

Bodhisattva Yoga

The Universal Foundation of
Religions and Spiritual Practices

Readings on Yoga and
Spiritual Cultivation

WILLIAM BODRI

Copyright © 2020 William Bodri. All rights reserved. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission of the publisher, except in cases of brief quotations in articles and reviews. However, the chapter Arhat Yoga may be freely reprinted without copyright permission, as well as edited for corrections and commented upon with addendums, as long as there is correct attribution of the initial text to William Bodri and this book. For information write:

Top Shape Publishing LLC
1135 Terminal Way Suite 209
Reno, NV 89502

ISBN: 978-0-9998330-5-6

DEDICATION

For everyone, regardless of their religion or spiritual tradition, who treads the path of spiritual cultivation and is seeking answers. Inside are readings on the shared cultivation path within the world's great faiths that leads to transcendental attainments. The proper spiritual practices constitute a universal, non-denominational pathway constructed on the principles of cause and effect science and lead to a verifiable result. I've brought together readings on the main principles of this universal path so that the techniques of entering the door of the Tao, and attaining the fruit of enlightenment, will not be terminated. I apologize for any errors herein, especially in earlier works cited as new information has sometimes come to light and my opinion changed after their original publication, but the broad strokes of the pathway revealed are correct. Just as Saint Maximos the Confessor corrected the theological errors of Origen and Evagrius, Tibetan master Tsong Khapa cleaned up the errors in Vajrayana Buddhism, and Shakyamuni Buddha cleaned up the errors seen in the cultivation practices of his day, I hope this work cleans up the errant ideas and perspectives about spiritual cultivation in today's world. I also hope that someday people will work to clean up this work as well.

CONTENTS

	Acknowledgments	i
1	Arhat Yoga	1
2	Introduction	167
3	Universal Creation	430
4	The Sequential Stages and Five Bodies of Spiritual Cultivation	480
5	Varieties of Foundational Cultivation Practice	537
6	Meditation & Cultivation Practice	651
7	Gong-fu Experiences on the Cultivation Path	748
8	Transforming Your Behavior for the Better	867
9	Summary	981
10	Finale	1045

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This is a compendium of the very best excerpts from the many books I've written over the years, and should in one volume give you an idea of what cultivation is all about so that you don't need years of study.

CHAPTER 1: ARHAT YOGA

I'm making this 900 page DRAFT document available online until I publish it in book form. This first chapter ("Arhat Yoga") was originally 120 pages in length and then slowly expanded to 450+ pages, whereupon its length necessitated that I turn it into a separate book called *Arhat Yoga* that is now available on amazon.com. In that one book is the gist of the cultivation path inherent within all religions. I highly recommend it. If I had had that information when younger I would not have wasted so much time studying so many useless as well as INCORRECT things and gone down so many barren paths.

It might take a few weeks or 1-2 years to edit this unfinished DRAFT of *Bodhisattva Yoga* (this book) so until then, I am making this draft available for free since anything can happen to me during that time and I want this information available to the public. Once it is published, which will make this draft obsolete (usually I make substantial changes in correcting many errors) then this pdf will no longer be available. I have to use the ideas developed in *Arhat Yoga*, for instance, to further edit the ideas and information in *Bodhisattva Yoga*.

Forget all the talk about enlightenment mind, emptiness, "becoming one with Brahman/God" and so on. They are all tricks to get you to cultivate

ARHAT YOGA

meditation practice, but the real enlightenment is attaining transcendental bodies – by purifying your Yin and Yang Qi – that win you escape from the lower realms of reincarnation. With each body you have some new special abilities and the same ordinary mind you have now, not some fantasmigorical mind, but you can use your energy bodies to do unusual things.

You have to cultivate your internal energy and meditation to attain enlightenment (the higher bodies). You must also be a good person, which means you must cultivate your personality and behavior, and do good deeds. Then you have a chance if you are like this and cultivate practice. Even if you don't get enlightenment you should be working on cultivating your personality.

The chapters I've selected to excerpt here from *Arhat Yoga* include:

8 – The Five Bodies

9 – Generation of Higher Spiritual Bodies

10 – The Stages of Spiritual Attainment

14 – General Principles of Qi/Prana Internal Energy Practices

16 – Arhats, Bodhisattvas and Buddhas

17 – Comprehending *The Heart Sutra* & *Bhagavad Gita*

18 – Summary

Chapter 8 THE FIVE BODIES

Religions, and especially spiritual cultivation schools, typically talk about five planes of existence or beingness in addition to the primordial original essence that is our ground state substratum. However, there are many despite the limited revelation. Through various reasons, human beings have discovered the ability to cultivate more etheric spiritual bodies free of the densest matter of the earthly realm that are comprised of the energies or etheric substances of these higher transcendental planes.

Each higher energy realm “closer” to the original essence, in terms of the layers/levels/sequence of causal evolution, is composed of more subtle,

refined, purified, fundamental, primordial, higher, or more transcendental energies than a subsequent evolute, which is considered denser or more impure. A denser evolute *has all the higher energies inherently within it* and must be worked on in order to separate out a more transcendental body clone from within it. As with all things, the energies of all these planes interpenetrate, and together comprise a single universal whole – Shakti, the Logos – whose fundamental nature is the ultimate truth of the universal substratum.

Of the five planes or realms there is the (1) material plane or chemical dimension, (2) subtle plane, (3) Causal plane, (4) Supra-Causal plane, and (5) Immanence plane. These planes can be experienced by human beings (and other beings in the universe) who possess the requisite body - a material physical body, subtle body, Causal body, Supra-Causal body or Immanence Body, respectively. These bodies are known by different names in different spiritual schools, but they are the same phenomena. Each is composed of a different energy or etheric substance. The higher or more transcendental that a body and its realm are – meaning the closer it is to the first principle, cause or fundamental substrate – the more perfect or pure is considered the stage of spiritual achievement.

As stated, all the phenomena of these planes exist because of a complex interaction of cause and effect spanning across all realms, energies and phenomena, in effect the result of a great mixing of infinite, co-dependent arising that is infinitely old - beginningless. In other words, there is only one space-time, one fabric of manifest existence, and everything occurs within it as an inescapable part of it.

The formations within Shakti all have interdependent origins within its single fabric, and therefore no a single thing is intrinsic or inherent due to its self alone. In particular, one can consider the phenomena of our material plane a condensation of higher energies since once investigated the decomposition of matter reveals space and an agglomeration of transcendental energies that seem solidified when they manifest matter. The most fundamental basis of all these energies and phenomena is the one primordial original substrate, the original one, the only truly existing one, the most fundamental ground state or essence of them all.

By the process of spiritual cultivation you can generate a body, out of your own, composed of the energies from each of the higher realms. The process entails releasing a higher transcendental body from within the matrix of an “impure” body composed of lower plane energies/materials. You cultivate the animating vital energy within a lower body to “purify”

that energy and when it becomes purified and released you have a higher body attainment attached to the lower body. When you die on the earthly plane “the soul is released upon death,” which is essentially the arising of your subtle body that has inhabited/interpenetrated your physical shell all your life. This is why most people feel they are passengers within their body during life. Spiritual masters achieve an independent subtle body while alive, and can use the body to do good deeds in the world such as help them with their troubles. If you cultivate that body then you can release a Causal body composed of the higher energy within it, and then so on.

Locked within the matrix of our material plane body is an energetic superstructure of vital energy or Qi (Prana) of similar shape to our body, which cultures commonly call the soul, that is released upon death as a more perfected form of the physical body, but through the arduous process of spiritual cultivation you can attain its independence whilst alive and then have use of both it *and* your physical body. This is the meaning of enlightenment whose concomitant, attendant mental state is more joyful and purified than the mind transfixed within the material plane, and the same goes for each new body you achieve. Enlightenment is actually a body attainment, not a mental realization attainment, but it is taught as a mental attainment requiring virtue and purity in order to lead people to purify their consciousness in order to merit it.

All living beings therefore have within themselves etheric superstructures of more transcendental energies that can be released, and spiritual cultivation is the way to release that internal superstructure for human beings. When an individual acquires a higher body attainment composed of more transcendental energies, he/she then expresses himself/herself as being that particular body, identifying it as themselves, although they also retain control over their lower body vehicle(s) that then serve like lower appendages.

The physical body of the material plane is known as the food body, gross body, coarse human body, impure physical nature or body of flesh and blood. It is also referred to as the form skandha in Buddhism and *annamaya* (“foodstuff”) *kosha* in Hinduism. Although it is a solid phenomenon composed of atoms, space passes through the physical body with ease as our body moves because space is finer than matter, and thus a body moves through space without obstruction. It is not that a body divides space, such as parting air as you move through it, but that a body moves through motionless space that never changes. The body, composed mostly of space, passes through space as it moves, and space passes through it.

Although it looks solid, the matter of the physical body is mostly empty

ARHAT YOGA

space itself and its atomic solidity is actually condensed or confined energy. Since the body's inherent nature is energy, this is why the process of spiritual cultivation, and death, can free an energy-based copy of the physical body from the confines of its denser shell. There is survival after death. When the end of life arrives for the physical body it is because the subtle body within it, composed of its vital energy, has finally been released into the earthly heavenly plane around us that religions normally refer to as Heaven.

The freed subtle body is also known as the deva body, *yin-shen*, will-born body, Yang spirit, astral body, impure illusory body, man's soul, *suddha deba*, etheric body or body composed of Qi or Prana. It is a body of "impure atoms" because it still has etheric matter (Qi atoms) as its substance. It is referred to as the sensation skandha in Buddhism and *pranamaya* ("energy") *kosha* in Hinduism. It is the initial fruit of the spiritual path to liberation (that gives rise to some minor spiritual powers) and is the purer, more spiritual, more transcendental, truer element of human existence. For each body attainment, you can say the same for the subsequent higher attainment.

Once you attain this body, which requires a devotion to intensified spiritual practices and then passage through an intense twelve-year process of kundalini transformation, you are considered "twice born." The subtle body attainment is called the first dhyana achievement in Buddhism and is said to be characterized by the "joy of separating from the body," which is because you finally attain the freedom of a spiritual body independent of your physical body shell. With the achievement of the deva (subtle) body you enter the stages of personal transformation that lead out of samsara. Thus this attainment is called "Entering the Stream."

Humans who attain the subtle body attainment reach the Srotapanna Arhat stage ("stream-enterer") of enlightenment, thus becoming *Homo Deus*, while devas who start out at this level (such as those born in Heaven) and cultivate their body to a higher stage of purity reach the Sakadagamin stage of the Arhats. This is just a higher stage of subtle body purification whose attainment means that upon death the deva-attainee will definitely be reborn in the realm of devas (Heaven) rather than the human realm.

For this reason you should cultivate the purification of your inner Qi body within this life through cultivation exercises because even if you don't succeed in attaining enlightenment during life you will be far ahead of everyone else who didn't cultivate because you will have purified your subtle body to some degree. As devas, everyone in the Desire Realm

Heaven of our earthly plane is cultivating their body to reach the second dhyana (a more purified state of their body) during their life which then assures for themselves a rebirth in Heaven when that life is over rather than a rebirth in the lower earthly plane as a human once again.

The Causal body is the next higher body and is also known as the Mental body, Wisdom body, Mantra body, body of vibrations, *pranava deha*, man's spirit, Grace body, or purified illusory body. It is composed of a higher energy known as Shen (Taoist nomenclature) that is more transcendental (refined) than the Qi of the subtle body and capable of greater superpowers than the subtle body. It is free of all lower gross matter and impurities, but it is considered a denizen of the Realm of Form since it still has a solid-like structure. It is also referred to as the conception skandha in Buddhism and *manomaya* ("mind-stuff") *kosha* in Hinduism, and is the stage of an Anagamin Arhat.

The Supra-Causal body is also known as the Clear Light body, Wisdom Light body, *jnana deha*, Dharma body, Rainbow body, Buddha body, Arhat body, and is composed of what Taoism calls Later Heavenly Qi (energy, Prana or wind). It is "one with the universal life" composed of lower levels of energy, meaning that it can sense the happenings in all the lower energy realms of Nature because its energy realm is more refined. Hence it can be a witness of the universe able to freely hear and comprehend the minds of lower sentient beings (whose thoughts are composed of lower energies readily accessible to this body's more transcendental level), and able to access their knowledge and wisdom. When someone attain this body we say "their wisdom opens up" (which is why it is called the Wisdom body) because they no longer need to enter into someone and read their neurons to know their thoughts (as is necessary for subtle-bodied devas and Causal-bodied individuals, which are akin to the second and third dhyana). Rather, they can sense thoughts in the environment, or use *nirmanakaya* emanations to access the brains of many individuals, including animals such as snakes, parrots, dogs, elephants, etcetera. The Supra-Causal or Wisdom body is referred to as the volition skandha in Buddhism and *vijnanamaya* ("wisdom") *kosha* in Hinduism.

This stage of achievement is also called the fourth dhyana attainment of becoming a full Arhat, which is the classical meaning of "becoming enlightened." This everlasting and imperishable (long-lived) body is the attainment that people normally think of when they hear the word "enlightenment," and the attainment of this transcendental body (which is free of all coarser levels of matter and energy and consequently exhibits a tremendous flexibility of shape) is considered Sivahood, or "*nirvana* with

ARHAT YOGA

remainder” because it is “formless” yet imperfect since there is one remaining attainment left that is a still higher level of physical purification.

In Hinduism it is said that through spiritual exercises such as meditation, mantra, reverence and devotion you will purify your physical body (dense matter), subtle body and mental body that are the lower three *koshas* in order to attain “the state of final release,” or *Kaivalya*. This means the attainment of this body that belongs to the Formless Realm since it is free of all lower forms of matter and energy. This body, free of particulate matter in its construction, can therefore twist and turn in all sorts of shapes without restriction, which enables it to create all sorts of energy movements and effects (such as feelings of hot or cold or vibrations) within any human body it enters. An example is the strange currents of hot or cold energy people feel when a Buddha helps an individual move their energies during cultivation processes such as kundalini activation.

Being free of the lower realms and now understanding himself as belonging to the unity of all things in the one soup of Shakti (an attaine realizes that there is no separate existence), at this stage one recognizes that they are part of the one Ocean of Shakti (fabric of the universe) and becomes free of ignorance, delusions, and misunderstandings as regards the origins and evolution of life. Thus one becomes emancipated from Maya (delusions and ignorance) because he understands. Devoid of ignorance he realizes his eternal existence in the infinite ocean of Shakti as Shakti itself.

This Supra-Causal or Buddha body can generate energy copies of itself, called *nirmanakaya* emanations, which can be projected as independent entities in the world to perform specific deeds. When you finally are able to cultivate this body you will exist with a body vehicle whose structure doesn't degrade quickly because of the long-lived nature of its compositional elements (referred to as “light”). Therefore it is said you will live practically forever as an immortal. When it must die, your etheric body is so high that it can carry memories of your life with you into a new incarnation, which even happens to some extent when lower level Arhats are reborn, thus *ensuring a type of continuity or immortality from a different aspect than deathlessness*. With the attainment of the Supra-Causal body you escape further incarnations in the lower realms because of its transcendental composition absent of unpurified matter, and with immortality you insure continuity to escape the cycles of birth and death too.

The next attainment, or Immanence body, is also known as the Complete and Perfect Enlightenment body, or Great Golden Arhat attainment. It is a body composed of Primordial Heavenly energy. It is referred to as the

consciousness skandha in Buddhism, the stage of No More Learning, the *anandamaya* (“bliss”) *kosha* in Hinduism, and the stage of “*nirvana* without remainder” as it is said that no higher body vehicles are possible. Once you attain the stage of Buddhahood, which is the Arhat attainment of a Formless Realm body, there is this yet this higher body attainment that is composed of the most fundamental energies of Shakti possible where a body formation is still possible because linkages can exist between some form of rarified composite components. At this stage it is said that one does not hear, smell or see but becomes sight, sound and smell simultaneously, which Buddhism calls the interchangeability of the sense consciousnesses.

In the Buddhist *Heart Sutra* it is said, “Form is the same as Emptiness, Emptiness is the same as Form. The same can be said of the Sensation, Conception, Volition and Consciousness skandhas. All things are characterized by (come from) Emptiness. For Emptiness there is no beginning or ending, increase or decrease, purity or impurity. There is no ...”

What this actually means is that, “The physical body is no different than the fundamental substrate (Parabrahman), the primordial foundational substratum is the same as our physical body because it permeates it and is its ultimately composition. The real nature of our physical body is the primordial universal substrate and the same can be said for the subtle body, Causal body, Supra-Causal body and Immanence (Great Golden Buddha) body. They are all characterized by an emptiness of inherent, intrinsic existence; they are all essentially the fundamental substratum of the universe. The fundamental nature is unproduced and has no beginning or ending, undergoes no increase or decrease, doesn’t come from anywhere and isn’t going anywhere (isn’t transforming into anything else), and is neither defiled nor non-defiled (since apparent configurations arise within it).

Atisha describes the ultimate saying, “Here, there is no seeing and no seer, No beginning and no end, just peace ... It is non-conceptual and non-referential ... It is inexpressible, unobservable, unchanging, and unconditioned.” Thus, within It there is no seer nor seeing nor objects to be seen, etcetera. It is the state of a single substratum – a peaceful pure Aloneness ... It is non-composite, unconditioned, unchanging, indestructible, without attributes like space, unfathomable, unobservable, non-conceptual and non-referential – an unborn self-so eternal like an empty space or void that lacks all matter, energy or other types of phenomena. Within It there is nothing else; from Its aspect there is no such

thing as Shakti for there is only Itself, and yet Shakti is not absent from being an appearance within Its nature.

Therefore, ultimately within the foundational substrate there is no such thing as the chain of dependent existence (cause and effect relationships), yet dependent existence (cause and effect) is not absent since phenomena appear and function with apparent facticity. Yet they have no substantial, inherent, self-so intrinsic existence or own-nature where they exist in-and-of themselves. There is no such real thing as life that is intrinsically real because it stands/exists on its own, and yet life and consciousness appear. We are a creation within the space-time of Shakti that is like a bubble within an ocean or the impermanent process of a flickering lightning flash, and what we see and experience of Shakti is a limited mental approximation of reality that is an illusory construct we mentally create. That view of purified reality is certainly neither a complete nor accurate representation of Shakti, yet evolution has given us this ability of consciousness to make mental representations so that the object called a “living human being” could survive and replicate ...”

There is only one absolute reality - the one fundamental substrate - and everything else is a transient, non-intrinsic, composite (conditionally created through infinite interdependence) component existence within the fabric of manifest Shakti that is ultimately the single fundamental substratum. The space-time existence of Shakti is the foundational substrate in an apparent manifest sense – empty of any solid or dependable composition, always changing, yet something we can perceive as a momentary existence even though it lacks solidity but simple appears solid and continuous. Since our mental images of the phenomena within Shakti are imperfect and incomplete approximations, this makes them falsities or illusions once again. The unchanging fundamental substrate and its manifestation of Shakti are one and the same. This is the essence of non-duality.

Chapter 9

GENERATION OF HIGHER SPIRITUAL BODIES

[L]
[SEP]

The Yoga school says that the purpose of the spiritual path is to resolve the physical material body back into its most primal constituent components, which means cultivating higher transcendental bodies that are “closer” to the original nature in terms of their composition, namely the layers of universal emanation or planes of existence, until the composition of your ultimate body is as high/refined as you can go.

The practice of Yoga has the purpose of taking man back to his Source (source-nature) or self-nature, which is his True Self. This means the fundamental substrate of all existence. You cannot attain a physical body that is the fundamental substrate, but the highest body you can attain is resolving your physical nature to its highest constituent level, and that’s what you work for as the target of Yoga. This is called the Immanence body that is “fused with the universe” or “oned with eternity.” This is our real true life that is joined with this universe whereas the Form Realm and Desire Realm body aspects of our *sambhogakaya* (subtle and Causal bodies) are second and third level reflections of this life.

Taoism says that we must return to our original nature, our primordial essence. “Returning to the Source” does not mean dissolving the mind-ground and all its layers of manifestation into the transcendental all-ground of nature. If you did that then you would become extinct/annihilated as a sentient being, and there is no point to that. As with Yoga, you simply have to cultivate transcendental bodies until the composition of your ultimate body is the very highest possible.

The Confucian school also says to trace all things back to their source, which can only be done by generating these higher transcendental bodies.

Like every other spiritual school, it also provides names for these stages of attainment.¹

Hinduism says to cultivate a state of bliss, which is only attained by possessing a higher transcendental body as your major body vehicle (since its attendant mental state and realm of existence is considered blissful compared to a material body and the earthly world). Also, the physical sensation of that body is more comfortable as well. Hinduism also says that “the *atman* must return to Brahman,” meaning that you must achieve a higher body attainment as close to the original nature (Brahman) in composition as possible. The ultimate purpose in Hinduism is to reach the ultimate source of life and consciousness, which is the foundational essence. Once again, other than perfect annihilation the highest you can go – unless teachings for higher bodies have been kept from us – is to achieve the Immanence body attainment.

Buddhism says you must prove that all things come from the original nature by cultivating to attain it, but you can only prove that all things arise from the primordial fundamental nature by cultivating transcendental bodies composed of higher and higher essences, each new one composed of a level of energy-substance that is more primordial/transcendental than the previous. Each higher body leaves behind coarser elements from the old and is thus “closer” to the original essence in terms of composition, purity or refinement.

Thus according to Taoism, out of a physical body you can generate a body of Qi, out of a body of Qi (the subtle body or deva body) you can generate a Causal body composed of Shen, out of a Shen body you can generate a Supra-Causal body composed of Later Heavenly energy, out of a body of Later Heavenly energy you can generate an Immanence body composed of Primordial Heavenly energy, and so on. These Taoist bodies are matched with the stages of the Taoist Immortals. In a sense this is saying that the subtle body is the soul of the physical body, the Causal body is the soul of the subtle body, the Supra-Causal body is the soul of the Causal Body, and the Immanence body is the soul of the Supra-Causal body. These bodies are the *koshas* or sheaths of Hinduism, or skandhas of Buddhism. Also, in Buddhism it is explained that from the human body the Srotapanna stage of Arhatship is attained, from the Srotapanna stage the Sakadagamin stage is attained, from the Sakadagamin stage the Anagamin stage of Arhatship is achieved, from the Anagamin stage Buddhahood is achieved, and from Buddhahood as a base one can reach the stage of unexcelled perfect

¹ See *Color Me Confucius* by William Bodri.

enlightenment.

Islam explains this by saying that spiritual development means passing through various planes or levels of divine manifestation, and at each level we transmute by shedding a skin. This spiritual path in Islam is called “the return,” and has the same meaning as developing a new body of higher elements out of a body of coarser elements that belongs to a lower plane. In Islam the planes of existence are said to be like screens that separate us from the highest purity of Allah, the foundation of All, which of course is the fundamental substratum. Islam says the purpose of spiritual cultivation is to engage in an “unveiling” or “tearing off of veils” to see God’s face and experience unity with Allah, the original nature or Parabrahman. This too means that you must progress through a sequence of higher body attainments.

Christianity teaches that God wants us to return back to Him. Furthermore, Christianity says that we should strive to become partakers in the divine energies of God. We are also to seek communion with the saints who have achieved heavenly bodies, which means they are more near God the Father Supreme because of the process of divinization, deification, beautification, ascension, transcension or *theosis*, which is the glorification of an individual to a divine level.² This is achieved through your own spiritual efforts by cultivating an incorruptible, refined, transfigured body of glory and power, which refers to the initial subtle body (*Homo Deus*) and then higher body attainments. Christianity simply fails to disclose that there are many possible bodies rather than just one.

Thus the various religions and spiritual paths of the world phrase the cultivation of our inherent transcendental bodies - which is attaining enlightenment, “attaining the Tao,” becoming an immortal, achieving liberation, emancipation of the soul, transcending the earthly plane, the attainment of Arhathood, becoming a *jnani*, becoming a saint, etcetera - in many different ways.

The spiritual cultivation path for attaining the higher bodies entails transformations within your physical body to purify impure elements of its own vital energy, which composes the subtle body that is the first higher attainment. The result is that you first purify the Qi/Prana of your physical body and gradually generate from within it a body of transcendental elements that can leave your physical body at will – the subtle (deva) body

² See *The Mystical Path of Christian Theosis: Practical Exercises for Experiencing Christian Purification, Illumination and Glorification* by Elijah John.

attainment composed of vital Qi energy that Indians call Prana. This “soul body” is already existent within your physical body as the vital energy part of its structure, which is why it is released at death for everyone, but due to spiritual practice you can purify its essence and enable it to be released whilst alive and still retain a tether to the lower physical body so that both bodies can live where the higher body can still use the lower. Then you “live in the world while transcending it.”

Spiritual cultivation is essentially a pathway of Yoga to cultivate your pre-existing Qi/Prana so that you can produce this independent spiritual body as the initial fruit of the spiritual path, thus making you an enlightened Arhat at the lowest stage of spiritual attainments. When ordinary individuals die their internal body of Qi/Prana leaves their physical shell, but it is much weaker and much more impure than any body that is purified through the kundalini transformation processes of Yoga and spiritual cultivation. It is this subtle body, called the “soul” in Christianity, which is responsible for the energy of consciousness that works through your anatomical structure. You cannot have consciousness without Qi energy, namely a “soul” of subtle energy composition within your physical body. This is what leaves your body at death. It transmigrates from life to life bringing along with it the accumulated dispositions it has developed (*samskaras*), and which become part of the new personality upon rebirth, hence are similar to hereditary traits.

On the cultivation pathway to generate the independent subtle body you must use your will to mobilize your Qi/Prana so that it circulates and spreads in every part of your body, making it go to your four limbs, muscles and ligaments, internal organs, skeletal bones, all your tissues - everywhere. This is called cultivating your Qi/Prana, rotating your Qi/Prana, or revolving the “vital breath” of your body so that this Qi, Prana, vital energy, wind element, life force or kundalini energy penetrates everywhere. This is how you purify your physical nature and its inherent subtle Qi body.

You accomplish this via various spiritual exercises that stimulate your Qi/Prana, typically by rhythmical mantra sounds, breathing practices or by arousing positive or negative emotions that move your Qi/Prana, and by moving your Qi/Prana with your will or by the physical movements of special exercises. If you purify and strengthen the Qi/Prana of your body (your vita energy) sufficiently and in the right way, then out of your body’s physical matrix you can eventually generate an independent spiritual body formed of your Qi/Prana that can then leave and return to your physical shell as you want. This subtle body attainment, known as the deva body, is the first stage/fruit of the genuine spiritual path. Attaining the deva body is

equivalent to breaking free from your animal form. It makes you an Arhat, Arihant, *jnani* or *jivanmukta*.

This generation process occurs when the physical body is “burnt out” through the continual application of the “fire of yoga,” and eventually produces the “divinized body,” “purified body” or “perfect body” that is the subtle body. Once again, this accomplishment is just the first stage of the spiritual path, which is called the first dhyana or Srotapanna Arhat accomplishment that is also known as *Homo Deus*. It is the liberation of the human spirit in an independent form, composed of Qi, from the bondage of the physical body.

This subtle body, composed of “pure elements,” which means your purified Qi/Prana, is called the “house of kundalini” because purifying and transforming the Qi/Prana within your body to cultivate its emergence is sometimes called kundalini yoga or *kriya* yoga (as well as *nei-gong*, *neijia*, *anapana*, inner energy work), and these particular yoga activities correspond to purifying your Qi/Prana. The subtle body (deva body) composed of Qi/Prana has free movement in the world although unseen by men, and its residential realm is called the earthly heavenly plane. This is the level of etheric existence achieved by ordinary human beings, so this is what is known as “Heaven.”

The next stage of transformation is that the subtle body can through a similar process generate from within itself a more transcendental Causal body, Mental body, Mantra body, Shen body, or purified illusory body that is entirely free from all gross matter and impurities, including those still remaining in the subtle body composed of Qi. The achievement is equivalent to the fifth and sixth Bodhisattva *bhumis* in Buddhism as well as the third dhyana attainment. It is also known as the stage of the Anagamin Arhat attainment. The Causal body is a transfigured body higher in transcendental energy-matter composition than the subtle body composed of Qi, so it resides on a yet higher plane (invisible to the subtle body) and has access to other transcendental worlds called Pure Lands (“blessed worlds of the virtuous”) that the subtle body cannot access. Naturally the Causal body has dominion over more siddhas or superpowers than the subtle body.

The next transformation is that this Causal body, with more cultivation, can generate from within itself a Supra-Causal body, also known as a Clear light body, Dharma body, Buddha body, Rainbow body, light body or bliss body. With this attainment, called “*nirvana* with remainder” that equates with the seventh and eighth Bodhisattva *bhumi* levels, you can identify with universal

ARHAT YOGA

life that resides on the lower planes. You can know their thoughts, emotions and please for help. Just as light can be divided into the colors of the rainbow, this “light body” can generate countless invisible *nirmanakaya* projections of itself to perform tasks and functions throughout the cosmos.

In attaining this body you become a Para-mukta, meaning you attain Sivahood or what is typically thought of as the “enlightenment” or “liberation” that leaves the coarser physical planes behind forever. While attaining the deva body is equivalent to escaping from your animal form, attaining the Supra-Casual, Rainbow or Buddha body is equivalent to breaking free from physical form. This is because its composition is akin to pure energy that is forever free of the lower realms of matter including etheric atoms, which is why its longevity is legendary. The process of attainment is that the energy of your physical body of impure elements is refined through spiritual cultivation practices to produce your subtle body of pure elements (refined Qi/Prana), next the Casual body is produced by refining the energy of your subtle body, and then the Supra-Causal body, Buddha Body or Arhat body is attained by refining the energy of the Causal body. At this stage it is free from all gross matter and impurities, and is imperishable and everlasting.

This is the body level that escapes the cycle of reincarnation in the lower realms forever, thus transcending *samsara*, and is equivalent to achieving the mind of *bodhi* or *bodhi* mind. The concomitant (naturally accompanying) consciousness of the individual who attains the Supra-Causal body is the unexcelled, all-pervading mind of enlightenment that can sense things in the lower (denser) realms of energy-matter, but this Buddha body only achieves *nirvana* with remainder. Nevertheless, since forevermore this body cannot fall into the lower realms because of its transcendental composition that is so refined and purified of lower atoms and energies, and essentially becomes the vehicle of immortality, it is also the level of attainment equivalent to the Bodhisattva vows.

Going further through cultivation, this body can cultivate from within itself a body of Immanence said to be close to God Supreme, meaning that it is the most transcendental body attainment you can reach, and thus is equivalent to Complete and Perfect Enlightenment or the perfect *nirvana* attainment (*nirvana* without remainder) of No More Learning that is final liberation. This is the stage of *anittarasamyaksambodhi* or perfect enlightenment. It is the attainment that goes along with a Great Golden Arhat’s body, which is the Immanence body attainment. Higher bodies might be possible still but earthly teachings are restricted regarding such information, and only pose this body as the final termination target for your

cultivation efforts.

This process of spiritual emancipation, liberation, release, *moksha*, self-realization, *nirvana* or enlightenment starts with your understanding that the ultimate evolutionary source of energy and matter, and thus life and its attendant consciousness, is the original nature or *dharmakaya* that is the primordial substance of the universe. You are essentially an evolute, emanation, or transformation of this ultimate foundational essence, which is thus your Real Self since It is your foundational self, or fundamental substance. That makes it your original nature or fundamental self-nature.

One proves this by purifying your body back to its most purified elementary forces, thus creating higher and higher transcendental bodies in the process. Each new body stays attached to the lower body from which it was generated, and each resides on a different plane that is invisible to the previous plane of existence. Each is capable of different powers and skills that you can master which can affect the denser plane(s) below its own level of manifestation (plane of composition).

A set of these bodies linked together, or these bodies together with all their *nirmanakaya*, or simply the highest body attainment you reach just by itself, is called the *sambhogakaya*. In Hinduism this is the *Vishvarupa*.

Chapter 10 THE STAGES OF SPIRITUAL ATTAINMENT³

An individual who successively cultivates their subtle body to attain the deva body that can come and go out of their physical body at will is called a Srotapanna, which is the Christian stage of *Homo Deus*. This is the first stage of Arhat enlightenment attainment. It is also called attaining the first dhyana in Buddhism or *vitarka* (coarse mental grasping) samadhi in Hinduism. Its attainment is called a “birth by transformation” since it arises out of the physical body due to meditation work, morality, merit and Qi cultivation efforts. You have to cultivate your inner Qi-body with countless inner energy practices (*nei-gong*) for its birth to become possible. After it emerges the Indian yoga schools say you are one of the “twice born.” Jesus also explained, “Unless one is born again he cannot see the Kingdom of Heaven,” which is referring to the deva body attainment. This deva body attainment is equivalent to becoming *Homo Deus*.

With the subtle deva body an adept attains the eight yogic powers, or *siddhi*, because the subtle body composed of Qi/Prana can change its shape and form to become bigger, smaller, lighter, heavier and so on. This is why a subtle body can shrink itself to enter into someone’s physical body and learn to read the memories stored in someone’s brain, which is one of the training practices after achievement since this is how spiritual beings help human beings. Using this new body he/she can perform minor miracles (tricks) in the physical world such as converting a dry tree into a green one, stop railway trains or cars, fill a dry well with water and so forth. Of the eight yogic powers, the *ishita siddhi* of “lordship over someone” means possessing them with one of your higher bodies, or a *nirmanakaya*

³ See *Nyasa Yoga, Move Forward, Color Me Confucius, God Speaks* (Meher Baba) and the story of Ramalinga Swamikal (Vallalar).

projection, and causing them to think or do what you want.

If you use a higher body to enter into someone's lower body you can therefore control them such as suppressing their spiritual powers by blocking them through control of the Qi of your body that is possessing someone else's lower body. This is how "higher" masters can block the superpowers of someone with lower attainments. It is not because of higher superpower skills but because they have one higher body, such as an Immanence body entering into a Supra-Causal body.

The individual who cultivates the subtle body to a higher stage of purity is a Sadragamin, or second stage Arhat. This is alternatively called attaining the second dhyana or *vicara* (refined mental grasping) samadhi. Devas start out with a subtle body already whereas humans start out with a physical body and must first cultivate an independent subtle body, which normally is ejected from their physical shell upon death. Thus this higher stage of subtle body purification, where the Qi/Prana of your subtle (deva) body is refined to leave even more gross matter behind, is simply specified for the benefit of devas who already possess a subtle body. Devas are considered to possess the first dhyana, and by cultivating the purity of their Qi to the level of the second dhyana they can avoid reincarnation on the earthly plane.

Normally when a deva dies he or she will be reborn in the human earthly plane. However, if devas cultivate their Qi while in Heaven then they can purify it enough that they will be reborn in Heaven again upon that death, which is why all devas are always working hard studying with a spiritual master and cultivating their Qi. Their two major cultivation techniques are kundalini yoga where they focus on concentrating or moving their Qi in various parts of their body,⁴ and sexual cultivation where they stimulate their happy, joyous emotions and Qi during sexual congress without losing energy so that they can excite their Qi everywhere inside them and make it circulate better and infuse every cell with bliss. Furthermore, this means that people who cultivated during life, even if they did not attain the Tao

⁴ See *Nyasa Yoga*, *Buddha Yoga*, *Neijia Yoga*, *Bodhisattva Yoga* (forthcoming), *Visualization Power* and *The Mystical Path of Christian Theosis*. If you were aiming to transform the Qi of a country, city, temple, company or other organization of men you should read *Culture, Country, City, Company, Person, Purpose, Passion, World*. Together these books are the true school of Vajrayana that cultivates the form and energy of a structure. If you were interested in mindfulness practice and cultivating inner virtue and purity of mind you should read *Color Me Confucius*, *The Mystical Path of Christian Theosis*, and *Meditation Case Studies*. In order to help rejuvenate the physical body for Vajrayana practice you should study and apply *Detox: Cleanse Your Body Quickly and Completely* and *Look Younger, Live Longer*.

(enlightenment), are much further ahead than those who did not cultivate because they purified their Qi to some extent, and will have an easier time in Heaven as a deva in purifying their Qi to the level called the second dhyana.

In other words, the first and second dhyana of Buddhism refer to two different purification/cultivation levels for the same subtle body composed of Qi/Prana. As a human, when you die you attain an impure subtle body as a deva, which is equivalent to the first dhyana or Srotapanna attainment. You will be reborn in the earthly plane again as a human when your heavenly life is over *unless you cultivate its purity to a higher level, which is the second dhyana*. Devas in heaven, meaning the earthly heavenly plane, will be reborn as humans when they die unless they cultivate the second dhyana Sakadagamin attainment whilst alive (the work extensively on cultivating the Qi of their subtle body) so that their rebirth can remain in heaven as a deva. The Sakadagamin attainment is the same body as the Srotapanna except that its Qi energy is more purified or refined. When devas enter human bodies to help spiritual practitioners cultivate their Qi, higher bodied beings help those devas purify their bodies as well, especially when devas enter into humans to help transform their Qi during spiritual practices.

Therefore devas are always helping humans cultivate their Qi during times of religious worship or Qi practice (such as during kundalini yoga activities or certain types of martial arts) because they also receive help at the same time, and especially during meditation practice when their efforts to move your Qi via their own are not thwarted by a strong clinging to your thoughts or inner Qi sensations. If you hold onto your thoughts during meditation practice you will bind the movement (circulatory flow) of your Qi, and thus their efforts to move their Qi inside you to help purify your own will be obstructed. This is another reason why people are taught to practice “empty mind” or witnessing meditation practice where you detach from internal sensations and your thought-stream. This makes it easier for spiritual beings to enter into you and help transform your Qi for the first dhyana attainment.

The individual who cultivates the Causal body is an Anagamin, or third stage Arhat. This is the third dhyana attainment of Buddhism and the *ananda* (bliss) samadhi of Hinduism. Using this new body composed of Shen (a type of energy higher than Qi/Prana) he/she becomes capable of performing grand miracles such as giving sight to the blind, restoring limbs to the maimed, and sometimes even raising the dead to life (although at this stage the life restoration ability only applies to lower creatures rather than human beings). He can experience yet more of the different planes and

worlds of the transcendental spheres, called Pure Lands.

The individual who cultivates the Supra-Causal body is a full Arhat, or “Buddha,” which is called attaining the fourth dhyana, “*nirvana* with remainder” achievement or *asmita* (existence) samadhi in Hinduism. With this body he becomes capable of raising the dead and even creating new life. He can also generate many *nirmanakaya* emanation bodies to do simultaneous activities in lower realms, and even project one into a womb to be reborn in the world of men. A reborn *nirmanakaya* is an individual who usually attains the Tao (achieves the subtle body attainment) at a very young age because the *nirmanakaya*’s father (or mother) is typically working on cultivating his or her Qi all the time because of the tether that connects the two.

The individual who cultivates the Immanence body is a Great Golden Arhat, or Complete and Perfectly Enlightened Buddha. This is the Buddhist stage of No More Learning, or “*nirvana* without remainder.” Since you (supposedly) reach the highest body attainment that is as close to your original *self-nature* as possible, this is why enlightenment is called perfect “*self-realization*” or the final liberation.

These higher bodies starting with the subtle body are all considered stages of “enlightenment,” realization, spiritual attainment, spiritual salvation, divinization, *theosis*, ascension, transcendence, Arhat attainment, deification, beautification, glorification or liberation. However, most spiritual literature focuses on just the Supra-Causal Buddha body attainment, and most people think of this stage as “Buddha” enlightenment whereas even the subtle body attainment is considered enlightenment.

Devotees of all religions and spiritual traditions can and do equally cultivate to attain all these bodies. They don’t attain anything other than these body attainments, and then practice using their abilities that we normally think of as superpowers. Moslem, Jew, Christian, Hindu, Taoist, Buddhist ... everyone achieves the same body attainments. To attain a higher body, which takes you out of the material world, is the ultimate purpose of the spiritual path. The purpose of the spiritual path is to attain these higher bodies and eventually the Supra-Causal body (Buddha or Arhat stage) so that you can jump out of the lower rounds of reincarnation forever.

These bodies are inherent within the energy of your physical nature and their generation is the natural result of spiritual practice that purifies your Qi and conduct. Their production is not the monopoly of any person, sect, spiritual school, tradition, practice or religion. However, even though

ARHAT YOGA

everyone attains the same body achievements we find that Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism, Taoism, Sufism, Confucianism, Yoga and other traditions have very different names for these common stages of attainment.

An individual on the spiritual path might cultivate prayers, mantra recitation, visualization practice, mental introspection, pranayama, concentration practice, stretching *asanas*, bhakti, *anapana*, *nei-gong*, kundalini yoga, sexual cultivation, sexual restraint (*brahmacharya* or celibacy), a special diet, fasting, meditation, charity work, good deeds and all sorts of other cultivation techniques to attain the higher bodies, but if their cultivation of mind, body and behavior are insufficient they will not attain the first subtle body and rise to the spiritual realms during life. You need merit (a good character, good deeds, mental purity and virtue), and must cultivate your Qi and meditation during life.

The key is to use techniques to cultivate your Yin and Yang Qi so that your inner Qi body becomes stronger and then independent of your physical form in that your spirit (Qi body) can leave your physical form at will. From this subtle body attainment you can then cultivate to achieve the yet higher transcendental bodies of the spiritual path.

The first stage of cultivation practice is called “laying the foundation” where you work at restoring and replenishing your body, its health and its energy so that it reaches a state of flourishing (optimum health for its age, physical constitution and other conditions). This includes diet, herbal or other medicines, physical manipulation to correct and structural deficiencies, and exercises. After replenishing the basic constituents of the body so that they conform to the requirements of higher spiritual practice, later you can work on cultivating its Qi, which is called harmonization, refining, purification, improving its circulation or “nourishing life” depending upon what objective or aspect of the path you are targeting in your practices. This is also called the Stage of Virtue Training and Wisdom Accumulation because at this ground stage of cultivation you also work on polishing, perfecting or upgrading your personality, perspectives, habits, skills, ethics and ways of doing things, which is the foundational stage of general religious virtue practice for the public where you work on purifying your personality and conduct. In Patanjali’s Yoga the state of *Niyama* refers to physical purification, spiritual observance, self-study (wisdom and knowledge accumulation, and devotion. These factors overlap with the activities of the foundational Stage of Training in Virtue and Accumulating Wisdom that is found in most religions.

Next comes the Stage of Intensified Yoga Practices, or “arts of the Way,” which is also called the stage of transforming your Jing (your physical body made of semen) to Qi because it entails cultivating the Qi of your body so that through a process of refinement your inner subtle body of Qi becomes purified, strong and finally independent of your physical nature. This is the stage of “refining your Qi,” “refining your Jing (essence) and transforming it into breath (Qi),” “harmonizing your breath” or “refining the form” since you have to cultivate both your physical body and the circulation of its internal Qi energy to do this.

This is a stage of actual *doing*, which requires *nei-gong* work in moving your Qi with your will (mind or intent),⁵ although this active work also leads to a state of mental quiescence. You should strengthen this inner quiet and clarity through the meditation practice called “emptying the mind.” If enough preparatory cultivation work is done, of meditation and inner Qi *gong-fu*, you will initiate a twelve-year period of *kundalini transformations* where your internal Qi moves by itself because it is then guided by Buddhas who take over the transformation process by using their own energy. Upon success, your inner spirit body composed of Qi can leave your physical body at will through the top of your head.

With attainment of the independent subtle body, called the deva body (since it is a heavenly body that can enter and leave your physical body at will), this is called the Stage of Attaining the Tao. This stage of Srotapanna Arhatship constitutes the achievement of spiritual enlightenment or liberation – also called “crossing the shore,” “ascending into Heaven,” “the winged transformation,” “liberation from the corpse,” and “becoming twice born” – but it only constitutes the initial lowest stage of the ranks of possible attainments. Even so, with the subtle body attainment you enter the stream of personal transformations that lead out of samsara, which is why this attainment makes one a “Stream-enterer.”

From this point on, you enter the Stage of True Cultivation Practice where you next cultivate the energy of this subtle body, which becomes your new center of life, to attain the Causal body (which is called refining Qi to attain Shen). Then you refine/cultivate the energy of the Causal body after its attainment to achieve the Buddha body, which is called “refining Spirit (Shen) to attain Emptiness (the Supra-Causal body).” The physical emptiness of the Supra-Causal body is that it is now free of all vestiges of coarse matter because the Anagamin (Causal) body still had some impure energy-matter elements even though it is known as the pure illusory body.

⁵ See *Neijia Yoga, Nyasa Yoga, Buddha Yoga and Bodhisattva Yoga* by William Bodri.

Finally, the vital energy of the Supra-Casual Buddha body is cultivated to attain the Immanence body, whose attainment constitutes the Stage of Complete and Perfect Enlightenment, the Stage of No More Learning, or final liberation. It is so difficult to achieve this highest body attainment, just as it is so very difficult to split a photon of light, that Taoism terms this cultivation stage as “breaking Emptiness to return to the Tao.” “Emptiness” refers to the Buddha Body, Rainbow light body or Dharma body that is a formless body free of material elements like light, and “return to the Tao” refers to achieving the highest body attainment whose composition, due to physics, is as close to the foundational substrate as we can get.

The entire spiritual path is exactly this. Otherwise it is a path of accumulating merit in this life, and improving your personality, mental patterns, habit energy and skills so that you have a better fortune, better conditions and better foundation in this life and in a subsequent life to achieve this task. Thus, people go round and round the cycles of reincarnation endlessly, which is administered by Buddhas so that people’s etheric bodies do not disintegrate (they are working on strengthening the integrity of people’s bodies throughout people’s lives) until individuals finally attain the purified subtle body and can then start working to cultivate the nearly immortal, indestructible Buddha body.

You might not attain the deva body while alive, but you still must cultivate your Qi even after death to attain the second dhyana in heaven so that you merit a heavenly rebirth rather than return to the earthly realm when your heavenly life is over. This is how reincarnation works; if your body’s energy does not become elevated, purified or refined there is no way to become reborn in a higher realm because your composition is too dense or impure, so spiritual cultivation is necessary. Since the major spiritual accomplishment people can and should reach requires that they cultivate/refine their Qi through exercises, good thoughts and good behavior, Qi cultivation in various ways and forms has become the predominant but unrecognized practice of the spiritual path.

Many of these methods can lead to health and vigor, the elimination of illness, and extension of your lifespan. By cultivating the circulation of your Qi and opening of your Qi channels you will smoothen your inner Qi flow. Personalitywise this leads to inner calmness. The better Qi flow throughout your body and brain will help you to develop a mind of greater clarity and peacefulness, thus enabling you to enjoy life more and make better decisions so that you change your fortune for the better. When you start

thinking with greater clarity due to self-cultivation practices you can start to overcome your own distortions of judgment and cultivate wisdom so as to make better decisions in your life. Therefore, even if one does not succeed in attaining the deva body, one still gains tremendous advantage from engaging in spiritual cultivation practices. The practices are still beneficial to your mind, body and fortune.

Lacking sufficient cultivation to achieve the subtle body while alive, individuals on the spiritual path who cultivate will from their endeavors still achieve a higher measure of good health, energy, longevity, mental clarity and an improved fortune in this life and the next as a result of their efforts. For instance, cultivation efforts that affect your Qi/Prana can sometimes cure illness, and in the absence of illness (attained through meditation and Qi practices) one will see health improvements, greater energy and the prolongation of one's life. Thus, you will improve your health and longevity from Qi practices, breathing practices, virtue training and meditation practices. Furthermore, once they die such individuals will have an easier time of cultivating the higher bodies as a deva spirit in the earthly heavenly plane because they already performed a lot of Qi refinement work while living.

Few people succeed in spiritual cultivation during life, but everyone dies. If you cultivated your Qi during life you will be much farther ahead than everyone else since their own residual Qi will be less purified than your own due to a lifetime of spiritual cultivation efforts that helped to purify your Qi to a great extent. Everyone gets the correct spiritual teachings in the afterlife because they can see all around them the process of reincarnation being managed, masters using multiple spiritual bodies to help people and so forth, and so then they start to cultivate their Qi with ferocity since the spiritual road is finally made clear. All false dogmas they followed in life are revealed for the falsities they are, and the true path of spiritual practice is known everywhere. Qi cultivation then becomes one of the primary occupations of the devas, and their two primary practices are kundalini yoga and sexual cultivation (where they try to excite their positive emotions and their Qi during sexual congress).

One who practices policing their mind and behavior through mental watching/witnessing practice will also be cultivating their character, the refinement of their Qi as well as good fortune for this life and the next life due to their pursuit of virtue, merit and the avoidance of faults and error in life. An energetic vigor for correcting your personal faults and weaknesses and doing good deeds will also bear positive karmic fruit in terms not just of personality improvements but of your Qi purification. Ashrams in India,

ARHAT YOGA

for instance, are meant to lead a person by stages through virtuous deeds, enabling an individual to purify his character of flaws, and finally attain an enlightenment that transcends the physical nature.

Human beings who don't succeed in attaining the deva body will still improve their life to a major extent because of better thinking processes, better personality traits, better health and energy, higher Qi purification and due to changing their fortune for the better. They might not succeed in attaining the deva body but they can still improve their lives in all sorts of ways by spiritual cultivation efforts that bring them to a progress point halfway between the spiritual and physical realms, which puts them at a fantastic advantage after they die and are reborn in Hea

ARHAT YOGA

Chapter 14 GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF QI/PRANA INTERNAL ENERGY PRACTICE⁶

In spiritual cultivation you proceed from study to practice, and from practice to study. You need to mix study and practice together (theory, meditation and inner energy work) to achieve the final result just as you must mix flour and water together to make bread. Unfortunately, in many traditions the adherents only study spiritual books and perform neither meditation nor inner energy work. Some traditions don't even emphasize good behavior. In some schools they perform physical exercises but no energy work or introspective self-corrective work that polishes the character and improves behavior. You need to engage in inner energy practices, meditation practice and behavioral training. You also have to start performing acts of merit that help other people and this must become part of your character along with a mindset of kindness and acceptance of others including all their faults.

You attain the goal of the spiritual path from perfection in study and practice together because study alone will not strengthen, purify and then liberate the inner subtle body from your physical nature, which normally happens only upon death. Practice without a guide will lead you nowhere also. In other words, study alone will not get you to the first dhyana attainment, which is the Srotapanna deva body achievement, because it is only achieved through cultivation practice, and haphazard cultivation practice without adherence to principles will produce no substantial progress either.

For the generation of an independent subtle body during life you need meditation work to stop holding onto your thoughts (which thus frees your Qi to circulate better since Qi and thoughts are linked), and to sharpen your mental clarity so that you can spot and then correct errant thinking and behavioral tendencies. You need to cultivate and perfect the abilities and activities of consciousness.

You also need to perform energy work on your inner Qi/Prana. The deva body, or Srotapanna Arhat attainment, is your inner subtle body but it is locked inside your human frame until death, or until you release it through spiritual cultivation. Cultivating its freedom through inner Qi exercises is sometimes called "growing the embryo," which is terrible terminology because the word "embryo," "baby" or "womb" makes people incorrectly

⁶ See *Nyasa Yoga, The Yoga of Siddha Tirumular, Yoga Yajnavalkya*, etcetera.

think that there is a small body like a baby developing inside you. Actually, you are simply purifying and strengthening the Qi inherent within your full form physical body, and the subtle body when ejected is an exact duplicate of this adult structure. Once it is freed from the physical body, which is the “mind-born” body achievement of enlightenment described in the Buddhist *Surangama Sutra*, you have the beginnings of the *sambhogakaya* attainment because it will still be attached to your physical body, and you will have then two bodies that you can use. This is the first stage of enlightenment equivalent to the first dhyana.

This type of purification-ejection process of a new and higher transcendental body out of an old (lower) one is the spiritual path, and sometimes it is called “building a Buddha within you.” Because you can keep generating bodies in this fashion you can gain access to the abilities of higher spiritual bodies with greater capabilities than the physical body, and by using these higher bodies spiritual “masters” are able to perform miracles in the world. The miracles don’t “come from God” but from spiritual beings using their bodies to perform certain deeds in the world. To release the subtle body while alive you must perform lots of intensified yoga practices that purify its Yin and Yang qualities, and greatly increase the freedom of its internal energy circulation. You can pursue this path by becoming healthy and engaging in intensified yoga practices or martial arts forms that stress the mastery of breathing and inner energy as do *taijiquan*, *bagua* 八卦 and *xingyiquan*.

Furthermore, if you are not a virtuous person, spiritual beings will not help you in this process and their help is absolutely essential for purifying your Qi, as is the assistance of a qualified master to oversee the process. Therefore, it is impossible to succeed unless you have a good teacher and are also a virtuous human being deserving of higher bodies because you are intent on helping others and devoted to self-improvement of your own behavior.

The principles of effective practice differ for each type of cultivation technique. The principles of practice always take into account the welfare of your mind and body – you are never to hurt your mind or body through spiritual practice! You are always to preserve and improve your health and well-being otherwise it will be difficult to proceed onwards and succeed. Remember that the deva body is a duplicate of your physical body, so you shouldn’t harm your body in any way. In particular, you should not undertake extreme ascetic practices that tax or risk your physical body, you should never ignore taking care of medical conditions, should cut off habits harmful to your health and welfare (ex. smoking, drugs, drinking, etc.) and should not devote yourself to harmful physical sports that produce frequent

physical injuries.

The main objectives of spiritual practices are to calm your mind and stimulate the Qi/Prana of your body into moving so that this purifies your Qi/Prana. A greater circulation of your inner Qi, or the act of washing it over and over again, will gradually strengthen your inner subtle body composed of Qi/Prana until through purity it can weaken the chains to the physical body and finally leave your physical shell while you are alive. Then it becomes your main body of being, the center of your life, although still attached to your physical body, which becomes like an appendage that you learn how to control using that new body. The higher body can reside within its lower shell or somewhere else, and when traveling somewhere else we say “the master is in samadhi” because his spirit is absent and he seems non-responsive (as if in a thoughtless trance). When a master repeats a long discourse/lesson to his students (and the students wonder why he repeats the same lesson over and over again) it is often because he is absent for a prolonged period of time and asks another spiritual master to possess his body during that interval and deliver a lesson that draws from his memories. Inner energy practices to mature the independent subtle body attainment (Tibetan Buddhism calls it the “impure illusory body”) are sometimes called “attaining control over the life process within your self” because Qi/Prana is the body’s vital energy or life force.

You should practice as many different types of spiritual exercise as possible, each of which works according to different principles for transforming your Qi/Prana. Through *simultaneous* practice of *many different cultivation exercises* at the same time, each which affects your Qi/Prana via *different principles*, you will maximize your chances for real Qi/Prana transformations that will purify its nature and produce the independent subtle body quickest. Since you don’t know which techniques will work best for transforming your Qi/Prana, the use of multiple techniques simultaneously, each of which works on affecting your Yin or Yang Qi/Prana according to different principles, is highly recommended.

For instance, one might during a single day practice meditation, Mantrayana recitation, pranayama, yoga stretching with visualization on your muscles, and inner *nei-gong* work (*anapana*) to move your Qi. This is an example of practicing multiple techniques simultaneously rather than just a single cultivation method. Using multiple methods will mean that each of them will have an effect on transforming (purifying) your Qi/Prana via different principles. The harder you work – the more types of methods you practice and the longer and more consistently you practice – the higher your chances for success, and the quicker your success if success is to come.

Success is the result of consistent effort applied across time. The longer and deeper you practice the more profound will be your results.

Some of the major principles of practice for different spiritual exercises are as follows:

Mantra and Prayer Recitation: Reciting mantras or prayers while listening to the sounds/words quiets and calms your mind to help you attain a state of quiescence. A mantra also invites into your body the energies of a particular family of Buddhas who have vowed to help practitioners who recite their lineage's mantra, thus helping to purify your Qi and hasten your spiritual development. Mantra recitation also transforms your Qi/Prana directly because of the resonance of the sounds vibrating the Qi/Prana within your body and rhythmical breathing used during recitation that then *pushes* your Qi/Prana in a rhythmic circulation pattern. When prayers are continuously recited in tune with your breathing this will help to regularly circulate your Qi with a push and circulate to purify it as well. As stated, different mantras, prayers, and spiritual songs (as well as books, passages, and spiritual texts) are “answered by,” “protected by,” attended to or receive response from different enlightened masters who through their vows assume responsibility for them. Naturally these are masters who have achieved the long-lived transcendental body attainments and fill their time with this as one of their compassionate activities. In response to hearing within their Supra-Causal or Immanence body the recitation of a mantra, prayer or text they have chosen to protect, they arrive via *nirmanakaya* emanations to work on the Qi/Prana of the practitioners who recite them. Therefore a good mantra/prayer is one that you feel moves the Qi/Prana within your body. In other words, higher spiritual beings will respond to mantras and prayers due to their personal vows to protect/help those who recite the chosen mantra or prayer they have vowed to “protect” or respond to. However, even without this help there are certain mantra *bija* sounds that often *naturally resonate* or stimulate the Qi/Prana within particular parts or segments of your body, and therefore also help to strongly purify your Qi/Prana through the power of sound vibrations alone. To make mantra practice even more effective, you can (1) generate strong emotions at the same time you practice recitations to better arouse your Qi/Prana, (2) think of being the ideal model of a particular personality trait and hold that core *bhava* emotional experience in your mind-stream and as a body feeling, (3) combine mantra/prayer recitation with visualization efforts that also move your Qi/Prana inside you or concentrate it at a selected location, or (4) using your willpower try to stimulate/vibrate the Qi in different areas of your body according to the sounds. Then mantra or prayer recitation becomes the more effective method of Mantrayana

practice.⁷ Basically, whenever you recite a prayer or mantra *you should try to move the Qi within your body*, and it's even better if you impregnate the Qi of your entire body with a specific Yin or Yang feeling/emotion (via various methods as explained) to help activate that internal Qi for purification purposes. By moving your Qi through rhythmical breathing, rhythmical recitation of sounds that vibrate it, and by actively trying to move it internally, and by impregnating it with various qualities you help cleanse your subtle body's Qi, which is an absolutely necessary preparation for ejection as an independent deva body. Countless individuals throughout history have used prayer recitation or mantra recitation as a means to calm their mind and transform their Qi as part of the intensified preparation work necessary for attaining the deva body enlightenment attainment. The continuous recitation of the Jesus Prayer, as practiced in the Eastern Orthodox Christian tradition, is one such technique while various holy mantra recitations are a standard practice in countless eastern religions.

Mantrayana: Certain mantra sounds are incredibly effective at naturally vibrating (stimulating) the Qi/Prana in certain sections of your body through resonance, such as the three consecutive sounds of “Om Ah Hung,” “Om So Hum” or “Ah Rah Ham” affecting the Qi/Prana in your (1) head and arms; (2) chest region; and (3) abdomen together with legs, respectively. Many people know “Om Ah Hum” due to association with the Buddha Samantabhadra, but the mantra “Ah Rah Ham” is just as effective in vibrating the three sections of your body consecutively when you focus each sound on a different body section. Actually, when reciting the syllables of this mantra they should be felt in all parts of your body equally, as is the preferred case for all three-syllable mantras unless you are specifically reciting each syllable within a partition, and the sounds of “Ah Rah Ham” can also be used to *pulse* the entire Qi of your body in rhythmical fashion when recited. “Om So Hum,” “Om So Ha” or just “So Ha(m)” is usually associated with breathing methods. “Aim Hreem Shreem” (where “Aim” is pronounced “I’m”) can also be used to move your Qi/Prana for exciting/vibrating the Qi of your entire body or for stimulating it in your three body sections consecutively. As stated, usually you try to feel each syllable in your *entire whole body* with each syllable's voicing. Or, for instance, when reciting “Ah” you might feel the energy start in your head and move towards your feet as you hold the syllable, or start from your feet and move upwards, or start within your stomach area and move outwards everywhere, and so forth for each syllable respectively. You can recite one, two, three, four or five syllable mantras in order to cultivate the Qi/Prana of that many different physical body sections respectively, and if you simultaneously hold

⁷ See *Nyasa Yoga*.

onto an emotion at the same time, or simultaneously hold onto the idea of being one with/like some spiritual great, the practice will impress your Qi/Prana with the influence of those extras. You can also recite mantras on certain *bindus*, *marma* points, acupuncture or acupressure points too in order to stimulate the Qi around those points. Another alternative is to try to feel the effect of the sounds along certain acupuncture meridians or within certain body parts and pathways. In esoteric Theravada (*boran kammatthana*) the Pali phonemes (“sacred syllables”) are brought into certain body parts while Japanese syllables are used in Shingon, Hebrew letters in kabbalah work, Sanskrit sounds in Hinduism and certain mantra sounds within Buddhism. If you recite mantras while trying to feel, move, excite or stimulate the Qi/Prana in different areas of the body, this effort can be helped by also simultaneously using emotional excitement or other vitalizing and invigorating techniques such as visualizations and rhythmical breathing. And, if you also put your mind/will on those areas to move your Qi/Prana in conjunction with reciting and feeling those sound syllables within you, you will quickly stimulate your Qi into passing through your subtle body and thus purify and strengthen its structural integrity. Adding visualization efforts to the body section at the same time - such as by using your imagination to mentally flood an area with bright light or change its color - will also help to transform its Qi/Prana because it will bring Qi/Prana into the region and the color adds emotional content that changes the temperament/ flavor of the Qi. The best mantras have sounds that actually move/vibrate your Yin Qi or Yang Qi – and thus change the body’s Qi temperament in that way – because those energies resonate in particular sections of your body just as “Om” seems to vibrate most in the head and “Ah” resonates in the chest. “Ram” (Rang, Rahlam, Rah) and “Vam” (Vah, Vang, Lam, Lang, Lah, Nam, Hum, Hung) are also very useful sounds for vibrating the Qi/Prana within particular body sections such as the top/bottom or left/right sides of the body. Some mantras call for Qi/Prana help from higher spiritual beings, some work on purifying just your Yang Qi/Prana or just your Yin Qi/Prana through direct sound resonance, and some work on transforming both the Yang and Yin Qi/Prana of your body. Therefore, mantras can particularly vibrate the Qi/Prana in certain sections of your body or “raise your kundalini.” This is how you quickly transform and purify the Qi/Prana of your inner subtle body, which is by energizing your body with certain types of Qi that are tuned by the attendant emotional tones you generate. Thus it is said, “A person who becomes an expert in sound yoga can attain the supreme reality.”

Meditation: Meditation practice, where you achieve a degree of mental quiescence by watching your thoughts while refusing entanglement with

your thinking enables you to achieve a dispassionate oversight of the workings of your mind. Thereby free of fusion with your thought-stream you can correct your thoughts or let them calm down (by not injecting the thought-stream with more energy) so that you arrive at a peaceful mental state, which is necessary for spiritual cultivation in every school and tradition. A variety of meditation practices are available to achieve this goal, especially formless meditation practices as recommended by Kashmir Shaivism, or mindfulness and formless mind practices as recommended by Zen, *Dzogchen*, *Mahamudra*, Great Perfection and other spiritual traditions. The world's religions promote many different types of meditation practice but the most frequent commonality is "watchfulness" (mindfulness) where you observe your thoughts, and "emptiness meditation" where you try to calm your thoughts and experience inner stillness. With watchfulness you stand apart from your thoughts by observing them with dispassionate detachment until they calm down, your mind grows tranquil and your mental clarity (awareness) increases (the "mind grows bright"). Because you monitor them you develop a mind of clarity where you can see them clearly and thus move to correct them. Several "emptiness" or "formless mind" meditation approaches that abandon thoughts include mentally imitating empty space; imitating what you believe it is mentally like to be dead or non-existent; or concentrating on a mental image until wandering thoughts disappear and then letting go of even that quiet state in order to rest in real mental emptiness. Your thoughts can be calmed through these and many other meditation practices so that your Qi/Prana proceeds more readily through your brain's innumerable energy channels, which become cleared, and your awareness sharpens because your mental realm accordingly becomes quieter over time. Your thoughts and Qi are connected in that your thoughts can move your Qi. When you attain mental silence in this way, which is a state relatively free of thoughts, you free your internal Qi circulation from its attachment to thoughts and then it begins to revolve more smoothly so that it works through the Qi/Prana obstructions within the natural circulatory routes of your inner Qi body. Meditation practice can (1) result in mental tranquility that is a restful state of peace and relaxation, and because of the calmness and tranquility you can *make better deliberations and decisions*, (2) result in greater clarity or awareness of what you are thinking, which will *improve your powers of self-correction or self-rectification*, (3) *strengthen your various mental skills* such as concentration, focus and the ability to ignore distractions, (4) through the achieved inner clarity enable you to attain *better self-understanding or insight into your reasons for doing things* when through that clarity you watch your thought processes and determine why certain thoughts and behaviors arise, and (5) enable spiritual beings to become *more efficient at transforming your Qi* with their own energies because during thought-free meditation practice your thoughts do not hold tightly

to your internal energy at that time, and thus it can be more easily moved by spiritual masters trying to help you. Many meditation techniques are available such as those found within *Nyasa Yoga*, *Meditation Case Studies*, *Easy Meditation Lessons*, *The Little Book of Meditation*, *Color Me Confucius*, *Twenty-five Doors to Meditation*, *Buddha Yoga*, *Neijia Yoga*, *Meditation Techniques of the Buddhist and Taoist Masters* as well as the *Vijnana Bhairava* and Adiswarananda's *Meditation and Its Practices*.

Yoga Asanas: Correct posture is an indispensable requirement for successfully practicing sitting meditation, pranayama exercises, martial arts, athletics and yoga *asanas*. Only a correct body alignment allows for the proper Qi flow or internal Qi circulation throughout your body. The more that your Qi flows properly throughout your body without bottlenecks, obstructions, or impediments to its circulation, the greater will become your ability to feel the entire Qi/Prana of your body as a single whole or forget the feeling of your body entirely because its Qi/Prana flow is so smooth and perfect. Also, the easier it is for your Qi/Prana to flow smoothly, the more you strengthen your inner subtle body and prepare it for "birth by transformation." Any posture held for spiritual practice is an *asana* and sometimes unusual or uncomfortable positions are held in order to cultivate the Qi/Prana in hard-to-effect body regions. While one of the highest objectives of yoga is to gain complete control over your limbs, organs and other parts of the body, the best poses are those which promote the frictionless circulation of the Qi/Prana within your subtle body, will then help to purify and strengthen it, and which helps you to tame your thoughts and emotions because an internal fullness of Qi and better circulation engenders calmness. Stretching your muscles by holding an *asana* posture (or martial arts pose) not only increases physical dexterity and flexibility, which is what ordinary people usually think is the ultimate purpose of Yoga, but has the purpose of activating and stimulating the Qi/Prana throughout your muscles, organs and tissues by improving their Qi circulation. Some postures, such as the sitting lotus posture used for meditation practice or the standing horse posture of martial arts, are uncomfortable at first, which means that your body must force its own Qi/Prana through the muscle energy channels in order that you can master the position. However, previously uncomfortable postures once mastered allow you to engage in prolonged Qi/Prana cultivation efforts for a long period of time. The standing *san ti shi* trinity posture of *Xingyiquan* is an *asana* that you hold for a prolonged period of time, thus allowing Buddhas and Bodhisattvas to possess your Qi/Prana during that time and use their own energy to help improve your Qi circulation, which is why it is so effective. Yoga has this same real purpose of purifying your inner subtle body by washing it with Qi/Prana because *correct yoga postures will stretch your muscles to eliminate*

circulatory impediments to your internal energy and they will bolster specific Qi circulation pathways that will help to improve Qi circulation in selected muscle groups and regions. This is why yoga becomes a spiritual practice, for otherwise it is just exercise. For true Yoga (1) You can mentally focus on body regions for prolonged periods of time to draw Qi/Prana within them to wash them with energy, such as by concentrating on “chakra regions.” This means holding your focus and intent on your Qi/Prana in a certain area. Concentrating on a region will pull the Qi/Prana to that area due to the mind-body connection between thoughts and Qi, and that subsequent collection or concentration of Qi/Prana will “wash” or purify the underlying subtle body. *Bandhas* or locks, for instance, are used for concentrating and holding the Qi/Prana in certain body locations for this purpose of washing your subtle body, which is called “opening the *nadis*.” (2) You can also *use force to pump your Qi/Prana* through specific body locations, as in pumping exercises like *mula bandha*. Pranayama is another method used to forcibly push Qi/Prana through body regions to open their circulatory obstructions so that the improved Qi flow through them will help to strengthen and purify those Qi flow routes. (3) You can *wash* a body region with Qi/Prana by using your will to circulate the Qi/Prana in various revolutions within that area (leading it via your mind). You can also use special techniques for specific anatomical parts that you repeat over and over again to improve Qi/Prana circulation within those parts. Two examples: (a) humming “mmm” when trying to feel or push Qi/Prana through your upper palate; (b) using the sounds “Cha” and “Chr” to push or pull the Qi/Prana through your teeth and gums; (c) or pushing the tongue up against the palate to exercise the muscles of the thyroid and throat since this moves them (while simultaneously reciting “Jha” since this sound stirs the Qi in the throat and thyroid region). Touching the palate with your tongue curled backwards (some incorrectly call this the “tip of the tongue”) also provides a bridge so that you can push-circulate your Qi through your tongue to your palate, nasal cavity, cerebellum, back of throat and so forth in various rotational patterns that you guide via your will. (4) When your body is held motionless in *asana* or *mudra* positions that stretch muscles, you can practice stimulating, exciting, energizing, invigorating, moving, circulating, pushing or pulling your Qi/Prana through the muscles being stretched by combining the stretching with other energy techniques. This includes mentally focusing on the feeling of the muscles to sense the shape of the muscles, using visualization efforts on the muscles being stretched, reciting resonating mantra sounds on or as if within those same muscles in order to stimulate their Qi/Prana (the best sounds vibrate the Qi/Prana within the part being cultivated), and giving rise to Yin Qi or Yang Qi emotional tones to overall stimulate your Yin or Yang Qi into moving. This is Nyasa Yoga. Wherever you put your focused concentration

within your body your Qi/Prana will automatically follow to that spot because Qi and consciousness are linked. By adding emotional content during your practice session so as to stimulate your overall Qi/Prana into a certain mood, you will greatly enhance your efforts. (5) You can guide your Qi/Prana through various *pratyahara* circuits in your body, moving it from point to point and location to location. You concentrate your Qi/Prana at various locations within the body, circulate it within that region and then move it to a subsequent region. This will wash selected body sections in sequence, and then you must link the Qi/Prana of these regions as a unified pathway. Various pathways are revealed in *Yoga Yajnavalkya*, *Nyasa Yoga* and *Neijia Yoga*. For instance, in the *boran kammatthana* Esoteric Theravada School of Buddhism you are taught to concentrate “spheres of light” at the tip of the nose and then move it to the back of the nose between the eyes, between the eyebrows, top of the head, back of the head, epiglottis, heart, navel, and then around the navel. You progressively draw your Qi/Prana from the intranasal cavity inside the nostril down to the *dantian*. With other methods you place the Qi/Prana (light) spherical-concentrations in different arrangements within the body both horizontally and vertically at points such as the navel, at points on the level of the navel surrounding the navel, at the heart and so on. (6) Eventually after using all these techniques you can eventually build to the point where you can feel the entire Qi of your body as a single unit unified whole – which is the ultimate target – because the Qi of all individual parts becomes connected. There are various exercises available that lead you to being able to feel the entire Qi/Prana of your body as a single unit. The point of all these techniques is to try to first move your Qi/Prana through your muscles by pulling them with stretching exercises, mentally focusing (concentrating) on them, or by guiding it along special pathways, and in this way “wash” those pathways with Qi/Prana that purifies your underlying subtle body. This is called inner energy Yoga, inner alchemy, Tantra, Vajrayana, *anapana*, *kriya yoga*, *kundalini yoga*, *laya yoga*, *nei-gong*, *neijiaquan*, *nei-dan*, *boran kammatthana* etc. Eventually from these forms of inner energy work you will be able to feel the entire Qi of your body as a single unit, and its internal circulation will become orderly and free without obstruction or dysfunction. *When practicing such techniques, always try to feel the Qi/Prana within the body location being emphasized rather than just imagining inside your mind that you are moving it, otherwise often you will think you are moving your Qi but not actually producing any actual physical sensations or circulations.* You could spend years in wasted efforts if your mental thoughts do not move the Qi/Prana throughout your body because you are just visualizing events in your mind without connecting with, touching, grabbing or feeling the actual Qi/Prana sensations in your muscles and organs. Thinking about moving your Qi/Prana is different than actually doing it, which is the point of such practices, *so always make sure that whatever you visualize or imagine is felt*

within your body because you are supposed to connect your will and intent with your Qi/Prana in those regions to actually stimulate them. After all body areas are stretched you should try to feel the Qi energy of your body parts threaded together as a single unit. The Qi everywhere within your body should be naturally connected because then you are cultivating your subtle body and preparing it for emergence. The entire purpose of Yoga is to produce greater health and *purify your subtle body so that it can emerge from the physical shell*, but people don't know this highest of objectives. Once all your Qi/Prana is transformed and linked so that it feels as if it is just one single unit, the birth of the spiritual body can occur. Since that stage is one of frictionless inner Qi circulation then at that stage of cultivation your body will feel blissful, almost as non-existent. Furthermore, the smooth internal Qi flow will produce a calmer temperament of peace and quiescence that you might also term blissful. This is the *sat, chit, ananda* of Hinduism where the mind (consciousness) becomes open, clear and empty (blissful) while the body is so comfortable it feels as if non-existent. To transform a body into the healthiest state possible you will find that diet, medical/nutritional remedies, detoxification and physical manipulation are also important. For optimizing your body's structural alignment, first undergo chiropractic treatments to align your bones, next undergo AMIT therapy to activate all your muscles, and then engage in either passive stretching exercises (Yoga, Pilates, etc.) or active exercises (dance, martial arts, Ginastica Natural, sports, athletics etc.) in conjunction with inner Qi/Prana exercises and mental work. The best yoga teacher is not the one with the best expertise of personal attainment, or the one who is the best teacher/instructor, but the one who is enlightened and uses his own energy to push open the Qi channels of your body when you are doing stretching routines, for this is what frees the independent subtle body whilst alive, thus giving you the Srotapanna deva body attainment that makes you a *jiva*. Yoga master Yogeshwana Ramamohana Brahmachari and Tirumalai Krishnamacharya attained the subtle body attainment of enlightenment through the pathway of Yoga practice that must always include internal energy exercises in addition to stretching poses. See *Neijia Yoga: Nei Gong for Yoga and the Martial Arts* for this missing half of yoga exercises.

