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MEDITATION IN THAILAND

A New Interpretation

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I

Here is a summary of the main arguments given in the paper:

1. It is widely understood and practiced among Thai Buddhists that meditation is at the heart of Buddhism. I agree with this. However, the word '*meditation*' needs a serious investigation: what is the meaning of the term as intended by the Buddha? It could be possible that the meaning as it is now widely adopted amongst the Buddhists is not the same as it was used by the Buddha at his time. It is the intention of the paper to explore, as far as possible, the meaning of meditation as it was understood by the Buddha.

2. In my view, the practice of meditation in Thailand is basically dominated by what is given in the *Visuddhimagga*, by Buddhaghosa. As I understand, Buddhist meditation first appeared systematically from the *Visuddhimagga* onwards. Before that, even though it appears in the Pali Canon that the Buddha provides us a form of meditation through various sutras like the *Maha Satipatthana Sutra*; in terms of a format, the Buddha does not suggest a method to *meditate*—he just points out how to *contemplate* our life, using four objects as tools: the body, feelings, the mind, and truths concerning the human life and the world.

For me, *meditation* as understood by Buddhists in general these days and *contemplation* as suggested by the Buddha are not the same thing. Most meditation schools in Thailand explain that meditation is not thinking. For them, liberation of the mind from suffering cannot be attained through thinking. On the contrary, during the practice of meditation, people are advised not to think. It seems that meditation as understood by these meditation schools is a mystical state. They believe that when the mind of a person focuses well on one single object, for example—breathing, his mind will be eventually locked in a mystical state in which he will experience mystical phenomena called *insights*. These insights are compared to a light for the destruction of the dark—defilements in the mind. What follows from this line of understanding is: liberation of the mind from suffering has nothing to do with the understanding of truths. This kind of liberation could be called a *mechanical* liberation.

3. I believe that if there is something that can be called the meditation taught by the Buddha, it might not be a mystical one as said above. The sources concerning the attainment of liberation of the Buddha's disciples as recorded in the Pali Canon might suggest the truth concerning the Buddhist meditation more or less. All disciples of the Buddha became *arahants* through listening to the preaching of the Buddha. For example, the first five disciples became *arahants* after the Buddha's second sermon, the *Anattalakkhana Sutra*, was completed. His third sermon, the *Adittapariyaya Sutra*, given to three thousand people under the leadership of Uruvela Kassapa, liberated them from the darkness of mind. These people turned from ordinary people into noble ones from listening to the speeches of the Buddha. No record about the Buddha's teaching of meditation in the Pali Canon. In listening to another's speech, a person needs to understand it. Liberation of the mind found in the cases of the Buddha's disciples above could be said: resulting from their understanding the Buddha's preaching—a deep understanding of deep messages. Certainly, in some sutras like the

Maha Satipatthana Sutra mentioned above, the Buddha teaches a way of mental cultivation called mindfulness, *sati* in Pali. In my view, *mindfulness* is not the same as mystic meditation. Mindfulness is an ordinary state of mind. People can have this in their daily life. No special method is required to get it—like listening to music which people do not need any special method.

4. In conclusion, the sources from the Pali Canon suggest that contemplative thinking is needed to liberate oneself from suffering, rather than mystic meditation. If my theory is correct, what we need primarily in the practice of meditation is the work of wisdom from the masters such as deep speeches or highly contemplative writings; while what we need secondarily from the disciples is just mindfulness and deep thinking. The use of language is important. Deep language cannot come from a person whose thought is not deep. Hence, meditation is not a mechanical process without understanding or realization of the subject. On the contrary, meditation should mean: the reading and understanding of the human life and the world—good books in terms of deep thoughts of the masters are very useful to help the disciples 'read' the human life and the world more effectively—as demonstrated through the life of the Buddha. Moreover, meditation should be practicable without leaving our normal life: it should be practicable in offices, homes, during a journey, while reading a book, and so on. It seems that these cannot be done in the practice of mystic meditation.

