

# **The “Round” Doctrine of Tian Tai and Its Significance for Modern Time**

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## Chinese Buddhism and Its Core Features

The development of Buddhist thoughts in India may be chronologically described as thus: The different interpretations of the Buddha's teachings gave rise to the Buddhist schools. Followers of these early Buddhist schools, except the Sautratikas, can be called Ābhidharmikas because all of them believe in the theory of dharmas, and have their own Abhidharma literatures. Most scholars agree that the Mahāyāna schools arose in the process of reacting to and opposing the interpretation of dharmas by the Abhidharma schools.

The earliest form of Chinese Buddhism was introduced to China via central Asia, and the doctrines were mainly those of Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma and early Mahāyāna literatures. In the development of Buddhist thoughts in China, first the meditation texts were translated into Chinese adopting the prevalent Taoist and Confucian terms. Early Mahāyāna Buddhist literature such as the *Prajñāpāramitā* and the works of Nāgārjuna were introduced into China at the early stage. With translations by Kumārajīva, the Chinese started to understand the Indian thoughts more accurately. There was no more reading of Taoist and Confucian notions into the Buddhist texts. The early Chinese schools, such as Pure Land, San Lun (Madhyamaka), Tian Tai (based on Madhyamaka, Prajñā and Lotus Sutra respectively), and Hua Yan (Avamśaka) schools were developed by the Chinese. Subsequently, in the Tang Dynasty, with the new translations made by Xuanzang, the Chinese Fa Xiang (Yogācāra) School was formed. Later, the Zhen Yan (Tantra) school became popular among the Chinese Tang court. Following the arising of the Chan School and neo-Confucianism, academic activities declined in the tradition of Chinese Buddhism. It may be said that the history of Buddhism in China is a history of translation of the Indian Buddhist texts. These texts came to exert much influence on the development of the Chinese Buddhist tradition.

### *The Feature of Chinese Buddhism*

When discussing on Chinese mind, Inada K. Kenneth agrees with Fung Yu-lan's notion that the Chinese mind is one endowed with "a continental spirit" on which the unique Chinese culture or civilization was created (K. Inada, 1997, p.7). The term "continental" depicts a huge land mass, a vastness, an illimitable nature, and the term "spirit" is modified with the same nature, a spirit that is huge, large, extensive, holistic, totalistic and a grand unity. Kenneth concludes that the continental spirit of Chinese mind can be expressed in terms of boldness, swiftness, magnanimity and holistic mutual involvement. Under this spirit, the main feature of Chinese Buddhism is inclusive.

Since ancient times Chinese have tended to think holistically or inclusively. Confucians and Daoists tended to observe things as they are and, with increasing ontological penetration, to see differences. The wonder of the universe, for Confucianism and Daoism, is a harmony among diversities and even opposites. According to the Yin-Yang School, the Yijing (Book of changes), and the Daodejing (Way and virtual classic), the universe is a united whole. It is composed of pairs of opposites: *yin* and *yang*, positive and negative, male and female. The interaction of *yin* and *yang* produces all things and all kinds of movement. (Hsueh-li, 2006)

Jan Yunhua says, "The core of Chinese Buddhism surpass the boundary of religions, it represents the profundity of the Chinese Buddhism." (Yunhua, 2000, p.419) The central philosophy of Chinese Buddhism was established as a consequence of the Chinese criticisms of Mahāyāna doctrines originated in India, and Tian Tai is the first Chinese school. Following the holistic and inclusive thinking, Tian Tai masters adopted the *yuanjiao* (round teaching) and developed a philosophy of all in one and one in all. The core feature of Tian Tai is round, inclusive and surpassing the boundary of religions. In modern time, our society is full of conflicts; it is necessary and significant to re-examine

Tian Tai and its functions.

## **Tian Tai School on the Unity of Diversity**

After the introduction of Buddhism to China, the first Chinese school to systematically develop its thoughts on theory and practice is Tian Tai. This is the first time that the Chinese expressed their understanding of Indian Buddhism with confidence. The real founder of the school was Zhiyi (538-597), most of whose life was spent in practicing meditation in the Mount Tian Tai in modern Zhejiang, from which the school gets its name.

Zhiyi constructed a vast syncretistic system of Mahāyāna thought and practice that aimed at giving a comprehensive overview of all of Buddhism and that found a place for all known modes of practice and doctrine. Confronted with the massive influx of Mahāyāna texts translated into Chinese, many of which directly contradicted one another in matters of both doctrine and practice, Zhiyi was faced with the challenge of accommodating the claim that all these texts represented the authoritative teaching of the Buddha. The solution he arrived at can be described as an insight into the interconnection between two central Mahāyāna doctrines: the concept of *upāya* (expedient means) and the concept of *śūnyatā* (emptiness). From the synthesis of these ideas, Zhiyi developed a distinctive understanding of the bud-dhanature, rooted especially in the universalist exposition given in the Nirvāṇa Sūtra. (Brook, 2004)

What is unique for Tian Tai is both its doctrine and praxis stresses on the unity of diversity. This also reflects the fact that the founder Zhiyi lived in the divided China during the fifth century. Zhiyi himself experienced from divided China to united China (from Northern dynasty to Sui dynasty). Zhiyi's biography shows that he studied and gave Dharma talk at an early stage and went to Tian Tai mountain, meditating there for more than ten years. At his later stage, he gave lectures on Round and Abrupt meditation.