Martial Arts: You can either practice stimulating, moving, pushing or pulling your Qi/Prana through your muscles when you hold your body motionless in Yoga postures that are stretching your muscles, or when your body is moving as in dance, sports, athletics, gymnastics, or martial arts. Martial arts, when practiced correctly, also opens the Qi meridians within your body and harmonizes your Qi flow. This cultivates your Qi, improves health, and calms the mind. In particular, the soft martial arts are a foundational training method for cultivating your inner Qi body. Wherever

you put your intent within your body due to martial arts inner energy exercises, your Qi/Prana will follow because your Qi and consciousness are linked. Practicing to have your body follow your mind through physical movements is called uniting mind and body. The pursuit of then combining your Qi with your movements is in martial arts called “unifying” your Qi and movements, “uniting your movement with breathing,” or “combining your breath with your practice.” However, “breath” actually means your internal energy or Qi/Prana rather than just your respiratory breathing, although your breathing patterns should also be matched with your movements. By washing your body’s Qi/Prana via martial arts inner energy practices, you will prepare your subtle body for emergence as is done through inner energy Yoga. The practice technique is to try to feel your Qi flow through your muscles, and to also *guide* it through your muscles when they are exercised/stretched, which is called *anapana*. There are three levels of Qi – there is superficial skin Qi that guards the body, deep Qi that penetrates even the center of your bones, and Qi that penetrates the body’s matrix between these two – skin, muscles and bones. All these levels of Qi are cultivated via the inner energy methods of the soft martial arts such as *Taijiquan*, *Baguazhang*, *Xingyiquan*, *Tongbeiquan*, *Yiquan*, and *Liu He Ba Fa*, which therefore help you *directly cultivate your deva spiritual body*. In the inner martial arts you practice accessing and then moving your Qi throughout your entire body so that the Qi of every appendage becomes linked together as one unit, thus cultivating the essence of your subtle body. You also concentrate on bringing the Qi to or projecting it from your lower abdomen (*dantian*). When you practice the soft martial arts and combine your efforts with breathwork or *qi-gong*, each posture helps to open a different Qi meridian or group of meridians. The opening of meridians is a foundational stage of practice that stabilizes, harmonizes and thus transforms consciousness by improving your body and cranial Qi circulation so that your mind and personality become calmer and more stable. Hence, martial arts practice will transform your personality too. In martial arts you are often instructed through teachings like “feel as if you are a tiger hunting,” “feel like a river flowing,” “feel like snake slithering,” “feel as strong as a mountain” and so on when doing certain movements in order to stimulate or arouse your Yin or Yang Qi/Prana respectively (as is done in Nyasa Yoga). With these instructions you are not just trying to master special physical movements but also trying to arouse unique types of Qi feelings via different imaginations or emotions. Done correctly, this will activate and help purify Yin or Yang Qi within your subtle body, and thus the martial arts teaching is true that “you can become enlightened through the proper practice of *tai jitsu*.” Thus, you should always practice combining your Qi/Prana with your physical martial arts practice in order to more quickly cultivate your inner subtle body. You can use various types of

emotions or visualizations/imaginings to assist in stimulating different types of Yin or Yang Qi inside your body so that you can directly access the cultivation of your subtle body and not just your physical nature; both Yin and Yang Qi must be separately cultivated. Or, you can practice absorbing the essence of the sun or moon to more directly cultivate Yin Qi or Yang Qi rather than having to rely on arousing emotions to do so. Step by step, martial arts teach you to align your joints with the natural flow of internal Qi energy, feel that energy, and with intention guide that vitality to even your extremities and tips of your body so that you can eventually feel the energy of your entire body, which is then sensed as a single unit. Many prior martial artists through constant practice of such techniques achieved the enlightened Srotapanna deva body attainment, which in Taoism is termed becoming an Immortal. They were all practitioners of *nei-gong* and spiritual practices. Yang Lu-Shan (founder of Yang style *taijiquan*), Liu Hung Chieh (taught by enlightened Buddhist master Tanxu), Wang Ziping (a Naqshbandi Sufi), Taoist Lu Zijian (who also practiced Esoteric Buddhism) as well as Wang Shujin (a leader in the Taoist sect Yi Guan Dao), Sun Lu-Tang (who practiced inner *nei-gong* alchemy), Wu Jian-Quan (*taijiquan*), Wang Ji Wu and Wang Fu Yuan who attained immortal arts skills (*xingyiquan* masters), are just a few of those who achieved the subtle body and then higher spiritual attainments by practicing inner martial arts. They practiced *kung-fu* and spiritual practices together, which is why they succeeded. The creator of *taijiquan*, Zhang San Feng, is considered the founder of all inner martial arts and is therefore considered a Taoist Immortal and Buddha worthy of veneration as are some of the founders of other traditions if enlightened. Martial artists with the deva body Srotapanna attainment never tell anybody about their achievement because people wouldn't believe them and it would also invite too many challenges to fight, but this explains why some can demonstrate amazing superpowers. With the martial arts that practice inner *nei-gong*, you not only cultivate your inner Qi body but also directly train to develop some of the eight supernatural *siddhi* skills available only to the Srotapanna Arhats, Immortals or devas (whose bodies are composed of Qi), such as lightness, heaviness, and swiftness in movement and walking. Hence, the soft martial arts directly cultivate the Tao and prepare you for the deva life even if you are not successful in the Srotapanna attainment while alive.

Pranayama: Pranayama breathing exercises, which are especially promoted in the Yoga schools, Tientai school of Buddhism, and *qi-gong* methods of Taoism, can stabilize your mind and have a therapeutic effect on your body. They can expand your lung capacity, increase your blood flow, oxygenate your blood and temporarily alkalinize your body. Changing your pH will affect your internal chemistry and therefore your mental states by altering

your consciousness. The first important step in learning breathing exercises is to master the *asana* of a stable posture and then afterwards pranayama, or regulating your breath. In the Buddhist *Anapanasatti sutra* you are taught to “breathe in and experience (feel) your entire body, breathe out and experience (feel) your entire body; breathe in and calm your entire body formation, breathe out and calm your entire body formation; breathe in while internally arousing the emotion of joy, breathe out while internally arousing the emotion of joy; breathe in while arousing the sensation of pleasurable bliss within you, breathe out while arousing the sensation of pleasurable bliss within you; breathe in and calm your mind, breathe out and calm your mind ...” while in other sutras you are taught to notice the “hotness” and “coldness” of your breath that refers to the Yang and Yin Qi of your body since they are considered hot/warm and cold whereas breath has no temperature at all. Pranayama initially teaches you to control your breathing but ultimately aims at purifying your Qi/Prana through the vehicle of your breathing that moves it and enabling you to control your Qi/Prana through your breathing. When breathing you should feel the entire Qi/Prana of your body, and then wash it by holding different Yin or Yang emotions during extensive sets of inhalation-exhalation cycles. Pranayama expertise begins with the regulation of your respiratory breath(ing) and then gradually proceeds to the stage of washing/purifying and then gaining control over the life-currents or inner vital force of your entire body, namely your Qi/Prana. In other words, pranayama aims to help you start gaining control of the life-currents of Qi/Prana within your body through mastery of your breathing and breath, and gradually with expertise you can direct your internal energy to go to any area of your body you desire to “wash” those tissues and thus purify your inherent subtle body. It is especially important to open up the lower regions of your body from the pelvis to the feet, your genitalia, ears, nose and the hands and fingers. You can also learn how to expand your Qi to your skin through breathing exercises. By learning to move your breath in certain specific ways you can end up stimulating/moving your Qi/Prana, which will end up purifying it. Eventually you can simply grab and move this Qi/Prana by your will, which then becomes *anapana* practice, *nei-dan* exercises, inner alchemy, kundalini yoga, *kriya* yoga, *neijiaquan* or *nei-gong* work etcetera. When pranayama is attended by the mental recitation of any mantra, it is one hundred times more powerful than when practiced without mantra recitation because mantra recitation requests help from spiritual beings and tends to rhythmically move your Qi/Prana on its own as well. If during pranayama practice you simultaneously visualize Qi/Prana currents moving or held stationary at locations within your body and try to feel these energies, or feel certain emotions, this will also increase its power. Certain breathing patterns can be used to affect your emotions that will transform

your Qi as a kind of cultivation as well. You can even visualize that the pranayama efforts are purifying you by forcing poisons to leave your physical body through your feet or by visualizing your body becoming non-solid and as transparent as crystal during practice. Pranayama attainments depend upon the intensity of the practitioner's efforts. It is recommended to practice them two to four times per day when you have an empty stomach and are not tired or worried. Wim Hof breathing practices, freediving breathwork practices, and other forms of breathwork (such as Buteyko breathing, coherent breathing, hypoventilation, holotropic breathwork, embryonic breathing, tummo breathing, sudarshin kriya, etc.)⁸ can improve your pranayama results. They are especially good at lengthening the amount of time you can remain in *kumbhaka* pranayama breath retention states that are one of the most important types of pranayama exercise. Various forms of breathwork can open up your Qi channels or excite the Qi everywhere throughout your body, which is why they are practiced since this is the basic transformational method of purifying your Qi-body for the emergence of the deva body. There are many breathing methods, pranayama techniques, and breathwork for “harmonizing the breath” (such as 5.5 second coherence breathing), but their common goal is to wash the body with stimulated Qi, produce better Qi/Prana and blood circulation everywhere, and either lead you to a state of energetic stimulation (where you feel full or energy and alive) or to a state of quiescent mental calmness. There are also methods such as *kumbhaka* that expand your lung capacity (VO2 max), which has a large positive effect on your longevity. The Chinese Buddhist Tiantai master Tanxu is one of the many individuals who attained enlightenment through a practice pathway that included mastery of breathing practices.

Kumbhaka Pranayama: The *Yoga-sutras of Patanjali* states, “Regulation of breath or the control of Prana is the stoppage of inhalation and exhalation, which follows after securing that steadiness of posture or seat.” This is *kumbhaka* pranayama, which forces your Qi/Prana to move throughout your body due to the fact that you stop breathing, just as the lack of food during fasting forces your physical body to rely on its Qi energy for survival. Additionally, holding your breath through *kumbhaka* practices also dilates your capillaries throughout your body, and that stretching is a way of exercising those tissue tubes. It helps to transform their capacity for Qi/Prana circulation. Some breathing exercises are a form of breathwork that moves the Qi/Prana within your body to wash your tissues, as in *qi-gong* and martial arts “guiding your Qi” practices, but *kumbhaka* breath retention exercises force the body to dilate tissues and open up all its internal energy

⁸ See *Breath: The New Science of a Lost Art* by James Nestor.

pathways. Yoga texts contain many *kumbhaka* breath retention exercises, which can be learnt therefrom, and even have advanced yoga exercises that involve moving your body while holding your breath. This is similar to methods such as *baguazhang* that teach you to hold your body and its appendages in certain positions while you mentally guide, pull or lead the Qi along acupuncture meridians to open those channels. There are many different *kumbhaka* techniques. If a breath retention technique is not practiced according to rhythmical ratios of exhalation, inhalation and retention, and instead for the purpose of just holding the breath for as long as possible, the general principles are to: hold your breath as deep within your body as possible, for as long as possible, using as little force with as few muscles as possible, and then forcibly expel it as quickly as possible. Or, use whatever classical instructions are provided within the instructional text you are using. It is not so much your breath that you want to feel within your body while inhaling, holding, moving and exhaling. You want to circulate your Qi within you. You should combine your techniques with freediving or Wim Hof breathing exercises if you want to hold your breath longer, and periodically measure and record on a graph the length of your retention period so that you can track your progress and try to improve upon best efforts. Shri Samarth Muppin Kaadsiddheswar Maharaj is one of the many individuals who attained the Tao through a pathway that included mastery of *kumbhaka* breathing practices, which can extend an individual's life span when performed regularly.

Kundalini Yoga, Kriya Yoga, Anapana, Nei-gong, Neijia: Kundalini Yoga, *kriya* yoga, and *anapana* practice involve moving the Qi/Prana of your body in various ways via your will (thoughts), which is also basically *nei-gong*, *neijiaquan* or *nei-dan* work. You train to pull or push your Qi/Prana with your mind such as by rotating/revolving it hundreds to thousands of times in specific patterns within your body. You might focus on a body region to bring Qi/Prana into that area, or use your will to circulate it in various patterns elsewhere and especially in particular areas you select for a work session, which might be cultivated according to a schedule you set up. The entire purpose of incessant Qi/Prana stimulation is to eliminate impediments to the flow of Qi within the Qi channels (*nadis* or circulatory routes) that penetrate all your tissues, and to circulate your Qi/Prana over the molecules and their atomic bonds again and again to purify them. Hundreds of masters and their students will take shifts doing this to your body continuously during the Twelve Year kundalini transformation process if you have the merit, which can only happen after years of devotion to intensified inner energy yoga, and this is absolutely necessary for the Srotapanna deva body attainment. Another method concerns fixing your Qi/Prana through focused concentration in various body locations

and then taking/moving it slowly, step-by-step and stage-by-stage, to other sections of your body. For instance, Yogi Boganathar suggests leading your Qi/Prana from the big toes to your ankle, knee, thigh, genitals, navel, heart, neck, uvula, nose, space between the eyebrows, forehead and crown of the head; the *Yoga Yajnavalkya* has a different sequence for how to sequentially move your Qi to open up all the sections of your body. Taoism has a Small Circulation and Great Circulation where you revolve your Qi along certain large meridian pathways within your body, guiding it along these routes, and this practice is also used in the martial arts. For instance, you can lead your Qi up into your brain through the nerves in your spine or lead it up via spinal nerves and skin/muscles surrounding the spine. After leading Qi to your brain you should then *wash* the brain's anatomical structure with Qi revolutions of countless different patterns. You should use anatomical and DTI (diffusion tensor imaging) brain images as maps to guide your efforts to revolve your Qi along the brain's various nerve pathways. Normally when the brain is filled with Qi it becomes energized and functions more fully, reaching a state of quiescence and clarity, which is the basis behind meditation and this work. The *Nitya-natha-paddhati* reveals "sixteen containers" where you can lead and concentrate your Qi/Prana: big toes, anus, rectum/sphincter, male genital organ, lower abdomen/entrails, navel area, heart, throat, uvula, naso-pharynx, root of the tongue, base of the upper teeth, tip of the nose, base of the nose, point between the eyebrows, and eyes. You can also *hold* your Qi/Prana at these or other vital points. A common introductory practice is to especially work on moving your Qi/Prana up and then down your spine into your brain hundreds of times per day, or to circulate it in circular orbits (loops) up your spine into the brain and then down the front of the body and alimentary canal, or to hold it at various places. Practicing Qi/Prana revolutions or holding patterns in various parts of your body will bring different results/delights to a practitioner in accordance with their ability to move their Qi/Prana to these spots and rest it there. Just as in martial arts you should practice moving your Qi/Prana hundreds to thousands of times per day for the quickest results. To become enlightened (attain the higher transcendental bodies) is not a matter of study, worship, meditation, mantra, introspection, yoga, improved behavior or other similar efforts. These practices are helpful but *it is primarily accomplished through inner energy work*. As the famous Zen text *Transmission of Light* said, "In the distant past, Ananda had awakened the aspiration for complete perfect enlightenment in the presence of the Buddha called King of Emptiness, at the same time as did the present Buddha Shakyamuni. Ananda was fond of intellectual learning (rather than meditation and Qi practice), and that is why he had not yet truly realized

enlightenment. Shakyamuni, on the other hand, cultivated energy, whereby he attained true enlightenment.”⁹ You absolutely must cultivate inner *neigong* or *neijia* energy work for the attainment of enlightenment. Thus, while you need to practice meditation to cultivate mental stillness and clarity of mind (i.e. King of Emptiness) whereby you can become aware of your thoughts to better police them, the practice of formless mind meditation where you let go of your thoughts and vital energy allows higher beings to more easily move your Qi/Prana with their own (because they don’t have to fight your thoughts and their grip on your Qi circulation) when they enter into you to help move and subsequently purify your body, but the key to success is *inner energy work* that involves moving the Qi/Prana within your body and gaining control over its properties and movements. Many practices for doing this are revealed in *Nyasa Yoga* and especially *Neijia Yoga*, which essentially reveal the basics of Tantra and Buddhist Vajrayana methods. Paramahansa Yogananda and Swami Muktananda are just two of the many individuals who attained their deva body through the pathway of kundalini/kriya yoga. See *Neijia Yoga*, *Nyasa Yoga* and *Buddha Yoga* for practice details.

Kundalini Yoga Clarified: In the *Gospel of Ramakrishna* (Vol. I, p. 499) Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa said, “The mind of a worldly man generally moves among the three lower centres: those at the navel, at the sexual organ, and at the organ of evacuation. After great effort and spiritual practice the Kundalini is awakened. According to the yogis there are three nerves (Nadis) in the spinal column: Ida, Pingala, and Sushumna. Along the Sushumna are six lotuses, or centres, the lowest being known as the Muladhara. Then comes successively Svadhisthana, Manipura, Anahata, Visuddhi, and Ajna. These are the six centres. The Kundalini, when awakened, passes through the lower centres and comes to the Anahata, which is at the heart level. It stays there. At that time the mind of the aspirant is withdrawn from the three lower centres. He feels the awakening of the Divine Consciousness and sees Light. In mute wonder he sees that radiance and cries out: ‘What is this? What is this?’ After passing through the six centres, the Kundalini reaches the Thousand-petalled lotus known as the Sahasrara, and the aspirant goes into Samadhi. According to the Vedas these centres are called ‘bhumis’ or ‘planes.’ There are seven such planes. The centre at the heart corresponds to the fourth plane of the Vedas. According to the Tantra there is in this centre a lotus called Anahata, with twelve petals. The centre known as Visuddha is the fifth plane. This centre is at the throat and has a lotus with sixteen petals. When the Kundalini

⁹ *Transmission of Light*, trans. by Thomas Cleary, (Shambhala Publications, Boston, 2002), p. 9.

reaches this plane, the devotee longs to talk and hear only about God. Conversation on worldly subjects, on ‘woman and gold,’ causes him great pain. He leaves a place where people talk of these matters. Then comes the sixth plane, corresponding to the centre known as Ajna. This centre is located between the eyebrows and it has a lotus with two petals. When the Kundalini reaches it, the aspirant sees the form of God. But still there remains a slight barrier between the devotee and God. It is like a light inside a lantern. You may think you have touched the light, but in reality you cannot because of a barrier like glass. And last of all is the seventh plane, which, according to Tantra is the centre of the Thousand-petalled lotus (Sahasrara). When the Kundalini arrives there, the individual goes into Samadhi. In that lotus dwells Satchidananda Shiva, the Absolute. There the Kundalini, the Awakened Power (Shakti), unites with Shiva. This is known as the union of Shiva and Shakti.” Thus, this is a standard explanation of kundalini, and like most others is incorrect and meant to mislead you because masters and their spiritual traditions for a variety of reasons *do not want you to know* the truth - that enlightenment is a transcendental body attainment that allows you to escape from a lower realm, and with that new body comes an attendant clarity of consciousness that you would have due to that body being composed of a higher form of energy that circulates in your brain without as many obstructions or impediments. There are no “chakras” within the body or on heavenly planes. The only “heavenly plane” is a new plane you reach with a new spiritual body. The chakras refer to sections of your body – horizontal sections – delineated by the standard partitionings of the spine according to vertebrae, and many traditions have you do Qi-work on the body by addressing it in sections under the guidance of a master, hence the idea of chakras was invented.¹⁰ Actually, the sacral chakra of six petals refers to the sacrum since two sets of six nerves protrude from it, while the heart chakra has twelve petals because there are twelve thoracic vertebrae in that region of the spine. The two-petalled Ajna chakra refers to the two sections of the brain stem while the ten thousand-petalled crown chakra refers to all the nerves and neurons in the brain. The kundalini energy is basically *your Qi that resides in all your body cells* since your subtle body interpenetrates your physical body, so “unawakened kundalini energy” does not primarily reside in any chakra such as being coiled up inside the Muladhara. It is everywhere within you and comprises an energetic duplicate of your physical body that is released as your “soul” upon death. *Through intensified yoga practices* you use a variety of techniques to work on purifying (vibrating, moving, awakening, washing, etc.) this Qi

¹⁰ See *Neijia Yoga* and *Nyasa Yoga*, which clearly describes the “true” chakras and various other partitioning schemes of the body into different numbers of sections with appropriate cultivation techniques that will move the Qi within each section.

throughout your body, and then due to their grace (commitment to massive organized labor) a series of spiritual masters will use the energy of their bodies to move your own energy within you, which you will mistake for your own kundalini when it is actually their energy. You will have many “spiritual” experiences whenever this happens – mental experiences and physical sensations inside your body. It takes many years of organized labor to purify your Qi and produce the deva body attainment, which is the Srotapanna stage of enlightenment. When an aspirant’s thoughts stop it is also because such a being intervenes to make them stop rather than that you attain some mysterious exalted state of consciousness, and when you cannot cognize your body or don’t seem present it is because they have done this or you have attained a deva body and are travelling off visiting some other place in the world, but they call this “samadhi” and falsely describe the kundalini process (including descriptions of its final twelfth year of incredible pain) to hide these actualities from individuals. A similar somewhat misleading report, in *The Truth Is* (p. 447) Sri H.W.L. Poonja wrote, “Kundalini is lying dormant in everybody in the muladhara chakra of the astral body which is in the heart of the physical body. This energy is sleeping and you give rise to it by concentrating on different chakras one after the other. If you are interested in it I don’t advise it because it takes special guidance and it can be dangerous. Focusing in the chakras will cause the energy to start traveling upward through all the chakras. Finally it reaches the top and then you will feel that you are not the body, but that you are out of the body. This is a difficult process and takes at east twelve years in a quiet place with a good teacher.” Once again, your Qi energy is in all your body cells, not just the muladhara chakra, and you must perform exercises to rotate it in your body sections to purify your inherent subtle/astral body, including pushing/pulling Qi up your spine and then down the front of your body and down your alimentary canal in the center of your body. Poonja says that your Qi ascends because at the earliest stages of purification you spend a lot of time moving your Qi up your spine through mind-led visualizations and other *nei-gong* efforts. If you have enough merit for the Twelve Year kundalini transformation process, at the end of twelve years of spiritual masters doing this for you (with countless revolutions of their own energy everywhere within your body) then your subtle body (astral body) will finally be able to leave your physical body through the top of your head and you become an Immortal (Srotapanna). If you start doing many *nei-gong* or kundalini exercises then lots of local spiritual residents will start working on you as their own training vehicle and cause all sorts of mischief, which is why masters don’t normally teach kundalini yoga (or they require you to take an “empowerment” so that you are under someone’s supervision and thereby somewhat protected) or the details of the true process, but you have to do these things if you want to

attain true enlightenment rather than just some intellectual realization that you think is enlightenment, but is just a bunch of thoughtful insights.

Visualization Practice: Practice holding images steady in your mind for as long as possible to build your powers of concentration, or you can practice mentally rehearsing moving scenarios. The ability to hold a stable concentration leads to a stronger mind and the mental powers of focus that can ignore afflictions, annoyances and distractions – “mental defilements.” Visualization practice is way to develop the mental skill of concentration, and also a way to train to hold your Qi at one place in your body in order to open up all the *nadis* in that region due to the Qi concentration you then bring to that area. One should especially practice holding bright images of Qi/Prana – such as flames, fires, lights, the sun, etcetera - in your abdomen, heart, brain, and other areas of your body as is done in Jainism (flames in the abdomen), Orthodox Christianity (flames in the heart), Buddhism, Taoism, Yoga, Vajrayana, etcetera because this will cultivate both your Qi and exercise your mental powers of focus and attention. If appropriate, add stimulating emotions to such mental images in order to help vibrate your Qi/Prana by changing its Yin or Yang qualities. The enlightened Theravada Buddhist Bhadantacariya Buddhaghosa, in his *Visuddhimagga* (Path of Perfection), introduced the practice of visualizing certain colors and shapes as a way to cultivate a stable mind of concentration. Jesuit monastics would visualize scenes in the life of Christ in order to develop stable mental concentration skills and to evoke certain Yin or Yang purifying emotions, such as the Yin Qi aroused when compassionately crying due to visualizing his pain on the cross. The great Tibetan lama Tsong Khapa performed millions of offerings of mandala visualizations where he would envision a particular mandala and offer it away while holding onto positive *bhava* emotions such as charitable giving, or blessing, thus making mental concentration practice into a method for repeatedly training not just his concentration but his emotions. Sports figures use internal visualization, or mental rehearsal, to train their body to perform athletic activities with excellence, as explained in *Sport Visualization for the Elite Athlete* and *Visualization Power*. Visualization or concentration practice is also used to visualize deities via stable mental imagery, such as the Tibetan *yidam practice* where you visualize and feel the Qi of the *yidam* inside yourself by imagining that you become one with the deity (and then masters who previously succeeded with that technique will come to lend you their Qi to help purify and transform your subtle body). Another yogic practice is to visualize your Qi/Prana at certain points within your body and then take/move/lead it

step-by-step, and stage-by-stage, to other locations.¹¹ This will move your Qi to those areas and thus help remove various disorders in those regions by opening up the Qi channels (*nadis*) in those localities. Visualization together with willpower can lead your internal energy to any area within your body because “where your intent is your Qi will condense.” Supreme martial artists therefore practice leading their Qi into their *dantian*, and then from their *dantian* to different areas of their body. Qi/Prana flooding a region will “wash” the region, warming and softening it, and thus purify and strengthen your inner subtle body in that region. Hence, you can imagine absorbing the essences of the sun and moon to flood your body with Yang Qi and Yin Qi respectively. You can also practice visualizing light and/or colors at certain points within your body, and special shapes or pathways inside your body in order to stimulate your Qi. Another Yang Qi practice is to inhale to fill your entire body with breath, hold that state for as long as possible while feeling your Qi everywhere within you in order to open up blocked Qi flow meridians. At the same time you must visualize that all your flesh is red in color, your body is flaming on fire, you hold onto the *bhava* of intense stimulating joy, and you visualize that your bones are shining with a bright white light as you exhale (and you feel or move the energy inside them while retaining the breath). After exhalation, you hold your lungs empty while maintaining the visualization of your bones giving off a shining light. At the final stage of this visualization you abandon all such images and rest your mind in emptiness, as if you were just empty space that supports all things within it without holding onto anything, which is referred to in Hinduism as becoming established in the Self.

Sexual Cultivation: Since sex is a standard biological function you can use it as part of spiritual practice on the cultivation path. This is done in several cultivation schools since sexual intercourse can greatly vitalize your inner Qi movements, stir joyous-happiness emotions that rouse your Yang Qi, and can move your Qi/Prana due to the breathing and yoga-like exercises. The method is to use the emotional excitation and happiness-joy-bliss that comes from the passion of sexual activity, which stirs your Qi/Prana, together with physical sexual congress to move the Qi/Prana in various regions within your body. Sexual relations can be a powerful force for moving your internal Qi/Prana through emotional excitation, which is why many masters encourage their students to marry because then sex can then become available as a method to transform their body for the spiritual path. It is one of the fastest ways to transform the Qi/Prana of your body because it excites all your Qi everywhere while arousing the Yang Qi

¹¹ See *Yoga Yajnavalkya*, trans. by A. G. Mohan (Svastha Yoga Pte Ltd., 2013), and *Neijia Yoga* by William Bodri.

emotions of joy, elation, thrills, delight, bliss and happiness, or less excited emotions like tenderness, softness, gentleness, love, kindness, and warmth during restful pleasure. These emotional feelings *are felt throughout your entire body* and thus they affect the entire Qi of your body, which is the basis of using sex as a cultivation technique. Sexual intercourse can become a very stimulating full-body workout of your Qi. This activizing, energizing, invigorating or vitalizing of Qi can readily open up your Qi channels (*nadis*) because the energy stimulation is greater than for most other cultivation methods, but pursuing sex (without marriage) usually leads to all sorts of problems so it is not allowed in most cultivations traditions. There are dangers such as pregnancy, disease, violence, abuse, emotional harm, and damaged social relations. The alternative is celibacy, which is the standard default that requires extra efforts of restraint together with ardent pranayama practice, inner *tummo* heat cultivation exercises and other techniques to help move your Qi. Celibates can reduce their sexual desires by practicing yoga, pranayama, martial arts or other exercises (ex. prostrations) while frequently fasting or eating a vegetarian diet because it reduces desires due to the lack of calories and stimulating food. The need for pranayama exercises and emptiness meditation for celibate cultivators is emphasized in the story of celibate meditating Shiva who kept all his energies within himself (preventing them from leaking). When he opened his eyes while meditating after being bothered by Kamadeva, the god of lust, Shiva burned him into ashes just by looking at him; as a supreme yogi his body produced hot kundalini energy inside that produced spiritual transformations because he did not lose his Qi energy through sexual leakage. Similarly, in the *Surangama Sutra* Ucchusmma was given the name “Fire Head” because when a man restrains from ejaculation for a long time but does not circulate the Qi within himself then his face often reddens from just cultivating Yang Qi without its Yin Qi companion. Ucchusmma cultivated sexual restraint while envisioning that his body became a mass of raging fire (along with joyous emotions at the same time), a technique through which he cultivated the Qi/Prana (kundalini) of his body and succeeded in the path, but his face became red from too much Yang stimulation. To help reduce such instances of redness you must receive chiropractic treatments for your spine so that your Qi energy rising into the brain flows in a smoother and more natural circulation. When you make efforts to open more Qi channels through mantra practice, yoga, pranayama, exercise and diet you lessen the likelihood of such results as well since this will help to balance your Yin and Yang Qi throughout your body, which is an achievement that Yoga calls the union of Shiva and Shakti in the body. These stories show that you need to cultivate your Yin Qi along with your Yang Qi and not just Yang Qi, which is a mistake often made. For instance, the story of the Hindu ascetic Rishyashringa concerned

a country experiencing a drought said to be caused by his ascetic Yang Qi cultivation, which would be similar to the case of Ucchusmma. In the story a courtesan had sex with this celibate yogi and this finally ended the drought by making the rains fall, which does not refer to ejaculation of semen but to the activation of descending Yin Qi circulations within the body due to the harmonizing effects of sexual relations. During sex – which involves the Yang Qi stimulating emotions of happiness, excitement, thrills and joy – you not only activate ascending Yang Qi flows within the human body but descending Yin Qi circulations as well to achieve a complete circuit of Qi flow harmonization. Ascetic practices that force your Yang Qi upwards (the fire road of cultivation) are incomplete because your Qi must revolve within your body in a descending circuit too, hence falling rain represents Yin Qi. Your Qi must circulate to return to your perineum by descending down the front of your body along the water Qi channel (the *ren mai* conception channel acupuncture meridian) and also through the center of your body via your esophagus, stomach and intestines to your anus (since the body is essentially a worm, or long digestive tube, in terms of its structural evolution). For non-celibate cultivators, men should try to prevent ejaculation during sex so that they don't lose their Qi/Prana necessary for opening their Qi channels whereas women are experience no detriment in losing energy through orgasm, but in both cases they must still have their Qi circulate freely upwards and downwards within their body and strive to create such vibrant circulations. In Tibetan Buddhism the nuns do not take a vow of celibacy because their school allows them to use sex in the spiritual path as an effective way of cultivating their Qi, and sexual activity as a means of inner Qi cultivation is also taught in Taoism and the Kaula yogic schools of India. However, it is difficult to find the right partner for sexual cultivation due to the necessity for karmic compatibility, sexual compatibility and the requirement that practitioners must first have sufficient merit to be qualified. The cultivation prerequisites for this type of practice mean that the practitioners should have first practiced lots of pranayama, mantrayana, *nei-gong*, and other inner energy work such as the methods within *Nyasa Yoga* and *Neijia Yoga* such as the white skeleton visualization of Buddhism (where you push bright Qi or bright light to wash the hundreds of bones within the body as well as your organs, muscles and viscera and then at the end of each meditation session their energies are threaded together as a whole). In other words, you need to have done lots of inner energy work (and breathing practices) that already started moving and transforming your Qi/Prana before you can start engaging in sexual cultivation. A typical sexual cultivation effort with a partner should last two to three hours continuously with minimum male ejaculation, otherwise the man will lose his energy, namely his Qi that he needs for purifying his Qi channels. Women, on the other hand, are free to

experience orgasm as many times as happens. Furthermore, the woman might become pregnant. The Tibetan female adept Yeshe Tsogyel, who practiced with several partners, has left teachings on this topic of sexual cultivation. You are basically doing a form of happy, thrilling physical exercise to excite and mobilize all your Qi inside you, which refreshes the inner energy matrix of your subtle body. If done correctly, sexual yoga turns into Yoga directly because it invigorates and energizes the Qi/Prana of your body everywhere, while you simultaneously enjoy positive Yang Qi emotions (such as joy, enthrallment, happiness, fun, excitedness, thrills, elation, delight and bliss), and you also engage in various postures, positions and movement activities like yoga enabling you to move your Qi to wash your body's tissues. Ultimately you are trying to wash or energize the tiniest simples that compose your body because that is how you can ultimately achieve the separation of your physical body into a physical and independent subtle energy component while alive.

Bhakti Yoga, Devotion, Reverence or Worship: As practiced in Hinduism (focusing on Krishna, Kali and other deities), Christianity (by focusing on Jesus or the Virgin Mary), and other religions, the purpose is to self-generate ardent devotion to such a deep extent that your intense positive and negative emotions end up creating internal sensations that stimulate and move the Qi/Prana throughout your body, thus washing your internal subtle body. Sexual intercourse and pranayama practices accomplish this in an entirely different way. Feelings or emotions are internal responses to events conditioned by our existing concepts, and we can use them to generate sensations within our body that moves our Qi so that the internal Qi stimulation, when prolonged, can wash either our Yin Qi or Yang Qi. This principle is commonly used in many forms of spiritual cultivation without practitioners knowing about it. For instance, the emotion of tremendous admiration and awe can move your Yang Qi while religiously motivated crying can move your Yin Qi by energizing the body with Yin-type emotions. “Fools for Christ” and “Krishna consciousness” disciples, when taught properly, are put through many deep emotional experiences of Yin and Yang to purify their Qi in this manner. Religious practice also follows this pattern when monks and nuns are led to meditate on topics such as glorious Heavenly rewards (which raises their Yang Qi) or the necessity for humility, obedience or repentance for sins (that stirs their Yin Qi). Cultivating ardent emotional states like this is also a derivative of the “immeasurable emotion” practice taught within Buddhism, which is also similar to the Path of Heroes that instructs you to hold an emotional mood, essence or flavor during an activity or for a prolonged period of time in order to help transform your Qi and thinking patterns. *Boran kammatthana* methods instruct you to invite mental factors into your body in order to

tune your Qi/Prana to different qualities and help with the purification transformations necessary to wash your subtle energy (Qi/Prana) and produce a Buddha body. *Yidam* meditation practice similarly instructs you to associate with the energies and personality characteristics of a deity (disposition) to cultivate your Qi in that manner. The practice of envisioning that you become one with a deity, spiritual great, or individual of admirable qualities such as an ideal spiritual savior will not only move your emotions but can also be used for personal development to move you in the direction of obtaining character traits you desire that they possess. Basically, however, *bhakti* practice is meant to deeply stimulate certain devotional emotions in order to move your Qi/Prana. States of deep crying are connected with Yin Qi purification, while joyous states of rapture and ecstasy are connected with your Yang Qi cultivation. True *bhakti* adherents absolutely must experience sorrowful states of mind, such as feeling cut off from God and subsequently crying in despair since this generates anguish that will stimulate your Yin Qi that must be purified within your subtle body. Songs or hymns of worship that move your Qi internally (because the sounds are projected from different areas of your body) - such as the Christian refrain “Gloria in excelsis Deo,” the “Hallelujah Chorus” from Handel’s *Messiah*, Gregorian chants and Islamic *dhikr* practices – are also *bhakti* or reverence cultivation practices since they strongly move your Qi through songs, hymns and the attendant breathing that moves your emotions. When singing religious hymns you should always make the sounds resonate within your body while feeling deep emotions, and then this becomes true spiritual worship instead of simple singing. Mantra recitations, or *japa* practice, should always be performed in the same manner with the intention of vibrating the Qi of your entire body, or just certain body sections, and should be combined with feeling strong emotions at the same time. The practice of chanting hymns, mantras and other religious sounds should *never be monotonous* but should vibrate the Qi in different areas of your body, or your whole body at once, and then the practice becomes effective at spiritual transformation. Then it becomes true spiritual practice whereas otherwise it is just voicing sounds. To feel Yin or Yang Qi emotions when singing strengthens the effect of inner Qi stimulation and purification. Religious reverence, as practiced in spiritual ceremonies and rituals, is also a form of cultivation practice for quieting and purifying your mind that also affects your Qi/Prana. During occasions of religious reverence and worship you should engender a feeling of deep reverence because that deep feeling felt throughout your mind and body is what cultivates your Qi rather than the mechanics of the activity. Or, you might cultivate a state of humility by “surrounding your thoughts to God” during that time, which is a type of mental emptiness cultivation that cleanses your Qi/Prana. The monkey god Hanuman, hero of the Indian

Ramayana epic *who always keeps Rama and Sita within his heart*, and who recites “Ram” as a devotional mantra since this sound successfully vibrates the Qi of the entire body (like “OM”), represents the power of devotion that enables animal man, who is an ape, to reach the higher spiritual stages. Prayer is also a form of worship and comes in many forms for cultivation purposes. In reciting prayers you should focus your mind on the repetition, and feel the meaning of the prayer inside you so that it affects your Qi. Repetitious prayer should eventually lead to an abandonment of thoughts and an experience of mental quiet that is *theoria*, a type of internal illumination where your self is quiet but you fill with Qi. Another type of prayer teaches us to abandon our thoughts and enter into tranquility by instructing us to let go of our ego and “give all our mental concerns over to God.” Religions explain that prayer therefore helps us reach a state of supreme solitude centered entirely “on the presence of God” that is a “union with God,” hence, prayer is how we can reach the experience of God called *theoria*. Naturally this is just the mental silencing of your inner dialogue while your body fills with Qi and consequently feels blissful, but it is worded in a more attractive religious fashion. Nevertheless this is considered a deeper connection to God through silence - a silent time of internal sacred quietude that is transformative (due to internal Qi flow during a quiet state of mind). This achievement of being free of coarse thoughts is actually a meditation attainment, which is practicing an internal quietude of the mind rather than engaging in reflective thoughts. That’s when the Yang Qi of your body can arise and start washing your tissues and organs. Thousands of men and women over the centuries have achieved the independent subtle body attainment through the religious practice pathway of prayer, worship and reverence, especially within the Christian, Jewish and Moslem traditions. This includes the more recent Eastern Orthodox monks and nuns Gerontissa Makrina, Gerontissa Taxiarchia, Elder Paisios of Mount Athos, Arsenios the Cappadocian, Elder Joseph the Hesychast, and Elder Ephraim of Arizona; Christian saints such as Padre Pio of Pietrelcina and St. Francis of Assisi; Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson; Sufi Sheikhs Nazim, Shaykh Sharafuddin Daghestani and Abdullah Fa’izi ad-Daghestani; as well as the Krishna *bhakti* exemplar Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and Kali *bhakti* adherent Ramakrishna, who all attained the initial enlightenment stage of the Srotapanna deva body via the cultivation route of religious practices that included prayer, worship and reverence. After their initial Srotapanna *Homo Deus* attainment they went further to accomplish the entire path. Vedic astrologer James Braha states that when Jupiter occupies the 1st house in an individual’s natal chart or aspect’s the 1st house ruler then the person tends to spiritually cultivate using the *bhakti* pathway of devotion and prayer (like Krishna devotees), and the same if Jupiter aspects the individual’s Sun (which represents the soul) or Moon

(which represents the person). People who follow austere spiritual cultivation paths that involve practicing meditation, introspection, fasting, detachment of the senses, non-attachment to the world and monkhood will usually have Saturn occupying or aspecting the 1st house or Saturn aspecting the 1st house ruler or Sun or Moon. People who use Advaita (non-duality), Zen, astrology, the Bible, intellectual inquiry, spiritual seminars and any mental path tend to have Mercury occupying or aspecting the 1st house, or Mercury aspecting the 1st house ruler, or Sun or Moon. These three cultivation pathways are symbolized by Krishna (a Jovian bhakti type path), Shiva (a Saturnian austerity type path) and Vishnu (a Mercurian mental type path).

Diet, Herbs and Remedies: Eating the right foods, minerals, herbs, and supplements to nourish the body and help to bring about a state of optimal health is necessary for spiritual cultivation. The beginning stage of “laying the foundation” on the spiritual path is also a stage of “rejuvenating the body” and includes eating vitamins, specific herbs, minerals, and special foods that will help to rebuild your Qi and restore you to maximum health. This is necessary for the spiritual path.¹² The most nutrient-dense foods you can eat include red and green vegetable-fruit powders, nucleotide-rich foods, and organ meats.¹³ All of these foods are wonderful for your biological substrate because they are easy to digest, absorb and be used to create or repair cells. You should always (1) prefer organic foods, (2) avoid sugar, (3) avoid processed vegetable fats in your diet and (4) reduce wheat flour and grain consumption to lose weight. Some remedial herbs may help your hormone levels, or your Qi/Prana, and others may serve as adaptogens that help bring your biochemistry into balance while yet others may simply help to heal you. Mineral deficiencies must also be addressed. The foundational stage of the spiritual path also includes detoxification of the body’s tissues such as muscles, organs, bones and the channels of elimination (intestines) as necessary.¹⁴ Those who can regularly clean their intestines of the filth impacting its walls to keep the channels of elimination open tend to live longer, as is the case for those whose Qi circulatory system runs continuously smooth without blockages¹⁵ (nattokinase helps eliminate blood clots). Brain scans reveal that using ginkgo biloba, which improves blood flow throughout the body, definitely helps the brain because it produces the healthiest or “prettiest” brain pictures. Chinese

¹² See *Blood Chemistry and CBC Analysis* by Dick Weatherby and Scott Ferguson.

¹³ See *Look Younger, Live Longer* by Bill Bodri.

¹⁴ See *Detox Cleanse Your Body Quickly and Completely* by Bill Bodri.

¹⁵ See *Prevent and Reverse Atherosclerosis: Proven Natural Alternatives that Eliminate Cholesterol Plaque Without Surgery* by Stanton Reed.

culture has created a deep philosophy on the right type of foods to eat in order to help the body adjust to the climate, seasons and health conditions although the western natural foods movement has created its own set of food principles. Ayurveda also offers some principles for this topic but they are not as developed as those of Chinese culture with its Taoist influences. Some foods can certainly be used to adjust your Qi. For instance, hot spices will stimulate your Yang Qi while other special foods may cause a cooling reaction within your body, thus supporting your Yin Qi. Therefore you can ingest certain foods, herbs, minerals, etc. to adjust the Qi/Prana of your body as necessary rather than just eat for health and growth. Food is better than medicine for improving health, and as stated this is a special knowledge within Chinese cuisine although remedial measures are also found in Ayurveda and many other herbal medical traditions. Examples of adjusting your Qi include drinking warming teas during winter (such as Pu'er), and cooling teas (such as Jasmine tea) during Summer to help adjust your body. Some schools use fasting as a spiritual cultivation method because the lack of food forces you to depend upon your inner Qi body for sustenance. The desire for food and sex are two fundamental desires suffered by animals that can be used to move their Qi, and so fasting is a time when you can use the force of that discomfort to push the Qi within your body. The internal energies aroused during sex are also used in some spiritual conditions.

Yin Qi Cultivation: The emotions of fear, fright, shock, hurt, anxiety, sadness, worry, disappointment, loneliness, isolation, hopelessness, helplessness, resignation, vulnerability, rejection, unimportance, insignificance, feeling unwanted, feeling let down, feeling confused and lost, feeling on guard and uncomfortable, inner turmoil and travail, intimidation, humility, yearning, hunger (fasting), depression, suicide, guilt, embarrassment, shame, humiliation, grief, apathy, disgust, revulsion, jealousy, treachery, sneakiness, greed, and chills all stimulate, vibrate, or raise your Yin Qi. Individuals who cultivate are often provoked by their spiritual master into situations that stimulate their Yin Qi (such as fear, embarrassment, guilt, anxiety and worry, bad dreams, etc.) in order to purify their the entire body of Yin Qi or its channels of circulation. For instance, they might be taught to daily observe the ugly sight of a decaying corpse, which gives rise to revulsion, disgust and sadness. Typically they are put into a prolonged *bhava* state of emotional feelings (strong emotions are evoked) that produces strong sensations inside their body that stimulate their Yin Qi. This is done for hours, days, weeks and even months in order to raise the student's Yin Qi in order to help purify this aspect of their inner subtle body. The principle is that mental states can directly affect the Qi of your body, and so you are put through different mental states to raise your Yin Qi or Yang Qi during

specific energy rotations in order to wash the relevant Yin or Yang energies of your body. When you are doing something wrong - such as stealing, lying or spying on others - your Yin Qi also normally arises because you recognize the impropriety of your behavior. The daily practice of introspection to find personal faults, errors and bad conduct, to feel *ashamed* or *guilty* about these imperfections, and then engaging in a small ceremony of confession and *repentance* so that you don't repeat them is a wonderful way to periodically refresh your Yin Qi, establish rectitude in your mind and correct your behavior. Imagining that you absorb lunar energy from the moon (cool moonlight); water visualizations; meditating or conducting sadhanas in cemeteries; charnal ground practices; corpse practices; performing ghost, Hell, purgatory (*preta*) or death sadhanas; seeing sorcery or witchcraft practices; experiencing pain or torture; doing evil deeds alone or within a group; cultivating within a room of mirrors that makes you feel cool or coldish; visiting a cool cave; visualizing or imagining that you undergo age regression; fantasizing that you transform into a young girl (femininity practices), etcetera are all methods of Yin Qi cultivation. Times of sickness; darkness; thoughts of suicide; attending funerals or cremations; sitting in cool caves; working in a monastery's ossuary; engaging in thievery or other criminal activities, visiting a hospital; working in or visiting a mental asylum; eating cold minerals such as calcium; visiting limestone or other "cold" mineral formations; standing within a cold waterfall; eating Yin foods, cooling herbs or Yin medicines (such as antibiotics); "seeing ghosts" or having scary visions or "bad" drug trips; sitting or walking naked like a Jain monk; having people learn your embarrassing secrets or just being embarrassed, etcetera are all situations that arouse the Yin Qi/Prana of your body because at those times your Yin Qi is stimulated into moving and temporarily dominates your physique. During cultivation you must undergo sustained Yin Qi cultivation that cause you to generate different types of inner sensations that stimulate your Yin Qi to arise for prolonged periods of time. Usually this is done to aspirants by causing them to suffer various degrees of (uncomfortable) Yin emotions to wash their Qi. You must cultivate *both* your Yang Qi and your Yin Qi during the cultivation path; you cannot cultivate Yang Qi alone. It is most common to cultivate your Yin Qi by reciting the mantras/prayers (or performing the sadhanas) of female Buddhas, the Hell Buddha Ksitigarbha (who deals with sickness, death, purgatory and the hells), performing cooling water visualizations that "wash" your body's Qi (Yin Qi is cool, not warm), visualizing that you are the color blue or black or white, performing lunar energy absorption sadhanas, or reciting certain mantras at midnight during a new moon (no light) in a Yin location, etcetera. Martial artist Sun Lu-Tang¹⁶ would face the

¹⁶ See *The Internal Practices of Sun Lu-T'ang*, compiled and translated by Bradford

moon and practice absorbing its Yin Qi through every pore of his body. During the course of spiritual cultivation to transform your inner subtle body for the Srotapanna attainment you absolutely *cannot cultivate just your Yang Qi alone* but must also stimulate your Yin Qi. This is why the Medicine Buddha Bhaisajyaguru is attended by two bodhisattvas symbolizing the light of the sun and moon, namely Yang Qi and Yin Qi since both energies must be balanced within your body for healing. Suryapraba Sun Light Bodhisattva and Chandrapraba Moon Light Bodhisattva (also known as Nikko Sunlight Bosatsu and Gakko Moonlight Bosatsu in Shingon) are the two Bodhisattvas that represent the Yin Qi and Yang Qi of your body. Sun Lu-Tang would also inhale Yin Qi for martial arts practice during the hours of 11:00 pm to 1:00 am when Yin Qi is strong and collects around the physical body, and upon exhalation he would direct the moon's Yin Qi into his lower abdomen and imagine it shining with lunar power. To acquire "heaviness" skills (the opposite of the *laghima siddhi*) he would absorb two hours of the moon's Yin Qi and mix it with one hour's practice of absorbing the sun's Yang Qi (this time ratio is not exact but would be adjusted as appropriate). When sadhus in India sit under the hot sun surrounded by burning coals or burning cow dung, they are using special methods to cultivate their cooling Yin Qi so that they can withstand the heat (while Tibetan yogis cultivate warm Yang Qi in the snow through *tummo* kundalini exercises so they can stand the cold). When you are naked in public and thus become ashamed or embarrassed of your nakedness this causes your Yin Qi to be stimulated (until you get used to it), and this method is used in the Aghori and Jain traditions to help purify someone's Yin Qi. When individuals are told to go out and spend nights in scary places such as graveyards, deserted forests, wild mountains, cemeteries or haunted locales where apparitions appear, at those times their Yin Qi is stimulated into arising, which also happens when they are told to conduct frightening sadhanas involving dead bodies and (fake) ghosts, demons, Yakshas, and the like. Many Aghori masters have cultivated their Yin Qi in this way. The initial phase of the white skeleton visualization, when you visualize that your corpse decomposes in a disgusting manner, arouses your Yin Qi and is imagined prior to visualizing your skeletal bones shining brightly, which stimulates your Yang Qi. The female Mahavidyas of India (Kali, Tara, Tripura Sundari, Bhuvaneshvari, Bhairavi, Chinnamasta, Dhumavati, Bagalamukhi, Matangi and Kamala) as well as the nine manifestations of the goddess Durgha and ten forms of Kali also represent different tones of Yin Qi cultivation. In Christianity, adoration of the Mary the Mother of Jesus is a form of Yin cultivation; a female figure is so helpful for Yin cultivation that had Mary not existed then some other female or goddess ideal would

have to have been created for the Christian tradition. The phases of the moon represent different types or stages of Yin Qi cultivation too and are used in *Yijing* study and astrology, which takes note of a planet's occultation to judge its power on events or individuals. Prominent female Buddhas within Buddhism include Tara, Kuan Yin, and Zhunti who are matched with appropriate (Yin cultivation) mantras and practices as well. In ancient times the cults of female goddesses (ex. Isis, Demeter, Diana, etc.) provided society with Yin Qi cultivation methods too. Many countries even have Yin holidays – such as Halloween, Mexico's Day of the Dead (*Día de los Muertos*) or China's Tomb Sweeping Day – which are used by Buddhas at those times to help transform the Qi of large communities of people on a vast scale. When people suffer scary nightmares or “see ghosts” this is sometimes due to spiritual beings trying to frighten them to provoke their Yin Qi in order to open their channels just as eating spicy food temporarily opens up your Yang Qi channels, and when Zen masters report irrational strong fears of death or the hells this is due to the influence of Buddhas as well who try to stimulate their Yin Qi while working to purify their Qi channels. Christian Hesychasts often end up deeply crying during their prayer recitations; their deep emotional response of weeping is a type of Yin Qi cultivation but if done frequently they must protect their lungs and kidneys with proper diets and supplements, otherwise they will weaken from the excessive depletion. When you are sick with a cold or flu it is easier to cultivate your Yin Qi since your Yang Qi is depleted at that time. Any adept going through the Twelve Year kundalini process will pass through many Yin Qi experiences, such as half-hour periods of shaking uncontrollably with chills that is a Yin Qi purification blessing by spiritual beings, or being scared deeply by some contrived incident. Men undergoing the Twelve Year process will also sometimes experience Shariputra's goddess flower lesson that he experienced within Vimalakirti's ten-foot square room (that symbolized his brain). The Buddhist *Vimalakirti Sutra* reveals a special gender transformation imagination sometimes imposed on aspirants passing through this stage of Yin Qi transformation. This method explains why Ramakrishna, Arjuna and Hercules ended up wearing women's clothing for a brief period of mental feminization practice (it is only imagined during specific meditation practices for brief periods of time), and why the legend of the Greek Tiresias said he experienced a (mental) sex-change into a woman for seven years. The methodology can be further understood by reading *Shikhandi and Other Tales They Don't Tell You* (Devadutt Pattanaik), *Nyasa Yoga and Meditation Case Studies*.

Yang Qi Cultivation: Feelings of anger, pride, courage, triumph, heroics, confidence, euphoria, exhilaration, enthusiasm, joy, cheerfulness, awe, optimism, sexual excitement, love, strength, willpower, mirth, brightness,

aliveness, attending weddings or other happy ceremonies or festivals, active exercise, fighting, masculinity practices, positive *bhava* meditation-visualization practice, sunshine visualizations, pranayama cultivation, positive planetary aspects (in the sky or happening to your natal planet locations as shown in a birth chart) etcetera are all situations used to cultivate the Yang Qi/Prana of your body. To cultivate the Yang Qi of our body, one method is to enter into a *bhava* emotional state of feelings that accordingly arouse sensations inside your body that will, in turn, stimulate or arouse your Yang Qi. An example is to whip up one's devotional emotions to enter into an ecstatic state of bhakti yoga. In Esoteric Theravada the practitioner *pervades their entire body with positive mental states* they select as specific objects of consciousness they focus upon during meditation; the practitioners do not realize that the purpose of such exercises is to stimulate the movement of their internal Yang Qi and have those resultant Qi energies affect their entire subtle body. The Buddhist "Four Immeasurables" meditations on infinite joy, loving-kindness, compassion and equanimity are another form of this technique, and proper instructions for the "four infinite minds" meditation practice is that you are supposed to stimulate all the Qi inside your body using the emotion so that they infuse you and are not just a mental phenomenon but a physical phenomenon too; you are supposed to cause to arise the feeling of those states within your body in order to stimulate and cleanse its Yang Qi. Of the basic human drives and emotions – hunger, submission to others/authority, sexual desire, and the fight or flight reactions necessary for survival – three are used in Yin Qi cultivation methods (fasting causing hunger, submission-obedience-humility in the face of authority, and fear causing flight) and two are used for Yang Qi cultivation, namely sexual desire/enjoyment and the spirit of fighting that requires courage. Other Yang Qi emotions such as pride, arrogance, anger, etc. are also used in Yang Qi cultivation techniques, especially those espoused in Tibetan Buddhism that cultivates "divine pride," "divine anger," etcetera. Some foods cause a heating/warming reaction within your body that is also a form of Yang Qi stimulation. Fire visualizations, pranayama practices and kundalini Yoga exercises are typical Yang Qi cultivation methods. Sun Lu-Tang would practice absorbing the sun's energies through his back, while facing away from the sun, at 3:00 am to 7:00 am in the morning to cultivate his Yang Qi. Both India and China have sun and moon (Yin Qi and Yang Qi) energy absorption techniques which typically assume that the moon's essence is felt strongest around the full moon, and the sun's Qi is fresh and gentle around the beginning of the month (either the lunar month or when the sun changes astrological signs). Sword masters practice absorbing Yang Qi while inhaling, and when exhaling move the Yang energy through their sword to its tip. When Tibetan monks sit in icy cold weather and try to melt

the snow around them, they are using special methods to cultivate/activate their warming Yang Qi, which is called *tummo* meditation practice. The capability is based on performing special breathing exercises in conjunction with special concentration and visualization practices. Because of their high altitude evolutionary genetic adaptations over time, Tibetans have twice the rate of blood flow through their capillaries than ordinary people (due to broader capillaries and higher levels of nitric oxide), hence they tend to be better at warm kundalini (Yang Qi) cultivation but not Yin Qi cultivation (note the fierce nature of the Tibetan-Mongolian gene stock), which is why compassion must then be emphasized as a remedy for this genetic stock of people. Indians and Africans, because of their hot weather genetics, can regulate their cooling abilities easier than others, which (in addition to culture) is why they tend to excel at Yin Qi cultivation, which is exhibited through gentleness and non-violence. This explains why there is a preponderance of Yin cultivation techniques in India that include female deity *yidams*, scary midnight or ghost Aghori sadhanas in charnal grounds, and so forth. Elder Joseph the Hesychast would every night lead his close Christian monks (destined to get the Tao) through wonderful inspiring tales of saints and then reflections on death, the Crucifixion, their personal sins and then life in Heaven in order to daily progress his students through states of both Yin Qi (reflections on guilt, personal sin, worry, repentance and contrition, death, the Crucifixion, etc.) and Yang Qi (reflections on victory, happiness, Heaven, rewards, etc.) arousal to purify their Yin and Yang Qi and their channels. Solar deities in world religions always represent Yang Qi, such as the Chinese sun god Taiyang Xingjun or Hindu solar deity Surya.

Five Elements Qi Cultivation: While it is said that there are two basic types of Qi/Prana – Yin and Yang (which are often symbolized by two intertwined snakes, male and female) – one can also think of the body as being composed of the Qi/energy of five elements, or the different Qi energies of the nine planets, or the Qi energies of other diverse component factors that each have unique signatures. Thus, methods have been developed to help you cultivate all these different energy flavors or Qi tones. You can cultivate the Earth element Qi of your body through muscle exercise and diet, both of which affect the composition of your physical body, or the white skeleton visualization that focuses specific attention on your dense bones. The Water element of your body can be cultivated by relevant emotional exercises (immeasurable meditations), lunar absorption techniques, water visualizations and *nei-gong* Qi practices on your endocrine glands since they secrete hormones, which are the watery elements within you responsible for health, cellular communications and aspects of consciousness. The Fire or Warmth element of your body can be cultivated by breathing methods,

kundalini practices and internal sun or fire visualizations, and there are various ways to cultivate fire samadhi. The Wind element of your body can be cultivated by various pranayama, Mantrayana, inner alchemy, kundalini, *kriya* yoga, *anapana*, *qi-gong*, *neijiquan*, *nei-dan* and *nei-gong* exercises that move/mobilize your inner Qi/Prana. The Space element can be cultivated by emptiness meditation practice and by imagining that your body becomes an empty sack or formless, boundless, bodiless light. Ramana Maharshi achieved his first enlightenment body (Srotapanna stage) through emptiness meditation and *jnana* (wisdom) inquiry. Wisdom can be cultivated by studying spiritual texts, such as in Vedanta, and by studying psychology and other cause and effect findings in various fields such as economics, medicine, human relations, science and so forth. In astrology the planets represent specific types of Qi-Prana energy, and you can construct relevant exercises to try to stimulate a *planetary characteristic Qi/Prana* within you as yet another means to cultivate/purify the Qi of your subtle body. Vedic astrology has mantras for planetary deities that request their purifying influences on your Qi. Taoists stand in certain postures (such as the *san ti shi* trinity posture of *Xingyiquan*) at specific times of the day, without moving, in order to absorb the specific Qi essences of those hours to “feed” their subtle bodies. In the martial arts there are also *animal form* cultivation practices where you focus on duplicating the energy of a certain animal when performing special movement practices because you want to stimulate your Yin or Yang Qi/Prana through those powerful envisioned characteristics. This is similar to *bhava* practice. After trying to evoke the energy (Qi) characteristics of the animal, you try to link that type of Qi/Prana with your limbs during movement. You do this over and over again to synchronize the limbs of your physical body’s Qi/Prana with energies of a certain Qi-tone, and thus use this as a way to cultivate your etheric subtle body of Qi. Thus martial arts can help you purify your inner subtle body, which is why it is said that you can become enlightened through the proper practice of the martial arts.

Cultivation of Infinitely Large Immeasurable Emotions: The four Buddhist immeasurable meditation practices on infinite joy, kindness, compassion and equanimity are meant to help you cultivate different tones of your Yang Qi/Prana. They symbolize the four dhyana/higher bodies, and by dwelling in them (regularly cultivating them fully) you will slowly change your personality over time to develop in the direction of those personality characteristics. Those emotions will not only change the quality of your Qi but will also impregnate your cells and internal organs with those emotional energies if you consistently try to feel them within your physical body during practice, as proven by the fact that organ transplant recipients start taking on some of the personality traits of their donors after a transplant

(because the Qi of their new organ became impressed within those characteristics). As a beneficial practice you can also cultivate emotions such as tremendous (immeasurable) courage, valor, vigor, passion, generosity, authority, positive energy, stamina, mirth, etcetera to help you influence your Qi/Prana and change your personality and fortune as you gradually develop those characteristics. Long-term practice will not just stimulate your Qi but also start to permanently flavor your Qi/Prana because you change your personality. If you hold onto a specific pure mood or emotional essence (a prevailing stable emotion or *bhava*) this is *Viramarga* (the Path of Heroes) in Kaula Tantra. It involves holding onto a pure dominant emotion or feeling (*Rasa*) but always in service to the highest principles. Such exercises will help to permanently change the *samskaras* or predispositions within your subtle body that reincarnates. By engendering large, intense heroic emotions (and cross feelings ancillary to the mood), and holding those emotional states in mind and body like meat soaking in a sauce that then becomes saturated with the flavor, through the force of permeation over a long period of time you will slowly affect the Qi/Prana of your body, your thoughts and finally your behavior. Eventually you will break through your mental barriers, limits and prior conditioning (“your heart will break through”) and your virility and vitality will become permeated by the pure quality you have cultivated, which should be invoked in service to people. Esoteric Theravada Buddhism uses a similar technique that cultivates mental factors and emotions that are *invited into consciousness and the body* as a form of meditation practice, whose ultimate purpose is to also help transform the Qi/Prana of the body. It helps *immensely* if you watch your behavior and then act in the same particular ways that express the character traits you want to evoke when opportunities arise because a character trait only takes hold when you practice it rather than just think about it. This is why sports training mental visualization (rehearsal) practice is followed by the actual physical efforts, and yet the visualization practice improves results immensely just by itself.¹⁷ Therefore you must be vigilant for opportunities to manifest the *bhava* (prevailing stable emotion) in real time. *This is spiritual cultivation*, which is cultivating the spiritual discipline of the hero. It takes vigorous effort to put the full-body emotional training into effect in your real life until those characteristics become an essential part of yourself. The results of transforming your character will appear in this life, and as character traits in subsequent incarnations. To make greatest use of this technique, during practice sessions (or during daily idle moments such as waiting in line somewhere) imagine suffusing, permeating, perfuming or saturating yourself with the Qi/Prana/aura of the character trait you strongly wish to cultivate, imagine also projecting it into your outer

¹⁷ See *Sports Visualization for the Elite Athlete* by Bill Bodri.

environment, and simultaneously try to *feel the Qi of that characteristic within yourself and projecting from yourself everywhere*. The Qi and emotional feeling must be large, intense and held with stability. When appropriate opportunities arise then retrieve that feeling and act that way because there must always be a regular consistency of actions (*praxis*) to solidify your learning and intent. Consistently visualizing and feeling that you are a wrathful deity, like Yamantaka for instance, is another type of immeasurable practice designed to raise your Yang Qi/Prana, but it will also increase your pride and aggressive tendencies if you are not careful of the *yidam* you select and how you practice. When choosing a *yidam* or deity for “Buddha mindfulness” meditation practice, such as a Jesus or Krishna or Dattatreya, you must be very selective as to the types of emotions and thoughts you practice generating and holding onto during your practice sadhana since they will influence your Qi/Prana because you are actually cultivating those same characteristics. For instance, many Hesychasts recite the Jesus Prayer, “Lord Jesus Christ, son of God, have mercy on me a sinner,” that produces a feeling of remorse and humility, which are designed to provoke your Yin Qi. Note the difference between this and the feeling from reciting alternatives such as “I give myself to you, Jesus Christ the Lord” or “Come to me, Jesus Christ my Savior.” One must carefully select the *bhava* emotional mood they must cultivate to serve as an aid to Qi cultivation and as an antidote to one’s deficiencies. Performing activities while holding onto a “principal awareness” reframing of their importance when viewed from a higher perspective, and elevating your emotions regarding the activity, is also another way to change your Qi, mindset, perspective and personality. This cultivation method is based on the principle that anytime you change your thoughts, attitudes, mentality, and conduct your Qi will immediately alter and transform in those directions, which is another reason you are taught to cultivate virtuous actions, speech and thinking. Therefore if you change the mental frame that you use to view something, such as embedding them with very significant emotional content, your activities can change your Qi. Reappraising your activities with a new frame also allows you to replace old pathways of reasoning with new and more powerful ones and allows you to impart tremendous compassion, kindness and so forth into your behavior. By correcting mistaken reasoning you can permanently reprogram your mental algorithms that lead to undesired emotions and develop a healthier, more accurate and more successful mindset or outlook in their place.

Breaking Barriers and Limitations to Unleash Your Inner Vitality, Feel Truly Alive and Touch Your Higher Bodies: When yogis who have practiced lots of cultivation work practice fasting they are forced to live off (depend upon) their subtle body to maintain their vitality, thus strengthening their inner

subtle body by drawing upon its Qi energy to survive (since this helps to open all its channels). When you practice *kumbhaka* pranayama and hold your breath longer than your normal limits, subsequently passing through a state of difficulty that then opens up into a visage of greater mental clarity and lightness, through lack of air you force yourself to open internal Qi channels and rely on your inner Prana/Qi as well. When you encounter layers of resistance in athletic activities like running where you are up against a performance barrier, but through heroic persistence surpass that resistance and push through your pain threshold when you “hit the wall,” you force yourself to depend more on your inner Qi body to move forward, and then you are living within the Qi of your subtle body. When you get so good at athletics that you use your real (rather than superficial) Qi and begin to move with effortless grace and ease, you can sometimes experience a flowing sublime state of inner peace and joy that is pristinely alert, blissful and the purpose of cultivation. When as an athletic professional you play sports and go beyond your normal capabilities to hit a state of “flow” (where your mind enters a state of concentration that seems focused and quiet without distractions while your body grooves itself to an optimality that uses less effort), you are synchronizing your physical body with your inner subtle body. Athletic flow is expressed during optimum health, optimal blood circulation, optimal respiration and optimal Qi flow that is so excellent because your body is running at peak performance, and which then quiets the mind and produces mental clarity. It also involves a strong sense/feeling of being fully alive, which means feeling blissful in all your body’s cells, due to that optimal inner harmony of respiration, blood circulation and Qi circulation. In ordinary life you may sometimes break through strong beliefs you once had that were inhibiting your virility and vitality, and when no longer being blocked or locked up by false beliefs your Qi/Prana will often start to immediately flow better. By freeing yourself of limiting mental restrictions you will unleash your inner Qi/Prana flow and begin to feel more alive and able to experience “flow” in a different form. When you stop trying to conform to an identity that others have created for you that feels like a burden (because it isn’t your true self), you will free your inner Qi flow as well. Your authentic self can come out when you let go of a false you self-image and then your virility, vitality and Qi will accordingly respond because you no longer repress them through restrictions; you must always strive to be your authentic self. When an Aghori flaunts societal traditions by breaking behavioral norms, the resultant freedom leads to a special type of unrestricted internal Qi flow too. When you break any psychological limitations you assumed for your potential abilities, and try to push past them to reach a higher level of excellence, you will break the barriers that constrain your life, life force and fortune. Once again, *this* is spiritual cultivation. You can also try to directly

cultivate the higher energy bodies by practicing the formless samadhis of Buddhism, each of which corresponds to a higher stage of finer thoughts we call “emptiness cultivation” that is matched with an attendant stage of more refined Qi/Prana. When you practice centering within the four formless samadhi absorptions – such as the samadhi of infinite space, infinite consciousness, infinite emptiness and neither thought nor no-thought – which each require more subtle levels of thoughts and Qi, it is like centering your living presence in your subtle body, Causal body, Supra-Causal body or Immanence body respectively, which strengthens the circulatory flows of the energy within your body’s energy substrates. Therefore, by trying to center yourself within a clear lucidity of extremely fine thoughts (which is achievable due to meditation practice) you are cultivating the energy of the higher body vehicles inherently within your physical matrix. At the stage of pristine awareness we call “clear mind” where the inner narrative that normally speaks within your mind quiets, you are basically cultivating the higher energy elements of your physical nature. Basically, there are various ways involving your mind, body and breathing to force yourself into relying on your higher energies (or you could say higher bodies composed of Qi, Shen, etcetera) that are inherently embedded within the matrix of your physical shell but not yet differentiated out into separate entities. They are as yet condensed (undifferentiated but existing as components) within the composite energy we call Qi/Prana that comprises your subtle body, which is the densest of your potential spiritual bodies. You can, through various means, force yourself to survive on your inner subtle Qi body (by fasting, pranayama, etc.) in order to strengthen it. You can force yourself to tap into your Qi body through physical exertion that takes you past your limits (“hitting the wall”). There are many methods of breaking through your physical and mental barriers to access your higher energies (such as your inner Qi body), many methods for strengthening your inner energy bodies, and many techniques for synchronizing your breathing, thoughts, and physical movements with the energy of your higher bodies. Many of these techniques are very apropos for sports professionals during challenging events because they involve going past one’s physical limitations and transcending one’s physical nature by tapping into your Qi energy and yet higher forces of formation. The mundane method of breaking barriers or coverings is actually *detachment* or *non-clinging* because it involves freeing yourself from conditioned programming such as limitations you incorrectly assume you have. This enables you to break through false barriers you had assumed for yourself, thus freeing your vital energy to improve its internal circulation. By eliminating layers of automatic patterning you’ve developed over time, including identification with a false persona, you transcend learned behavioral traits and past conditionings that certainly bias (crimp) your natural inner Qi/Prana flow and your behavior.

Afterwards your Qi can flow more freely because it is no longer a prisoner of artificial restrictions, and you can live at a higher state of vibrant being. Thus, detachment means letting go of any artificial patterning you have developed over time and freeing your virility and vitality to flow as it naturally would without the artificial conditioning that has restrained you. Thus you become more alive, but you still require refinement of your character, virtues and Qi otherwise this is just similar to releasing the vitality of an animal. For instance, confidence is something people already have but it is covered over by ingrained habits and learned patterns of tension. If you can free yourself from identification with those patterns, such as breaking your patterns of fear reactivity, you will automatically have more confidence since confidence and its Qi is naturally inside you and just being blocked. That self-development work will equate with a greater degree of vitality, and thus better Qi flow. The ability to detach from what's going on and look at things from an outsider's perspective, to step back from fusion with your thought-stream and the situation at hand, is the purpose of learning detachment through meditation. This is the meaning of, "when thoughts arise, (be aware of them but) do not pursue them." It means not becoming merged with your thought-stream but stepping aside and seeing things more clearly, with pristine clarity, as if you were an independent observer who wasn't fused with the situation. Yes you still have thoughts but you don't get entangled with them because you practice meta-cognition that oversees them. Cultivation means "letting go of" or "becoming detached from" subtle mental patterns and reactive behaviors that you have learned/adopted over time which function as suppressive coverings over your psyche, and which bias your inner Qi body with unnatural leanings. Such barriers define you because they become incorporated into your personality, and thus help to create your fate by binding your thoughts, actions and energies to constraining patterns that robotically restrict and impede your greater freedom. Whenever you break away from such false coverings your Qi/Prana begins to flow more freely, your vitality rises extraordinarily, and you feel more vital and alive as a result of breaking free of prior conditioning. This, then, is a way of cultivating your Qi. However, just having strong vitality is akin to being like a strong animal. You must refine that Qi through culture. Confucius said that when your native substance (Qi or vitality and personality) wins out over cultural refinement you have the coarseness of a peasant, and when cultural refinement wins out over natural substance you get the pedantry (clarity of minor details) of a clerk. Only when your natural substance and your cultural refinement are in balance do you get a leader, a real human being. Confucius said he *refined himself* by basing himself on virtue and taking recreation in the arts that in his day included archery, charioteering, writing, ritual and music. Today that would include yoga, martial arts and athletics that cultivate/refine your Qi;

the active literacies that cultivate your intellect and give you the power of elegant and effective expression; and the arts that pacify your emotions and refine-elevate your tastes and character. Hence, you must not just cultivate your virility, vitality or strength of Qi (animals do this when females breed with the strongest males) but must refine your consciousness and personality with training and culture. Cultural refinement focuses on our animal nature and brain to make noble the beast within us. Refinement or elevation of our intellect and behavior (propriety, wisdom, kindness and compassion) are what make us transcend above being just regular animals.

This is therefore a summary of the many ways to purify the Yin and Yang Qi of your body, which is the basis of the deva body attainment known as enlightenment. When you achieve the deva body attainment, you become *Homo Deus*, a Taoist Immortal, Buddhist Srotapanna Arhat, Hindu *jnani*, and so forth. This attainment is the very first rung of the true spiritual ladder that is kept hidden from people since most would not attain it, and therefore would be dejected about their efforts and stop cultivating altogether. This is why the path is positioned as some type of emptiness attainment because in cultivating emptiness meditation people think they are making progress, but cannot actually measure whether this is true. Hence they still progress towards the attainment, even though they won't achieve it in this life, and lay the foundation of achievement necessary for success in the after life.