II

The following are details of what summarized above:

Buddhism has been referred to as an example of Indian religious opinion which is based on realistic and empiricist spirit. Buddhism stands unique in the history of Indian philosophy through its way in accepting and rejecting truths. George Grimm, a prominent German Buddhist scholar, calls Buddhism a religion of reason and meditation. What Descartes presents to us in his *Meditations* is extremely different

from the same names given by Buddhist, Jain, and Hindu masters. However, there could be two main kinds of mediation in Indian philosophy. The first one is *mystic* meditation; the second one is *rationalistic* meditation. It is the latter which belongs to Buddhism especially in its early form.

Another difference between the understanding of meditation in Eastern and Western philosophies is that for the East meditation is the tool to cultivate the soul for attaining liberation, not merely to exercise mental power for achieving knowledge as in the West. Even though Buddhism does not understand meditation as a mystic phenomenon, it fully accepts that the purpose of meditation is to attain some moral qualities. The point is, within this understanding Buddhism is of the opinion that such moral qualities will result from rationalistic meditation, and not from a mystic one.

In the second sermon, the Buddha utilizes a dialogue to teach his disciples. And the result of the dialogue brings about the enlightenment of them. The contents of the dialogue have nothing that could be interpreted mystic. All are clear and based on reasoning. The following are example.

(Buddha): Your body is permanent or not permanent?

(Disciples): Not permanent, sir.

(Buddha): If a thing is not permanent, it is subject to pleasure or pain?

(Disciples): Pain, sir.

(Buddha): If a thing is not permanent and subject to pain, it should be deemed self or non-self?

(Disciples): Non-self, sir.

(Buddha): Very good, very good. Your body is not your self. If something would be your self, it must be under your command. But you cannot command the body that "let the body be permanent and subject to pleasure." Hence, it is not your self.

Note that the objective of the Buddha is to point out that the body

can never be counted the person's self, and the method used by him is a dialogue. Using this way suggests that he wants his disciples see from their own vision that the body should not be viewed man's self. This kind of dialogue is found much in the work of Socrates. However, the difference is the dialogue given by the Buddha eventually brings about the enlightenment of the followers. This means that for Buddhism reason has the potential to liberate man from ignorance and suffering. What I have presented here is rather difficult to understand even for Buddhists because later Buddhist meditation explained by Buddhist thinkers after the Buddha's death has been based on the mystic understanding of the term. Looking from this point, the history of Buddhist meditation can be divided into two periods. The first period, which can be named the *rationalistic period*, dates between the lifetimes of the Buddha. And the second period, which can be named the *mystic period*, dates after that.

As reason and language are closely related—in exercising reason man needs language; to understand the position of the Buddha as regards meditation, we need to understand his attitude to language. Eastern mysticism, such as that of Taoism and Zen Buddhism, does not believe that language is able to hand human beings the truths. So, the sages of this tradition are persons who speak very little even though they are the masters whose primary duty is to teach the students. Differently, the Buddha has used dialogues all the time. There is no explicit evidence showing that he teaches his followers to practice meditation in the form as found today in Buddhist communities. According to modern understanding of Buddhists, especially those of Theravada tradition, meditation and thinking are of greatly difference. Most of them consider thinking as a lower kind of mental activity compared with meditation which is a higher kind of mental training and this kind of mental activity does not require language. In Thailand, most meditation schools usually set up the rules for the practitioners that during the time of meditation training they must not speak to each other and

must not read books even those concerning Buddha's teachings. This tradition of meditation practice is something can be understood if we accept that meditation is a kind of *bodily practice* like driving a car. Before a person is to be instructed about driving, he will be informed that how the car works. Information about the car is given in a handbook. In this sense, the language is needed as a starting point of the practice. After studying the handbook, then the person has to practice to drive the car. People cannot drive the car merely by studying the handbook. In the same way, the practice of meditation can be compared with car-driving practice. The practice instruction in the form of text or the master's speech is needed just as the starting point of the practice. During the process of practice, no texts or language instruction are needed.