Its main theory contains three sections:

1. Classification of teachings (*pan jiao* 判教),
2. Round and inter-inclusive threefold truths (*san di yuan rong* 三諦圓融),
3. *Śamatha* (Pali, *samatha*) and *vipāśyana* (Pali, *vipassana*) (*zhi guan* 止观)

### ***The Classification of Teachings (pan jiao) to unite all Buddhist Schools***

The translation of Buddhist texts from Sanskrit into Chinese produced a large number of volumes. It was easy for the beginners to be confused, as some sutras contradict others and the Chinese has the spirit of round and integration. They tried to unite them together by analyzing the differences and synthesizing them together. Under this circumstance, Zhiyi developed this theory of "Classification" in order to unite all Buddhists in the divided China at that time in the Southern and Northern dynasty (420 — 589). Zhiyi believed that the Buddha taught for forty-nine years in different places for different people and he taught differently according to the audience's capacities. To categorize the Buddha's doctrines will help people understand the teaching and enter the path without confusion. Facing a large volume of translated texts from India during the fifth century, the Chinese presumed all the teachings presented in different sūtras were taught by the Buddha, while they found that the contents of some sūtras contradicted other sūtras. The best way to solve this problem was to categorize his teachings according to the nature and contents, thus Tian Tai formed the "Five Periods and Eight Doctrines."

### **Five Periods**

The Buddha's teaching can be chronically divided as five periods. Here "chronically" does not mean that the sūtras composed time rather it refers to the time the Buddha taught to his followers in

Mahāyāna tradition.

### 1. The Avatamsaka Period

21 days after the Buddha's enlightenment, he taught the Avatamsaka Sūtra to bodhisattvas and Brahmans.

### 2. The Mṛgadāya Period

The Buddha taught the four noble truths recorded in Āgamas.

### 3. The Vaipulya Period

The Buddha taught bodhisattva and compassion in the early Mahāyāna sūtras.

### 4. The Prajñāpāramitā Period

There are no permanent dharmas. Things are by designation only, even the *nirvāna* and the Buddha are concepts only. We do not need to become attached to them. This kind of teaching is taught in Prajñāpāramitā sūtras.

### 5. The Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Mahāparinirvāna Period

Teachings are about expedient means (*upāya*) in the Lotus Sūtra and the Buddha nature teaching in the Mahāyāna-mahāparinirvāna-sūtra.

In the Five Periods, the perfect one is the Lotus Sūtra, because it teaches the round doctrine. Round is a special concept for the Chinese. Buddhism, according to the *Lotus* and Tian Tai, is a system of expedient means (*upaya*) leading one with partial truths to ever greater, more comprehensive truths. Tian Tai teachings are 'Round Teachings', meaning that they encircle or encompass everything and, lacking sharp edges, are therefore Perfect. Other forms of Buddhism are not 'wrong', but are only partial visions of the One Vehicle that Tian Tai most perfectly and completely embodies.

The "Five Periods" is based on the five major sūtras and the time the Buddha taught; it explains the background and significance of each sūtra. It explains the relationship and importance of each sūtra based on the whole life of the Buddha's teaching. Under the Five Periods, the whole picture of the Buddha's teaching is made clearer. It is the unique understanding by Zhiyi.

## Eight Doctrines:

### I. The Four Methods of Conversion

The Buddha uses different methods to instruct people.

1. The Sudden Teaching
2. The Gradual Teaching
3. The Secret Indeterminate Teaching
4. The Express Indeterminate Teaching

### The Four Dharmas of Conversion

The Buddha teaches different contents according to the capacities of the audience.

1. The Storehouse Teaching
2. The Pervasive Teaching
3. The Separate Teaching
4. The Round Teaching

When we look at any teaching in the sūtras, Zhiyi told us, we should look at the time, locus and audiences when the Buddha taught, and check with "the Five Periods" and "the Four Methods of teaching" to verify the Dharma. Zhiyi further wants us to verify the Dharma by experiencing and

practicing. (Rosan, 2002.)

Any level of practice is acceptable in Tian Tai. In Tian Tai, there is no best level; any method is just skillful and expedient means. Tian Tai may favor the Lotus Sūtra and Mahāpravīrvaṇa Sūtra, but it does not mean that other sūtras are useless. They are valid when one practices it. Tian Tai call themselves as Round teaching; by round here means anything is acceptable and there is no fixed position in the circle. Anyone follows the Buddha's teaching, whether one is beginner or advanced, can be included in the Round. This is why Tian Tai is called Round and Inclusive Teaching. Round, inclusive are significant for modern society. We need to accept others; we cannot force others to give up their traditions. Any tradition and culture should be truly accepted. Actually, in early Buddhism, the Buddha does not deny other religions in India. What the Buddha denies is the extreme belief that there is permanent unchanging self or Brahma. In Tian Tai, any level of practice is acceptable under the expedient means; anyone can receive benefits from the Buddha's teaching.

