

# Reflections



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Three disciplines for progress on the Buddhist path are study, reflection and meditation.

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## Editor's Comments:

*The practice of meditation is such a powerful life changing tool for waking up and developing an acute awareness of life. When I think of the historic Buddha, I think of a man characterized by insight and compassion, living a meaningful life. He skillfully navigated through all the daily distress and delusions that we all face. How he reached the state we call enlightenment is no secret. He made it his top priority and stayed the course until he reached the ultimate in compassion and insight. Perhaps you will find the following articles helpful as we all labor to stay the course toward our own enlightenment.*

– Dan Lee–

## **DON'T JUST DO SOMETHING – SIT THERE!**

### The Benefits of Walking Meditation

by Sayadaw U Silananda

The primary posture for mindfulness meditation is sitting with legs crossed, but because the human body cannot tolerate this position for many hours without changing, we alternate periods of sitting meditation with periods of walking meditation. Since walking meditation is very important, I would like to discuss its nature, its significance, and the benefits derived from its practice.


Unfortunately, I have heard people criticize walking meditation, claiming that they cannot derive any benefits or good results from it. But it was the Buddha himself who first taught walking meditation. In the Great Discourse on the Foundations of Mindfulness - In the section called “Postures,” he said that a monk knows “I am walking” when he is walking, knows “I am standing” when he is standing, knows “I am sitting” when he is sitting, and knows “I am lying down” when he is lying down. In another section called “Clear Comprehension,” the Buddha said, “A monk applies clear comprehension in going forward and in going back.” Clear comprehension means the correct understanding of what one observes. To correctly understand what is observed, a yogi must gain concentration, and in order to gain concentration, he must apply mindfulness. The Buddha was instructing meditators to apply mindfulness, concentration, and clear comprehension while walking, while “going forward and back.”

Let us now talk specifically about the practice of walking meditation. If you are a complete beginner, the teacher may instruct you to be mindful of only one thing during walking meditation: to be mindful of the act of stepping while you make a note silently in the mind, “stepping, stepping, stepping,” or “left, right, left, right.” You may walk at a slower speed than normal during this practice.

After a few hours, or after a day or two of meditation, you may be instructed to be mindful of two occurrences: stepping, and putting down the

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## Buddha Goes to the Movies

The following is a list of quality movies with Buddhist themes for your enjoyment and personal growth:

### **"Amongst White Clouds"**

(by Edward Burger)

Amongst White Clouds is an intimate insider's look at students and masters living in scattered retreats dotting China's Zhongnan Mountain range. These peaks have reputedly been home to recluses since the time of the Yellow Emperor, some five thousand years ago. It was widely thought that the tradition was all but wiped out, but this film emphatically and beautifully shows us otherwise.

### **"THE CUP"** (Khyentse Norbu, India/Tibet, 2000, subtitled)

A comedy set in a monastery about a group of young monks in India who will do anything to watch the World Cup Soccer on television. They need to sneak around to make it happen. The

foot, while making the mental note "stepping, putting down." You will try to be mindful of two stages in the step: "stepping, putting down; stepping, putting down." Later, you may be instructed to be mindful of three stages: lifting the foot; moving or pushing the foot forward; and putting the foot down. Still later, you would be instructed to be mindful of four stages in each step: lifting the foot; moving it forward; putting it down; and touching or pressing the foot on the ground. You would be instructed to be completely mindful and to make a mental note of these four stages of the foot's movement: "lifting, moving forward, putting down, pressing the ground." At first yogis may find it difficult to slow down, but as they are instructed to pay close attention to all of the movements involved, and as they actually pay closer and closer attention, they will automatically slow down. If yogis want to pay closer attention to the movements of lifting, moving forward, putting down, and pressing the ground, they will automatically slow down. Only when they slow down can they be truly mindful and fully aware of these movements.

Although yogis pay close attention and slow down, they may not see all of the movements and stages clearly. The stages may not yet be well-defined in the mind, and they may seem to constitute only one continuous movement. As concentration grows stronger, yogis will observe more and more clearly these different stages in one step; the four stages at least will be easier to distinguish. Yogis will know distinctly that the lifting movement is not mixed with the moving forward movement, and they will know that the moving forward movement is not mixed with either the lifting movement or the putting down movement. They will understand all movements clearly and distinctly. Whatever they are mindful and aware of will be very clear in their minds.

