

# Chanting, Recitation, Words and Phrases, Shakyamuni Buddha Instruction

*the "Lotus samādhi" (Lotus meditation) which includes penance, prayer, worship of the Buddhas, and reciting the Lotus sutra*

In Buddhism, it is the last of the eight elements of the Noble Eightfold Path.

## Hinayana Buddhism

In early phases of Shakyamuni's teachings as he was then teaching to all castes of people in India including most who were illiterate and uneducated or prepared for deep contemplative conceptual realizations, Shakyamuni Buddha's teachings on meditative practice were a preparatory method of deepening the people's skills in concentration and insight. One mainstay of Theravada Buddhism of that period is the Satipatthana Sutta;

The **Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** (MN 10: *The Discourse on the Establishing of Mindfulness*) and the **Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta** (DN 22: *The Great Discourse on the Establishing of Mindfulness*) are two of the most important and widely studied discourses in the [Pāli Canon](#) of [Theravada](#) Buddhism, acting as the foundation for [mindfulness](#) meditational practice. These [suttas](#) (discourses) stress the practice of [sati](#) (mindfulness) "for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, for the extinguishing of suffering and grief, for walking on the path of truth, for the realization of [nibbāna](#)

## Right samadhi ("concentration")

Samadhi (samyak-samādhi / sammā-samādhi) is a common practice in Indian religions. Although often translated as "concentration," as in the limiting of the attention of the mind on one object, it also refers to the clearness and heightened alertness of mind which appears through prolonged practice of

dhyana.[88] The term samadhi derives from the root sam-a-dha, which means 'to collect' or 'bring together', and thus it is often translated as 'concentration' or 'unification of mind'. In the early Buddhist texts, samadhi is also associated with the term samatha (calm abiding). In the suttas, samadhi is defined as one-pointedness of mind (Cittass'ekaggatā).[89] Buddhagosa defines samadhi as "the centering of consciousness and consciousness concomitants evenly and rightly on a single object...the state in virtue of which consciousness and its concomitants remain evenly and rightly on a single object, undistracted and unscattered."

Neither the Four Noble Truths nor the Noble Eightfold Path discourse, states Johannes Bronkhorst, provide details of right samadhi.[91] The explanation is to be found in the Canonical texts of Buddhism, in several Suttas, such as the following in Saccavibhanga Sutta:

And what is right concentration?

1. Here, the monk, detached from sense-desires, detached from unwholesome states, enters and remains in the first jhana (level of concentration, Sanskrit: dhyāna), in which there is applied and sustained thinking, together with joy and pleasure born of detachment;
2. And through the subsiding of applied and sustained thinking, with the gaining of inner stillness and oneness of mind, he enters and remains in the second jhana, which is without applied and sustained thinking, and in which there are joy and pleasure born of concentration;
3. And through the fading of joy, he remains equanimous, mindful and aware, and he experiences in his body the pleasure of which the Noble Ones say: "equanimous, mindful and dwelling in pleasure", and thus he enters and remains in the third jhana;
4. And through the giving up of pleasure and pain, and through the previous disappearance of happiness and sadness, he enters and remains in the fourth jhana, which is without pleasure and pain, and in which there is pure equanimity and mindfulness.

This is called right concentration.

According to Bhikkhu Bodhi, the right concentration factor is reaching a one-pointedness of mind and unifying all mental factors, but it is not the same as "a gourmet sitting down to a meal, or a soldier on the battlefield" who also experience one-pointed concentration. The difference is that the latter have a one-pointed object in focus with complete awareness directed to that object – the meal or the target, respectively. In contrast, right concentration meditative factor in Buddhism is a state of awareness without any object or subject, and ultimately unto nothingness and emptiness.