Nearly one-hundred percent of spiritual practitioners do not know how to cultivate correctly even if they are monks or nuns because they do not realize they are performing exercises meant to transform and purify their Yin Qi or Yang Qi. The purpose of spiritual practice is to purify and strengthen your subtle body composed of Qi so that you can achieve the independent deva body attainment whilst alive, or (failing at that) lay the foundation for the Sakadagamin stage and then Causal body Anagamin achievement after death. Now that you know the many ways to go about purifying your Qi and the principles behind these techniques, you should be able to make your spiritual practices, whatever they are, much more effective.

The road of spiritual practice involves cultivating, purifying or refining (1) your Qi, (2) your consciousness and (3) your character, which gives rise to your behavior. Hence we say you must purify your behavior on the spiritual trail. Even if you don't succeed in enlightenment, you still want to achieve a refined state of psychology (mental well-being) and behavior. However, you also want to make progress in purifying the internal energy of your body since that is the basis of your spiritual attainments and the body of your next life. If you don't succeed at the subtle body attainment in this lifetime

you can continue cultivating the purity of your body's Qi after death and achieve the requisite purification of your subtle body from there to attain the Sakadagamin stage of achievement. You get a head start on this objective if you cultivated spirituality during life.

The level of attainment you want to ultimately achieve is Supra-Causal body achievement that corresponds to a “formless plane” of existence, meaning a level of existence where your body is free of all the vestiges of coarse matter including etheric atoms, which is why that body can twist, fold, vibrate and perform all sorts of shape changes that are used during the purification processes of your kundalini transformations. For these achievements you can cultivate your Qi directly through *nei-gong* purification practices or go about trying to purify it by purifying your consciousness. How do you purify your Qi by purifying your mind (consciousness)? By cultivating internal values and virtues rather than evil deeds since bad behavior pollutes the quality of your Qi and creates unfortunate tendencies or *samskaras* in its basis.

Humans stay animals if they don't cultivate their consciousness. They smell like animals if they don't cultivate their Qi. You must perform both of these tasks on the spiritual path.

Whenever you break free from animal instincts and impulses; break free from (detach from) the social cocoon of groupthink; free yourself from errant past conditioning (such as the brainwashing of errant social notions); or like an outside observer exercise meta-cognition that stands aside from entrainment with your mind-stream to realize what you are actually thinking and doing and then pivot to act differently when you see you are errant, you then ascend. In so doing you can create a new life and new future destiny. You can improve your present state of being and then reside at a higher level of excellence. Because of detachment or “distancing” you can separate yourself from your mental conditioning and live a new life free of old thinking and behaviors that hold you back. Then you can create a better life than the one they would have produced had you retained those influences as your standard attributes. In the place of the old you can create a new life as you choose.

You aren't just breaking away from your thought-stream or the Qi/Prana within you. You are breaking away from the mechanistic programming you've developed within your attribute of consciousness that is another inanimate process belonging to Shakti, for Shakti is *entirely inanimate*. We only call certain things within Shakti “living” for the convenience sake of differentiation (identification). You are just a process (we call you a “life”)

within Shakti that has consciousness, and your consciousness and life are neutral processes within Shakti that we term “animate,” but there is no such independent, innate thing as a “living being with consciousness.” Consciousness seems like it is free of matter and apart from Shakti, thus transcending it, but is a process entirely within Shakti that is composed of Shakti rather than transcendental.

You are a borderless ripple within the fabric of Shakti so you are Shakti rather than an independent life, and ultimately beyond being just matter-energy you are the fundamental substrate of the universe that lacks consciousness (or even movement). You are just a different conglomerate type of form, aspect, process, event or functioning within Shakti that is Shakti and the original nature. You are part of the cosmos and an individual in your own right, and the view of self-realization is to know your true relationship with the cosmos (Shakti) and the foundational substrate of the cosmos. You look like a sentient being but there really is no such thing as a sentient being *in the way we assume there is*. There is no such thing as an innate, inherent, independent, essential, core or absolute soul-self for what we call the “self” is just a dependent construction whose composition spans the entire universe. You are essentially a being without any form.

Everything gets into the act of making or defining you. And yet, of course, a sentient being is there but there is no innate person as the knower. There is just a process going on, a collection of events or simples and energy waves. Even so, you think you are a sentient being with special characteristics and do enjoy consciousness, so make use of it as best you can. For instance, the more you become free of your robot-like programming - rather than entangled with your thought-stream and any imagined restrictions you’ve assumed for yourself - the better your Qi vitality will flow. You will thus feel more truly alive and better able to experience peace, happiness and bliss, which is what we all want. We all want to feel an active inner vitality and taste the joy or bliss of life rather than just exist. We don’t want to suppress this or turn aside from this *joie de vivre*.

To some extent you will always be a slave to your genetic conditioning, cultural conditioning, and what you learn from your experiences etc. since cause and effect rules all, including the fact that your thoughts, emotions and deeds are influenced by such conditioning (that includes mental structures common to all that have been instilled by society), but you can create different programming you may want to follow in order to experience whatever you want.

This should not include adopting pathways that abandon humanity for something lower because a person is a person and not an animal or less virtuous conscious agent; humanity is a quality we create in each other. We cultivate humanity by purifying our minds, behavior and by refining our Qi through spiritual techniques. Our existence as humans and even the greater level of *Homo Deus* spirituality is due to the higher qualities we teach each other concerning consummate conduct, which is what separates us from lower species. Nevertheless, the point is that most people born within the same period, for instance, tend to adopt the same programmed values as their peers, but you can choose to develop values that are totally different from those group values. You can purify your adopted values just as you can work to purify the Yin Qi and Yang Qi of your body, and this is a necessity for the spiritual path. You can develop a psyche (your total personality encompassing all your thoughts, behaviors, feelings and emotions) containing elements foreign to that of everyone else. Specifically, a personality can be transformed to become more noble, pure, compassionate, wise and spiritual than everyone else. This is the spiritual path.

You are a slave to the conditioning of your culture and environment (that produce an energetic impact on your subconscious thought processes even if you are not aware of it), but you can choose to change your thinking apparatus and fill your mind with contents different than everyone else. You can choose to think differently than others too, which means being more noble or pure and thinking independently. You can make yourself be the way you want to be (adopt spiritual values and characteristics) that help you become whatever you want to become, which is the road of spiritual practice. You can also choose the future you want to enjoy and then create it.

By viewing yourself and your thoughts, actions and situations from a detached higher standpoint that lets you see them for what they are, you always give yourself the chance to break free of blindly following (conditionally derived) thoughts that would produce a particular worldly fate you do not want, such as a life with a particular outcome, and can choose higher spiritual outcomes instead. You can self-rectify yourself through mental observation; unlike the flow of a river that must follow a set course you can learn how to self-correct yourself according to spiritual ideals and change directions. Thus, your fate can always be changed by better thinking and behavior. Through better thinking and behavior you can change both your personal attributes as well as life events that determine your fate and fortune.

This is the purpose of meditation exercises that emphasize awareness, presence, watchfulness, being centered, introspection, self-observation or mindfulness. While you must cultivate the Qi energy of your body, their purpose is to develop the natural tendency to always be fully awake, alive, aware and free from entrainment with your mind-stream so that you always raise your thinking and actions for the better too. Meditation practice enables you to settle in a living state of presence (awareness) rather than continue going through life in a robot-like condition where your thoughts are compulsive. To be robot-like is to be trapped by perfect entrainment with your thoughts where there is no way to change their trajectory and spiritualize your behavior. On the other hand, we want to live our lives in a state of fully present awareness with elevated behavior that is the fuller human potential rather than to live in a robot-like, hypnotic “waking sleep.”

The meditation practice of continuously watching yourself has as one of its purposes the objective of helping you cultivate a state of presence where you are not enmeshed or caught up in your thought-streams and always blindly following thoughts while losing your state of presence. Presence is the experiential feeling of *living in the Now* where there is a freshness of living experience - a complete mindful awareness of the present moment that fully appreciates the greatness of the experience. It is like being centered so that your Qi runs directly into your brain, your I-thought quiets, the Qi even circulates through your cerebellum and back of the head since you are not pushing it forward, and you experience life and all its glory in that state of quiet, focused, alert, vivid, centered presence. This is to experience the joy of life, or the bliss of life (even if it might not seem blissful), especially when your Qi flow is so excellent that it energizes all your body cells. Meditation practice therefore strengthens your ability to be present, achieve the state of flow, and not develop a fluctuating, wandering mind *if you practice correctly*.

Detachment practice actually means “pristine awareness” or “ultimate clarity” practice. Through detachment, mindfulness, awareness or independence *you can remain focused on your mental doings and take back control of your life by transcending your robot-like conditioning, transcend any adhesion to the momentum of events and reassert your own values again*. By not mechanically clinging to (following, going along with, getting entangled within or becoming merged with) your deterministically-created thought-stream but always rising above it like a separate individual who independently views it by standing outside of it, you can realize what you are actually doing in all situations and where you are actually going. Through this transcension of “being clear” you can break away from your thought-stream and the fortune that it destines and create a new one in its place. *This is essentially*

spiritual cultivation. You cannot just emphasize body (Qi) cultivation on the path but must emphasize this aspect of spirituality, which is the cultivation of your behavior and your mind that includes your thoughts, emotions and your overall psychology and character.

This is the crux and core of spiritual cultivation, which is to cultivate yourself (mind, Qi-body and actions-conduct) so that you personally move to a better/higher state of being, and to use your powers to also create better states for others since they are your brothers and sisters within Shakti who can also experience bad things in life. A spiritual cultivator works to decrease personal suffering for the “I” as well as suffering for the “We,” and works to create more positive states of joy, kindness, compassion, etc. in both themselves and others in the present and as a legacy after they are gone. You can make efforts so that any possible future becomes a reality such as more positive emotional experiences, living conditions or achievements.

You cannot escape having a fortune since Shakti is ruled by cause and effect, which means that a line of thoughts and actions will always produce a consequential result (fortune) once initiated. You cannot control the outcome of your actions but only your actions, but still you must make the efforts required to attain whatever you want. Your actions will always have a consequential outcome along that road of effort. You can and should always try to create the special fortune, fate or future you want for your life even though you cannot guarantee that future outcome. Once your wisdom realizes any mistakes in your efforts through introspective review, you can change an ongoing course of actions headed for an unfortunate outcome, but only if you are wise enough, skillful enough, and put in the requisite effort.

This is the uncertainty of life, and it is the flexibility of consciousness that gives us the opportunity to adapt our efforts and correct them in response to conditions as well as select worthy goals in the first place. Your Qi must be cultivated, mind must be cultivated and your actions must be cultivated through self-correction, which you can also call a form of “purification.” Insentient objects have fixed attributes and cannot do this. They cannot be proactive, plan or adapt but can only respond to conditions. Conscious beings, on the other hand, have voluntary volition and can monitor and rectify their actions and behavior.

Most of the time your thought-stream mechanically (automatically) arises in response to situations. You become *more truly alive* by *not fusing* with your thought-stream that is dominated by processes inherent to the machinery of

your brain, and thus are mechanistic in nature and therefore often errant. You become deadened by fusion rather than most alive, so the key to life is to become aware of what naturally, automatically, mechanically arises within your mind and then correct those thought products and alter them according to your higher goals and purposes. We say you need to purify your Yin and Yang Qi and you also need to purify your mind like this for it gives rise to evil, bad and unwholesome Yin thoughts and positive Yang thoughts. You want to strive to become more noble, consummate, and majestic (as well as realistic) in altering whatever arises naturally in your mind. If anger arises or you immediately think someone is ugly it may be a natural reaction, so you do not criticize yourself for what mechanically, automatically arises. You stay aware of the natural thought-stream and then *correct whatever arises*, guiding thoughts into a more noble elevation, and refuse to act upon errant impulses that may have naturally arisen. Learning how to do this is the Great Learning of life.

You can pursue greater happiness and bliss by training your thinking apparatus to produce excellence, or by exposing yourself to different thoughts and environments, and this pursuit is also spiritual cultivation, which is to do the very best with what you have despite any inherent deficiencies. Your job is to correct your thoughts that naturally arise so that they are mentally aligned with goodness, rightness and your highest best self. Your job is to recognize mistakes in what you are thinking and doing in real time and then correct until you get things right. Your job is to optimally manage all your capabilities of consciousness, and gradually take yourself to a state of excellence that is a spiritual nobility beyond your current state. To do so you must progressively *discard the negative programs within your persona* that pollute its illustrious nature, retrain your perspectives and ways of thinking, develop your wisdom and skillfulness in terms of decision-making and active behavior, and develop the willpower to transcend unwholesome urges, habits (that cause you to do certain things in a certain way), mindsets (that cause you to see things in a certain way) and predispositions to create a new fortune.

Thus, emptiness (a mind that is somewhat quiet of self-talk, wandering thoughts, impelling desires, distracting emotional irritations and impulsive inclinations) is often considered the highest state since it is the barest state, the most natural state, the unconstructed state, the calmest clearest state, the most enjoyable state. However, if the mind's conceptual processes always reference a substratum of values due to prior trainings in ethics and virtue, and if those noble values and virtues then become stamped upon all its outputs (thoughts), we might say that the expression of such thoughts is then truly majestic, noble, pure and beautifies reality. In that case, how can

emptiness be termed the highest state as compared to a spirituality that transcends the world? Thoughts (and actions) to help others in compassionate ways are the highest, most noble and most beautiful states of consciousness! *The mind expressed in consummate conduct is the most beautiful and highest state rather than passive emptiness that does nothing.* When you do good deeds and you feel the joy of giving, is this vibrancy of vitality and life not a blissful flow state too?

The universe is neutral, but we create its moral order. We create nobility and morality, or evil and cruelty. In terms of universal structure, however, emptiness co-exists with phenomena just as objects and energies permeate the emptiness of space, so the mental practice of being neither totally empty nor attached to our thought-stream corresponds to the natural state of the universe and this is the way we should be. We should neither attach to emptiness nor to thoughts, and this is the Middle Way.

Many spiritual traditions say this is how our minds should operate but we harbor too many mental attachments, including attachments to desires and impulses that impel us incorrectly. Basically, you should not attach to illusory consciousness with fusion unless you are fixating on a mental topic with concentration for a specific purpose. Then you are trying to hold your mind on a point with stability for a specific purpose. When you are letting your mind flow, your vitality should become full because of the health you've cultivated for your body where you can feel an inner physical bliss connected to your Qi circulation. Thus you can experience *sat, chit, ananda*, or existence, consciousness and bliss. *Sat-chit-ananda* should not just subjectively describe the ultimate unchanging reality but your experience of life itself, and it can if you cultivate *ananda*.

This is the state of “living in a state of presence with (detached) pristine awareness and perfect poise” that allows a world of qualities to be experienced in a state of flowing clarity. It bespeaks of the phrase “neither real nor non-real.” In that state of flow the I-self identity you take yourself to be still exists (otherwise consciousness does not transpire) but *does not become overly fused with its mental constructs*, and the mind is not interrupted by distractions that might arise within its field of focus. Thus life can be experienced vividly, vibrantly, with your full awareness and vitality operating in the most natural and correct manner.

Being in that state is not a weakness because your Qi – due to prior stretching exercises and inner Qi work – should flow naturally throughout your body so that you exhibit a strength in virility and vitality. Furthermore, your Qi should directly enter your head and stream everywhere cranially

with fullness (that tends to produce calmness and clarity) including even in the cerebellum, which then makes one exceptional. This creates a state of centered *presence*, and sometimes it is called “clarity” or “pristine awareness” or even “emptiness” even though the thought-stream (such as mental recognition of objects and awareness of the mind-stream) is still functioning.

In the *state of presence* there is no excessive identification with your body or mind and you execute your functioning in a smooth and effortless manner. There is predominantly the state of presence since self-talk has been silenced and you can approach life with a pure and clean mind connected with the reality about you that is also absent of unwanted internal annoyances and distractions. The mind is quiet but wide-awake and aware so the experience is like a feast of lucidity. It is not a nihility of thought since thought processes are always producing the world of qualities you experience within your mind. However, there is a pristine lucidity of clear, centered awareness without unwanted distractions, and in that state your body feels blissful/comfortable. Why? Because it is healthy and its energy flows smoothly in proper balance due to a proper diet and all your prior physical exercises and spiritual inner energy cultivation work. That is why you cultivate the Yin Qi and Yang Qi of your body. In the state of presence you can concentrate on whatever you are doing with absorption, and truly enjoy an experience of the bliss of life and the joy of living. In a state of presence or flow your absorption in a world of thoughts and qualities remains unaffected and unperturbed by distractions and continues to fully enjoy whatever is the experience.

This feast of lucidity is an optimal way to exist in life as you go about doing whatever you need to do. Thus it is called aliveness, or “flow state.” It is existence, consciousness and bliss. At times it might seem as if there are no thoughts during this state of *vivid presence* but there are always very fine (almost quiet) thinking processes going on within the mind whenever you are conscious no matter how pure, empty clear or quiet your mind may seem.

The key to “experiencing silence,” “pristine clarity” or “one-pointed concentration” is whether there are too many wandering thoughts, chaotic thoughts, afflictive emotional thoughts or just too much focus on the coarse impulses, desires, and inner narrative of the I-self. The mind always has forms of unconscious processing going on including perceptions without awareness of what is perceived, therefore many mental operations don’t openly appear as existing but are present in consciousness when you are awake. Thus there is no such thing as truly empty mind when you are

awake. The mind processes many types of “very subtle thinking” even though consciousness may seem pristinely quiet and empty. A mind can process stimuli and act on them without any awareness of it doing so.

You must choose your future – the future you want to have in terms of how you want your mind to be, where you want to live, what you want to experience, what you want to associate with, what you want to accomplish, how you want to be, the well-being you wish to create and so forth. You can manifest your fortune by creating better thoughts and by also not clinging to your thought-stream so that you are more open to change and innovation. Then you must select whatever appropriates the highest objective, ideal or aspiration after due consideration. Since you are not an intrinsically real “sentient being” but only so in the apparent/conventional sense, the highest state is to recognize what you really are (the “enlightenment view”) and be truly empty of clinging to painful or incorrect attachments, correcting the errant oddities or unwanted attributes of your mind in real time, and actively manipulating Shakti as a living being does to accomplish whatever you want while enjoying all that Shakti, your greater body, has to offer.

Nature is ruled by laws of cause and effect, so all things in the cosmos are controlled via cause and effect because they follow rules of transformations. However, you can manage these transformations to create or accomplish whatever you want even though, technically speaking, your decisions are also really inanimate events/processes cocooned within Shakti and somewhat deterministic because they are produced according to your conditioning and mental processing machinery. There is no escaping Shakti and the fact that you are not really an innate, self-so, independently existing living being, personality or entity that transcends it. There is no such thing in Shakti, there is only Shakti – the neutrality of scintillating Shakti that has some conscious components thinking they are independent beings separate from Shakti when everything about them, even their consciousness, is Shakti. You are simply a continuous process within Shakti that is more or less uniform, monotonous and stable, but you have the gift of being able to continuously generate mental experiences as well as perform deliberate actions with intent. There are many actions you can take to free yourself from suffering, including self-improvement or improving your environment and circumstances, yet the most special set of actions involve cultivating higher spiritual bodies by purifying the Yin and Yang Qi of your inner physical nature. This is what is done on the path of spirituality, but people don’t know it and masters don’t speak about this clearly because most people would fail at it during life, and would thus be discouraged if they knew the full truth as I have revealed. The spiritual path is therefore

worded in a way that does not emphasize body cultivation but mind and conduct purification instead since by so doing you will make progress during life and can finish the efforts of purification in the afterlife to attain the higher bodies.

You are not an innate process with an inherent unchanging I-self, but are a somewhat stable process that is always transforming into something else. You have the power that you can lead some of those transformations for the real world, and for yourself as regards your mind, behavior and body. You have read about many of the methods used to cultivate mental purity, freedom from emotional afflictions, ethical values and virtues, wisdom, the proper way to operate consciousness, and so on. You have read about mindfulness and many other methods used to correct and elevate your behavior or make your actions more skillful and effective. And you have read of the many methods for purifying your Yin and Yang Qi, which must be done for the spiritual path, and for cultivating the health and flexibility of your body including a more optimal freedom of inner Qi circulation.

Essentially you are constructed out of the interconnections with All of Shakti itself and are simply an event made of other events that combine with each other. But so what? You still have the freedom of self-expression and can enjoy the life you have because you have the prize of consciousness, so you can give your life significance and meaning. The second great luck is that you have the ability to cultivate to attain a nearly immortal spiritual body that can escape the lower realms of continuous reincarnation. The problem for you within the universe is not birth and death but *longevity and continuity* that are maximized by spiritual cultivation. Reincarnation is managed by higher spiritual beings because our inner Qi body eventually deteriorates but through their efforts is always being refreshed, which is why they constantly intervene in our Qi during our lifetime. Reincarnation prevents physical, subtle and Causal bodies from decomposing and deteriorating into annihilation, and the rounds of lower reincarnations can finally be escaped forever when you achieve the Supra-Causal body and higher that are free of the lower forms of even etheric matter.

So in truth, there really isn't any such true transcendental thing as the consciousness of a living being, which is why Buddhism calls conceptions "false thoughts." False thoughts are just another type of inanimate/neutral events or processes going on within Shakti that are not apart from it nor transcend it even though they seem free of matter. From the aspect of living beings thoughts create a gross but limited approximation of Shakti in our minds – a similitude or illusory reality – but that imperfection is okay

because it still provides us with life, and we can correct some of the errant processes within consciousness. Thoughts are therefore “false” or “illusions” or “unrealities” because they can never capture Shakti properly through mental representation. We truly don’t know what reality looks like so what we see in our similitude is referred to as an illusion. There is a Shakti reality behind that has qualities, but we can never know it directly, fully and thus correctly. Yet who cares about such deficiencies since we don’t know any better and what we have is still the great miracle and treasure of existence. You have to cultivate to make consciousness better!

Thoughts are simply part of Shakti, not something that transcends Shakti because of an independence of non-membership. They are neutral or inanimate activities or processes without a separate, independent, innate living being behind them. They do not provide you with “truth,” but with your own personal version of truth that is relevant for yourself and for your class of sentient beings. Your individuality is actually a collected assembly of simples (particles, atoms or quanta) in a particular ever-changing pattern (meaning that there is no absolute pattern at all), or an agglomeration of interdependent conditions and processes within a field – a process stretching through time – without anything *inherently you* being there. You therefore have no substantial reality as an innate being although your apparent existence is more or less uniform, monotonous and stable for awhile. There is no intrinsic, inherent, unchanging permanent self-core of your apparent self inside those intertwining conditions of infinite interdependence - inside those processes or conditions you call your body or mind - or inside any collection of simples and processes or events no matter what the pattern of the agglomeration. Yet, you can still enjoy the bliss of life through the great miracle of consciousness that we are taught to tame and master on the road of spirituality.

Your consciousness does exist within Shakti, faulty or incomplete that it is, so you can enjoy it. The great miracle of existence, and greatest treasure, is the I-thought of being a sentient subject that can experience a world of qualities through consciousness. You are just an object or process within Shakti with the property of consciousness, which is the grandest miracle and treasure of the cosmos no matter what its faults or limitations. The point is that you are a living object, with a body, that enjoys awareness that can experience a little of what you are. Consciousness is simply one of your properties and your Knowledge is your identity for as long as it lasts.

Our challenge is that suffering often afflicts consciousness (living beings) so you should learn how to make things better (master the conditions of Shakti) in order to reduce or eliminate suffering in your life and produce

well-being in its place, for well-being is more palatable or enjoyable and can admit to certain inevitable degrees of pain and suffering that cannot be eliminated. You need to learn how to think differently so that suffering does not bother you so much when you cannot reduce it or avoid it, and learn how to cultivate a happier, sunnier, more cheerful and optimistic mentality so that you can enjoy Shakti to a higher degree. The great goal is that everyone else becomes happier too because conditions become better due to our aggregate efforts at improving ourselves and making the world a better place.

This is why spiritual masters stress that we should work to improve conditions for others, which is why we work so hard to give our children better lives and better futures than we had. This is the point behind eliminating suffering by improving conditions, and training our minds by mastering consciousness and behaving better. By improving our understanding of affairs (increasing our knowledge and wisdom) we will better understand patterns and regularities and thus know how to better act, and by developing wisdom, knowledge and skills we will become able to improve conditions for ourselves and others (achievement).

Unfortunately, consciousness usually gets caught up within its own mind-stream whereby you lose perspective/comprehension of what you are truly doing because of that fusion. You lose your perspective because you get caught up in things, and therefore make bad decisions or act poorly. When you get distracted or caught up in your own agenda you lose the state of presence. This is why you should, through meditation practice, cultivate mindfulness of your thought-stream that produces a meta-perspective knowing of it. Otherwise, by becoming entangled within it and blind to what you are doing you will often make bad decisions and perform actions that lead to inferior states of being. By also cultivating concentration through meditation you will learn how to deal with distractions, annoyances and afflictions that typically pollute the mind and mar the state of presence.

You actually become “more insentient” by forgetting yourself and getting blindly entangled with following your thought-stream like a robot under command. This is how you can commit great wrongs or errors by losing the proper perspective. This is what is meant by becoming more “mechanical” or “robotic” through the fusion of blind entrainment, and the perfect example of this is succumbing to (automatically acting upon or becoming engrossed in) your most animalistic urges, desires or habits that appear within your consciousness due to physiology. Spiritual cultivation teaches you not to become imprisoned by your desires and senses. It teaches that we should not unite ourselves to some object of desire or blind impulse that

so occupies our heart and mind that we long for it to the extent that we feel we cannot live without it.

You can learn how to transcend such pollution, which is the path of cultivation practice that ennoble you as a spiritual being. Attachment means that you identify yourself with whatever fills your mind through the senses or emotions. In religion this is “occupying your heart by another God” or idolatry because your whole being becomes glued to something other than spiritual ways. Cultivating emptiness and detachment, on the other hand, allows you to counteract craving and desire.

The remedy for becoming more sentient, more alive, and more transcendent or independent of the forces normally controlling you is to reside in your highest spiritual status. That state is detached from conditions where you always try to engender a wiser, kinder, more transcendental perspective. Actions proceeding from that perspective reflect a higher, better way than what would normally just naturally occur. This is the path of ennoblement and consummate conduct, which is the Great Learning pathway of Confucius in how to use our mind, body and behavior.

You are wired or conditioned to act a certain way but can learn to step out of this learnedness. You can ascend to something better. You can become more independent and more “alive” by reversing the tendency of entrainment where you are merged with lower conditioning. You can ennoble yourself and transcend the pulls of materialism by cultivating mindfulness, detachment and a meta-observant distancing that makes you more independent of your thought-stream of passions, urges and desires. By cultivating meditation you can train yourself to become an observer more “outside of” your thought processes and circumstances and therefore be detached from the heat of the moment (the stream of events within your mind-stream). This allows you to improve yourself. From a higher perspective that observes/knows your mind clearly due to non-entrainment you thereby become free to adapt your behavior to perform better in any situation and get on track to achieve what you truly want, which is called “gain” in Confucianism.

By always watching your thoughts, and therefore standing apart from fusion with them because you are viewing everything from a distanced perspective of dispassionate detachment, you become more and more *truly alive* because of a lesser amount of robotic entrainment. Without entrained attachment you get closer and closer to the ideal of free will. This is because you free yourself from ingrained conditioning, and you can therefore become less robotic/automatic instead of succumbing to the automatic patterns within

your consciousness.

This is the liberation offered by cultivating higher spiritual bodies that are progressively closer in composition to the foundational nature – doing so allows you to conquer your lower natures. For instance, the more you can detach from the physical body the less you are prone to coarse animalistic desires and urges that may sometimes impel you. The more you detach from your inner subtle body Qi the less prone you are to getting carried away by your passions, desires, prejudices, aggressive tendencies and emotions. The more you can detach from your thought-stream the more you can transcend ordinary thinking and attain to higher perspectives that view things differently. Basically, the less you are controlled by your automatic thoughts and emotions the higher your stage of spiritual attainment.

Normally individuals become entrained with their body sensations along with coarse materialistic thoughts, desires and urges, but when you stand apart from them, stop identifying with them and transcend your physical nature (through an “awareness that sets you apart”) it is as if you are centering yourself in your next higher body, your subtle body. You thereby train to become a *heavenly being* through such practice. If you can let go of your emotions, desires and passions within your vital energy so that you transcend their pulls, we say that you center yourself in your body of conceptions/mentation that is higher than the realm of emotions, and you thereby become a more *spiritual being*. If you can rise above entrainment with your thoughts, you can eventually become an *enlightened being*, a *sage*.

The highest degree of freedom and abilities for a sentient being is to attain a body composed of the highest etheric energies of Shakti possible, yet one might say that the absolute highest stage of existence is to be just the Unmanifest, formless, inanimate fundamental substrate itself. In that case you have personal non-existence and there is no *sat, chit, ananda* – existence, consciousness and bliss. At that stage there is only nothingness. You can say It is beingness, but without consciousness that non-composite existence is as nothingness.

You *want to have* consciousness, want to experience happiness and bliss within that consciousness, and using consciousness want to develop a meaning and significance for your existence. Humans have invented many ways to pursue happiness and joy in their lives, such as by continually running after pleasant sensations, but most of these pathways are errant because they do not produce lasting bliss, comfort or well-being that include meaning and significance, which is what humans seek. Humans

need to seek significance and meaning in life by performing good deeds (despite the burden) rather than predominantly seek fleeting states of happiness or pleasure.

Right now you seem to be a separate individual entity but you are part of Shakti, *in fact all of Shakti*, but you cannot see all the interconnections of your body linking your apparent being with everything else. Even though you are all of Shakti you imagine yourself to be innately separate from Shakti and Nature due to your ignorance. However, you are indeed Shakti, and in fact you are part of the aggregate *consciousness of Shakti*. All of Shakti is one organism, and you are a portion of the voice and consciousness of Shakti.

You are also the foundational substance of the cosmos, its absolute essence. Being both, you are neither just the void of the absolute nature nor the non-void of manifestation. You are neither just the unchanging true reality nor a transient manifestation. Being Shakti you are always changing, but being the original nature you are the permanent Self that is not subject to change or cessation.

The fundamental substratum that is your True Self is the only real substantive nature, and existence (beingness) is its very nature because it is permanent, eternal and never changes. It is always there changeless, dependable and true, so It is the sole Reality, your true nature, true beingness. Your true reality is That. Unfortunately It is insentient because It is inanimate, changeless, pure, non-composite.

However, being the pure fundamental essence that is the True Reality, you are a real existence that is not a manifest existence, and therefore a non-existence that is nevertheless true beingness and true existence. Your real body is formless and cannot be grasped, and this is your true self-nature. How can you imitate this fact within your life of manifest nature, rather than unmanifest nature, to experience more happiness and bliss?

The more you detach from clinging to your thoughts the more you are like your real nature that, like space, supports everything but offers no friction or obstacles to the transformations within it. Hence, the more you detach from entrainment with your experiences (of the body, emotions, conceptions, impulses, etc.) and transcend the doings of your consciousness, the more you become alive, awake, aware, *real* – the highest state of manifest conscious existence that incorporates existence, beingness, consciousness, presence, and bliss that straddles both the state of existence and non-existence, the void and non-void (Shakti). The more you don't

cling to thoughts, the better your Qi will flow within you so that you can achieve physical bliss within every body cell, and feel more fully alive as a sentient being.

This is the highest state of manifest beingness in manifestation. It is using your primary property, consciousness, in the right way such as for improving your environment so that it is more comfortable for your existence and for subsequent generations ... including *your own subsequent incarnations!* Proper, correct consciousness creates and follows rules of morality and ethics as well as standards of virtue and values so that one can live in harmony with Nature and others and experience happy mental states from your relationships.

One might state that the highest and purest state is being wholly the empty, unmanifest, pure original nature, but It has given birth to the cosmos that is just Itself, so the manifestation is also pure. You are both so must be both, but you should cling to neither. Within the manifestation there is no good or evil because it is all neutral, and only our minds make something virtuous or not. Good and evil are human constructions – human interpretations in a neutral universe. We create such values in life because we need them to live better even though they do not ontologically exist in the universe.

Despite appearances, Shakti *is therefore ultimately pure* just as you are ultimately pure, and there is no such thing as the characteristics of evil or virtue inherent in the universe because it is simply itself, and these are principles created by our minds and our understanding of fairness, justice, suffering, relationships and so on. We are the ones who create the moral order for the universe. We create the code of culture, and then culturally indoctrinate ourselves to right and wrong. We create it because *we need to create it* for flourishing, happiness and bliss to exist for ourselves. It is a fictional reality, an imagined order, but we create these values for our protection, survival, flourishing and well-being just as our senses and mental apparatus create an imagined view of the outside world that is also not truly accurate but fit for our survival as well.

In the existence of the universe you are an object – a *living* object – lucky enough to have consciousness and can therefore choose to express yourself and perform any actions, aspirations, deeds or vows you desire that might give your own life happiness and meaning. However, your existence and the rules of transformations within Shakti are subject to cause and effect so you might not always get what you want and work towards. Therefore you need to develop wisdom for how to proceed to accomplish whatever you want, and need to develop skillfulness to achieve those goals. Then you have to

perform whatever is necessary and continue with perseverance until you achieve your goals.

You should learn to master the highest and best methods for whatever you have as yourself in terms of body, mind and behavior. You should also learn to master the highest and best methods of performance for every aspect of your life. The apex of perfection is not to be a naked sadhu who silently sits alone without possessions and simply survives, accepting all that comes his way with indifference and calling this renunciation “spirituality.” The apex of perfection is to master yourself and phenomena so that you become master of the laws of nature and changes of phenomena (that include yourself). The apex of perfection is to a motionless sadhu or dry tree Zen but full active engagement with the world for your own purposes, including activities that help oneself, promote the good, cut off evil and help others. The apex of perfection is a consciousness that enjoys mental states of peace, calmness, lightness, natural ease, centeredness, egolessness, pristine clarity-awareness, vivid presence that accesses a feast of undistracted lucidity, compassion and kindness, wisdom, sunniness, shine, brightness, flow, happiness, joy, vitality, bliss and so on. One can never subdue all passions and desires to become “colorless,” but must purify their passions and desires since many are necessary for survival (such as the desire to eat, protect one’s life, etcetera).

You can arrive at all this through the road of self-perfection called self-cultivation or spiritual cultivation.

The practice of detachment helps you move towards these excellences. Detachment means that you know your thoughts and analyze your situation from a higher perspective of meta-cognition like an independent third person observer-analyst. It means to always cultivate a meta-perspective that towers above your thought-stream and allowing for self-correction, this engendering better behavior for achieving any of your objectives. Mindfulness of your thought-stream weakens the link between self-identification with your thoughts. It is a form of detachment that provides an opportunity for you to intervene and restructure (correct) your thinking and behavior rather than simply be blindly subject to your thoughts as robotic instructions, for that is also akin to being inanimate. Through mindfulness of your thoughts you can achieve the meta-cognition that gives rise to better, wiser, more skillful and effective behavior. It allows you to also give rise to kinder and more compassionate behavior.

If you think of yourself as a third-person character it becomes easier to observe yourself and the world to see what you are really doing in real time

without your ego getting in the way, and then through this distancing you can more effectively work on a self-improvement path that seeks happiness in life. For instance, when you attain the subtle body and through it view your lower physical body, it becomes easier to manage your earthly behavior for the very same reason that you have attained independence from that life and therefore dispassion in regards to it.

The highest ideal is to learn how to master the changes of phenomena, act with kindness and compassion amongst inanimate phenomena and life, and then to take the necessary best steps to improve phenomenal states for yourself and others who are *also the consciousness of Shakti* subject to the same pains and sufferings as your own.

This is just ordinary life. This is just *being ordinary* but not being overly attached to whatever happens, and yet adapting to whatever happens and reacting in ordinary ways - but wise, kind, compassionate and skillful effective ways. You don't try to silence your existence or cut anything off other than afflictions, suffering and unwholesome states of being. You live life ordinarily but effectively and compassionately and pursue what you want to pursue. If you need money for your objectives then you pursue money. If you need status in society so that your words are heard then you pursue status. If you need power to affect changes then you pursue power.

This is all ordinary life. It is the natural way of things. The highest way includes mastering money, power, status, etcetera – basically “all dharmas” – in order to become able to accomplish the highest ideals and objectives, such as Buddha vows, rather than simply to pursue transitory base, selfish, materialistic pleasures and enjoyment.

This is the road of spiritual cultivation, and to push society forwards along these lines is an act of great merit. Your highest, most perfect state is to be a perfection that straddles both existence and non-existence without clinging to either side. Or, you can say from the manifest aspect of reality that your highest state is existence, rather than annihilation, that uses your consciousness to affect conditions for the better so that you and everyone else becomes happier, but where you are always detached from the results (as if your next higher perspective was the pure original nature itself). This requires you to cultivate the highest spiritual bodies possible so that you can always gain a higher perspective and also have access to greater powers of achievement.

Remember that your body and mind have no substantial reality because there is only the one fluctuating universe rather than discrete phenomena

within it, although of course our minds create individual discrete phenomena though they are actually part of the seamless everything else. You are a transforming process within Shakti's infinite sea of fluctuating interconnected processes, but you have a body and the gift of consciousness that can know qualities of experience and perform actions through a body. How then should you live your life? You must learn to use your gift of consciousness in the highest, best ways possible.

For this goal training is necessary, namely the Great Learning. You should maximize the capabilities of consciousness and learn to control it, such as learning how to ignore mental distractions, annoyances, emotional disturbances and subdue unwanted involuntary activity. You will always be subject to the processes of consciousness that produce your mental experiences since your mental apparatus is a dependent construction, and thus always conditionally mechanical/automatic to some degree beyond your control. What arises within consciousness is not your fault, but what you do with the mind-stream is your responsibility. Therefore you should choose to learn the highest and best ways of thinking, experiencing, feeling, behaving so that your consciousness is predominantly filled with positive and enjoyable states rather than negative experiences. You should choose to learn and master the highest and best ways of altering or improving states of consciousness and your mind-stream so you can actualize those optimum states of excellence.

Furthermore, you can also cultivate higher spiritual (transcendental) bodies that live in more pleasant realms in more pleasant ways because they have more pleasant lives. Is this not also the purpose of spiritual cultivation, which is to free yourself from suffering and the lower realms of incarnation forever? You must therefore follow a pathway of practice to maximize your physical and conscious capabilities. Consciousness is produced only because you have a body, so self-cultivation involves taking care of and in fact improving your body and its vital energy that is the basis of the higher spiritual bodies. Self-cultivation definitely involves perfecting your body and its vital energy, which is why all monks and nuns should pursue a beneficial diet as well as stretching and athletic exercises such as yoga, the martial arts, or dance and other sports. They should also pursue various *nei-gong* exercises that purify their Yin Qi and Yang Qi, and which improve internal Qi circulation. The vital energy of every body is actually the next higher body attainment – the subtle body of Qi within you becomes the deva body or Srotapanna attainment – so we work in spiritual cultivation at purifying and strengthening its integrity. We must, during the course of our spiritual practices, pay attention to purifying and strengthening the Qi within the matrix of our physical shell.

There are many forms of Qi/Prana work that can be practiced in conjunction with meditation to help you transform your Qi/Prana and quickly purify and strengthen your inherent inner subtle body. Religious practice strengthens it but not so much as the various pathways of *nejjia* yoga previously explained.¹⁸

Thoughts can move your Qi, but emotions are usually more powerful in creating internal sensations that influence the entire body of your Qi at the same time. Visualizations and willpower can move your Qi, but sound vibrations are more effective. What is better than reciting sounds to move your Qi is reciting *rhythmical sounds* that can produce a resonance of vibrating Qi energy within you. Reciting rhythmical sounds + arousing relevant full body emotions (that stimulate your Qi) + visualization efforts is even more powerful as a package than any single cultivation method alone, and there are quite a few ways to stack various spiritual practice methods together like this to produce very powerful processes of Qi/Prana purification and transformation.

Many cultivation methods have been developed based on these principles such as the practice of reciting prayers/mantras while imagining that you become one/unified with a deity (since this provides an emotional tone to your Qi while you stimulate it through sound pressure). If you simultaneously stimulate pertinent Yin Qi or Yang Qi emotional states (such as those corresponding to relevant character traits) when affecting your Qi this helps to impregnate them with certain qualities, which we call “purification” since you are trying to cultivate auspicious positive qualities in place of negative traits.

You can analyze all sorts of cultivation methods a decomposition approach to see how many cultivation principles or methods are stacked together to affect your Yin Qi or Yang Qi at the same time because multiple influences makes a method more effective. Bhakti yoga, sexual cultivation, kundalini chakra visualization methods, inner martial arts practice, special mantrayana techniques, and so forth all have multiple methods layered together for affecting your Qi, and some methods are geared to purifying your Yin Qi while others are geared towards purifying your Yang Qi. Everyone thinks that you just need to raise your Yang Qi during cultivation but you need to purify the Yin Qi of your body as well, which is why many tantric spiritual paths force you to suffer through prolonged periods of being afraid, depressed, dejected, sorrowful hungry, destitute and so forth. Ordinary

¹⁸ See *Nejjia Yoga* and *Nyasa Yoga*.

people cannot understand this.

The key to achieving the subtle body attainment is a firm resolution to consistently maintain deep cultivation practice of deliberate methods according to a regular practice schedule involving meditation and Yin/Yang Qi *nei-gong* work. In order to interject some variety into your cultivation routines that will help you maintain a continual practice schedule you might key certain activities to different days of the week, a specific period of time, or various astronomical phenomena (that affect the Qi atmosphere of the earth) such as the phases of the moon, the travel of planets through nakshatras or astrological signs or their conjunction with planetary nodes, the maximum or minimum declination of the planets, equinoxes and solstices, lunar apogee and perigee, eclipses, and so on. You can use astronomical phenomena to bolster the purification of your Yin Qi or Yang Qi efforts by scheduling certain Qi exercises for when the planetary phenomena will have the strongest effect on the earth's Qi. The ultimate target objective is not just transformation of your physical body, but purification of your Qi *and your ability to start controlling your Qi/Prana by your mind/will*. Successful practice also requires that you understand the principles underlying the effectiveness of the practice, as explained.

Chapter 16

ARHATS, BODHISATTVAS AND BUDDHAS¹⁹

Arhats and Immortals: The Arhat or Immortal is an individual who attains one or more spiritual bodies, and through them primarily works on his own salvation and on satisfying his own personal interests and pursuits in the universe. In modern parlance he is like a self-reliant “sigma male” who is highly independent and does his own thing without necessarily collaborating with others rather than an “alpha male” who is usually connected with groups, including other alpha males. The Arhat or Immortal is more focused on the desires and goals of the “I” rather than the welfare of the “We,” so his life path follows his own inclinations and interests rather than the road of selflessly servicing others. Having attained the initial fruit of a subtle deva body, or even more bodies, he primarily resides in his highest body. His lower bodies act as appendages and enable him to see what each lower realm looks like from the aspect of that realm, and he can use them to perform deeds in those realms according to his wishes. An Arhat is not especially enticed by any sensual attractions or delights in the lower realms, including money and power, since his truest body resides in a higher realm, but you cannot say he is free of those inclinations in that

¹⁹ See *Culture, Country, City, Company, Product, Person, Passion, World*.

higher realm. Having achieved the higher realms, to him each lower realm is like garbage, which is why the Buddhas are so anxious to free people from the lower realms of being along with the reincarnation cycle within those realms. The lowest realm of an Arhat's beingness are bodies he can easily discard since his existence is centered in his highest body, which is why Jesus' body can be destroyed on the cross while never touching the health and welfare of his higher body attainments at all. An Arhat identifies with his highest body as his self, and his lower bodies are like appendages that can be thrown off. He or she does whatever they want (subject to the laws of each realm), and so having achieved liberation they follow their own interests and inclinations without any special commitment to other human beings. Thus they are sometimes labeled as a *pratyekabuddha*, which is someone who is enlightened but goes their own way just like a sigma male. They're not especially associated with or committed to any of the groups of other enlightened individuals (Buddhas) who take on a common vow such as the protection of a spiritual tradition. At times they'll help such groups in their efforts, but they basically concentrate on doing their own thing. Specifically, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas have special vows they are committed to and are always working on purifying ordinary people's Qi so that human lives do not deteriorate too readily, and they work together in groups to progress a worthy candidate through the Twelve Year kundalini transformation period so that they can attain the higher bodies leading to full enlightenment. Arhats develop skills and talents according to their own personal interests, whereas the Bodhisattvas and Buddhas do so with the objective of accumulating skills that can help others and accomplish goodness on a vast scale.

Bodhisattvas: The Bodhisattva, having attained one or more higher spiritual bodies, is an Arhat who chooses to spend a great deal of time trying to help others in various ways. They recognize that life is suffering, humans pursue well-being and ethical enjoyments to counter the inevitabilities of suffering, humans are searching for meaning and fulfillment, and they want to create a better future for their family and the world, so they try to help them in these pursuits. They are always helping humanity by responding to the needs of people (in terms of addressing problems of prosperity, sickness, hunger, career, money, marriage, children, justice, war, etc.) and intervening in their lives, either visibly or invisibly, to help improve individual, familial, social, and environmental conditions. They believe their life and efforts should enrich the world in some way, and therefore set out to "save the world" through a personal commitment of targeted efforts called "vows," which are utter dedications to noble causes that improve the conditions of

humanity.²⁰ These are their deepest authentic aspirations to make the world a better place, so you can think of vows as committed initiatives, missions or pledges of compassionate activity or personal excellence in special skills and behavior rather than just aspirations that have no follow through of work and effort on their part. They realize they are like a dream person in a dream world, that within this dream all conditions are impermanent (which means they can be improved), the bag of troubles they hoist upon their own shoulders as a burden (because of their undertakings) is light because it is ultimately empty, and any sufferings they assume will end in the long run. Therefore they tirelessly work at fulfilling various personal vows, pledges, or responsibilities they voluntarily chose, and those aims become the drive and ambition by which their life is organized. This includes supporting various special causes, missions, protections, and contributions. Their work at achieving these Noble Aims is the road of Bodhisattva Yoga, and is a type of post-enlightenment Karma Yoga aimed at helping others. This Karma Yoga goal to improve the quality of people's lives and bring brightness to society through their personal efforts is what Confucius called "instructing (teaching) the people" or "loving the people," and what Christianity terms "loving others." Each Bodhisattva adopts a personal set of vows, which set up an entire framework of attributes, actions, goals, perspectives, mindsets, and behaviors they consequently adopt, and by committing themselves to their vows they become a special force in the world that makes a difference for humanity's progress and advancement along those lines. Vows are usually aimed at reducing the suffering, chaos, deprivation or injustices in society and bringing peace, prosperity, protection, happiness and other positive solutions to mankind instead. While free to leave projects at any time because their participation is entirely voluntary, the Bodhisattvas don't abandon people but like the infinite interdependence of the universe involve themselves in all sorts of compassionate activities (some of which just constitute "hit and run" efforts) to help the world, and therefore live lives full of excellent deeds. They are always working to master various *dharmas* or bodies of knowledge (such as medicine, astrology, wealth making, agriculture, warfare, best practices, optimal management methods, etcetera); skills or abilities (such as yoga, martial arts, dance, sports, cooking, diplomacy, counseling, animal training, the active literacies, etcetera); positive personality traits and characteristics, and special powers or excellences. They are always working to create new friends and develop beneficial relationships everywhere they go. In addition to gaining knowledge and understanding of various fields, even with the Immanence body attainment they don't feel they are at a completion stage of "No More Learning" that essentially means "no more

²⁰ See the extensive discussion of vows, and how to set your own, in *Buddha Yoga*.

work to do for personal progress” and “no more work necessary for self-improvement.” Rather, they work at always improving their skillfulness in *how to proceed wisely according to principle* in all their activities – how to act with wisdom and skillful effectiveness, kindness and compassion, and justice–fairness–righteousness to achieve the results they want. This is Wisdom-kaya, which is the science of positive, effective action that is also fair and compassionate activity. They continuously work at perfecting their knowledge, understanding, and wisdom as well as honing their skillfulness and effectiveness so that they can participate immaculately in activities aimed at even ever greater deeds to liberate beings from suffering. They try to address problems at their roots so that they can be entirely eliminated or prevented, and if not they then help to manage them or transform them into better circumstances. They devote themselves to creating flourishing states of harmonious peace, welfare, prosperity, abundance, happiness, and well-being for others that are absent of suffering, pain, emotional turmoil and deprivation. Thus they pursue mastery of what the Greeks call *arête* (excellence or virtue), *phronesis* (practical and moral wisdom) and *eudaimonia* (human flourishing and prosperity). In personal training they obligate themselves to the road of Perfection-kaya in order to master the skills necessary for their chosen vows and take that mastery to peak excellence. They devote themselves to Perfection-kaya to also master their personality or character traits (qualities), their skills and other *dharmas*. Perfection-kaya is a road of self-discipline and self-perfection that includes embracing the highest human values, ethics, virtues and morality. It involves striving to always exhibit noble, consummate conduct. Thus they work at always improving or elevating their character/personality, views and perspectives, knowledge and understanding, intentions, and efforts (actions, behavior and conduct). Bodhisattvas are always focused on self-correction and continuously work at refining (lifting to new heights) their thinking and behavior through study, practice and the mindfulness effort of self-observation of their thought-stream and conduct. They are dedicated to self-rectification and active learning of whatever they must cultivate in themselves to move forward in self-refinement and personal growth, trying always to spiritualize their basic animal nature. Our animal behavior can be refined to become human behavior, then noble behavior (consummate conduct), and then spiritual behavior (where you take the burdens of others and their sufferings unto yourself in order to relieve the people), which is the path they follow. They devote themselves to skillfulness (expedient means) in thought, word, and deed as well as in appearance and demeanor, thus attempting to master both their own presence *and* their functioning in the world. They try to offer helpful intercessions and influences by deed or presence of some type, which includes active *nirmanakaya* projections that travel to sources of human trouble and lend aid to alleviate the problems,

which is Compassion-kaya. As part of their devotion to Perfection-kaya they try to transform any of their prior errant conditioning and bad habits such as by transcending prejudicial thoughts geared to narrow divisions of caste, race, religion, nationality, gender, sexual orientation or creed (or any other distinguishing characteristic) so that they can help all beings without prejudice. They strive to detach from fixed concepts of morality, outdated or inapplicable traditions or codes of conduct, and rigid dogmas of purity in order to universally contribute to the spirit and well-being of mankind. They see all errant situations as diseases that should be cured, and because diseases are not the same they recognize that remedies must vary according to the situation. They vow to master all the possible remedies, but most of all to vow to delve in and apply them rather than to just know them. They try to avoid one-sidedness and transcend all their current patterns of feeling and thinking to employ better ones, not being wed to any except what is best for the situation at hand as well as good for the intermediate-term and long-term too. They understand that as an embodied manifestation of the original essence that has consciousness they are basically a dream body-mind complex, a cosmic functioning, an aspect or even a process that can choose its own activities, and thus they devote themselves to mastering skillful intercession in various directions where they've decided to act as saviors to improve lives and liberate beings from suffering. They pledge themselves to the fundamental principles of ethical behavior such as the cardinal ethical principles (don't kill, lie, steal, sexual misconduct, etcetera); to respect people's autonomy, not aggress upon their person or property and to be honest in their dealings with others; to respect the obligations within the traditional relationships of parent-child, brother-sister, myself-friends, student-teacher, employee-boss, citizen-society, man-environment, etcetera; the Golden rule to treat (help or do for) others as you would like to be treated and never do to others what you would consider harmful to yourself; to bring about good in all your actions and support goodness whenever you find it while cutting off evil whenever you encounter it, to always encourage unborn good to arise and always prevent unborn evil from arising (such as by taking positive steps to *prevent* harm from occurring); to do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as you ever can (be unremitting in the doing of good deeds; do them with all your might and by every possible means); as to the principle of non-violence take no actions that will harm life nor by inaction allow life to be harmed, never cause harm as a general rule, but if harm must be done then minimize the harm you do, your actions must produce more good than harm, never increase the risk of harm to others, and never waste resources that could be used for good; to treat all people fairly, work for the benefit of those unfairly treated, impose no unfair

burdens on others, and always provide others with whatever they are owed or deserve. Unlike the solitary Arhat, they find fulfillment not only in executing their vows but in associating with like-minded others committed to similar pledges.

Buddhas: A Buddha is one who builds upon the foundational vows of the Bodhisattva and goes farther. Having attained the higher bodies and therefore being gifted with a very long life ahead along with the many powers that those bodies make available, a Buddha starts thinking about what would now give his (or her) life meaning during that great longevity. Like a Bodhisattva, he then takes upon himself compassionate vows (commitments of noble involvement) to accomplish very long-term aims, initiatives or missions but *weds himself to those vows*. A Buddha thereby creates an identity for himself through self-determination and his commitment to the permanent vows he creates. Each one becomes devoted to several fields of effort or activities and then specializes in helping within those areas. Through utter dedication to vows of selfless service that accent goodness, protect people, and reduce their problems and sufferings, they obligate themselves to vigorous efforts of benevolent activity forever and work in groups with others to achieve such goals. Through their vows, they lose self-centeredness because they devote themselves to benefitting something larger than themselves. That constancy of purpose (in various fields) due to their vowed commitments creates happiness and meaning for their very long life. In other words, by taking on very deep and permanent responsibilities of service to humanity their life thereby acquires greater meaning and significance. They devote themselves (perform *bhakti*) to whatever aims, aspirations or missions they vow and catalyze an identity by sacrificing themselves to these undertakings that are so high in value that they are willing to pay the price of suffering to achieve them. Buddhas therefore set themselves up to become a fixed feature in society because of their vows. Like a strong tree that grows roots and branches everywhere, they assume a permanent presence in a body of undertaking in order to spread their influence, and with that rootedness of purpose strive to establish peace, prosperity, and direction for all humanity. They voluntarily take the suffering of other beings upon themselves - swallowing poison like Shiva as well as insult and persecution like Jesus and Maitreya - in order to relieve the conditions of suffering in society. Like a peacock that eats poisonous insects but manifests glorious feathers in turn, they assume the troubles of the world so that they can produce beauty and peace in their place. Thus they will tread roads fraught with difficulty in order permanently improve human conditions for the better, and even help to create laws, traditions or systems that automatically solve problems without the necessity of their involvement. Each of their lives/bodies in each of the

various realms (planes of existence) demonstrates a fearless courage and determination to work on problems, and acts without delay. Committed, they don't frighten of troublesome responsibilities but are willing to suffer to accomplish the tasks they chose because the goals are so noble, worthwhile and meaningful. They try to model themselves on the ceaseless vitality of cosmic processes so that they can continue to maintain their compassionate activity despite intermittent waves of weariness and fatigue during the ups and downs of events and circumstances. By dedicating their lives to vows, they have the potential to become like a permanent cosmic function and so strive to become an unstoppable field of blessings that is like a force of nature. They inspire people to diligently take up the road of cultivation that leads to spiritual liberation and the ability to make cosmic vows, and which involves constant efforts at self-improvement, spiritual cultivation, mastery of one's physical body, the deepening of one's wisdom and knowledge, benevolent cooperation and collaboration with others, endless charitable activities, and the promotion of culture and civilization. They teach individuals and societies all sorts of *dharmas* on how to behave and what to cultivate, help to establish conditions favorable to those efforts at self-improvement, encourage people along the paths of virtue and achievement, support all sorts of philanthropic/charitable projects to improve the basic human condition, try to make every situation they encounter better than how they found it, and try to realize all aspects of the Tao. Basically, they try to improve culture, society and civilization to upgrade the quality of peoples' lives and their lifestyles so as to create the best possible life and living state for others. Although settled in the original nature, they never settle in one phenomenal state too long but make sure conditions always evolve forward and move ahead so that everyone progresses. Those at these upper stages have developed unbelievable transcendental skills due to incredible practice efforts at cultivating their mental abilities and internal energies, and due to superior inner Qi flow they enjoy exceedingly excellent states of sublimity.

Every higher spiritual body lives longer than the average human lifespan, and each higher body lives longer than its previous denser composite, so upon achieving the higher body attainments you must choose appropriate tasks, goals, aims, vows, responsibilities, commitments, or offerings in order to give that longer life relevant purpose and meaning, which will be a reflection of your Compassion-kaya, Wisdom-kaya, and Perfection-kaya.

If you develop an indestructible, practically immortal Buddha body through your cultivation, you must determine purposes for your existence that can be summarized as vows, commitments, pledges or undertakings. Otherwise what will you do to keep busy? Arhats and *pratyekabuddhas* stay busy with

their own affairs and enjoyments, but Buddhas commit themselves to improving the welfare and happiness of others through noble activity that helps people. Action-kaya, which is how you behave and what you do in the world/universe, involves perfecting your personality, conduct, behavior, skills, and worldly activity. It requires that you cultivate the “wisdom of accomplishment,” namely the knowledge and understanding necessary for being able to accomplish what you want in the world. A portion of Action-kaya is the Karma Yoga pathway of selfless service and behavior – devoting yourself to benevolent purposes, causes, initiatives or vows of service to others – that we call Bodhisattva or Buddha vows. They are personally meaningful vows of behavior (taking responsibility for always relieving certain forms of suffering or helping to manage certain affairs so that they always go well) that touch upon your innermost spiritual center – your authentic self and your innermost aspirations for what you would like to do for the world. They are guiding purposes for your life. Action-kaya is an exhibition of your own inner Why or reason for existence, what’s important to you in terms of compassion, and what you want to help build to create a new and better tomorrow. As stated, Buddhism calls these pledged responsibilities your Bodhisattva or Buddha vows, which are guiding purposes for your life. These vows make the long lives of Bodhisattvas and Buddhas meaningful because they embody the idea of selfless service in helping people, and that service helps to negate the pains, trials and sufferings everyone feels due to existence.

Because of the commitment to their vows and all the activity this engenders, their life truly becomes a heroic venture. People become vibrantly alive (feel inner aliveness and bliss) when they are concerned with helping others, and when they are authentic (true) to their deepest beliefs that are in sync with their passions. This is when they can connect the direction of their life and the exercise of their vitality with their innermost sense of purpose to experience fulfillment, meaning and satisfaction.

While it is idealistic to assume that you can master all *dharma*s equally along the roads of Buddha and Bodhisattva Yoga, in practice people will always be better at some things more than others. Therefore it is best to work at *specializing in some specific fields* of interest that help others rather than try to become a jack of all trades who is master of none. In the human world, large conglomerates that try to do everything are eventually broken up because they lose their purpose and become inefficient and unprofitable as their size grows. Most any talents can be learned but the key to learning skills is deep, deliberate practice and specialization. Learning always requires a committed effort to mastering both theory and practice.

Chapter 17
COMPREHENDING *THE HEART SUTRA*
AND *BHAGAVAD GITA*²¹

One needs to understand that your physical, subtle, Causal, Supra-Causal and Immanence body are all essentially the pure fundamental essence, and the pure primordial substrate is not different from these bodies. It supports them, It permeates them, It is their inherent absolute substance. Their true self-nature is essentially the fundamental substratum (which is essentially all things), and their manifest form is just one of its appearances. Everything is essentially the primordial substratum.

In Buddhism it is said that the form, sensation conception, volition and consciousness skandhas are the original nature, and the original nature is the compositional substance of these skandhas. This is the exact same principle. The skandhas are our spiritual bodies, they are all the fundamental nature, and the emanations of the fundamental substratum includes these bodies of ours. The skandhas are ultimately empty of a self-so nature since they are essentially the ultimate substratum, and the absolute substratum is what they are.

The skandhas and the primal substance are not different from one another. You are composed of these sheaths, without which you do not exist, but in the absolute sense you are also essentially the primordial substance-essence of the universe. It is you, you are It, and when you say “I” this is actually

²¹ See the *Heart Sutra* of Buddhism, *Avadhuta Gita of Dattreya Avadhuta* (translated by Swami Chetanananda), *The Ribhu Gita* (translated by Dr. H. Ramamoorthy), and *Astavakra Sambhita* (translated by Swami Nityaswarupananda) which all contain approximately the same message.

the primal essence pointing at Itself. “I” refers to the foundational substrate, your absolute self-essence.

Thus, in one sense you cannot be termed as any of the five transcendental bodies, five *skandhas*, five bodies (*koshas*) or coverings, nor energy, nor any type of material essence, nor an assembly/collection of simples, nor set of processes, nor the condensation of a rippling appearance within a field, nor the intersection of endless interdependent causes and conditions, nor a being with consciousness. Your body-mind has no substantial reality, which is the realization of enlightenment. You are ultimately just the fundamental substance, and It is you.

In another sense that captures the apparent realm of manifestation, you *are* essentially an agglomeration of the five skandha, a mass of energy, or a collection of simples within Shakti that has temporarily formed a somewhat stable pattern that supports consciousness, but which is always transforming into something else.

In another sense you are *nothing yourself* because you are an infinite interdependence of conditions, processes or events without anything being there that is inherently you or yours. You are beingness without a body. From that sense you are empty of primal existence, and can be considered all of Shakti just as an iota of the ocean is the ocean. You are empty of a true inherent existence yet are all of manifest existence, and that manifest existence is essentially the primal absolute substance that is substratum of existence, so you are nothing at all.

Further, because you are sentient you are part of the aggregate consciousness of Shakti’s body since Shakti, the cosmos, is your entire body. You are therefore part of the universal consciousness as well as an individual consciousness. What you think is your fixed form actually blends into the one fabric of Shakti and is firmly an inseparable part of it even though you falsely think yourself some independent entity hanging in space that is disconnected from everything else.²² What about all the other separate individual appearances you see? They too are Shakti, so they are you. They are the original nature, so they are you.

Whether it be Shakti in total, or portions thereof, the objects/phenomena of the universe, including you, have different forms (appearances) and functions yet every one of the multiplicities is not essentially different from being Shakti and the one primordial substratum.

²² Fields of energy, invisible to your eyes, connect you with everything else.

The manifestation of All (the universe) is a unity of oneness. The components, phenomena or energies of the All melt into a single whole, and there are no genuine divisions in the totality of manifest reality. What is the oneness of manifestation? Phenomena are all defined by infinite interpenetration, an infinite crisscrossing of simultaneous cause and effect relations that originate (produce) phenomena via infinite co-dependent arisings. Due to interdependence, you cannot truly tell where one phenomenon ends and another begins. Objects are all defined by dependent origination – by a conditionedness on all else within Creation – and are therefore characterized by inherent emptiness, which means each lacks a self-so independent nature that is separate from everything else. This means that essentially you are the full body of the manifest universe – the All. Or, since the All of Manifestation is essentially the one substratum primordial nature, it means that you are ultimately bodiless, birthless and imperishable since you are essentially the primal substance in a human form.

You now know what you are, always have been and always will be. This is the understanding of your self-nature. There is no way to make yourself an independent, self-so unchanging real phenomena. You are just a changing aspect of Shakti with a very limited longevity unless you take steps to cultivate spirituality to transcend the lowest transient realms of matter and energy. As a human body, subtle or Causal-bodied entity you will always be a construction of events and always be transforming. However, you have the freedom to move, grow and develop in any direction to live the life you want (for as long as it lasts) because no one ultimately binds you. Conditions bind you, but you can use your intelligence to transcend them. The only major obstacles in life are circumstances, namely cause and effect relationships that might provide you with obstructions. You must use your mind to deal with them.

The laws of cause and effect that define Shakti can create obstacles to the gratification of your desires, which is why spirituality teaches you to be detached from desires yet still perform your duties in the world and pursue goals and objectives, but not to attach to the results of your actions. Obstacles also have the potential of being overcome through wisdom, skillfulness, willpower and perseverance.

Therefore celebrate your life with joy and make use of it in whatever way you wish, to go in whatever direction you want, to accomplish or experience whatever you desire, and stick at it until you achieve it. You are the fundamental substance, you are Shakti, you have nothing with which to

identify yourself (except your vows and commitments) so become of yourself whatever you want to be. You are unique, designed to sing your own special song. Make a connection with your innermost desires and potential, and work towards that potential of a highest best self until it becomes a reality for you. Most barriers that block your aspirations can usually be overcome through wisdom and perseverance so aim high, continually exert yourself, and work to attain whatever you want because no one ultimately bars you. It is only conditions that need to be overcome.

At the very heart of all things is the primal essence, the true substance of everything that has never turned into anything else. It is fundamental substrate, the ultimate substratum, the core inherent nature. It is thus said, “The universe appears as manifold but there is a single intuition as its soul.” Similarly, “There are many bodies but their governor is one.” The governor is the ultimate absolute substratum but It doesn’t govern anything at all; It is simply the ultimate support.

All beings and bodies are equally the one single True Self, *your* True Self, your self-nature, the primal substance, the foundational substratum. All bodies, phenomena, energies, forces, fields, processes and events are its appearance and functioning within Shakti, which is Its one manifestation. Furthermore, as a drop of the ocean of Shakti you *are also Shakti* since Shakti is the only apparently existing thing. It is not a multiplicity of separate independencies but a oneness, and individual entities are dependently arisen entities that have merely conceptually constructed existences. Shakti is a single soup. Therefore all things, including living beings, are an aspect of *you* because you are Shakti, the universal manifest Self, and they are the body of Shakti as well. And, because of being conscious (having sentience) you are part of the aggregate consciousness of Shakti. You are part of Shakti’s mind.

In a sense you can consequentially say that the universe is truly alive as one being with consciousness. Most of Shakti’s nature is insentient matter and energy, but some parts of this body have consciousness that in net aggregate are its consciousness. Thus, you are part of Shakti’s mind that can move its body as you like by performing actions just as you can move your own physical body. Shakti is one body and has one consciousness that is the aggregate consciousness of all sentient beings.

As with other sentient beings, who are therefore your brothers and sisters, you have the special miracle of consciousness that allows you to guide phenomena within Shakti’s body – your body. You can transform your body of Shakti to produce anything you desire and can learn to control

many of its transformations. Hence, you can more frequently experience joy, happiness, bliss, flow, presence, centeredness, peace and lucidity if you choose to cultivate the conditions necessary to experience those states of consciousness. You can also work to bring those enjoyments to others who are essentially just other parts of yourself.

Insentient universal phenomena, which Christianity calls “darkness,” are incapable of conscious experience or comprehension but you have the illumination of consciousness/awareness. Thus you can experiences states of comprehension as well as happiness, enjoyment, sunshine (“shine”), lightness, contentment and bliss – states of being absent of suffering.

Since other beings are part of your body, do you not have an obligation to help make situations better for your brothers and sisters by improving their circumstances to relieve their difficulties when you can? They share the same inner self-nature as you – your Supreme Nature is God (Parabrahman or the foundational substrate that is the eternal unchangeable state) – so of course you should make efforts to help yourself. Or, you can think about it in terms of the simple morality of doing for others and helping them in ways that you would appreciate yourself.

Within the realm of Shakti, you own absolutely nothing, can hold on to absolutely nothing, and can guarantee absolutely nothing. You can undertake actions but cannot guarantee the results you want, yet still must take actions such as those necessary for your livelihood and survival. You yourself are ultimately nothing, a conglomeration of events, processes and conditions that produce *a ripple in the one fabric of Shakti, an apparent being empty of real concrete existence* since there is nothing permanently you there within these conditions except the primal substrate. The primal substrate is your only core. However, you can extend the longevity of your existence significantly through the cultivation of higher spiritual bodies. You can also learn to create, control and improve the conditions of your own life and future even though you are actually nothing but a small configuration within Nature, which has no favorites. Remember, you are a minor ripple or collection of functioning processes within Shakti that has an apparent enfolded existence only because of Shakti’s totality.

Lacking a self-so nature, namely a real inherent “I” that is established independently apart from Shakti, in lacking any separation from being Shakti you are therefore just one of its transforming processes that has originated because of its totality. Being produced because of the totality of Shakti, therefore you are playing a role within it. *Your role is that you are a process that masters the changes of phenomena to produce new states you want and this is*

possible because you possess something we call consciousness. What, then, is it that you want to personally experience or see in the world as a source of light for yourself and others? Those are your own Bodhisattva vows. What meaning do you want to derive from your life or create for others? You become defined by the purposes you serve.

Although you yourself are a phenomenon having equality with all other occurrences in the universe, you possess two special characteristics called life and consciousness that have come along with your existence. Your consciousness can produce a flowing experience of a world of qualities within a mind-stream that is essentially just a subtle energy stream and bunch of bioelectrical flickerings undergoing the condition of excitation. Those bioelectrical flickerings of subtle vibrations manifest as conscious thoughts, speech and then actions that change conditions in the universe. They produce your personal experience since they compose the thoughts and images within your consciousness. Because of your anatomical pattern of physical construction – which is an agglomeration of energy, forces, simples and processes interpenetrated by infinite intermixing conditions – you experience a mind-stream of error-prone mental processes that includes a similitude representation of the external world, but there is so much more outside of your simplified mental image.

It is unfortunate that we easily get distracted by our mental bioelectrical flickerings and don't understand our true self-nature. Unfortunately we too easily become entangled with insignificant sensations, whims and desires and seek pleasurable sensations rather than stay centered in our clear witnessing awareness that is our very beingness of conscious existence. To get entangled within the stream of consciousness is a poor strategy for your existence since it never allows you to transcend ephemeral flickerings that blind you from the living bliss of life.

Entanglement with the products of your consciousness keeps you bound to the momentum of your thought-stream, even when it is unwholesome. When this occurs you become like a mechanical robot who automatically follows karma without trying to change it because as you do not transcend your conditioning (software) but follow it like clockwork. A robot cannot elevate itself above its programming (analogy: our thought-stream) through detachment to see what it is really doing and thereby allow for course corrections to be made.

The ordinary human strategy of forever running after desires and pleasant sensations in life in order to experience feel-good happiness can never produce real satisfaction, contentment, fulfillment or peace in life. Instead,

you should pursue a happiness connected with meaning such as service to others (family, friends, the community or society) and a commitment to higher vows and pledges that have meaning to you and fill you with purposes. If you are going to pursue joy and happiness, why not do so by working to transform conditions for the better that will improve the mental states for your larger self-being, Shakti, that has countless consciousnesses within it? In other words, why not try to make others happy too instead of just yourself?

All manifest things are transformations of Shakti, which is essentially the original nature, so this is what you ultimately are. The ultimate foundational state is your absolute substance, your inner core being, your unchanging true existence. You are conditionally defined within it, an intersection of infinite conditions coming together spanning the past and present. There is nothing that is *you* in yourself, there is only a conjunction of conditions that produce your appearance and which you take as *your self* because of a somewhat stable monotonous configuration that is essentially impermanent.

In being the foundational nature, however, the truth is that you were never born and will never die. You will always exist in some form or another. You are pure existence itself in a temporal form and as an apparent being are free to chart any course you want in the universe because consciousness gives you that functional ability. That ability comes with consciousness so *use it*. It takes work to change into something else or to achieve some objective, but you can do so. What will you then do with your abilities of consciousness? What direction is worthy of your existence?

You can accomplish any vows, missions, purposes, objectives, aspirations, goals, aims, responsibilities or offerings you choose, and there will always be consequences to your actions in the field of Shakti, which is the realm of manifestations. You are in a great game that never ends and can choose to make your participation as worthwhile or grand as you want. Why not take the chance to be worthy of life? Why not become a blessing and light to the universe that you want all to see?

It is inevitable that you must therefore adopt a mindset of never-ending, continuous self-improvement and develop an intrinsic motivation of personal vows or purposes for your existence. Everyone should be trying to put some good into the world, which is ultimately your larger body. Everyone should come to believe that their life, their work, their existence is enriching the world in some way and thereby achieve some satisfaction. You need only point your consciousness in a direction of positive development and then start working to create that goodness so that you

leave golden footprints of transformation everywhere. Because you are just a fluctuating agglomeration of simples, processes, events and conditions that is always transforming, you must define your own purposes for your existence that will shape those transformations as you like, as well as provide your consciousness with happiness, contentment and meaning. Then your existence will move from a state of suffering, to being palatable, to being worthwhile and rewarding. This involves performing deeds that put sunrise in your heart.

You are a living object with consciousness, and thus can develop volitional control over your behavior, and can even change your properties through learning and cultivation. You can change your personality, characteristics, properties, or traits that include your attitudes, beliefs, mental perspectives, habits, skills and your activities or behaviors. Unlike inanimate objects, you are lucky enough to be able to guide your own development and evolution. You can do this through training and self-cultivation efforts while insentient objects cannot, and living beings with a less developed level of consciousness (where they cannot learn) cannot change their attributes or functions (behavior) either.

You are a person, just an animal with consciousness, who can use your higher-than-ordinary-animal consciousness to master the changes of phenomena and control nature. With that ability you can change both yourself and your environment and bring about better states of being for yourself and others. You can change your attributes, adapt to the circumstances or consequences around you, and alter your fate or fortune. Although conditioned to think and behave in certain ways, consciousness gives you the ability to amass new knowledge and thereby change the perspectives, ways of thinking, mindset and behavior you've developed. It enables you to not only change your personality/psyche (attributes) but develop new skills that let you accomplish goals of your own choosing. Consciousness lets you pursue whatever you want to pursue in the universe, including significance and happiness.

Your "lived space" is a physical material body composed of condensed energy that has the potential to release from within itself the sheaths of four higher transcendental bodies, *koshas* or *skandhas* through the process of spiritual cultivation. Your lived flesh is thus an embodied organism that has the potential within it of four higher transcendental bodies that can be generated out of its matrix. Once liberated, these higher bodies that are nearer in essence to the foundational substrate will each reside in higher planes (of their composition) and have various energetic powers over lower denser realms, including the ability to help people in various ways if one

chooses to exercise kindness and compassion to do so. They have more powers and abilities than the physical body, and live for very long periods of time. Once you achieve a higher body it becomes the new center of your life whereas the lower body out of which it arose becomes like a tethered appendage. Through any of your lower bodies you can view the lower realms in which they reside in the way that their denizens see them. In other words, the eyes of beings living in higher planes of energy see a lower realm differently than its residents do, but you can see it and experience it the way they do by using a lower spiritual body that is appropriate to that realm. This is why Buddhism says that water appears as water to us, as pus to hungry ghosts (who live in a lower realm), and as amrita to devas (who live in a higher realm). This description is not accurate, but the idea transmitted is that materials appear differently to the beings of different realms.