As yogis carry on the practice, they will observe much more. When they lift their foot, they will experience the lightness of the foot. When they push the foot forward, they will notice the movement from one place to another. When they put the foot down, they will feel the heaviness of the foot, because the foot becomes heavier and heavier as it descends. When they put the foot on the ground, they will feel the touch of the heel of the foot on the ground. When yogis perceive these processes, they are perceiving the four essential elements (in Pali, dhatu). The four essential elements are: the element of earth, the element of water, the element of fire, and the element of air. By paying close attention to these four stages of walking meditation, the four elements in their true essence are perceived, not merely as concepts, but as actual processes, as ultimate realities. Thus we see that in just one step, yogis can perceive many processes. They can perceive the four elements and the nature of the four elements. Only those who practice can ever hope to see these things.

As yogis continue to practice walking meditation, they will come to realize that, with every movement, there is also the noting mind, the awareness of the movement. There is the lifting movement and also the mind that



entire thing baffles the aging Tibetan Rinpoche who runs the monastery, an exile who yearns to return to Tibet. Key roles are played by real Teachers (high-level) and monks.

**“KUNDUN”** (*Martin Scorsese, 1997*)

H.H. The Dalai Lama’s youth and young adulthood, including his exile in India. Gorgeous.

1) To what extent did the Dalai Lama’s upbringing influence him as a spiritual leader? To what extent did the circumstances of his country’s invasion by the Chinese?

2) How do you deal with violence when your culture is non-violent?

3) How does the real Dalai Lama compare with the character in the movie?

**Milarepa** (*Orgyen Tobgyai*)

Milarepa, Tibet’s greatest meditation master, lived as a yogi at the end of the eleventh century. Born into affluence, Milarepa watched as their estate was stolen by an ambitious uncle. To avenge this injustice, Milarepa mastered the arts of black magic and assassinated his uncle’s family and friends. Almost immediately Milarepa felt great remorse for his brutality and set out to undo his bad deeds

**Siddhartha** (*Shashi Kapoor*)

Based on the novel by the same name by Herman Hesse  
**“SPRING, SUMMER, FALL, WINTER...AND SPRING”** (*Ki-Duk Kim, Korea, 2003. Subtitled.*)  
In a temple in the middle of a lake, a Buddhist master patiently raises a young boy to grow up

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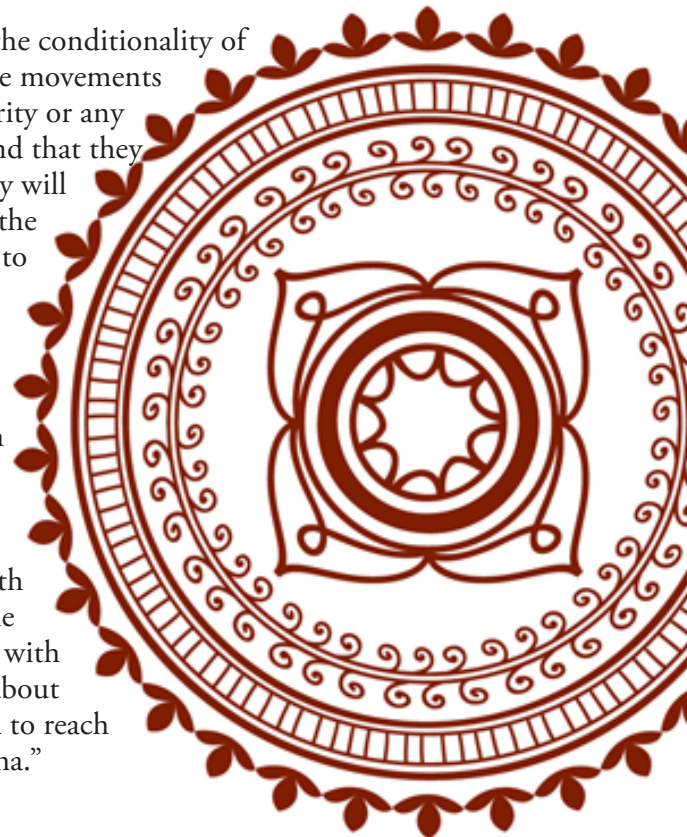
is aware of that lifting. In the next moment, there is the moving forward movement and also the mind that is aware of the movement. Moreover, yogis will realize that both the movement and the awareness arise and disappear in that moment. In the next moment, there is the putting down movement and so also the awareness of the movement, and both arise and disappear in that moment of putting the foot down on the ground. The same process occurs with the pressing of the foot: there is the pressing and the awareness of pressing. In this way, yogis understand that along with the movement of the foot, there are also the moments of awareness. The moments of awareness are called, in Pali, nama, mind, and the movement of the foot is called rupa, matter. So yogis will perceive mind and matter rising and disappearing at every moment. At one moment there is the lifting of the foot and the awareness of the lifting, and at the next moment there is the movement forward and the awareness of that movement, and so on. These can be understood as a pair, mind and matter, which arise and disappear at every moment. Thus yogis advance to the perception of the pair wise occurrence of mind and matter at every moment of observation, that is, if they pay close attention.