“Five Periods”, “Four Methods” and “Four Dharmas” are three guidelines of classification. Each of the three has significance. The relationship between different sūtras and different schools are explained. The contents of the Buddha's teaching are vividly presented. The classification also stresses on Tian Tai's unique understanding and appreciation of the Lotus Sūtra.

### ***The Three Truths: Round and Inter-inclusive (三諦圓融)***

The three truths doctrine in Tian Tai follows the doctrine of Dependent Co-arising (*pratītyasamutpāda*, Pali: *paṭicca samuppanna*) explained in the Madhyamakakārikā by Nāgārjuna, which holds that every thing arises from causes and conditions, thus things are avoid (*śūnya*) of inherent natures (*svabhāva*).

What is the nature of reality and existence? What is the relationship between the perfect and ordinary? Nāgārjuna's answer is found in the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā in chapter twenty-four, verses eight and nine:

8. All Buddhas depend on two truths  
In order to preach the Dharma to sentient beings.  
The first is the worldly mundane truth.  
The second is the truth of supreme meaning.

9. If one is not able to know  
The distinction between the two truths,  
One cannot know the true meaning  
Of the profound Buddha Dharma.

Conventional truth (*saṃvṛtisatya*), also called “worldly truth” (*lokasaṃvṛtisatya*), is the ordinary, common acceptance of the everyday phenomenal world as experienced and interpreted through our senses. What is the relationship between Conventional and Supreme truth (*paramārthasatya*)? The two truths are actually one twofold truth that they are two ways of viewing one reality. Then what is the relationship between the two views?

Zhiyi developed a solution utilizing a threefold structure. Zhiyi's threefold truth concept is an extension of the traditional Mādhyamika theory of the two truths. The direct literary inspiration for the formulation of the threefold truth concept is found in verse eighteen of the same chapter.

*yaḥ pratītyasamutpādaḥ*      Dependent co-arising  
*śūnyatām tāṃ pracakṣmahe*      We declare to be *śūnyatā*

*sā prajñaptir upādāya*      That is dependent concept  
*pratipat saiva madhyamā*      That is the Middle Path.

*Pratīyasamutpāda* means all things arisen due to a multitude of causes and conditions. *Śūnyatā* means the lack of intrinsic nature (*svabhāva*). *Svabhāva* defined as something absolute, uncreated and not dependent on anything else, and it never changes. *Śūnyatā* is an attack of such concepts.

*Prajñāptirupādāya* (dependent concept) refers to our phenomenal world which has temporary reality. This is called conventional existence. *Madhyamā* means the teaching of *śūnyatā* denies the view of externalism; the teaching of conventional designation denies the view of nihilism.

Co-arising, emptiness, conventional existence, and the Middle are not four realities, four separate existences, or four independent doctrines, but four ways to express the same one reality, the Buddha-dharma, which is *saṃsāra* to us common ignorant mortals and *nirvāṇa* to a Buddha, Hence the common Mahāyāna proposition that “there is no difference between *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*.” (Paul L., 1989, 5-6)

For Zhiyi, the threefold truth is an integrated unity with three aspects. First, emptiness, often identified with the Supreme truth. Second conventional existence of phenomenal world as co-arising, often identified with the worldly truth. Third, the Middle, a simultaneous affirmation of both emptiness and conventional existence as aspects of a single integrated reality. Thus, these three components are not separate from each other but integral parts of a unified reality. They are simultaneous aspects of one reality.

This Middle Path, however, must not be grasped as an eternal; it is, rather, manifested in and through and is identical with temporal phenomenal reality, which is again in turn empty of an unchanging substance. The circle is complete in itself, what Zhiyi calls “a round and inter-inclusive threefold truth.” Zhiyi summarized in his *Fa hua xuan yi*:

The “round threefold truth” means that it is not only the Middle Path which completely includes the Buddha-Dharma, but also the real and the mundane [truths]. This threefold truth is round and inter-inclusive; one-in-three and three-in-one.<sup>1</sup>

In other words the real truth, the mundane truth, and the Middle Path are three ways of expressing the threefold aspects of a single integrated reality. This concept of the threefold truth plays a central role in Zhiyi’s Tian Tai philosophy and provides the structure for his interpretation of the Buddha-dharma.

Threefold Truth in Tian Tai is not real three but one rounded and integrative doctrine. One is all, all is one. In reality, it is one truth, but conventionally we speak three. Zhiyi quoted from *Prajñāpāramitā sūtra* and *Lotus Sūtra* to support his idea.<sup>2</sup>

Swanson argues that the key to Tian Tai Buddhism, is Zhiyi’s concept of the “Threefold Truth”: Emptiness, Conventional Existence, and the Middle; not the “Five Teachings and Eight Periods.” (Paul L., 1989, ix). The Threefold Truth provided the principle for bringing together the disparate elements of Buddhism into a cohesive system of teaching and practice.