All these higher planes are still Shakti. Within all these planes, you are actually a mereological collection of simples (atoms, muons, form elements, seeds of form, etcetera) in composition and lacking anything that is inherently a separate self-so distinctive you, and your pattern just happens to produce the great miracle of consciousness. That pattern comes about through an agglomeration of conditions, forces, processes or events that lack a self-so you within them. However, that pattern produces consciousness or Knowledge. With the great gift of consciousness, imperfect as it is, you can experience a world of qualities in a mind-stream and you can learn to master the world for advantages such as altering conditions so that you can experience happiness, well-being, and a life of meaning and significance.

You can use the sentience of your ever-changing pattern to experience or accomplish whatever gain, conditions, initiatives or missions you wish in the universe, and need only decide what is meaningful and worthwhile before applying your will in that direction. Because you have consciousness you can choose to pursue personal mental happiness and physical bliss through various types of cultivation, and thus achieve the triumvirate of existence-consciousness-bliss (*sat, chit, ananda*) in your existence. If wise, you might choose to pursue a higher meaning and purpose for your behavior to give it a significance that outlasts the pursuit of sensation-based pleasure. What you ultimately choose to do is up to you.

You are essentially a patterned agglomeration or ripple in the fabric of Shakti that has appeared as a localized (nodal) intersection of infinite cause and effect conditions that are reflexively co-defining one another. In being only an intersection of infinite interdependent conditions *without anything within you that is inherently you*, you essentially are actually nothing yourself at

all, and thus are inherently empty of self-so existence. You are not this body of yours, nor do you have a body. Your appearance is just the intersection of conditions, so you are nothing that is your own independent existence, nothing at all. You are essentially a being without form. Being empty of any pattern of inherent existence, thus you are actually free to work to become whatever you like or accomplish whatever you wish and will transform according to your conditioning of self-development efforts.

You are actually all of Shakti instead of the small body you take yourself to be, but you cannot see your interconnections with all other phenomena such as the wavefronts of energy crisscrossing you (that you are also part of) that make this so. Since you have consciousness you are also part of the consciousness of Shakti with the ability to manipulate your greater body of Shakti in endless transformations via mastery of your “individual body” that produces thoughts, words and deeds.

Whether you are considered all of Shakti or just a part of Shakti, your real nature transcends the patterned collection of simples and interlinked conditions that compose your construction. You are inherently the original nature, immortal, ultimately free of birth and death and karmic formations yet able to give birth to all energies and transformations. You are free to grow, develop and evolve in whatever ways you wish; you are free to become whatever you wish; you are free to act in whatever way you wish; you are free to work at achieving whatever you wish. The only boundaries are that everything is subject to cause and effect conditions, but the road of self-development allows you to evolve yourself into whatever highest self you wish to become.

Being at your foundational level just the empty, pure, undifferentiated primordial essence-substance of the universe, at that absolute ultimate level there is the extinction of personhood, entityness, selfhood, or individual beingness. At the ultimate level there is just your true-I, your absolute self-nature, the primal substance that is your True Self. It is just a substance without consciousness, the empty substratum that makes up everything in the universe. This is what you ultimately are, and yet you are an appearance that has somehow arisen/developed out of exactly That, and have consciousness of your apparent existence. Even so, you are always and everywhere the formless foundational substratum, and however and wherever It expresses Itself that is you. The small-you that you are is It, and you are also Shakti. Being the foundational substance always and everywhere, there isn't really any such thing for you as ultimate annihilation or extinction but on the apparent level of Shakti you undergo constant transformation.

You are therefore neither existent as a real being nor non-existent (without manifestation or appearance which is impossible since you are here), and thus “neither real nor non-real.” Why? Because you are not purely the spotless absolute nature since you have an apparent existence, but your transient existence (produced because of intersecting conditions) is not a *real intrinsic existence* so you are actually that spotless substrate. There is no truth, reality or intrinsic nature to your manifest beingness. You simply don’t have selfhood (I-ness) in the way you imagined it, in the way you were conditioned to believe.

You have apparent existence with consciousness. You also have an inherently infinite, eternal, blissful existence due to being the original nature, which is like unchanging empty space.

So essentially you are neither entirely formless (void) nor a stable real independent (non-conditional) form, neither real nor non-real, neither have consciousness nor don’t have consciousness. You are a being without ultimate form, or an emanation/form that encapsulates true being. You are all of existence and yet there is no such true thing as manifest existence, but you are that illusion as well as its transcendental substrate.

The separate appearances you see within your mind are you since they are part of Shakti and you are Shakti. They are part of your infinite material body that you can influence in various ways because you have a mind that can control your actions. Other phenomena that you see in the cosmos are not the same as you in conditions (appearances and functions) yet are not different from you in ultimate entity or essence. The underlying fabric of existence is your true self, the Self of all existence, an unborn primordial substratum that is the fundamental essence of dream-like manifest reality.

To realize this and center yourself in this realization is one of the highest spiritual achievements for it is realizing the way things are. This is Truth. This is understanding your self-nature. This is the enlightenment view that Buddhas come to teach people. It is the understanding of self-realization, which is only possible because we have consciousness. This understanding of an immortal nature but transient existence (that is kept alive through the process of reincarnation managed by spiritual beings) should give you the courage to start making of yourself whatever you want in existence. Conditions and circumstances may seem to thwart your potential at present, but you can lay the foundation for the changes you want to make in your life and way you want to be.

Now you understand the reality of your existence and the cosmos. To mentally stand apart from falling into either emptiness or thought is the highest mode of manifest beingness because you are neither, and you achieve that middle way by cultivating and centering yourself within a state of clear presence or pristine awareness. To be detached from both emptiness (no-thought) or your thoughts so that you always maintain the optimum perspective during situations is the highest mode of conscious beingness that you can achieve, and a subtle bliss will accompany that state.

That being so, be courageous in life to take the active steps necessary to become what you want to become and achieve what you want to achieve in life. This requires personal efforts at self-cultivation. Be fearless and get started at moving ahead towards what really matters for you. Work towards achieving a personal ideal that includes self-perfection, self-achievement, and personal excellence with well-being within Shakti. Live happily, and make efforts to help others as well, for they are your brothers and sisters within Shakti and desire exactly what you desire, which is freedom from limitations that enslave them to lower states of existence.

This is the enlightenment view – you are a sentient being (animal), a living object with consciousness, a set of transcendental energy bodies encased within each other, a collection of simples and energy with the property that you can thrive and replicate, the intersection of conditions with no fixed core self inside them, a continuous event that for a while seems stable and monotonous, a collection of processes that intersect in producing a temporary appearance, a small portion of Shakti defined by its whole, the entirety of Shakti, or part of the consciousness of Shakti and so on.

You are also the primal foundational substance, and altogether neither pure being nor non-being because you have a dream-like apparent existence that cognizes an apparent but always transforming reality of facticity, and an essential core nature that never changes or evolves into anything other than its phenomenal-less self. *This analysis of what you ultimately are is the understanding of your self-nature, or self-realization.* Realizing these facts is considered self-realization, meaning you realize what your self ultimately is. Understanding this is realizing the nature of your self-nature.

When you ask yourself, “Who is this ‘me?’” the answer is (1) an ever-changing conditional construction composed by infinite conditions that simultaneously arise within Indra’s net of interdependent, interpenetrative causation, (2) within the oneness of the unified field of Shakti, that (3) ultimately itself is the single, empty (phenomena-less), foundational substrate of the cosmos. To understand these facts is to understand your

self-nature - *what is your ultimate true self* - and this is the “view of enlightenment,” the “enlightenment view,” or the “understanding (*prajna*) of self-realization” or just plain “self-realization.” When you understand this you realize what your apparent self is, namely, what the “me” is within you. You realize your true relationship with Shakti where you are part of Shakti and an individual in your own right, “God” or the fundamental substrate.

The “enlightenment mind” is something different – it is just our ordinary mind. Enlightenment is not a mystical state. Repeat: the ordinary mind is the mind of enlightenment; nothing changes at all in your psychology when you attain a higher spiritual body except you just attain different physical capabilities due to that body. Your mental habits stay the same unless there are new skills, ideas and perspectives you learn for survival in that realm. However, we want to cultivate special qualities in our ordinary mind whether or not we achieve enlightenment, which means attaining the higher transcendental spiritual bodies. During the course of self-cultivation we therefore want to correct the software that produces our personality and thoughts so that we have a more enjoyable life of flourishing and become the best version of our self.

As to our ordinary mind, which is the same as the mind of enlightenment, in daily life we want to experience mental peace and calm, which is called emptiness or a tranquil mind (free of excessive chatter, negative self-talk, emotional afflictions, mental defilements and the tendency to wander). Tranquility and calmness are not just mentally enjoyable but enable us to make better decisions in life so that we can masterfully maneuver in the right direction as we encounter circumstances. Therefore we want to cultivate inner calmness.

Without training, however, our emotions can easily become uncontrollable and cause us unnecessary suffering. They can undermine our efforts and lead us in the opposite direction of our goals, and can cause us to act in incorrect ways we later regret. Tranquility, on the other hand, helps us transcend our emotions and avoid suffering so we want to cultivate tranquility as a basic psychological trait. Meditation practice is therefore used to train for the “mind of enlightenment,” which is just a more perfected form of our ordinary mentality where we have corrected as many of our psychological traits as possible and optimized our conscious states to be closer to flow. Through meditation practice we can attain greater mental equanimity, which is a state of undisturbed tranquility and psychological stability.

We also want to experience a pristine clarity of awareness, which you can achieve when your mind is focused, observant (mindful of its activities) and calm. We want to experience a sense of subtle bliss in our mind and body, which is physically possible when you are healthy and full of vitality, all your muscles are in great shape so that there are no internal impediments to Qi flow (thus making the body very comfortable), and because your inner Qi flow is smooth and natural, which also produces mental calmness. Spiritual cultivation is meant to produce “happy people” who attain such characteristics. We also want to experience “shine,” which is a type of alert happiness that is achievable because our body is blissful and our mental realm is happy (a subtle form of joy) because it tends toward optimism and is free of afflictions and distractions. Instead of mental waywardness, dullness or robotic entrainment with our thoughts, we always want to be fully aware of the present moment of now, which is recognizing the state of beingness or presence. We want to experience “flow” where our mind is quiet, enjoyably engages in activities with a concentration that is free of afflictions and distractions, and it skillfully, expertly handles every situation at hand.

We can deliberately reprogram and restructure the algorithms of our consciousness to experience these states on a steady state basis, which is the purpose of cultivation since many of our algorithms have flaws. If you see monks or nuns who have become rigid or sullen because of their cultivation work then it is wrong. *We always want to be enjoying states of calmness, clarity, presence, bliss, comfort, lightness, shine and flow.* Life is naturally vibrant, and that is the way you should be. If your cultivation school is too austere and does not lead to these results then it is truly in error. Shakti is animated and so should you be.

We are a mind-body complex. Therefore, basically we have cognitive skills and physical skills. To develop our cognitive skills we need to cultivate our *intellect, rationality, knowledge, wisdom (understanding) and introspection.* Our emotions are automatic responses that are part of the cognitive palette and can be mastered through *mindfulness, modulating our desires* and by *cognitively restructuring* our interpretations of events.

The human mind is riddled with all sorts of automatic cognitive biases and lapses such as false assumptions, emotional leanings and prejudicial beliefs and mindsets, and this affects not only our reasoning and wisdom but our actions and emotional well-being. On the spiritual trail we try to always inspect our consciousness to discover these biases and correct them whenever found. Furthermore, a large degree of our psychological suffering is a matter of becoming lost in thought rather than recognizing that we are

thinking without knowing we are thinking, and that what we are experiencing are just thoughts that are separate from our true self. If we become lost in negative emotions through lack of mindfulness we can easily become those thoughts and then suffer needlessly rather than just let them pass away.

The algorithms of our emotions and belief systems are heavily biased due to our previous conditioning/experiences, and they produce massively warped worldviews. This is one of the things we work on during the course of spiritual cultivation to attain the higher transcendental bodies. A spiritual body attainment does not automatically wipe our mind free of its habitual problems, so during the course of self-cultivation we work on controlling our mental and emotional factors and training them to be more optimal. You can never eliminate the problem of suffering, for instance, so the task is developing mental characteristics that will produce the aggregate of well-being.

All Buddhas come into the world in order to help sentient beings understand the fundamental nature of reality, which includes understanding what we essentially are. They teach where we come from and what we are, and that because of our non-fixed nature we have an infinite capacity to become whatever we want and do or experience whatever we want if we learn how to use our consciousness and will/efforts correctly. They therefore teach us how to cultivate our characters (personalities), bodies and the usage of our mind – both its automatic and deliberate mental factors. They teach that we can detach from bondage to our mental phenomena and thereby achieve calmness, contentment, forbearance and self-control of our consciousness. They teach how to access states of peace, tranquility, clarity, comfort, happiness, joy, bliss, centeredness, presence, shine and flow for there are some mental states of well-being within reach of consciousness that are intrinsic to the nature of consciousness rather than being predicated on the contents of consciousness being one way or another. To achieve them is a matter of discovering the natural state of consciousness and learning how to use consciousness correctly, such as quieting the disturbing inner narrative to enjoy life more fully in the present. A quiet enjoyment of the moment is a form of bliss. It is possible through spiritual practice to learn how to shut off the inner narrative and quiet the mind so that you can appreciate the experience of aliveness in the moment of presence without disturbing the moment. This is called bliss or tranquility, presence, clear consciousness, calm focus, pristine clarity, one-pointedness, aliveness, being centered, flow or many other names that are the ordinary mind of man. These are the states of mind you should be cultivating on the spiritual path, as well as optimism, sunniness, cheerfulness and shine. To cultivate such beautiful states you must cultivate

the energy flow within your body as well as mediation and your personality or mindset.

However, we still have the problem of survival in the realm of Nature which is brutal and frightening because within it the strong are always overpowering the weak, living beings are always seeking food and killing one another for that nourishment, and Nature is a continuous tragedy of conflict, pain and suffering where we get sick, age and eventually die. Life is a tragedy and reality is not a Utopia. How to navigate the landmines of life for survival and still experience happiness, peace and bliss is an incredible challenge.

Because of widespread poverty, to flourish with great happiness and prosperity is beyond the capability of many people in life. Hence, Buddhas come into the world to help people deal with suffering and establish noble purposes in their lives despite the suffering of existence. Without their spiritual teachings we would, as aggressive and antagonistic animals, become corrupted by the pains of existence and continuously fall prey to negative emotions and behaviors such as anger, killing, hate, greed, lying, stealing and so forth. Buddhas teach us how to calm our minds, control our thought processes and uplift our conduct so that we can spiritualize our natures, and thereby move closer to the Buddha-body attainments and experience states of peace, happiness, contentment, flow and bliss. Their teachings and guidance help us find a higher purpose and meaning to life.

We need to maintain ourselves to live, but we can only accomplish this through the help of others in cooperative, collaborative arrangements where we band together to overcome Nature, and thus Buddhas help us develop our societies and culture. They give us with teachings on human relations, how society should progress, and on methods of self-improvement so that we can change our characters and lives and plant the seeds for better subsequent incarnations.

Humans remain animals unless they fall under the civilizing influences of spirituality, civics, rationality and science. The hope is that our animal nature is cleansed and uplifted enough through the influences of spiritual teachings to become human nature rather than animal nature, our human nature rises through self-cultivation to become a noble nature, and then is further purified and perfected to become spiritualized nature. The hope is that we use our willpower and consciousness in life to not only develop ourselves, but to create a better future for ourselves and others that removes the pains of our souls and moves humanity forwards.

Buddhas teach people so to fully comprehend their personhood, which is a fabricated construction of many processes whose innermost core is the unchanging true self, or true reality of existence. They help people understand the true nature of manifest reality, that a multitude of conditions agglomerate together to compose their body and create their consciousness, that they have no intrinsic nature of their own, and that their ultimate self-nature or True Self is their true core and the universal substratum from whence all originates. They come to teach people that their true identity is the universal substratum, and that there is a unity between themselves and that substrate; these two are one. The individual personal self, being Its manifestation, is one with It.

When one realizes the oneness of his personal self with the Universal Self or Supreme Reality, which is your true relationship with God (the foundational substratum), this realization is often called self-realization, liberation or emancipation. However, such knowledge does not solve the problems of birth and death or suffering which can only be handled by, among other things, learning how to manipulate the conditions of the universe in your favor so as to produce better living conditions, learning how to manage the operations of your body and mind and bring them to states of optimality, learning how to cultivate material and mental well-being, and learning how to cultivate higher transcendental bodies that live extremely long lives in higher planes of existence.

All Buddhas teach the unified oneness of our personal self with Shakti and ultimately the Universal Self, the Supreme Reality, the universal substratum, our fundamental nature. All Buddhas come into the world to enable sentient beings to realize the nature of their self-essence, which is to understand their true self-nature just as you have been told, and in addition to these revelations that lead to the perception of Truth within us, they also provide for us pathways of cultivation. They teach us how to manage our consciousness – our awareness, contemplation skills, thinking processes, and imagination – and master the rules of causality (cause and effect) that rule phenomena so that we can learn to master ourselves and our environment to produce better states of well-being. Because we are social animals interconnected with other group members whom we need to survive, they teach us how to behave with one another in cooperative, collaborative societies that satisfy our needs for happiness, prosperity and protection, safety, security and fairness, etcetera.

They teach that although we are transient beings, there is a process of reincarnation that provides a degree of continuity to our existence, and locked within the energy matrix of our body there is the potential of higher

transcendental body achievements that can win us an existence of extreme longevity where, even if one eventually passes away at that level, allow many memories and attributes to be passed onto a subsequent incarnation. They teach that we should mentally stabilize in our Real Self, and cultivate the inner vital Qi energy inside us as well as the proper behavior and efforts that progress mankind forward, in order to (1) promote transformations that lead to a better society (which we can thereby enjoy in our subsequent incarnations) and (2) produce these higher transcendental bodies that free us from lower unfortunate realms of existence. They teach us to improve our own lives and the state of society so that we can obtain all sorts of other benefits too such as the ability to change our fortunes for the better and experience what we want and become the people we want to become in life. If we work on ourselves, our conditions and society we can more readily *feel shine* in our lives and experience the true vitality of being.

After receiving such teachings, we must arouse the courage to start cultivating ourselves – our bodies, personalities (because we are living objects these are attributes or characteristics), spiritual values, knowledge and wisdom, thinking processes, skills, conduct and projects – by purifying, elevating and mastering all the abilities of our consciousness. They then encourage us to use our powers to improve society and move it forward in positive ways so that it does not succumb to ossification, calcification or stasis due to freezing the changes required by progress, and also encourage us to dial back our errant tendencies. They want us to be self-correcting in personally cultivating ourselves to become better people and more skillful in our activities so that we can also more effectively accomplish whatever ethical, virtuous goals we desire for life.

Buddhas come into the world in order to enable sentient beings to create pathways of higher culture, civilization, cultivation, conduct, charity, cooperation and dharma that improve circumstances and lead to better existences for human lives. When humans die their inner subtle Qi-body separates from their physical shell and lives in an earthly etheric plane until reincarnation, administered by higher beings, sends deva souls down again into the material plane when that life ends ... unless during that time they cultivate the next higher stage of existence – the Causal body inherent within their deva body shell. On and on it goes in cyclical fashion until through spiritual cultivation practice your energy body and your personality/habits are purified to the extent that you can attain a Supra-Causal body that is practically immortal, free of the impurity of all lower realms of matter and energy, and therefore forever free of the cycles of birth and death in the lower planes of existence beneath its composition level.

Hence, Buddhas come into the world to teach us how to improve our lives and the structures of society; how to develop our wisdom, skills and abilities of consciousness to the fullest; and how to transform our characters and ethical roots of behavior to higher stages that carryover for subsequent incarnations. They come into the world to teach us how to live with one another peacefully, cooperatively and prosperously. They come into the world to teach us how to attain the higher spiritual bodies that leave the lower realms of suffering behind forever. They come on account that they want us to awaken to the view of the Buddhas, achieve the perfected ordinary mind of enlightenment,²³ and take upon themselves similar Buddha purposes, vows and commitments to help humanity in various ways.²⁴ They want to enable sentient beings to engage in the task of self-perfection, perfect their current physical body and ways of living,²⁵ and attain the higher transcendental bodies of enlightenment, and produce a better world for themselves and others, and so they come into the world.

Specifically, they want human beings to spiritually cultivate to attain the Supra-Causal body, also known as the Buddha body, Rainbow body or Clear Light body attainment, and experience its attendant level of clear consciousness (the mirror mind) and other capabilities. And they want them to devote themselves to Buddha vows to help other sentient beings in the world. After someone achieves this transcendental body attainment, its composition is so refined in terms of being free from coarse matter and lower energies that they no longer have to reincarnate in the lower physical realm, subtle realm, or Causal realm that correspond to the human,

²³ A mind that has achieved a natural, steady state mode of inner peace and calm, tranquility (“emptiness”), centeredness, pristine clarity, is “present” in the moment (rather than wandering), and experiences a physical comfort or feeling of body bliss due to its health and vitality. Mental states of flow, sunniness (a quiet inner optimism, happiness and energy) and shine are also optimum states of the ordinary mind. These are just the qualities of the mental realm you hope to achieve in your ordinary mind through the process of spiritual cultivation. You can cultivate peaceful, calm states of egolessness and desirelessness that are accompanied by brilliant mental clarity, and more active blissful states (happiness, shine, optimism, vigor, etc.) that are vibrantly engaging and fill you with much more energy during the life experience. Whether you cultivate a passive or active state, it is to become elevated and highly refined.

²⁴ See *Buddha Yoga* for a wide variety of such vows.

²⁵ As just one example, for every activity of life there is an optimal way of breathing, and you need to learn the proper breathing method that fits for each activity such as a specific sport, concentration, meditation, etcetera.

Srotapanna and Sadragamin, and Anagamin levels of attainment. They can escape the lower realms of reincarnation forever.

From the standpoint of the original nature there is nothing else in existence other than just Itself, just as ornaments of gold are nothing but gold and a jar of clay is only clay. From the perspective of gold there is no such thing as a (gold) necklace because there is only gold (there). Thus, there is no such thing as manifoldness (manifestations of phenomena) in the cosmos. From the standpoint of the primordial substratum there are no such things as dependent arising, production or destruction, cause and effect, laws of physics, living beings, consciousness and thoughts, holy teachings, stages of life, a path to enlightenment, wisdom, karma, suffering, attainments, codes of conduct and so on in the universe. There is only the fundamental foundational substratum present that is absent of all these appearances that are essentially matter-energy agglomerations that are in turn the fundamental substrate.

Within Shakti there is no definite thing; there is only neutral scintillating energy without good or bad, virtue or evil, and within it there are no stable patterns. There are also no genuine souls, *atmans* or entities who cultivate, no one who transmigrates through reincarnation, and no intrinsic selves that attain the higher spiritual bodies and released from bondage, ... there is only Shakti transforming in various ways without separate individual self-so patterns, and that Shakti is the primordial formless (empty) substrate. Shakti itself is only Shakti without multiplicities, and yet multiplicities exist otherwise we wouldn't be here. Yet we are here, but don't exist in the way we imagine to be. Buddhas arrive to correct our notions on these matters and point to the implications for how to improve our lives and escape suffering by producing well-being.

Everything in the world is part of you and you are part of everything. You can also say that the apparent living beings of Shakti are not just Shakti but the primal substance *Purusha* in Its various forms that illusionally seem bound, released or transmigrating but are essentially free. In the realm of Shakti, cause and effect has produced a manifoldness of phenomena that are actually all seamlessly interconnected as one soup, but you have the gift of consciousness that enables you to define multiplicities, realize your true nature, and make a better life for yourself. With the amazing miracle of consciousness you can apply self-efforts to become however you want within Shakti in terms of your skills, personality traits, body characteristics, etcetera and can work to develop, achieve or experience whatever you want.

Nonetheless, there is only the fundamental substrate in stable existence and permanent dependability cannot be attributed to any of its manifest evolutes since they are always changing. They are not inherent entities so they are always transforming into some type of new state every moment. For us that means we must learn how to adapt to the changes of the universe, and those who learn faster are the ones with a sustainable advantage for surviving and thriving.

Shakti doesn't ultimately exist, and there is no stable pattern within Shakti. Furthermore, the patterns within Shakti can only be discovered through consciousness. From the ultimate standpoint of the Empty foundational substrate, there is no master nor student, no teachings nor self-realization. There is only Itself. There is no one who achieves enlightenment, nor is there such a true thing as enlightenment or higher bodies. Ultimately there is no state of virtue and no state of vice, no state of bondage, no state of liberation, no coming and no going, no change and transformation. There are absolutely no modifications within the fundamental substance that is empty of all things (just like space), and thus absolutely transcendent without attributes or qualities. The realm of Shakti, whether you say it is perfectly chaotic or replete with patterns, is neither ultimately patterned or chaotic since Shakti is just inherent emptiness.

Then again, within the world of Shakti these all exist in a conventional sense for it is a realm of cause and effect whose essential nature is temporary agglomeration and then change. Our mind names and labels the things we perceive within Shakti for identification purposes so that we can deal with the world that appears within our minds, which are the constructs of Shakti, but they are always transforming into something else. So we say there are living sentient beings, reincarnation, ignorance and liberation, but they are not inherent, intrinsic existences. They exist for as long as they exist, and are temporary or "apparent" rather than unchanging "true" existences. To say that we are living beings, for instance, is only a conventional (but false) way of speaking because there are no intrinsic beings here since everything is conditionally defined through an agglomeration (we are non-intrinsic entities composed of all sorts of other conditions rather than having an independent self-so nature) and always transforming (therefore impermanent). Thus, you can say that sentient beings are neither truly existent as inherent beings, yet neither are they non-existent because we do live a transient apparent existence with the attribute of consciousness that lets us know appearances of the world and thoughts from within our composition.

From the aspect of the foundational substratum you can say Its purity means It has no cause or effect, is free from cause and effect, transcends cause and effect, is beyond the relationships of cause and effect, cause and effect do not affect It, cause and effect do not truly exist, cause and effect are ultimately empty, the nature of cause and effect is emptiness, and so on. Imagine if the entire universe was just empty space alone with nothing inside it. In that case, where would there be cause and effect? There would just be an endless void of nothingness – nothing at all. This is the nature of the original foundational substrate.

In meditation practice religions teach people to abide their mind in this way as a means of training, but to maintain awareness during that state of empty mind rather than fall into a no-thought stage such as deep sleep. They want you to cultivate a pristine awareness of your thoughts where you know your consciousness but don't cling to it. This is why you train to watch your thoughts instead of blocking them to “experience emptiness.” The lack of fusion with your thoughts allows you to correct them whenever required, and thereby enable you to rectify your behavior to the level of nobility (consummate conduct) and then spirituality (selflessness).

In the conventional realm of manifestation there is indeed cause and effect. Within Shakti cause and effect certainly do exist and create all its configurations. Even before consciousness arose within Shakti those configurations existed, otherwise there would not have been a history of evolution to produce the conscious life that has eventually arisen within it. Without a mind the undifferentiated mass of Shakti cannot be segmented into differences or distinctions, so no multiplicities of any type would be recognized by anyone even though what exists would still exist. All the various manifestations, phenomena or fabrications of energy and matter arise out of the complex interaction of cause and effect. Since the best understanding of cause and effect incorporates energy wavefronts and the interdependence of phenomena that underlies all of materiality, you can definitely say that manifest reality is created through an infinite Indra's net of simultaneous co-arising, co-penetrating conditions.

Conventionally, within Shakti there are sentient beings and better apparent states of existence that you can bring into existence for yourself and others, so why not do so? Why remain attached to inferior states of being rather than making efforts to move ahead in the conventional realm and make things better for yourself and others? Why not create states absent of suffering but full of joy, bliss and well-being for all? Are you who and what you want to be? If not, then you should make arrangements to change yourself in the directions you want.

We have both attributes and a trajectory and a destiny in life related to our character. We can change both through the cultivation effort of self-improvement which requires consistent work on changing our personality, thinking and behavior. This in turn requires us to concentrate on perfecting our consciousness that gives birth to most of our volitional attributes. To achieve this type of self-improvement we need *a system of regularities that continually point us toward this goal and gradually take our mind, body and behavior through the difficult transformation process of retraining or reshaping*. That is why some people enter into temples, ashrams, abbeys, monasteries and convents and take up the structured religious life.

We are connected to all things in existence, but are especially influenced by our prior experiences that have shaped us. To change ourselves to become better (and often in order to create a better future for ourselves) we must find our psychological walls and surpass any mental limitations. We must permanently alter any limiting patterns within our psychology. We must also transform ourselves by elevating our minds and behaviors above our animal natures. When we encounter resistance to change, we have to dissolve any obstructions through wisdom.

Our task of maintaining our lives (survival) and thriving entails mastering the conventional states of living. You travel through life using the intellect, so you must master the abilities of consciousness and use your mind to adaptively master life's conditions to bring about what you need or desire.

For us, appearances of a world (forms and phenomena, including life and consciousness) certainly *do exist*. You cannot say they *ultimately exist* as inherent truths, but only conventionally exist as apparent truths within our consciousness. They are not non-existent since they exist conventionally. They are only temporarily true and not “really real” in the sense of being permanent localized items or having permanent inherent natures, yet they do exist. They are all composite constructions produced from a myriad of contributing causes (cooperating forces). From the aspect of the entirely pure foundational substance they do not exist at all for within It there is only Itself. However, phenomena do appear in the unreal, non-self-so, transitory apparent realm of causality that lacks inherent existence – for we perceive them – and you know of this because you have consciousness. Without a mind, you would be an insentient phenomenon for which nothing exists, and yet as an insentient phenomenon you would still exist but without knowledge.

With a mind, however, you can create an ordered human world within Shakti, create culture and civilization, and live your life prosperously whereas Shakti is ultimately only a realm of disorder where the life within it must constantly experience pain and suffering. How to improve our lives and our selves is what the Buddhas come into this world to teach.

Even though we have a mind, within our consciousness phenomena never really appear to us in all their dimensions because the picture we internally create of the outside world is limited by the constraints of our sense organs and our mental processing. Due to the limitations of our imperfect sense organs and lack of even more sensory vehicles, you always experience the world incompletely and incorrectly. You experience the world conditionally according to the limitations of both your sense organs and your mental processing capabilities that simplify matters. These produce a simplified (but somewhat illusory) map of the outside world, which you build inside your brain, and your mental processing also unconsciously adds subjective factors to the picture, thus contaminating it. Those contaminating, biasing factors automatically arise due to your past experiences (conditioning) and are not under your voluntary control, which is why you must practice mindfulness to spot these insertions and correct them.

What you experience as the world with qualities is only an illusion within your mind. It is only an abbreviated, imperfect approximation of something out there; it is a mere representation limited in scope and qualities. It is a type of false imagining that you create through pattern recognition. Your approximation of reality is inaccurate because it lacks critical details, and also because it arises within your mind that embellishes it with biases and prejudices because you automatically add likes and dislikes, desires, interests and preferences onto the simplified image.

Nonetheless, this is the nature of consciousness, so you cannot criticize what you have but only correct it once you discover its natural deficiencies. Consciousness is what it is, as faulty as it might be, so there is no use complaining about it. There is just the task of mastering what you've got, which is a great miracle that we even possess such a process.

The Great Learning is *to make the best use of your thinking apparatus and cognitive processes* for the health of your psychological realm and goal-seeking behavior. You must work with what you have without complaint because nature has evolved this capability in you that, although precious beyond measure and of inestimable value, has natural limitations. There's no use fretting about the limitations and inaccuracies of consciousness because that's how consciousness is. That is what we have for our minds. Therefore

you can only correct its errors, train to improve your usage of consciousness, expand its abilities wherever possible and work to master it.

Through consciousness you know the world via constructed mental images, and thus you *never directly perceive reality*. You only experience an image of the outer world within your mind that through a trick of inversion makes you think you are experiencing something outside of the brain. Even so, you only ever experience your mind of mental thoughts and images. You experience a symbolic representation of something “out there.” Your consciousness is the only thing you can know; you cannot know the world, you can only know your consciousness and the picture it builds of the world, whether true or false. Nevertheless, this light of illumination (knowing) is a treasure compared to insentience.

Everything you experience happens in the space between your ears because absolutely everything you know is only an experience constructed within your consciousness. The worldview of qualities you create isn’t totally real but just an *approximate illusion* that works for you, and it becomes the conventional truth for other humans as well because we all share a similar anatomical structure that produces a similar mechanism (internal operating system) for consciousness, and therefore we all create a very similar type of picture of the world.

Phenomena are actually wavering energy vibrations in space, constantly changing and ultimately ungraspable. Not being changeless, phenomena are inherently unreal and intrinsically undependable as “solid objects” but we take them as solid dependabilities. We don’t even realize that they are made of atoms or even smaller simples that are mostly empty space, so their apparent solidity is also a fiction since they are mostly emptiness. Therefore they don’t exist in the way they appear to be. The universe is that way as well, and human beings are also not what we assume ourselves to be.

All things appear due to conditions, meaning they appear only because there are conditions interpenetrating them that produce them (they conditionally arise), and so in being dependent on conditions they do not ultimately exist in some fundamentally inherent way. They are *dependencies*. – impermanent dependent constructions that need various strategies to stay together. Their existence depends upon other things including an entire history of past conditions. In other words, they have no self-so natures (intrinsic natures) that are *independent existences*. What seems like an independent body flows into everything else due to interdependent arising that basically dissolves any discrete borders we assume they have. However, objects do exist non-transcendentally (conventionally) for as long as they do

exist, which is always momentary since they are changing into another state every moment. They are all apparently real for just a moment, but our minds make them appear to be continuous on a moment-by-moment basis. Nonetheless, what we think is monotonous is always changing, and hence never the same constant thing. So there is a reality we see, but it's just not what we assume it to be, nor does it exist in the way we perceive it.

Even if ultimately unreal as a changing dependent existent, what we take for reality and experience as reality is to us reality, so why not master the changes of the reality we experience? Why not learn to become a master of phenomena where you can skillfully guide their possible changes to more auspicious states of being? After all, conventionality is the only thing that ultimately matters, not the original nature, because conventionality is our *conscious existence*. Without consciousness we are insentient existence in some form or another, which is ultimately the same as personal extinction or annihilation, so conscious existence is what matters to us! The bliss of Advaita Vedanta or Buddhist *nirvana* - a bliss of unperturbed peacefulness - is meaningless without a mind and refers to a conscious existence experiencing bliss, namely *sat-chit-ananda*. We have to master and then perfect the functions of our mind through cultivation efforts to experience the bliss of *ananda* and *make it the natural state of our life*, otherwise we will remain simple animals.

The *sat-chit-ananda* of Hinduism stipulates a bliss experienced by consciousness that *only occurs because you have existence*. Therefore this is not a blissful peacefulness of no-thinking (no-thought) due to the non-existence of sentience, or due to the blocking of thoughts that creates a dulled mind of thoughtlessness. It is not the stale emptiness mind of “dead tree Zen” where your thinking and inner vitality are somewhat suppressed to become unnaturally subdued. Many meditation practitioners think they should sit without letting their mind move, or without letting thoughts arise to attain a “samadhi of oneness,” but this is a false/wrong emptiness. It is an unnatural deviation to the proper flow of life and can never lead to an *ananda* of true peacefulness, tranquility or bliss. Your thinking must always remain active and ready to sprout rather than suppressed to create an empty visage within, so this type of lethargic peacefulness that some strive to cultivate is not true peacefulness, empty mind nor bliss. It is an obstruction.

A blissful experience is certainly absent of suffering, but more akin to a state of physical and mental well-being (since we can never entirely rid ourselves of pain and suffering in life) infused with a degree of physical comfort and subtle happiness that is there in the background as an enjoyment you can savor, but which does not overwhelm your being to the

extent of clouding the experience of consciousness in any way. While we want to be happy and joyous in life, vibrant states of elation are like a passing brightness that is an exciting or thrilling irritant polluting the peacefulness of a clear mind of inner tranquility. The most enjoyable mental states are sustainable for every moment, which means the peaceful minds of calmness, tranquility and equanimity. Therefore what we normally call emptiness (empty mind) is a common target of meditation practice.

Emptiness, peacefulness, or tranquility do not mean (absolute) no-thought but that your mind is clear and relatively quiet of complexity - *you have sharp mental clarity, acuity and cleanness without internal afflictions and irritations* and you enjoy that calm, peaceful state of mind. You experience your existence within an attendant (accompanying) degree of mental brightness, peace and calm rather than while constantly experiencing some thrilling degree of rapture, ecstasy or even bubbling joy that cannot give you rest. Bliss is something subtle but pleasant and pervasive, and this is what you should experience if you cultivate well enough your mind, health, behavior and vital energy. The states of flow and shine are sample blissful states of mind and life.

These are various bliss states of *sat-chit-ananda*, some of which are more passive and some of which are more active: inner peace and calm, tranquility, being centered, having pristine clarity, mental one-pointedness, being present in the moment of *now* (“presence”), being centered and mentally quiet, feeling fully alive with physical comfort/bliss and lightness but without mental complexities, sunniness (a quiet inner optimism, happiness and energy), flow state, brightness and shine. These are forms of *ananda*. They are some of the preferred steady state modes of beingness that you would *prefer* to be experiencing all the time and can *remain experiencing for long periods* of time without getting bored or irritated or fatigued by them. They are sustainable (and non-irritating) beautiful states of mind.

Through spiritual practice you want your ordinary mind, which is the same mind as the mind of enlightenment, to attain this degree of inner luminosity, calm and enjoyment as its steady state nature. This is what you want to cultivate towards because you want to enjoy these states even if you don't attain the higher spiritual bodies in this life. The more you can cultivate them, the more they can become a natural part of your personality in subsequent incarnations, which is the goal.

In particular, the state of flow is a form of bliss since it is a clear mind of concentration that can become immersed in life yet free of mental annoyances and distractions. During flow you use your mind and abilities to

their full potential completely while immersed in their current activity, and you relish the moment. This is the proper way to be. The state of shine is a type of steady state of subliminal joy or happiness that naturally exudes from you without effort so that there is no loss of energy, and which easily affects your environment. Sunniness is a more vibrant and hence excited state of constant bliss like optimism, and is a natural personality trait that almost reaches the unsustainable stage of overt happiness or joy. These are states that combine a joy of life with a peaceful state of clear illumination and a body that is comfortable due to its health and vitality.

Many spiritual schools promote meditation so that you master certain mental skills such as concentration or mindfulness, and so that you can achieve an enjoyable quieting of your mind's inner narrative. However, they really want you to experience these states of mind as your accomplishment. Our natural mental state is to be peaceful and happy until we disturb it, and many spiritual schools want you to be able to regain that natural underlying state without pollution. You also want to transform your personality so that you can enjoy more active states of bliss on a regular basis rather than some theoretical neutral mental state that is tranquil but absent of emotion. To regularly experience mental states such as compassion and kindness, sunniness, shine or micro-flow as personality traits it involves cultivation practice and changing how you view your life, which is cultivation practice as well.

You are certainly not trying to cultivate perfect no-thought or thoughtlessness through meditation practices because this is equivalent to insentience. The fact that you can experience bliss means that you are aware of your beingness and existence, so it means that when you are happy you fully know you are happy and when sorrowful you are keenly aware of your suffering. Nothing should be blocked to produce a state of thoughtlessness. Thoughtlessness (no-thought) is a mistaken interpretation about the inner tranquility and calm one should be cultivating, and you often see an attempt at thought suppression in Zen and Advaita Vedanta practitioners who are seeking to achieve some form of egoless pure consciousness that lacks mentation. What compounds this issue are descriptions of masters sitting motionless "in samadhi" or a "dhyana absorption," and individuals mistakenly thinking the masters are experiencing thoughtless mental states when they are actually just traveling around elsewhere in their higher spiritual bodies. Their spirit is absent so they sit motionless, and people mistakenly think it's some type of mental samadhi when it is simply that they aren't present. When Ramakrishna would sit motionless "in trance" some students would think his mind was in some beatific samadhi but he

was just absent from his physical shell and traveling about in his higher spiritual bodies.

The unperturbed peacefulness of absolute no-thought is equivalent to the insentience of nothingness and non-existence rather than liberation, and so an *ananda* that is a peacefulness-bliss of no-thought or deep sleep is not what we're after. We are interested in the bliss of a quiet mind, such as in the flow state, where there still are mental operations going on such as the recognition of one's existence, recognition of objects, a feeling of deep engagement with life, and of course whatever thinking operations (thoughts) that are necessary.

While we all want to be happy and experience cheerfulness and joy, these excited conditions are considered mental disturbances compared to the flow state or the refined peacefulness of calm tranquility, so while they are enjoyable mental-emotional states we should seek higher bliss states that more refined for our natural temperament rather than these lower states of joyous excitation. From the vantage point of the higher stages of refined bliss, the lower states of joyousness are an irritation or disturbance. Yes we should regularly experience them, but as the basis of our personality we should seek to cultivate higher stages of equanimous bliss and shine.

A state of peacefulness (emptiness), comfortable (physical) lightness or peaceful, glowing shine are getting closer to a bliss you might always wish to dwell within, especially when you remember that the self is simply a bundle of fleeting states, a combination of physical and mental aggregates working together interdependently in a flux of momentary change within the laws of cause and effect. The idea of cultivating unmoved tranquility or mental oneness is to achieve pristine illumination - a clear mental state that can experience the moment of beingness without negative internal complexities. Through calm tranquility you can make deliberations with great care so that you can more reliably attain your goals and can develop the highest excellences.

You cannot say that the worldly phenomena you see within your mind don't exist, but you cannot say that they exist as "inherent realities" or exist in the which that they appear to us. You cannot say that Shakti doesn't exist, but it doesn't exist in the way we assume that it does, yet even so there is an apparent existence there in front of us that we know through our consciousness. The phenomena of Shakti (the universe) are empty of intrinsic existence and only exist as temporary appearances that dependently arise having borders that turn out to be the entirety of Shakti. Phenomena are conditionally defined so they arise through an infinite number of

interconnections with physical laws, environmental conditions, and so forth. Thus there is nothing inherently there as a singular, independent pure phenomena.

Objects, events, entities, or processes always have *an infinite composite nature*. However, their inherent changeability due to the characteristic of impermanence gives you a freedom – the potential to change their nature and any conditions you encounter in life. Their continuous frothing changefulness means that humans must learn how to quickly adapt to the ever-changing conditions of the world to ensure their survival, and to survive they also need to rely on one another in this world of continuous changes. These are some of the keys to eliminating your personal suffering in the world, making your conditions better and ensuring your survival. Because you can change conditions, you should think about the following question: “Why not pursue positive purposes in life that improve conditions for as many people as possible?”

Remember, although you perceive a universe of objects, what you are actually perceiving (other than your mind) is the primordial essence alone. As to this foundational substrate, It never changes into anything else so nothing but Itself pervades It. Objects are simply empty appearances rather than its true nature. The name “universe” or “cosmos” is superimposed on It, but what we call the “universe,” “Shakti,” “Logos,” “Manifestation,” “The Triple Realm,” or “All” is really nothing but the original essence. On one level we see discrete phenomena, on another level they are one single interconnected soup, and at the ultimate level they are all the one primordial essence-substance.

Thus you can say that the original nature or foundational substrate is neither has attributes nor lacks attributes. It is not “without attributes” since the world of manifestation appears, and yet It does not possess attributes because It is empty of all marks, signs, stains or phenomena just like empty space. Thus, you cannot say It is pure (without phenomena) because manifestation certainly appears within It, which is what we see and experience. You also cannot say It is impure since those phenomenal appearances of manifestation are actually just It. Although stationary, non-transforming, and unmoving without activity you cannot say It is inert because phenomena have somehow arisen as a realm of continuously changing appearances within It. You can’t say It is non-inert because It never moves or changes Its clear substance.

This is all summarized in the *Heart Sutra* and *Diamond Sutra* of Buddhism, and in the conversation between Krishna and Arjuna in the *Bhagavad Gita*.

Unfortunately, few people understand that this is the meaning of these texts and that these are teachings they are trying to transmit. The basic idea is that *phenomena don't inherently exist but only apparently exist temporarily, in a conditional way due to interdependent origination, this includes human beings, and phenomena are only known because our consciousness reflects them internally in the nature of a dream of approximations.* Further, the fabrication of conceptions within consciousness to experience reality only produces an “imaginary” or “constructed” nature that does not transcend Shakti either.

Shakti lacks intrinsic sentient beings but contains apparent sentient beings while the foundational nature contains no phenomena at all. Hence the Advaita Vedanta sage Nisargadatta said, “The real never dies – the unreal never lived.” Shakti lacks any true things called “living beings” so they are the “unreal who never lived.” Shakti is actually a neutral, insentient, inanimate, purely material-energetic realm and living beings and consciousness are just processes within Shakti. We only call living beings “living beings” and say they have consciousness as a means of identification but this isn't the way things really are. Living beings are essentially just portions of Shakti that we delineate with our minds; there are no such things as independent living beings in reality.

There is no such inherent thing as a sentient being. There are only *conventional designations of us as living beings* for we are processes, events or living objects having consciousness that each assume they are inherently existent entities independent of the universe rather than interpenetratively defined. Our consciousness does not “transcend the material universe” either since the thinker, thinking and thoughts are all matter-energy processes within the one matter-energy field fabric of insentient Shakti. Thus consciousness is just another material, phenomenal process within scintillating Shakti although we consider consciousness the property of a living being that transcends Shakti. There is no such true thing as a “living being” either since this is merely a designation for an apparent portion of Shakti. Insentient Shakti through all its evolutions cannot produce anything other than more processes within itself that are just itself rather than something independent that transcends it.

We cannot escape Shakti, which is why we must learn how to control its changes. The problem with monks and nuns who spiritually cultivate is that they work primarily to attain the higher transcendental bodies possible because of our material structure, but fail to work at mastering various aspects of Shakti nor learn significant skills to manipulate and control the changes of phenomena as emphasized in Taoism or science or action-oriented bodies of knowledge.

The original nature is the one true reality and permanent existence – single, beginningless, omnipresent, imperishable, uninterrupted, unchanging, infinite, all-pervading, immaculate, pure, indivisible, and without phenomenal stain. Yet appearances somehow arise within It, but from the standpoint of this fundamental substratum for manifest reality there is nothing else at all except Itself. The road of spirituality teaches that your mind, which gives birth to phenomena, should rest in its natural state that is empty of thoughts, and therefore abide in a state akin to your foundational self-nature that is fundamentally peaceful and free yet somehow able to produce conventional reality just as our natural empty mind somehow spontaneously gives rise to thoughts that cannot stay. Can your mind be like the original nature that lets phenomena/appearances arise within It without interfering with the process? Can you be pure, unborn and clear without a single thought arising? That freedom and bliss is the state we want to experience due to meditation practice. Thus people on spiritual paths train in meditation.

In fact, the only reason Buddhas stress that the fundamental substrate is empty is so that we imitate that emptiness *and its detachment* during spiritual practice by becoming mindful of our thoughts through meta-cognition. Staying aware of our thought-stream gradually produces an enjoyable quieting of the mind-stream so “emptiness meditation” is promoted as a practice for this benefit of calmness and clarity. Meditation practice helps decrease the tendency for mental wandering because it trains your concentration muscles, so your mental illumination is never turned off to produce a scenario without thoughts. Consequently, through meditation we can experience concentration and clear awareness and can ignore annoyances that might cause our minds to wander while staying aware of the pure clarity within us. It is simply a training mechanism. *To attain the deva body, however, you must also do inner energy work.*

Nonetheless, mental quiescence is a peaceful state achievable through meditation where consciousness still shines because objects are still recognized, and thoughts still come and go but the mind seems quiet because its habitual afflictions have been emptied away, your awareness doesn't cling to thoughts, and you develop a natural state of concentrated focus like flow.

Another reason we train in letting go of our thought-stream is because we make it far easier for higher spiritual beings to use their Qi during that time to help purify and stabilize our subtle bodies, which need periodic communion with higher energies in order to maintain their health and

integrity unless you do a lot of internal energy work on your own through the right *nei-gong* practices. The intercession of Buddhas on our bodies is regularly going on all the time, but humans do not know it. This is how Buddhas, who have attained the higher bodies that live extremely long lives, try to maintain the life of lower sentient beings and preserve them from disintegration (until they too attain those very long existences) since they are ultimately just patterns of nature.

Those on spiritual roads are taught to engage in spiritual practices that train them to let go of their minds so that their Qi can flow more freely, which then washes and strengthens the structure of their inner subtle body. They are taught to detach from their thought-stream during spiritual practices so that their Qi can also more easily be rotated by junior devas, and then by higher spiritual masters who don't normally do this coarse purification work.

By detaching from thoughts you detach from your body's inner Qi circulation since your Qi and thoughts are connected. This detachment makes it easier for your Qi to move within the etheric Qi channels of your subtle body (since it isn't then attached to thoughts that might inhibit or bias its circulation). This better Qi flow then rejuvenates or strengthens the underlying structure of your subtle body. Also, letting go of our thought-stream produces an enjoyable quieting of the mind-stream so the meditation pursuit of quiescence is emphasized where your mind is predominantly clear and quiet.

Many Hindu sadhus, yogis and monks are taught practice instructions to “detach from desires and sense objects to achieve liberation.” They're taught to disconnect their mind from the concept of being the doer of actions and unite their minds with God (which is a form of emptiness meditation too). They're taught that God is the cause of everything and the real (ultimate) doer in their life so they should surrender completely to God and offer Him everything they have, including their thoughts and behavior. They're taught that they are “pure consciousness in nature,” and that the fundamental universal substrate – the basis of the manifest cosmos – is pure consciousness, which is nonsense but an effective way to spur meditation practice. There is no permanent consciousness that just exists as a substratum because consciousness arises as a process that requires a body and internal energy.

They are taught that if they give up their ego and remain absorbed in God then they will experience bliss, which is because they will consequently start quieting their mind to touch inner peacefulness (since this type of

absorption is a form of emptiness/formlessness meditation) and their Qi will also start to invigorate their physical body during that time. They're taught that they are not the body, and to live like someone without a body so that they once again become detached and attain a serene nature.

Some are taught to disassociate from all mental objects that the mind connects with and to focus continuous attention on the sense of "I," which is the center of your thoughts and perceiver of your perceptions. If you focus on the I-sense and stop consciousness from connecting with all exterior phenomena that you want to experience then the individuality of the I can no longer exist, so it will have to withdraw and disappear ... and you can then realize its inherent unreality.

Thus they are taught not to identify with their ego (I-ness) or their thoughts and perceptions or the relative aspects of their being. They are not to identify with their body, mind, thinking (discrimination), the perceptions of their senses or the manifest universe. They are taught to give up the I-concept and achieve an unattached state of formlessness because we are all the thoughtless Supreme Nature. Therefore we should in spiritual practice detach from thoughts and desires to find an internal peace as if nothing exists.

These are all just various types of meditation practice, which is championed because of the common objective – you might develop certain beneficial mental characteristics from such practices, but the most important principle is that such practices enable your subtle body to be more easily purified so that it can independently emerge from the physical body. Spiritual practitioners across the world search for text-compatible cultivation practices (exercises sanctioned by the orthodox texts of their religion) that are essentially (1) inner energy practices and (2) empty mind meditation practices like this that can help produce the Srotapanna (first stage) body of enlightenment. Religions try to hide from adherents the truth about the deva body attainment, and in this hiding thereby pacify practitioners who cannot achieve it in this life (if they knew it was the *true objective* of spiritual practice) by posing all sorts of other mental realizations as enlightenment instead, which particularly misleads people in Buddhism and Hinduism.

Many Hindu sadhus, yogis and monks are taught to hold nothing in their minds, become empty and always imagine they are boundless as space like the fundamental essence. They're taught to only be conscious of the (empty) Self and perceive everything as nothing but our formless Self, which gives rise to detachment. They're taught to consider everything as their Self so as to become desireless and happy. They're taught that nothing

can bring lasting happiness in life but you already have it within the naturally peaceful nature of your mind, and so they should stop running after the pleasure of the senses and cultivate dispassion towards thoughts and emotions. You don't get happiness outside of yourself but already have it inside you except that you disturb it through mental attachments, desires or the passions. Some are taught "I am the Supreme nature" and others are taught "I shall become the Supreme being" (by offering themselves entirely to God) all as a means of cultivating their mind and Qi/Prana.

Hence people are taught detachment, non-clinging or emptiness practice in various forms and don't realize the underlying principle that is being taught. Such practices calm the mind and improve your Qi flow as is necessary for the purification and strengthening of your subtle body that is normally released only upon death, but can attain an independent life *during life* if you engage in spiritual practice. By improving your inner Qi flow you can achieve an inner comfort of your physical body and a sense of physical lightness.

Better Qi circulation will not only calm your mind but also sharpen your mental clarity and acuity (achieving what Zen calls "pristine clarity") due to better Qi flow circulation directly into the brain. This makes it possible to achieve higher beautiful mental states such as presence, being centered and flow. The enlightenment mind is nothing but more peaceful, aware, blissful, uncluttered mental states for your ordinary mind. If you cultivate your personality and remind yourself of how you want to be, you can cultivate other mental states such as a constant, quiet happiness state that projects out of you called "shine."

When you realize that you are like a dream person in a dream world because you understand the truth of your self-nature then it becomes easier to start attaining some of these beautiful mental states. Why? Because you can let go of other things since they don't matter so much anymore. This knowledge makes it easier to detach from objects and desires so that you can pursue meaningful significance, and a whole level of suffering will depart as that previous bondage melts away that will let you live much more freely. But suffering cannot be eliminated entirely in life, so everyone needs to work towards well-being instead where the goal of reducing suffering is a subset within that greater objective. Well-being is not just a mental state but something you must create with vigorous physical activity, but unfortunately many monks and nuns never learn how to do this.

Within the ideal of well-being is the need to create a brighter future for yourself and everyone rather than just dispassionately accepting everything.

In working to create a brighter future for yourself, because we are community creatures it is essential that you should also work towards creating a brighter future for society by fostering brotherhood among men. An enlightened person who can “hear the cries of the world” wants to help end the sufferings of all people and relieve their pains. He wants to enrich their lives, and protect them and their interests. An enlightened person wants to establish order and justice within society, encourage people to improve themselves by nurturing excellence, and doesn’t want to let society stay at the same stage of development for too long.

If an individual only focuses on non-clinging as their spiritual practice they will neglect the importance of vigorously focusing on making improvements in the world to help move society forward. One should work not just on improving oneself and one’s own conditions but at seeding the world to make it healthier, accenting the good wherever possible, and working to improve general human happiness. We should all be working towards establishing better social justice, social equality, human welfare, prosperity and progress.

Actually, many cultivation teachings neglect the ideal of progress because they are especially designed for poor people in poor countries where there is little chance of gain to help them escape their poverty. Therefore they help people mentally bear their poverty (hence the emphasis on detachment) while they work to cultivate the higher transcendental bodies that will free them from the material realm of poverty and suffering forever. By letting go of their thoughts (via detachment, meditation practice, etc.) people reduce their desires, mental suffering, and the internal disturbances to their peace of mind. They also free up their Qi circulation so that it can be more easily transformed, which is one of the ultimate objectives. But if you are not a virtuous person then no deva or Buddha will work on your Qi at that time to help purify it in preparation for the higher body attainments, so virtuous behavior and mental purity are also stressed on the spiritual trail.

What people don’t recognize is that many cultivation techniques are just disguised methods for helping you cultivate mental emptiness and non-clinging is just one of them. For instance, the Buddhist meditation teachings to cultivate the samadhi of infinite emptiness, the samadhi of infinite consciousness, the samadhi of infinite nothingness and the samadhi that is neither thought nor no-thought are also “emptiness meditations” designed to help you practice letting go of your thoughts so that your Qi can more easily be rotated and thus purified through that refining process.

Gorakhnath's descriptions of *Anama* (the nameless origin, which is Parabrahman the empty fundamental substrate)²⁶ also serve as alternative meditations on emptiness that are similar to the four formless absorptions of Buddhism: *nija-shakti* is described as eternally present, absolutely pure, motionless (without any pulsation), imperceptible (differenceless), and an undisturbed state of consciousness while *para-sakti* is immeasurable existence, undifferentiated, infinite and unmanifest. Meher Baba also provides descriptions of the gradual solidification/condensation of subtle energy into matter that also serve as a form of formlessness meditation practice.

The practice of “supremely surrendering to God” espoused in Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, etc. is yet another alternative form of formless meditation practice, as are the Advaita Vedanta instructions to “Take refuge in the eternal peace of your True Self.” There are countless forms of “emptiness” meditation that involve detaching from your thought-stream to achieve a quieter mental state more pure (free of desires and attachments), and people usually don't even recognize that their spiritual practice is aimed at this pursuit even though, as you can see from reviewing these various methods, this is the shared commonality within many techniques. The major difference among traditions is the various forms by which this principal practice is transmitted.

In truth, no one attains absolute desirelessness or true detachment. Why? Because attention is an *omnipresent factor of consciousness* so is always operating within the mind, and attachment to an object of consciousness is always there for as long as focus and attention lasts. If a spiritual master truly seems to be detached and have no desires it is usually because he has attained the higher transcendental bodies where he is living in upper realms, but uses this earthly body as an appendage or empty shell to teach people. Hence it is easy to preach desirelessness and detachment to people on the earthly plane since the suffering experienced within it is to him like a dream to his higher bodies. However, within the highest plane he is still subject to desires so don't cheat yourself about a supposed perfection of their character – since you are predominantly residing in a higher planed body your desires focus on that plane instead of the lower ones.

In Vajrayana and Tantra (tantric yoga) the practice of inner energy work is stressed along with meditation practice, in Taoism inner *nei-gong* practice and going along with the flow are emphasized, emptiness meditation is

²⁶ See *The Natha Philosophy and Ashtanga-Yoga* (V. S. Bhatnagar) or *Siddhasiddhantapaddhatib* (Dr. M. L. Garote and Dr. G. K. Pai).

championed in Zen, watching your thoughts and proper behavior is emphasized in Confucianism, and in Christianity you are taught to do good deeds and to sacrifice yourself for others while working at self-improvement. Confucianism, in particular, says that “refining your self lies in balancing your mind” and stresses that you work to make your virtues brighter and pursue consummate conduct. Different principles are stressed in different religions but genuine religions all share the same stages of achievement in terms of the spiritual body attainments that are gained through inner energy work transformations that purify your Qi/Prana. While learning how to calmly observe your thought-stream or desires, cravings, etc. is a common feature in most paths, it is particularly emphasized in poor countries where the adepts will have to experience poverty while cultivating.

Detachment from our thought-stream allows us to transcend our conditioned behaviors and reach for self-improvement, which is possible as long as we don’t fuse with our activities but through pristine awareness remain transcendent. On the spiritual road we need to practice to become independent enough of our thoughts to realize what we are actually doing in the moment so that we can correct ourselves when we realize we are errant. Such recognition only becomes possible when we can remain independent of our thought-stream and look at what we are currently thinking and doing with a sense of oversight. Further, by not rigidly clinging to our mind-stream (which produces a kind of restraint or bias on our inner Qi) this openness provides more opportunity for the creativity of new thoughts to spontaneously arise within us.

By also recognizing that material things are not inherently existing phenomena, but are simply temporary designations within the All that is just our manifest Self, we will also mentally lighten our greed and attachment to physical goods or any hostility we might feel towards objects. By detachment from desire, yet focusing on our actions, we also plant the seeds of results without desiring their fruit. This can socially translate into activities such as working to help other people in life while working to outgrow, rather than indulge in, our own desires, hungers or fears.

Lastly, by emphasizing that phenomena are transient and changeable, and that we are not inherent identities either, we thereby remind ourselves that all things are impermanent and our personalities are also not fixed. We can polish our characters and improve ourselves to become better, and our lives can be improved by any active efforts we make as well. Our personality or character is derived from a series of experiences that have given us Knowledge and colored our consciousness through the perfuming of new

mental patterns, and it affects all that we do. What we do creates our fortunes but what we do depends upon our personality, character or disposition, so our personality creates our fate because it causes our fate. A large part of the spiritual trail is work on transforming our personality and character, in effect polishing and purifying it.

Desires and cravings are due to your mind, intellect and sense organs. If you can give up all mental craving through detachment and just let them flow through you as if you were the stainless original nature, you can become more blissful, peaceful, happy and content because you don't identify with or hold onto the mental modifications that cause pain and dissatisfaction in life. If you learn how stay detached from painful emotions then they will just flow through you and then you'll be done with them rather quickly.

Our True Reality is blissful, peaceful, tranquil, non-attached and devoid of sufferings caused by any agency. It is untouched by the grief and misery of the world, free from passion, jealousy, greed, pride, frustration, rage, hatred and the rest. Can you practice so that your mind is like this? After all, you are not an inherent being, ego, self or life but a function of the original nature that has illusory consciousness. It is you, so you can be this way.

You are a being without any form, so you can adapt your apparent form and train its functions (skills) to be anything you like. This is because in the highest sense there is no fixed individual that suffers, commits karmic deeds, attains *nirvana* or brings things to perfection. There is an apparent being but no *real* doer of deeds, so your attributes are not fixed and you have no reason to cling to any forms of suffering. This is the principle taught within the *Diamond Sutra*. There is no intrinsic permanent core being in us (except for the immortal substrate) and yet conventionally we exist because we are an agglomeration or collection of molecules, energy and conditions in flux that together produce what we call a "being with consciousness." Amazing! We can become of ourselves whatever we want. It just so happens that because matter is a condensed form of energy, we can decompose the energy of our physical body into a higher transcendental body, and keep doing this through cultivation until we can reach the highest transcendental body after which decomposition is not possible thereafter.

The primordial essence, the ultimate universal ground, the primal substrate is by nature equanimous, stationary, blissful and free. So should be your clear awareness as it encounters events including suffering, so it should not fuse with mental states just as the original nature never fuses with the wonder of Shakti. Joy and suffering are both to be experienced within the

awe and wonder of consciousness, but naturally you should try to reduce any suffering states of mind. Spiritual adherents know they should cultivate open, empty, flexible minds but take the instructions for spiritual practice incorrectly. The dulled bluntness of no-thought, nothingness, insentience, and emptiness are not the correct path for eliminating suffering since they are the same as non-existence or annihilation whereas the Great Perfection is existence-consciousness-bliss.

Because the mind should be free, one of the principles for operating it properly is that we should not try to fuse with desires since when unfulfilled they produce suffering. We should not overly attach to phenomena either. Phenomena are a mass of interlocking conditions/inter-relationships following one another in an unbroken succession until they sufficiently change enough to transform into something else. The only dependable thing that does not change, and therefore is real, is the original nature that is empty of phenomena like boundless space.

You can say that phenomena are one and the same as the primordial substance-essence, or that they are the primordial substance-essence, or that they are essentially the primordial substance-essence, they are inherently the primordial substance-essence, permeated by the primordial substance-essence, are ultimately empty, or temporarily exist as appearances before instantaneously transforming into something else, or don't inherently exist in some fundamental self-so way, or only apparently exist and so on.

Some religions state this in an even more original way by saying that the attributes or operations of God are identical with His essence. This makes us creations/attributes of His immortal essence, and because of consciousness we are able to experience manifestations of the Divine. They also say that God is both transcendent and immanent, which means that God transcends all attributes or phenomena (as is the case with the fundamental substratum that is empty of phenomena like space) and yet is always immanent or present as the support and substance of everything; God permeates every thing as their ultimate substance and support. Didn't we just say that without using the word "God" but instead the "fundamental substrate"?

Men are free to arrange phenomena as they deem fit within the universe, but the consequences of their actions will always be bound to its rules of causality. Causality means cause and effect, stimulus and response, interdependent origination and Indra's net. Causality is karma, karma is causality. Your bondage in the universe is to the net of causality. All things are bound to the net of causation, meaning the laws of cause and effect

(such as the laws of chemistry, physics, etc.) that order phenomena in the cosmos, thus ruling them. Causality structures the infinite network of apparent existence, which is why manifest reality is called “origination through dependence (causality).” Dependence means that the origination of any object depends on the existence of everything else in a cause-and-effect relationship. If we can learn those interrelationships, we can learn to affect them to change manifest reality for our benefit, which is the Great Learning of existence that we need to concentrate on through each and every life.

The realm of causality rules the field of emanations, Shakti, but not the original nature, so the Great Learning for a sentient being includes learning how to master, manage or control the patterns and laws of causality within the field of manifestations to gain any results desired – whether they be *Artha*, *Kama*, status within dominance hierarchies, relationships, health, peace of mind, prosperity, spiritual liberation and so forth. This requires the pursuit of wisdom and skillfulness; you must train in acquiring knowledge and understanding and then you know what to do in circumstances. Thereafter, because of your awareness and intellect of understanding, you can apply yourself and make efforts to engineer results as you wish. You train in understanding and active skillfulness, and then you work to do what needs to be done to achieve your goals and objectives.

This is what you should be pursuing in life, and in particular you should be learning how to cultivate the transcendental spiritual bodies that provide you with a better, longer-lived existence in more pleasant realms. Those bodies give you more power to help people on lower planes of existence, which is another reason to pursue them – you need to achieve them in order to fulfill vows of compassion to help others. To successfully cultivate this outcome requires virtue and merit, learning and wisdom, and then much cultivation effort.

Since phenomena appear *for us* (because we have minds) we must learn how to master them if we wish to live better lives with greater well-being and less suffering. The transitory nature of conventional reality, rather than the ultimate reality that is unchangeable, means that there is always a chance to make situations better because they must by nature ultimately change, and our job as conscious beings is to learn how to master phenomena to produce more fortuitous states for ourselves, others and future generations by producing those possible changes. Because phenomena are open to change this gives us the opportunity to alter phenomena, and our fates, for the better. If phenomena were not transitory but fixed then no conditions could ever change and we could not improve ourselves or advance our fortunes.

Without doing anything, the primordial substrate of Parabrahman sustains the whole universe. As the basis of the cosmos as Its universal support, It is essentially the ultimate Doer of all things that acts without acting, and hence is the “causeless cause.” Armed with all this understanding, which constitutes *prajna* transcendental wisdom, recognize that now is the time for you to orient yourself correctly in the world and universe and also become a more active doer of benevolence. It is up to you to decide your fate. Now is the time for you to decide how to direct your life and what you should work towards achieving.

In summary, the fundamental substratum or essence of Creation is neither impure nor pure; It is empty of everything and yet contains infinite emanations, manifestations or appearances that are essentially Its pure self. Therefore It is not nothingness and yet is not anything. It did not come into being, and is not going anywhere. It was never born and will never die, and does not come from anywhere or anything and is not going anywhere or transforming into anything different. It is devoid of above and below, an interior and exterior, a before and after, or increase or decrease. It is eternal and everlasting, immutable, dependable and true. It is the substrate of All. There is nothing else beside It. Everything is ultimately It.

Somehow Shakti, or *samsara*, has appeared within It. We don’t know how this happened since the primal substrate cannot change, so Buddhism labels that process of generation “Ignorance” to denote that we don’t know anything about the process. The act of Creation is a mystery. The emergent entities, manifestations, emanations or “karmic formations” within Shakti compose themselves within Shakti’s all-encompassing field of manifestation while still retaining their nature as being the primal substrate in absolute essence – a formless pure substratum like empty space. Hence, “Brahman is everything and everything is Brahman.” Everything is fundamentally the primal substratum even though things appear solid from the surface aspect.

If you say that “Maya, *samsara* or Shakti does not exist,” its appearance and *your life* is right there in front of you, so this isn’t true. The world is said to be existent because it appears in our consciousness and has a facticity of cause and effect that produces predictability. Of course, if you say that “Maya, *samsara* or Shakti *inherently* exists” then how can that be so? Phenomena conditionally exist so cannot have intrinsic natures. What appears to exist only has a brief momentary existence and then changes into something else. Furthermore, objects only seem to exist as solid entities but are mostly empty space, and don’t exist on their own because all things must participate together in producing one – no object stands on its own.

ARHAT YOGA

No objects or phenomena are intrinsically established and what exists does so as an apparition that appears for but a moment before transforming into something else. No thing can be frozen to produce a dependable unchanging reality of what it currently is in the moment. All things are therefore ungraspable like a dream or flash of lightning.

All things lack an inherent self-so nature, so are not intrinsically so. They are not independent existences that exist/stand on their own but composite constructions that exist within a single realm of infinite interconnections. They exist due to fields of vibrating interdependencies that together produce a scintillating whole where nothing ever stays constant. Not being solid and stable, the world we see appears in the nature of an illusion since we see it as solid and stable.

Shakti and the original nature together constitute the entire universe. But everything within the cosmos is ultimately empty, meaning that all phenomena lack their own isolated, independent, inherent self-so nature. Everything is produced through a dependency on other things, through an infinite Indra's web of interpenetrating multiplicities. Whatever you experience of phenomena is like a dream or illusion within consciousness that approximates an outer world appearance while blurring and excluding many features and dimensions. Despite deceptive appearances, the only thing ever really present is the permanent original nature that is the transcendental, metaphysical, spiritual truth while Shakti is the apparent truth that changes every moment and therefore cannot be true or real at all.

The fundamental substratum or primal substrate is your True Self, your true self-nature, your primordial self-essence, your fundamental beingness and It is the primordial universal ground. Shakti is your body and mind but not your true self. In Buddhism the foundational substratum that is our True Self is often called Emptiness to denote a substrate that lacks phenomena other than Itself for It is purely Itself – nameless Aloneness, the One Without a Second, the sole Reality.

Starting from nothing in terms of circumstances (emptiness), we can use our consciousness to create whatever we want to experience in the universe because it is open to change and we are free to chart our own destiny within it. The Great Learning for our lives is to assume full control over our bodies and minds, cultivate our bodies and consciousness to their utmost excellence, chart and pursue goals and achievements we want, and to celebrate life with full awareness and physical bliss. You want to cultivate to the point where your psychological realm has been conquered and you are always in a state of peace, clarity, brightness, lucidity, presence, compassion

and kindness, wisdom, flow, lightness, sunniness or shine, and always pursuing a vibrant engagement with life. You want to always be feeling your active inner vitality and be experiencing the joy of life in fulfilling self-expression.

So do great things in life! Put fear aside and grab the reigns of courageousness. You are the Supreme Self, so abide in your own glory! Create as you wish, go after what you desire. Put fear aside and be bold and creative to take great risks, but temper your courage with prudence and wisdom in crafting your plans so that you act skillfully. Create wonder for the world, and find yourself in self-expression! Everything you see is nothing but the Self. Everything you see and experience is the Self in manifestation, so be courageous and withdraw from nothing because you are always facing just yourself. Become fearless and free like our primordial self, but only pursue what is ethical, moral and virtuous.

Choose whatever you want to accomplish in the universe and then start working towards it. Live life without regrets by avoiding what you know is wrong, but pursue what you want to pursue. Go after what you want. Don't create a regret for not trying, and don't refuse to evolve yourself because change is inherent to your nature so you might as well guide it to a state of more magnificence.

Our fundamental nature is without fear. In freedom and boldness It has given birth to all things that will continue transforming in endless ways throughout eternity. Can you not imitate the courageous outpouring of your fundamental essence? Of course you can, for that is what you are! You need to determine in your life a personal Dream or direction that has ultimate value to you in terms of meaning, satisfaction and fulfillment so that it can guide your life. That aspiration or set of aspirations must exteriorize your highest inner values and your sense of life purpose. With an inner vow or commitment to a code of conduct and a personal mission, only then does life attain true meaning and become worthwhile. The idea is to *do good rather than seek happiness*, and then one will attain a sense of meaning, purpose and significance in life, and happiness as well from one's efforts and their results. The people who seem the most content in the world are those who help others and especially those who live lives of service. If you can get your attention off yourself and onto others then the roughness and suffering of life become much easier to bear, and you discover a life of meaning within that service.

Hence, don't hold back on being authentic to the inner calling of your highest self and any inner mission you may have inside you to do something

for people or the world. Don't hold back on being true to yourself, and on being your true self. Unleash your inner vitality in pursuit of your highest calling. Be courageous. Start from now.

You determine what you will ultimately make of yourself in life. You are beingness without a body, so you are the one who determines how you will develop, what you will develop into, and what you will ultimately create and experience in the conditionally built realm of Shakti. Life runs on the principle of causality and can go in any direction you want when you put in the required energy and effort. Your choices and actions will therefore determine the direction and outcome of your life according to your efforts and the rules of causality where results are produced by efforts. So apprentice yourself to a system that will get you there - get you to where you want to go and to being what you want to be.

Since you are essentially *The One*, what then is a high enough overarching aspiration worthy of being pursued by you? What mission is worthy of your vitality and life, your thoughts, speech and efforts? What inspires you the most? The answer is to help create or become the light you passionately want to see in the world, to become the Buddha you want to be.

Our fundamental nature is in enduring bliss and we can become that way if we tap into our innermost calling and bring it out into the world. Imagine who and how you could be and then aim single-mindedly in becoming that. Start thinking like that person, talking like that person, dressing like that person, and behaving like that person, and basically, just practice being that *person until you become that person and are doing what that person should be doing*. Become that person that is the more perfected and spiritualized you!