Some scholars, such as Bronkhorst, question the historicity and chronology of these details. Bronkhorst states that this path may be similar to what Buddha taught, but the details and form of right concentration in particular, and possibly other factors, is likely of later scholasticism. Bronkhorst states this is likely because Buddha could not have assumed the third stage of jhana, which includes "Noble Ones say", since he is considered to be the first to reach the samadhi and enlightened state of nirvana, then turning the wheel of dhamma. It is likely that later Buddhist scholars incorporated this, then attributed the details and the path, particularly the insights at the time of liberation, to have been discovered by the Buddha.

## **Tien-Tai**

### **Mahayana Buddhism**

From Tien-Tai (Chi Che) we learn a comprehensive breakdown of the practice of Samadhi. The text consists of seven chapters in ten fascicles. The focus of the Mohe Zhiguan is the practice of samatha (止 zhǐ, calming or stabilizing meditation) and vipassana (觀 guān, clear seeing or insight). Zhiyi teaches two types of zhiguan - in sitting meditation and 'responding to objects in accordance with conditions' or practicing mindfully in daily life. Zhiyi uses quotes from all the Buddhist sutras available in China at the time, and tries to include all doctrines into his meditation system. Zhiyi divides his meditation system into three major sets, the 'Twenty-five skillful devices', the 'Four samādhis' (sìzhǒng sānmèi 四種三昧) and the 'Ten modes of contemplation'. The twenty five skillful devices are preparatory practices which include keeping the five precepts, being in a quiet place, adjusting food intake and posture as well as restraining desire in the five senses and restraining the five hindrances. The four samadhis are designed for beginners who wish to practice meditation intensively. They are:

1. "Constantly Seated Samādhi" (chángzuò sānmèi 常坐三昧) - 90 days of motionless sitting, leaving the seat only for reasons of natural need.
2. "Constantly Walking Samādhi" (chángxíng sānmèi 常行三昧) - 90 days of mindful walking and meditating on Amitabha.
3. "Half-Walking Half-Seated Samādhi" (bànxíng bànzuo sānmèi 半行半坐三昧) - Includes various practices such as chanting, contemplation of the emptiness of all dharmas and the "Lotus samādhi" which includes penance, prayer, worship of the Buddhas, and reciting the Lotus sutra. This recitation of the Lotus Sutra is condensed to include several forms as

- a. The entire sutra
  - b. Excerpt Hoben and Juryo chapters as critical points
  - c. The title of the Sutra (which also occurs at the beginning of each chapter's title.
4. "Neither Walking nor Sitting Samādhi" (fēixíng fēizhuò sānmèi 非行非坐三昧) - This includes "the awareness of mental factors" as they arise in the mind. One is to contemplate them as "not moving, not originated, not extinguished, not coming, not going."

After the meditator has practiced the four samadhis, he then moves on to contemplating the 'ten objects':

1. Contemplating the skandhas, ayatanas and dhātus. By itself this part takes up one fifth of the entire book.
2. Kleshas
3. Illness
4. The karmic marks
5. Demonic forces appearing in one's mind
6. Various forms of dhyāna which might be distracting
7. False views
8. Overwhelming pride
9. Śrāvaka-hood or the idea that Pratyekabuddha-hood is the ultimate goal (instead of full Buddhahood)
10. The idea that Bodhisattva-hood is the ultimate goal

The core of the exposition is taken up by the skandhas, ayatanas and dhatus, which are to be contemplated in ten "modes":

1. Contemplating objects as inconceivable.
2. Arousing compassionate thoughts (bodhicitta), vowing to save all beings
3. Skillful means for easing one's mind.
4. The thorough deconstruction of dharmas, the seeing of dharmas as being empty frees one of all attachment.
5. Knowing what penetrates and what obstructs the path.
6. Cultivating the steps to the path (the thirty seven aids to nirvana)
7. Regulating through auxiliary methods.
8. Knowing the stages of development in the path.
9. Peace through patient recognition.
10. Avoiding passionate attachment to dharmas.