The Round teaching in Tian Tai is based on the three truths. Each truth mutually includes each other. With the inter-inclusive three truths, one can understand the Round teaching better. These three truths also offer a theory for our daily practice. One needs to observe each moment of our mind with three truths, one will accept others and be calm and serene. In fact, the threefold truth is the fundamental

<sup>1</sup> T33, No. 1716, 705a5-7.

<sup>2</sup> T46 p.28b12.

theory for Tian Tai's meditation practice. The notion of threefold truth is Zhiyi's understanding the Buddha's teaching through his practice.

### ***One mind contains Three Thousands Worlds***

Zhiyi divided the realms of existence into ten inter-penetrating realms: buddhas, bodhisattvas, pratyeka-buddhas, śravakas, heavenly beings, fighting spirits (*asura*), human beings, beasts, hungry spirits (*preta*), depraved hellish beings (hell). These are not ten separate distinct worlds, but rather experiences or states of existence in one reality. It refers to these ten "destinies" as states of experience.<sup>3</sup> For example, when one performs an altruistic deed, one experiences the realm of the bodhisattva. When one has an insight into the true nature of reality, one experiences the realm of the Buddha. These realms are "inter-penetrating" or "mutually inclusive". Each sentient being experiences these realms in accordance with its actions.

Each realm is a process of causes and effects that inherently entails all the other realms. Each of these realms can at each moment be characterized by the ten "suchnesses" from the Lotus Sūtra. All of these may be understood either in terms of the sentient beings experiencing these realms, the environment conditioning these beings, or these beings considered in terms of their components. Ten realms, each including all the others makes one hundred; multiplied by the ten suchnesses, one gets one thousand, and multiplied by the three aspects, three thousand.

In the final analysis, all of reality is an integrated, interdependent unity. Everything contains everything else, and the whole contains all things. It is described in terms of "the inter-inclusiveness of the ten realms" (十界互具). These three thousand worlds are contained in one thought. (T.46, 54a5-9)

The actual number, whether a thousand or a hundred or whatever, is irrelevant; what matters is the inclusion and interpenetration of all of things in one reality.

### **Round and Abrupt Contemplation in Tian Tai**

The practice of this school consists of meditation based on the methods of *Zhi Guan* (*śamathā-vipaśyanā*). *Zhi* (*śamatha*): 'stopping' and 'calm abiding.' 'It refers to meditative practices aimed at the stilling of thought and development of concentration. *Guan* (*vipaśyanā*): "through understanding of the threefold truth, enlightenment may be attained in a single spontaneous thought." Three Thousand Words in One Thought" are the famous Tian-Tai theories about how one thought embodies the universality of all things. It is translated with such terms as 'analysis' or 'clear observation' and refers to the application of one's concentration power to dependent co-arising. Zhiyi's *Zhi Guan* systems:

- Gradual -- Threefold contemplation
- Round and Abrupt – Advanced Contemplation
- Indeterminate

The gradual approach is how to observe the three truths in our daily life. Each moment of mind can be checked by the three: empty, conventional, the middle. Gradual methods are taught in the *Smaller-Śamatha-Vipaśyana* (T46, No.1915) and the Gradual *śamatha-Vipaśyana* (Explanation of the Gradual Dharma Door of the *Dhyāna Pāramitā* T46, No.1916).

Indeterminate is for higher level practice. These instructions are recorded in the Zhiyi's book: *The Six Wondrous Gates of Liberation* (T46, No.1917: *Liu-Miao-Fa-Men*).

Here, we only discuss the Round and Abrupt meditation, which is recorded in Zhiyi's book: *The Great*

<sup>3</sup> T33, no. 1716, 696a.

Calming and Contemplation (*Mahā-samatha-vipāśyana*, *Mohe-zhiguan* T46, No. 1911).

### **Round and Abrupt Contemplation (圓頓止觀 *yuan dun zhi guan*)**

What is Round and Abrupt contemplation? The definition given by Zhiyi:

Round and Abrupt means, when one knows the reality, one faces all objects as middle, nothing is not real. When one thinks of Dharma-realm, one moment of dharma-realm, one color, one smell are all middle path. One's realm, Buddha realm and sentient beings' realm are also the same. The five aggregates (*khandha*) are the same, there is no suffering (*dukkha*) to be abandoned. Ignorance, *samsāra* are the same as the *bodhi*; there is no cause of suffering to be removed. Extreme views are also middle; there is no path to practice. *Samsāra* is *nirvāṇa*; there is no secession, nothing attainable. There is no suffering, no cause; thus there is no mundane world (*loka*). There is no path, no cessation; thus there is no supra-mundane (*lokottara*). Pure reality, there are no other things beyond reality. The nature of dharmas (*dharmatā*) is serene thus called *zhi* (*śamatha*). Serenity and constant bright are called *guan* (*vipāśyanā*). There may be beginner, but not different from the second. This is called the Round and Abrupt *zhi guan*.<sup>4</sup>