Another thing that yogis will discover is the role of intention in effecting each movement. They will realize that they lift their foot because they want to, move the foot forward because they want to, put it down because they want to, press the foot against the ground because they want to. That is, they realize that an intention precedes every movement. After the intention to lift, lifting occurs. They come to understand the conditionality of all of these occurrences — these movements never occur by themselves, without conditions. These movements are not created by any deity or any authority, and these movements never happen without a cause. There is a cause or condition for every movement, and that condition is the intention preceding each movement.

When yogis understand the conditionality of all movements, and that these movements are not created by any authority or any god, then they will understand that they are created by intention. They will understand that intention is the condition for the movement to occur. Thus the relationship of conditioning and conditioned, of cause and effect, is understood. On the basis of this understanding, yogis can remove doubt about nama and rupa by understanding that nama and rupa do not arise without conditions. With the clear understanding of the conditionality of things, and with the transcendence of doubt about nama and rupa, a yogi is said to reach the stage of a “lesser sotapanna.”

A sotapanna is a “stream-

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in wisdom and compassion, through experience and endless exercises. Later, as a young man, lust turns his life into a hell, and he returns to the lake temple to find spiritual enlightenment. Gorgeous and a profound meditation.

**“TRAVELLERS & MUSICIANS”**  
(*Khyentse Norbu, Bhutan, 2003, subtitled*)

Filed in beautiful rural Bhutan with local actors. A traveler on a bus route in rural Bhutan finds himself in the “dreamland” after a monk relates the fable of Tashi. Is the grass ever greener somewhere else? Is impermanence always bittersweet? (See also *The Cup* by the same director, a Tibetan lama.) One of the lessons in the film is “what we hoped for yesterday, we dread today”. To fully accept impermanence must we give up hope?

**“WHAT THE BLEEP DO WE KNOW”** (*William Arntz, Betsy Chase, 2004, animation*)

A woman’s idea of reality is shaken when she is exposed to the less than solid world of the quantum field. The distinction between science and religion becomes blurred when we see that they are both attempting to describe the same phenomena.



enterer,” a person who has reached the first stage of enlightenment. A “lesser sotapanna” is not a true stream-enterer but is said to be assured of rebirth in a happy realm of existence, such as in the realms of human beings and divas. That is, a lesser sotapanna cannot be reborn in one of the four woeful states, in one of the hells or animal realms. This state of lesser sotapanna can be reached just by practicing walking meditation, just by paying close attention to the movements involved in a step. This is the great benefit of practicing walking meditation. This stage is not easy to reach, but once yogis reach it, they can be assured that they will be reborn in a happy state, unless, of course, they fall from that stage.