You might begin by emulating someone you admire and then work on developing their characteristics. Personal cultivation is hard as is changing your character, so make your training playful and go outside your comfort zone to surpass your barriers and limits to create something new. This is equivalent to dedicating your life to a pledge or vow.

From the aspect of emanations there are uncountable phenomena in the cosmos including other living beings with minds who, because of their own possession of consciousness can generate thoughts, perceptions, feelings, Knowledge and memories within Shakti just like you. They can know aspirations, joy, achievement, bliss, and fulfillment. Without a mind you are just another insentient portion of Shakti, but because of the astounding, miraculous phenomenon of a mind you can know your identity as the ripple in space-time that you are and experience a universe of qualities. You can

also cultivate higher bodies of transcendental composition and longevity that possess higher abilities to accomplish whatever you want in the universe. What goals are worthy of you when you can essentially live forever in some form or another? You are essentially the undying original nature and can cultivate excellences in any direction you want.

Your thoughts and actions interact with all other living beings, so start learning how to bring the best to all situations – which is the rest of your manifest body – and start acting in this manner. Grab hold of the process of causality and start working on manifesting something wondrous inside and outside of yourself, for yourself and others, while evolving towards transcendence. Be at your best, be the light you want others to see, the Dream within yourself that reconnects you to your greatest self and the joy you want to see in the world everywhere.

Meaning doesn't just fall on your doorstep so start living your life like it's your second chance, and be the source of positivity you want to be or want to see. Life is too short to be little. Take authorship of your life instead of following someone else's script that you might have adopted as an identity you don't want. Shed some of the artificial layers that have confined you so that you can get in sync with your authentic self. Take direction of your life story as much as possible to not only create peace, bliss, happiness, flow state and well-being for yourself but also for others. Don't just smile more, laugh more, dance more and create more but live for *something bigger than yourself*. Do something that will benefit your community rather than just make yourself the "be all and end all" of your existence since this will never provide you with meaning or satisfaction.

People find meaning through service, and become important in life through commitment to some mission or through service to others. Through service missions they witness happiness and receive positive emotions for their commitment that makes the world more beautiful. What is it that can be your most significant imprint in life? What will make a difference in people's lives? Where can you accent the good? What beneficial impact do you want to have on others? What profound part of yourself can you bring to the world to alleviate its suffering, or create new types of goodness and higher meaning for others? What energy that is in sync with your own sincere interests will you pour into the field of time? How will you seed the world to improve the state of the world and make it healthy? How can you cause it to more lean toward the good? What deeds can you do for others that will produce sunshine in your heart? How can you leave golden footprints everywhere?

We can build a better future even beyond our highest expectations if we refuse to accept limitations (our limiting patterns) and start working to manifest that which is currently beyond ourselves. Select a possible future to become a reality and then start working to make it so. Define yourself, your life and your future through your own guiding purposes instead of blindly conforming to the prescriptions of your culture or letting life sweep you along and define you. Define and then pursue the authentic goals of your native self rather than those sold to you by the larger culture or by other people who are trying to make you into something they want. For your psychological well-being, your decisions should be directed toward your inner ideals, not the ideals of someone else. You should set a course for an intrinsically fulfilling and rewarding life by aligning your actions, activities and goals with the vision of your ideal self.

Therefore, make the vow to become a certain type of Buddha or Bodhisattva *because you want to become that way* and are inspired when imagining that you are that way. Then, start walking the requisite pathway of character development, study and learning, cultivation Yoga, and unrelenting performance of good deeds to make that possible future become a reality. This is the stance you should take for life, which is to take the body-mind complex that you are and cultivate with consistent and sustained effort to *become your ideal self*. With enough deliberate practice you can overcome your current self and move closer and closer to your highest self and whatever it is that you want to master. Pick a possible future and then start working to manifest it.

Chapter 18 SUMMARY

In the *Nirvana Sutra*, Shakyamuni Buddha said spoke about *True Self, permanence, purity and bliss* thus revealing that the foundational substrate of the universe (Shakti), which is also our fundamental self-nature (True Self), is eternal and everlasting (permanent); perfectly pure (absent of phenomena like empty space); and thus changeless which also means still, peaceful or blissful.

In other sutras he said It is *unborn, unbecome, non-made, non-constructed*. In other words, the universal substrate or fundamental substance-essence did not come into being because It is self-so - something not produced/created but intrinsic because It has always been.

In the *Nirvana Sutra*, he also said that his many teachings on impermanence, no-self, emptiness and suffering were just expedient means meant to help lead us to enlightenment. Other religions have different expedient means to help lead people to enlightenment, or just specify the lower objective of helping us attain better lives and experiences within existence.

At various times Shakyamuni Buddha also spoke of *pativcasamuppada*, commonly known as dependent origination or dependent arising. This teaching states that change in a phenomenon within the manifest universe is not due to one factor of causation but due to many factors. All phenomena exist through a mechanism of infinite inter-causality that produces interdependent arising.

In particular, Shakyamuni Buddha spoke of twelve *nidanas*, or the twelve links of dependent arising that lead to our group and individual existence. These links follow one another as if in a chain: Ignorance, karmic formations, consciousness, name and form, the senses, contact, sensation, craving or desire, clinging or grasping, becoming, birth and death.

The **first link** in this chain of dependent arising, Ignorance, means we don't know how the fundamental substrate produced the manifestation of Shakti, the universe, which is the **second link** in this chain. We don't know how an unmoving pure primordial substrate, free of manifestations, produced "karmic formations," which is another name for Shakti since all its components or phenomena are dependently defined formations created through cause and effect (karmic) relationships. We don't know how Creation – a realm of matter and energy phenomena – appeared from a perfectly pure ground state absent of anything other than Aloneness, so we call our understanding "Ignorance."

With the manifest realm of karmic formations that comprise the universe of vibrating Shakti, all phenomena arise from other pre-existing phenomena or existent factors. Furthermore, within the dancing Shakti there are no permanent, self-so (intrinsic) or stable phenomena. Nothing has an independent, intrinsic self or essence, and hence all phenomena lack a self-so, independent identity. They are all dependently defined whereby each phenomenon is caused by all others, and therefore all phenomena flow into one another in complex but regular, ordered, set patterns of causality.

This principle of conditionality is at play in all phenomena, and the fact that all phenomena are linked to one another because they share in each other's manifestation makes the realm of Shakti a single whole, a single soup. The underlying true nature of the universe (Shakti), however, is the pure fundamental substratum that is free of conditioned co-rising.

It is important to note that because we have a mind/consciousness we can discover, understand and then use the principles of causal regularity (cause and effect) that define/produce the universe. This is an important point to discuss later.

As to the **third link** in the chain of dependent origination, within the always transforming universe of complex interactions a thing called life eventually appeared, and some forms of life eventually evolved a property called consciousness.

What does consciousness produce? It produces the *discernment* of names and forms, namely the appearance and discernment (understanding) of mental fabrications (objects), which is the **fourth link** in the chain of dependent arising. In other words, Knowledge arises within consciousness and is known by consciousness; consciousness produces Knowledge (names and forms) and understands/knows this Knowledge.

The **fifth link** is that various sense organs eventually form within living organisms, and the existence of sense organs then gives rise to the **sixth link**, which is that the sense organs of living sentient beings can make *contact* with objects and produce sensory perceptions or impressions of them that constitute a new type of Knowledge. Hence, first you have basic consciousness or sentience and then cognitive sense consciousness and the mental processes by which the mind operates.

In response to the stimuli of those sensory impressions, the consciousness of a sentient being reacts by producing pleasant, unpleasant or neutral *feelings or sensations*. These feelings or sensations are yet another form of Knowledge that constitutes the **seventh link** in the chain of dependent arising.

In terms of evolution, it might actually be that the formation of sensory organs was necessary for the formation of consciousness within living organisms, otherwise mental “changes of state” (thoughts or mental fabrications) could never be generated. However, the swapping of the fifth and fourth links is irrelevant for the larger story of what is being conveyed.

Now, when you like a sensation or feeling/emotion that arises within your consciousness, this produces the **eighth link** of dependent arising, which is the arousal of a *desire or craving* to repeat those pleasant sensations. For instance, when you become hungry the desire or craving for food leads you to satisfy that hunger so that you experience satiation. Everyday you eat in order to re-experience the feeling of satiation that silences the pains and agonies of hunger.

In the causal chain of dependent arising that explains sentient life, we can say that the next **ninth link** in the chain is that mental *craving and desire* leads to *clinging or grasping* at desires because we to hold onto pleasant thoughts and sensations with *attachment*, and thus pursue them. Using the example of hunger again, once a living being experiences a pleasantry (such as the satisfaction of food) it then wants to hold onto the contentment of satiation and repeat that sensation regularly.

Consciousness prefers wholesome, pleasant (joyous or blissful) as well as neutral, equanimous, peaceful-tranquil states of mind over unpleasant, unwholesome, or negative mental states such as pain and suffering. Hence, craving, desire, greed or thirst are aimed at the pursuit of pleasant sensations and feelings due to the elimination of suffering, and then we want to hold onto those pleasant experiences with clinging. Sentient beings

therefore tend to run after and cling to pleasurable enjoyments such as sexual pleasure, emotional or physical bliss, beauty, music, etcetera. They develop entire processes of behavior to serve desire and clinging. Detachment, on the other hand, helps you become situated in transcendence where you can subsequently attain freedom or release from desires or disturbing emotions. Acceptance is then liberation.

Overall, in summary we see the development of a universe of formations, and then the development of complex life in the universe that possesses the attribute of consciousness that can experience thoughts, sensory perceptions of the world, and generate emotions or feelings about those experiences. Sentient life goes about pursuing its various survival-maintenance needs and other activities that also include running after pleasant sensations and avoiding unpleasant sensations. It *grasps* after experiences for gain, such as to fulfill needs such as *sustenance* or the desire for procreation. It *clings* to or attaches to the achievement of objectives in order to sustain its living existence, and this *grasping, attachment* or *clinging* is the **ninth link** in the chain.

Shakyamuni Buddha said that desire, attraction and attachment for various mental factors was the cause of suffering and that getting rid of the vexations of desire and greed for various objects and mental states lead to the cessation of suffering. However, there will always be suffering in life. It cannot be totally eliminated regardless as to what sages say in order to motivate you to purify your animal tendencies and cultivate spiritual practice. The real key is to learn how to handle pain, misery and suffering so that you can eliminate it, minimize it, avoid it, ignore it, transform it, reinterpret (reframe) it, alter conditions so that it doesn't reappear for you or for others in the future, etc. While you should employ many strategies to deal with suffering, you should in life pursue well-being rather than the absence of suffering so that within well-being any remaining degree of suffering can be tolerated.

This is one reason why individuals are encouraged to pursue value-based happiness rather than pleasure-based happiness in life, which is because individuals who pursue activities that hold meaning and life purpose can forget any suffering they must bear in life while working to achieve those higher goals. Those activities – especially undertakings of service which improve the lives of others – make life worthwhile despite the suffering they entail to make them possible.

Thus there is the *existence* of sentient life in the universe – *living body-mind complexes* – that continuously sustain their lives by pursuing their various

maintenance processes until death. The overall process of living or beingness for sentient life as it experiences the world and transforms along the way is called its *life, existence* or *becoming*, which is the **tenth link** in the chain of dependent arising.

Living is a continuous process of always-new *becoming* or *transformation*. Sentient life is a living object that, unlike inanimate matter, possesses the wondrous attribute of consciousness that allows it to change its behavior (activity) according to circumstances, adapt to new conditions to sustain itself, and transform its properties or attributes over time. Sentient life during its existence experiences thoughts, perceptions and emotions and runs after blissful mental states absent of suffering that are either peaceful/tranquil or actively pleasant in some way.

The implications of the interdependent arising that characterizes Shakti and which has produced life are that sentient life must learn to understand its laws of cause and effect in order to survive and prosper, which leads to a necessity for the development of knowledge, science, logic (rationality), and wisdom. The implication of our existence arising from cause and effect interrelationships means that we must find our meaning in life through our actions and efforts aimed at specific aspirations and ideals, and through our relationships such as our connectivity or belongingness with our family and ever larger groups of people united by common purpose. The implication of the fact that the universe is constantly changing is that we must learn and adapt quickly to new situations and willing to change over time in order to survive, and refuse to freeze the forward march towards greater social progress in society such as justice and fairness that liberate individuals from oppression. Another implication of impermanence is that we need to strive for longevity, a continuity (of admirable personality characteristics, skills or attributes) across lives if such a thing is possible, and a continuity of progress in human conditions that spans across generations. The implication that the world does not exist in the way it appears to be means that we need to primarily rely on logic rather than emotions to run our lives, and need to learn how to control our emotional minds so that they do not control us. The implication that happiness is a fleeting state of mind is that we need to pursue meaning, purpose and significance in life instead of short-term pleasure states as our primary motivation. The implication that the universe is impure is that we need to beautify and improve our living conditions to make them better. Impurity mandates that we need to develop rules of hygiene for daily living, create clean environments for habitation, and eat (clean) quality food because in a dirty world such factors are necessary for the survival of our bodies, their proper growth and the prosperity of our lives. The implication that entropy rules a universe of

deterioration and ever increasing disorder is that we must strive to make conditions better not just *in the now* but *for the future* of our children and subsequent generations, which is by adorning the country with improvements and bringing out its magnificence. If we don't strive for progress by improving conditions for ourselves and others they are bound to decline. The implication that life is filled with suffering is that we should try to reduce the pain and suffering within our lives by improving our resilience, learning to control our emotional mind, and reducing the causes of suffering, which once again leads to the needs for making our circumstances and living conditions better and improving our adaptability. The fact that we are not inherent souls or entities but composite dependent constructions having the same permanent real Self that eternally pervades all beings and existence implies that there is no such real thing as a sentient being or entity receiving the fruits of their actions. Therefore we should reduce our greed, desires and attachments to the fruits of our actions since there is no real being to receive them. We can certainly pursue pleasurable, enjoyable states but for the greater good of ourselves and society we can also learn to become egoless at times and act with inner renunciation in selfless service that dedicates some of our efforts to improving the conditions of our close relationships and the world. While during life we should certainly pursue individual activities, aspirations and meaningful, significant purposes that reflect our own inner *dharmā*, and while we should also certainly pursue pleasurable experiences, activities and emotions during life (*Kama*) that are absent of suffering, we should also be willing to become devoted to certain higher causes, and take on sufferings to improve conditions for others while remaining stable and unaffected by the fleeting emotions of pain or pleasure they entail. It is through selfless, impartial, compassionate activities that are dedicated to the uplifting of mankind that humanity transcends its prior conditions and achieves a better body just as we attain a higher spiritual body through the discipline of spiritual efforts and self-cultivation practice. Through mental detachment from the fruits of our efforts and through persistent actions, unwavering in intent, that unite and uplift society despite their difficulty we can through that desirelessness and the absence of egoism find inner happiness within ourselves, and unpolluted society by raising ourselves above our animalistic tendencies for greed, anger, hatred, intolerance, lust, hypocrisy, deceit, conceit, corruption, violence and brutality or cruelty to get what we want. Therefore through kind acts of service we can maintain the prosperous continuity of harmonious societies, elevate ourselves individually through consummate noble conduct, and effect selfless proper activity that leads to liberating effects (that all will share in) rather than what is merely profitable or expeditious.

So far we have simply explained the appearance of life within the universe, the evolution of consciousness and sense organs, and acknowledged their ability to produce perceptions of the world, thoughts and feelings in response to those sensations and perceptions. We also know that organisms will alter their behavior according to their desire to pursue pleasant sensations that they find attractive, wholesome, profitable or pleasurable for their lives. Desire consequently leads to clinging or attachment that may present a problem for living beings. Hence we have contact with objects that produces feelings, and then craving and grasping under the right conditions.

This briefly summarizes some of the mental activities of sentient organisms. They have consciousness and sensory perceptions of the world, can think and experience emotions due to possessing the attribute of consciousness, and are motivated by cravings and desires for experiences (some of which are to sustain their life while some are for pleasure/entertainment) that can lead to clinging or attachments. They go about their lives revolving through these various states, and transform for better or worse during the process, which is called their “life” or “existence.”

In general sentient life, and certainly animal life, is preoccupied with two processes – *to find food and not to be eaten* so as to become food for others. They seek *resources* (for food or sustenance, medicine, prosperity, success, happiness, etc.) and *safety/protection* for their lives. Humans, in particular, have banded together to live in peaceful, productive, collaborative and lawful communities in order to help ensure the supply chain of their food supply and protect themselves from worldly injustice, oppression of their freedom, or outside attacks by others. This, too, is recognition of the individual’s need for food/resources and safety/protection.

Groups, communities or societies eventually develop social rules for living not only to ensure harmony but to establish fairness, justice and protect the individual rights of individuals within the group as well so that no one can oppress anyone else. Due to community living relationships, humans have developed the ethical values and virtues we have today that enable strangers to harmoniously live together in peaceful cooperative societies characterized by ethics and virtue. The laws of organization find that societies develop into hierarchies of elites and commoners, or those who manage/lead and those who are lead, and societies develop laws, social forms and rules of fairness and justice so that people do not aggress upon others and so that the elites – who are subject to *craving, desire* and *greed* like all others - do not use their privilege, power and position to oppress the weak.

Now, just as we explained the creation, appearance or birth of dancing Shakti (*samsara*) from the pure, “empty” fundamental substratum of the universe, at this point we have to explain the birth of a specific sentient being (living organism) in the universe out of the entire matrix of conditions. This is called “birth,” which is the **eleventh link** in the chain of dependent origination.

If we are speaking of a specific individual – you – then the eleventh link refers to the becoming of “rebirth” rather than simply “birth,” and this difference is due to the existence of reincarnation. Birth then comes from being entangled within cyclical existence. Reincarnation is a process managed by higher spiritual beings (enlightened Buddhas) who help guide rebirth (the recycling of lives) so that people’s existence is not completely cut off at death (permanent annihilation or extinction) but sustained with some degree of continuity. The process of generating an independent spiritual body, on the other hand, which is achieved through spiritual cultivation is normally called “transformation” rather than “birth,” but you can also call it a “birth” achieved through the transformation of spiritual practice.

Entropy rules the universe so within the cosmos all phenomena are impermanent including life. Phenomena are all dependently arisen processes so they are all impermanent. They are conditional, which is of a nature to cease; nothing but the primordial substratum is independent (rather than conditional) and permanent. Since all things decay, eventually a birth (living sentient being) will experience the deterioration of aging and then death, which are the **twelfth link** in the chain of dependent origination. Birth comes on the basis of consciousness, death comes when life has run its course, and extinction/annihilation comes from the elimination of form.

As aging and death are inevitabilities, the major challenge for living beings during their existence cannot be limited to suffering alone. The big problem is the brevity of existence itself. Therefore the challenges in life are not just the elimination or avoidance of suffering but the prolongation of life, and the maintenance of the continuity of life (after death) so that it does not end in total annihilation upon death. Therefore, while sentient beings seek to avoid suffering and instead seek to experience happiness, well-being and meaning/purpose in its place, they must also pursue several other goals or activities during life as well. They need to cultivate methods that lead to *greater health and longevity*, and to the persistence of consciousness after death if there is such a thing. This is one of the objectives of spiritual cultivation.

Here we come to the human condition, which is our condition. In terms of the universe we are living objects that possess the property of consciousness. We are best described as a *process* rather than as a being or living object, and that process is inseparably embedded within Shakti. Specifically, we are a body-mind complex composed of energy and matter (simples such as atoms) and are conditionally defined through the interdependence of all other things in the universe such as magnetism, energy fields, history, physical laws of nature, atomic qualities, etcetera. As the body-mind entity that we are, we essentially have only two skills: *physical skills* and *cognitive skills*.

As an animal with consciousness that lives in social groups for the purpose of survival, the Great Learning required of our lives is that we learn how to master both our physical and cognitive skills, and take them to their highest degrees of excellence. In particular, we have to learn how to use our consciousness correctly, effectively, skillfully, optimally. We need to learn how to manage the operations of our consciousness with excellence because consciousness creates our world, produces either suffering or well-being, and ultimately controls our behavior that produces either pain or the factors of prosperity, success, happiness and flourishing. All the events that we can experience in life are experienced through our body and its consciousness.

The Great Learning for our lives requires that we fully master our bodies and minds, and must cultivate their many abilities to their utmost stage of excellence. We need to therefore learn how to manage ourselves, our plans and our actions with wisdom, skillfulness and tact. During life we should pursue whatever goals, objectives and achievements that we want, and because of the great miraculous gift of consciousness should learn how to experience every moment of our life with bliss and full awareness. You want to experience mental states free of suffering (due to mastering calmness, detachment, desirelessness, peace, etcetera), but you should also want to experience a *joie de vivre* during life and engage in various means of joyful self-expression. To say that life is only about a clear awareness of experience while absent of the factors of bliss and joy makes it a robotic undertaking that is hardly worthwhile. The rewarding emotions or feeling states of life make it worthwhile and give it meaning, and yet the highest internal mental states involve the bliss of internal peace, calm, tranquility and equanimity.

As to our body, which is our “lived space,” we must cultivate its physical health, its fitness potential, its internal energy and ultimately train it to reach a point of natural ease and comfort. You want to always be feeling the

blissful inner vitality of your body. You either want to forget the sensation of your physical body entirely because it is so healthy and comfortable, or cultivate its well-being to a stage where you feel a non-irritating subtle bliss in all its cells, which makes it feel especially comfortable but without that comfort occluding your internal clarity.

The Great Learning for your life is that you need to cultivate a mastery over your physical realm and psychological realm. You want to cultivate your mind so that you are always in a state of peace, clarity, presence, centeredness, lightness, flow (which is a type of samadhi or concentration state) or sunniness and shine, and always experiencing happiness or bliss in life. Life is existence (*sat*), your existence has consciousness (*chit*), and within that consciousness you want to experience *ananda* - physical and mental bliss, happiness, joy, peace, comfort or however you wish to define an excellent state of non-irritating magnificence. This is the *sat-chit-ananda* of Hinduism.

In terms of cognitive skills to master, we are capable of *deliberate mental processes* that can be guided by our will such as thinking, reasoning, discrimination, and the intellect. These mental abilities, and others such as concentration and focus, control our behavior, and these are all factors of consciousness we must master.

To master our lives we must also master the *automatic processes* of our consciousness such as emotional feelings, mental states, moods and afflictions that spontaneously arise in response to situations. Through devoted cultivation practice, many automatic mental processes can be mastered or even reprogrammed, and you can learn how to gain control over some autonomic physical processes of your body (temperature control, heart rate, muscle tone, etcetera) as well.

For the Great Learning of life, you basically have to master your *thinking mind* and *emotional mind*. These are your deliberate intellectual processes that are under voluntary control and your automatic processes of consciousness (such as your emotions, mental states and unwanted mental afflictions) that spontaneously arise within your mind. You especially want to dissolve any fetters of the mind such as incorrect mental algorithms that cause you to assume artificial limitations or wrong points of view.

These two mental aspects, as well as your physical body and behavior, should be the primary focus of your self-improvement (cultivation) work during life. They are what you should always be working on improving and taking to states of excellence. A living physical body that has consciousness

- which together produce mental states, external behavior and material accomplishments - are what you must master during life.

To master our consciousness we must learn how to control many mental factors such as our attention, concentration, volition/willpower, and thinking. Ultimately our capabilities of deliberate consciousness - which include factors such as our thinking, wisdom (understanding) and decision-making - can be enhanced, improved or elevated through various types of education and training, and doing this is a primary requirement for life. We cannot remain feral humans but must elevate ourselves from the stage of being just animals to a stage of *humanity* (where we transcend our animal nature), and then to a stage of *nobility* (that expresses consummate conduct) and then *spirituality* (where we can sacrifice ourselves for the benefit of others). We can only do this if we cultivate all our physical, mental and behavioral dimensions until they reach and abide in states of highest excellence.

For this to become possible we must train ourselves, and training requires that we correct ourselves when we diverge from ideal models and modes of thinking or behavior. This, in turn, requires that we be taught those ideal models or modes, and then monitor and adjust our mind-stream and actions in real time when they deviate from the ideal pattern. To be able to do this, again in turn we must practice mindfulness of our thoughts and behavior so that we are naturally practicing self-rectification all the time.

This is how we can reduce imperfections in our thoughts and behavior and reach towards the self-perfection of our body-mind vehicle. Only mindfulness and self-rectification enable us to purify and elevate our various properties and processes to embody excellence and elegance. When we have stubborn flaws and imperfections that require a stronger type of remedy than what mindfulness, introspection and wisdom-reasoning can do when we want to dissolve those problems at their roots - such as habits, ingrained mindsets or persistent types of bad emotional reactions - we must engage in entirely different training regimens to rectify those imperfections.

Basically, starting from a child you want to learn *how to think better, feel better* and then *act better* for your life, and that striving to become better requires that you emulate models of perfection and engage in self-adjustment against those standards. You must *retrain yourself* to something higher and better when you find that your attributes are errant or sub-optimal. Everyone has imperfections so you must use various remedies to eliminate them and replace them with something better. As living beings with consciousness, we have the capability of *adaptability* that is necessary to maneuver within a

world of impermanent conditions. We need to learn how to think better to improve our decision-making and act better (in new and improved ways) so as to create better conditions or circumstances for our lives, and we need to gain conscious control of all our mental processes so that we experience a more wholesome and enjoyable interior life of mental states and moods.

The principle of training is to *learn and put into practice methods that most reliably produce the highest levels of excellence*, and this requires that you develop excellent neurological (mental) programs and patterns through study and training practices. The ultimate goal is not just to always experience interior states of happiness and well-being but that your thinking and external behavior also become extremely skillful, tactful, kind, effective and perfectly appropriate for every situation (consummate). You want to perfect your behavior so that you exhibit consummate, skillful conduct of the highest excellence (“brightest virtue”) and where your behavior ultimately exhibits elegance, grace, nobility, kindness and elevation. Therefore you need to learn how to manage the operations of your consciousness with excellence, and bring your thought processes to a higher mode of operation because consciousness creates your world, creates either suffering or well-being within it, and ultimately controls your behavior and its results.

As to our physical body, naturally we want to be as healthy as possible during life through proper diet, exercise and care. We want to have a sound mind and sound body. We want to be physically comfortable at all times (we want to feel physical bliss in every body cell or become so healthy that we don’t notice our body feeling at all), and able to control our internal energy and other physical processes such as our breathing that in turn can be used to manage our mood, behavior and effectiveness during activities. We want to train our body to its maximum degree of fitness – maximizing its flexibility, agility, coordination, strength, endurance and speed – and we want to install within ourselves optimal reactive patterns for sports, self-defense or other types of physical endeavors and aspirations.

You want to cultivate a healthy body during life, and especially cultivate the purity, circulation and robustness of your internal energy even if you don’t achieve enlightenment during this life. During life, the efforts you make to cultivate your Qi will produce definite degree of progress, and those results will serve as a foundational base for enlightenment efforts in the afterlife (as a deva spirit) should you not succeed during this life. Enlightenment, as a necessity, entails cultivating the higher transcendental bodies inherent within your physical structure, and this requires that you cultivate your internal energy in various ways that purify its Yin and Yang components.

It is just a fact of the universe that we can split apart from living physical matter a set of different energies that reside within it and thereby unleash higher body vehicles that are copies of the original physical nature. In other words, a certain number of decompositions are inherent for physical matter that can produce etheric copies of the original physical nature. To achieve enlightenment you must cultivate the internal vital energy of your physical body (Qi) until it can escape from the matrix of your physical body as an independent life that is still tethered to your living physical nature, which begins the development of the *sambhogakaya* of enlightenment.

To do this you must follow a road of gradual spiritual cultivation, and the achievement requires the help of enlightened beings who have previously succeeded on the path, but who will not help you unless you are an ethical virtuous being. Then out of your physical body you can cultivate an independent subtle body (that you normally only achieve upon death), out of the subtle body you can cultivate an independent Causal body, out of the Causal body you can cultivate an independent Supra-Causal body (the stage of the full Arhat enlightenment attainment that is the fourth dhyana) and out of the Supra-Causal body you can split out an Immanence body that is the equivalent of the Great Golden Arhat attainment. This is the spiritual path that mankind must tread.

As conscious beings, a crucial aspect for life is not just learning how to use all the capabilities of the mind for survival purposes (the prime directive of life is to survive) or safety needs, but to learn how to use your mind (which begets thoughts and guides your actions) to also satisfy any needs for self-fulfillment because this makes life worthwhile. One goal is to learn how to use your mind to minimize suffering by cultivating well-being, which requires you to learn how to think and act in optimal ways so that harmful states/conditions do not arise, either internally or externally; so that pure or beneficial states always arise instead; so that you can cut off or transform harmful states that arise or have already arisen; and so that any wholesome, beneficial states that are already existing keep continuing.

You want to cultivate your consciousness so that you are not just calm, peaceful, clear and centered as a natural tendency but so that you regularly experience various blissful states such as happiness, sunniness, shine, lightness, flow (which is a type of active samadhi or concentration state), presence, and are always experiencing happiness and joy in life. You want to cultivate your mind and your behavior to regularly experience various wholesome internal states such as these, both passive and vibrant states of consciousness. Those vibrant states of consciousness beyond the needs of survival requires that man pursue roads of personal achievement, self-

esteem, relationships and self-actualization that provide him with meaning, purpose and significance in life.

Thoughts and feelings are fleeting vibrations in consciousness connected with internal biochemical reactions, and are essentially transient irritations of energy within our nervous tissues. These fleeting mind-stream elements can affect us substantially in either positive or negative ways, and so we must learn how to manage our mind-stream and reliably produce positive mental states rather than negative, painful or unwholesome mental states instead. We must also learn to manage consciousness so that it is not just pure or blissful, but so that it is skillful because it enables us to produce what we want in the material and conscious realms. This is the basis of consummate conduct, which is perfectly appropriate for the situation at hand, skillfully leads to what we want with an optimal elegance, and is replete with virtuous qualities that transcend our animal passions and tendencies.

Therefore, through your actions, conduct and behavior you want to cultivate external conditions so that positive states can frequently arise for yourself (and others). You must therefore strive to improve the various circumstances you encounter in life by repairing unwholesome external conditions. You can replace them with whatever is better, and should make sure that wholesome admirable conditions are not destroyed but only improved. Wherever you go, you want to improve conditions for both yourself, for others and for the possibility of a brighter future, never resting on the laurels of your past achievements. You want to seed the world by promoting certain trends or activities to make it healthy and advance it, accent the good and leave behind social improvements and a world of better circumstances as a legacy of your life and efforts.

As to the automatic processes of consciousness that you experience in your mind, they are like reflexes that mechanically arise without thinking. Many of the patterns for our automatic reflexes can be “purified” through retraining to produce superior mental and physical reactions, and as beings of consciousness we should train our consciousness to produce superior reflexive responses whenever and wherever possible.

Consciousness is the wish-fulfilling prize of the universe that lets us (sentient beings with higher consciousness) create or experience whatever we desire. We need to train/master consciousness, our cognitive faculties, so that we can fulfill our needs and desires in life and experience a bliss and joy of existence as well as meaning and purpose for our actions. Otherwise there is no point to existence. We want to live a life that has meaning, and

experience fulfillment, satisfaction, joy and bliss during our existence.

Training is necessary for us to be able to attain these goals, which is the Great Learning of discovering the principles of cause and effect within Nature, and the Great Learning of mastering our consciousness and behavior so that we can control ourselves and Nature (circumstances or conditions) to become, create and experience whatever we want. As a sentient being with the property of consciousness, you should maximize the capabilities of your consciousness and learn how to perfectly control it, such as learning how to think properly, change your mental states, and ignore mental distractions such as emotional disturbances or unwanted afflictions and fetters that mar calm or beautiful mental conditions.

The Great Learning for our lives is learning to assume full control over our bodies and minds and behavior, to cultivate our bodies and consciousness and behavior/actions to their utmost excellence, to pursue the goals and achievements we want during life, and to experience a life of significance with full awareness that often touches blissful, beneficial and joyous states of being. You want to cultivate yourself to the point where your psychological realm has been conquered and you are always in a various comfortable/blissful states such as peace, clarity, egolessness, brightness, presence, flow, lightness, harmony, happiness, optimism, sunniness or shine, and always experiencing a joy of life. You want to always be feeling the active inner vitality of your physical body and be experiencing a fulfilling joy of living through virtuous self-expression.

The Great Learning for life involves learning how to control our consciousness and maximize its capabilities. This includes such things as learning how to concentrate and ignore or subdue mental distractions, annoyances, emotional disturbances and excessive passions or cravings. Your mental apparatus is a dependent construction, and thus it is always conditionally mechanical or automatic to some degree beyond your control. What arises within your mind is not your fault because thoughts automatically appear without any effort on your part, but what you do with your mind-stream is your responsibility. Therefore you should learn how to control your thoughts once they arise.

Furthermore, you should try to learn the highest and best ways of thinking, experiencing and behaving so that your deliberate thought-stream is predominantly filled with positive, skillful and enjoyable states of mind rather than negative experiences, and you need to learn the various techniques (such as mindfulness and self-correction) that enable you to break the momentum of your mind-stream (and your entrainment with it)

so that you can change its contents and trajectory at will. You need to master the highest and best expedient means for altering or improving your states of consciousness so you can actualize the highest states of excellence. The ultimate goal is that you want to live life ethically and fill it with wonderful experiences, enjoyments, and achievements so that you experience fulfillment, satisfaction and blissful states of mind rather than suffering and purposelessness.

So basically, the Great Learning for our lives is to assume full control over our bodies and minds (and behavior), cultivate the status and capabilities of our bodies and consciousness to their utmost excellence, chart and pursue goals and achievements we want, and to celebrate life with full awareness and blissful experiences. You want to cultivate to the point where your psychological realm has been conquered and you are always in a state of peace, clarity, presence, lucidity, flow, lightness, compassion and kindness, wisdom, sunniness or shine, and always experiencing great vigor along with a joyousness or happiness in life. You want to always be feeling an active inner vitality and you want to frequently experience a happy *joy de vivre* during fulfilling activities of self-expression.

In life you act to fulfill your physiological survival needs (food, water, clothes, shelter, sex, etc.) and security-protection issues that involve health, personal safety, emotional security, financial security and so forth. You also work to fulfill interpersonal needs such as desires for feelings of love, intimacy, friendship, connection or belongingness. As an individual being you seek feelings of mastery, competence, strength, accomplishment and self-esteem, and although you desire the freedom of independent autonomy where you *feel authentic in your life*, as a social animal you act to fulfill a need for feelings of status, respect, and recognition by groups of others by working to climb dominance hierarchies. You act to satisfy your various internal promptings such as curiosity, and you often engage in creative activities such as the arts, sports, problem solving challenges and various forms of self-expression.

In life you are always working to actualize your goals and objectives, which are your accomplishments and attainments. You should be always working to change your circumstances for the better including your karmic conditions, life events or fate. As you experience life, you will grow in ways that transform your personality and perspectives (mindset), and you can work to beautify these aspects as well as master skills and create stronger relationships for a better *this life* and *future life* since these attributes will carry through to your next incarnation. And, you might wisely decide to offer kind, compassionate, caring aid to others to help solve their current

problems and transform the negative conditions of the world. This will not just make the world better for others *and yourself* and make it possible that you might *inherit legacy improvements* in a subsequent incarnation, but also enables you to accumulate the merit for a better subsequent incarnation. One should never rest on their achievements in life but always pursue further learning, self-improvement and accomplishment, and you should try to achieve these objectives through the deliberate capabilities of consciousness that control your mind and behavior.

To summarize it a different way, the Great Learning for our lives is to assume full control over our bodies and minds and conduct, cultivate our bodies and consciousness and our behaviors to their utmost levels of capability and excellence, chart and pursue goals, achievements and experiences we want during life, and we should seek to experience life with full awareness and bliss. We need to cultivate to the point where our psychological realm has been conquered and we are always physically comfortable and mentally experiencing peace, calmness, clarity, centeredness, presence, flow, lightness, happiness, sunniness or shine, and always experiencing a celebratory joy of life. Important during life is to learn how to control your mental state that is naturally peaceful and calm until we disturb it. Meditation practice helps us to retrieve the underlying natural peaceful, calm, happy state of our mind that lacks mental disturbances and pollution.

We can also cultivate states of egolessness and desirelessness that are extremely peaceful and calm but brilliant with clarity, and more active states of bliss that are vibrantly engaged with more energy during the life experience. This includes *peak experiences* that are deeply moving, exhilarating, creative, elevating experiences – rare but exciting, oceanic moments of highest happiness and fulfillment – where your mental realm has opened up and you experience virility, vitality and an advanced form of perceiving reality. Such mental states are often triggered by pursuits in the arts, nature, sex, music, creative work, the newness of scientific discovery, sports, or religious worship. In those moments reality is perceived with emotions such as wonder, awe, humility, reverence and feelings of goodness, beauty, truth, wholeness, uniqueness, self-sufficiency, perfection, completion, richness, effortless, playfulness and aliveness.

You are essentially the undying original nature, and with your body-mind that is the fundamental nature you can cultivate excellences in any direction you want. Being Shakti, you have the right to shape it in any direction you want as well as the right to shape your personality, mood, state of mind or *bhava* with a dominant note that is whatever you want, such as when you

evoke certain emotions in service to people who are essentially the same Self. The key is to first handle the survival issues of your life, then improve the conditions of your life for yourself and others, and cultivate your life to attain a higher existence in this and yet higher realms.

To do this, Buddhism says we must cultivate Wisdom-kaya, which means to continuously work at perfecting our knowledge, understanding, and wisdom (of cause and effect) so that we have better behavior. Wisdom-kaya involves honing the skillfulness and effectiveness of our actions and behaviors – honing our “accomplishment wisdom” – so that we can achieve/manifest whatever we want in reality.

Buddhism says that we should also cultivate Perfection-kaya in life, which means devoting ourselves to the yoga of self-development work to perfect not just our bodies and consciousness but their attributes such as our views and perspectives as well as our character and behavior. Perfection-kaya is a road of *self-discipline* and *self-perfection* that includes embracing the highest human values, ethics, virtues and morality. It involves striving to always exhibit skillful, noble, compassionate consummate conduct. Perfection-kaya includes the road of spiritual cultivation in that entails cultivating our physical nature as well as developing the capabilities and purity of our mind, behavior and internal energy.

Buddhism also says that we should always in life be practicing Compassion-kaya, or Karma Yoga, which is performing deeds of kindness and unselfish actions to benefit others. We are social animals and must live together in groups, so group welfare is not only necessary for our survival but for our happiness and well-being. There needs to be a collective investment in society so that it, and the individuals within it, can thrive, flourish and prosper. Man finds purpose and meaning in life through his (social) relationships with others and his feelings of kinship, inclusiveness or belonging. Deeds of kindness such as charity exhibit a love for others, and such efforts should always be performed without any concern for personal recognition, rewards or benefit. Since there is no such true thing as a living being, there is no real being there to receive the rewards of merit. The only benefits one should expect to receive from acts of kindness and merit are passing positive emotions, the witnessing of happiness, and the reaching of a deeper understanding of life. These are receipts that money cannot buy.

Greek philosophy has advice to offer us as to the proper goals of human life as well. It says we must work to achieve *eudaimonia* (human flourishing and prosperity) to live a wise and good life of happiness and well-being, and this required that we rely on developing our reason as a nourishing quality.

We must also cultivate personal *phronesis* (practical and moral wisdom), and *arête* (excellence or virtue) where you live up to your full potential and virtuous ways become your disposition rather than just a light tendency to act in a certain way.

In ancient Imperial Rome the *mos maiorum*, or set of Roman values, involved promoting the common good of the people. While the Greeks stressed individual prowess (such as exhibited by Homeric heroes or Olympic champions) the ideal Roman hero was someone whose wisdom, courage, and self-sacrifice saved his country in the time of peril, which is the equivalent of the Bodhisattva hero.

Confucius said that we need to engage in self-cultivation, which is the art of becoming better, and so during this life we should train to brighten our inherent virtues; love people and act in ways that help them and society (by being of service to others by enriching the world with benevolent activities); and continuously pursue these endeavors until we reach and reside in the highest levels of excellence. “Education” is formation of the self, and in Confucian education it is especially emphasized that you are to polish your virtues.

Christianity says we need to love other people, as was also emphasized by Confucius, and its pathway of Christian perfectionism prescribes that we unrelentingly perform good deeds on their behalf with all our might and by every possible means while devoting ourselves to the perfection of our character and other forms of self-improvement. It says we should be cultivating our person as a whole.

Hinduism says that during life it is proper that we pursue four goals or *Purusartha*. We are to pursue *Moksha* or liberation (the enlightenment of enjoying better mental states as well as the attainment of higher transcendental bodies). We are to pursue *Kama* or joys, pleasures, amusements, benevolent emotions, desires, and wishes during life (so that life is neither boring nor stale, simply a matter of survival, nor predominantly marked by suffering). We are to pursue *Artha* or the “means of life” (wealth, career, prosperity, success, livelihood, etc.) in order to reach and be in a state you want to be in. By engaging in proper *Artha* we can enjoy a virtuous livelihood and not be a burden by having to depend upon others for our existence. We are to pursue *Dharma* so that we can elevate our behavior and live harmoniously and cooperatively within society. To follow *Dharma* means to regulate our behavior so that we are in accord with ethical, moral, wise, compassionate and virtuous ways, and the pathway of *Dharma* elevates our conduct and behavior so that we can peacefully live

together with others in families and society.

As to Taoism, the instructions for human society and for your life are represented in the symbolism of the Three Divine Teachers, or the “Three Pure Ones.” The first of the Three Pure Ones (Three Purities) is Yuanshi Tianwang who represents the absolute nature, original nature or fundamental essence since he is lord of the origin of things, lord of the primordial beginning. The second of the Three Purities is Shangqing, the Supreme Pure One who is also known as Lingbao Tianzun, “The Celestial Worthy of the Numinous Treasure” who represents manifest existence and its evolution into various forms through the laws of nature, meaning the laws of cause and effect or dependent origination that rule all of causality. He is also called Jingbao, the “Treasure of the Laws of Nature” or “The Universally Honored One of Divinities and Treasures” since Shakti becomes differentiated into all sorts of forms, phenomena and functions that are here called divinities and treasures. Shangqing represents the entire field of manifestation, or Shakti-Creation, and everything within it are his treasures. The third of The Three Pure Ones is Taiqing - the Great Pure One or Grand Pure One – and the one most appropriate to us in terms of instructions for life. He is also known as “The Universally Honored One of Tao and Virtues” or “The Celestial Worthy of the Way and its Power” (Daode Tianzun). Through his title as Taishang Laozun he is known as the “Highest Elder Lord” or “Grand Supreme Elder Lord” to denote that he is the highest sentient aspect within the field of manifestation/Creation who serves as a teacher or leader of mankind. Pictures of Taiqing usually show him holding a fan to indicate that he has mastered the life-force energy that we must cultivate in order to attain the higher spiritual bodies of enlightenment and the moving energy, *Prakriti* or Shakti aspect of Creation as well that are the forces of the manifest cosmos. As animals with higher consciousness, we are charged with this task as well, which is to master the various aspects of Shakti. Since we are to master cause and effect, religions that previously thwarted the development of science, math, innovation, invention and progress in various fields can clearly be seen as being in error. A fan also means that Taiqing can cause wind, meaning that he can create phenomena through his understanding of nature. Since he masters the laws of dependent origination and their manifestation, he is said to preach the Laws of Nature as well as how we should develop - how things are “meant” to be. In conventional terms, because he is a sentient being with a mind that can form thoughts to know things he can develop understanding/wisdom that lets him gain control over phenomena, and this is the instruction for our lives. We are to grow by developing our consciousness and cognitive skills in various ways to gain control of nature and make our lives better, but we this includes gaining control over ourselves and elevate our thinking

and behavior – our virtues.

Active consciousness (knowing, knowledge or awareness) appears as a movement of energy and Taiqing represents the moving aspect of Creation as a sentient being who can manage its functions, properties and aspects, and thereby direct them however he wishes. Taiqing is also described as the educator who brings civilization, which is a task we are charged with, and is equated with the highest teaching. The highest teaching is that of disseminating civilizing influences such as ethics in society and the knowledge of the pathway to Tao (self-realization and the attainment of our higher spiritual bodies that take us out of the lower realms forever). As an educator who teaches or transmits, he represents gaining control over the forces of movement or transformation in the field of manifestation. But in which direction should we take things? He learns to master the transformations of phenomena and uses his knowledge of how to change things to make them better, thus enriching the world and human civilization in both the material and ethical, moral or spiritual spheres. We are advised to emulate Taiqing by becoming masters of our consciousness and external phenomena, and using them to elevate our personal lives and the conditions for society as well.

As a living, sentient body-mind complex, we are basically capable of deliberate acts of consciousness, and we also experience automatic processes that operate according to ingrained patterns. We must train these capabilities, and for our body we must cultivate its health and learn to master its movements, states and internal energy. Most important of all, its health and internal energy must be cultivated in order that we are able to attain the spiritual bodies of enlightenment.

During the course of our lives we develop mental programs that control our mental states, thoughts, emotions and our will that guides/controls our actions. We need to install excellent mental programming (the patterning of consciousness) through a sustained effort to rest in mental stillness and with training that replaces any inferior programming that we have picked up through other forms of conditioning, and then monitor and adjust our consciousness in real time so that it produces elegant thoughts, mental states and behavior that embody excellence in regards to our highest models of behavior and achievement. We especially need to remain true to our sense of highest self rather than conform to inferior standards foisted upon us by society that encourage conformity to lower instincts and thinking. Instead one should follow the *ikigai* principle of becoming a sovereign, autonomous individual who devotes himself to pursuits he personally enjoys or that make life meaningful. We should strive to find our

own voice and follow our own authentic aspirations in life so that we actualize our highest and best potentials, and direct ourselves towards everything that we want to become and are capable of becoming. We must be authentic (true to ourselves) in our lives and say what we want to say and do what we want to do (as long as they are virtuous activities that do not infringe upon others' rights or hurt others). At the end of our lives we will not remember the time we spent in the office or in mowing the lawn, so you should “climb that mountain.” By expressing your authentic true self you can access your inner vibrant, vitalizing energy that involves your whole being and the flourishing of human spirit. You will achieve resilience along with a cheerful enjoyment of life where you genuinely feel internally alive and can continue to sense the feeling of being real, alive and creative even under adverse circumstances.

Basically, the fundamental way of the Great Learning of life is that we cultivate our minds, bodies and behavior to their highest octaves – thus vastly improving our cognitive and physical skills – and continuously pursue states of highest excellence in living. The goal is to cultivate the virtues and excellences of our body, mind and behavior; to not only make our virtues “bright” or magnificent but strongly manifest them in the world; to cultivate steady states of well-being (abundance, prosperity, success, health, happiness, peace, harmony, friendships, intimacy, comfort, joy and bliss) absent of suffering; to cultivate the spiritual path to enlightenment; to behave like your own self to others and to eradicate selfishness by loving everyone and performing activities of merit that lead people to a better life.

The fundamental way of the Great Learning is to always pursue such endeavors in life until we rest and reside in states of highest excellence, which includes the achievement of the deva enlightenment body. Through training and practice we must elevate our animal nature to human nature, human nature to noble conduct, and nobility to spirituality. In this way we earn heavenly merits even if we don't achieve the deva body from our cultivation efforts during this life.

We should make a Buddha or Bodhisattva vow to become a certain way (like a certain type of Buddha or Bodhisattva who will perform certain type of deeds and functions in the universe), and start performing good deeds and acts of merit in line with our vows. We should also try to perfect our character or personality to free it of faults, ornament it with brilliant virtues, and train ourselves to start performing actions in line with our vows and highest ideals or aspirations. This effort is equivalent to transforming your basic core character or personality, which is typically denoted by your natal chart in astrology, and this takes effort.

We should try to transform our personality for the better in life via techniques like *watchfulness (mindfulness) and self-rectification practice* to correct our faults and cultivate various virtues (such as exemplified by the efforts of Liao Fan, Benjamin Franklin and Frank Bettger); *principal awareness* to impress virtuous emotions into our activities and inject them with higher virtuous ideals; *emulation* of individuals who have talents or virtues we admire; *bhava-attitude meditations* and associated visualization practices to develop virtuous character traits; the *repetition of affirmations* to help us develop those traits, or the *repetition of prayers and/or mantras* to aid us in developing those traits; real world conduct *in line with those desired traits* to reinforce their development; broadening yourself with culture and restraining yourself with the principles of proper conduct (standards of proper behavior); studying the principles of good or optimum behavior as well as irreproachable conduct; regular contemplative introspection practice to unravel or dissolve the root errors responsible for our afflictions or errant tendencies, and to dissolve any psychological blockages standing in the way of cultivating virtues; a *regular schedule of disciplined training* to regulate our behavior towards self-perfection and help establish the new virtues we want; and by using various personality transformation techniques (such as NLP) to regularly work at incorporating ideal models of virtue and behavior into our psyche.

This is the path of spiritual practice. You work at changing your personality, behavior, doing good deeds for others ... and work at meditation practice to purify your mind and internal energy exercises to start cultivating the deva body inherent within you. We want to be working at cultivating ourselves and our deeds so that we have the merit for achievement. We want to cultivate virtuous, pure, consummate ways in ourselves, our conduct and activities and use our personality and efforts to perform compassionate, kind, merciful deeds on behalf of others. Spiritual practice is not just about ourselves but about having empathy and sympathy for others, which is cultivating the vehicle of humanity. At the same time we want to be cultivating the abilities and powers of consciousness to an excellence of perfection, as well as the abilities and powers of our physical body.

Cultivate your entire mind, body and behavior for this is the way to succeed. Whether or not you achieve enlightenment during life, this is the pathway of spiritual cultivation.

CHAPTER 2: THE UNIVERSAL PATH, THE UNIVERSAL RELIGION

Let's start at the beginning, meaning the portions of history that end up explaining where we are now.

History shows that human beings have been constantly evolving physically, psychologically and socially (culturally) over time. Over the millennia we have been undergoing changes in our bodies, our diets, our activities, our ways of thinking and social interaction, and we have been altering our social and organizational structures accordingly.

Physically, in general we are now shorter, lighter and smaller boned than our ancestors were 100,000 years ago. Our brains, which grew larger over evolutionary time, are now the smallest they have been at any time in the past 100,000 years. Our brain is more compressed at the level of the frontal and occipital lobes than in earlier times, while our cerebellum and temporal lobes have become enlarged compared to our early predecessors. Physically our teeth have become shorter over time and our jaws have become smaller too.

This just goes to prove there is an ultimate plasticity of the human body where it can change over time, meaning it evolves, as conditions change. It is speculated, for instance, that our ability to use fire to cook food, and thus release more nutrients from our food due to cooking, is what led to the great increase in our brain size that was experienced by our earliest ancestors. In other words, the cognitive facility to control fire (the domestication of fire) enabled us to evolve even more cognitive abilities! Having more energy available from cooked food, which made digestion easier, freed our biological energy to the extent that we could as a species

shrink our digestive tract and grow a bigger brain in turn. It enabled us to jump some physiological hurdles, namely energy constraints, in terms of the amount of energy that our large brain needed. Over the last two million years our brain has actually tripled in mass and developed a new structure – the frontal lobe with a pre-frontal cortex – that works as an experience simulator. Now we can think of something more than just our stomach and survival.

Many physical changes that the human body has undergone are the outcome of various genetic mutations, epigenetic factors, dietary changes, environmental pressures and even cognitive advances and cultural initiatives that have occurred over the ages. For instance, in recent years our elbows have been getting narrower and there is even a new spiky growth appearing on the back of skull. Scientists believe that this is due to our recent smart phone and desktop computer usage, which are themselves a component of our cultural transformations.

Continuously or consistently cultivating a specific mental state or type of thinking can effect gene expression as well, and can even produce permanent physical changes in the body. For instance, taxi drivers in Britain are required to memorize a virtual labyrinth of 25,000 streets within a ten-kilometer radius of Charing Cross train station in order to obtain a taxi license. The intensive training in navigational memory they undergo to acquire this “Knowledge” causes the successful ones (about 50% fail the licensing test) to grow larger-than-average hippocampi memory centers in their brains. In other words, *certain types of consistent mental activity will produce changes in the structure of our brain.* Those who consistently practice certain thoughts and behaviors in real life in order to improve the probability of automatically having a consistent mental and physical performance of a specifically desired type - even under pressure – will produce changes in their neural structures that accord with those rehearsals. This is also why persistent loving-kindness meditation (and many other types), since it consistently evokes feelings of warmth and concern for others, will not only change your current emotional state but reshape your enduring personality traits. In practicing such forms of cultivation you are trying to create personality traits that are better and more stable than your present set point for those characteristics.

Professional musicians, who extensively practice music throughout their lives, are also found to have greater neural gray matter in their brain than non-musicians because of their musical practice. They show structural differences in the areas of their brains related to music too. These structural adaptations have definitely appeared in response to the long-term pursuit of musical skills and the repetitive rehearsal of those skills. Similar to taxi drivers changing the structure of their brains, musicians who consistently cultivated music skills have been shown to demonstrate structural changes

in their brain.

Just these two examples alone show that *your consistent mental training patterns and thinking styles will not only change your personality and ways of doing things but can absolutely change your physiology too*. This is why athletes practice deep visualization techniques to develop optimal neural circuitry to master sports movements. Some athletes also use it, as Arnold Schwarzenegger did, to guide the growth (or workout development) of muscles through diligent visualization efforts, as revealed in *Visualization Power* and *Sport Visualization for the Elite Athlete*. So your mental training can definitely affect your gene expression, and my firm belief is that your environment and culture can also because they force you to consistently think and act in certain ways.

Since athletic and musical skills can often be carried over to a subsequent incarnation as natural talents, a question arises as to whether this is due to the brain changes that are somehow carried forward in some form of template.

Despite the physical changes that have occurred across the millennia, the core within the path of spiritual cultivation has not changed at all. Spiritual cultivation is still about cultivating your mind, body and behavior – your cognitive and physical skills controlled by your mind – and your efforts lead to either a mundane or transcendental result. Furthermore, the progress you achieve can be turned into a habit energy or character trait that is carried across lifetimes. Certain skills, characteristics, personality traits or tendencies can leave imprints in your subtle body, and this is why they can be carried over from one life to the next.

One aspect of the path is to cultivate emptiness meditation, or a quiet mind that is undistracted, always aware of its own contents that it does not become entangled with so as to lose a higher perspective. We want to cultivate an operative consciousness that is always open/flexible and aware/awake enough to accept changes in its mental fabrications rather than remain permanently tied to its previous conditioning and the momentum of its mind-stream.

This is part of the mental aspect of the path that also entails cultivating purity of (virtue in) thought, word and deed as an objective of perfection since we have the ability to improve ourselves in these areas. Cultivation is essentially a road of self-perfection to gain greater skills and mastery over consciousness and our behavior and accomplishments. If we cultivate a “mind of purity” then our thoughts will reflect higher noble values, and when expressed will become more ethical, virtuous, beneficial and skillful actions.

Cultivation, then, is essentially the practice of self-perfection, consummate behavior and meaningful accomplishment. You are one of the rare aspects of Shakti with consciousness, and your life process should

revolve around not just survival and replication but learning how to master consciousness to make use of all its capabilities, however imperfect it may be. Your actions should improve your life and lift it to a better state of prosperity as well as improve the conditions of others so that subsequent generations benefit from your present existence.

Cultivation involves this effort at improvement otherwise there will be no progress forward in your life or the world, and then the inevitable suffering inherent within Shakti will overly burden you and others. So cultivation is essentially the pathway of mastering your consciousness, including both its deliberate and automatic functions such as afflictions that arise spontaneously within it. The deliberate aspects of consciousness include such processes as thinking, imagination, concentration, logic, planning, mathematics, athletics, craft, healing, achievement and so on – the “thinking mind.” The automatic aspects of consciousness can include afflictive emotions, habit energies, predispositions, self-talk and negative mental states - the “emotional mind.”

Cultivation also involves the task of preparing you – as a living and always changing continuous process within Shakti – for subsequent life state transformations. What does that mean? It is just an inherent property of our body structure that you can grab hold of its vital energy and cultivate it through revolutions so that a more perfect and purified vital energy (life force) becomes available within it while you are alive. Or, you can wait until death to arise within an impure subtle body composed of this Qi that is already inherent within your physical structure. The after-death spirit body is the deva body attainment, but the one produced by spiritual cultivation is more purified.

You can also attain even more significant transformations of your inherent life force because your life force energy – whether it be in the form of a subtle body, Causal body, Supra-Causal body and so on – can always be purified through cultivation to give birth to a more independent, purified, and transcendental structural form of its own inherent life energy. What you cultivate as memories, skills, and traits are incorporated into it as it forms and then emerges in a new body that is simply a copy of its lower structure. Therefore you should aim at developing your consciousness, personality/mindset and skills, and should set out not just to live life in a wonderful way but perform deeds that will make life both better for yourself and others as a legacy. You should work at building more positive personality or character traits, since those are your properties, as well as build the skills you desire to have. You should work at changing your habit energies, such as how you view the world, and learn how to cut off mental afflictions and transform them into a better mind-stream. You should learn how to change your emotions by shifting your attitude, outlook and perspective, and through emotional balance and a clear mind make better

judgements that improve your circumstances. You should learn how to accomplish personal goals, how to act according to principles and plans that will change your fortune and enable you to achieve what you want, and devote yourself to higher goals, pledges and vows that will give your life a meaning and significance greater than simply consumption. You should give thought and effort into doing good deeds for others that affect the greater environment of Shakti in a positive way so that beings of consciousness experience a reduction in suffering and an increase in convenience, happiness and joy. Winston Churchill said, “We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give.”

Once again, this is cultivation. If you do not succeed in cultivating the subtle body while alive, you will still arise in an *unpurified* subtle body at death and can continue cultivating in the earthly heavenly plane. This is everyone’s fate for that is how the world works. Yes, there is life after death. When you must finally transform from the after-death state of being into a new incarnation due to death in that realm, whether your fate is to be reborn as a human or deva you will always take with you the imprints you developed within your subtle body’s vital energy (*its* energy body *and* its Shen body since Shen is the vital energy for a Qi-bodied individual) that will express themselves in your subsequent incarnation.

Therefore there is a continuity to this process we call life, and thus you should work at self-development during your living, including the pursuit of values and virtue as well as the performance of good deeds and acts of merit that help others by improving the world. The more you train to be a certain way the more you can be that way in this life and in a subsequent transformation, so take the pains to plant and cultivate the relevant seeds of merit that you want.

This is what religion is supposed to help us do, but it is only done through the pathway of spiritual cultivation. In Christianity the path of *theosis*, divinization or spiritualization helps you cultivate the subtle body and this is the true path of Christianity. In Judaism the “return to the Father” entails cultivating the higher body vehicles too. In Islam the “removal of veils” to experience God’s face is also the path of transcendental body attainments.

In Buddhism the stages of enlightenment, called the Arhat attainments, correspond to the higher transcendental body attainments that not just free you from rebirth in the lower realms of suffering but give you powers to help sentient beings at those lower levels of existence. In Hinduism, the idea of tracing your body back to its primordial origins, Brahman, means cultivating these more transcendental body vehicles (rather than annihilation or extinction). In Taoism, becoming an “Immortal” involves attaining these higher body vehicles that live longer lives than the human physical frame. In Christianity, “Ye are gods” means that you can attain

these higher bodies, which is the achievement of becoming one with the communion of saints. And so on it goes.

All the religions involve spiritual paths that entail cultivating the higher spiritual bodies. If you don't succeed then you can still take with you into your next existence a more shining personality, better behavior, more skills, and the merit of good deeds that makes your life more enjoyable and much easier if you cultivated these things while alive.

An individual should always be working on cultivating their behavior to make it better, which Confucians emphasize and call the quest for "consummate conduct." We can also call this the behavioral aspect of the path rather than the mental path, or you can call it the mental path since the mind controls behavior. You can also call it the physical aspect of the path since behavior is what we exhibit in the external world. Thoughts are things, and actions are too. Both have an effect within Shakti, and both must be mastered. In particular, pursuing consummate conduct entails mastering yourself and what you will do with your willpower in thought, word and deed.

The quest to perfect your behavior and thereby master yourself does not just require you to cultivate a state of presence where you can be aware of every deliberate decision you make by stepping out of your thought-stream to see what you are actually doing and thinking. Perfecting your behavior means that your actions are all conducted with virtuous intent and free of such factors as greediness, malevolence and ill-will. Consciousness essentially operates according to the preconditioned programming that we ourselves have developed (picked up) over time, but if we cultivate a state of openness, awareness or presence where we can detach from entrainment with our operating system we can then interrupt our automatic, mechanistic, unthinking processes and apply our higher wisdom faculties to make better decisions for our life.

Another aspect of the spiritual path is to purify your inner Qi/Prana (vital energy) through various breathing exercises, physical movements, sound exercises, emotional exercises, visualization practices, or other applications of mental willpower that can move your Qi/Prana and transform its nature. The purpose of purifying your Qi/Prana is to prepare for the independent existence of the will-born subtle body, which is attained only because of training. The integrity, purity and circulation of your internal vital energy is the basis of ordinary health and longevity in life as well as the basis of spiritual experiences and spiritual achievements. Thus, if you don't succeed in the subtle body achievement you will still make inroads into health and longevity benefits for your life as well as finer mental states if you spiritually practice during life.

Yet another basic aspect of the spiritual path – which is almost always neglected - is to bring your human physical body of flesh to a state of

excellence through appropriate diet and exercise since that is “you” in life and the template for your body in the afterlife. This goal also belongs to the “body aspect” or “physical aspect” of the spiritual path. The spiritual path involves perfecting the “lived distance” that is you. This means your physical body, but we can also extend the meaning to include your environment since you should be working on improving it for your benefit and that of others.

Human bodies have changed over the millennia and we certainly have a duty for our personal health to work on our bodies so that we attain agility, flexibility, coordination, strength, endurance, speed and are free of illness, pain and discomfort. Since the state of our physical body and physical health are connected with the state of our mentality, once again the task of perfecting our consciousness is called to account.

As an example of our psychological changes over time we can examine IQ tests from the 1900’s, which show that we now place a much larger emphasis on theoretical judgment than previously. For instance, if you asked a child in 1900 America, “What do dogs and rabbits have in common?” they might answer that you use dogs to hunt rabbits. Today a child is more likely to say, “Dogs and rabbits are both animals” because they are psychologically predisposed to think in terms of theoretical classifications rather than practical usage. The basic psychological patterns we prefer has changed. In books such as *The Geography of Thought* it becomes apparent that Asians and Westerners think differently, and it is no great leap to accept that psychology does not just vary by region but by time as well.

Today people are more inclined to think about relationships between things whereas in previous eras the human mind was preoccupied with a more practical, materialistic emphasis. In previous eras, our memory skills were also more important than they are now and thus people had tremendous memories. Illiteracy necessitated that people remember things in their heads, which resulted in better memory skills. This no doubt changed the structure of our brains, which has plastic elasticity, as the example of the London taxi drivers showed. Some further evidence on this conjecture is the fact that individuals with hyperthymesia (who can remember an extraordinary number of life experiences in extreme detail) have particular sections of their brains quite enlarged.

Over the ages our bodies have changed and our psychology and mental skills have evolved as they developed within entirely different psychologies than in earlier times. Human beings have definitely transitioned from a more practical, utilitarian psychological perspective to a rather scientific and theoretical perspective. With the increase in communication skills and media, we have also become more imaginative too. Additionally, many people now guide their lives by totally idealistic perspectives such as the idea, there should be world peace and an end to global poverty, there

should be global conservation and a reduction in world pollution, we are all brothers and sisters who should take care of one another and so forth.

Historically speaking, in breaking away from the previous mentalities that believed in superstitious and magical thinking we transmigrated to a more scientific perspective. Now we have evolved into following sweeping universal, salvationist, and idealistic principles such as ideals of universal brotherhood, welfare and development.

This is not just a result of social conditioning *because there must have been evolutionary anatomical and psychological changes over time that accompanied these changes*. Let me provide the thinking behind this view. Over several hundred years humans have selectively bred dogs for specific physical and behavioral traits. Scientists (Hecht et al, *JNeurosci* 2019) have found that within different dogs breeds the varying behavioral characteristics are definitely related to different anatomical variations in brain structure that have occurred through selective breeding. Hence, anatomy has an effect on psychology. For us, civilization has definitely had an impact on our biological evolution because we have experienced physical changes as we have transitioned from being hunter-gatherers to agricultural, then industrial and now information-rich societies.

Cultural innovation has been and is a driving force behind biological change. Using fire to cook food, which ended up increasing the average size of the human brain, is another example of this principle. As our own social environments and social conditioning have evolved human anatomy has evolved, and thus our psychology has evolved. Conversely, as our anatomy has evolved our own social environments and social conditioning have evolved because as our brain has grown in size we have developed higher cognitive capabilities that had led to social and cultural innovations.

In short, biological evolution has an impact on cultural evolution and been a key factor in driving history. Cultural evolution has been a factor in driving human evolution as well. Biological and cultural evolution have influenced one another, a fact easily seen by considering Cortes's invasion of Mexico where 500 men were able to conquer an empire of millions who were ravished due to lack of disease resistance.

Yuval Harari's book *Sapiens* nicely lays out the view that mankind has clearly progressed through various stages of cognitive development that gradually allowed us to process knowledge in new and revolutionary ways. Those new ways of thinking enabled us to build better tools, and we have been reshaped by tools that have transformed our living conditions and thus societies. *Homo sapiens* developed greater cognitive abilities than its genetic predecessors and that trend in cognitive development improved us and our ways of living. For instance, *Homo sapiens* developed thinking and imagination skills that led him to develop the new fields of symbols, religion, myth, legend and fantasy/imagination.

Homo sapiens's greater thinking, language and problem solving skills set off a Cognitive Revolution that rapidly separated us from prehistoric humans such as Neanderthals. It enabled us to communicate better, cooperate better and live peacefully in larger, more cohesive groups. Over time this led to all sorts of other societal transformations. The great leap in cognitive abilities over our forbears, prehistoric man, improved our abilities to plan and organize and has helped bring us to where we are today.

The metamorphosis schema of Spiral Dynamics affirms the view that throughout history we can see a definite evolutionary progression in human development that entails various stages of psychological development. These stages of psychological development are bound up with the ways in which mankind lived, such as whether he was a hunter-gatherer, lived in a tribe, lived in a city, lived in a hierarchical society and so forth. Those living situations also influenced the development of the religions and spiritual paths which man has used to guide himself over the ages.

SURVIVAL SELF

In our earliest history man was no doubt primarily concerned with procreation and survival issues such as security, food and drink, clothing, habitat, health, pain avoidance and safety. Man had to learn how to *act without dying* before he could develop explanations of his “rules for living and survival,” which at much later stages of human development certainly got turned into some of the dietary and hygienic rules promoted by religions.

This primal psychological stage of mankind can be called the *survival mind (existential self)*. We can characterize it as the primary concern to satisfy one's biological needs for survival and instinctual urges for reproduction. Living in a state of nature, you could surmise that in the earliest days of mankind the survival mindset predominated because we were closer in nature and behavior to animals than we are today. We were primarily dominated by primeval instincts, passions, urges and emotions. In those pre-medical societies, where pathogens or improper foods and other mistakes could easily kill, the people who survived weren't scientists but simply adopted specific behavioral ways of doing things that they passed onto others as rules for how to do things.

Where we are now as modern day people is because we have gone through tremendous stages of anatomical, cultural and psychological development starting from this existential foundation. Consciousness itself is a mechanism for survival and replication and we are here, where we are, because consciousness has evolved over hundreds of thousands of years in a certain way that made survival together with procreation possible. Our development has especially been due to the gradual influence of new ways

of thinking and cultural evolutions that have penetrated and transformed our societies.

The human brain is a product of millions of years of evolution and hard-wired with instincts that helped our ancestors survive in small groups of hunters and gatherers. We are also born with certain appetites, such as cravings for sugar and fat (rich sources of energy) and salt, which were necessary for saving lives because of frequent times of scarcity. However, there are many things such as language and cognitive skills that we have always had to socially, culturally learn. We build our cognitive mindsets, such as our ways of thinking and our mental skills, via social interactions rather than through genetic inheritance.

Many of our mental circuits, our mental processing and decision-making algorithms, are socially and culturally constructed. Afterwards they usually operate automatically. They operate in an unconscious, mechanistic fashion that automatically influences and shapes our thoughts, emotions, motivations and decision-making. For instance, our mind automatically assigns meaning and feelings to all incoming sensory stimuli based on our mental operating systems that are derived from the anatomical structure of our brain and its network of neurons. This is the way consciousness works. There are many largely unconscious cognitive processes going on inside us all the time that determine our automatic view of the world without us knowing it. Some of these determinations can be trained and transformed through the process of self-cultivation. Over time we may change our likes and dislikes and worldview perspectives, and then those new emotions and views will immediately arise when we encounter the relevant experiences. But for now, what arises is what is already preprogrammed into our neurons.

That being the case, why not train to learn the best way of viewing situations and the world, the best ways of handling circumstances and behaving, the best ways of accomplishing things, the best patterns for our emotions and mental processes? As Marcus Aurelius might say, everything depends on how you interpret it. Everything is interpretation and you can learn to frame things more positively to add more happiness to your life. Whatever happens, you can choose how to interpret it. This is the secret to becoming a happier, more cheerful self who suffers less in life.

For instance, instead of complaining, “I have to make breakfast for the kids” you can train yourself to think, “I *get to* make breakfast for the kids.” This is learning how to think differently, how to view things differently in a higher and more positive way. Instead of saying, “I will never be able to learn how to use Microsoft Excel” you can train yourself to replace frustration with, “I have not learned how to master Microsoft Excel *yet*.” Instead of just building a brick wall you can learn to think of the larger picture, “I am building a cathedral.”

This is spiritual cultivation. Spiritual cultivation isn't saying prayers, reciting mantras or sitting in meditation. It is doing precisely this. It is training the *emotional mind* to respond in a different way, and using the thinking mind to control the mind of emotions. It is training to free the mind from afflictions and emotional bondages. Cultivation involves learning how to repel or wipe away any impressions that are troublesome or unsuitable, and to instead experience tranquility. It is freeing yourself from the limited survival mode of the mind and enhancing your physical capabilities, purifying and elevating your inner psychology, and improving your cognitive-intellectual abilities.

For the *thinking mind* you cultivate calmness, clarity, emptiness, peace or concentration without afflictions or distractions. Being mindful of what you are doing every moment is concentration without distraction, and is the reason religions teach mindfulness. These are all synonyms for the idea of pristine awareness, *flow*, *presence*, quiescence and so forth. Along with your physical body and its internal energy, these two cognitive vehicles – the emotional mind and thinking mind – must both be cultivated as the Great Learning in life. They are the basis of your conduct, behavior and life experience.

There are all sorts of more optimal ways to think, behavior, view situations and process your emotions. In cultivation you strive to learn the best ways of operating your consciousness for your greater benefit. You use the ability of consciousness called wisdom (understanding or insight) to learn the best methods/ways of doing things, and then adopt those as your standard template. For instance, Aristotle said that virtue is learning what is good for you and then training yourself to like it, so you can retrain yourself to like what is to your benefit too. By learning how to calm your mind you can begin to operate consciousness without distractions, and through that mental clarity you can arrive at better decisions for your gain. This is how you improve your life and fortune.

This is why Confucius said, "First you must attain calmness, and then your mind can be steady. Once your mind becomes steady, then it will be at peace. Only when your mind is at peace are you able to think (properly) and finally gain." He explained that by practicing meditation and mindfulness your mind can reach a state of clarity absent of most distractions, which he called stopping and stillness. This is calmness. It doesn't mean that the mind is empty of thinking (which would be sleep) but that it is empty of distractions budding up around your thinking, namely distractions. This calmness leads to a steady mental tranquility that is strong, and hence we have the steadiness of concentration. Within the clear awareness of concentration, where the mind operates effortlessly in flow but without being interrupted by afflictions or disturbances that distract the attention, you are involved with proper thinking and can make better decisions. Better

decisions means better outcomes or fortunes, and hence you gain. You achieve the *attainment* you want. The ancients basically told people how to use their minds and train their minds, but people don't understand the very simple words and miss the lessons entirely. You basically have only two skills – cognitive and physical skills that are dependent on a mind that depends on a body. You must cultivate both in life, and most spiritual training teaches you how to tame and use your mind properly. That is all, except for the fact that thoughts lead to behavior so conduct is stressed as well (including topics such as virtue and so on). If you do enough cultivation work you can also transform the inner energy of your body and gain the spiritual bodies that free you from lower level reincarnations, but no higher spiritual beings will help you do this unless you are already a virtuous person and have proven it by eschewing self-centeredness and accumulating merit from activities devoted to helping others. That is the essence of the spiritual path.

At our foundations we are basically animal-like. However, we have higher consciousness and it can be trained. It controls our body and behavior and it can be elevated, spiritualized or ennobled to produce a state of being that far transcends ordinary animal urges and tendencies. It can lead us into becoming truly spiritual, which is the gist of the cultivation path.

Our thought patterns can be trained, our cognitive skills can be developed, our emotional expressions can be elevated or controlled, and control over our physical body and internal energy can be perfected. Today mankind is at a stage of psychological development where we have learned to transcend (or distance ourselves from) our basest instinctual urges, primal tendencies and animalistic impulses. We have learned how to control our appetites to some degree and transcend the passions, and why we should control them. We are able to not just transcend the baser parts of our nature but transform those energies into higher octaves of expression.

Living conditions have changed dramatically over the millennia and the ennoblement of mankind has meant becoming less like an animal and more like an awakened being who uses reason, wisdom, the intellect and self-control rather than just relying on feelings and emotions to make decisions to interact with the world and society.