Zhiyi further explains: In the Round and Abrupt *śamatha* and *vipāśyanā*, if one practices one truth, then one also practices the three (emptiness, temporal existence, the middle). Just like the eyes, light and objects, those three things are always together when we perceive an object. One contains three, three contains one. (T46. No.1911, 25b)

A practitioner should apply anyone of the three truths into practice. When one is applied, the others are automatically applied. In that sense, the moment one applies the Buddha Dharma, the moment one is practicing the Round and Abrupt contemplation. At that moment, a beginner practitioner has the same experience with the advanced one. What is the most important message here is that one needs to apply the Dharma to present moment mind.

Zhiyi also explains his meditation system is Inclusive Dharma (攝法). *Śamatha* and *vipāśyanā* includes all Buddha's teaching. *Śamatha* can calm all things, *vipāśyanā* can lighten the truth (理 principles). Thus it includes all Buddha Dharmas.<sup>5</sup>

It is called Round and Abrupt contemplation in a sense that it includes all the practice methods found in Buddhism. For those with sharp faculty of understanding, they can directly move to the last stage. It is "Abrupt" in a sense that anyone can locate their practice at any moment. The most important is one needs to apply any method to practice. For the beginners, conventionally one needs to follow these steps.

#### **Step 1: Twenty-five Devices<sup>6</sup>**

##### *i. Fulfill the Five Conditions*

- Equip with food and clothing
- Observe precepts
- Stay alone at a quiet place
- Avoid learning, disputes, relation etc.
- Have spiritual friends (*kalyāna-mitra*)

##### *ii. Restrain the Five Desires*

<sup>4</sup> T46, no.1911, 1c-2a.

<sup>5</sup> T46, no.1911, 29c.

<sup>6</sup> T46, 35c.

Against any temptation from sense of Sight, Hearing, Smell, Taste, Touch.

*iii. Throw Off the Five Covers*

Resist the distracting influence of Desire, Hatred, Drowsiness, Remorse, Doubt.

*iv. Arrange the Five Matters*

Adjust food: neither starve nor sate himself. Adjust sleep. Adjust body not so much relax nor tense.

Adjust breathing. Adjust thoughts.

*v. Perform the Five Dharmas*

Positive desire, Effort, Awareness (*smṛti*), Wisdom to distinguish karma, One pointed mind

## Step 2: Four Samādhi

*i. Constantly Seated Samādhi*

The practitioner remains seated (motionless, erect, cross-legged position) for a period of ninety days, leaving his seat only for reasons of natural need. He must think single-mindedly on the “dharma-sphere.”<sup>7</sup>

*ii. Constantly Walking Samādhi*

Ninety days walking clockwise around his place of contemplation. While circling, he is to keep Amita constantly in mind and repeat his name aloud in uninterrupted continuity.<sup>8</sup>

*iii. Half-Walking Half-Seated Samādhi*

Attain Two kinds of Samādhi practice, one can choose by will:<sup>9</sup>

- *Vaipulya Samādhi* (cultivation with mark, chanting Mahāyana sūtras, having vision of Samantabhadra bodhisattva)
- Lotus *Samādhi* (cultivation without mark, highly concentrated contemplation of the emptiness of all dharmas)

While performing the Vaipulya samādhi the practitioner is required to contemplate first emptiness, then middlelessness, the latter in connection with: chanting Vaipulya sūtras, the ceremonies connected with the samādhi, etc...

## Lotus (*fa hua*) Samādhi

Preparing stage

- 1) Cleansing of one's sins by The Devices of Fivefold Penance
- 2) Penance: confessing the past sins and guard against future ones.
- 3) Pray all the Buddhas in the universe to come into one's presence
- 4) Rejoices over and praises of meritorious roots
- 5) Directs one's merits toward the attainment of Buddhahood for all.
- 6) Take Vows

Practice *Samādhi* by<sup>10</sup>

- 1) Purifying the place
- 2) Purifying body
- 3) Honoring the Buddha in deed, word and thought
- 4) Calling upon the Buddha to be present
- 5) Worshiping the Buddha

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<sup>7</sup> T46, 11a21.

<sup>8</sup> T46, 12a19.

<sup>9</sup> T46, 13a24.

<sup>10</sup> T46, no.1911, 14a5-9.

- 6) Repenting of all sins committed with the six senses
- 7) Walking clockwise round the place
- 8) Reciting the Lotus
- 9) Sitting in contemplation
- 10) Envisioning the Buddha with all his distinguishing marks in one's mind's eye.

Often people refer to Lotus *Samādhi* as Round and Abrupt *Samādhi*. Later on, Chinese Buddhist ritual practices such as repentance, morning and evening chanting are all rooted in Tian Tai's Lotus *Samādhi* and *Vaipulya Samādhi*.