When yogis comprehend mind and matter arising and disappearing at every moment, then they will come to comprehend the impermanence of the processes of lifting the foot, and they will also comprehend the impermanence of the awareness of that lifting. The occurrence of disappearing after arising is a mark or characteristic by which we understand that something is impermanent. If we want to determine whether something is impermanent or permanent, we must try to see, through the power of meditation, whether or not that thing is subject to the process of coming into being and then disappearing. If our meditation is powerful enough to enable us to see the arising and disappearing of phenomena, then we can decide that the phenomena observed are impermanent. In this way, yogis observe that there is the lifting movement and awareness of that movement, and then that sequence disappears, giving way to the pushing forward movement and the awareness of pushing forward. These movements simply arise and disappear, arise and disappear, and this process yogis can comprehend by themselves — they do not have to accept this on trust from any external authority, nor do they have to believe in the report of another person.

When yogis comprehend that mind and matter arise and disappear, they understand that mind and matter are impermanent. When they see that they are impermanent, they next understand that they are unsatisfactory because they are always oppressed by constant arising and disappearing. After comprehending impermanence and the unsatisfactory nature of things, they observe that there can be no mastery over these things; that is, yogis realize that there is no self or soul within that can order them to be permanent. Things just arise and disappear according to natural law. By comprehending this, yogis comprehend the third characteristic of conditioned phenomena, the characteristic of anatta, the characteristic that things have no self. One of the meanings of anatta is no mastery — meaning that nothing, no entity, no soul, no power, has mastery over the nature of things. Thus, by this time, yogis have comprehended the three characteristics of all conditioned phenomena: impermanence, suffering, and the non-self nature of things — in Pali, anicca, dukkha, and anatta.

Yogis can comprehend these three characteristics by observing closely the mere lifting of the foot and the awareness of the lifting of the foot. By paying close attention to the movements, they see things arising and disap-

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**Even when I do  
things for  
the sake of others  
no sense of amazement  
or conceit arises,  
it is just like feeding  
myself;  
I hope for nothing  
in return**

*Shantideva*

**When crows find  
a dying snake,  
they behave as if they  
were eagles.**

**When I see myself  
as a victim  
I am hurt by  
trifling failures.**

*Shantideva*

**Like a dream,  
whatever I enjoy  
will become  
a memory  
the past is not  
revisited.**

*Shantideva*

pearing, and consequently they see for themselves the impermanent, unsatisfactory, and non-self nature of all conditioned phenomena.

Now let us examine in more detail the movements of walking meditation. Suppose one were to take a moving picture of the lifting of the foot. Suppose further that the lifting of the foot takes one second, and let us say that the camera can take thirty-six frames per second. After taking the picture, if we were to look at the separate frames, we would realize that within what we thought was one lifting movement, there are actually thirty-six movements. The image in each frame is slightly different from the images in the other frames, though the difference will usually be so slight that we can barely notice it. But what if the camera could take one thousand frames per second? Then there would be one thousand movements in just one



lifting movement, although the movements would be almost impossible to differentiate. If the camera could take one million frames per second — which may be impossible now, but someday may happen — then there would be one million movements in what we thought to be only one movement.

Our effort in walking meditation is to see our movements as closely as the camera sees them, frame by frame. We also want to observe the awareness and intention preceding each movement. We can also appreciate the power of the Buddha's wisdom and insight, by which he actually saw all of the movements. When we use the word "see" or "observe" to refer to our own situation, we mean that we see directly and also by inference; we may not be able to see directly all of the millions of movements as did the Buddha.

Before yogis begin practicing walking meditation, they may have thought that a step is just one movement. After meditation on that movement, they observe that there are at least four movements, and if they go deeper, they will understand that even one of these four movements consists of millions of tiny movements. They see *nama* and *rupa*, mind and matter, arising and disappearing, as impermanent. By our ordinary perception, we are not able to see the impermanence of things because impermanence is hidden by the illusion of continuity. We think that we see only one continuous movement, but if we look closely we will see that the illusion of continuity can be broken. It can be broken by the direct observation of physical phenomena bit by bit, segment by segment, as they originate and disintegrate. The value of meditation lies in our ability to remove the cloak of continuity in order to discover the real nature of impermanence. Yogis can discover the nature of impermanence directly through their own effort.