Suppose we begin with an understanding that the practice of meditation is mainly involved with the training of thought, the role of texts or language might be different. The thought of human beings is something that can be developed and enhanced; but the problem is: what can be used as the tools to develop thought? In driving the car, bodily skill is of most importance. But in the practice of meditation it seems that what we need is a change of mind; or it can be said that we need mental skill, or more deeply: spiritual skill. It is clearly given that the objective of Buddhist meditation is to liberate the human mind from bondage. Mind* according to Buddhism has two main potentials: the first one is the potential to be calm; and the second one is to develop wisdom. In general, meditation as commonly found in ancient India at the time of the Buddha aimed to arouse the former potential; but Buddhist meditation as given by the Buddha tends to deal with the latter. Earlier in his ascetic life, the Buddha trained under two masters in the former tradition of meditation; but later he becomes conscious that

* Note that the Buddhist mind is not merely an activity of the brain. This term refers to a kind of immaterial entity that looks like the soul in Hinduism and Jainism. But for Buddhism this kind of soul is not permanent as the Hindu or Jain soul.

this kind of mental potential has nothing to do with the cessation of suffering. With calm meditation (*Samatha Bhavana*), the suffering just temporarily freezes, and has not been destroyed.

It is said that the meditation that the Buddha studied under the two masters was the highest one to be found in India at that time, meaning that there was no absorption of the mind to be achieved more than this. The Buddha decides to leave his masters to seek the way that leads to the cessation of suffering. First things to be known are: what is the 'suffering' meant by the Buddha and why it cannot be overcome by the meditations he learned from these masters?

For the first question, this can be answered with looking back at the beginning of the story about the Buddha seeking of truths. It is said that as his father needed him to live a householder life as a prince, so he was raised up inside the luxurious palaces surrounded by good things like pretty girls and prevented to see bad things like the old persons. One day he escaped from the palace and saw the *four signs of suffering* which are: an old man, a sick man, a dead body, and an ascetic. He thought these things are the truths of life, meaning that no one in the world can deny and overcome them, including himself. One day he might be sick and dead. The prince thought further that nature created things and their counterparts. When there are birth, sickness, old age, and death; there must be *something* standing opposed to these things. He decided to leave the palace and take on an ascetic life to seek such a thing.

Human life in the Indian tradition at the time of the Buddha had been viewed as a series of eternal rebirths. When a person dies his soul will leave the old body and take on another one, as: an animal, a human being, a celestial being, etc; and this is called rebirth. In some sense, to be reborn again and again could be viewed bondage. Suffering in the view of the Buddha does not mean pain because pain is not the only thing to be found in life, we have pleasure as well; hence suffering rather means a long series of rebirths. For those who feel they love re-

birth as it brings about new experiences, suffering as meant by the Buddha becomes something which is not a problem at all; but for those who feel extremely bored with this, the Buddhist suffering will have meaning for them. Actually, all religions of India have agreed that there must be a final aim of life where the series of rebirths, as said, is completely stopped. Hinduism calls it *moksha*; while Buddhism and Jainism call *nirvana*.

It should be remarked that the salvation of life as mentioned above is of two kinds—one belonging to God and another not belonging to God. The salvation that belongs to God is not difficult to understand. In *The Bhagavadgita*, Krishna said to Arjuna that the person who devoted his life to do good things in the name of God and did not want any worldly rewards from doing such things was the one highly pleasing to God. After death, God will receive this kind of person, to join him—this is salvation. The salvation that does not belong to God as found in Jainism and Buddhism could be either the union with something or totally extinction from the universe. It seems that the Jain liberation is mainly associated with the first category while in Buddhism both possibilities are found.

Anyway, suffering in the Buddhist perspective is a state of rebirths again and again and salvation is a name given to the cessation of rebirth. The Buddha learned that the meditation that he had studied from his two masters, in its essence, is the control of the mind to be 'still and silent' and has nothing to do with desires. He thought that desire might be the seed of rebirth. If a person has desire in his mind, it will cause the next rebirth. This thought the Buddha gains from a simple metaphor that as far as the seed of a tree is fresh it will only grow into a tree when a certain number of conditions are given. It should be noted that the Pali term used to denote desire, *Tanha*, means some sticky substance which generally found in the seeds of plant and living plants. It is believed that this thing gives life to things that possess it. The death of a plant is not the real death because before death the

plant has placed the sticky substance into its seed. As long as the seed is fresh in the meaning that its sticky substance is not destroyed, the new life of the tree is sure to occur. In the case of human beings, the Buddha is of the belief that desire in the mind is the main key leading to rebirth. Before death, a person still has the will to be reborn and this enables him to be reborn. The fear of death, found in every sentient being, is used by the Buddha as evidence to show that people have the will to be reborn.