*iv. Neither Walking nor Seated Samādhi*

Ten Actions:<sup>11</sup>

- 1) Cleaning the place
- 2) Worship
- 3) Burning incense and strewing of flowers
- 4) Fixing one's mind upon ...
- 5) Having willow twig (*danta-kāṣṭha*) in readiness
- 6) Invoking the Buddha, the Dharma, the Sangha
- 7) Intoning mantras
- 8) Confessing and repenting of one's sins.
- 9) Worship
- 10) Sitting in contemplation

The practitioner is advised to fix his mind on its objects (with the distinction of *kusala* and *akusala* and indifferent). Having thought them in relation to the "six sensations," he proceeds to seek them in relation to the "six actions."

### Step 3: Contemplation Proper

After the preparation of the four kinds of *samādhi*, the practitioner is now in the position to engage in the contemplation proper: The ten possible objects of contemplation; Ten possible modes of contemplation. Of these ten objects, only the first is present to all practitioners.

#### The Ten Objects of Contemplation

The Seventh chapter of *Mohe Zhiguan* occupies half of the entire text. It is again divided into ten topics known as the Ten Objects of Contemplation (T46, 49a27). When one practices diligently, the obstructions and demons such as heavy sleepiness and distraction will arise. In such cases, one need not follow them, nor be afraid of them for by following them we are led to the devil's path and if we are afraid of them then they will become obstructions to the path.<sup>12</sup> The Ten Objects of Contemplation are:

1. The object of *skandha*, *āyatana* and *dhātu*: This refers to the objects of our mind. Zhiyi explained this in more details than any other objects. From this object, again the Ten Modes of Contemplation are further explained.
2. The object of *kleśa* (affliction): When practicing contemplation, *kleśa* may arise.
3. The object of illness: One needs to overcome the illness from meditation.
4. The object of karma marks: Some illness may be related to former actions (*karma*).
5. The object of demonic forces: One needs to overcome the demons which appear in one's mind as one's practice advances.
6. The object of *dhyāna* concentration (*samādhi*): Various forms of *dhyāna* may appear to distract one's mind.

<sup>11</sup> T46, 14b26.

<sup>12</sup> T46, no.1911, 48, c28-p. 49A7.

7. The object of false views: False views formerly held by the practitioner may now appear to distract one's attention.
8. The object of overweening pride: Having overcoming the false views, one may become proud and fancy oneself to have arrived at the final stage.
9. The object of the two vehicles: Even if one is able to overcome pride, one may fall into the *śrāvakahood* or *pratyekabuddhahood*.
10. The object of the Bodhisattvahood: The practitioner may mistakenly come to imagine the tentative role of the bodhisattva as the ultimate goal. Thus, one needs to continue practicing to overcome this object.

## The Ten Modes of Contemplation

Among the Ten Objects of Contemplation listed above, the first one, the object of *skandha*, *āyatana* and *dhātu*, is the core of the topic, where the Ten modes of contemplation are expounded (T46, 52b01).

### 1. Contemplating objects as inconceivable

As the title indicates, it refers to an unthinkable higher stage experienced by the enlightened ones. Zhiyi explains this as one thought containing three thousands worlds, which is more than listing some technical terms, such as the Ten Suchness. Zhiyi quotes sūtras and śāstras to explain the Ten Suchness as the Buddha's experience. For the meditation practitioners, it is not wise to stick to those concepts but rather it is more important to be aware of one's thoughts at each moment. When we think it is hell, we are experiencing hell; when our mind is open, it is close to the Suchness, and we are experiencing the Buddhahood. In short, the mind is inconceivable.

### 2. Arousing Compassionate Thoughts

Once we know the inconceivable objects, others' sufferings become ours. Thinking of the past, we have created unwholesome karmas due to our ignorance, thus we pity for ourselves. This kind of pity is also extended to others.<sup>13</sup>

Thinking of others and oneself, one arouses the compassion and makes vows:

1. I vow to take across the numberless living being.
2. I vow to cut off the endless afflictions.<sup>14</sup>
3. I vow to study the countless Dharma doors.
4. I vow to realize the supreme Buddha Way.<sup>15</sup>

Compassion is wisdom; wisdom is compassion. Compassion is to help all without any conditions, without any thinking. It is to do one's best to help others, to make others happy naturally. It is not sharing with hatred. There is no miscomprehended emptiness, no attachment, or wrong views. This is the true arising of the *bodhicitta*.<sup>16</sup>

### 3. Skillful Means for Easing One's Mind

Skillful means for easing one's mind means calming and contemplation to ease one's mind by using appropriate methods. Skillful here indicates that there is no fixed method to rest one's mind.

“To ease one's mind” there are two methods: 1) from others' instructions, 2) through self-practice.

<sup>13</sup>T46, no.1911, 55c26-27.

<sup>14</sup>T46, no.1911, 56a10-12.

<sup>15</sup>T46, no.1911, 56a29.

<sup>16</sup>T46, no.1911, 56b9-12.