After realizing that things are composed of segments, that they occur in bits, and after observing these segments one by one, yogis will realize that there is really nothing in this world to be attached to, nothing to crave for. If we see that something which we once thought beautiful has holes, that it

# Establishing a Daily Meditation

excerpt from:

## A Path with Heart

by Jack Kornfield

Find a posture on the chair or cushion in which you can easily sit erect without being rigid. Let your body be firmly planted on the earth, your hands resting easily, your heart soft, your eyes closed gently. At first feel your body and consciously soften any obvious tension. Let go of any habitual thoughts or plans. Bring your attention to feel the sensations of breathing. Take a few deep breaths to sense where you can feel the breath most easily, as coolness or tingling in the nostrils or throat, as movement of the chest, or rise and fall of the belly. Then let your breath be natural. Feel the sensations of your natural breathing very carefully, relaxing into each breath as you feel it, noticing how the soft sensations of breathing come and go with the changing breath.

After a few breaths your mind will probably wander. When you notice this, no matter how long or short a time you have been away, simply come back to the

is decaying and disintegrating, we will lose interest in it. For example, we may see a beautiful painting on a canvas. We think of the paint and canvas conceptually as a whole, solid thing. But if we were to put the painting under a powerful microscope, we would see that the picture is not solid — it has many holes and spaces. After seeing the picture as composed largely of spaces, we would lose interest in it and we would cease being attached to it. Modern physicists know this idea well. They have observed, with powerful instruments, that matter is just a vibration of particles and energy constantly changing — there is nothing substantial to it at all. By the realization of this endless impermanence, yogis understand that there is really nothing to crave for, nothing to hold on to in the entire world of phenomena.

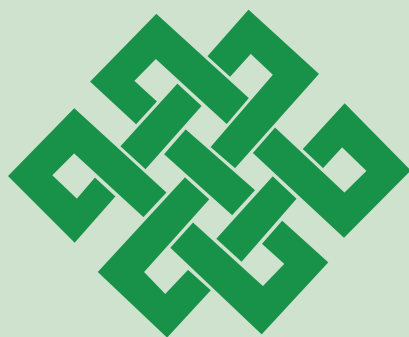
Now we can understand the reasons for practicing meditation. We practice meditation because we want to remove attachment and craving for objects. It is by comprehending the three characteristics of existence — impermanence, suffering, and the non-self nature of things — that we remove craving. We want to remove craving because we do not want to suffer. As long as there is craving and attachment, there will always be suffering. If we do not want to suffer, we must remove craving and attachment. We must comprehend that all things are just mind and matter arising and disappearing, that things are insubstantial. Once we realize this, we will be able to remove attachment to things. As long as we do not realize this, however much we read books or attend talks or talk about removing attachment, we will not be able to get rid of attachment. It is necessary to have the direct experience that all conditioned things are marked by the three characteristics.

Hence we must pay close attention when we are walking, just as we do when we are sitting or lying down. I am not trying to say that walking meditation alone can give us ultimate realization and the ability to remove attachment entirely, but it is nevertheless as valid a practice as sitting meditation or any other kind of vipassana (insight) meditation. Walking meditation is conducive to spiritual development. It is an efficient tool to help us remove mental defilements. Walking meditation can help us gain insight into the nature of things, and we should practice it as diligently as we practice sitting meditation or any other kind of meditation.



next breath. Before you return, you can mindfully acknowledge where you have gone with a soft word in the back of your mind, such as “thinking,” “wandering,” “hearing” and “itching.” After softly and silently naming to yourself where your attention has been, gently and directly return to feel the next breath. Later on in your meditation you will be able to work with the places your mind wanders to, but for initial training, one word of acknowledgement and a simple return to the breath is best.

As you sit, let the breath change by rhythms naturally, allowing it to be short, long, fast, slow, rough, or easy. Calm yourself by relaxing into the breath. When your breath becomes soft, let your attention become gentle and careful, as soft as the breath itself.



