicated one grade of ignorance, it is different. You go to the 'Pure Land's realm of rewards'; is this not amazing? If you can continue to remain in the pure self-nature; that is the 'realm of permanent tranquillity and enlightenment'; so is it not helpful? There is a very close relationship.

Therefore the same applies to whichever method of cultivation, inclusive of Mahamudra and Dzogchen. Those of you who have cultivated Mahamudra and Dzogchen will know, actually they have all been included in our lectures. Therefore we know that Tiantai Calming-and-Insight Meditation really encompasses all meditation methods. After this we have two more parts in our lecture series wherein we will analyse it in greater detail. Then you will understand that there is no mutual conflict between any methods of cultivation and Tiantai Calming-and-Insight Meditation. Moreover if you have the wisdom of The Six Gates to the Sublime According to Perfect Contemplation – 'one is all'; 'one' is inclusive of all your cultivation methods. They are exuded from your self-nature, so there is no obstacle whatsoever; you can understand clearly all things (dharma). This is the result of your accomplishment of The Six Gates to the Sublime According to Perfect

Contemplation; there is not a single thing that you are not able to integrate completely, and understand clearly without obstruction. You should be full of faith now, right? There is absolutely no mutual conflict with your current cultivation methods.

Now we will end our lesson for today. Later we can still practise the gate of turning and the gate of purification. I have already explained the cultivation of the gate of turning and the gate of purification just now.

Let us invite Venerable Jingtai and fellow practitioner Thomas to demonstrate for us.

Today we will practise the last two gates. After this we will practise counting, following, stabilisation, turning and purification till you know them fluently. Then they will be very useful, you will know how to use them flexibly; and know how to slowly attain complete integration without obstruction.

(For ***Beginning Meditation*** – please refer to Lecture 1)

Cultivation of Counting, Following and Stabilisation Practice

We start with counting the breath, it should be faster now; count from one to ten. Inhale and exhale, count one; inhale and exhale, count two..... count from one to ten in this way. Repeat this, count from one to ten again. Count till there are no more misleading thoughts; then put your thought on the breath. At this point of time you have entered following. When you put your thought on the breath, the breath gradually becomes faint and your thought also gradually becomes faint; it seems like stopping. At this point of time you have attained stabilisation.

Cultivation of Contemplation and Realisation of Contemplation Practice

We start our contemplation now, we have practised this yesterday. You contemplate your body is like the banana tree, your thoughts are like the water in a waterfall; and your breath is like the wind in the air, and they are not really in existence. Since the body, mind and breath do not exist, where is the 'self'? What is so-called 'self' is the composition of body, mind and breath; since these three do not exist, 'self' also does not exist. This is non-existence of 'self'. Body, mind and breath belong to things (dharmas); since these three do not exist, this is non-existence of all things. All the phenomena of stabilisation arise from the body, mind and breath; since these three do not really exist, all phenomena of stabilisation that you have attained also do not really exist. With this wisdom of contemplation, you will understand the true nature of all things (dharmas); which is the non-existence of 'self' and things (dharmas). This is where we have stopped our practice yesterday.

Cultivation of Turning and Realisation of Turning Practice

Next, can you have awakening to the truth through contemplating in this way? You still cannot be awakened to the truth, why? This is because you still have the contemplating wisdom. Just now,

what did we use to contemplate the non-existence of body, mind, breath and the phenomena of stabilisation? We use the wisdom to contemplate; therefore there is the contemplating wisdom and the contemplated body, mind, breath and the phenomena of stabilisation. Since there is the duality of the conditioning and the conditioned, this is not the pure mind. We know that the pure mind is free from forms and thoughts; and there is no conditioning and the conditioned in the pure mind. However now we have contemplating wisdom; what does this contemplating mind contemplate on? Contemplate on the body, mind, breath and the phenomena of stabilisation. There is still the contemplating and the contemplated; it is not our pure mind. There is still the duality of subject and object.

Now we already know that the contemplated body, mind, breath and the phenomena of stabilisation do not really exist, we contemplate further on whether the contemplating wisdom really exists? This contemplating mind exists when you want to contemplate, but when you do not want to contemplate, it does not exist. This is because you normally do not contemplate in every thought; it shows that it does not exist. If it really exists then it will not disappear; you will contemplate in every thought. Since sometimes it exists and sometimes it does not, it shows that the contemplating wisdom, the contemplating mind also does not exist. The contemplated phenomena do not exist and the contemplating mind does not exist, so the duality of subject and object will both perish. What happens when they have disappeared? You return to the origin. The process of contemplation is known as the cultivation of turning. When you the duality of subject and object truly perish, returning to the origin; this is known as realisation of turning.