Again, each has two kinds of practice:

- confidence practice and
- dharma practice.

The practices refer to calming (*zhi*) and contemplation (*guan*). Again each practice has eight steps. (T46, 55c26)

1. To praise the calming by following one's likeness in order to arouse one's interest on practicing calming mind.
2. To praise the calming by appropriate actions to arouse one's interest on calming the mind. If one's mind becomes one, all wholesome actions grow leading to full enlightenment.
3. To praise the calming as an antidote to one's distractions to arouse one's interest on calming the mind.
4. To praise the calming that can induce one to the highest reality (*paramatha satya*), to arouse one's interest on practicing calming the mind.
5. To praise the contemplation to arouse one's interest on practicing calming the mind.
6. To praise the contemplation by the appropriate actions to arouse one's interest.
7. To praise the contemplation as an antidote to one's unwholesome thinking.
8. To praise the contemplation and *prajñā* to make one understand the importance of practicing contemplation.

Consequently, the number of resting-mind reached to 512 by Zhiyi. Mainly, the method is either *zhi* or *guan*. As stated by Zhiyi:

“Just like to preserve our health and nurture our body and life by adjusting food and drink, in the same way, it is also applied to preserve dharma-body by calming considered as drink and by contemplating considered as food.”<sup>17</sup>

Some practitioners may not be suitable for contemplation, such as those who think too much. For them, only the calming method is used. Some may be only suitable for contemplation, like those whose mind is dazed and sleepy.<sup>18</sup>

Ultimately, beyond the three truths, there is no place for easing mind. Beyond calm and contemplate, there is no dharma of easing mind.<sup>19</sup>

#### 4. The Thorough Deconstruction of Dharmas

One needs to deconstruct all aspects of dharmas which are attached to one's mind. All dharmas are products of one's thoughts. When the thoughts are deconstructed, all dharmas are deconstructed.<sup>20</sup>

Deconstruction of Dharmas in Terms of “Non-Arising” is divided as:<sup>21</sup>

- From conventional to emptiness: Deconstruct all wrong views (62) and mental *kleśa* (88). Thus they are empty.
- From emptiness to conventional: Refers to bodhisattvas who wish to help others. Thus they enter the conventional worlds.
- From the two contemplations skillfully enter the middle and highest truth. The three contemplations actually are in one-mind.

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<sup>17</sup>T46, no.1911, 59a10-11.

<sup>18</sup>T46, no.1911, 59a15-18.

<sup>19</sup>T46, no.1911, 59a29-b2.

<sup>20</sup>T46, 59b8–86a9: 橫豎諸法悉趣於心。破心故一切皆破。故言遍也。

<sup>21</sup> T46, 62a14.

Lastly, contemplating skillfully to enter the middle, says Zhiyi:

The proper contemplation of dharma nature does not rely on the two extremes [existence and non-existence] and avoids the four alternatives (*catuṣkoṭi*). It is pure in the final analysis. It does not cling nor attach to anything. As stated in the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-sūtra* “look up the sky without clinging.” This wisdom once opened, it deconstructs one, and then all can be deconstructed. As none of these places are not deconstructed, it is called the Thorough Deconstruction of Dharmas.<sup>22</sup>

To contemplate horizontally and vertically with one clear thought (橫豎一心明止觀): one-thought on the dependent co-arising dharma, as empty, as conventional, and as the Middle.

## 5. Knowing what penetrates and what obstructs the path

One now distinguishes carefully between everything that conduce the goal of ultimate perception and everything that hinder it.

The obstruction refers to ignorance (*avidyā*), *duḥkha*, the illusion of seeing and thought (見思), discrimination in *samsāra* (分段生死). Penetration refers to the one-thought on the three contemplations.<sup>23</sup>

## 6. Cultivating the steps to the path

If the five above mentioned modes fail their purpose, the practitioner sorts out the thirty-seven aids to enlightenment, selecting those that will advance him towards his goal and leaving the others (T46, 87c).

## 7. Regulating through auxiliary methods

If one enters *samādhi* and has established the four *samādhis*, such a person with a sharp-faculty does not need an antidote. When practicing *samādhi*, one will encounter obstructions and one needs to practice the six *pāramitās* as antidotes to the obstructions.<sup>24</sup> If one still has obstructions, one needs to practice the five assistants as antidotes:<sup>25</sup>

- If one's mind prevailed with the three poisons, one should use the counting of breaths as an antidote. If the counting is lost, one needs to count from the beginning.<sup>26</sup>
- If one is attached to women's charm, one should use impurity as an antidote. One needs to use the impurity method of observing impurity (of the body) of the dying beloved ones whose body becomes cold, changes color, worms coming out from body that is running with pus and thus impure.<sup>27</sup>
- If one is attached to hatred, one should apply compassion as an antidote.
- For wrong views, contemplate on the causation as an antidote.
- If sleepiness arises as obstructions to the path, one should chant the name of the Buddhas.