Spiritual evolution is now a more primary concern rather than survival, and upon surveying history you might say that it entails elevating ourselves as high above our animal natures and tendencies as possible. This means working towards mental purity, the adoption of spiritual virtues and values in our mental and physical behavior, and the elevation or mastery of our body, speech and behavior to a stage of excellence, elegance, ennoblement or perfection. Ennoblement means towards what is transcendental in ultimate excellence rather than what is coarse, impure, materialistic, and

base.

Spiritual practice must therefore involve exercises that teach us how to permanently transcend our most animalistic tendencies while also purifying those habit energies so that they are completely transformed forever. They need to help us purify errant tendencies and create better ones in their place. This is why spiritual practice entails purifying your subtle body composed of Qi/Prana.

We are decision makers every moment, and spiritual practice must train us to be able to rise above (resist or ignore) our baser urges in real time, thus ennobling us. At the same time cultivation practice should train us in the best models of behavior so that our automatic, unconscious actions are more elevated as well. To do this we need to correct any errant mental and behavioral tendencies we have learned, some of which have been culturally derived and others self-taught. We need to create new ones in their place that will take us forward and help us personally create better states of well-being.

A perfect example of how our living conditions have radically changed over time and why we now need to be more skillful decision makers is that an excessive indulgence in sugar and fat in prior days (overeating when food was plentiful) prevented starvation during times of scarcity, but now these urges will lead to obesity and illness because we are always surrounded by plenty. Therefore we must learn to rise above our prior animal appetites and control ourselves with reason, wisdom, temperance, discipline, and self-restraint to do what is best.

With the application of wisdom and steadfastness we can even thwart our own genetics to enjoy to better states of being, which I have detailed in *Move Forward*. Since our environment, culture, thinking processes and behavior can affect the expression of our genes we should learn how to employ these conditions to our benefit.

The big lesson is that just as mankind evolved certain animalistic means for survival in earlier eras, we must now learn to transcend our animal instincts and passions to truly evolve to a higher nature. We must follow roads of practice that elevate our minds and behaviors, transcending any lower tendencies that have become conditions, processes, or algorithms of our minds.

MAGICAL SELF

Now as survival man's cognitive powers evolved he eventually developed an inclination towards animism, which is the view that places and objects possess a spiritual essence and are populated by spirits. Thus arose from the base of the instinctive survival self a psychological stage of magical thinking called the *animistic self*. With this type of thinking, the

divine or supernatural was now taken as the explanation for all sorts of natural phenomena.

In an era of mankind against nature where humans were constantly worried about health and survival while lacking knowledge of science, technology and higher philosophy, humans developed the notion that the landscape was populated with nature spirits, gods or deities that they could and should placate (along with their ancestors) to supply their needs and keep them and their tribal group safe from harm. Thus our ancestors started looking to deities and other transcendental powers for protection via rituals. In other words, since you might die from illness, starvation or other events out of your control, people believed that the forces that controlled such matters could and should be beseeched or placated with rituals and offerings.

Placating the spiritual realm through offerings and worship became a magical way of pacifying those forces. The supplication was a type of transaction of the form, “I do this for you and therefore ask you to do [something] for me.” Thus, humans started making offerings to gods in exchange for mastery over plants, animals, sickness, safety and scarcity – basically to help him meet their needs.

The basic idea was that there were gods and spirits and we should keep them happy in order to get a reciprocal reward. To do so, men felt they had to make offerings because this would establish a reciprocal covenant binding the gods and spirits to us where they would prosper and protect us in return. In Vedic fire sacrifices, for instance, priests serve the gods with milk, oil, spices, grains and other plants in exchange/expectation for order, bountiful harvests and war victories.

This mindset explains why many early cultures and religions started worshipping a multitude of spirits and deities. If instead of one all-encompassing supreme power you divide the power up, then you inevitably wind up with more than one deity/god. This was seen in the early Greek and Egyptian religions as well as Hinduism. Thus you eventually get a great plurality of gods and goddesses with all sorts of different powers of abundance, protection and responsibility. Deities for invented to fulfill the hope of protectors. Next, you then get a plethora of different rituals and ceremonies specific for requesting aid from different deities in different areas of life. Nature seemed less terrifying if the gods who controlled it could be influenced by ceremonies, rituals, prayers, promises of obedience, flattery or sacrifice.

Both individuals and tribal groups performed such ceremonies/rites because their main concern was still that of health and welfare, and only the spiritual could help in these areas. The rites and ceremonies were all based on the idea of a reciprocal contract relationship – pleasing the gods in return for some favor. For instance, early Roman sacrifices were often

envisioned as legal bargains between deities and the worshipper with the Roman expecting *do ut des*: “I give, so that you may give.”

The reason human society was able to grow in group size over time and form large tribes where members cooperated in very large numbers, such as at this stage, is because our group subscribed to common social virtues/behaviors and our imagination was able to create fictional stories like this that also united the group in beliefs. They served as a unifying force, as a further way to instruct preliterate cultures in common spiritual values, ethics and rules of behavior. We were able to achieve large-scale cooperation, where we gave our power to the tribe and existed within it as an equal member to everyone else, because we enforced common behavioral rules as well as unifying fictions and fantasies created by our minds, and those stories became part of the regulating glue of culture and proper behavior. The accumulated experience of a group led to its creation of traditions and societal rules that worked to preserve and prosper the group, and these became somewhat binding over time. Because different groups developed in different environments and have different historical backgrounds, they created different rules and traditions to unify themselves.

Naturally we also subscribed to common social virtues, such as honesty, since they were essential for creating trust and friendship between group members. Without common social virtues where group members could trust and rely upon one another, the groups would have disintegrated for sure. This is why religions became ever so much more important over time. They fortified the fabric of society by establishing common moral values, which created emotional cohesion within the group, and they enforced compliance among everyone. Strange behaviors became unacceptable under the rules of religion. You could not excuse yourself from the group because of your own importance or wonderfulness either, but had to adhere to the group norms. This enforced a bonding with others and internal uniformity or cohesion within the group. Survival is a group phenomenon, not an individual achievement, so religions also helped societies survive by making them cohesive against external threats.

However, the basic idea was that man could establish a contractual arrangement with gods, deities and spirits where you could perform various ceremonies to get things from the spiritual realm in return for worship. The expectation was just like a normal business contract, and if the gods didn't keep their end of the bargain people would say it was their own fault because they did something wrong, or that the gods/deities were fickle.

This is not the way Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and other spiritual beings who help human beings really operate, but I'm pointing out that this concept of a contractual arrangement with Heaven was the next logical evolution in human culture and psychological thinking beyond the animalistic stage of instinctual survival.

EGOCENTRIC SELF

Even though most individuals were members of tribes or even larger social groups such as agricultural communities or cities, and although they established a collective group identity wherein there was a great call for conformity, cooperation and reciprocity so that they could survive, over time people eventually began to assert more of their individual egos. People started to put group needs aside and egocentrically pursued power for self-gratification. Humans always have a desire to satisfy their impulses immediately, and at this stage of development many started disregarding the social rules of the group because they wanted to assert domination.

This gave rise to a psychological attitude we might call the *egocentric self*. As individual egos more and more came to the forefront so did an active assertion of power over others within the fraternity of flexible cooperation. There arose great individualistic impulses to control/dominate others, which then became great group impulses to dominate other groups. Large-scale events started happening in the world where tribes and entire societies took what they wanted from other groups for their own pleasure through the use of power and force. The use of power, demonstrating malevolence rather than cooperation with and consideration of others, was applied over others in order to improve one's own conditions in life. This is the basic psyche of the Mafia, gang leaders and dictators.

With those impulses arose the conquering mindset of tribes along with the idea that might is right, and that you can get what you want by aligning with power. Think about how such ideas might be important for empowering tribes, chiefdoms and nations searching for a particular notion that might collectively unite the group. The idea of conquering others became a purpose that proved a group's superiority. Conquest promoted the idea that a group had a higher destiny.

Tribes are naturally hostile to outsiders since foreigners are not protected by the ordinary notions of tribal fellowship that considered them human beings or acceptable in the sense that a tribal member is. No doubt this is partly due to the fact that they always brought with them disease, strange notions and unusual customs. Tribes are commonly characterized by intra-group kindness, but animosity to outsiders who are not tribal members.

Tribes exist for themselves alone and commonly adopt an us-versus-them mentality that prizes cohesion and loyalty. They offer a survival vehicle that involves group adhesion around a unified ideal of existence. At this stage of psychological development they developed the idea that the world is adversarial and uncaring but raw power can help you prevail over the environment or others, and therefore power was pursued. An idea also

arose that, “If I do prevail over you it is because my gods are more powerful than yours.”

Thus, according to the stages of psychological evolution the emergence of greater personal desires for glory, power, dominion and domination began to predominate within societies. Tribes are not governed by the rule of law but by a code of honor where insults to honor are avenged. Hence, what also arose were personal reactions of great rage and revenge for personal slights, infractions and wrongs when committed against an individual. This characteristic somewhat reminds me of the many generals in Roman history who sought glory through conquest and who considered those who personally opposed them or besmirched their reputation as enemies.

The egocentric self was now exerting itself and it was exploitive, rebellious and impulsive. People pushed to stand out, transcending the limitations of the tribe, so that their individual self might be recognized as supreme. They sought respect and honor from the group while at the same time strived to avoid any type of public shame or humiliation. They still wanted to be within their group, but they also wanted to shine as a/the predominant figure.

It is interesting to note that in some ways Zoroastrianism addressed this pursuit of power over others because it divided the world into a duality of good and evil. Manicheism and Gnostic Christianity divided the world into lightness and darkness as well and urged that we work to separate the two forces and conquer darkness. This has to be accomplished within society and within ourselves. In Zoroaster’s day there were bandits, robbers and others who chose to use raw power over others to take whatever they wanted. These “evil ones” were juxtaposed against ordinary individuals within society who choose to pursue good conduct and live peaceful lives respectful of laws. Zoroastrianism therefore stressed that we generate good thoughts, words and deeds to bring an ethical awareness into the world for much of the world lacked this.

The early Romans, who were fanatically devoted to the pursuit of respect, honor and glory for their individual selves, also segmented the world into two parts. They divided the world into an uncivilized part, and a part subject to Roman rule that brought peace, justice and refinement to barbarian people.

These are just two examples illustrating the egocentric impulsive self characterized by the concept “be what you are and do whatever you want.” The task confronting this mindset is how to reign in or control ambitious, impulsive, dominating tendencies that show no concern for others and no consideration for groups other than the tribe/group to which one belongs.

CONFORMIST RULE SELF

A subsequent evolutionary development next arose in response to the social chaos produced from the rise of the egocentric self. In order to restrain/pacify the impulsively aggressive tendencies to use power over others, a new development arose in societies. As a means to create peace, stability and order in society people were now being taught that they should be obedient not to power but to rightful authority, tradition, heritage and the rule of law. Members of the collective were now taught that in order to maintain social order and group harmony they had to suppress their personal desires when necessary in order to promote collective interests. Chaos may reign if a society does not develop a certain level of structure and rules and so they now developed.

People were now taught that they had to lose some freedom of individuality by subscribing to certain rigid legal or social systems. This involved fulfilling certain specified roles and following certain behaviors, which meant sacrificing their ego for the sake of their community or country. Self-regulation for conformity was now more important than self-expression or individual rights. People were taught that they should work and sacrifice for their religion/church, government and community as had been done in the ancient tribal days, but now the groups were much, much larger so the behavioral ideals had to correspondingly evolve.

As a consequence, more elaborate and often rigid hierarchal systems started developing within communities where important authorities were positioned at critical places within the organizational structures. In short, bureaucracies started developing. Religious officials and functionaries developed special clothing and paraphernalia so that the public could recognize them as legitimate leaders with adequate authority.

The public was now taught to deny their self-centered impulses and to become obedient in following specific roles laid out for them, including the moral precepts of the group. The basis of behavior was *compliance* with a commonly accepted set of standards shared by society. People living in larger communities are mostly strangers to one another, and therefore they are likely to have disagreements with one another and need to cooperate flexibly with cantankerous neighbors. Everyone had to accept and tolerate one another, so moral rules embodying principles that established tolerable behaviors were necessary to produce social peace. Such moral rules were then considered socially binding and everyone was expected to conform to the standards.

Paramount at this stage were certain widely accepted rules of virtuous behavior such as being honest (not lying and speaking properly) because no social relations between individuals can survive without trust between the members. If you remove trust due to frequent dishonesty and the lack of integrity then there is no dependable bond between individuals, and without

a bond of reliability there is no relationship at all. Another requirement is peacefulness or non-aggression, non-violence and non-harm, which you might also call friendliness. Societies cannot survive with constant internal aggression where members are overly irritating or harming one another. Thus, they also require the members to cultivate the virtues of respect, hospitality and tolerance for one another rather than aggression.

Large groups can only become societies after developing a practical system that satisfies the need for cooperation, which in turn requires peaceful cohabitation and virtuous behavior among its members rather than conflict. The general rule is that “virtue equals cooperative behavior, and cooperation produces survival and prosperity.” For instance, friendliness, courtesy, love and kindness are virtues that exhibit a cooperative spirit and mutual respect for one another. Another required principle within societies is justice and fairness. People need mechanisms to arbitrate fairness when there are disagreements that will inevitably arise. Furthermore, even though inequalities will also always arise within societies, people need to feel that they are treated fairly as well because a group is supposed to be based on reciprocal relationships, otherwise why participate by staying a member? Open-mindedness and acceptance allow us all to get along with one another as well. Since sustainability is an active condition of solving problems, the survival of a group depends upon its degree of group cooperation.

The virtuous rules or expected patterns of behavior that societies eventually derived were solid expectations that people could depend upon to work day after day for years without deterioration or degradation. For instance, an emphasis was placed on social prudence, namely the need to stay aware and be sensitive to other people, places or things because people who weren't socially careful in what they were doing could easily destroy a community struggling to survive that had been painstakingly, carefully built over time. Such conformist expectations thereby produced stability, peace, harmony, equilibrium and cooperation within thriving communities.

Therefore, people starting abiding by the behavioral ideals adopted by society. Social stability and security were achieved by emphasizing public submission to a special approved way of doing things – sacrifice and conformity rather than impulsiveness. To be able to live you need to be a *properly functioning* body/individual, to survive you need to be a *properly competent* individual, but to live in a group with others you needed to be a *cooperative* individual. To live together harmoniously, people need to learn how to be *properly social* individuals. This entails special expectations of behavior.

Cooperative, complex societies require human trust among members. Trust, honesty, and reliability have to be self-sustaining virtues within the group. Human beings, especially males, can be aggressive, violent and cruel to one another. When living in the same general territory with others we

therefore need to live by principles that produce a social climate of peaceful friendly relationships. There cannot be different rules for different people. There has to be one over-arching conformist rule structure if people are to live harmoniously with one another.

Community living is preferable to solitude but it requires people to co-exist with others of different affiliations, religions, regions, approaches and beliefs. This requires acceptance, open-mindedness, civic-mindedness and many other social virtues that are more demanding than tribal virtues. Without those virtues, larger community living cannot thrive because there would be a large degree of internal aggression, antagonism and chaos.

To put it another way, a social community is preferable to just being a lone survivalist. Furthermore, a peaceful social body is preferable to war, aggression, conflict and chaos. As a consequence, if people were to be able to live peacefully in a larger social body it was absolutely essential that they sacrificed some of their individual idiosyncrasies so that they could live with other people harmoniously. This is the basis of the *social rule self*.

Community living, which provides us with endless benefits versus a survivalist or hunter-gatherer mode of being, justly demands some sacrifice of personal expressiveness. You have to become “approximately like others” in order to be able to live together peacefully without active aggression. This necessitates shared beliefs and common customs/rules of behavior ... unless you have a very good reason to be different. Yes, you can be unique, spectacular or different from others in some unique way, and thus stand out enough to be given some leeway in rule-breaking, but 90% of the time your other aspects are just average and have to conform to group standards.

Rules and behavioral expectations were therefore invented in society not to oppress people but to enable us to live together peacefully because man is an aggressive, predatory animal that can easily and willfully hurt others with physical harm or just plain cruelty. People learned to conform to these peace-promoting standards rather than aggressively attack others out of the desire for dominance.

This is why religions train man in certain social virtues, for part of the goal of religion (but certainly not all of it) is socialization. You must become more like the others within your community if you want to create and enjoy peaceful social being, and this means you must conform to generally accepted social rules of behavior – the virtues of society for that period of time. You must therefore sacrifice something in and of yourself by adopting some limits for your behavior. You have to follow some generally accepted rule book of behavior.

The common denominator to peaceful societies is virtues that enable people to live together in peaceful, trustworthy, high quality relationships. To establish those necessary social virtues everywhere, the natural acts of

human beings must become viewed within the context of a generally adopted moral code which indicts behaviors as being right, wrong, evil, depraved, honorable, noble and so on. Such moral claims cannot be divorced from a religious structure, which then sets up a whole framework of interpretations.

Thus we saw the eventual psychological development of the *absolutistic mind*. The absolutist mind holds that things should be done a certain way in a certain order - by the book according to rules. The general idea at this stage of psychological development is that life had meaning/purpose with predetermined outcomes and one had to follow specific rules and ways of acting to achieve those outcomes. You needed to follow the conformist way to know the truth and be successful.

We can use the example of Confucianism to illustrate this mentality because as it proliferated within Chinese society its adherents were taught to follow certain standard norms of behavior. People became subordinately conformist not just to these norms but to bureaucratic institutions too. As the norms/formalities of expected behavior developed, which were called "rites" within Confucianism, rule-abiding became the dominant theme. People were also expected to live out certain prescribed roles in life that entailed certain responsibilities. The caste system of India is similar in some ways.

The rigidity imposed upon society through the necessity of having to follow artificial rules of behavior certainly restricted economic and scientific development in Confucian China, Moslem, Christian, Jewish, Amish and other societies. The Islamic and Amish cultures are especially good examples of this stage of absolutist, conformist, rule-based societies. The rule-following meme took hold in many cultures where the social structure required a degree of conformity in order to establish stable internal peace and prosperity. At the same time, religions were developing that started promising people a heavenly reward for their fidelity to this "good behavior."

Naturally, the human mind rebels at having too many restrictions. It rebels against caste systems, rules and hierarchies since they are oppressive and we like freedom. They thwart social mobility. Also, hierarchy without compassion for individual suffering quickly becomes tyranny. Thus, it should be considered normal that a variety of protests arose against this sort of psychological confinement. Various philosophies free of the idea of excessive social conformity developed such as Chinese Taoism, Japanese Shintoism, Shugendo and the Aghoris of India, each of which dissented in a different way from the conformist notions of being strictly allegiant to strict social behavioral rules and injunctions.

For instance, Taoism emphasized nature rather than civilization and all its conformist rules of behavior. It espoused a return to the natural order of

things in order to free people from a state of lifeless stricture produced by excessive social restraints. It instead promoted the alternative idea of being spontaneous, unconstrained, free and natural as an alternative means for people to also reach a state of flourishing.

Shintoism, while emphasizing somewhat strict concepts of personal cleanliness, purity, and honor, also took on many of the naturalistic tendencies of Taoism although elevated by ritualistic ideals. Shugendo, “the path of training to attain spiritual powers” founded by En No Gyoja, is a Japanese mountain religion formed from an amalgam of folk religion, shamanism, animism, asceticism, Shintoism, Buddhism and Vajrayana. It developed by collecting individuals on the outskirts of conformist society such as hermits, wandering holy men, exorcists, diviners, blink musicians, unofficial monks and so forth who then engaged in their own form of cultivation.

The Aghoris of India, while typically scorned by established society, also developed by enveloping the socially stigmatized and neglected elements of society that were rejected by the mainstream conformists. Its many methods often reveal a non-conformist approach to spiritual cultivation.

What we should note is the principle that when there is one predominant psychology in society, and especially when it proposes stringent rules of behavior for living, there will tend to be rebellions against conformity even when people are taught that this predominant culture is the only or most valid, noble culture. When there are pent-up passions within society, they search for a release. When culture is too stifling people look for a way to break its norms and taboos, and it feels liberating to people when they do so. Societies cannot be too restrictive, but must offer safety valves that allow people to let off steam, which then actually protects the status quo.

INDIVIDUALISTIC ACHIEVER SELF

As a response to the natural feelings of entrapment and confinement people developed within excessively rigid societies that embraced strict rules of behavior, individuals started breaking away from these conformist tendencies out of a desire for individualism and autonomy. They were not satisfied with finding gratification in acting according to the requirements of the culture, and in living a false persona or artificial identity that stymied their real self. They started pursuing their self-interests of personal achievement and success instead of suppressing themselves for the group’s sake.

Societies can become so rigid or ossified that “water stops flowing,” and people feeling that they are trapped by these strictures will try to find

some way of release. Societies began to recognize that there were many ways to live rather than just one right way, so faith in an absolute set of standards stipulated by social customs or enforced by religious laws started to weaken.

People eventually learned how to live more freely by maneuvering around rigid rules and regulations rather than comply, circumventing what they objected to, and started to become more independent, autonomous, and self-sufficient. Societies thus gave rise to the psychology of the *achiever self* who did not want to be strictly bound by social rules and regulations, but who wanted to launch out in his own directions and fully pursue his own self-interests.

The achiever self did not want to be bound by rules or have to self-censor himself. He wanted to take action and exert power in the ways he saw fit. The achiever selves moved away from social conformity and pursued a success focus around personal achievement, abundance and material comfort even if they came at the expense of others.

Achievers started experimenting to discover truths beyond those generally accepted by society. They learned how to make progress in various fields and usually found better way of doing things among many possible paths/choices. As a result they became more future-oriented, growth-oriented, progress-oriented, scientific and competitive than the conformists. They applied their discoveries to achieve greater abundance (the good life) for themselves, and society eventually accepted the idea that achievers/winners deserved the personal rewards they created in life from their independent efforts.

Thus developed the trend for achievers to move society forward by pursuing personal achievement and their own self-interests. It was a freedom they won by insisting on autonomy rather than just conform to the pre-ordained rules of religion/society specified by some ancient leader or religious book or traditions.

The psychological emergence of the achiever mind reminds me of the struggle that science historically endured in breaking away from the prohibitions caused by the Christian Church during the Middle Ages. Due to that freedom, scientific investigation has enabled mankind to manipulate the world in order to create higher much living standards and make people happy. The development of Protestantism from Catholicism is another split reminiscent of the tendency of the achiever mind to depart from conformity in searching for truth and progress, which often led to more materialistic ways.

Incredible inventiveness, innovation, creativity and the advancement of science, medicine and business occurred when people were no longer restricted solely to religious doctrines that had ossified society. Slowly people accepted the view that curiosity was to be commended, fundamental

laws of how things work could be investigated and the principles learned could be applied to getting things done. Progress could occur far beyond what was written in books that produced limitations, and society was allowed to move in new directions that were not already prescribed or sanctioned.

SENSITIVE CARING SELF

The next natural evolution in psychological development beyond the goal-focused achiever self, which is a mindset that also reminds me of Wall Street and the great “robber baron” industrialists who built America, was the psyche of the *sensitive self*. In reversion to an emphasis on the importance of the group rather than individual, this stage of psychological development started to emphasize community connections again as well as the needs of the many rather than the desires of the one.

This humanistic mindset was characterized by a focus on humanity, spirituality, the importance of relationships with people, empathy for the feelings of others, sharing and caring, and a rejection of shallow materialism. An example of this sort of mindset was the hippy movement of the 60s that served as a foundational launching pad for feminism, the animal rights movement, the push to recognize racial equality, and the development of liberalism.

Self-achievement is a lonely road, and is not enough in itself to produce happiness in life because happiness requires human connections such as friends, relationships, social connections and higher purpose. Few people are happy in solitary ascetic paths or paths of maniacal achievement no matter how much they achieve. Furthermore, most people cannot achieve success solely on their own because doing so usually requires collaboration with others.

The sensitive mindset therefore revolved around the notion that people should join together for mutual growth. It emphasized group membership, community consensus, connecting with others, pluralism, harmony, empathy, care and concern, love, sensitivity and equality. A basic idea is that everybody counts. The sensitive mind emphasizes the dimension of caring for one’s family and one’s community. It outwardly projects the principle that no one wants to hurt others, and we are all seeking internal peace, harmony and mutual prosperity.

This stage of psychological evolution saw a shift from the individualistic achiever mindset to an emphasis on community welfare, group empowerment and group motivation. Two examples of this mindset were the 60s movements and the development of labor unions in response to the excesses of capitalist achievers who were now considered exploiters.

The sensitive mindset also reminds me of two particularly wonderful

social aspects of Sikhism. Founded by Guru Nanak, Sikhism places a great focus on its members helping the greater community through the free communal meal (*langar*) and other types of selfless social service. It also emphasizes the necessity for both individuals and groups to fight against social injustice.

INTEGRAL SELF

The next evolutionary stage in psychology was a swing back to focusing on the individual once again. It was the development of the mindset to cohesively integrate oneself with all the previous developmental levels and as many other systems and forms of wisdom and capability as possible.

This is a mindset that engages in systems thinking on a grand scale. It can accept and integrate multiple perspectives, and puts a priority on attaining knowledge and competency. We can characterize this ideal as an *integral self* that possesses a *multiplistic mind*.

The multiplistic mindset is usually an option available only to an advanced, wealthy or privileged society since only leisure-gifted man in a knowledge-rich society, freed of survival burdens and ready with ample funds, has the time and resources to pursue as many bodies of knowledge, lines of intelligence, and active skills as possible while striving to integrate them into a cohesive whole.

No longer motivated by compulsive survival fears, gods and deities, the quest for power and domination or social approval, guilt and reward, group pressures, or material ambitiousness the *integral mind* seeks the goal of living fully. It entails being authentic to what one presently is and what one is learning to become by pursuing one's curiosity and interests. Along those pursuits, the psyche of the integral self chooses to remain a responsible member of the community, rather than a recluse, who does not cause harm to others in his efforts at self-mastery.

In a way we can consider this a *developmental self* that is willing to learn from everyone and everything whatever will help him move forward to achieve his own goals of self-development and achievement. The goal is to fully develop one's physical and cognitive abilities. The mindset is to master human knowledge as well as all the capabilities of the mind, such as being able to experience internal peace when you want it. The ideal is to control your mental processes as much as possible and develop the mind's cognitive and other skills to their fullest.

The integral self learns from a variety of experiences, sensitivities and sources while striving to master a variety of skills (abilities), talents, virtues, and bodies of knowledge. At the psychological stage of the integral self an individual cultivates a clear and present awareness of his mind, and polices his thoughts so that he develops a great awareness of what he is or isn't

doing. He knows what he does or doesn't understand, and thus can better guide himself to learn and create exactly what he wants, which is a better state of being for himself and others. He also works on transforming his innate, inherent habit energies so that they are no longer a detriment to happiness. He is not bound solely by the conventional thinking, the educational trends of the day, or the social, cultural, religious, political or economic structures of the times.

I like to think of this as the stage of the true spiritual cultivator in the world who is investigating every religion and spiritual stream to discover the true path and its practices in order to attain the true highest achievements, which is what I've tried to give you in this book.

HOLISTIC SELF

The next development in consciousness hasn't happened yet, but Spiral Dynamics speculates that it is that of a *holistic mindset* that is more focused on the global community of life, such as the Earth with all its cultures and creatures, rather than just the individual self who is typically bound to just one nation or culture.

This *systemic self* doesn't believe in Communism but in collective individualism, which is an apt description of the true state of the world. It is guided by a great compassion and caring dimension that pursues social harmony and prosperity, the end of suffering, and well-being for all. Furthermore, within that framework every individual can cultivate all their talents and skills in whatever direction they like. We might say that a multidimensional perspective characterizes this mindset, which can accept everything because it doesn't privilege any one type of experience as the whole of existence.

In a sense this psychological evolution represents the saint, sage, master, Bodhisattva or Buddha self who can know the minds of countless sentient beings, including all their problems and afflictions – their aggravations, defilements and sufferings – because of transcendental body attainments and various powers, specifically the *nirmanakaya* emanations that can enter the minds of other beings. They can feel when someone is thinking of them whenever it happens via the vibrations within the lower etheric realms. These spiritual great ones can also go into other people's bodies/brains to know all their thoughts, memories, problems and inclinations, and have the ability to affect their thoughts as well. They also can know the future of man and mankind, and use their aforementioned powers to prevent people from committing great harm to themselves and others.

You can read a book like *Elder Porphyrios: Testimonies and Experiences* to see many of the diverse activities that an enlightened master will undertake

to help people such as telling them their future, emanating *yang shen* bodies to prevent them from killing themselves, and confronting each of their problems with different medicine.

This is the standard career of a saint, sage, master, Buddha or Bodhisattva. Their influences are blessing people everywhere all the time to help specific ends.

Buddhas or Bodhisattvas who have a high enough transcendental body are “knowing” or “witnessing” everything that countless beings are doing in lower realms by “knowing their minds.” This is why in the Buddhist sutras Sahkakyamuni would say, “I know the minds of all sentient beings.” It’s because he can use a *nirmanakaya* emanation to go inside a person and then understand their consciousness by reading the brain’s thoughts. The Hindu sage Nisargadatta Maharaj explained this a different way: “Every existence is my existence, every consciousness is my consciousness, every sorrow is my sorrow and every joy is my joy – this is universal life.” It’s not just that you can know the thoughts of other sentient beings. Since you are Shakti and they are Shakti then their thoughts and problems are your thoughts and problems too.

Because they can within/through the capabilities of their higher bodies know everything people think and do, the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas develop a greater understanding and acceptance of the human condition from feeling their pains and sufferings as their own. Hence, this stage of psychology does not reject but accepts and comprehends all minds and types of consciousness, and works to heal humanity of errant thought patterns or perspectives, harmful emotions and habits, and engender better states of consciousness and being. Hence the *Avatamsaka Sutra* states that Buddhas work to give people peace and joy, help them to taste tranquility, evaporate their desires, free them from stinginess, inspire within them kindness, establish good roots their mind, cool their anger, help them break habits and so on. This is the career of the Buddhas and Bodhisattva.

These psychological stages of development oscillated back and forth between a focus on the individual or on the group, from an I-orientation to a we-orientation and then back again in alternating fashion. This is not just a tendency in human psychological development but in historical political and cultural development too, which I pointed out in *Culture, Country, City, Company, Product, Person, Purpose, Passion, World*.

Thus, historian Arthur Schlesinger noted that American politics swings back and forth between liberalism and conservatism, namely an I-emphasis and We-emphasis. Historian Frank Klingberg noted that American foreign policy repeatedly cycled back and forth between extroversion and introversion, a We-phase and Me-phase.

Neil Howe and William Strauss discovered that the generations in society also oscillated back and forth between a group emphasis on We and

individualistic ethic focused on Me. After studying 3,000 years of history, Roy Williams and Michael Drew also found that societies follow a very predictable pattern in transiting through a 40-year generational cycle that swings like a pendulum between an individualistic, unique, “I’m special with unlimited potential” Me-pole and a group-oriented, team, tribal, collective We-pole. They also noted that American generational musical themes swing back and forth between that very same I-focus and We-focus. The behavior of large groups is extremely predictable in nature. It is predictable in the sense that society always takes things too far in one direction, and then swings the other way.

Similarly, the *animistic survival* self phase of human development focuses on Me. The *magical* self phase of human development focuses on the We of the tribe. The *egocentric* self focuses on Me once again. The *conformist rule* self focuses on the We of the group. The *individual achiever* self focuses on the Me. The *caring communal* self focuses on We. The *holistic* systemic self focuses on self-development to comprehend and understand, which is an “I” or “Me” focus. The *holistic Buddha* self focuses on the all-encompassing health of the We, namely the world and cosmic life.

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CYCLE OF PREEMINENCE

There is yet another type of psychological development that mankind regularly progresses through that is exhibited during the build up and decline of human countries and empires. First noted by Glubb Pasha, and explained in *Culture, Country, City, Company, Product, Person, Passion, World*, the cycle is that mankind holds the greatest admiration and emulation for different types of heroes at different points in time. It admires those who are the primary builders or centers of society and culture at its current stage of development. In other words, people take as heroes a different type of individual during different stages of societal evolution.

Glubb Pasha’s observation was that there is a generalized pattern describing the development of many countries, empires and their march towards prosperity. Specifically, it takes several hundred years for a population to pass through seven regular stages of economic and psychological development, and the psychological mindset of individuals naturally evolves in a certain regular way through these stages. At each stage society is preoccupied with a different type of living, and champions different heroes as its ideal. What people strive for and what they consider preeminent is a function of the society and circumstances in which they live, and this becomes reflected in their mindset and psychology.

Pasha found that as an empire grows the people typically pass through (1) an age of discovery and outburst where adventurous pioneers hold the highest esteem within society, (2) an age of conquests where soldiers and

warriors are considered preeminent, (3) an age of commerce where businessmen are adulated, (4) an age of affluence where the pursuit of wealth becomes the predominant driving force within society and the rich are the most admired, (5) an age of intellect where scholars and academics are now highly esteemed, (6) an age of decadence where the populace starts experiencing moral decline, and then (7) an age of increasing decline and collapse.

In the first two ages, Glubb Pasha observed that a small and insignificant nation is established by hardy pioneers, gradually grows stronger and then suddenly overruns large areas of the world through conquest. Two perfect examples are the rise of Macedon because of Philip II and Alexander the Great, and the rise of the Mongols. This is an age of heroes because the warrior conquerors are extremely resourceful, full of energy and courage, daring, adventuresome and aggressive. Therefore the predominant psychology is that the population admires warrior heroes, and youths wish to emulate them.

Eventually, businessmen take over as the dominant characters within society during the two next stages of development, which are the ages/phases of commerce and affluence. Business and commerce become dominant in the new kingdom as vast areas of land are now united as a single territory under one government and its set of laws. Commercial prosperity depends on peace, and because society becomes internally free of warfare and conflict, that safety opens up an extremely large market area that allows commerce to flourish. Thus you see the growth of affluence.

The public at this time turns its sights to making money because of the many new opportunities available. Whereas glory and honor were the principal ambitions at the previous stage of development, the wealthy businessman now becomes the model of success, and the hero that society wishes to emulate. He becomes rich and society wants what he has.

Society, growing more and more affluent from the spread of business commerce dependent on the internal peace, and weary of taking unnecessary risks, now values material success while it downplays the values of the soldier. Military patriotism therefore loses its shine. The sense of duty and devotion to public service drops away because the desires to become wealthy and enjoy a life of ease now take their place. Schools stop producing brave patriots while students start seeking the academic qualifications that will reward them with the highest possible salaries. As the commercial classes grow rich through trade, the empire starts to spend more money to build communications and transportation infrastructure. Great cities and municipalities invest in magnificent architecture and art.

However, people start losing themselves in their luxuries. Moral decline accompanies this magnificence in human progress because the pursuit of wealth replaces the ideals of service, honor and adventure in the aspirations

of men. Men now no longer try to bring grandeur to their country, but seek it for themselves as a private interest. Virtue becomes secondary to the self-oriented desire to become rich.

At this stage, the empire now turns to defensiveness in its foreign relations. The goal is to retain its wealth and luxury rather than engage in aggressive conflict to amass more. To justify its pacifistic departure from its historically aggressive traditions that once brought greatness, militarism and aggressiveness are now denounced as immoral.

Business investment made possible by the empire's unity after conquests builds the stability and riches that leads to the next stage of development, the age of the intellect. Through the amassing of great wealth, ample funds and leisure now become available for the pursuit of knowledge. During this fifth stage of development, rich patrons seeking praise and fame sponsor works of art, music and literature and endow institutions of learning.

The empire spends large sums of money to establish educational institutions such as colleges, universities and high schools. Individuals now wish to learn and many become scholars because knowledge is now highly prized. After all, knowledge, in a certain manner, is what leads the human person upwards.

At its beginnings society saw popular enthusiasm for the pursuit of military glory, next it saw popular enthusiasm for the accumulation of wealth, and now men pursue academic fame and honor. Glubb Pasha found that the heroes of the empire change over time as do the psychological values of the people, and now the hero is the intellectual. The hero is the learned man rather than the greedy businessman concerned with wealth, the military man concerned with conquest, or the explorer concerned with discovery and adventure. Where pioneers and explorers, soldiers, military glory, and builders were first admired, this evolved to admiration for successful businessmen and entrepreneurs who amassed wealth, and then the role of preeminence finally turned to academics and intellectuals (academic fame).

During the final stages of the empire's decadence and decline, the most admired members of society finally become what were often considered the most superficial talents of society, namely performers such as athletes, musicians, actors and celebrities. The eventual high admiration for empty accomplishment exposes a shallowness that typically accompanies cultural decline. This is the next phase of evolution.

During the prior age of intellect, surprising advances are often made in the fields of academics and natural science. However, just as was seen in the case of ancient Athens, when the focus turns to intellectual discussion and debate rather than action then the tendency for action wanes greatly. Discussions and arguments start proliferating at this stage. There is too much talking and argument but very little resolution of problems and little

movement forward, and so public affairs worsen.

In the age of intellectual achievements, cynical intellectuals and argumentative skeptics started arising who oppose traditional values and even the religious beliefs of their empire. Now those internal political divisions, rivalries and hatreds that were created begin to intensify; internal political factions and dissension proliferate. Intellectual skepticism destroys the remaining unifying ideals of national self-sacrifice, loyalty, duty and solidarity that binds the people and brought them to greatness. As these values disappear, it sets the stage for decline. Where once the population was characterized by triumphant confidence during the ages of conquest and commerce, now you find the proliferating tendencies of materialism, sensual indulgence, frivolity and pessimism.

This leads to the sixth age of decadence whereupon an empire loses its resolution and enters a stage of pronounced cultural and moral decline. It is through a “decline in merit,” “decline in values” or “decline in virtue” that the empire suffers deterioration. During this phase of decadence society starts exhibiting increasing materialism, a marked indifference to religion, a decline in sexual morals (along with an increase in gay sex and an aversion to marriage in favor of “living together”), a relaxation or abandonment of personal discipline, and an increase in the divorce rate that undermines family stability. Men start to become economically non-productive or even destructive. At this stage, pleasure seeking, hedonistic pursuits and pessimism increase within the populace so that some people drop out of society entirely and become preoccupied with mindless entertainments such as drugs, alcohol, fighting and sexual pleasures. Today we might add video games or phone apps to this list.

The government at this stage, continuing to imagine that it will always be automatically rich, continues to spend lavishly on benevolent educational and medical missions, or other social projects that collectively create a welfare state. An example is Rome’s government-provided “bread and circuses” that were initiated to keep the masses pacified via free food and entertainment. The welfare obligations at this stage swell tremendously and the public becomes overly dependent upon them. The populace begins to believe that the state-provided largess is their right rather than a privilege.

Glubb Pasha found that it took about ten generations for hardy, self-sufficient and courageous pioneers to transform into people with a welfare state mentality! He found a generalized pattern of rise and fall, revealed in the history of countless empires, where an empire begins through self-sacrifice and discipline, but eventually becomes undermined through the growth of wealth and comfort that gradually destroy the character values upon which it was founded. Over time a country’s internal unity, which enabled it to grow great and strong, eventually weakens and then fractures. The final stages of existence involve a lowering of moral standards,

cynicism, pessimism and frivolity.

Basically, a country through struggle grows in affluence, but bathing in affluence slowly dissolves any sense of duty that people feel to the common good. When affluence becomes the norm then people assume it to be permanent, and arises the desire to maximize personal gain and then to delve into decadence. The corrosive desire for money and material success, together with a rise in frivolity, selfishness, self-absorption and hedonism, eventually causes both the common people and societal elites to lose their sense of duty and willingness to sacrifice for the common good, which is what built the empire in the first place. Slowly through the generations, men who once were ready to sacrifice and serve become opportunity seekers ready to snatch or steal. The populace sees a decline in its moral character. Basically, the psychology of the people deteriorates.

Glubb Pasha observed that an empire affected by disintegrating morality, decadence and destruction of its social unity grows weaker and more vulnerable to destruction by negative forces arising inside or outside of it. However, it basically erodes from within. A populace corrupted by the enjoyment of money and power for too long ends up becoming selfish and idle, unwilling to undertake sacrifices or make great efforts. If minorities coming into the fold also do not assimilate, this further weakens the unity of the collective whole. In general, for one reason or another the population gradually discards the very values of confidence, hardiness, tenacity, responsibility and self-discipline that had helped to create its greatness in the first place, and then the country ultimately collapses.

Glubb Pasha found that these six phases follow one another with remarkable regularity. Empires have tended to experience similar stages of development and decline and you can see how human psychology changes its focus during these various stages of development. Throughout all these different stages of development, it is the rare individual who sticks to a course of disciplined, selfless, virtuous behavior and who also makes great efforts to help others and the common good.

THE AVATAMSAKA SUTRA

In the *Avatamsaka Sutra*, also known as the *Flower Ornament Sutra* (*Hua Yen Jing*) of Buddhism, many protector deities, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas devoted to helping humanity assemble for a grand teaching and are introduced. Their names represent particular talents, predominant personality traits or the type of activity they primarily use to help others. In other words, their names reveal the predominant ways in which they try to help mankind.

The standard method that a saint or sage uses for helping us is by

affecting either our consciousness or Qi/Prana (our inner body energy), which they do by using one of their bodies to go inside us and give us thoughts or Qi/Prana. Or, they might impel/motivate someone of a lower stage of attainment than themselves to go and perform that task for them. You have to submit to a lot of this sort of influence during the course of spiritual practice since they especially do this during someone's twelve years of the kundalini transformation process.

During that process, the devas will regularly assemble with their teachers in your brain to watch the changes that occur in neurons when they use their bodies to affect your thoughts. This is poetically described in *Avatamsaka Sutra* with phrases such as "in every thought I will magically produce various Lotus-like Webs of Light, everywhere raining down showers of Jewel producing marvelous sounds." When someone is giving you wonderful thoughts, this poetically describes what you see in the brain.

When neurons fill with new memories the "webs of light" or "radiant banners" and other analogies are indeed a poetic way of describing the bioelectrical reactions between neurons that devas are watching. A Bodhisattva who vows to use his own powers to bring about better mental states in someone might also describe the vow by saying he will "constantly emit (give off) sounds to bring great joy," which is another way of saying he will give thoughts to people to make them happy. He might also say that he will "tame their minds," which means subjugating someone's errant thought patterns through their own thoughts, thus overriding them to make them better.

This is actually the same power claimed in the spiritual literature of Hinduism and Yoga. There it is claimed that yogis with realization – saints, sages, sadgurus, etc. at advanced stages of accomplishment – attain the capability of making people do whatever they want by "transmigrating into other bodies" to "gain the power of control (dominion) over kings and gods." They can do this for any people at lower stages beneath them, meaning anyone having bodies on lower planes than their own. Unfortunately, if the karma people must experience is thick, heavy or fixed then there is little they can do to change it despite their capabilities.

Regardless, this explains why someone with higher spiritual attainments can "block" the superpowers of someone with lower attainments. You simply use your higher body to go into someone's lower body and block their abilities (of that body) by blocking their consciousness from using them. You use your body's energy to affect the underling. You might have a Causal body while they have a subtle body, so you can use your Causal body to go into their subtle body and control them so that their superpowers don't manifest.

Devas, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are practicing tricks like this on each other all the time, and love practicing giving people certain thoughts and

emotions or blocking them. When you are trying to think about something they might make your thoughts seem blocked or confused. If you seem to be thinking of the same memory/situation over and over again and can't break free from it, or hear music continually playing in your head, or feel a consistent impulse to do something, or suddenly have a strange thought out of nowhere that has nothing to do with what you were previously thinking, or hear mantras/prayers being recited on their own inside you, these are usually such involvements as explained in the *Surangama Sutra*. If you want to get rid of such influences so that they stop, just start reciting prayers or protective mantras so that you can regain your mental clarity.

In the *Avatamsaka Sutra* there are many devas, deities, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas who are described with fragrant names, and many announce their vows of how they will help sentient beings. The vows they declare include activities such as the following: emancipate all living beings, bestow boundless peace and joy upon sentient beings, dispel their delusions, grant them broader perspectives, help them recollect their oaths of virtue, bring to mind their responsibility to help others, grant them comprehension of difficult *dharma*s, produce all kinds of displays for the benefit of sentient beings and manifest before them, reveal the path of transcendence, cause them to meet others who can help them, eradicate their suffering, give them a taste of tranquil states of mind, help them understand the teachings of the sages, enable them to enter into peaceful mental states, enable them to recollect teachings, guide them according to their capabilities, subdue their hatred and malice, eradicate their dark and deluded thoughts, help them know/derive the means of eradicating their misfortunes, inspire them to cultivate virtue and merit, inspire kindness, end their distress and suffering, sever their wrong views and delusions, eradicate all their fears, evaporate their desires, provide fearlessness and protection that leads to peace, safety and security, eradicate their resentment and tendency to harm, cause them to leave frightening paths, help them amass merit and virtue, help them to understand their own mental objects, protect them from difficulty, use fragrant wind [their Qi] to eradicate their illnesses, establish good roots in their minds, free them from stinginess and perfect their practice of giving, provide understanding for enlightenment practices, activate their stores of wisdom, cause them to cultivate virtues, give them thoughts of cultivating virtue, establish good roots of kindness, help them produce proper thoughts, replenish their physical strength [through Qi], rid their minds of defiling afflictions, cause them to produce pure good roots, cool their anger, wash away their defilements, make their minds pure and free from obstructions, motivate them to perform deeds that benefit sentient beings, cause them to give rise to great deeds, help them break the barriers of habit, help them avoid going along with bedeviling things, make firm their resolve to improve themselves, subdue their hatred and malice, and more.

In the “Great Repentance of the 88 Buddhas” prayer, which enables you to repent your misdeeds by reciting 88 different Buddha names, you can derive some of the predominant activities or characteristics of the Buddhas from their names. Many of these names show the same activities as found in the abbreviated *Avatamsaka Sutra* list just mentioned. There is also a list of thirty-five confession Buddhas from the Mahayana *Sutra of the Three Heaps* (Sanskrit: *Triskandhadharmasutra*). Together with the information from the *Avatamsaka Flower Ornament Sutra*, you can derive the main activities, or predominant characteristics of several of these Buddhas.

You must remember that in Buddhist Sutras “flowers” such as lotuses represent the appearance of neuron patterns in the brain for a certain topic, fragrances (such as sandalwood) represent Qi/Prana, the moon or pearls represents Yin Qi or a female Buddha while golden light or the sun represents Yang Qi. Light represents not just consciousness (illumination) but the superfine thoughts of a full Arhat stage Buddha or Immanence-bodied Buddha who are both said to have bodies of light. For instance, here are several of the 88 Buddhas and what their name means:

- Heroic Giver Buddha (Shridatta Buddha) - this would be a Buddha who is not only generous himself but also inspires people with the thoughts to be generous givers
- Wealth of Virtue Buddha (Danashri Buddha) - this would be a Buddha who had cultivated virtuous being, and who probably specializes in causing people to cultivate virtues and boundless pure qualities (so he establishes in people the roots of virtue)
- Sorrowless Glory or Sorrowless Virtue Buddha (Ashokarshi Buddha) – this would be a Buddha who has cultivated the virtuous trait of helping to end people’s sorrows such as by eradicating their suffering, giving them peace and joy, and ending various types of distress
- Glorious Flower or Flower of Merit Buddha (Kusumashri Buddha) – this Buddha name indicates that he creates great merit by his deeds, which are remembered in his brain and seen as flowers in the neural pattern, and helps people do deeds that create great merit
- Jewel Moonlight or Precious Moon Buddha (Ratnachandraprabha Buddha) - this would be a female Buddha who helps people with various types of thought (moonlight) or simply by helping them with her Yin Qi
- Mastery of Knowledge Lotus Light Buddha (Padmajyotivikrodhitabhijna Buddha) - this would be a Buddha who knows a lot himself and who would help you learn/master various topics or bodies of knowledge; he is also known as Lotus Light Rays Clearly Knowing by Play
- He Without Craving or Son of Non-craving Buddha (Narayana Buddha) – this is a Buddha who has mastered detachment and helps people

ARHAT YOGA

become free of passions, and stop clinging to old ideas, habits, customs, etc. such as becoming free of stinginess

- Glorious Recollection or Glorious Mindfulness Buddha (Smrtishri Buddha) – based on whether the name is recollection or mindfulness, it means a Buddha that helps you stay mindful of your thoughts or helps you retrieve things from your memories
- Marching Forth in Wholesome Merit Buddha (Suvikrantashri Buddha) – this would be a Buddha who gives people thoughts that help them amass virtue and merit
- Great Knowledge Light Buddha - this would be a Buddha who knows a lot and helps people by giving them thoughts on various topics (knowledge)
- Illuminating Talent Buddha - this would be a Buddha who helps people attain various skills or talents, which are skills you develop
- Sumeru Light Buddha – as Mount Sumeru stands for the highest point in our body, namely the head, this simply means a Buddha who gives people high-level thoughts (light) in their brain
- Wonderful Voice Supreme Buddha – this would be a Buddha who gives you wonderful thoughts in your brain; as with all such influences the Buddha thinks the thoughts and you believe they are yours
- Light of Sun and Moon Buddha – this would be a Buddha skilled in giving people both Yin Qi and Yang Qi assistance
- Golden Flower Light Buddha – this would be a Buddha who would give you wonderful thoughts causing you to develop a new neuronal pattern in your brain, like a flower, that is so virtuous or beneficial it is described as a golden flower
- Wholesome Intent Buddha – this is a Buddha who uses his *nirmanakaya* to give you thoughts of wholesome intent; in other words, they motivate you to do good, virtuous deeds of some type by establishing wholesome intent in your mind
- Treasury of Kindness Buddha – this would be a Buddha who would arouse within you thoughts of kindness to do good deeds to help others such as the practice of giving
- King of the Power of Love Buddha - this would be a Buddha who would arouse within you thoughts of love for others in order to prompt you to help them
- Sandalwood Cavern Victorious Adornment Buddha – as the cave stands for the skull and sandalwood for Qi, this would be a Buddha who gives you thoughts (adornments) that deal with being victorious in perseverance or struggle such as overcoming habits, changing one's behavior, accomplishing a deed and so forth; or, it is a Buddha who can

subdue even the most intractable, stubborn thought tendencies of a person thus helping them to change

- Cassia Sandalwood Fragrance Buddha – as Cassia sandalwood stands for a beautiful aroma, this would be a Buddha who helps people by entering into them and giving them the benefits of his glorious Qi energy for whatever purposes are necessary
- Pearl Pennant Lamp Light Buddha – this would be a female Buddha who helps people with various types of thought (lamp light)
- Strength of Effort Hero Buddha - this would be a Buddha who helps give people the strength to perform deeds
- Great Compassionate Light Buddha - this would be a Buddha who helps arouse within people the thoughts and activities of showing compassion for others by helping them

As you can see from the *Avatamasaka Sutra* list and a sample of the 88 Buddhas given here, the various activities of the enlightened beings are all about (1) giving people thoughts to mentally influence them or (2) influencing their Qi energy. That's because the primary way that spiritual beings help sentient beings on lower planes is by influencing their consciousness or energy with their own higher bodies.

A perfect example of this comes from *My Elder Joseph the Hesychast* where a Christian monk Fr. Joseph talked about receiving spiritual help from a Geronda, which is an elderly father or hieromonk with spiritual attainments. When young Fr. Joseph would often receive a letter from a particular elder he found, "There I would find written down the state I was in, and the reason for whatever was preoccupying me and where it came from. And the strange thing was that even before I opened it, a change would take place within me; all sadness vanished and I was filled with spiritual joy, and I was no longer concerned about many of the things that had been choking me with worry a short while before! At other times this happened even without a letter, just with the awareness of the Elder's presence in a supranatural manner; and I always understood this, when it approached me in a manner that left no room for doubt."²⁷

This is an example of the powers revealed by the *Avatamsaka Sutra* where devas, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas announce what they will do for people. The master knew what the monk was going through because he would periodically enter into him to check on his state. Also, he would enter into him and transform his thoughts and emotions for the better. It is as Dostoevsky said, namely that an enlightened spiritual master "is one who takes your soul, your will, into his soul and his will." They try to help you by

²⁷ Elder Ephraim, *My Elder Joseph the Hesychast*, (Saint Anthony's Greek Orthodox Monastery, Arizona, 2013), p. 298.

influencing you for the better.

Socrates reported about his inner *daimonion*, a divine something, who would frequently internally warn him against making mistakes. This is the same sort of influence although sometimes it is just *our conscience* warning us when we are about to do something errant or stupid (and because we don't cultivate ourselves we end up doing it anyway). Many people get strong feelings inside or intuitions that something will happen to them or that they should *not* do something, and this is sometimes the influence of Heaven trying to help us.

It is ironic that we often get warnings and do stupid things anyway. Our "stupidity" exhibits the fact that we went along with karma or our passions rather than pursue a course of wisdom and self-discipline. It *always takes energy to change karma*, which is a rule to remember, and we weren't willing to make the effort. Many soldiers even know when they are going to get shot during war, which are also demonstrations of such influences as well. Many people also know when they are to about to die, which is because higher beings have informed them by giving them "very fine thoughts" (fourth dhyana level thoughts, which means an influence from someone's Supra-Causal body), and thus they prepare themselves accordingly.

Of course, parental, cultural and religious influences also train people to think and act a certain way. Ethical teachings are another way to influence people so that they live a noble life and don't give into errant thoughts or impulses that need to be corrected. The Stage of Study (Wisdom) and Virtue Provisioning, which is the foundation of all religions and spiritual paths, doesn't just mean learning to understand things. It doesn't refer to just studying spiritual texts because "study" means regular training or practice to be a certain way.

As Hippocrates said, "Before you heal someone, ask him if he's willing to give up the things that made him sick," which in this case means replacing bad mindsets, habits and behaviors with higher values, more wholesome perspectives and virtuous conduct. This requires training ior practice. Insight, smarts and understanding are just some of the aspects involved with wisdom accumulation because it means becoming a certain way - changing the way we think and live.

You have to repeat something over and over again, and incorporate it into your life, to learn it well enough that it becomes part of your automatic processing, your conditioned way of thinking or doing things. You must slowly, gradually, continually step through a regular process of exposure and reinforcing activity to instill something deep enough within you so that it becomes part of your psyche and normal way of doing things, and then must practice to *go beyond* that to develop excellence in that direction. Learning or study when it comes to behavior, for instance, means training your reactions into a natural response, and training your personality to

possess new traits. It means self-policing your behavior to avoid errors, such as social gaffes and manifestations of ill will or bad temperament. It also means becoming more effective because you understand, via wisdom, how acting a certain way or doing a certain set of activities will eventually accomplish whatever you want.

Christians might say that heavenly beings (angels or guardian spirits) sometimes bestow grace upon us, but this is just another way of describing the ordinary activity of devas, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas who regularly give people thoughts (inspiration, motivation, ideas, etcetera) or helpful energy. All devas can do this and are regularly interacting with humans all the time in various ways, but people don't know it. For you to be able to do this while alive you have to attain the subtle deva body attainment at minimum, which then makes you, in the words of various traditions, a saint, sage or immortal. The subtle deva body is etheric in nature, and can pass into a physical body while a Causal or Mental body can pass into a human body *and* subtle body, and so on. The higher the body, the more subtle or fine the type of thoughts it can give to others, and the highest can give you what I would call a deep impression that is like a palpable determination or knowing that is both a conviction along with an intense feeling of certitude.

In other words, for you to be able to give thoughts to people to help them you must possess the yogic capability to do so, which in turn means you must have cultivated higher transcendental bodies that can enter into people to give them thoughts, emotions and inclinations. Buddhism tells you this, the Yoga schools tell you this, and the western religions have many examples of saints doing this too. Now, to cultivate the higher spiritual bodies you have to devote yourself to a spiritual path of cultivation, which for most people involves becoming a monastic or yogi ascetic of some type. Of course, ascetics are still associated with spiritual traditions because they need teachers and the heavenly beings of a tradition to work on their inner Qi body. Furthermore, to achieve success at this task you must train your personality and conduct so that you are a good, ethical, virtuous person, otherwise no one is going to help you succeed since success means that you can then affect the minds of others.

This is why even the devas in Heaven are working on polishing their virtues all the time. The cultivators among them are always working on getting rid of their own errant mental tendencies and cultivating their personalities. If they become like polished jade then the Causal-bodied and higher bodied Buddhas and Bodhisattvas will work on them so that they can attain a higher body. They have to generate merit too, and the easiest way to do so is by helping other sentient beings, especially humans since that is easiest. For us the easiest way to generate merit is through altruism, which is helping others through charity and other compassionate means. Some people sacrifice themselves to do so, and others are simply

philanthropists who donate their wealth to good causes, such as helping the needy, rather than use it for conspicuous consumption. Everyone has a different psychology as well as unique personal problems and issues, so you have to ask your own spiritual teacher, if enlightened, what is the best way for you personally to gain merit.

Here is a very important key point! This is another reason why the common foundational stage of all true religions and spiritual paths is about cultivating/perfecting your personality, character, values, ethics, virtues, intentions, thinking, mindset, speech, demeanor and behavior/activities. You normally obtain the deva body when you die, for that is the reward of the “heavenly life” that all good people attain. The physical body is simply considered the temporary lodging of the spirit made of Qi that is released upon death. But no one is going to work on giving you this attainment, where you can affect people’s thoughts while alive, unless you yourself become an admirable human being in terms of your own virtues, thoughts and behavior. This is why the road of religion tells you to work on purifying your mind and behavior. This is the foundational stage of all religions. It doesn’t just help society, but helps you too.

Therefore the spiritual path of cultivation all comes down to becoming a kind, loving, compassionate, helpful, generous, fair, intelligent, wise, prudent, disciplined (self-controlled), responsible, sociable, civic-oriented, humble (not arrogant), virtuous, ethical individual. We could add all sorts of adjectives, but you get the point. It comes down to being a good person as well as being effective in life rather than useless. You need wisdom to be able to understand people and situations, and for determining how to do things properly. Simplicity is thus a virtue. You need proper conduct in order to remain in harmony with society, and the relevant social virtues to be beloved and get along with others. You need the tendency to give of yourself to make a contribution to society, and discipline to succeed on the self-cultivation path. You need energy, diligence or vigor to take on all sorts of tasks and complete them, which requires concentration and perseverance. There are all sorts of values and virtues you need. You also need tolerance, patience, humor and open-mindedness in order to accept all you will see within people, which is a lot of dirty shit along with the good stuff.

Remember, we are still animals so we all still have animal tendencies, psychologies, passion and animal urges within our natures. We have to train our consciousness *and our behavior* to transcend such urges. The Great Learning of Confucius, “conversion of manners” in the Christian tradition, or the Great Betterment is that we have to convert our ways of thinking and behaving. Furthermore, all of us have some errant tendencies that we have learned in this life or brought with us from past lives, and every one of us has some history of having done some stupid things including things we

are really embarrassed about or ashamed of. Our psyches or personalities, which produce all our behaviors, are a mixture of many different behavioral algorithms that become incorporated into our neurons, and thus control the operations of our consciousness. Our modern psychology also includes features from many of the previous stages of psychological development that human culture has passed through. All these things must be transformed, namely uplifted on the spiritual path.

In any case, “virtue/ethics training” to teach people good behavior is the standard emphasis of religion. It is the foundational stage of the spiritual path that is not just necessary for enabling large groups of humans to be able to live with one another in large social networks of cooperation, but has a bonus to it. Think of a time when you did a good deed and it warmed your heart, or you saw something kind and merciful and it moved both your emotions and the energy within your body. That internal movement represents a purification of your inner Qi body because of doing good deeds. Cultivating virtuous thinking and behavior, and activities like showing reverence for God or humble thankfulness/gratefulness of some type, actually purifies your Qi/Prana. It actually cultivates your energy, it purifies you.

The right types of positive emotional experiences enervate the Yang Qi within you so they transform/purify your inner subtle body. Furthermore, the more you feel such emotions *and become that way*, the more your mental processes and conditioned neurons will transform in that direction, thus elevating/purifying you in turn.

You can choose to become more of a certain way in this life and in subsequent lives if you choose to cultivate certain virtues and character traits. In fact, this is what life is all about. You decide what type of person you want to be, take that as your ideal or target, and then use everything to *start becoming that*. You plan a life and a personality you’d like to have along with skills and character traits you want, and then you work to develop yourself in that direction.

Reaching towards those goals or ideals is a process of self-perfection, betterment, or transformation. You aim at becoming the person you want to be because that is what you have selected as your target objective of becoming, or being. The transformations that naturally happen to us during life that tosses us this or that way won’t take any of us to a higher target, but your deliberate striving will. It is something that you must plan and then work towards.

This is different from, yet similar to cultivation techniques such as that within the *Prasna Upanishad*: “If he meditates on the highest person with three elements of the syllable Aum (a, u, m) he becomes one with the light.” In this case you hold in your mind the ideal of being a certain way or like a certain person and try to become that person or possess those attributes,

holding onto the feeling of the Qi and emotions that represent being that ideal. Then in real life you must *act that way*. You must force yourself to act out or achieve within that lane.

Alternatively, you can just imagine that you are a body of formless light, like space, and recite the Aum mantra while holding onto that internal vision that you are infinite light in all directions. As with all such Qi/Prana cultivation methods, as soon as you feel your Qi/Prana start moving inside you then you must refrain from clinging to those feelings even if they are uncomfortable. You can know them, but don't grasp at them because the act of clinging will inhibit and shut down the transformation process of Qi to some extent. In other word, if you change your focus to concentrating on the Qi when it starts spontaneously moving inside you, that change of focus may crimp the flow of Qi/Prana. Hence, you must remain in a natural state of non-clinging, which is the Middle Way.

This, by the way, is the meaning of the formless empty space samadhi of Buddhism. In this meditation practice, you recognize that lots of things arise in empty space but you just let them be and remain as empty space while they transform. You can know them but you are not them, so you can be detached from them while seeing them arise and depart without any attachment or entanglement. You are free and easy.

It is also equivalent to the Taoist practice of inner viewing where you recognize/know the Qi movements within yourself, but refuse to get entangled with them and just let them be. Whenever you start to guide that Qi/Prana, however, then it becomes the practice of *anapana*, *nei-gong* or inner energy work. The purpose of emptiness meditation is to let Qi arise within you while maintaining mental clarity and openness. In a state of quiescence, the natural potential of your life force develops and starts moving within your body, which can even heal illness as well as defer decline and aging. The purpose of *nei-gong* inner energy work is to guide your Qi/Prana here and there inside you. Yogis will revolve the Qi/Prana in certain limbs, organs, orbits or patterns thousands of times per day. With some basic knowledge of acupuncture meridians, organs and regular anatomical knowledge you can figure out logical ways to do so.

In the *Prasna Upanishad*, the "highest person" can mean several things. I have taken it to remind you how to change your personality, and thus your fortune in life because you can cultivate to become the person you want to be. You set up a goal structure of a certain personality you want to have and even a certain type of life you want to live. You create a vision of the life you want. You plan your goals of being, specify exactly what they mean, and then work at becoming that.

In that mixture, at its very center, should firmly stand your core values and the principle of virtuous character. At its core is the task of ennoblement, which is perfecting yourself to become better than who you

already are. You come into the world with past life inheritances, which become further modified through genetics, parental training, social conditioning and so on. You take that as who you presently are and then start building upon it to create something better. In *Quick, Fast, Done* I even showed how you could create schedules to accomplish this.

If you put yourself in a new environment or subject yourself to a training program to become a new and better way then new genes will turn on and encode for new proteins. Changes even happen in the brain due to continual types of mental activity. Typically we create environments around us correlated with our genetic propensity, such as children with a genetic propensity for high intelligence preferring to read books. But we also know your brain's structure and circuitry will change because of what you actually do, the proof shown by London taxi drivers as well as musicians and athletes. This means that genes will express *because of our activities*. In particular, new behaviors and ways of thinking will change your neural patterns. By affecting the plasticity of your brain, new behaviors will reshape the brain so that it performs those activities with more ease and less effort.

Now, if you delve into something deeply enough, long enough, not only will your mind change but so will your Qi. This is why you can often easily tell who is the banker or lawyer in the room just from the way they stand or present themselves. Their behavior has changed due to their occupational shaping, and so has their personality and Qi. From transformations of your Qi will evolve changes in your internal structure all the way down to your molecular structure so that everything starts falling into a more consistent alignment. According to Chinese cultivation schools, certain acupuncture meridians will open more than others leading to greater Qi flow affecting certain areas or functions of your body, and hence once again affecting your personality.

Hence, your personality will change due to consistent reinforcement of being a certain way and so will your physiology, which means that you are full of biological potential that won't be realized unless you cultivate. You must recognize that you are full of physical or biological potential that can be unleashed if you cultivate in certain directions. Bodybuilding and athletics are perfect examples of this fact, but to achieve your potential you must make the effort to cultivate. You can even change the entire Qi/Prana of your body through cultivation, and then your emotions and energy will transform too. Then, eventually, so will the internal structure of your body to match with your mental and energetic changes.

Thus a deep commitment to certain behaviors/beliefs or character traits will produce changes significant enough to influence your body, Qi energy, personality, and actions. They will change your life, change your fortune, and can even change your subsequent incarnation. Through

concentrated efforts we can change the trajectory of our lives and our destiny. In other words, changing your personality will change your fortune. This is actually what we want, for we want to be able to become whatever we want to become in life even though there might be obstacles in the way. You are a certain way according to all your past karma, and you should want to hear not that God has some plan for you, but that you can change into a new person and go into a new direction of your own choosing. Other objects and processes in the universe cannot do this, but you are a collection of simples along with vital energy that has consciousness due to its structure, and can choose to do so. You are actually not a “thing in space,” or even an agglomeration of simples, but a place of transformation with consciousness that is connected to all other things in the universe, and thus you have the ability to dramatically change. You can make of yourself whatever you want, and that is the practice and purpose of cultivation.

By acting a different way consistently, through cultivation of *being that way*, you will actually turn on different mental and biological circuits and affect the energetic processes of your vital energy. You can and will transform in the direction of betterment if you set your mind to doing it, which is what life is about. That’s spiritual cultivation.

Life is essentially suffering that we might not be able to eliminate at times, so life isn’t all about happiness but about meaning. It is about reaching to become something beyond yourself that has meaning to you and is better than what you are now (becoming a better you that internally creates well-being), and about reaching or creating a state that is better than what you now experience. This is why you strive to develop merit for subsequent incarnations, and why you try to develop the deva body during this life. The deva body is definitely a better state of existence. Since you are reaching to become/achieve something better – which on your part requires awareness along with actual work effort – you might as well reach for something that is good for you *and* good for everyone else too. Why not strive to become something better where you help everyone else as well? The process of becoming a certain way and the end goal are more satisfying and richer when the end results justifying the striving help others as well.

This all takes work, so you have to think carefully about what you want to become and do because it will require work and sacrifices, which entails suffering, so you want to make sure that the sacrifices you undertake are worth it and will bring the proper future into being. In a nutshell, this is another interpretation of spiritual cultivation. It is about transformation, self-correction, self-perfection or ennoblement (and thus called purification) but in religion it is called spiritualization because it is about becoming better than you are right now, and that lifting up is the meaning of spirituality.

It is also about ideals and striving, whether they are ideals you personally select or ideals that religion suggests for you. It’s about picking

the right direction and locking into it so that all your progress moving forward is positive in that direction no matter how small, and you then work at reaching your goal eventually. You create a system that will get you there, and once you have the right process and do what the system entails there's no reason to be upset about the speed of attaining results or upsets that happen along the way. The system is what saves you. Direction in life is therefore the important thing because you want to be doing things that the future you would be happy about.

Thus, the foundational tier of religious practice, where you work on adopting new values and concentrate on mastering virtuous behavior as the ideal, prepares you for the highest attainments – the transcendental spiritual bodies. Ultimately these attainments are only granted to those individuals “with merit” – those who work hard at spiritual mind-body exercises and transforming themselves mentally/behaviorally into beacons of purity involving values and virtue. *As an absolutely necessity*, they must be virtuous people based on their own personalities and training.

How do you become a virtuous person? How do you train to become this way?

Think deeply about ethics, virtue, and compassion (which is discrimination, *jnana* or wisdom analysis) and try to apply them as your highest mind in real life until this habit becomes ingrained into your personality; use the NLP methods of imitation along with mental rehearsals and immeasurable meditations to reprogram your consciousness (and especially emotions) to naturally act in higher, more elevated ways; follow the virtuous behavior guidelines of religion; and so on. You basically train your mind to think in more virtuous ways and then proactively act in those ways.

I have mentioned several techniques of cutting off faults and afflictions in *Color Me Confucius*. However, proactively training yourself to become a certain way (that becomes natural as a personality trait) takes a lot more effort than simply policing your mind to cut off errant behavior. You are trying to transform your attitudes, perspectives and your thinking algorithms and reactions/behaviors into a new natural process that becomes the core of “you.” It takes time and effort to become a new person. It takes effort to do something different from how you now normally behave, effort to push yourself to go past your habitual comfort zone to become something different, effort to continually do this until you develop new habit energies of a character trait. This is cultivation work.

You must also consider the fact that while you want new character traits as natural characteristics of your personality, it is hard to stay the same under different conditions. For instance, you cannot say what the natural state of water is because it depends upon conditions. If it is freezing then water's natural state should be ice, if it's hot then its natural state should be

steam, if the temperature is warm then water is a liquid. The point is that you can develop certain personality traits for steady-state conditions, but it is hard to maintain that virtue in difficult conditions unless it has really become part of you. You also have to know how virtues should change their shape under different conditions, and when it is proper to switch to something different such as becoming angry when you see injustice and unrighteousness rather than remain slow to take offense.

There is only so much that adopting the patterns or practices of a culture will do for you. Rules imposed from without, such as the oppressive Sharia law that rules Islamic societies, the strict cultural rules of Japan, the specified living conditions of the Amish and Orthodox Jews, or even the strict rules that coordinate a Christian monastic life often provoke a psychological rebellion that seeks freedom from the constraints. Additionally, if you suppress certain traits through restriction, in a subsequent life those suppressed tendencies usually flame forth in glory because they are now freed of the artificial restrictions that previously inhibited their expression. This happens as a type of psychological rebellion against stricture.

This is why you have to transform tendencies rather than simply suppress them, and why the path of slow absorption through perfuming or smoking – which is how ancient Rome absorbed Greek cultural influences to become more elevated – is a way to slowly and safely purify, ennoble, elevate or transform one's aesthetics and behaviors. From a child you slowly absorb influences from everything around you which shape your ideas and behavior, and you have to perform your own self-development work to break free of this cocoon of conditioning and become something greater. Culture is strongly imprinted on you and then your character further evolves according to your own personal development.

Thus the spiritual path is actually a transformation process of purification, spiritualization, divinization, or ennoblement. It is exhalation of the human body, mind, behavior and spirit. You are doing this for your mind, for your personality, for your body and for your behavior. You can word it in many different ways, but cultivation requires transforming your personality, character, thinking and behavior so that you will be able to compassionately affect, uplift, influence, heal or help other human beings through the power of your actions. It is through such acts that you earn the right to possess the higher bodies and escape the lower realms forever.

Once attained you can use your higher bodies, which are the enjoyment reward of Arhats, to go off and live pleasantly in higher realms and never worry about human rebirth again. However, most Arhats feel sympathetic compassion and love for humans, and choose to stay and help as much as they can rather than permanently leave. These are the ones you can call upon for help and assistance, which is why religions have established

prayers and mantras for saints that you can use to ask for their intercession. Each individual who becomes enlightened develops special skills and interests, but the general rule of their activity follows that of John Wesley: They do all the good they can, by all the means they can, in all the ways they can, in all the paces they can, at all the times they can, to all the people they can, as long as they can. In Buddhist parlance they do all the good they can and help good to continue, encourage all unborn good to be born, cut off any evil that is in existence, and make sure that new evil does not arise.

The lowest stage of spiritual training thus enables the highest, and the highest level is just this – to be able to understand the minds of sentient beings, accept what’s in them, and helpfully influence them in a way that pacifies their defilements and mental afflictions, solves their problems and dissolves their troubles, and leads them upwards.

The spiritual path is therefore a path of training that we might call elevation. The ideal is excellence, exquisiteness or perfection. It is about *consummate conduct* before enlightenment and after enlightenment, so don’t ever think the spiritual path is just a set of yogic practices. It is about changing your personality so that your behavior becomes more elevated, refined, disciplined, compassionate and wise.

If you don’t exhibit the consummate conduct mindset of wanting to be a better person and act better then you aren’t qualified for Buddhas to be working on your vital energy for twelve years. I emphasize the yoga aspect of the path in this text because most people don’t know that yogic practices (inner energy work such as mantra and prayer, reverence, stretching exercises, visualization work, *nei-gong*, etcetera) are necessary for higher attainments and can speed their attainment, so this knowledge gap must be filled. It can help many more people achieve the Tao who otherwise would not, especially in the Christian and Jewish traditions. Also, any expertise you develop along this aspiration will help you in terms of health, vitality, and longevity in this life and in the afterlife. Cultivation involves work on perfecting your mind, behavior and body but few schools concentrate on methods of transforming your body for the better.

For your mind you want to be working on accomplishing several goals. You want to become skilled at and able to execute all sorts of special mental processing skills with excellence (such as visualization, planning, prioritizing, deducing, doing math in your head, imagining, memory skills etc.); cultivate better emotional states as your background tonality and become able to control your emotions; cultivate a state of natural “always clear awareness” that is a mental clarity of openness conjoined with knowing your own mind while accompanied by a deep feeling of presence and being alive; you want to always be conscious of what you are doing rather than fall into a robotic, mechanical state of entanglement with mental rote; make better decisions for your behavior and then execute them

flawlessly; be able to control your body and its internal energy states and movements; be able to concentrate and ignore distractions; be able to eliminate at will the afflictions that naturally arise within your mind and dissolve defilements that seem to be steady-state aspects of your psyche/mentality; be able to access internal peace at will; and so forth. The list is larger than this, and perhaps it can be summarized by saying that you want to master all your cognitive faculties – both your deliberate and automatic abilities.