The calm meditation cannot reduce the fear of death; so, the Buddha seeks a new kind of meditation for this purpose. Eventually he learns that the fear of something can be reduced or solved by an understanding of its nature. A new kind of meditation developed by the Buddha, called in Buddhist text as insight meditation or *Vipassana Bhavana* in Pali, is basically concerned with human understanding. As language is the major tool for understanding, this is why the Buddha has utilized a dialogue in his teaching. Even to liberate himself from the will to be reborn, language is needed; but it is an inner language.

In Indian philosophy, we have usually found that language is widely adopted as the tool pointing to the truth, and not the truth itself. My analysis of the Buddha's enlightenment above does not mean that I do not accept the general opinion concerning the role of language as said. On the contrary, I am talking about the Buddha's enlightenment in light of such understanding. That is, there are a number of natural truths found by the Buddha in his enlightenment. To use a metaphor, it can be said that the Buddha is compared to a man who tries to open a secret closed door. Behind the doors, there are a number of truths given and these truths are needed to liberate the man from the will to be reborn. For a general door, we just open it; but this secret door has something for any person who needs to open it to understand first, otherwise it is not possible to open it. In Buddhist texts, sometimes the Buddha has said that the world is given in the form of secrets and it is the duty of any person who needs liberation to 'read' and 'understand'

them. Buddhist meditation is nothing but the *reading* and *understanding* of the world.

In a *sutra* of Theravada Buddhism, it is said that when a person dies, if he has done many evils before death, the hell keepers will remind him of something which he should read and understand as follows.

"Did you ever see a newborn child?"

"Yes, I did."

"What did you think about it?"

"Nothing."

"Did you ever see an old man?"

"Yes, I did."

"And did you think of anything from such seeing?"

"No."

"Did you ever see a sick man?"

"Certainly, I did."

"Did you feel anything about it?"

"No."

"Did you ever see a dead man?"

"Of course, I did."

"Did you understand something from such seeing?"

"Nothing."

From the dialogue above, the man is reminded of the *four signs of suffering*, which are similar to those in the story of Buddha's renunciation. According to morality in Buddhism, these signs have moral meaning in the sense that if the person reads and understands them, his life must follow the right way. On the contrary, for the person who never notices that they exist, it is highly possible that his life follows the wrong way, as given in the above *sutra*. So, suffering in a Buddhist perspective directly results from not reading and understanding the world.

In the practice of Buddhist meditation, three characteristics of beings are given as the main things to understand. To distinguishing between Buddhist meditation and the non-Buddhist one, sometimes the

texts say that Buddhist meditation considers the *Lakkhana*, while the non-Buddhist one considers the *Arammana*. The difference between these two terms is that in considering the former, an understanding is needed; and this thing is not needed in considering the latter. For example, a person takes a lit candle as an object for meditation. He sits silently, looking at the candle. Suppose his objective is to watch the candle so that the picture of the candle will be deeply pressed into his mind, making him 'see' it even with the eyes closed; this is the practice of a non-Buddhist meditation. The way of this kind of practice is called the *Arammana* way. Suppose his objective is to understand the candle, what he needs is to think. Certainly, in thinking a quiet mind is needed; but it is still a normal mind because he needs to think, and some levels of the absorbed mind, as found in non-Buddhist meditation, do not allow the mind to think. So, the absorption of mind required in Buddhist meditation is a simple one. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu says that this simple state of mind can be found, as an example, in a scenario like when Isaac Newton sees the falling apple and is 'enlightened' about the law of gravity.