If the above methods cannot help during contemplation, one should include the Four Mindfulnesses, *prajñā-indriya* (faculty of wisdom 慧根), the power of wisdom (*prajñā-bala* 慧力), discernment (擇), *prītisambodhyaṅga* (喜覺分), right views (正見), right thoughts (*samyak-samkalpa* 正思惟) and the

<sup>22</sup> T46, no.1911, 83b13-17.

<sup>23</sup> T46, no. 1911, 86c8-21.

<sup>24</sup> T46, no.1911, no. 1911, 91a5-8.

<sup>25</sup> T46, no. 1911, p. 92c.

<sup>26</sup> T46, no.1911, 92c27-93a1.

<sup>27</sup> T46, no.1911, 93a6-12.

ten methods related to *prajñā*. If the *samādhi* does not arise, one needs to make some change and make the great vows.<sup>28</sup>

## 8. Knowing the stage

The practitioner observes carefully the developments in his present state of practice, neither overestimating nor underestimating it.

The practice of the Four *Samādhi* explained above is a skillful method. However, the Lotus Sūtra explains the practicing of the 5 repentances at all times daily as a skillful method.<sup>29</sup>

- Repentance.
- Praying
- Sympathetic joy (*anumodana*). Happy to help others perform wholesome actions.
- Transference of one's merit to another (*pariṇamayati*)
- To arouse the vow to save all sentient beings.

Based on the 5 repentance, there are 5 stages (T46, no. 1911, 98c-99a):

- Believe that the 5 repentances can open the door for contemplation.
- Reciting and chanting
- Teaching and helping others
- With more confidence on practicing the 5 repentances, practice the six *pāramitās*.
- Concentrate on the proper practice of the six *pāramitās*.

Based on the practicing of repentance, one has entered the stage of the ten confidences. Consequently, one knows the rest of the 42 stages.<sup>30</sup>

## 9. Peace through patient recognition

One takes care not to let oneself be moved by external circumstances. At this stage the practitioner may be surrounded by fame, good cloth and money which are like locusts eating all the leaves. One should refuse them early; one should not accept and not become attached to them. If they can not be refused, the practitioner will be entrapped by them.<sup>31</sup>

## 10. Avoiding passionate attachment to dharmas

Having practiced the above nine steps, one is able to enter into the reality. If not, it is the passionate attachment to dharmas which blocks the path.<sup>32</sup>

Zhiyi quotes the *Prajñāpāramitā Upadeśa (Dazhidulun)* that the three *samādhis* are similar to the path of attainment. Before attaining reality, one is easily attached to dharmas, which is called fall-near-top (頂墮). In this state, the cultivator does not move forwards, nor does he regress backwards. Once the attachment of dharmas is removed, one can enter the path to liberation.<sup>33</sup>

The Ten modes of contemplation under the proper practice apply to all kinds of practices. This proper

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<sup>28</sup> T46, no.1911, 93b2-7.

<sup>29</sup> T46, no.1911, 98a12-14.

<sup>30</sup> The 52 stage path of the bodhisattva.

<sup>31</sup> T46, no.1911, 99b28c2.

<sup>32</sup> T46, no.1911, 99c15-16.

<sup>33</sup> T46, no.1911, 99c26-29.

practice in *Mohe Zhiguan* is also called the Round and Abrupt contemplation, where Zhiyi includes all methods of practice such as ritual practice and repentance. Any object can be practiced if one understands that the higher truth is not beyond the conventional. One should see the phenomena as empty, conventional and middle in one single thought.

## Conclusion

The advantage of Tian Tai in modern time is that it balances theory and practice. Not only does it systematically present all Buddhist thoughts but also contains its own systematical practice. In this 21st century, it seems that the modern people are more self-isolated and perplexed; thus it is necessary to further develop some spirit of Tian Tai and re-examine it.

Round, inclusive are significant to modern society. We need to accept others; we cannot force others to give up their traditions. Any tradition and culture should be truly accepted. In Tian Tai, any level of practice is acceptable under the expedient means; anyone can receive benefits from the Buddha's teaching. Even the immoral person still has the possibility to survive. Also, "one mind with three thousand realms" includes the hell realm in the Buddha realm. This is the unique doctrine of Tian Tai—Anyone has hope and possibility to become a Buddha.

Stressing on the unity of theory and practice, Tian Tai established a record-breaking philosophic framework in China. To unite all Buddhist schools is a unique creation of Chinese Buddhism. To unite different culture and religions, Tian Tai provides an insight to solve the problem. We need to understand the different needs of different people by accepting all. From Tian Tai's Classification of teaching, we can propose that all the religions are valid. People from different cultural background tend to believe in certain religion. We should also start to reflect from oneself in our daily life. To accept and tolerate the difference while following one's own tradition without criticizing others. In the third century BC, the great Buddhist emperor, Ashoka of India, following this noble example of tolerance and understanding, honored and supported all other religions in his vast empire. Tolerant of the difference is important. Different group and different schools should be tolerant of others and truly respect others.

Tian Tai's Round and Inter-inclusive theory is the key to solve the differences of diversities.

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