You basically want to *master all the possible activities of consciousness* that your mind is capable of – deliberate mental activity (like decisions and skills), unconscious habitual mental activity (like afflictions or automatic responses you’ve built up due to conditioning), emotional states, intentional conceptual thinking, imaginative thinking (future pacing), the arousing of intentional purposes (intent) that cause you to initiate a sustained pathway of behavior over time, and so forth.

For your body you want to develop expertise in controlling its movements, its internal energy, and its physiological functions. You want to develop a posture and form that moves with grace and elegance, and you want to develop athletic abilities where the ideal of “fitness” includes flexibility, agility, coordination, speed, strength, stamina and endurance. You want to cultivate a state of health where you possess a high degree of energy, alertness and cognitive prowess; your steady-state of background physical sensations are comfortable/blissful, meaning that you can forget being a body or possessing a body, and you are pain free. You want to learn how to unify the body and mind so that there is a perfect coordination between thoughts and movement, and you want to learn how to move your internal energy at will. Perhaps the best way to summarize it is that you want to (inherit through karma and) work on developing a more perfect physical body with what you have been given by your genes, and you want to master all the aspects and capabilities of that physical nature.

For behavior you want to master consummate conduct. This is both wise and compassionate conduct, but also skillful in that it gets things done. It is “best practices” conduct that is smart and efficient (optimal or skillful) because it uses the best ways to accomplish things. It is conduct that adapts to new locations and circumstances, virtuous conduct that is good for yourself and others, and conduct that is good for the short-term, intermediate-term and long-term.

If your conduct is simply intelligent and skillful it may be brutal in accomplishing objectives, and thus lack the necessary compassion and caring required of human beings. If it is too caring it may also lack wisdom and then produce unfortunate results, such as when children who are never corrected because of parental love can become adult criminals. Thus, the ideal is wisdom and compassion, but also skillfulness and effectiveness

together with patience and discipline, which means best practices (optimal methods) adapted for the situation at hand, but also taking into account the intermediate and long-term results. This is called consummate conduct. Consummate conduct is the great skill of life, and learning consummate conduct is the great task of life.

Thoughts, intentions and words are one thing, but we judge people by their behavior. This is how you should judge people because what people say or think and what they do are two different things. It's what people do that matters.

For instance, despite moral and ethical training it is a basic principle of behavior that most people who attain power tend to oppress those without it. Hence, how you judge people is by their actual behavior rather than their thoughts or pronouncements. Some people can conquer themselves to rise above their animal tendencies and passions, and others cannot. Those who rise to the elite level and attain power often did so because they pursued power, and thus tend to become arrogant and abusive of those lower in caste or status. They take advantage of those without power. It is said that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

Whenever one group imposes their will upon another then the purpose of civilization comes to an end. So without actually being a virtuous individual of good behavior you won't spiritually succeed in this life at attaining the deva body because no spiritual being who can see human minds and behavior is going to help give a position of power and capability to someone who is simply an asshole, or whom lacks self-control. This is why behavior, and changing your personality and manner of doing things, is emphasized on the spiritual trail.

THE AGRICULTURAL REVOLUTION

The psychological evolution we've just gone over developed gradually over time as a result of and cultural developments and transformations in the social order, including human living conditions. Many of these psychological changes developed because mankind started living in much larger communities, including cities. You could say that mankind's growing mental/cognitive abilities are what enabled him to start living in such larger communities, which required a great deal more communication, planning and cooperative skills than that required by hunter-gatherers, and you could say that living in these larger groups increased his cognitive abilities too.

The transition from mankind's hunter-gatherer stage to the agricultural stage required a new cognitive emphasis on planning rather than immediate consumption, which paved the way for larger group living. The invention of writing, money, and higher forms of persuasion and organization were also

necessary for man to become able to live in cities.

Let's summarize this entire evolution another way.

Man belongs to the species *Homo Sapiens*, and his development of mental powers over time eventually made the Agricultural Revolution possible where he was able to transition away from roaming hunter-gatherer communities into larger sedentary farming settlements. *Homo Sapiens* progressed from the hunter-gatherer stage of existence to an agricultural existence that could feed larger numbers of people (communities), and the new living conditions in turn produced new predominant psychologies.

From simple settlements man started building cities and eventually empires. This became possible due to better cognitive powers over his predecessors that allowed man to organize things on a larger scale. He developed ways that let perfect strangers live together in harmony with a large degree of cooperation.

Feeding a city or kingdom is impossible by just hunting or gathering, so cooperation on a vast scale is required to generate enough food for such conglomerates. Personal acquaintance alone is also inadequate when it comes to engendering large-scale cooperation within a populace. The need for large-scale cooperation could only be met if there was a common ethos to bind people together, meaning a common *asabiya*, moral character, or culture that embodied shared virtues and vices and right or wrong ways of doing things including how to interact with others.

Different social structures, organizational methods and facilitation mechanisms therefore started developing that could help the members of large collective groups to work in unison. The invention of writing and money, for instance, greatly accelerated people's ability to cooperate with one another and live in these larger groups. Since one person could no longer produce everything himself people had to deal with others to exchange goods and services, and money facilitated such transactions.

The Agricultural Revolution led to very large communities compared to those of the hunter-gatherers. Intimate communities eventually became tribes, cities, kingdoms and then mighty empires. How it happened is that self-sufficient enclaves started producing more agricultural goods in excess for trade purposes as transportation, transactions and communications became easier with other groups and regions, thus giving rise to market economies. In other words, people started producing more because there was a marketplace where it could be sold or exchanged for other goods. Thus, larger communities grew because they could grow excess food as a specialization and then trade it for what they needed. This is actually how integrated market economies developed that led to international trade, and how the early emphasis on agriculture eventually passed to commerce.

Complex bureaucracies also started forming within kingdoms to manage the public and their output, and writing developed as an

administrative tool to help keep track of money issues such as taxes and transactions. This trend of agglomeration had a tremendous influence on our patterns of thinking, our belief systems, our susceptibility to social influence, and how we behave and how we live. We of today behave in certain modern ways only because mankind has progressed through these previous stages of development with their more primitive psychologies, and we have incorporated them into our modern psyche.

As communities grew into cities and kingdoms, various religions arose that emphasized different things, including different societal concerns based on particular ways of thinking. Temples were built to favored gods, who over time acquired festivals, property and power due to public donations. As writing developed it not only helped keep track of all the assets the temples owned, but recorded stories of the god's deeds and his commandments. These became like moral laws that people in society should obey.

Now there is only so much you can say to an uneducated, magical thinking crowd that believes in strong supernatural interventions while lacking a strong understanding of scientific cause and effect. For instance, what high truths can you say to a people who believe that disease is the result of an arbitrary decision by a supernatural authority figure? This describes the educational level of the people of this time. As example, we can say that it applied to the Israelites of Moses's day. Remember that Biblical Judaism didn't cater to intellectuals but to peasants, shepherds, farmers, and village life, which is why its doctrines were tribal in nature. Its earliest major festivals were simply harvest festivals where people came together to make offerings of all sorts of animals and other farmer bounties, and such customs greatly colored the shaping of the tradition rather than an external godly power.

With this as your background, you can understand that in earlier times the spiritual leaders with genuine attainments were only able to reveal just a little to the uneducated masses concerning what spiritual cultivation was truly about. The spiritual paths therefore excluded talk of higher bodies but typically focused on proper behavior and living rules that would address the health, hygiene, legal and business needs of the community. Over the centuries, spiritual teachers having multiple bodies followed the teaching pattern of skillful means laid out by the *Lotus Sutra* where you don't reveal the truth in order to lead the public. They would primarily just focus on rules and religious commandments because the public had only reached the stage of magical thinking, and it thus had to be relied upon to lead, pacify or manage the populace. The *Lotus Sutra's* emphasis on skillful means also means using *optimal or best methods* to do things, but many masters fall into the mistake of over-emphasizing the "deceive the public by not revealing the truth" aspect, which is just one small type of skillful means, and then

warp their personalities accordingly.

The biggest thing to emphasize to the public in earlier times was behavior. Religions stressed behavior because a shared propriety was necessary for regulating society as a way of pacifying and unifying the people. No one with genuine attainments could ever reveal that the spiritual path was really about attaining higher transcendental bodies, which you would find out about upon death, so the big story was that religion was primarily about proper behavior in this life, heavenly rewards later, and mental states of bliss and purity that you could also cultivate now that put you in touch with the divine.

If you cultivated a correct spiritual pathway that promised these states then your body's Qi/Prana would transform, which was precisely the intent. Then you could touch these states more frequently. If you worked at incorporating the principles of religion with you then you could also change your mental conditioning to make them more accessible. Even so, the information on many higher aspects of the path were largely withheld from the general public.

The great concern over this long development trend of building larger communities was that more massive communities needed within themselves higher levels of order, stability and social harmony in order to grow and survive. For instance, cooperation between individuals was absolutely essential within an agricultural community if it was to be able to produce enough food, distribute it within society, protect the community against enemies, and offer justice remedies within the group. Also, the larger the community the greater its need for a common shared identity to keep it together, which was usually achieved by propagating the common myths and beliefs of religion. Previously, the family and tribe were considered the major unit of identity but now family and tribe were too small for a much larger population.

The family, from earliest times, has always been our welfare system, health system, education system, insurance system, pension system, and protection. Family members typically sacrifice for one another and have done so throughout history. As individuals started living in larger and larger groups they needed to broaden their concerns from family welfare to the welfare of the greater community – their city – so that people would help even strangers during times of trouble and need. Hence there was a great benefit to transmitting stories about the shared origins of the group and its virtues, and unifying tales about the great gods or goddesses that gave the group its character. Such tales provided common social links between group members that helped establish peaceful relationships by strengthening their bonds of mutual trust.

Now as stated, as various hierarchies within cities and kingdoms started developing, societies also began creating networks of conformist

expectations, namely commonly expected ways of doing things that we call proper social behavior and culture. The wide acceptance of a common social groupthink - expected standards of proper behavior and similar ways that people did things - enabled ever-growing numbers of people to peacefully live together with one another. The core basis behind this cooperative capability was the sharing of a common belief system that extended to wider social expectations of harmonious behavior. At this time the core foundation transmitting such unifying harmony ideals was due to religion or the shared myths of the culture. This was a big development in cognitive/psychological evolution.

A common belief system within a large group of people – beliefs in shared myths or religions – enabled thousands of strangers to be able to live together more peacefully and cooperate with each other enough that they could coordinate their actions. To some extent this required a degree of self-sacrifice for others, as well as openmindedness, tolerance, courtesy/hospitality and altruism, and these became some of the virtues emphasized by religion.

Religions, which helped to create and maintain the social order in larger agricultural societies, eventually required leaders with adequate authority for their ministering. People therefore started seeing social hierarchies of power and privilege develop in the religious field. Priests and other religious functionaries then began to proliferate and predominate in certain areas of public life. Social systems develop on the basis of ideology, and of course religious ideas became incorporated into the predominant social ideology of the day since they provided its unifying basis. This followed the principle that a people are dominated by their culture and religion is one of the key influences on culture.

The dominant beliefs/ideology of a culture are usually incorporated into everything such as its social customs, its ideas of purity and hygiene that work as a protection against disease, and even its food observances. Religions often incorporated those ideas, and thus were sometimes useful in encouraging or enforcing healthy lifestyles by disseminating special dietary and hygienic rules. Hence, following religious dietary guidelines, when well constructed, often elevated the biological fitness of the faithful. Religions were also useful in providing social support networks and encouraging an optimistic outlook on life. They also served as a cohesive force for social solidarity via the promotion of shared beliefs and rituals. All these characteristics served the purpose of enabling humanity to successfully live in ever-larger sedentary groups.

As a general rule, religions typically promote norms of propriety (common social rules of behavior for a moral community) and rites, rituals or festivals that establish uniformity within society. Religions also commonly emphasize truth telling, fairness or justice, sympathy and

empathy, kindness and compassion, mutual aid, altruistic concern for others, conflict resolution, community participation, and other virtues that help with civic cooperation.

When individuals in a large group share very few moral guidelines the social bonds within the group will break down and the community will face destruction. Religions all develop dogmas, but they developed particular dogmas, rules or traditions in past ages partially as a necessity in order to survive and grow, and if an entire community subscribed to the same religion then those unifying structures helped preserve it by preventing social dysfunction and disintegration. Religions encouraged solidarity and trust within societies, promised a brighter shared future for the faithful who were obedient to standards of propriety, and often required (sometimes elaborate) displays of commitment that united society.

Most religions emphasized belief in a superhuman order that encompassed the existence of supernatural beings. They usually promoted the idea you are being watched and regulated by God or gods and that there is an ultimate supernatural punisher. This idea not only helped establish greater propriety and good behavior in society, but served to help somewhat restrain the upper strata of the powerful elite who tend, as a general rule in societies, to oppress others.

The earliest forms of religion explained our beingness as predicated on the existence of God or gods, and specified terms of exchange with them in order that we might prosper. Because they maintained there was a superhuman order, the norms put forth by religion were considered binding and therefore became the basis of moral and behavioral standards.

At first most new religions usually stayed primarily within their culture's regional borders and spread only because of pre-existing friendship networks. However, a common dispersion pattern also often occurred. To ardent adherents it occurred that if their faith truly offered knowledge about a universal superhuman (transcendental) order then it must be true always and everywhere. Therefore, adherents often felt the need to spread their beliefs to others out of compassionate concern, and thus arouse the zeal of the missionary impulse. Or, they simply carried their beliefs with them when they emigrated, thus spreading them to new locales wherever they went, especially when as foreigners the men or women took root and married locals. In any case, when religions spread to new regions they increased the number of adherents. This most often happened to the religions that were considered universal rather than just tribal or national.

The thing is, many religious beliefs, tenets and myths are entirely fictitious. They are just "imagined orders." They are fantasies created by our minds, fictional stories we believe in. They were created by man in order to help society, an example being the dietary rules propagated within Judaism. But sometimes religious ideas are just crazy notions. All religions contain

errant information or even imaginary myths, but most adherents cannot tell what is false or true within their own faith.

Nevertheless, religions typically provide meaning to life so that people don't have to generate their own. They promise ultimate answers about the universe, a way to better the conditions of mankind and they typically promise a salvation for eternity. They specify sacred places, objects, times and methods of prayer, ritual or other observances that are claimed to be a form of communication with the divine. They give people spiritual feelings that are uplifting, and which pacify their hearts and quiet their minds in a world of suffering. They promise a way to inner peace and harmony despite the vicissitudes of life. If you follow genuine spiritual paths, they can indeed produce some of these results. Religions usually promise a final sublime state but it requires a heroic commitment for the journey that involves good conduct, good works and special spiritual exercises/observances. This path of intensified spiritual practice for a transcendental result is the part we are most interested in, and will get to shortly.

People who study world religions in a comparative manner usually cite a variety of these social aspects along with this general sequence of psychological development. However, they overlook this one very critical aspect – an internal path of intensified practice open to all, but chosen by few, that leads to higher spiritual attainments, namely higher spiritual states of being.

Scholars typically focus on only the public pathways of ceremonies, worship, festivals, and traditions when making their conclusions. However, the great religions also usually contain *an intensified cultivation path of specific practices that produces factual results that can be authenticated* by genuine achievements during life. There is usually a path within them that produces the definitive gong-fu of higher spiritual body attainments prior to death that substantially proves the spiritual path and its claims. This is the pathway that generates an independent deva body while alive.

Atheists typically call religions “superstitious myths” but they are unaware of these internal esoteric paths and the spiritual gong-fu of genuine achievement that one can authenticate through personal effort. The gong-fu can be validated through personal experience. Christians, Jews, Moslems, Buddhist, Hindus, Jains, Sikhs and others have all attained extra spiritual bodies while alive and thereby become living masters, though few will advertise it. Even those who advertise themselves as spiritual masters do not talk about these attainments or clearly explain them, but they do exist or the individual is *not* a spiritual master. They are the only thing that makes you a spiritual master.

These cultivation pathways have always been available inside most religions whether or not people knew about them. Therefore, discovering that they exist, or even authenticating the deva body attainment result, isn't

anything new. This result of the cultivation path will always will be there available to people whether or not anyone knows about it, and whether anyone cultivates to attain the higher bodies or not. In other words, whether or not we know of the potential of the Tao, it is there and will always be there whether or not we discover it. Some people have discovered it through spiritual cultivation and then out of compassion have created intensified pathways of practice within their religion to help other aspirants attain transcendental spiritual bodies before death. Upon death everyone transitions to a subtle body and then in that etheric body have to start cultivating again to make some headway before reincarnation. As Nan Huai-chin once said, what a waste of lost time!

The truth is that the intensified practices within many faiths constitute a scientifically-based procedure, dependent on your own efforts and the efforts of higher sentient beings who help you, to transform/purify your body's Qi/Prana through various exercises and emotional experiences that can affect it. The goal is to purify and strengthen the independence of your inner etheric Qi body to such an extent that it can finally leave the matrix of your physical shell at will.

This constitutes the initial fruit of the spiritual path, and then for higher achievements you have to perform the exact same procedure for that etheric Qi body in order to generate from within its matrix a yet higher body made of an even more etheric substance, Shen, and then onwards still it goes.

This is why Taoism says, "Jing transforms into Qi, Qi transforms into Shen, Shen transforms into emptiness, and you must break away from emptiness to attain the highest Tao." Each of these stages represents the compositional structure of a new spiritual body. In this case "emptiness" represents the light body of the full Arhat, which is also known as the Buddha body of Later Heavenly energy while the Immance body is composed of Primordial/Earlier Heavenly energy.

Our physical flesh body is made of Jing, or semen. If we cultivate it sufficiently we can free an inner body made of Qi/Prana from its matrix and achieve the deva body attainment that is also called the subtle body or impure illusory body in Tibetan Buddhism. Thus, "Jing transforms into Qi." If we cultivate this subtle energy deva body composed of Qi we can free from within its structure a body of higher energy-substance that the Taoists called Shen. Thus, "Qi transforms into Shen" when we attain the next higher body attainment, the Causal body. Buddhism just calls Qi and Shen the "wind element" because "wind" represents energy in Buddhism and both of these elements are different stages/types of higher energy than those we know. If we cultivate that Shen body and free a yet higher spiritual body from within it, this is called an Emptiness body, Clear Light body, Dharma Body, Buddha body, Arhat's body and other names. This is the

stage of the full Arhat enlightenment of Buddhism. Performing the same procedure for that body we can then attain an Immanence body composed of a yet higher etheric substance still. The higher we go, the closer we get to the primordial energy planes of existence.

As stated, this pathway has always been there. It's available for alien life too. How we discovered it, who knows? When we die we all attain the etheric deva body as our next mode of living, so somehow those in higher realms discovered how consistent meditation and energy practice can free your inner etheric (subtle) body whilst alive.

THE SCIENTIFIC REVOLUTION

First came the hunter-gatherer stage of our evolution, next the Agricultural Revolution, and then humanity finally experienced a Scientific Revolution that caused even more remarkable changes in society, culture and evolution. During the Scientific Revolution mankind began to invest a tremendous reliance on logic, mathematics and developing technology. He started doing scientific experiments to tease out the laws of cause and effect that rule nature and phenomena, which produced a blossoming in technology and invention. The new mindset did not just led to more progressive ways of thinking and living but even greater cognitive advances than what occurred during the agricultural era.

This scientific psychological revolution – which emphasized the deep development of logic, reason, experiment, measurement and mathematics – produced new discoveries and led to new philosophies that caused many people to break away from religion. Previously people believed that there were intrinsic essential properties in things that explained the natural world. They believed that the essences of objects explained their behavior. This idea was replaced by the recognition that functions and attributes/properties are what exist, not essences. Furthermore, what rules reality are cause and effect relationships instead of the imaginary “essence properties” that had been invented to explain phenomenal transformations.

The Scientific Revolution gave us new discoveries and inventions such as the steam engine, steel, automobiles, electricity, radio, refrigeration, medicines, fertilizers and many, many others too numerous to mention. Its developments lead us to an Industrial Revolution that produced even greater leaps in material progress and social development. The Industrial Revolution thoroughly raised our standards of living across many fields.

Because of that developmental phase of scientific emphasis we have developed an entirely new mindset that clearly recognizes cause and effect everywhere in the world, but our minds have also developed the ideas of hope and optimism as to the potential for growth and a better future. The Scientific and Industrial Revolution have enabled us to build giant cities,

master our surroundings, develop entirely new industries, create tremendous production of manufactured products, and develop extensive worldwide trade networks with international communications.

The net result has been the disappearance of peasantry/serfdom and work at home, the rise of the industrial proletariat, the empowerment of common men and women, urbanization, modernization, scientific progress, democracy, social betterment, an improved status for women, and material prosperity in terms of food, shelter, medicine, hygiene/sanitation. There was even a weakening of religion as the guide for life since people started shifting their allegiance to –isms rather than religions.

Due to gradual but continuous scientific advances – which had often been thwarted in previous times because of the need to maintain conformity with religious doctrines – we have seen a decrease in the infant mortality rate, an increase in human life expectancy (longevity), increases in food production and calorie intake, gains in per capita income, and an increase in public education (the literacy rate).

We have also progressed in such a way that today nearly all human beings have adopted the same economic system (capitalism which uses fiat paper currency for exchange), the same scientific system of shared scientific concepts, same geopolitical system, and the same legal ideals that commit to fairness, equality, human rights and international law. This is all because mankind started transcending the sectarian nature of religions and started relying on scientifically proven facts rather than superstitious thinking, myths, legends and religious opinions. In particular, the pursuit of the provable and factual has led to countless positive developments.

Whereas mankind used to believe in myths and later the dogmas of religions, during this phase of development we saw the large organized religions penetrate society on a vast scale that affected the masses. As a counterforce to this penetration we also started believing in various non-religious –isms, which are basically mythical beliefs in a different form.

We now have global beliefs in nationalism, liberalism, humanism, feminism, veganism, consumerism, capitalism, communism, Keynesianism, socialism, environmentalism, and so forth that are just as strong as the tribal or religious beliefs we once adhered to in previous eras. An inherent idea behind many of these –isms is that the world is faulty, and only if you implement and adhere to *this* –ism ideology can you reach or produce utopia. Such promises behind specific social intervention strategies are always faulty themselves.

We also have political parties and ideological movements that are similar to religions, and which have similar shortcomings. We might even go so far as to call them “natural law religions.” Just as with spiritual religions, various concepts from these ideologies are incorporated everywhere in our lives such as in our art, architecture, legal systems,

economics, cuisine, clothing, customs and so forth. These ideologies substitute for religions through a similar promise to bring us happiness in life and a brighter future for all. Even the concepts of manhood and womanhood have changed over time due to the influences of such –isms.

Here are a few instances of the “new –ism religions” where our human ideas have replaced gods. Capitalism maintains that the free market is what will bring the greatest happiness and highest welfare to all. Communism maintains this can only occur if there is a dictatorship of the proletariat in society, and capitalists along with free markets are exterminated. Liberalism maintains that humans free to make their own decisions in everything will bring about the great good, well-being and happiness for society. Consumerism suggests that by buying material objects and chasing after new experiences we can find joy and fulfillment in life. Nationalism believes that nation-states making their own determinations, rather than listening to the rest of the world, constitutes what is essential for our highest welfare and happiness, and so on it goes.

The causes of happiness in life have passed from religious beliefs to beliefs in ideological –isms that are basically religions in a different form. They are not all good guides to life. Marxism, for instance, is a testament to the murderous power of resentment rather than an –ism that produces prosperity, promotes fairness and brings about the equality of mankind. Smart, powerful and distinguished men are all subject to the influence of such –isms. For instance, in *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money*, John Maynard Keynes wrote, “The ideas of economists and political philosophers, both when they are right and when they are wrong, are more powerful than is commonly understood. Indeed the world is ruled by little else. Practical men, who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influences, are usually the slaves of some defunct economist.”

We have gone from magical thinking, and then adherence to religious dogmas/teachings, to belief in ideological principles such as natural human rights etc. However – and this is what you need to note – *these ideas are as equally invalid as magical thinking or belief in fictitious religious dogmas because they have no objective validity*. They don’t really exist in nature. We made them up! They may be splendid ideas, but they are fictions we created through our minds, mental constructions of idealism, and we accept the ones we like without question. We impose these social constructs everywhere and they have had a great impact on civilization. They are part of a cultural groupthink of the times. They are now part of our conditioning, part of the process of how we think. But once again, we just made them up.

For instance, there is no such thing as rights in biology. There is no such thing as egalitarianism (equality), fairness, justice or fair exchange either. One animal eats another if it can catch it for a meal, and it has always been this way. Animals are therefore in a constant state of worry and alert

so as not to be eaten. There is no imagined –ism here of fairness or rights or righteousness or justice. There are only survival issues, and this is just the way things are. Through higher consciousness we have worked to transcend our own animal instincts and create shared behaviors that protect individuals from the aggressions of others, and we have worked to instill pacifying benevolent concepts in society such as fairness, kindness and compassion for others.

For humankind, what has worked for generations to help societies survive is simply what has worked. In other words, because of different conditions different societies have developed entirely different social systems, cultural traditions, organizational methods, stipulated behaviors and even different –isms to guide their people. There may always be something more optimal than the current unifying ideas and methods used within a society for some particular purpose, but the traditions that have worked are those that have been passed down from generation to generation. Those societies that developed and held onto –isms that didn't work either abandoned them or suffered elimination.

The point is that evolutionary iterations have been made, should be attempted, and always will be tried when people come up with what they think are better ideas for how things should be run, but many of those ideas are failures, such as Marxism and Communism. This is why Edmund Burke, who wrote *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, suggested that new abstractions to guide us (such as secularism, egalitarianism, pluralism, etcetera) may eventually lead to ruin whereas there is survival merit in many traditional notions like nationalism, religion, hierarchies of competence or modesty that have characterized societies that have survived and thrived.

Capitalism, for instance, is the –ism that has funded all other –isms since 4000 B.C. Therefore, why would you ever imagine trying to get rid of Capitalism when Marxism, Communism and Socialism have a proven track record of time and again never working. Instead, these failed –isms have killed millions of people through poverty, misery and even murder. They are failed theoretical Utopias. Absolute destruction and human misery happens again and again with these specific –isms, which are simply championed by people envious of those in power or just successful when they are not, and hoping in turn to replace them with themselves. When playing with –isms that promise Utopias, it is common sense that one must be careful to consider what the -ism will do to the established order that has worked for thousands of years and actually enabled societal survival to this point in time.

The ideas encapsulated within –isms are all imagined orders, rather than truly occurring existent orders. They are certainly not biological realities. They are imagined utopias that we invented with our minds. They are fictional stories that we sometimes believe in, yet they are imagined orders

nonetheless. Just as myths and many religious dogmas were fictiously invented for expediency sake, we made up these –ism philosophies too. Yet even so, just like religion they have served to guide mankind and even now beckon him to act and behave in certain ways. If you believe in them and act according to their precepts then they can determine the fate of mankind.

Here is the kicker. What has in general enabled human beings to rise above their natural biology (with its attendant animal urges) is their development of higher cognitive skills that have in turn produced philosophies and values. Man has used his brain to create a moral order not just for survival but for cooperation amongst people and social progress, and he has created religious ideas to guide his actions in a way that elevates human behavior.

While these are wonderful developments, but once again even the beneficial philosophical notions that we have created are artificial. They help to elevate society, but where were they before we started applying them? They are all made up. They are all thoughts we have created in order to make things better for ourselves. They are all imagined orders once again. Furthermore, there are so many competing notions, who can say which ones are the right ones or best ones?

If they are truly not absolute paths to some sort of spiritual liberation or salvation involving transcendental realms, then the main usefulness of religious guidance has to lie in simply pacifying our emotions and helping society to maintain a moral order of righteous conduct that allows everyone to live together harmoniously. On the mundane side religions can certainly help unify societies with a friendly spirit that minimizes disharmony, thus bolstering man's cooperative spirit and altruistic tendencies. Strangers can live together more peacefully only if they think in a similar way, and the similar thinking promulgated by religions definitely helps to produce group unity and harmonious living.

If we look at it in a certain way we can say that large-scale human cooperation is based on myths or mythical and religious thinking. In other words, cooperation requires an ideological or religious basis, and you need a good story to establish cooperation among a large number of people. The ways people cooperate with one another can be changed by altering those ideologies, stories or myths. In order to change the imagined order, however, you need to get millions of strangers to cooperate with you. This is only possible if you can get control of the masses by controlling the ideas, notions or memes they are exposed to. You have to control the culture and you do so by controlling the religion or philosophies that penetrate and guide culture.

In today's world this means you have to control the press or media, and also the pulpit. Furthermore, while we can change the imagined order along the lines we want if we exert enough influence, as a warning you need to

cultivate a clear, elevated (highly moral and ethical) consciousness to guide or manage the process correctly. Society has labored for thousands of years to give you the opportunity you have today to be a sovereign individual with rights, who has the freedom and opportunity to manifest what you can manifest. After thousands of years of trials, troubles, tribulations and trying we have in our cultural evolution reached the successful state where we now are. We shouldn't be so careless as to flippantly destroy any true and tried foundations of goodness that already works by pursuing strange notions of untested utopias that are entirely divorced from how human beings naturally think and act.

When anyone demands that we scrap entire systems we've struggled to develop due to the claims that they are extraordinarily bigoted or unfair and a true Utopia is possible, we therefore have to ask, "Compared to what? Compared to when?" We have to ask where and when there is a prior place or condition that is semi-*nirvana* like along the objectives proposed because if we cannot find one then it can be extraordinarily dangerous to try a wholly new experiment. You may totally undermine or destroy through rewriting what has already been accomplished. Where we are now is already working "as a pretty good deal" and sometimes it is even offering the best opportunities or conditions people have had in history compared to the entirety of the past.

You are interconnected, to a degree you cannot possibly imagine, with the struggles of countless people before you that have brought us to where we are today. This should prompt a deep sense of gratitude and thanks for their prior sacrifices and accomplishments to make our situation better. To sustain what already is constitutes a great task, a mighty chore, and we must be grateful to all the sacrifices and efforts of our forbears that have gone into building what we now have to make everything possible.

No creature other than man is so dependent upon the helpful efforts of so many others in providing food, education, etcetera from cradle to the grave, and our interdependence necessitates that we not only offer gratitude to others and try to be cooperative good citizens ourselves in our communities and society but try to pay others back for the kindness, sacrifices, and efforts they make or have made on our part. This is one of the reasons Bodhisattvas try to give back and lift up others rather than go off to Pure Lands and live wonderful lives without remembering us. In any case, we shouldn't just carelessly throw away everything prior generations have built *that works* on theoretical (pathological) notions that seek utopia. What we presently already have is incredibly rare in history, a miracle of opportunities and enjoyments that can easily be destroyed through bad judgment.

Unfortunately, the individuals who want to socially engineer society in new directions tend to be power hungry lunatics or fringe radicals lacking a

strong moral basis and deep practical wisdom on these matters, so perhaps the wisdom of guidance is best left to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas above. That leaves the greater mission for ourselves to work on changing our own bodies and consciousness/minds to bring about better states of being for ourselves and others. If we develop our physical and cognitive skills, and especially practice to gain control of our minds (thoughts, emotions, intentions, willpower, afflictions, defilements) and behavior, then this is the Great Learning required within the “long game” of existence. How can we make ourselves better and conditions better for ourselves?

The core component throughout this long development path has been mind, our wish-fulfilling gem, and its marvelous ability to create things through reason and imagination. We can say that mankind has previously elevated itself by passing from superstition to logic and reason. Now mankind is marching towards a psychological stage of holistic synthesis that matches with the capabilities of a sage, saint, Buddha or Bodhisattva who knows the truth – the many minds of sentient beings, the validities and falsities of religions or philosophies, and the true histories of civilizations.

We must say that our shared fictional myths throughout history have united us in ways that foundationally made this evolutionary development possible. Without them, we wouldn't be where we are now. However, we must not hold onto them any longer if they no longer serve us. You use a raft as a vehicle to cross a river, but when you're across you don't carry it with you everywhere else. You only use it for its purpose as a tool and then let it go.

The idea of using fictions to guide mankind through religion is one of the messages within the Buddhist *Lotus Sutra* which says you might need to mislead children in order to break their playtime so as to calmly draw them out of a burning house, and once out of the burning house you can provide them with the real truth of how things actually are. In other words, the early forms of religion were meant to guide people through myths and fictions, but now that people are becoming mature the mind of enlightenment and the special attainment pathway within religion, which was hidden in broad daylight, can be openly revealed.

As social conditions have changed over time our cultural thinking, psychology and social behaviors have changed too. Human beings have developed many religions and religious teachings to deal with their particular (psychological, social, economic and cultural) problems at their unique stage and circumstances of development. The religions developed various doctrines, dogmas and teachings to address the challenges of their time, challenges particular to the flow of progress through this great development arc and peculiar to the problematical circumstances of their time and place.

Some of these developments worked well for a long period of time and

others have not continued to serve a useful purpose, but have actually become toxic. This we find with the religions that adhere to old books for their laws. Many have not dealt with new social realities as mankind has progressed. Thus we are, in many religions, stuck with a plethora of religious rules and regulations that no longer should apply and whose continued existence, unaltered, ossifies or hampers greater society.

We must stay focused, however, on the fact that religions have arisen from within many different social milieu, which thus flavored them in distinctive ways as they developed to address the most predominant problems of their day and age. Others were efforts to clear up confusion in society after the founder had done much research, such as is the case with Buddhism and Confucianism. Some represent the founder's medicine for the ills of society, such as with Sikhism. Others were simply collections of methods that produced good results, such as in Taoism. Others represent an evolutionary development in mankind's psychology from much earlier stages, such as in Hinduism. There are all sorts of reasons for religions arising.

Each religion tends to emphasize different dimensions of the human condition. Each considers a different condition as the most central problem of mankind. Each promotes a different set of standards and stories to derive mass cooperation among the people. They implant the same stories in everyone to derive a system of peaceful cooperation among the people. As Stephen Prothero points out in *God is Not One*, because they developed in different circumstances they each had to address different circumstances, problems and solutions. Following his lead we can make some relevant observations:

- Judaism, the religion of an agricultural tribal people (most of its commandments dealt with farming and village life) who left their homeland to become slaves in Egypt, defined the central problem of mankind as its exile from God the Father, which is seen in the story of Adam and Eve being banished from the Garden of Eden for disobeying God's commandment due to temptation. The theory of the Big Bang embodies Jewish kabbalistic thought that Creation exploded out into the universe with the divine embedded within the manifestation, so Creation is like a redeemable broken vessel because the divine is in every part of it. In order for Jews to return to God and original wholeness and purity, Judaism created a spiritual path that stressed dogmatic laws professing obedience and fidelity to God the Father, who it is said to have established a holy covenant with the Jews. The Bible focuses around the historical story of a people who breach and remake covenants time and again, a story of a people banished and then called home, a story of exile and return just as the Jews returned to Jerusalem to rebuild their temple

after the Babylonian exile. The hero of the tradition is the prophet, the man of God (an enlightened master) who periodically arises to tell the people how to return to the path of righteousness from which they have strayed. Judaism is an exclusive tribal religion that emphasizes storytelling, the law, and other modes of recollection for purposes of self-righteousness (self-justification) and social cohesion so that the tribe will continue to always remember its covenant and what God has done for His people. It is interesting to note that the comic hero Superman, created by Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster who appended the Jewish divinity suffix of el- to his Kryptonian name (Kal-el), illustrates Jewish messianic storytelling. A partially assimilated immigrant like Moses, who was shot into space at his birth just as Moses was launched down a river, Superman attained magic powers later in life just as Moses did to save his tribe. The Superman story is sometimes taken by critics to represent the Jewish diaspora of a superhuman tribe no longer in their own home. Even Superman's code of ethics - "Truth, Justice, and the American Way - is similar to the Mishnaic values of "truth, peace, and justice." Superman also symbolizes the idea of power as a protection against extermination, which is always a worry touted by Jewish leaders, who therefore even now always try to organize efficiently for power and domination whenever possible to provide themselves protection because of the constantly reminded destruction of their First and Second Temple, their former status as Egyptian slaves, the story of Esther commemorated in the annual feast of Purim where she saved the Jews from extermination, their mistreatment in ghettos, the Holocaust, and their previous blockage from societal dominance hierarchies due to prejudices. The Confession which begins all Jewish services is, "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is One."

- Christianity, which is based on the approximately 2,000 words that Jesus spoke in the New Testament along with various commentaries by his disciples, especially Paul, evolved from Judaism within a Roman Pagan environment sometimes characterized by licentious debauchery. Rather than exile and separation, it defined sin (a tendency toward excess, wrongdoing or evil) as the most central problem in the world. Maintaining that "Ye are gods," its solution to sin was embodied in a cultivation path of good behavior, good works, prayer and faith that one would enable one to win a reward in Heaven that brings one closer to the Father. In general, Christianity promises a state of flourishing. Its great growth (where other religions have failed and disappeared into dust) has sometimes been attributed to its superior treatment of women and the care/concern shown to community members during disasters. Such group benefits attracted adherents from Paganism who lacked them. Pagans were known to have simply worshipped various gods in

their homes rather than go out after disasters and altruistically help one another with mutual aid. One of Christianity's other great attractions was that it was stripped of ethnicity and provided social services that Paganism and the government did not. It has produced many forms throughout the world such as Roman Catholicism, Anglicanism, Protestantism, Pentecostalism, the Orthodox Churches, and Evangelicalism to name a few, and is always evolving as seen in Christian America which has been shifting in emphasis from transcendence to immanence. During colonial times American Christians stressed God the Father, God the Son in Victorian times, the experience of God the Holy Spirit in our modern times, and now the emphasis is finally properly shifting to personal *theosis* and divinization via spiritual cultivation so that man can become *Homo Deus*, an active member within the community of saints as Christianity promises. This is the goal of Christianity, which is that a man or woman becomes *Homo Deus* by attaining the independent deva body, composed of subtle Qi/Prana, while alive, and Jesus is the exemplar of this possibility. The inherent message of the Christian New Testament is that the transcendental Utopia is a state of being you achieve through self-cultivation. As it gained predominance in the Middle Ages, Christianity at first inhibited the development of science for some time but it eventually adopted the notion that because God is perfect his handiwork functions in accord with immutable principles and we ought to be able to discover them through reason and observation. Thus, Christianity laid the foundations for the Scientific Revolution that the members of other world religions have all benefitted from. It let the Scientific Revolution get off the ground whereas other religions and philosophies thwarted the road of science and material investigations. Another aspect of Christianity little noted is that Jesus, as a rabbi or teacher, slowly morphed into the highest "son of God" primarily due to the efforts of Paul rather than due to what Jesus actually said. In Islam Jesus is considered a prophet, in Hindu an avatar, in Buddhism a Bodhisattva, in Judaism a rabbi or teacher, and in Christianity the Savior. Paul's zealous missionary efforts worked to differentiate the Christian sect apart from Judaism, which was a great boon to the Jews fearing Roman persecution and possible extermination as they remembered the destruction of their first temple. If it were not for Paul's efforts that differentiated Jesus's followers from Judaism, it was feared that Peter's aggressive tendencies might have provoked a Roman backlash against them. Unknown to the general public, in Christian theology God is simple/one because He transcends every form of complexity and composition, a consequence being that simple God lacks parts of differentiation into matter, but God is in some sense identical to each of his attributes and to His own existence.

Thomas Aquinas, one of the primary theologians of Christianity, in his *Summa Theologiae* said, “It is absolutely true that God is not a body ... It is impossible that matter should exist in God ... God is the same as His essence or nature ... God is not only His own essence, but also His own existence ... Nothing is prior to God either really or mentally ... The absolute simplicity of God can be shown in many ways.”

- Islam, which developed in an environment consisting of countless Arab tribes with strong tribal loyalties, defined the central problem within mankind’s existence as forgetting his true nature and having excessive pride in his self-sufficiency. It created a cultivation path stipulating that pride could only be cured through submission to a singular set of guidelines and principles – Allah’s laws that were revealed through the final prophet, Mohammed. Thus it delineated the puritanical Shariah law for human conduct that emphasizes a legal dimension over theology, thus establishing a religion with an inescapable Saturnian rigour, although there are also the Five Pillars of Islam. Radical Islam assumes that once you establish rigid Shariah everywhere then you will have Allah’s kingdom on earth, which is the promise of a Utopia that has actually failed to bring prosperity, ascendancy and success wherever it has been strictly instituted. Like Communism, Islam’s utopian rhetoric and theocratic state has never produced any promised successes and yet Islam cannot switch off its radicals who are willing to destroy themselves or inflict damage on others to spread Islam by force. They insist that if they master the Koran and do all that Muhammed has prescribed then they will succeed, but the world is passing them by in social advancement and flourishing prosperity. The Five Pillars of Islam are considered basic acts mandatory to believers that demonstrate submission to the will of Allah. They are the foundation of a moral life that also includes obligatory prayer and compulsory giving, both components of normal roads of spiritual cultivation. Having developed when Judaism and Christianity were already existent, during its foundational stage Islam differentiated itself from these other two religions by recognizing the prophets of Judaism, maintaining that Jesus was a prophet too, and stressing that Mohammed was the last of the prophets and thus the final word. The spread of Islam was greatly assisted through the application of military force, which always entails/demands the submissive obedience of the conquered. Hence, people must be submissive to Allah, Islam, and Shariah due to the application of power. The Koran is filled with just-war precepts. Like Judaism, Islam became handicapped/hampered by its necessity to submit to excessive legalism and its inability to modernize its laws as social conditions evolved over time. Its laws are codified in books that cannot be edited, and it is sacriligious to disagree with them. Thus

Moslems are held hostage to the perspectives that characterized an era hundreds of years ago, and are captive to doctrines that cannot progress as culture progresses. Furthermore, they developed without ever being in contact with the knowledge we have currently, so Moslems are taught to live life by people who were operating within the momentum of an ignorant past. It is difficult for Moslems to therefore enjoy progress in various fields when they condemn any departures from ancient tradition as a deviation and corruption of true Islam. As an example of its intransigent tendency of sluggishness toward change, Islam for a time adopted the notion that scientific laws limited the power of Allah so they cannot be true, and thus rejected study in those areas. As an aside, it is interesting to note that the ancient Spartans, the greatest power in the Greek world, also finally saw its demise because this conservative collective that was 100% loyal to the existing order of established traditions refused to adapt to new social, military and political realities. The rule of civilizations is that they die if they do not embrace change in positive evolution, which is a problem facing Islam. Islamic fundamentalism attempts to protect people against change by seeking something eternal and secure in inviolable laws, but while this stymies growth this doesn't prevent change within societies. Islam has many sects, and its path of Sufism, like Hasidism within Judaism, distinguishes itself by emphasizing devoted mystical practices such as bhakti yoga methods of devotion, *dhikr* and a quest for the annihilation of the self so as to attain union with Allah. Thus it has produced many enlightened masters. Islam craves Allah, not Paradise, and a recognition of the divine in the here and now. The Koran 112:1-4 says, "Say: 'He is God, One, God, the Everlasting Refuge, who has not begotten, and has not been begotten, and equal to Him is not any one.'"

- Hinduism can almost be considered a primordial religion that arose out of Brahmanism and early magical thinking within India. It encompasses a wide variety of gods (with countless temples, festivals and pilgrimages for devotional purposes) considered manifestations of the divine, embodies notions of purity and good conduct, stresses the idea of performing your duties while leaving the consequences to God, and the idea that you can perform ceremonies to appease a multitude of deities and ask for boons to solve problems in return. Its fire ceremony is not supposed to just happen within an altar because it symbolizes what is supposed to happen within us as a product of our kundalini spiritual cultivation. To Hinduism, happiness in life is considered a transitory, impermanent affair. Hinduism defines man's most central problem as samsara, which is bondage and suffering within an endless cycle of life (incarnations). It embodies a cultivation path of *Moksha*, or liberation, that entailed Karma Yoga (action), Jnana Yoga (wisdom), Bhakti yoga

(devotion to a deity of your choosing), Hatha Yoga (external body cultivation) and Kundalini Yoga (inner energy work) so that happiness (bliss) could be achieved by healing the split between the self and Brahman and realizing oneself to be that one True Self in all. In other words, the essence of the human being is believed to be the same as the essence of divinity, which is the essential message of Advaita Vedanta. By cultivating these yogas, Hinduism maintains that man can free his internal spirit, the *atman*, from his material physical shell/body and then work progressively onwards to become one with Brahman.

- Confucianism, which developed during a period of political chaos, disharmony, and social disorder within China, set forth a cultivation path of internal peace and harmony for the self that when extended would affect greater society and then the world. Confucian cultivation emphasized policing one's mind and behavior, proper relationships, proper social conduct (propriety), and cultivating inner harmony. To arrive at his teachings Confucius spent a great degree of time studying history to derive the principles of correct behavior, and the patterns or regularities of human actions and events, which we might also call wisdom. He said that you become most human, your highest self, by being social (not separated from society as with ascetics) doing the right thing, in the right way, during the right circumstances. Confucianism entailed not just meditation and constantly policing your own behavior (introspection or mental watchfulness), but an emphasis on learning so that you would master wisdom and decorum/propriety to regulate your own behavior and situations. Confucianism might have been ignored in China but for one great reason – it was beneficial to the rulers who endorsed it. This is because it created a theoretical framework for hierarchical control in society with the ideal of obedience to the king and elite officials at the top. Thus it received official sanction and promotion. All religions and philosophies tend to prosper when promoted by government echelons. As a message to powerful rulers and leaders who have the power to oppress, Confucianism emphasized “don't do to others what you wouldn't want done to you.” While Buddhism and Hinduism attempt to reduce the “I, me, myself and mine” in their own unique ways, Confucianism does so by denying the self's independence. It maintains that we are not separate individuals like isolated atoms but more like nodes in an interdependent network of relationships that comprise a giant web of social relations and obligations. This is how Confucianism captures the Buddhist idea of the selflessness of the individual and the infinite web of interdependence that defines all individual things, including you.
- Buddhism was developed after Shakyamuni Buddha surveyed all the various cultivation teachings and methods of his day, and like Confucius

edited out the good from the bad while synthesizing them into a path of proper behavior, ethical living and spiritual development. His teachings are based around the principle that we can solve human problems on our own without recourse to divinities or one Supreme God being. Buddhism specifies that the cardinal problem of mankind is suffering. Life itself is suffering or entails suffering because most of our conscious experiences are accompanied by some form of mental pain or physical suffering such as the pain caused by the attachment to internal mental phenomena when they leave and we cannot enjoy them any longer, or the pain of habitually holding to them when we should let go. But suffering has an origin so it can be eliminated, or managed. The Buddhist solution to suffering is a spiritual path of cultivation technologies targeted toward taking you mentally and physically to nirvana, a state absent of suffering. The road of Buddhist for monks and nuns entails intensified meditation and other practices whereas for ordinary people the roadway is to follow an eight-fold path of proper striving and behavior along with cultivation. If one cultivates correctly, Buddhism says that one can attain various mental states called dhyana that are the equivalents of the spiritual body attainments of Arhats. The highest stage Arhat is a fully enlightened Buddha who has several bodies composed of various transcendental “winds” (energies or substances) residing on different planes but all linked together, called a *sambhogakaya*, which is the common achievement of all who cultivate high enough. A Buddha body can also at will generate lesser *nirmanakaya* emanation bodies which can be projected outward to perform tasks in the world that help sentient beings in various ways. Its Arhats, Bodhisattvas and Buddhas – its accomplished human adepts – often choose to function as saviors of mankind upon completion of the cultivation path, and sometimes they leave for other realms as independent Arhats and *pratyekabuddhas* who go their own way. Buddhism, because it only appealed to the highest and most educated class in ancient Indian society, which was involved with divinities everywhere, died out within India but found a home elsewhere in other Asian regions. Buddha’s last words were, “Be lamps unto yourselves. Work out your own liberation with diligence,” so its adherents are usually practitioners rather than believers of blind faith since it believes that the only way to achieve the religious goal of nirvana is through self-reliance on one’s own merit/efforts. Buddhism’s Vajrayana Path (*vajra* means thunderbolt), having the force of a thunderbolt, teaches you to cultivate both mind and body to achieve Buddhahood extraordinarily quickly.

- Jainism originated in the same Brahmanical environment as Buddhism and also does not accept the Vedas as the absolute religious authority. It advocates meditation/cultivation practice rather than ritual, and does

not look to monks and nuns for religious authority. Its main tenets of truth, non-attachment, non-stealing, non-violence, many-sidedness and chastity emphasize virtuous living and the idea of a pure life centered on righteous conduct and discipline. Jainism emphasizes the equality of all life, advocating harmlessness towards all, whether the creatures are great or small. It emphasizes four harmful passions (anger, pride, deceit and greed) and teaches that straightforwardness is a remedy against deceit, contentment is a remedy against greed, forgiveness is a remedy against anger and harm, and humility is an antidote to pride. It developed a cultivation path of renunciation and purification designed to liberate one from the shackles of karma, allowing one to enter into a state of liberation from rebirth by attaining the equivalent of Buddhist nirvana. Basically, it is a pathway of liberating the soul from matter via individual effort, and a primary component of attaining its ultimate state requires a careful observance of nonviolent behavior. It says that man conquers his mind and body from the cycle of birth and deaths by conquering his desires and attachments to material things, and by annihilating his accumulated karma through austerities and the steadfast practice of virtue.

- Taoist teachings were assembled in China over a long period of time by collecting together a large number of naturalistic philosophies along with cultivation practices and melding them into a whole. It embodied the idea that the central problem of mankind was overly repressive social conventions such as the rules and regulations that predominated within China due to the predominant Confucian influences. It rebelled against artificial strictures saying they stifled one's life and inner vital energies. A main principle of Taoism is that human flourishing could come through quiet humility, simplicity in living, and union with the natural rhythms of life as seen in the example of nature. Taoism also emphasized cultivating the physical body by restoring, replenishing, augmenting and furthering its internal energy and body functions in order to heal illness, reach a higher state of health, and defer decline and aging. Thus it espoused a cultivation path of peaceful natural mental states that would bring about a fullness of Qi (vital energy) inside oneself that could be used for spiritual cultivation. It also espoused internal energy exercises to optimize the circulation of Qi within the body. It eschewed all the pomp and glory of established Chinese hierarchies and instead emphasized naturalness and spontaneity so that individuals could experience life's fullness and an ever-present sense of being alive. It held the idea that the principles of the universe were things one could derive from careful observation and then follow to become immortal forever just like the circulations of the Heavens. Its idea of going along with nature's trends, principles and seasons to get more done with less effort encapsulates the

ideas of frictionlessness and no effort. Following such principles, Taoism promoted the idea that a desirable government has a very light touch to get things done with the most minimal of efforts and the littlest interference in peoples' lives. Taoism reminds me of the naturalistic cultivation of the force in Star Wars, whose less than fully human half-machine man, Darth Vader, was sometimes taken to represent the institutional half-dead "corporate man" who has lost his freedom and vitality because he must live in a grey-flannel suit and submit to the daily deadening conformities of business life. For those interested in cultivation, Taoism also laid out a set of techniques for becoming an Immortal, which was the sagely equivalent to the Buddhist Arhat, Jain Arihant and Hindu yogi master. The early Chinese thought that was incorporated within Taoism recognized that around mankind existed a divine realm of spirits who had certain powers over the human realm, but man could tap into his natural energies, practice internal energy exercises and mental practices that freed the mind from limitations, and thereby also achieve divinity to join them. Then as a long-lived spiritual being with a human body, an Immortal or Arhat, he could control the cosmos with his higher powers. Thus, Taoism has a set of teachings and practices for self-divinization like Christianity and other religions, but emphasizes private self-cultivation since it is less organized and thus lacks a hierarchical organization.

- Yoruba developed in the rich tribal soils of Africa and embraced the existence of hundreds of higher deities, just as Hinduism maintained the existence of many higher deities while animistic religions maintained there were countless nature spirits. Yoruba is characterized by a wide variety of songs, histories, and other cultural concepts that made up Yoruba society. It felt that the central problem of mankind was disconnection from the divine creator and source of all energy. Thus Yoruba created a spiritual path that emphasized various means of connecting with the divine, such as sincere veneration of various Orishas (higher gods of achievement) and meditative recitation, as well as sacrifice and divination to ask questions of the higher powers. The final goal in Yoruba is that each individual achieves transcendence and finds his or her destiny in a heavenly spiritual realm where the inhabitants – deities – do good deeds and beneficial activities for mankind.
- Zoroastrianism is one of the ancient layers below Islam, predating both Jesus and Moses. It is one of the world's oldest religions, held the belief in an immanent self-creating universe with consciousness as its special attribute. It maintained a dualistic cosmology of good battling evil in the world, and humanity has an active role to play in this conflict. This reflected the warlike times in which it developed where powerful groups such as bandits would frequently use force/violence to oppress or steal

from the weak. Zoroaster proclaimed that there is only one God, the singularly creative and sustaining force of the Universe, that human beings are given a right of choice in their actions, and we should make use of the right of choice to choose good and righteous living rather than selfishly aggress upon others for gain. Furthermore, Zoroastrianism also maintains that people are responsible for the consequences of their choices/behavior. Like Hinduism, Yoruba and many other religions, it believes there are *Yazatas* or divine spirits/divinities (present day angels) all around us. Furthermore, man must act as guardians and protectors just as the *Yazatas* do to help us. In Zoroastrianism, the purpose in life is to “be among those who renew the world ... to make the world progress towards perfection.” Zoroastrianism therefore stresses that we generate good thoughts, words and deeds to bring a higher ethical awareness into the world.

- Sikhism, which originated with Guru Nanak, developed as an alternative to the Hinduism and Islam that monopolized the India of his day, and which had both developed excessive negative traits that he felt were too strong or deeply entrenched to be reformed. Surveying the excesses of these other two religions, Sikhism proposes that the central problem of mankind is that we are not aligned with God’s will, and Guru Nanak said we should remember God. He developed a cultivation path designed to help us merge/reunite with God by helping us develop positive human qualities that lead us to God. By saying that God can communicate with people Sikhism pays tribute to the fact that transcendental-bodied Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are always intervening with people’s thoughts and consciousness to help them. It recognizes the intercession of saints who can help people and whom it maintains are “divine in spirit” and the “embodiment of divine light,” recognizing the attainment of higher transcendental bodies by sufficient cultivators who work hard to help people. Sikhism stresses that people should practice pure motives and behaviors in life, forsake evil company, and especially fight against injustice when they see it. The *langar*, or free meal served to others regardless of their caste, religion, ethnicity, gender or economic status, emphasizes the religion’s emphasis on generosity and charity to help the community, especially the needy, and it expresses the Golden Rule of sharing and doing for others what you would want them to do for you.
- Stoicism, an ancient Hellenic philosophy, developed as an antidote to the vicissitudes/hardships of life during an age absent of the neighborly mutual aid typically found within Christian and other communities that emphasize support for their members. One of its creators, Epictetus, endured the horrors of slavery. According to the teachings of Stoicism, the human path to *eudaimonia* (happiness) is found in accepting the moment as it presents itself, by not allowing oneself to be controlled by

the desire for pleasure or fear of pain in that moment, by using one's mind to understand the world and act correctly in the moment, and by working together with others while treating them fairly and justly. Stoicism reminds us that life is fleeting, uncertain, unpredictable, and usually cannot be controlled. Therefore, we must rely wholly on only ourselves to manage our responses to events/circumstances instead of trusting to gods. We must learn to emotional control of ourselves and carefully manage our responses to the circumstances that arise within our lives. Stoicism says that the source of our dissatisfaction/suffering is because we are impulsively dependent on our reflexive habits instead of deferring to wisdom, logic and truth when dealing with situations. Stoicism teaches us to overcome destructive emotions that present themselves in our mind, and that we must act on what can be acted upon while letting go of what cannot be controlled. The Stoics held that certain destructive emotions resulted from mental errors of judgment, and they believed people should aim to maintain a will that is “in accord with nature.” To live a good life, like Taoists the Stoics were taught to understand the rules of the natural order since they thought everything was rooted in nature. While many religious adherents practice the deference or surrender of leaving everything to God, Stoics only cultivate the attitude of total acceptance to things/situations they cannot control. For things they can control they emphasize self-direction, which involves working to solve problems by their own efforts.

- Agnosticism does not believe in God, gods or transcendental realms. It only believes in science, cause and effect, and scientific principles such as evolution (including physical, social and cultural evolution). While it denies the existence of transcendental realms, this is only because its proponents cannot yet access them. They also refuse to acknowledge the many eyewitness accounts of miraculous abilities that individuals with higher bodies can perform due to their achievements. Atheists are unwilling to experiment to see whether cultivation teachings might be true, such as whether spiritual practices can move their own internal Qi energy to the extent that they feel it. They are also unwilling to research whether competing traditions have records of saints who have exhibited similar supernatural powers(due to their higher bodies) and whether these accounts bear consistency across traditions.

The differences between the main beliefs/tenets of these religions once again historically illustrates that human beings have been evolving socially and psychologically over time, trying out different ideas for ways to explain reality and order society. Different faiths helped produce a variety of diverse human cultures, each with different worldviews, behavioral patterns, social expectations, and lifestyles. Religions are not necessarily “truths” but

they are indeed natural phenomena that embody certain ideas and practices and have evolved in certain ways due to their particular circumstances. From one aspect they offer a view of the world, and from another aspect are definitely a social means of organizing biological beings, humans, by domesticating them to certain ways. But they also offer something much more.

These are just basic facts. I am not even going into the fact that many have experience evolutionary developments over thousands of years such as Christianity. Now, there is a lot of religious idiocy imposed on people, who are required to act in certain ways as a member and believe in certain tenets lacking reason or proof. Many religions have magical or unverifiable claims that the faithful must have faith in, but in real spiritual cultivation there is a verifiable path of spiritualization with definite gong-fu results one can expect and verify through attainment.

Social solidarity theories look at religions and propose that they have evolved primarily to enhance cooperation and cohesion within groups and provide personal benefits that can enhance an individual's chances for survival and reproduction. One social scientist, Emile Durkheim, maintained a strong opinion that the function of religion is primarily group cohesion – the formation of a single moral community – and that this unity was attained because of the collectively attended rituals. He asserted that these group meetings provided a special kind of energy, which he called “effervescence,” that made group members lose their individuality and feel united with the gods, and thus with the group. Hence they helped to build social cohesion.

In other words, through ceremonies the individuals within a religion can at times participate in a collective group cultivation effort where they can touch a bit of transcendence, attain to the feeling of losing their self, and temporarily feel in union with something divine.

Mankind’s psychological and social evolutions have certainly produced great advances in human culture and part of that cultural evolution during this long progression has been the appearance of religion, which influences us in different ways. Religions have been a great force of change in society, no doubt, and we should pay particular notice to the fact that their ceremonies have at times served as special cultivation methods.

As just one example, the sights, smells, and sounds during an Orthodox Christian mass are designed to transport your consciousness to an elevated state that is in touch with the purposes of spiritual cultivation. The same can be said for Shinto rituals or other ceremonies constructed in the proper way where you naturally cultivate your Qi/Prana and mind due to attendance. Unfortunately, many religions lack ceremonies structured in a way that would raise human consciousness to a state where it could touch emptiness or transform your Qi/Prana in any degree. This is because they

are not designed in the proper way to bring about proper Qi/Prana cultivation or higher states of consciousness where you can abandon normal mentation and touch states of transcendence, awe, sublimity, emptiness, reverence, or even emotional thrills.

Different circumstances have given rise to unique religious impulses over time. They all have similarities to one another, as well as their own unique messages and structures.

Some religions impose discipline on their group members/society by making people adhere to strict rules that regulate their lives precisely, such as in Orthodox Judaism and Islam. This is order and allegiance through imposition, namely forced obedience. Of course people always want to rebel against strictures that are too tight or deadening, and it is a problem when such religions impose doctrines or behaviors on the faithful that do not change over time as society evolves. It would be terrible, for instance, if religions enforced slavery over conquered populations because such notions were inherent to their scriptures.

Other religions simply call for voluntary devotion to a path of perfection where you can choose to participate or not, as in Hinduism. To counteract the resulting chaos of inequalities and mass nonconformities everywhere in society such religions turn to periodic spectacular public rituals in order to help unite the populace, unify the people and pacify society.

Other religions offer the chance of voluntary membership in groups spread throughout society that regularly cultivate reverence/worship on a weekly basis while encouraging better public conduct and good deeds in society. The weekly mass of Christianity is one such instance. The regularity of weekly attendance is what helps influence individuals over time.

Confucius said we shouldn't just use laws and punishment to order/guide society, but need to publicly promote the ideals of virtue so that people will copy them through their own volition. We need to establish role models that will passively influence the public. If the public sees higher officials, or various admired individuals, acting in a certain particular way then they will be influenced to duplicate the behavior of such role models. The idea is that people will respect righteousness and virtue and emulate it if they see the higher strata following it and prizing it.

Regardless of their different outer forms and the ways through which they try to influence individuals and society, most genuine religions embody a secret cultivation path within them, an esoteric path of more intensified practices. Most all religions have an inner path of intensified practices, involving the "arts of the Way," that leads to transcendental attainments. However, this is a characteristic that is unknown to most of the public.

Religions, regardless as to whether they have propagated true or false dogmas or adopted some rather unusual practices or rituals, fulfill some

psychological needs and genuinely try to help people deal with their daily social issues and concerns. This is their community function that all can see, and without this characteristic they would not have survived because they would have served no usefulness. They have often helped mankind deal with the issues of their day, and even such issues as the terror of death that faces us all. They have also helped regulate and pacify society by enabling large groups of strangers to cooperatively live together peacefully due to a shared groupthink of common ideas on how to behave and do things. But they also contain something much more.

We have looked at religions in terms of how they have developed in tune with man's evolutionary psychology. We've looked at religion in terms of a natural cultural and sociological development that has worked to consolidate people and help regulate/pacify society. We've even looked at religions in terms of how their basic dogmas differed because of what each faith addressed as the central problematical issues in the world. On this the great Ibn Arabi said, "Do not attach yourself to any particular creed exclusively, so that you disbelieve all the rest; otherwise you will lose much good, nay, you will fail to recognize the real truth of the matter. Let your soul be capable of embracing all forms of belief. God, the omnipresent and omnipotent, is not limited by any one creed."

These short summaries include the typical religious dimensions that most historians, sociologists or theologians would discuss. If 100% honest, they would also have to admit that nearly every religion contains some degree of ideological and even mythical nonsense lacking any basis in fact. To some extent they all promulgate some degree of illusions about reality – basically pious fiction. In fact, all of mankind's social rules of propriety are wonderful but simply things we made up – fictions created within our minds, imagined orders as to how things should be. They help pacify and order society but we made up those social rituals and expectations.

Nonetheless, as the *Lotus Sutra* teaches, this is one of the best ways to lead people, which is to sometimes use misleading tales, or just the partial truth in order to lead people out of danger and lower states of being. Such behavior falls under the rubric of "skillful means" used by the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in leading the people, protecting them and prospering them. In the West this is the "noble lie" of Plato taught in the *Republic*, where a myth or untruth is knowingly propagated by the elite (such as the enlightened) in order to maintain social harmony or advance an agenda beneficial to the people. It is a fiction told with an altruistic motive, usually to unite and guide the polis.

This is one of the reasons you aren't told that many living people in the world have the deva body attainment (or higher). The silence is misleading because people who have it don't want you to know and so they personally don't say anything about it. In many religions they don't even want people

to know it exists. Most accomplished individuals will deny they have attained it, or say their teacher did but not them.

Many who have the spiritual body attainments will even deny that this is the initial fruit of the spiritual path even though this information is clearly available in their own tradition, which we will soon see. So of course, many of the great ones heading spiritual traditions have such attainments otherwise you cannot be a spiritual master. Christians, Jews, Moslems, Taoists, Buddhist, Hindus, Jains, Sikhs, ... the Tao is barred to no one so many living people have attained the higher transcendental bodies due to their cultivation efforts under the direction of another with attainments.

This is what the religious path is all about. Good conduct is stressed for the masses at the lower end of the path, and the pathway leading to the higher body achievements (and what to do with them) are emphasized for those ready to attain them. Unfortunately, most people do not know they exist or how to cultivate for their attainment.

Religions serve to teach the common people, the public, how to behave nobly with virtuous, ethical, moral, “consummate,” or “irreproachable” conduct. The goal is to have this become people’s everyday self. They teach us how to personally behave and treat others with respect and dignity. They urge people to follow this road even if such conduct seems difficult and uninviting. They teach people that we should love one another and take care of each other, especially those in need. They teach that we should all act with dignity, humaneness, kindness and respect for one another.

They teach that we should follow the Golden Rule of not doing to others what we don’t want done to us, which is a great reminder to those in positions of power who can oppress others or take advantage of them. They teach that we should do for others what we would want done for us, which is the reminder for people in states of poverty that we should try to help one another such as with generosity and forgiveness.

They teach that we should practice moderation in all things, especially our appetites, otherwise we may end up in harmful extremes. They teach the basic foundational virtues that we should not lie, steal, cheat, commit adultery or sexually abuse others (sexual misconduct of any form), harm others or hurt ourselves. Furthermore, we should constantly practice mindfulness of our behavior to prevent such infractions. We should also practice acts of confession and repentance if we succumb. To advance even further in mastering character virtues and moral reasoning would require an effort based upon basics such as this. Religions teach us to follow a pathway of spiritual practice that is consistent and diligent along all these lines without pushing us to extremes and harmful behavior.

Now, if someone has finally become a truly virtuous person and devotes himself to spiritual cultivation, they can then be raised up to the higher state of *Homo Deus*. They can attain the independent subtle body

(deva body) whilst alive, thus becoming one of the twice born, and then can invisibly travel the earth plane unrestricted. By what we might call spiritualizing, purifying, divinizing or transforming the Qi/Prana of their body they can then work to attain the higher spiritual bodies one-by-one that are normally only available upon death, and use them while alive. Then we become the angels, archangels, principalities, authorities, etcetera mentioned in the Judeo-Christian tradition, who are actually just regular people like you and I who finally achieve the higher body attainments due to our purity and spiritual cultivation.

In the *Surangama Sutra*, sages are given an entirely separate classification than man because this multiple body attainment makes them a different species, which is why they should truly be called *Homo Deus*. This is the spiritual stage of attainment we are all called to evolve towards. It represents a higher stage of perfection because of the virtues required to achieve it: respect for others, kindness and compassion, helpfulness to others, wisdom, mindfulness, discipline, perseverance, etcetera. Naturally only the most ethical of people will be helped to attain the deva body spiritual achievement. Everyone else has to wait until death to arise in a deva body that lies within the shell of their physical body matrix. Your vital energy is essentially your deva body, and its presence is necessary to power your consciousness.

Thus, inside the outer shell of most religions and their behavioral training is an inside core, sometimes hidden or obscured by the outerwear, to help us work toward this attainment. Inside is a cultivation path of “emptiness mind” (such as giving all mental concerns over to God, submitting to God’s will, humbly offering away the self to do God’s will, being obedient to God, making offerings due to God, various emptiness or formless mind meditations, and so forth) and Qi/Prana cultivation.

Qi/Prana cultivation, unbeknownst to most people, is connected with the regular religious pathway of prayer, mantra, reverence, worship, songs, ritual observances and good behavior that most religions emphasize at the lowest rungs of the ladder. These two aspects – formless mind with awareness/presence/watchfulness and Qi/Prana cultivation – are what we must analyze if we are to uncover the universal basis for religion.

Religion is a practice that should transform our Qi/Prana and purify our mind and (elevate our) conduct. If we are lucky, it should also help us increase our cognitive skills, improve the health of our body and our control over our bodies. It should also help us improve our connections with our communities, namely our social relations with others. Religion is a pathway whose insights can enable us to improve ourselves in all dimensions. For instance, spiritual pathways might help us increase our ability to concentrate by silencing our negative self-talk and mental afflictions (through elimination or transformation strategies); improve our

cognitive skills; help us master various skills; improve our health and energy; get better at achieving goals; increase, strengthen, improve and elevate our human relations with others; find a life purpose or purposes within life and so forth.

Most monasteries, convents or ashrams lead people through the spiritual path of transformation via special mental and inner energy practices while the practitioners/adherents never know what is going on during the many years it takes, and this “imposed ignorance” is the tradition followed nearly everywhere. I don’t believe in it, and Shakyamuni Buddha did not either. Furthermore, it neglects the development of other skills at the same time that make you a more well-rounded human being, and which you would use upon attainment. If you enter the religious life and fail, you’d still like to have developed these extra skills along the way during that protected time, wouldn’t you? Therefore I disagree with the practice of having monks and nuns, yogis, rabbis and so forth only devote their life to meditation or worship where they could be learning other helpful skills for humanity at the same time, and should. Most religious functionaries will not attain the Tao in this life, and at the end of a lifetime that ignored skills acquisition they will then find that they achieved very little at all. During a lifetime of devotion to religion one can, at the same time, devote oneself to acquiring the knowledge and skills to become some type of Bodhisattva or Buddha rather than an expert in useless religious knowledge that cannot solve worldly problems.

In *Buddha Yoga*, *Nyasa Yoga* and this book you now have a bit of a guide as to what is going on during the spiritual path, and this is what is happening in the Christian monastic system to its monks and nuns, to the Jewish rabbis, to the Moslems pirs and sheikhs, Hindu priests and yogis, Buddhist monks and nuns, Jains, Sikhs, and so forth. They are all making steps towards attaining the deva body during life, and then using its powers to help others. Those who are already devas train within that human body during the Twelve Year kundalini transformation period, and of course during the stages of preparatory yoga. This is the spiritual path. You cannot succeed without the “help of Heaven.”

Should there be alien life on other planets, and there most certainly must be higher intelligences on other worlds since the galaxies with habitable worlds are so many, the same procedure will apply to them as well, namely that you can free your vital energy within your physical body, which is connected with the template of your physical structure, to establish an independent subtle body (deva body), and you can continue unwrapping the energy of higher bodies from within the lower ones to free new ones starting from the initial subtle body attainment as a foundational base. It is just the structure of reality that this is possible. In fact, the *Avatamsaka Sutra* of Buddhism lists many world systems where this is done, and some where

the densest material existence level of life does not exist but the higher transcendental levels do. Jainism presents an immaculate view of the cosmos also. Hinduism, Yoruba, Taoism, with their many gods and goddesses, refer to individuals within our world who have attained these levels of achievement and sometimes those from other world systems who come to help.

The sequence of spiritual body attainments and their usage in compassionate, wise activity to help others - this is the important thing that matters for true spiritual adherents. That is why we are all taught to cultivate wisdom in our thinking and behavior along with kind, compassionate, helpful, altruistic behavior on behalf of others who all belong to the same greater social community of cognizant beings.

For the general public, on the other hand, the emphasis is placed squarely on purifying one's mental realm and instituting proper behavior, and on religious/spiritual practices that will (unknowingly to them) strengthen and purify their inner subtle bodies so that they function with better health during life, can attain greater internal peace, and live longer in the next heavenly stage of existence after death. The work done by spiritual beings throughout your life on helping you maintain your inner Qi/Prana body (which explains many strange events you've been through) helps preserve your deva body after death so that this vital energy body doesn't just dissipate upon your demise.

For instance, listening to or singing the right type of religious songs can move your Qi, stimulating it so that it moves across your body. Mantra practice can exercise or push your Qi due to harmonic, resonant vibrations it sets up in tune with your breathing. Fasting as a religious practice helps strengthen your inner subtle body (vital energy body) because you have to depend upon it during that time. Reverence through worship can give rise to thoughts of awe, forgetting oneself (and one's body), humility and so forth that prompt a different type of Qi to arise within you and wash your body's Qi channels. If you pursue more intensified cultivation practices such as meditation, yoga, pranayama, and so forth they can lead to more intensive Qi/Prana transformations and a ladder of spiritual bodies that you can start cultivating whilst alive. To get there, however, you need a great spiritual master to oversee the process who already has those body attainments.

The scholars trying to make sense of religions never seem to dig deep enough to find this golden thread within the world's great faiths, but it's there. Perhaps the blindness is because they just don't know these principles. They regularly ignore this inner esoteric path of practices that encapsulates a scientific, step-by-step process of cause and effect to influence your mental states and Qi/Prana over and over for many years – the path of “intensified” or “preparatory” practices – until the Twelve Year

kundalini transformation process commences that upon its termination produces the free emergence of an actual spirit body higher than the one normally ejected upon death.

This is the pathway that proves the existence of a transcendental reality. Your actual achievement of the subtle body *authenticates the spiritual path*, and saints of many traditions have commonly spoken about it thus verifying its existence. At the higher stages of attainment they can even generate a *nirmanakaya* projection body that other human can see or touch, as did Padre Pio. Buddhism, Taoism and Hinduism offer many eyewitness accounts of this accomplishment as well as explanations of the attainment process. But you have to achieve it yourself to prove it unless you see one, such as reported by the stories within the *Anthonite Fathers and Anthonite Matters* (Elder Paisios) that attest to the same achievement within the Greek Orthodox Christian tradition. This is a common non-denominational stage of spiritual achievement so Christians, Jews, Moslems and others all commonly attain it. Unless you attain the lowest level of attainment whilst alive, which is the deva body composed of your subtle vital energy that Buddhism calls “wind” and Taoism calls “Qi” while Hinduism calls it “Prana,” you will have to wait for death to learn more about it and then take further steps to cultivate forwards. Why not start cultivating better now?