What about the candle? There is no exact or same answer for every person. As individuals have different backgrounds in life, it is not possible for them to read and understand the world in the same manner. To think about the candle does not differ from thinking about Tolstoy's *War and Peace*. One time the Buddha gave a piece of cloth to a monk for meditating. This monk was sent to him as a foolish monk. No one could teach him to meditate. The Buddha said to him, "Just move your hand on it and see what happens." The cloth was clean. After the monk moved his hand on it for hours he noticed that it turned dirty. Suddenly, he became enlightened. The text says that while doing things as the Buddha suggests, the monk sees and thinks. The enlightenment of this monk is an example of the power of thought in a Buddhist perspective. In short, for Buddhism liberation of life cannot be attained if a person does not understand the world and his life deeply.

As anything in the world can be an object for reading and understanding, Buddhist meditation does not require a format. It should be noted that Zen Buddhism seems to stand closer to what the Buddha teaches regarding meditation than modern Theravada Buddhism at least in two manners. First, Zen meditation does not require a format. Second, in enlightenment thinking is needed. It is said in the Zen texts that one time the Zen master saw a monk sitting meditative. He asked, "What are you doing?" The monk said, "Meditating." The master picked up a brick near by and pressed it over his arm and rubbed. It is said that his arm bled. Excitingly, the monk questioned, "Why are you doing that?" The master replied, "Making a mirror." The monk said, "Are you mad! How a person can turn the brick into the mirror?" The master replied, "Likewise, what are you doing cannot make you enlightened!"

The meditation that the Zen master does not agree with is—sitting alone and doing nothing. The calm meditation in its very essence is a kind of sitting alone and doing nothing as said. The Buddha accepts that human mind can be trained to be deeply absorbed into levels that within such a state a person can be said be in a vegetative state. He himself had direct experience of this kind as the result of meditation taught him by the two masters, as said; but later he questioned that such states of mind are not natural—in the sense that to live in this world a person needs to perceive things rather than shut himself down from the world. The meditation that he learned from the two masters can be compared to shutting down the mind from the real world. Certainly, suffering would not occur as far as the person is in such a state of deep dwelling; but the problem is when he awakes again, he will face the same problems because the meditation that he practices does not provide anything related to the overcoming of the problems. It is just a shutting down of the sense doors from the world. The problems still remain untouched.

The following are famous pictures from both the West and the East,

of thinking people. The first one is Auguste Rodin's *The Thinker*, and the second one is a picture of a Zen master in meditation, painted by Chinese artist Shih K'o, 10th century. (The Zen master in the picture is said to be the second patriarch after Bodhidharma—Hui-k'o.)



It is interesting that these two pictures represent something that very similar to each other. First of all, both illustrate that thinking is a serious work of the human mind. Civilization of humankind is the product of seriously thinking. Socrates and the Buddha share one important element: they are thinkers. Even though the way of thinking found in Western civilization mostly aims at the external world while the way of thinking found in Eastern civilization largely aims at the internal world, this does not mean that we cannot find thinking inwardly in the West or thinking outwardly in the East. Henry David Thoreau might be cited as an example of the West thinking inwardly. In India, the beginning stage of Hinduism is mainly concerned with the thinking of external world and God. We know that India has been the land where streams of metaphysical theories have been created day by day end-

lessly. Certainly, many parts of metaphysics concern external world.

To understand Buddhist meditation truly, a person should be reminded that at the time of the Buddha the mainstream intellectual culture of India was based on the culture of thinking. Religion in the form of thinking was created before a thing called meditation. People saw the sun and the moon and other natural phenomena which caused fear, wonder, and other emotions. It is human nature to give himself something to unite many things which share some characteristics. The best thing for uniting things is a theory and this thing is a direct result of thinking. India is well known as the main source of religion for the world because Indians are those who love to think. Besides religion, logic and mathematics are continually invented by Indian thinkers. It is believed that the creation of Zero was possibly made by the Hindu thinkers. In India, Zero is called the *Shunyam* which means the empty. The concept of empty was generally found in Indian philosophy. In Buddhism, they have teachings concerning the emptiness of life and the world. The wisdom that brings about the Zero into this world is special. This kind of wisdom can be found in Taoism as well. In the *Tao Te Ching*, it is said that the earth and the heavens last forever because they do not do anything. The great ruler behaves like the earth and the heavens in that he does not do anything and such non-doing rewards him the highest position over the people. The Indian Zero behaves like *Tao* in that both of them never possess anything but have endless values. The ruler who rules the people without ruling is the one who follows *Tao*. The great ruler according to Taoism hides himself behind people but gives them the strength to overcome their problems. Likewise, the Zero hides itself behind other numbers but gives them values. "11" when written fully is "10+1." But the Zero 'gives way' to 1 and this makes the Hindu-Arabic number system, which contains ten numbers, 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-and-0, easier to use than the Roman number system which does not have the Zero.