## The Four Buddhist Traditions of Tibet

*(The following article contains information on the four Buddhist Schools found in Tibet. The information has been extracted by Dan Lee from teachings by Alexander Berzin. The lectures were given in Munich, Germany in the 1990s. The original article can be found at [www.berzinarchives.com](http://www.berzinarchives.com). Definitions of terms have been added. They therefore appear in italics to indicate that these definitions were not in the original article. Please be aware that Mr. Berzin's original teachings included the pre-Buddhist Religion of Tibet – Bon – in this comparison. To void confusion Bon has been left out of this article.)*

The four Buddhist Traditions of Tibet are: Nyingma, Kagyu, Sakya, and Gelug. First we will look at their similarities and then discuss their differences.

*NOTE: The Nyingma tradition is the oldest of the four major schools of Tibetan Buddhism “Nyingma” literally means “ancient,” Around 760, the Tibetan King Trisong Detsen invited Padmasambhava and the Nalanda University abbot Shantarakshita to Tibet. From the 8th until the 11th century, the Nyingma was the only school of Buddhism in Tibet.*

*The Kagyu, Kagyupa, Kagyu tradition has a particularly strong emphasis on guru devotion. Its roots go back to the great Indian yogi Tilopa (988-1069).*

*The Sakya sect arose in the 11th century. During the 13th and 14th centuries, the holders of the Sakya tradition were also the principal political powers that ruled over Tibet. Although its political stature gradually declined over the centuries*

*The Gelug or Gelug-pa (also known as the Yellow Hat sect) was founded by Je Tsongkhapa (1357–1419). Its most influential figure is the Dalai Lama. Allying themselves with the Mongols as a powerful patron, the Gelug emerged as the pre-eminent Buddhist school in Tibet since the end of the 16th century.)*

## Similarities

### Hierarchy and Decentralization

None of the four traditions are centrally and independently organized like a church denomination would be in the West with exclusive administrative systems. Heads of each tradition, abbots etc. are mainly responsible for ordinations and passing on lineages of oral transmissions and tantric empowerments. Administration of the “denomination” is not a primary concern. There is a great deal of independence.

(A transmission is the transfer of a tantric meditative practice form teacher to student. The transmission is facilitated by an empowerment. An empowerment is a ritual in Tibetan Buddhism which initiates a student into a particular tantric deity practice. A tantric practice is not considered effective or as effective until a qualified master has transmitted the corresponding power of the practice directly to the student. There are three requirements before a student may begin a practice: 1. the empowerment 2. a reading of the text by an authorized holder of the practice 3. instruction on how to perform the practice or rituals. Tantric practices are a kind of meditation making extensive use the formation of images of various deities during meditation by means of creative imagination and mantras.)

## Common Features

There are more common features than differences among the traditions. The founding Buddhist masters gathered followings organized along a line of followers who received the transmissions of that particular master. As the teachings were transferred (transmitted) from one student to the next it formed a “lineage” But it is not uncommon for a student's name to appear in more than one “lineage”.

## Lay and Monastic Traditions

All the Tibetan Buddhist traditions have lay and monastic adherents. All followers fall into one or the other category. In addition to your average lay follower they all have married yogis or yoginis. These yogis and yoginis engage in intensive meditation practices and training. (Yogis and yoginis are male and female students or practitioners of a specific system of meditation and ritual observance) All the traditions have a monastic tradition that included monks and nuns, both fully ordained and novice. Even the architecture and décor of the monasteries are similar. They all share the same monastic vows – the Mulasarvastivada. They shave their heads and wear the same monastic robes.

### Sutra Study

All the traditions follow a three fold discipline. They study the sacred scriptures (Sutras), practice tantra and meditate. They memorize huge numbers of scholarly and ritual texts. They study by means of robust heated debate. The sutras studied are virtually the same in all the traditions though there is a slight variation. Yet not only will each tradition differ slightly in their interpretation of a text, but there can be some variation from monastery to monastery.