Cultivation of Purification and Realisation of Purification Practice

At this point of time you will have complete enlightenment because you have already returned to the origin; you understand that the origin is your pure self-nature. This pure self-nature will emerge when you return to the origin. Since your self-nature is originally pure, all things (dharmas) that arise from the self-nature are also originally pure. Hence regardless of the five aggregates, the twelve entrances (six sense-organs and the six sense-objects) or the eighteen realms of sense; they are all pure. Everyday our six sense-organs encounter the six sense-objects, giving rise to the six consciousnesses; this is the eighteen realms of sense. They are originally pure; but when our six sense-organs encounter the six sense-objects, discrimination and attachment are generated, so they become contaminated; then we give rise to afflictions. This is the cultivation of purification.

Hence if you cultivate up to this stage, you can see and hear freely every day without contaminating your mind. What is meant by not contaminating? It means not giving rise to discrimination, attachment, misleading thoughts; just like what we explained yesterday, it is like the mirror reflecting, reflecting the phenomena of the six sense-objects, but the mirror remains unchanged. This is because our self-nature is originally unchanging, non-arising and non-ceasing. When you see the originally pure self-nature, this is cultivation of purification. Since it is originally pure, when the six sense-organs encounter the six-sense-objects, giving rise to the six consciousnesses, you know that they are originally pure; so you will not give rise to all discrimination, attachment and misleading thoughts. For how long do you need to cultivate to attain realisation of purification? When all discrimination, attachment and misleading thoughts have been extinguished; at this point

of time you have attained realisation of purification, realisation that everything is originally pure. This is the realisation of purification.

So let us try to practise now and see if we can understand our mind and see our true nature. Once you have found the origin of your mind, you have seen your true nature.

(For *Emerging from Meditation*, please refer to Chapter 1)

Let us thank Venerable Jingtai and fellow practitioner Thomas.

This afternoon a fellow practitioner asked why is it that there seems to be no effect after he meditates for half a day. I asked him, "How many times do you meditate in a day?" He does not meditate every day; occasionally he meditates for ten or twenty minutes. I told him that it is very difficult to see any effect in this way. Why? This is because in our energies and channels, it takes forty minutes for the energies to flow from the coarse channels to the fine channels. So from the time you sit down, adjusting all the postures and wait for your body and mind to calm down; then the energies will start to flow from the coarse channels to the fine channels, it needs this amount of time. It is not possible to speed up the flow of energies from the coarse channel to the fine channels. Perhaps prior to your meditation you were still having some activities, or talking to our fellow practitioners, so that energies were still coarse.

If we categorise the channels into five levels, the first level of channels is when you are engaged in strenuous exercises; the second level of channels is when you are walking slowly or talking; the third level of channels is when you are thinking, planning; the fourth level of channels is when you are in the seven emotional states; the fifth level of channels is the sustenance of your mind. We will explain in detail at a later date. We do not have enough time now, so we can only emphasise the importance of meditating for forty minutes because from tomorrow onwards everyone here will be practising at home.

Apart from our earlier emphasis, it is the best to meditate at the same time and place for better effect. If you are able to meditate for forty minutes a day and fit in suitable exercises which are not necessarily strenuous exercises, it includes walking, etc; it will help the energies and channels to flow more smoothly during your meditation. If you sit at home throughout the day without going out, the effect of your meditation also will not be good. So how long should you exercise? Normally, the duration of the exercise is equal or up to double the duration of your meditation. For instance, if you meditate for forty minutes a day; then you need to exercise for forty to eighty minutes, depending on your situation; only then will it be effective.

Therefore, from the moment we sit down, when the body and mind calm down, till your thoughts stop moving; it is only then can the energies flow from the coarse channels to the fine channels. Therefore it takes time for this to happen. So if your time allows, it is the best to meditate for forty minutes a day; then the effect will gradually be seen.

We will end our lesson here today.

Dedication: May I dedicate this merit to all sentient beings; may I and all sentient beings attain the state of enlightenment.