Within the circumstance as given above, a proper way to understand

Buddhist teachings including its meditation is that religious thoughts of India have evolved side by side with logic and mathematics. As we have said previously, ultimately the Indians are of the view that all intellectual activities should aim at real usage in life. Logic and mathematics in Indian tradition are not something that is completely separated from religion. The Zero is deeply a religious concept. Or we can say that in India they did not distinguish between religious and mathematical concepts. The very famous Indian mathematician of modern time, Srinivasa Ramanujan, always said that in doing mathematics he never felt that religion is one thing and mathematics is another thing. On the contrary, his religious belief (he is a Hindu) seems to be the spiritual guideline to discover mathematical truths. What said by Ramanujan is not strange thing even when it is considered under the perspective of Western philosophy. We know that Plato is of the view that mathematics and logic represent the real things in the world of forms. For Plato, the numbers like 3 or 7 have the real corresponding entities somewhere in the universe. They are not just the empty concepts invented by human mind. But they really exist.

In the same way, the Indians consider mathematical concepts as something really existing in the universe. Mathematical laws are deemed as kinds of natural laws. It should be noted that the Buddha as a prince used to study mathematics and logic and it is said that he was skillful in doing these disciplines. Mathematics is called *Ganita Shastra* in India; and when Thailand adopted mathematics from the West, we translated it as *Ganita Shastra*. The fact that the Buddha used to study mathematics and logic implies what? The answer of this question can vary depending on how we understand what the enlightenment is. As given by the Buddha himself, enlightenment means two things. First, it means totally knowing what should be known to make suffering in life extinct. Second, it means totally being free from the influence of the dark sides of life. These two meanings must come together. Sometimes the Buddha utilizes a parable of light to illustrate how enlightenment

appears. When the light is given, it is doing two things. One, it makes people see things as they are. Two, it sets people free from the fear of darkness. It might be the above definition of enlightenment that causes most Buddhist thinkers to be inclined to understand that enlightenment has nothing to do with logic, mathematics, or reasoning. Freedom or liberation for them might result from *becoming*, and not merely *reasoning* or *philosophizing*.

A very simple example to show the very truth of the above claim is, as they argue: suppose you are given a fruit. The question is what should be done to that fruit—between eating it and reasoning with it? It is said in the Zen texts that at one time, a Zen master came to the field where they had planted the carrots with his disciples. The master picked up one carrot, raising it and saying, “What do you think about this thing?” One of his clever disciples said, “O Master, it is voidness.” The monk referred to the Buddhist teaching of voidness as the inner nature of things and for him this applied well to the carrot. There were a number of monks answering the question of the master and all of them answered through some kind of theory. At last, the master noticed that there was one monk who did not say anything. “Did you have anything to say about this carrot?” he said. The monk did not reply, coming to the master and taking that carrot—he ate it. The master said loudly, “This monk best knew what to do with the carrot! Is there anything more appropriate for the carrot than eating it! When I am hungry I eat. When I am thirsty I drink. When I am sleepy I sleep. When I am tired I rest. This is the practice of Buddha’s teaching!” In this story many monks deal with the carrot through reasoning or philosophizing, and this is not valid. Many Buddhist scholars are of the opinion that the enlightenment of the Buddha must not result from the use of reason because this thing cannot bring about the real truth to the person. What is the real truth? In the case of carrot, the real truth is a direct experience with it—eating and tasting it by a person’s sense experience. Reason can only bring about the shadow of truth, and not

the truth itself.