They all study the same Indian Buddhist philosophies which are:

**Vaibhashika** (*Vaibhashika holds “that no mental concept can be formed except through direct contact between the mind, via the senses, such as sight, touch, taste, etc., and external objects”*)

**Sautrantika** (*Sautrāntika is the view that there may be many buddhas simultaneously, otherwise known as the doctrine of contemporaneous buddhas.*)

**Chittamatra** (*The teachings about the role of consciousness or mind in creating our experience of reality*)

**Madhyamaka** (*The teaching traditionally developed by the teacher Nagarjuna emphasizing the identity of Samara and Nirvana as well as the emptiness of our ordinary perception of reality.*)

They all study the writings of the same classic Indian masters. A few of which are:

**Maitreya** (*Maitreya is a bodhisattva who in the Buddhist tradition is to appear on Earth, achieve complete enlightenment, and teach the pure dharma. According to scriptures, Maitreya will be a successor of the historic Śākyamuni Buddha. The prophecy of the arrival of Maitreya references a time when the Dharma will seem to be forgotten.*)

**Asanga** (*Asanga lived in the fourth century a major exponent of the Yogācāra tradition in India, which holds that the reality perceived by humans does not exist but only appears to do so by virtue of the capacity of the mind to perceive patterns of continuity and regularity. This was transmitted to Tibet by Śāntarakīta and later by Atīśa.*)

**Nagarjuna** (*Nāgārjuna lived between 150 and 250 CE. Along with his disciple Āryadeva, he is credited with founding the Mādhyamaka school of Buddhism, which holds that all phenomena are empty of “substance” having no intrinsic, independent reality apart from the causes and conditions from which they arose.*)

**Chandrakīrti** (*Chandrakīrti (600–c. 650), was an Indian scholar. Chandrakīrti’s works include the Madhyamakāvātāra which is used as the main source book by most of the Tibetan monastic colleges in their studies of ‘emptiness’*)

**Shantideva** (*Shantideva was an 8th-century Indian Buddhist scholar at Nalanda University. He was born as a Brahmin, the son of the King Kalyanavarman and he went by the name Shantivarman*)

Of course their commentaries all have slightly different interpretations.

**Lama Gursam  
Coming to BSBC!**



**Save the Date  
Friday January 27,  
2012  
General Talk 7-8:30 pm  
Held at the  
Yardley Friends  
Meetinghouse**



An entire lifetime of memories occupy no space at all.  
Decades pass as a breath exhaled.  
The warmth of June still real as the calendar page turns to August.  
Past sits sweetly flavoring present sight of others so grown.  
Theirs the children of now chasing the future.  
A perception spreads as a wave; good as it was, as is the now and forthcoming to be.  
Perfection present unwrap the gift.  
Common to the three worlds past, present and future is an ultimate timeless truth.  
It surpasses space and time can not be held yet envelopes all.  
Precious is all life.

By Jeff MacNair

*Jeff thanks you for this very inspiring submission!*



## Meditation, Tantra Studies and Rituals

All traditions have intensive mediation practices including retreats for three years three months and three days. These long retreats are preceded by preliminary practices with thousands of prostrations mantra recitations and so on. Of course each tradition has some variation in the schedule and structure of these retreats and rituals. But their rituals are incredibly similar from tradition to tradition. Sitting posture and ritual items are the same. Ritual items include: Water bowls, Butter lamps, Incense, Vajras (the word means thunderbolt. It is a ritual instrument symbolizing skillfull means and wisdom), Flags, Bells, Hand-drums, Horns, Cymbals, Large Drums. They all use chants and offer consecrated food and tormas (sculptures made of barley flour and butter) They all house and venerate relics of famous Buddhist masters.

All traditions include training in study of the Sutras (sacred texts presenting the teachings of the historic Buddha in his own words) , debate ritual and meditation. The emphasis varies from tradition to tradition and from monastery to monastery and even within the same monastery. All monks and nuns share responsibility for the menial tasks within the monastery or nunnery – i.e. cleaning, arranging offerings, gathering fuel and water, and cooking. The only ones exempt from these duties are high lamas, the elderly and the sick.