The concept of the three truths is a key element in Zhiyi's exposition of the practice of contemplation. Zhiyi's "perfectly integrated threefold truth" is an extension of Nagarjuna's Two truths doctrine. This "round and inter-inclusive" truth is made up of emptiness, conventional existence, and the middle way between the first two, a simultaneous and integral affirmation of both.

Contemplating a mental moment with regard to this truth or "threefold contemplation within one moment of mental activity" (yixin sanguan) is seen as the highest form of contemplation and as the ultimate form of realization. It leads to universal salvation (du zhongsheng) because through the transformation of oneself, one can therefore transform others.

## **Namu Myo Ho Ren Ge Kyo**

The internet is full of information and translations of the Daimoku (chanting / recitation) of Nichiren sect Buddhism. The Daimoku itself was deeply considered as a supremely powerful invocation long before Nichiren systematized and qualified it into a daily practice as the summation of the entire teachings of Buddha, transcending even Shakyamuni in its profundity as the mantra of the original and eternal truth of all phenomena. The tool of meditational practice as universal to all peoples at any stage of learning, to experience directly the Buddha mind inherent in everything.

Tien-Tai (Chiyi) in the sixth century CE of China wrote extensively on the Lotus Sutra whose title translates as Namu Myo Ho Ren Ge Kyo. Each of the 28 chapters of the Lotus Sutra begin with the same words as well. It could easily be said that these specialized characters are the very subject of the entire Sutra and by saying so, inclusive of all the Sutras ever taught by Shakyamuni Buddha.

This is to understand the practice of the foundational elements of the METHOD of Buddhism and the goal of Shakyamuni's advent in the phenomenal world.

1. Siddhartha's life goal was to discover a path for all human beings of any status or non-status to achieve liberation from suffering.
2. Once he awakened to the fundamental cause of suffering being a clinging and craving to the phenomenal world, Siddhartha, now working with an awakened or Buddha mind, applied his new wisdom to a path in the mundane world (Samsara) to attain awakening as he had experienced.
3. Since Siddhartha was born into the privileged and educated caste in India, he was surrounded by a huge population of uneducated and illiterate people who he felt must be included in this path. Indeed his first teaching was completely elusive and in fact frightening to most who heard it.
4. This put Shakyamuni on a program of teaching in phases to enable his followers to slowly develop the skills and depth of understanding gently by using familiar folklore and storytelling to elevate the conceptual capabilities of all his followers.

5. His teaching method was verbal, and his followers had to learn each teaching as a recitation. Shakyamuni taught always in the first person so that each practitioner would also be stating the teaching in the first person. This device help practitioners to remember the teachings, but to instill in them ownership of the thinking process of the Tathagata (Buddha).
6. This method of teaching predates Shakyamuni and is shared the world over.
7. What these repeated recitations amount to be, an extended mantra. They work in two ways
  - a. To deeply ingrain a teaching or concept
  - b. To provide a musical or songlike series of sounds without attention to individual words so as to manifest a trancelike state of deep desire for the goal of the said concept.
8. From this is the basis for the teaching of Nichiren in that the repeated chanting of the title of the Lotus Sutra would represent the entirety of the Buddha's teaching and actually then manifest the Buddha life state through the repeated chant into a trance state to experience during that recitation the actual Buddha wisdom inherent within all life. To do this was accessible to any and all who are capable of chanting and study.
9. Study MUST accompany chanting, for it is only with study that one will come to realize the depth of conceptual knowledge contained in the chanting. And, since this may require a good deal of time for many individuals, a strong mind of conviction and determination must also accompany study and practice (chanting), forming the three pillars of the Buddhist method.

Practice quiet meditation to gain insight on the experience of shutting down the endless stream of thoughts in your mind. These are thoughts generated from your habit energy of cravings. Calming and ceasing those runaway thoughts Is like clearing a forest to reveal the huge totality of what can be seen clearly.

Then practice recitation and chanting to connect directly with that Buddha landscape, clear, open and vast.

Sifu Sylvain Chamberlain

Abbot, Threefold Lotus Kwoon

Quantum Life Buddhism