The problem with the above analysis is that it works well with bodily action only. The eating of carrot does not require things other than bodily action. But the truth concerning enlightenment is much more complicated as it requires mental and spiritual actions rather than bodily ones. Given that we are asked, "What should be the most appropriate thing to do with your life?" How do we answer this question? Certainly, this question, even though it is given in the same format as the question about carrot, needs some theory and we know that any theory is the result of reasoning more or less.

There are two basic forms of human reasoning—induction and deduction. We know that science is based on induction while logic and mathematics are based on deduction. In short, deduction means a way of gaining other knowledge from what are readily known without the help of experience. For example, if we know that between the town *A* and the town *B* the distance is 200 miles, and we know further that the train which runs between these towns runs 100 miles per hour; from these facts, we can derive that the train must spend 2 hours in running between the towns. This reasoning was taught widely in India at the time of the Buddha in the name of *Ganita Shastra* as said previously. If there is some Buddhist thinker of the view that this kind of reasoning is not the result of direct sense experience so it should not be adopted by Buddhism, this claim is something irrational as a kind of extreme skepticism. In real life the Buddha and his disciples utilized many mathematical rules in calculating things. Induction is more interesting in that even though we have some facts which are gained from sense experience this does not mean that merely having facts is enough. Ultimately, we still need some kind of reasoning. For example, a scientist performs an experiment with drug. He has found that the drug can reduce the pain resulting from blood cancer. Before announcing the result in the form of a research article to be published in the medical journal, he needs to test the drug for a certain number of times. Why

does he need to do such a thing? The reason will confirm that what he gains from the experiment is valid. Validity is not a property of fact but of theory. Induction is a way of gaining new knowledge from some known ones. It is done on the belief that there is some conformity in nature. If the drug reduces the pain in Mr. *A*, Mr. *B*, and Mr. *C*, it might be the same with Mr. *D*.

Why do we need theory? Why mere facts are not enough? The answer is simply: the facts that we have are usually limited to the certain time and space. It is worth mentioning here that after being convinced that he had been enlightened, the Buddha had spent time reconsidering what he had known before giving it to other. The Buddha might be aware that his personal experience with truth was limited to time and space, and it could be illusion. How could he be sure whether it was knowledge? This is why he needed time to reexamine it. In Buddhist texts the Buddha gave a number of rules to confirm that what we have attained or to be attained are not illusions, as follows:

Rule One:

There must be a causal relation between the practice and its result, and this causal relation does not need a special method to understand it other than plain reason. For example, Buddhism teaches that a forgiving mind is happier than an angry mind. This truth can be understood through reasoning, simply because a forgiving mind is the mind that lets the burden go while angry mind is the one that does not let it go. The point is: between these two minds which one should be happier? The answer is not difficult to find. Reason tells us that there is a causal relation between forgiving and happiness, and there is no causal relation between anger and happiness. To apply this rule to the practice of meditation, we can question: is there a causal relation between sitting alone/doing nothing except reciting some mysterious words like '*Buddha... Buddha...*' and the extinction of suffering in our mind? Suppose we have a doubt that there might not be such a causal relation, to practice this kind of meditation is against the rule.

Rule Two:

Buddhist liberation is based on understanding. The practice of meditation as given by the Buddha himself is a process of mental cultivation through awareness and understanding of life and the world. For example, in a very famous *sutra* called the *Maha Satipatthana Sutra*, the Buddha gives four objects as the grounds of meditating. They are body, feelings, mind, and mental objects (called in the Pali words as *Kaya*, *Vedana*, *Citta*, and *Dhamma* respectively). In short, the *sutra* does not give any official format of Buddhist meditation. Exactly we do not have such a thing in early Buddhism. In the text, the Buddha begins with a suggestion that we can learn to liberate ourselves from these four things. The body seems to be the most concrete object, so it deserves to be used as the starting point. To learn from the body, the Buddha points out that we have two things: first, to use the body as the object of the practice of mindfulness; second, to critically examine the body and determine whether it should be counted as ours. The practice of mindfulness is to prepare the mind to be as skillful as possible. The mind itself is the tool for studying itself and the world. Mindfulness in Buddhism is a state in which man's thought focuses on something continually and peacefully without restraint. A man plays the violin for hours joyfully and efficiently. This is an example of a thing called mindfulness in Buddhist teaching. Given that a person has no problem with mindfulness, the next step is to think about the body through such mindfully consciousness. In the text the Buddha gives many aspects to look at the body. Ultimately he says that wise consideration of the body will lead to a conclusion that it is not right to think that the body is ours. As mentioned in the *Anattalakkhana Sutra*, the Buddha is of the view that the body cannot count as man's self, even for those who believe that the body is composed of matter only. Even though it is true that a man is totally composed of matter only and there is no any soul, this fact has nothing to do with two things to be found in human life as the contradictory to each other. One, the body has its