### System of Reincarnate Lamas known as Tulku

The practice of identifying and recognizing reincarnated Lamas (Tulku) is common to all Tibetan Buddhist traditions. It is believed that when these Lamas or greatly advanced meditators die they direct their own rebirths. Their disciples read the signs and use special means to locate the Lama as a reborn child. The recognized reincarnation is then trained by the best Buddhist teachers. In all the various traditions the reincarnate is treated with great respect.

Summer night—  
even the stars  
are whispering to each other.

*by Kobayashi Issa*

Seasons change  
But the tree  
Is still a tree

*Soji*

## Mixed Lineages

A particular teaching of a particular practice or aspect of philosophy will be past down from teacher to student, who then teaches it to another and on and on indefinitely. These lineages of teaching freely cross over from one tradition to another.

## Differences

### Usage of Technical Terms

Among the various traditions the same technical term may have different definitions or meanings. This can create a serious problem when trying to understand Tibetan Buddhism. Sometimes different authors within the same tradition will define a term differently. This can become confusing.

The Gelupa tradition teaches that “mind” means awareness of objects and that it is impermanent. But the Kagyupas and Nyingmapas teach that mind is permanent. They seem to contradict one another. But actually they do not. Kagyupas and Nyingmapas use permanent to mean mind (the awareness of objects) its nature remains unaffected by anything and thus never changes.

### Type of Path to Enlightenment Emphasized

The Gelupas and the Sakyapas teach that followers progress gradually along the path to enlightenment. Kagyupas and Nyingmapas frequently speak of everything happening all at once.

### Approach to Meditation on Voidness

Voidness or Emptiness is a characteristic of phenomena. Nothing possesses an essential, enduring identity. The realization of the emptiness of phenomena is an aspect of the cultivation of insight that leads to wisdom and inner peace.

All Tibetan schools teach Madhyamaka (voidness) but understand the concept slightly differently. This difference shows itself most distinctly in how they practice the highest tantras.

### Whether Voidness Can be Indicated in Words

Gelupas say that the concept of that the self and all things can be indicated in voids. The other traditions say it is beyond words and concepts.

### Use of Chittamatra Terminology

*Cittamatra is the teaching that there is no reality outside the mind*

All traditions but the Gelupas use a lot of Chittamatra terminology.

### Summary

So there is remarkable similarity and consistency among the four schools of Tibetan Buddhism. We find more than 80% similarity and the differences though profound are subtle and no deterrent to co-operation. The differences are mostly due to how they define technical terms, and approach meditation.

The general training parishioners receive in each tradition is the same. Some styles are different. For example most Kagyupas and Nyingmapas and Sakyapas complete all preliminaries for tantra practice (the 100,000 prostrations etc.) all at once. Gelupas complete them one at a time as they fit into

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their schedules and usually after they have completed some basic studies. Also the same all at once or one at a time method differs during the study and practices making up the three year retreat schedule.

### **Conclusion**

These traditions share the same ultimate aim and are equally as effective in helping practitioners reach the goals on enlightenment and being of benefit to others. They fit together harmoniously able to teach people of different inclinations and capacities.

Finally “ It is also very important to see that for anything that we do – be it in the spiritual or the material sphere – there are perhaps ten, twenty , or thirty different ways of doing the exact same thing . This helps us avoid attachment to the way in which we are doing something . We are able to see the essence more clearly, rather than becoming caught up in “ this is the correct way of doing it, because it is my correct way of doing it!



## Contact Us!



is seeking submissions. Everyone is invited to contribute. Submission topics can include but are not limited to the following:

**Letters to the Editor and suggestions**

**Poetry (any style)**

**Notes about your spiritual journey and reflections**

**Buddhist thoughts on a contemporary movie or novel or other books**

**Short suggestions about or Buddhist Literature (books, magazines, etc.)**

**Information on Buddhist resources and area events**

**Deadlines for submission for Autumn 2011 issue is October 15, 2011**

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### *Buddhist Sangha of Bucks County*

Meeting every Monday evening  
at the Friends Meeting House  
65 North Main St. Yardley, PA 19067  
Service and Meditation 7pm - 8pm  
Group Discussion and Tea 8pm - 9pm  
All are welcome to attend.  
Visit [www.buddhistsangha.com](http://www.buddhistsangha.com)



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