way to go. Two, man's consciousness is inclined to take it for granted that the body should be as he wants it to be. We do not want the body to become old or sick, but the body does not hear what we want. One day it must be sick and die. And this is why the Buddha advises us to consider it as not ours.

The same is given to the rest which are feelings, mind, and mental objects. According to Buddhism, we live in the body and it is natural to feel something as the result of living in the body. When the season changes sometimes we get a headache and fever. This is an example of pain which is one among the three feelings. On the hot day, the cool wind is something desirable. The feeling caused by the cool wind within such a circumstance is an example of pleasure which is one among the three feelings as well. Besides these two feelings there is also the neutral one as to be found when we do not have both pain and pleasure. These feelings should be considered like the body—they are not ours in the sense that we cannot command them to persist or disappear as we need. The mind as meant by the Buddha is consciousness. When we see, we should know we are seeing. This applies to other perceptions like hearing and so on. Like the body and the feelings, the mind is the object for meditation in two meanings—for the cultivation of mindfulness and wisdom. Suppose we do not have the problem with mindfulness concerning the working of mind, the next thing to be done is to consider it as not ours. The Buddha says that when a sight occurs a person is naturally inclined to feel that there is 'me' and this 'me' is playing a role as the seer. The creation of 'me' in man and animal is illusion as there is no entity called 'me' inside them. Certainly, the Buddha accepts that the feeling of 'me' must stem from something inside human life; but this does not mean that there must be some entity really existing inside our life as the corresponding reality of the word 'me.' In short, the Buddha opines that the complicated conditions inside human life form a feeling of 'me.' As this word does not have corresponding reality, we should know exactly, that there is no

agent inside us playing the role as the doer. There are only the seeing, the hearing, the smelling, the tasting, and the touching without the seer, the hearer, the smeller, the taster, and the toucher at all.

In some sense, meditation is considered by the Buddha to be a tool for 'seeing' hidden things in our life. Generally people have the feeling that "I exist and I am the person who does these or those things." The meditation will disclose the truth that actually there is no such "I." In the text, the Buddha has suggested that the "I" is just a phenomenon in the meaning that we can feel it but cannot see where it is located. This is enough to conclude that there is nothing playing the role as the owner of our life. Meditation greatly helps us to understand that we should consider our whole life in terms of a stream of conditions. This stream has no core. So when we get pain or pleasure all should be considered as if merely the passing wind. It comes and goes away anywhere and anytime.

Suffering in Buddhist perspective has its root in ignorance. And ignorance in the Buddha's teaching is nothing but a lack of knowing that actually life is just a stream of conditions. Buddhist meditation has its primary function to reduce or destroy suffering in human life, so meditation should be concerned with human thoughts. As the Buddha himself says in the first stanza of the *Dhammapada*, thoughts are the roots of everything in man's life. Suffering must be found in the life of a man whose thoughts are not arranged wisely. On the contrary, happiness must be found as well in the life of a man whose thoughts are well arranged. In the *Maha Satipatthana Sutra* mentioned previously, the Buddha talks about the mind and mental phenomena which can be merged into one concept: *thought*. There are two things given by the Buddha as the ways to deal with thought: first, thought as an internal phenomenon has no entity playing the role as corresponding agent, it should be viewed like the passing wind; second, thought as an external phenomenon or a consciousness of something in the world should be directed to some valuable theory. In the text, the Buddha gives the

Four Noble Truths as an example of a valuable theory as said. It should be noted that meditation as found at this stage is directly concerned with contemplative thinking. In this sense, reading books or even watching movies, which give us insight, should be counted a kind of meditation practice.