Is this deva body really existent ... is there really life after death? Sure. You are not a temporary ego-identity that lives a life on earth and then are annihilated at death. Your vital energy simply unwraps from your material structure to free a subtle-bodied entity made of Qi that we call the soul, but it is just you in a more energetic form that still resides in the earthly plane. The higher transcendental bodies can travel elsewhere. In any case, this is why Christianity says that your soul is isconfined within your body or “your real self sleeps inside you” because it is released at death unless you cultivate to free it during life. Taoism calls it the *yin shen* while other religions use different names for the attainment. However, this is just your vital energy body, your etheric body composed of Qi/Prana. The work that Buddhas and the local Protector gods are doing on your Qi all the time, to make sure that you live well and your vital energy survives in its structural form upon death, ensures that this happens.

There is no denial of the soul’s existence. There is just a denial about what people normally believe is its true nature. It lacks absolute permanence because it is always changing, and is not an independent existence of an inherent self-so you. It is an existence with consciousness that is infinitely part of everything, defined by innumerable conditions, and has been influenced by these conditions. You have to cultivate a lot more to attain the much higher bodies that approach the Eternal Life promised in most religions, and yet the starting point is the same. It all starts with the deva

body attainment.

Christianity words the start of spiritual practice as becoming free from the captivity of sin and errant desires, while other religions alternatively say you must cultivate purity, become free of taints, master virtuous behavior, practice introspection, and so forth. This is why all the religions tell us to examine a thought when it enters our brain. Is it right, is it proper, what will it lead to if followed? We are to police our thoughts and behavior, to be very careful in what we do, and to practice self-denial to errant thoughts and desires. All sorts of methods, even tales of Hell that cause the public to fear evil ways, have been created by religions as tools to influence people to stop doing evil and do good.

Religions teach us methods of practicing clearance from too many thoughts, clearance from errant thoughts, clearance from excessive desires, clearance from egofulness (arrogance, conceit, narcissicism, hubris, etcetera), and the clearance of stepping back from the momentum of our thought-stream and experiences that might be called detachment. Such types of clearance can result in inner peacefulness, contentment, inner silence, non-ego, emptiness or empty mind.

Religions teach obedience and allegiance to codes of ethics, “do not do” lists, and rules of virtuous conduct. They teach us to make vows to be our higher self and so on. Sometimes they even recommend that we practice confession, admissions of guilt, and then repentance to help us clear out our faulty past. Once we mentally cut with a track record of past errant/evil behavior, we can consider that our life is “new” from that moment forward. Afterwards we can start moving onwards without that conduct, make amends and improve ourselves to practice goodness and avoid evil.

Would someone help you become a Buddha, who has great powers over other conscious beings, if you weren’t like this? No, which is why everyone must cultivate themselves in regards to their mind and personal behavior. You have to introspect and find what’s wrong with your behavior in life and then vow to change it.

You can find “saints” in nearly every religion who have attained transcendental bodies while alive, which they hope we all will attain or make great efforts in working to achieve. Thus they can perform miracles such as knowing your inner mind, healing others, conversing with animals, preventing people from moving, controlling nature, and even bilocating that entails projecting a double of themselves elsewhere (a *nirmanakaya*) to perform some deed.

Bilocation, which is the *yang shen* attainment of Taoism, is possible only because they have achieved these higher attainments that give them the ability to materialize a visible *nirmanakaya* in the material realm, and sometimes you can touch it and sometimes it is like an empty hologram.

Many people within Jewish mysticism, Christian mysticism, Hinduism, Buddhism and so forth have exhibited this skill because it is a non-denominational achievement belonging to the Supra-Causal stage of attainment and higher.

For instance, Hinduism is replete with many stories of masters exhibiting their *yang shen* such as Nityananda, Neem Karoli Baba, Sri Yukteswar, Lahiri Mahasaya, Sri Ramana Maharshi and others.

Islam has tales of Bayazid Bastami, Abu Sa'eed, Rumi and others exhibiting bilocation, as well as exhibiting *karamat* or supernatural wonders due to their higher body attainments.

Christianity has many saints who have attained the *yang shen* ability of bilocation such as like Domenico da Cese (Italy), Padre Pio (Italy), Gerard Majella (Italy), John Boscoe (Italy), Mary of Jesus de Leon y Delgado (Canary Islands), Juan Martin de Porres Velazquez (Peru), Charles of Mount Argus (Ireland), Ursula Micaela Morata (Spain), and Lydwine of Schiedam (Netherlands).

In the Coptic Church saints Yostos El Antony and Pope Cyril VI of Alexandria were known bilocators. In fact, the book *Anthoite Fathers and Athoite Matters* records many cases of individuals on Greece's Mount Athos who also reached this stage of attainment.

Since the scholars cannot explain such things they routinely dismiss all these stories, including the stories with many credible witnesses. But these are actual saints who have shown their attainments, and therefore you can always call upon these saints for help when in need. This is why many traditions build special tombs, temples, churches, and so on that are dedicated to accomplished ones. They are a place you can go where you can ask for help and assistance in life, though in truth you only need to make an appropriate mental connection to receive a saint's blessings. This is why the Christian Saint Seraphim had the following inscribed on his tombstone: "When I am dead, come to me as when I was alive, and kneeling on the ground, cast all your bitterness upon my grave. Tell me everything and I shall listen to you, and all he bitterness will fly away from you. And as you spoke to me when I was alive, do so now. For I am living and I shall be forever."

Whenever someone becomes enlightened they can know when others think about them because they have a Supra-Causal or Immanence body whose energy is so transcending of the lower planes that they can know/feel through it the vibrations of such thoughts, especially well-known vibrations such as their name (calls for help). Thus they try to respond with help through one of their main bodies or a *nirmanakaya* projection.

Now, if you have any sense at all it will no doubt occur to you that the inner intensified yogic paths within religions and their professed result of the deva body attainment (and yet higher bodies with their attendant

powers) may be a myth/falsity on par with the many others ordinarily circulated by religion. It might be just other made-up fictional nonsense that is a close brother to superstition and magical thinking. Boy, does the following sentence (from me) certainly sound silly, “Yes, I know your objections, but not for this fact.” Who’s going to swallow that?

There *is* a common golden thread within the cloth of world religions that has nothing to do with imagined orders. There is something factual rather than fictional within religion – this pathway of practices with provable results – that is not a made-up mythical ideology but instead a cause and effect pathway just as is found in science. The key to its authenticity is that *you can prove it*, and others have left records of this achievement that is taught universally.

In Buddhism, after learning the dharma you are asked to authenticate it. You are asked to prove it by your practice effort to gain this advertised result, which is to become an Arhat - a stage of attainment on the way to becoming a fully enlightened Buddha with an Immanence body, the whole *sambhogakaya*. Then you have proved the path.

You are not asked to believe by faith but to have just enough faith to work towards some proof, and then the proof will start to come when your Qi starts to move. When your internal energy starts to stir because of cultivation practices, which science says is impossible, then you will begin to have evidence of the path. When you work just a bit at cultivating correctly and start feeling your internal energy (Qi/Prana) move inside you due to your cultivation efforts then your belief in trying is rewarded right then and there because science says that isn’t supposed to happen. You’re not supposed to have internal energy that moves here and there. The fact that your inner energy, your vital energy or Qi/Prana, can move due to spiritual practice is proof that such a thing exists when science denies it, and the rest of the path can be proven from then on as well because it all depends upon transformations of your internal energy that achieved because of exercises guided by your mind and willpower.

When you achieve the subtle deva body, which is the first Arhat stage called the Srotapanna, it is said you “develop faith in the path” because you finally get free of the physical body and are now fooling around with all the other heavenly beings and other people who also attained it. You don’t need faith anymore because you have achievement, and thus you have true faith, true belief in the path. Because you have achievement you have proved the path, and thus you have certainty as to the rest of the teachings. Thus the stage of attainment leads to the Stage of True Cultivation Practice that from then onwards eventually leads to a fully enlightened Buddha body.

When people therefore say that the major religions have very little in common, and therefore they must be entirely mythical fictions due to the

fact they lack common denominators except for an emphasis on ethical injunctions, the naysayers are missing the following in their analysis. They deserve to exist because they lead the masses upwards, and for the best they lead them to heavenly achievements during life. Furthermore, they might seem very different from one another on the surface but they do share several very important common cores.

There are indeed many commonalities, but both the public and scholars don't notice the most important ones. When you examine them closely you will recognize the basis of a non-denominational universal path within all these separate streams, *a universal path for a higher self* despite all the outer differences in dogmas and practices.

Call it the "soul being released from the material body," the deva body, a heavenly reward, liberation, or other names but the genuine fruit of the spiritual path is still the same thing promised in multiple genuine traditions. This is what religion is really all about – the enjoyment of a heavenly state while alive.

FIVE COMMONALITIES AMONG RELIGIONS

As we've seen, there are many differences between the world's major religions, but there are commonalities too. Here are five of the most important commonalities that escape the public.

The first is the most overt principle that religions have in common, which is a common emphasis on ethics. Regardless of their differences regarding the central problem of mankind, the world's religions all espouse the pursuit of virtue and good behavior, such as the Golden Rule.

The foundational stage of every religion teaches us to focus on cultivating good behavior by carefully watching/policing our mind and applying our will to better conduct and good deeds. We have to work at developing an awareness of what we are doing in the present, rather than act robotically, and stop errant, evil, bad, malevolent behavior in its tracks (or before it even occurs because we catch the thought) while replacing such tendencies with virtuous, ethical, pure behavior instead. And, we must do so in our mind, speech and action.

Perfecting your behavior is not simply a matter of obeying rules, which any robot can do, but of cultivating your inner life through self-reflection so that you always know what you are doing and where you are going. Because you can detach from events to see yourself and what you are doing, if you find yourself erring in some way then you can correct yourself. We are all taught to feel remorse at making errors in our mindsets and behavior, and taught that we should try/vow/strive to change ourselves to become better people.

People typically justify their bad behavior. This includes their

addictions, past evil deeds, malevolent deeds, malicious acts and even crimes. Religions rightfully teach us that you have to take a good honest look at yourself and step away from what's errant, evil, selfish, malefic, malevolent, hurtful or harmful in your mind and behavior. They also ask people to study spiritual teachings, which is so that people are exposed to spiritual wisdom and the basics of the cultivation path. They ask them to study general wisdom as well (wise ways of doing things or understanding situations) in hopes that people make better decisions in life that improve their lives rather than create problems.

Sociologists usually fixate on this one stage of virtue training and spiritual study when analyzing the world's religions and say there isn't much commonality beyond this, but this isn't true.

Somewhat less overt than the foundational stage of religions is the fact that many great faiths not only have general paths of worship for the masses that have their own public, community or societal purposes of development and transformation, but also have more esoteric intensified cultivation paths as well. These intensified paths constitute a type of preparatory yoga ("arts of the Way") to attain the gong-fu that leads to higher spiritual body attainments.

Some intensified paths are ascetic paths for solitary aspirants, some are for people who want to practice in groups such as in ashrams, monasteries and convents, and there are also intensified practice pathways for ardent laymen practitioners who do not want to assume an ecclesiastical, ministerial, spiritual or other religious role as a priest, hieromonk, starets, elder, rabbi, mufti, sheikh, yogi, guru, master and so on. They practice at home, and usually have a teacher to guide them.

Even within their ritualistic practices religions typically incorporate intensified practices, but this fact is unknown to the public. If done in the right way the ritualistic practices or rituals that constitute religious/spiritual services can all move your internal Qi, elevate your emotions or raise one to taste higher states of consciousness. It depends on their design including the décor of environmental surroundings, songs/hymns sung, fragrances smelled, activities done, activities watched, and so on.

Active religious participatory practices, done rightly, also have this capability. Rather than singing, take western prayer as the example. There are four primary types of prayer in the West. There is ritualistic reciting, which if done with the right emotions and sounds can become a type of internal Qi/Prana practice, or if done with the right undivided attention becomes concentration practice. There is meditative prayer that is more spiritual as it is akin to silent thinking, and thus is a way to cultivate emptiness or mental silencing. Then of course there is colloquial prayer that is a general conversing with God. There is also petitionary prayer that makes requests to God, saints, Buddhas, sages and so forth asking for

help/assistance.

Those who start cultivating correctly will start to feel their inner energy transform, and experience all sorts of gong-fu that confirms they are on a spiritual trail. We might call this gong-fu, the strange experiences which happen due to cultivation, as the third aspect of the path found within religions. If practitioners are successful they will after a long time achieve the deva body attainment, which is the lowest level body attainment of the spiritual path.

Fourth, those who achieve any stage of spiritual higher achievements (namely spiritual bodies) usually become helpers of mankind. These become the recognized saints and sages of religious traditions, otherwise known as the spiritual masters, leaders and gurus of mankind. They appear in every genuine religion. We are told that we can ask them for certain types of help and aid when we are in trouble. Sometimes they can help us and sometimes they cannot depending on the karma such as the severity of the situation, or the efforts we are willing to make or are capable of making to solve the issues at hand. You can ask for help, but don't expect miracles. No truer words should be trusted in this matter than, "God helps those who help themselves."

Lastly, there is yet something more. It is a principle that is important for the benefit of "emptiness cultivation." This is the little-known fact that most of the great religions actually agree on a fundamental description of God, or the primordial nature of the universe, where everything in Creation originates from an oneness of stationary pure essence akin to the limitless indivisible emptiness of space. All of manifest reality, in other words, originates from an infinite void of nothingness, or you can say a pure substance that is stainlessly free of all phenomena just as is endless space. Does this mean everything actually originated from empty space? Who knows?

Just thinking about this is a type of meditation practice, and thoughts on the matter appear like a beacon in the higher realms that identifies a spiritual practitioner. So this concept appears in many religions not necessarily because it is right, but because it can be used to lead people to looser, emptier states of mind. The idea is that energy produced matter but energy originated from something that was not energy or wind. Energy originated from something empty like absolute space that was more primordial and in fact fundamentally primordial, but maybe energy or even several separate different types of energy were also primordial along with it. Maybe several different types of energy were also self-so primordial existents. Who can say? For the purposes of cultivation, and leading people to emptier mental states, we simply say that all things proceeded from an aloneness or purity that was empty like pristine space.

The fact that the common notion within Islam, Judaism, Christianity,

Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Hinduism and so on is that Creation originated from a primal pure emptiness is not something the public wants to hear about because this does away with a personal God-being who is watching us, who will punish people for moral transgressions, and who has a plan for us that takes care of our future. Nevertheless, *nearly every major faith* subscribes to this notion!

While Judaism uses the term “Jehovah,” Christianity uses the “Father,” Islam uses “Allah,” Hinduism often employs “Shiva,” and other religions talk about primal God, they actually refer to a primordial foundational state – the ultimate universal ground – that is not a personal being but *something insentient* that somehow gave birth to existence and life. Sometimes to explain consciousness they say it is pure consciousness, but this is a form of word trickery as well. It is an insentient ground state that is empty like space so It isn’t consciousness at all.

Some religions like Taoism, Buddhism, or Jainism refer to an insentient foundational state of existence directly, which is said to be the ultimate source of life. The real secret is that the religions where the public thinks there is a fundamental Creator being *also* subscribe to the notion of a nameless, personless, insentient absolutehood. What? Check it out, it’s true! For instance, the monotheistic religions of Christianity, Islam, Judaism all identify God as a transcendental, pure, omnipresent, eternal, changeless identity.

Some traditions or spiritual schools even talk about various planes of existence that have evolved in the universe starting from the most etheric of nothingness or voidness and evolving through a process of densification, crystallization, or solidification to the most densest of realms, which is our material plane. You can find various versions of this teaching in Jewish kabbalah teachings, the Islamic emanation teachings of Ibn Sina and al-Farabi, Meher Baba’s solidification story of etheric planes, Rudolf Steiner’s (Anthroposophical) cosmology of planetary etheric manifestation, and even Theosophy’s ideas of etheric cyclical rounds of universal manifestation. Even Shakyamuni Buddha mentioned in the *Surangama Sutra* that the physical realm is like a crystallization of energy, and in the Chinese philosophical thinking of Taoism the material plane is solid because it is a conglomeration of all the other higher energies. Thinking about the densification of matter, or the reverse process of matter becoming etherized, are actually just meditation methods to help you achieve mental states of emptiness, and to help masters identify you.

(1) VIRTUOUS MIND AND BEHAVIOR

As to the commonality of religions telling us to pursue virtue in life (stop engaging in evil deeds and adopt ethical behavior instead, and arouse

the vigor to perform good deeds), once again a reminder that Buddhism calls this the foundational cultivation or spiritual Stage of Study and Virtue Provisioning to identify the bedrock, bottom, cornerstone stage of all religions and genuine spiritual paths. This stage, which emphasizes better behavior (improving oneself) and spiritual study, is found everywhere universally.

This is a basically a foundational stage of work on perfecting your behavior and transforming what Indians call your *gunas* or *samskaras*, which are the inherent dispositions or temperaments of your mind/behavior and your inner tendencies of conduct. *Gunas* are like a set of qualities, properties, tendencies or peculiarities woven together that define the character of someone – their mentality, nature or temperament – and therefore determine their progress and outcomes in life. For instance, your personality is your set of characteristics, including your habits, that is consistent from situation to situation. You can change your personality through education, new ways of thinking and doing, and disciplined training that override or expand upon the old.

How to respond to life, how you experience life, what you experience, and your life path such as who you marry and jobs you obtain, all depend upon your personality and character, and thus your *gunas* and *samskaras*. If you can ennoble them then you can create for yourself a better fortune and life. You will end up changing how you experience conditions, how you affect conditions, and even the actual conditions you will experience since you will end up changing your fortune.

You might think of *gunas* as the aggregate collection of a person's character traits that contribute to their personality, way of thinking and being. Indians summarize someone's *gunas* by saying this or that individual is *Sattvic* (spiritual pure, virtuous, compassionate) in nature, *Rajasik* (ego-driven, passionate, energetic, active) or has a *Tamasik* (impure, destructive, dull or lethargic) personality.

People have different proportions of all three *gunas* and this is what makes us different from each other. Even twins raised in the same family have entirely different personalities and behaviors due to their inherently unique *Gunas* and the unique cognitive processing algorithms they develop in their brains. The interplay of the *gunas* affects an individual's values, and in the Hindu worldview these values affect an individual's actions, as well as the happiness and serenity experienced by the individual. Thus once again they affect how you alter the world and how you experience the world.

If you transform your *gunas* for the better you will transform your life path for the better. The question is how to do so, and spiritual schools provide all sorts of answers. You can usually summarize them somewhat by saying you must cultivate wisdom, compassion, your body, your actions, your intentions or purposes, and internal physical bliss or mental tranquility.

PHYSICS ANALOGIES

I want to talk about this in terms of some physics analogies to help provide a better understanding of the great merit there is to elevating your intentional behavior by pausing a moment before making decisions and then deciding by taking into account higher wisdom and compassion as your intent. Whenever you face a decisive moment you should always think of what is best for the short-term, intermediate-term, and long-term. What is best for your future self? Your decisive moments during the day are important because they determine your life.

Buddhism teaches that you should therefore police your thought and mind, but Christianity, Confucianism and other religions address it also. You should always police the thoughts that enter your mind, and inspect them to discard those which are errant, prejudiced, not uplifting and so forth. They must be sieved through wisdom and compassion. When it comes time to take action, which requires deliberate internal decision-making within your mind, you must pause to let wisdom help arrive at the decision rather than blindly act as a slave of emotions or ignorant automatic reactions.

Also, just as an athlete trains to make *optimal reactions* their automatic (unthinking) responses for their sport, you might continually work at reprogramming your typical automatic responses to more elevated options so that those are the ones you mindlessly materialize in the moment when you lose clear awareness or the “state of presence” and thus defer to reflexive, instinctive, unconscious, automatic reactions. You want to make optimal reactions your habit energy. Or, you can train to always be in a fully aware presence of mind so that automatic responses are not called into play and are instead replaced by fully aware cognizant choices (as in Stoicism) instead of robotic unconscious reactions that don’t employ deliberate choice or thinking in any way.

You should be training yourself in life to always deliberately take the highest path that requires the noblest possible manner even though that choice is extremely difficult. Sometimes the wisest course is to simply do nothing at all but ignore the situation and let it pass. In other words, the choice to do nothing is a positive choice of doing something. Sometimes not letting situations prompt you into acting or refraining from acting or stepping back/stopping what you were doing is the highest, best action. At other times you have to use wisdom to achieve what you want.

For instance, some people remain poor because they don’t learn the laws that govern the building of wealth, or don’t apply them such as the principles of saving, investing, and so forth. Or, they don’t manage their emotions and calm their mind so that they can produce clear judgement in

following them. Each type of activity and each dominance hierarchy in life (status levels for money, power, fame, skill, etcetera) has certain rules or principles of achievement, and if you learn these wisdom principles and apply them with a clear, unfettered mind then you can change your fortune. This is the meaning of mastering wisdom and skillfulness. Relying upon wisdom you apply yourself and create the life/fate you want through willful self-creation.

Everyone has a certain fate ahead of them that we might call a “guiding function” or life path, and that fated pathway of events is likely to transpire unless we are willing to put a lot of energy into changing ourselves. We created that fated path by our prior actions in past lives and in this life, and so we are free to change it if we put in the required effort.

To change our life’s direction requires wisdom, vigor, perseverance and effort. Frankly, it doesn’t just mean changing the actions you take now and how you react to situations, but especially changing your character since those decisions issue from your character and temperament – your way of thinking about things and doing things. If you can elevate your mental internals - your automatic and deliberate ways of processing cognitions and turning those cognitions into actions - then you can change your fortune. This takes effort, but this is spiritual cultivation. Through efforts we can change our personalities, the trajectory of our lives and our destinies.

Your character and personality are pretty much formed, which means that the mental algorithms that produce your behavior because of prior conditionings are pretty predictable, and that’s what produces your “fated” outcomes in life and ultimately your fate. It’s like solidified habit circuits in your brain that produce predictable responses. If you can change those then you can change your fortune, so self-improvement is a pretty good strategy for moving yourself forward in life and across lives. For instance, if you can train your emotions to be more stable, or train yourself to reinterpret events with a different attitude and perspective, you can elevate your emotions and creating a calmer personality that can make better judgments. This will certainly improve your personality and fortune.

At times, changing your fortune is like trying to make electrons jump shells in an atom because you are trying to change your fate to a higher state that it isn’t. The only way you can make electrons jump to a new energy level is if you add extra energy to the system, so the only way you’ll be able to change your fate is if you add a lot of energy into working on yourself to change your normal ways of thinking and doing things into something better, smarter, higher, wiser, more noble, ideal. This is the pursuit of virtue or *virtus*.

Another thing you have to change are your habit patterns because your automatic responses may not be suitable to a given situation. Small habits make a big difference in life. In *Atomic Habits*, author James Clear made this

clear for us:

“Too often, we convince ourselves that massive success requires massive action. ... [However] The difference a tiny improvement can make over time is astounding. Here’s how the math works out: if you can get 1 percent better each day for one year, you’ll end up thirty-seven times better by the time you’re done. Conversely, if you get 1 percent worse each day for one year, you’ll decline nearly down to zero. ...

“This can be difficult concept to appreciate in daily life. We often dismiss small changes because they don’t seem to matter very much in the moment. If you save a little money now, you’re still not a millionaire. If you go to the gym three days in a row, you’re still out of shape. If you study Mandarin for an hour tonight, you still haven’t learned the language. We make a few changes, but the results never seem to come quickly and so we slide back into our previous routines.

“Unfortunately, the slow pace of transformation also makes it easy to let a bad habit slide. If you eat an unhealthy meal today, the scale doesn’t move much. If you work late tonight and ignore your family, they will forgive you. If you procrastinate and put your project off until tomorrow, there will usually be time to finish it later. A single decision is easy to dismiss.

“But when we repeat 1 percent errors, day after day, by replicating poor decisions, duplicating tiny mistakes, and rationalizing little excuses, our small choices compound into toxic results. It’s the accumulation of many missteps – a 1 percent decline here and there – that eventually leads to a problem.

“The impact created by a change in your habits is similar to the effect of shifting the route of an airplane by just a few degrees. Imagine you are flying from Los Angeles to New York City. If a pilot leaving from LAX adjusts the heading just 3.5 degrees south, you will land in Washington, D.C., instead of New York. Such a small change is barely noticeable at takeoff – the nose of the aircraft moves just a few feet – but when magnified across the entire United States, you end up hundreds of miles apart.

“Similarly, a slight change in your daily habits can guide your life to a very different destination. Making a choice that is 1 percent better or 1 percent worse seems insignificant in the moment, but over the span of moments that make up a lifetime these choices determine the difference between who you are and who you could be. Success is the product of daily habits – not once-in-a-lifetime transformations.

“That said, it doesn’t matter how successful or unsuccessful you are right now. What matters is whether your habits are putting you on the path toward success. You should be far more concerned with your current trajectory than with your current results. If you’re a millionaire but you

spend more than you earn each month, then you're on a bad trajectory. If your spending habits don't change, it's not going to end well. Conversely, if you're broke, but you save a little bit every month, then you're on the path toward financial freedom – even if you're moving slower than you'd like.

“Your outcomes are a lagging measure of your habits. Your net worth is a lagging measure of your financial habits. Your weight is a lagging measure of your eating habits. Your knowledge is a lagging measure of your learning habits. Your clutter is a lagging measure of your cleaning habits. You get what you repeat.

“If you want to predict where you'll end up in life, all you have to do is follow the curve of tiny gains or tiny losses, and see how your daily choices will compound ten or twenty years down the line.”²⁸ In other words, little things make big things happen. Hundreds of small things done the right way, and done consistently, change the fortune.

Famed basketball coach John Wooden won 10 national championships, 88 consecutive victories (a record), 38 straight tournament playoff wins (a record), and four perfect seasons with only one losing year in 41 years of coaching. How did he set all those records? The answer always given is that he taught good habits. If you can change your rash, impulsive and automatic behaviors you can change your fortune! You try to cultivate the right intent and presence of mind in your behavior to change your fortune. Those who are unwilling to improve themselves, on the other hand, remain bound to their fate.

The momentum of your character, personality and prior conditioning in producing habits or other predictable algorithms of behavior/decisions is what makes people live out a fated life. Only if we can upgrade our personalities and behaviors can we really change our fates for the better, which is a topic I addressed as the “8M Method” revealed in *Quick, Fast, Done*. Furthermore, the fact that some of your future is somewhat worked out already – unless you work hard to change it – is clearly illustrated by several stories in *Husbands and Wives Were Connected in the Past* and *White Fat Cow*. In these books I discuss the *Bhṛigu Sambhita* and Iron Abacus astrology readings that accurately reveal your life details and future fate. There are many cases of spiritual masters exhibiting clairvoyance to reveal someone's fate, and that's because it is already built ... unless you determinedly act to change it.

I like to compare the idea of fate to some of the ideas associated with the de Broglie-Bohm Theory of particle wavefunctions, which is one of several possible interpretations of quantum mechanics. It can be used to

²⁸ James Clear, *Atomic Habits: An Easy and Proven Way to Build Good Habits and Break Bad Ones*, (Random House Business Books, London, 2018), pp. 15-18.

predict the trajectories of particles where the final outcome is a probabilistic spread of possibilities.

Think of your potential future or fate as a wavefunction on a space of all possible configurations of life events. It's the set of all possibilities for all experiences potentially in front of you. The sequence of events in your life depends upon the configuration and probability of phenomena within this wavefunction, and those events will manifest according to probabilities distributed upon the configurations where the higher probabilities are funneled into special configurations of likely events.

Imagine that you have a fate where the evolution over time of actual events within that wave configuration or field of possibilities – the *actual* events that will occur within your life – is being defined by a guiding equation, or pilot wave, that dominates within that wavefunction. It's what walks you forward through life in certain directions so that you meet certain particular (karmically fated) environments or circumstances out of all the possibilities within your wavefunction. That guiding function will determine how your progress through the total potential of life. You could experience many other things in life if you made different choices and put in the required efforts, but most people will not make efforts that get them out of their comfort zone nor will they strive to break their limitations, and thus they will follow the path of least resistance in life that the wavefunction defines. Hence, they will follow the wavefunction's probabilities that will force them to live out a certain karmic pattern within the envelope of their total possible experiences.

In other words, your life is lived within a wavefunction of innumerable potentials that actually organizes the shape your life will take according to the potentials or probabilities (conditions) within this wavefunction. The wavefunction produces a pilot wave or guiding function that will organize the shape of your life path, and this happens for each and every individual. You might say that there is a pilot wave within the wavefunction that is already in formation, and is ready to unfold into manifest reality the basic trajectory your life path will take. There are ways to change this path, such as by asking for help from higher powers, or working very hard to break its limitations, or making different decisions that go against fate (such as moving far away from your present location), but without this extra energy “to change your fortune” your life path will follow a path of least resistance or maximum likelihood within this wavefunction, meaning it will conform to a certain basic and somewhat predictable shape. Only through cultivation and a lot of effort can you change this fate or destiny, which is the emerging of our personal reality. Unless you cultivate hard, your possible experiences are therefore in a sense limited because of conditions, but they are still truly vast in number.

For instance, you might live in Communist China so your wavefunction

will be all the possibilities at each point in time of the events and experiences you can go through in the limitations imposed by living in Communist China. If you lived in Iran your wavefunction would be accordingly limited. Your guiding function is what causes you to make certain choices *with high probability* so that you follow a fate line determined by previous lives. Once you act a certain way because of the influence of your guiding function then you will experience certain events within your wavefront. The concatenation of decisions in life where one decision leads to another and then another and then another where you wind up down the road in a place no one ever planned is because you don't establish a plan, aspiration or set of goals for your life that you strictly hold onto as a guide, but just let the guiding function of karma take you along. Karma will rule your life if you don't establish the will to go against the direction life is taking you.

But this is not to mean that goals must entirely rule you in an iron-clad fashion. Life is about the journey, so you must find meaning and joy in the journey. You have to remember the teachings of Alan Watts along these lines: "The existence, the physical universe is basically playful. There is no necessity for it whatsoever. It isn't going anywhere. That is to say, it doesn't have some destination that it ought to arrive at.

"But it is best understood by analogy with music, because music, as an art form is essentially playful. We say, 'You play the piano.' You don't work the piano.

"Why? Music differs from, say, travel. When you travel, you are trying to get somewhere. In music, though, one doesn't make the end of the composition the point of the composition. If that were so, the best conductors would be those who played fastest. And there would be composers who only wrote finales. People would go to a concert just to hear one crackling chord... because that's the end!

"Same way with dancing. You don't aim at a particular spot in the room because that's where you will arrive. The whole point of the dancing is the dance.

"But we don't see that as something brought by our education into our conduct. We have a system of schooling which gives a completely different impression. It's all graded and what we do is put the child into the corridor of this grade system with a kind of, 'Come on kitty, kitty.' And you go to kindergarten and that's a great thing because when you finish that you get into first grade. Then, 'Come on' first grade leads to second grade and so on. And then you get out of grade school and you got high school. It's revving up, the thing is coming, then you're going to go to college... Then you've got graduate school, and when you're through with graduate school you go out to join the world.

"Then you get into some racket where you're selling insurance. And

they've got that quota to make, and you're gonna make that. And all the time that thing is coming – It's coming, it's coming, that great thing. The success you're working for.

“Then you wake up one day about 40 years old and you say, ‘My God, I’ve arrived. I’m there.’ And you don’t feel very different from what you’ve always felt.

“Look at the people who live to retire; to put those savings away. And then when they’re 65 they don’t have any energy left. They’re more or less impotent. And they go and rot in some, old peoples, senior citizens community. Because we simply cheated ourselves the whole way down the line.

“Because we thought of life by analogy with a journey, with a pilgrimage, which had a serious purpose at that end, and the thing was to get to that thing at that end. Success, or whatever it is, or maybe heaven after you’re dead.

“But we missed the point the whole way along.

“It was a musical thing, and you were supposed to sing or to dance while the music was being played.”²⁹ The destination is important because it orders your life, but the journey is to be enjoyed. It is all about living the journey properly and with happiness.

If you establish goals for your life and plans to accomplish them, and then you stick to those plans (see *Quick, Fast, Done*) in order to stay on track, then the effect of wrong/unsupervised decisions incorporated into your life here and there can be countermanded if errant and then their agglomeration won’t send you astray. That’s one of the benefits of having a clear plan of what you want for your life. The little 1% decisions you make about this and that, and which affect your personality and actions, can easily end up leading people into consequences they didn’t intend nor want. In the best of all possible worlds, everyone develops the ability to detach from their life and circumstances to see what they are actually thinking and doing so that they can then self-correct their trajectory.

The meditation practice of watching your thoughts, and afterwards practicing mindfulness during regular activity, are supposed to strengthen this skill of detachment and introspection. Then you can view your situation with wisdom and decide how best to proceed rather than get entrained with the momentum of the situation and engrossed in the wrong perspective. This is how you can change the momentum of karma. People who get caught up in cults, for instance, rarely take the chance to detach from the situation to see what they are actually doing. Once they do, they usually

²⁹ Alan Watts, “You Play the Piano.” Found within the Youtube video, “Alan Watts & David Lindberg – Why Your Life is Not a Journey,” accessed 11/17/19, https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=8&v=qHnIJe3LAI.

return to the regular world after the wake-up call of realizing what's actually going on and where they are headed.

Why do you even have a guiding function of karma? Because you are not a being, entity, personality or life but a moving process within Shakti whose trajectory, with all its wiggles, can be predicted because it is somewhat mechanical. The interdependence of cause and effect creates all situations in the universe, including your karmic path. If you knew the speed, momentum and location of all the gas molecules in a closed system you could predict every interaction and where all the molecules would be at any moment in time. In the universe, the interdependence of cause and effect has therefore already produced the future for everything. This is why we have karma for while we have consciousness, we are actually inanimate from the standpoint of Shakti. We are actually just processes with consciousness where consciousness is part of Shakti, not outside of it, and therefore there is no such true thing as a living being, entity or life and hence things can be predicted. Thus we have karma which is why *Tieb Pan Shen Shu* can reveal it. But we can also use our minds and effort *that goes against karma and conditions* that would normally impel us according to our nature, to change our fate. Then a new fate is created and the whole universe changes as well.

Because life normally follows a trend that is karma, which is why life events can be predicted, you normally become bound to it unless you learn how to “transcend yourself” and your normal behavior. Your normal behavior is what makes your pave a predictable fate, but if you change it then the fate changes. How do you change it? By improving your character/personality so that you are not bound to lower impulses or the conditioning that produces bad decisions/behaviors. By not simply going along with situations but cultivating presence of mind and detachment to see what you are actually doing, as if from outside, and then acting in a higher, better way. By removing yourself from an environment or situation that might cause you a particular fate and thus escaping the destiny imposed by location. By imposing rules on yourself so that you don't waver on a high trajectory and succumb to behavior that leads down lesser fated pathways. By asking for help from higher beings to help you overcome your tendencies and deficiencies at key decision moments so that you can create a better fortune from behavior at those junctures.

There are many more such remedies.

We are traveling along in life experiencing so many things by following a guiding path within our larger wavefunction that is a field of reachable possibilities. You can touch any of those possibilities if you act determinedly in a certain way with consistency, but normally we just go along with the karma of our guiding wave. The guiding function of our life defines our journey because it defines/influences our decisions and behavior, so it

introduces us to different environments and circumstances according to its design that is part of a larger pattern of infinite intersecting conditions within Shakti. You can consider it the net vector of forces impelling us to do this or that and move in certain directions. Each of us has our own unique wavefunction of possibilities (due to where we are born and live as well as when) and a guiding/pilot function that helps us traverse through them. We can achieve or experience certain things or not within our own unique wavefunction based on how we traverse this wavefunction that varies over time and space/place.

Can you predict what we will achieve or experience in life? As the *Tieh Pan Shen Shu* fortune telling method illustrates (see *White Fat Cow and Husbands and Wives Were Connected in the Past*) we all have a fate line that is like a pilot wave or guiding function taking us to specific destinations (namely events) within an extremely large tableau of possible events – the field of possible experiences – and that guiding function produces certain fated events that astrology or spiritual masters can tell us. Why? In my thinking it is because an etheric pattern of those events already exists in the higher realms, due to the interdependence of cause and effect already having produced an outcome of trajectories for our life and many other events, and they can see the etheric pattern if their transcendental body is high enough. It has to be higher than that pattern, so a Supra-Causal body can see the pattern within the Causal or Mental plane, also known as the realm of vibrations.

Let's provide some examples of your fate being known. Some soldiers report of their wartime experience that they knew they would be shot on a certain day (because Buddhas gave them that forethought), and many people just know that someone is the person they will marry upon first meeting (because Buddhas give them that thought from knowing the future), or they even know the date they are to die (because they are similarly told in order to prepare them for the transition). These are just a few instances of knowing some very important life events within the big wavefunction/wavefront of possibilities. You know them because someone tells you, and the tellers know them because in my opinion the pattern is already etched out in higher planes due to the interdependence of conditions that creates the patterns. The fact that all events or conditions are interlinked in a giant web or net means that certain events will take place in order that all other conditions are fulfilled, and because Buddhas have bodies of a more transcendental composition than the patterns they can then see them and thus know your future. It is not about seeing the future. It is about seeing the etheric pattern already constructed of a life path including its major events. Some events in your life will be fated like a node in a web, and many others are open to change.

Now, you can of course change your life, through exertion and effort,

in such a way as to create a new set of patterns yet to occur. This takes effort and you'll usually encounter friction because you are going against karma. Nevertheless it can be done. Unlike insentient phenomena you have a conscious mind and can change your situation through wisdom and effort. It is all a matter of applying effort to change your consistent character, mental perspective (attitude and outlook), habit energies and behavior. Many little changes added up can produce big changes in your life. Also, big exertions held with concentration, determination, non-distraction, perseverance and grit can substantially change your fate as well. As famed boxer Muhammed Ali said, "I don't count sit-ups; I only start counting when it starts hurting because they're the only ones that count. ... I hated every minute of training, but I said, 'Don't quit. Suffer now and live the rest of your life as a champion.'"

If you strap yourself with unswerving commitment to a larger goal, objective, aspiration or vow and keep at it with grit then you can, like a ice trawler in the Artic, break through karmic binding ice, so-to-speak, and create that new destiny. It takes tremendous perseverance and commitment but it can be done. In fact, it's being done by people all over the world all the time.

The potential terrain of the wavefunction over time, and the evolution of your fate that manifests as events within this terrain of total possibilities, is produced by your actions and reactions to circumstances as you traverse along in life according to your pilot wave. Your fate is dependent upon your choices that are influenced by (or depend upon) your personality, character, habits and behavior. They develop your pilot wave because they cause you to think and act a certain way. This is why religions emphasize that we must work to perfect, purify or improve our thoughts, habits, decision-making and behavior in order to change our life, change our fate and fortune, and just basically elevate our normal way of doing things to something more noble.

The mastery of virtue and wisdom is important because your decisions and behavior can take you to the low end of your wavefunction of possibilities or the high end, and that depends upon whether your actions are skillful, wise and virtuous at points where your guiding function is carrying you through a wavefront of possibilities. Unless you really add a lot of energy to your life in terms of training and discipline (such as restraint from low-end ways) you will be bound within a particular guiding function (and wavefunction) that starts at your birth.

Your orientation to events – how you think, feel, unconsciously behave and deliberately act – determines the cause and effect consequences that become your life events. Some of your responses to life are automatic or unconscious (without thinking) while some are fully conscious, deliberate actions. How you react when you have choices, what you choose, and how

you apply your free will is a matter of acting knowingly, which is usually according to programming you've already built up inside your head. Unless – *and this is a big unless* – you are aware enough, present enough or open enough to accept new outside ideas and impulses when deciding what to do then you are fated to follow your internal neural programming, which are your normally used behavioral algorithms. As to unconscious actions on your part (where you are unaware during decisions and not in a state of presence with full awareness), you will also act robotically according to your internal algorithms and will therefore follow a general road of predictedness. This is why fate can be known. Until, that is, you become more mindful/aware of what you are doing, which is essentially cultivating a state of presence of mind. Also, you can change your standard behavioral programming/conditioning through cultivation efforts.

Everyone acts or does things in a certain way when confronted with particular conditions and impulses, and we all produce outcomes, results, or experiences based on those actions. Thus you produce your own life events in sequence. If you want your life experiences to be great then you must start acting in a certain way that will produce greatness. You have to start elevating yourself above your inherent animal nature when making conscious decisions and improve your automatic habits too. You have to start acting in accordance with wisdom, meaning the rules of life that will produce the greatness of experiences you want.

Here is the kicker. Your intrinsic properties, your intrinsic character, your intrinsic thinking mechanism and algorithms (that you developed according to the conditioning caused by your culture, religion, family, environment, schooling, training, working life, genetics, prior experiences, etcetera) are what cause you to act a certain way. Sometimes you act automatically without thinking, but whether you must think clearly to make a decision or are just acting automatically your behaviors are following a guiding function – a pilot wave or fate line – to a greater or lesser extent. That karma is forcing them to align in a certain way. Unless, that is, you can generate an independent perspective to always correct your orientation and behavior to head in a different direction.

Through spiritual cultivation you can become more free from your pilot wave's hold on you, and thus more able to change the future. Cultivating the “emptiness mindset” and “presence state” of pristine clear awareness allows you to do this. However, still your decisions are made by your own consciousness and your own consciousness is binding. Nevertheless, you can start determining your life to become whatever you want regardless of the limits that the wavefunction and pilot line impose on you as your possibilities or current life path and fate.

You can learn to resist the thoughts and emotions that impel you, such as by turning the cheek like Jesus and Maitreya. This will change your

results within all the possibilities possible at that point in your pilot function pathway. You might avoid a situation entirely by moving to an entirely different country, and thus escape a national war, a political takeover (such as the Communism of China), or even the extermination of your people. This pilot wave decision will change your wavefunction entirely. You can submit yourself to a strict course of discipline without veering, such as dieting or trading stocks using a strict system, and use that *robotic behavior that eliminates the emotional mind* to change your fortune. It is the adherence to a strict system with 100% obedience that will override the emotional mind and the tendency of emotions to get in the way of personal achievement! The turbidity of emotions often derail us in life, and reprogramming our emotional responses can improve our fortunes. If we cannot improve them then we must learn to ignore them or transcend them, and in that way escape the pitfalls that would draw us into lower fates.

In physics, the motion of a particle within a wavefunction is governed according to the particle's guiding function. You can therefore know the generalized trajectory of a particle if you know the wavefunction and guiding function. Your life is similarly fated. A fate line causes you to do or experience certain things at certain points in time. Not everything is fated, but certain events certainly are. In a moment we'll read of a particular example with a pair of brothers.

There is a limit to what you can achieve or experience in life that is your wavefront of possibilities. Or instance, you probably cannot become the President of the United States so that possibility is limited, and thus that experience is outside the shape of your wavefunction. If you are living in a totalitarian country like North Korea, there are certain things you can experience and not experience, which is also your wavefunction. For instance, you probably cannot get rich if you are living in that country at this point in time, so your wavefunction's shape is therefore so restricted.

Now, while your wavefunction offers a lot of possibilities, what you can experience within your wavefunction is determined by the actions and directions you take at the point in time and place where your piloting function has already taken you. A track and field coach will tell you, for instance, that you might win a running race if you work hard, so what you achieve in life is ultimately based on your efforts. It's also based on your wisdom because you can train to run faster by using Ryan Flaherty's data-driven training system that calls for you to practice the hex-bar deadlift even though this has little to do with running directly. Knowing to practice this unusual way of training to run faster or jump higher is wisdom, and if you use more wisdom in your decision-making then you can reach sweeter points within the possibilities of your wavefunction.

Your pilot function causes you to progress through life in certain ways, make certain decisions and experience certain experiences as fate. As stated,

some people are fated to marry a particular individual, or fated to experience a certain type of accident on a certain day, and these are events within your wavefunction that are determined by your guiding function.

An example of this is the case of two twins named Jim. You can look up their case on the internet by googling “Jim twins.” A set of twins, separated at birth and each named Jim by their new parents, grew up separately from one another. Because of very similar birth times that were close enough to each other and also special, as explained by the method of *Tieh Pan Shen Shu* revealed in *White Fat Cow* and in *Husbands and Wives Were Connected in the Past*, they had very similar life events because they had similar pilot functions keyed to close together birth times that produced specific fortunes.

As a schoolboy, both enjoyed math and carpentry but not spelling. Both had dogs named “Toy.” Both boys married a woman named “Linda,” later divorced, and both then married a woman named “Betty.” Both also had a son who they named “James Alan.” Both drove a Chevrolet, were avid chain smokers, and while one worked as a security guard the other worked as a deputy sheriff. Therefore both jobs were essentially policing and security functions of some type. The coincidences even extended to the fact that both men also took vacations at the same Florida beach. Neither of the two knew any of these facts about their brother.

Tieh Pan Shen Shu, based on your birth time, can also reveal the name of your future spouse, where you will live, your mom’s and dad’s occupations, your own future occupation, the birth years of your siblings and so forth because those are part of your karmic fate whose secrets we can unravel after analyzing your birth time. As explained, you are not a separate, independent, inherent “living being” but a mechanistic process within Shakti that has consciousness. You look like you are not deterministic but you react in probabilistic ways and karma has set up some definite experiences that you will go through in life. Just as in physics, part of the mechanistic aspects of your existence can be known. This is why *Tieh Pan Shen Shu* can reveal so much about you.

Furthermore, all you think, say, do and experience is determined by all the conditions within the entire matrix of Shakti, but most closely by your local environment and what has become part of your standard neural behavior because of your conditioning throughout life. This guides your life down a certain pathway. This guidance is called karma. It manifests because you take certain steps according to your fate line that is, in essence, your pilot function. It is hard to become free of it, or change it, unless you really work at it in a way that transcends that pattern because you develop a different character and behavior. The more you free yourself from being bound by fate the more you become a cognizant being living in the present.

Your pilot function, keyed to your birth time since this is when your

life outside of the womb first started, will cause you to do certain things or make certain decisions in life such as marry a certain woman named “Linda” or take a job in public security. As taught in Hinduism, names can be predicted because of the relationship of sounds to the energies of the moon. Within all the possibilities or events, experiences and life paths available to you at each moment of time, its strong influences will cause you to take a certain direction or pathway within that wavefunction of possibilities. Thus, your life will remain fated unless you learn how to change your habits, your mindset and perspectives, and your actions and behaviors by becoming more aware. Through exertion at achieving a goal whose attainment you commit to with grit and perseverance, and through exertion at self-perfection to become free of habit energies and mental entrainment (via detachment), you can transcend your pilot function. You can create a new fate in this life that is free of the old one you already created from past lives that will come due in this life as your pilot or guiding function. You can create a new pathway for your fate in the wavefunction around you.

You can especially start to become free of your pilot function, which influences the way you act and the decisions you make because it sends you down your fate line in life, if you start to master detachment where you can step back and look at what you are thinking and doing like a third-person observer who is independent of the process. Being able to do this through mindfulness or watching of your mind, behavior and the situation at hand can free you of entrainment with your “fate” and keep you on course to a higher calling. In other words, just being aware of how we are in any given situation we can transform.

You must also work at learning to transcend your impulses, habits and predispositions that would impel you down a fated path. Becoming less mechanical in following your conditioning is what makes you more “alive” in the truest sense of being alive if there is any such thing. Otherwise you are closer to just being another automatic process (with consciousness) within Shakti that acts in a certain particular way. How? According to your internal programming built up from your conditioning that causes you to act, think and feel in certain ways and traverse life according to a predetermined fate path you’ve built in the past. We call our internal programming or mental processes “consciousness,” which is one of the functional capabilities of a living sentient being that differentiates it from inanimate phenomena, but there really isn’t any such thing as a living being within Shakti. That’s just a category we came up with that doesn’t mean what we actually take it to mean. Furthermore, the functional capability of consciousness belonging to living beings is actually part of all the many other (inanimate) processes of Shakti because it is another part of Shakti rather than something that transcends Shakti. Consciousness, as a function

or attribute of a living being, does not transcend Shakti but is just one more of the innumerable, uncountable functions within Shakti like everything else.

I mentioned that you must work at transcending your impulses, habits and predispositions that impel you in life and make your fate predictable. Your Qi/Prana always becomes embedded with your likes and dislikes and personality traits to such a deep extent that their influence is carried over to another life, so they certainly affect your fate. You must learn to transcend, ennoble or step away from these and other impulses, including basic animalistic biological urges, in order to truly change your fortune. Through the effort of learning to control our emotional mind we can change the trajectory of our lives and our destiny.

You must also learn how to stop, step aside and detach from the world via non-action at times, such as going into retreat and doing nothing when bad/errant circumstances arise, impulses arise, situations arise or a bad fortune period arises. At times, walking away is best if you can do so, and sometimes doing nothing is better than doing something. For instance, there are certain strategies or remedial measures you might use during a Saturn transit to help alleviate difficulties, and if you are supremely wise you can avoid them entirely and just feel the mental influence of the planet on your consciousness impelling you to experience certain thoughts, emotions and experiences. There are certain activities to avoid or get rid of, and other activities to focus upon during difficult times in order to reduce or eliminate the possible influences of the guiding function that will impact you based on your circumstances and conditioning. Being still, remaining mentally and emotionally unaffected by affairs because you fully accept/allow the events that come your way without reacting, and even simply waiting (despite thought vibrations impelling you) are often solutions too. Relocating yourself to an entirely new location is also sometimes a solution even though it might cost you money or represent an opportunity cost in income.

Remember that you are conventionally a living being, but actually just another moving process within Shakti that is affected or ruled by other forces. You just happen to have consciousness so you *think* that you have 100% free will and are completely independent of all these forces and influences, but they produce you so they also rule you. You are Shakti, and the cause and effect of Shakti controls you. The interdependent origination of Shakti controls you. The fact that you have a predicted fate, like the trajectory of a particle that can be predicted according to the laws of physics, is the fact that you have karma. This is due to the fact that there really is no such real, true thing as an independent sentient being. Whatever you are in part of the mechanism of Shakti, including your thoughts, consciousness, which you think brings you out of Shakti because it

transcends Shakti. Consciousness does not.

This fixity of your life path or fate over time where you are destined to meet, encounter or do certain things according to schedule proves that there is no such thing as an independent, separate, intrinsic or inherent living being outside of the process of Shakti. There is just a process going on, which we call a living being, that has a certain set of reactions/events due to occur over time that can be predicted. Even its actions can be predicted due to its character and conditioning. To say that you are a personality, entity or life is merely a designation or conventional way of speaking for identification purposes. There really is no such true thing within Shakti.

To help make decisions in life you should view yourself as an entity-process duality just as we have particle-wave duality in physics. At times you should consider yourself a conscious living being, which is a living entity that can make choices to better your conditions (if you use the highest wisdom and strap yourself to the highest behavior despite pulls/impulses in the opposite direction), and other times you should consider yourself an impersonal, mechanistic process within Shakti that is destined to have certain events happen to it and prone to act in a very predictable fatalistic way because of its own unique and peculiar character(istics), circumstances and conditioning. This is why we pursue study to learn wisdom, for if we act strictly according to wisdom, as a mechanistic process would, we can cut across our fate line and create a new and better fortune always.

You have a fated path from karma and your pilot function influences you to make the decisions that will drive you down that fate line. In a sense, your pilot function *is* your fate line. Your mind naturally wanders when you don't concentrate on following a specific path, goal, aspiration or aim. Unaware because of lacking the state of mindful presence, and operating in a mechanical, mechanistic or robotic fashion due to following our conditioning without policing our mind and behavior, this is when it becomes entirely ruled by prior karma. Without that concentration on a pathway of accomplishment, you typically follow the winds of karma in life which is tracing out the steps of your guiding function of fated life events. This is what causes you to trace out a predetermined fate. On the other hand, if you changed your habits, mindset and charted a new set of aspirations or goals for your life that you followed with discipline that overrode your habit energy then you could change your fate entirely. This requires exertion, but it is exertion towards kindness as well as doing good and great things that changes your fortune.

Detachment means that you can see something amiss in what you are thinking and doing because you can detach from entrainment with the situation, and then through presence of mind change your direction or momentum of activity. You can stand aside from a situation, or just your

thought-stream, because detachment allows you to ask from an outside perspective, “Wait a minute, what am I actually doing here?” In being detached from mental entrainment/entanglement with a situation, which normally causes you to lose perspective due to your voluntary binding, you can switch your current thought-stream to a new mode of thinking that looks at things differently and uplift your behavior to more noble ways so that it comes closer to consummate conduct. Teaching you to do this, of course, is one of the major tasks of religion. Religion should also teach you to take a fearless moral inventory of yourself to identify your defects of character and begin working on them. This too requires honesty and detachment.

As previously stated, it is well-known that spiritual masters can tell you your future, or even the fate of a country. Some fortune telling methods, like the *Bhṛigu Samhita* or Iron Abacus Astrology (*Tieb Pan Shen Shu*), can even tell you very specific events to yet happen in your life also. Therefore the pilot wave guiding any of your life outcomes is pretty much set unless you work to change it. All these methods that can predict your future also insist that you can change it.

Swami Sivananda of Rishikesh once said, “You are the architect of your own fate. You are the master of your own destiny. You can do and undo things. You sow an action and reap a tendency. You sow a tendency and reap a habit. You sow a habit and reap your character. You sow your character and reap your destiny. Therefore destiny is your own creation. You can undo it if you like because destiny is a bundle of habits. Purushartha is self-exertion. Purushartha can give you anything. Change your habits, change the mode of thinking and you can conquer destiny.”

It is also said, “Beware thoughts, for they become words. Beware words, for they become our actions. Beware actions, for they become our habits. Beware habits, for they become our character.” And of course, our character becomes our fate and destiny.

In *Liao Fan's Four Lessons*, Zen master Yungu said, “Ordinary people are forever involved with wandering thoughts, so naturally their lives are bound to Qi, the forces of Yin and Yang, and fate. You cannot deny that fate exists, but only ordinary people are bound to it. Destiny cannot bind those who practice great kindness or great wickedness. For those who cultivate great kindness, the virtue they accumulate from kind acts is so great they can alter their original destiny for the better. The merits accrued can actually change their destiny from suffering to happiness, poverty to prosperity, and short lives to longevity. However, when a person's evil deeds are great and powerful, they will cancel out the fortune and prosperity predetermined in their original fate, and their life will be transformed from good to bad.”

Vasistha's Yoga says, “What is called fate or divine will is nothing other than the action or self-effort of the past. The present is infinitely more

potent than the past. They indeed are fools who are satisfied with the fruits of their past effort (which they regard as divine will) and do not engage themselves in self-effort now.

“If you see that the present self-effort is sometimes thwarted by fate (or divine will), you should understand that the present self-effort is weak. A weak and dull-witted man sees the hand of providence when he is confronted by a strong and powerful adversary and succumbs to him.

“Sometimes it happens that without effort someone makes a great gain: for example, the state elephant chooses (in accordance with an ancient practice) a mendicant as the ruler of a country whose king suddenly died without leaving an heir; this is certainly neither an accident nor some kind of divine act, but the fruit of the mendicant’s self-effort in the past birth.

“... The wise man should of course know what is capable of attainment by self-effort and what is not. It is, however, ignorance to attribute all this to an outside agency and to say that ‘God sends me to Heaven or to hell’ or that ‘an outside agency makes me do this or that’ – such an ignorant person should be shunned.”³⁰

Okay, the sages have said that you do have a fate for your life, a destiny, a guiding function within a wavefunction, a life path of some events that are destined to happen. But as you just read, they have also said that you can change those future occurrences by using some effort. Then you’ll simply have a new fate. In particular, to do so you must stop doing evil deeds and stop following errant/stupid ways. You must transcend your animal nature and malevolent spirit. You have to change your habit energy, which means correcting habits by forming others that are better for your body and mind, and the mind-body connection. Instead you must devote yourself to cultivating the virtues (better behavior) so that it becomes habitual for you to do good deeds and leave golden footprints everywhere. You have to replace your pilot wave with a new effort of persistence to arouse the internal vigor to do acts of merit, and that includes purifying your mind and behavior.

Nonetheless, since some events are pretty well set unless you exert yourself to change them (like becoming a monk to avoid a fated marriage, having a vasectomy to avoid children, or moving to a different country to avoid a problem), for most people the guiding function will be pretty deterministic and your fate can be somewhat known. Unless, of course, we strive to change our perspective/mindset, attitudes and outlooks, habit energies, level of mindfulness/awareness, work towards higher aspirations with devoted commitment despite obstacles, and always work on developing consummate conduct in any situation rather than defaulting to

³⁰ Swami Venkatesananda, *Vasistha’s Yoga*, (SUNY Press, Albany: New York, 1993), pp. 26-27.

our behavioral programming.

How can we further relax the grip of our pilot function on us for the objective of improving our circumstances for the better? How can we create a personality so that we make better decisions, enjoy life more and are always marching forward?

There is always hope or possibility that you can change your fate, meaning you can change the shape of your pilot wave guiding function, because your probable actions at certain important junctures in life are only known statistically. In truth, you never act totally deterministically even though your actions are determined by your thinking, which is in turn produced (when deliberate) by your conditioned thinking processes, which in turn are limited by the algorithms within your brain that you developed over life, which in turn are due to your fate line within Shakti. You only act probabilistically, and the more you cultivate detachment from thought and mindfulness of your thoughts and behavior the more animate/living and more open you become. You become more “free of the fate you built” because you can select better choices from those you can create within your limited mental set, or become more able to accept outside ideas that are totally beyond the scope of your limitations, namely what you could generate yourself.

You can use wisdom to make better decisions and thus actions. You can practice presence of mind so that you act differently too. You can train yourself to automatically act differently to external onslaughts against you. You can look at things with a different outlook or perspective, and change the habit of your emotions, in order to cultivate a more stable mind and make better judgments. You can subject yourself to restraint and refuse to act upon impulses, and thus change your fortune through stillness or inactivity. But also a warning along these lines, which is that people at the end of their lives regret their previous inaction at certain key decision points. They regret their inactivity, the chances not taken. They regret staying silent rather than speaking up and not representing and being their true authentic selves such as standing up against a bully or social wrong. Who cares if you look stupid when there is something you really feel you need to do? Just use wisdom so that you don't get yourself into permanent trouble.

You can definitely train yourself to act differently – with consummate conduct, irreproachable conduct, selfless conduct, dignified and respectful conduct where you no longer consider your own egotistic concerns but those of others – thus also changing your fortune for the better. You want to always maintain your highest, best behavior and have this become your everyday self. You can also employ more effort and perseverance to battle through circumstances where most people would give up, and thus change your fortune this way as well. This is a pretty good strategy for moving

yourself forward and enjoying a better future for yourself over time. You can also change the timing of your actions using wisdom and thereby change your fortune in this way too. You can move to a different region to escape environmental impulses, or go into retreat (thus bringing all major activities and responses to a standstill of non-movement) until bad fortune passes, and thus change your fortune by escaping disasters that were in store for you. Other people may come to your aid and with charitable assistance change your fortune as well. You can call on spiritual masters, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas to intercede at moments to help you make the right decisions to change your fate also. This last possibility is like an electron being given extra energy from an outside force so that it can jump shells.

We are like an energy packet in space. You might think we are like a solid particle but we are more of a process than anything fixed. We are just a process within a universe of endless energies that knows itself as a sentient being, but is irrefutably in touch with all other things in existence because of infinite interdependence.

We are like an energy packet being constantly influenced by all sorts of simultaneously competing energies, forces and wavefunctions. Around us is the environment of the universe, a configuration of countless conditions and circumstances, a big probability space. There are an infinite number of forces acting on us, some stronger than others, and they include astrological forces, societal pressures and internal impulses such as sexual desires, achievement impulses, survival needs to make a living, and our mental conditioning that has created the algorithms for how we normally act and behave. We also may have created vows, goals, aspirations or commitments integral to our life purpose that will help us override our tendencies and so forth.

The pressures pushing you to do certain things and act in a certain way, even the environment you experience, the karma pulling you into certain situations, is like a gigantic invisible guiding function within your wavefunction possibilities, an Indra's web of infinite energies impelling you while also simultaneously defining you and your probable direction within life – the actions you will take and thus the path you will travel - is known because of the qualities/properties of who you are and how you will usually behave/decide. When you react you might be going along with a certain pilot/guiding wave within your wavefunction or heroically acting to evolve your pilot wave in an entirely different way. It is a matter of choice.

Bombarded by all these impulses and forces, we are always presented with choices as to what to do in any moment, and how to act/react in any situation. How we do so determines real time consequences for our life, but that trajectory in total is also subject to our path within a larger wavefunction. If you are truly great, truly stupendous, you cannot only

change your guiding function or pilot wave but the general wavefunction of your environment as well. For instance, you can move to a new region and then be open to new possibilities, or develop specific life skills or character attributes to such a high level (because of strict devotion to a course of cultivation) that entirely new possibilities also open up. The results you get will have everything to do with the systems you follow.

The wavefunction and strongest pilot wave within it guides us through a sequence or series of consecutive events in life, meaning that they determine the dynamical evolution of our lives. This means that you are somewhat controlled by the forces of astrology, fate, genetics, environment, culture, conditioning and so forth. There might be an appearance of randomness, like not knowing the final position of a particle when we don't know its velocity or direction, but the outcome of events in your life will be defined by your reactions to circumstances within your wavefunction, and you can even choose your wavefunction if you are smart enough. Normally, though, you only travel within it – within this massive environmental onslaught of energies, impulses, and circumstances – according to your pilot wave or fate line.

By radically changing your circumstances and training yourself to produce different outcomes that are not mechanistic or automatic, but *alive in the moment* guided by alert wisdom and compassion, you can produce highly better outcomes. You can change the expected outcome of your guiding function, and change its direction, if you learn to make better choices in life that go outside of your conditioning that controls you because those imbedded neural patterns determine how you will act. Otherwise your mental conditioning (namely your neural circuitry that gives birth to your decision-making, your habits, your deliberate behavior and automatic reactions, your thoughts, emotions and mental perspectives, etcetera) will control you like a puppet. But that's consciousness, so that's what is supposed to happen because you cannot escape it. But, and this is the big "but," we are supposed to perfect our consciousness so that we are always acting from the best levels of our consciousness, meaning that we are always using the best algorithms within our consciousness. The enemy is attachment that blinds us from the very best because it causes us to blindly follow our habitual algorithms (that might be inferior for the case at hand) rather than best ones for the moment.

We are supposed to always elevate our patterns of behavior and develop a detachment from situations and our emotional mind (the instinctual brain) so that we can always select the best thing to do with the utmost of our wisdom and compassion rather than remain in entrainment to our habitual conditioning, as well as our emotions and passions, that might not produce the best outcome in the particular situation we are in. That's why we practice meditation, which is to learn mindfulness or

awareness of our thoughts and the situations we are in. That's how we try to rise above not just our animal nature but our more civilized nature too. The ideal is *consummate conduct*, the very best there is. Granted that we are always stuck within our consciousness patterning (unless an outside force, such as a Buddha, gives us some fresh independent ideas) but the great task in life is self-perfection to build new and better patterns all the time so that we have purity of mind and behavior, consummate thinking and consummate behavior that integrates wisdom, skillfulness and compassion.

If you transform some of your mental algorithms or parts of your mental algorithms that cause you to act this way or that way then you can change your fate. You have to change the way your consciousness works and then you'll get a different result (because consciousness controls your behavior). You are affected by your genes, family, culture, religion, nation, education, training, work, friends, environment, personal experiences and other influences that have all programmed you to become a certain way, and you have to work to create better thinking and emotional mechanisms to become a new you if you want to change your fortune. Only a new you can change your fortune. The key is to transform your emotional mind – which gives rise to passions, desires, selfishness, fear and aggression - while making your wisdom mind clear and strong.

The primary foundations of Buddhism, for instance, are the four words Clean and Empty, Drop Off and Change. You must strive to cultivate a mind that is clean and empty, which means “pure” in the sense of being free of afflictions and distractions. This is sometimes called pristine awareness free of distractions, or a state of concentration when it simply means an unclutter, untroubled mind that is quiet except for the objects of attention. Second, drop off and change mean to eliminate mental afflictions, emotional bonds and thereby transform one's psyche. The biggest problem in this respect is gaining control over the emotional mind (which gives rise to selfishness, passions, desires, fear, aggression and sometimes self-destruction if not regulated by the wisdom mind) whereas the thinking mind is easier to control. Drop Off and Change also refers to dropping off your weak physical body and cultivating it to a stronger, healthier and more energetic one. Thus you fulfill the cultivation task of “Xing Ming Shuang Xiu,” which is double cultivation of your physical body and spirit – the mind-body challenge on the great road of cultivation. If you work to change your body and mind you will certainly change your fortune.

As soon as you change yourself then your fate is no longer deterministic from being wed to your old limitations. It will then be deterministic according to your new character, skills and so forth ... but that's what you want. It will always be deterministic according to the level of what you are, but the key is that you can change that through training and self-exertion, a process called personal cultivation. You open up new

possibilities and horizons, and you do so through training yourself to be a certain way, think a certain way and act a certain way both deliberately and unintentionally via automatic reactions. This is what athletes train to do.

Changing fate comes down to being alive in the moment, being fully aware of what you are doing, and then choosing the best in thought, word and deed by using what seems as an independent awareness that “seems to stand beyond” or “transcend” the workings of your mind. You do this rather than simply act according to the defaults/normal behaviors of programming already installed within your consciousness. You have to think about what you are doing, be aware of what you are doing and not let emotions get in the way of deep decision-making.

That’s what spiritual cultivation is all about. You improve your life for the better by making better decisions, and you learn to make them through the process of self-cultivation that changes your consciousness (its normal programming, conditioning or decision processes, however you wish to word it). Consciousness must be trained, from the time you are young, to master the best patterns and capabilities possible (ex. being honest, fairness, persistence, logic, deductive reasoning, inductive reasoning, mathematics, visualization skills, the ability to concentrate, etc.) that also emphasize wisdom and compassion as its bedrock.

In life you hope you can actualize the following ideal: live happily and with definitive purpose, and with the aspiration that through your life and actions (dependent upon your consciousness) you can improve not only your own circumstances, prosperity, welfare and happiness but that of everyone else too but without infringing upon other people in causing them hurt or harm. Furthermore, one of the best gifts to mankind is to leave behind a legacy that accomplishes a noble task without your presence or effort because it operates automatically. If you create an ongoing system where people automatically act higher or enjoy life in a better way because of what you’ve contributed then you have accomplished exceedingly much. You want to leave such a legacy in the world. You want to create in the world ongoing sunshine that all can see, and want to leave golden footprints behind where you travel. You want to make a positive impact that carries wellness, prosperity and happiness forward even when you are not there, for the key in life is not to create a job for yourself where you must be the one managing and overseeing affairs. You want to create a system where progress happiness naturally without you, and where people have the incentive to engage in self-improvement all on their own.

You might say that our evolution over time (the events in our lives and how we have reacted and grown) is defined by a wavefunction of environmental possibilities and a guiding function that are both deterministic and probabilistic at the same time, so don’t ever take life as being unchangeable or perfectly fated. There is always great room for

change, for improvement, for betterment. Some of the events in life ahead of us are fixed if we continue to act in our present ways we've become conditioned to, and make certain decisions using the algorithms we've always used, but there is also always some degree of a stochastic aspect to whether or not we will make decisions that will change our future, and there is some leeway as to how things will turn out even when supposedly fated.

No one is fated to become a Siamese twin, for instance, so the mistakes that happened during the course of gestation were not fated. Those individuals were fated to become twins, and then mistakes in the fetal development phase happened. Such things happen throughout life. The whole universe gets into the act of producing your life – the universe in its entirety determines what happens to you – but not everything that happens is a karmic debt. It's just that everything happens because it does happen, because the whole universe got into the act making it so, but those outcomes are not karma in the sense of debts. They are only karma in the sense of the whole universe working together to make things transpire the way they do.

The short of it is that we can actively work to change our character, our knowledge, our abilities, our circumstances (such as by moving) and how we behave. This will then change our life, our fortune, our fate, our karma. You shape or make your own karma due to your own efforts. It takes a *persistent* addition or channeling of energy – namely consistent practice and effort along a path of progress – to change ourselves and our prior conditioning we picked up from youth. While training to become different, it also requires discipline to continue to act in a certain way that puts us past our comfort zone into a new zone of change. However, this is how we change for the better. Change is rarely easy. An input of energy and commitment is what transforms us and our circumstances so that bad futures have a lesser chance to manifest.

Putting it simply, to change your fortune dramatically you have to become a new kind of person. You have to change your emotional life, increase your wisdom and calm your mind, broaden your perspective, and start acting in new ways.

Furthermore, if we use thinking to guide our actions, rather than automatically defer to our emotions or habitual reflexes/responses, we have a better chance of guiding our responses to produce how we want our life to turn out. Thinking (wisdom) can give us a better pathway of behavior, but to interrupt the momentum of automatic behavior we need presence of mind, namely the wakefulness of clear awareness. This is why religions tell you to inspect, watch, evaluate, or police your own thoughts and decisions.

That capability requires meditative practice because meditation produces *clearance*. This is the mental tendency for us to always be clear, always be in a state of openness, and always be to some degree detached

from (above or transcending) our thinking and behavior so that we can act with presence of mind and make the best decisions or take the best actions for the moment. When we take decisions for the moment we must also factor in the total direction of where we want our life to go. With deliberation you can aim your life so that its direction is consonant with your dreams and inner compass as I pointed out in *Quick, Fast, Done* and you can continually guide it along directions that take you there. You definitely can change anything as I pointed out in *Move Forward*.

IN GROWING WE NEED EXPOSURE TO VIRTUES

By changing our personality and character for the better - by eliminating negative *samskaras* and cultivating positive ones in order to improve our *Gunas* (qualities of behavior) and become better people - we can change our internal mental processes that we use for unthinking behavior and deliberate, intentional decision-making. Decision-making controls our behavior and within our brains, due to our conditioning of how we were raised and personally developed, are algorithms for voluntary and involuntary responses that control how we act and react.

Now if we can elevate or “purify” these mechanisms we can change our fortunes entirely. We can absolutely, positively change the fortunes of our lives. We can uplift our destinies and change our life paths entirely. For instance, you are always using values in your brain to decide what to do. If you change your values then you will change your decision processes, and the domino effect is that this will change your behavior for better or worse. This effort, in aspiring for the positive rather than negative, is part of the spiritual path. It is all about changing yourself along lines of ennoblement.

This effort at self-improvement is called the “conversion of manners” or “conversion of life” (*conversatio morum*) in the Benedictine monastic tradition of Christianity. The idea is that every day, every moment, you have a choice to keep your mind and heart open to follow the pathway to God. The conversion of manners is an effort to always tread a pathway of virtue and mental purity which requires mindfulness and selflessness. This is substituted instead of the usual aggrandizement of our ego. It is a spiritual path of continuous improvement that requires an always on self-policing of your mind and behavior. It is a path of consummate conduct. Christianity says it means that you vow to live in the spirit, but this is essentially a pledge or commitment at self-improvement to let go of your ego to purify your mind and behavior.

There is no inherent I, you, self, ego or living entity. There is only conditioning that is you and which determines how you think, feel, imagine, act, respond, and behave. This is encapsulated within your neurons as a sense of I, and those same structures establish your way of processing

mental objects and determining actions. Some of that set of processing algorithms is inherited from genetic evolution as part of your anatomical structure, but most of it is the product of cultural interaction. Your behavioral algorithms developed through your childhood because of interactions with others and the world. They become the foundation for how you think, feel and behave.

Now if you want a better trajectory in life, you have to start from where you are, with what you already have, and introspect with contemplation to determine whether you are using consciousness to process things correctly or incorrectly. Are you looking at things in the right way? Are you making the right decisions according to the right value system? Do you have some goal that you are heading towards and a plan to achieve it? Do you have a plan for self-improvement?

You have to clean up what is errant inside you and then start cultivating to create new processing algorithms with deliberate intent rather than just absorb them mindlessly. New neural behaviors will create a new world of experience for you, and thus change your fortune because they change how you “be” in the world.

For the benefit of the younger generation, we can give our children a better foundation than ourselves if we analyze these matters. For instance, we can determine what they need for growing perfectly and then make sure they do not lack these necessities.

For instance, to develop correctly when young children need:

- Body (Jing): the right food/nutrients for their physical body, and proper exercise to develop muscles and muscular coordination. If certain micronutrients (vitamins and minerals) are deficient from the diet then growth goes wrong whereas if exercise is deficient the body does not grow correctly either. For instance, tooth shape is controlled by our genes whereas proper tooth position in the jaw is influenced by chewing forces, so if you don't chew enough (and thereby exercise your jaw because you eat too many soft foods) your teeth are likely to become misaligned. In short, we need proper exercise, especially stretching, to grow properly.
- Emotions (Qi): exposure to emotional care and healthy social interactions with people. If children grow up without exposure to proper nurturing and caring emotions they will be emotionally stunted for life and thereafter always react improperly. We need to be exposed to certain emotions when young or our brains and capability for social interactions will develop incorrectly. We also need to learn how to control our emotions and cultivate a calm temperament.
- Thoughts/Conceptions (Shen): to be taught the right ways/methods of thinking, how to make correct judgments/decisions, and various

mentation skills (visualization, memory powers, concentration, etcetera) otherwise the brain's neural circuits will not develop correctly. They also need to be taught how to handle unwanted afflictive thoughts that arise within their consciousness.

- Will/Aspiration (Later Heavenly Energy): to develop the right models, aims, or aspirations of achievement as inspirations for their careers or life purpose.

In particular, children also need to be exposed to the spiritual life, which not only leads them to practice virtuous ways, but teaches them how to rest their minds and find internal peace.

As to the physical body, in *Look Young Live Longer* and *Detox Your Body Quickly and Completely* I detailed how important it was to have a special diet for the fetus and then growing child. The diet in general should follow the guidelines of the Price-Pottenger Foundation that I have revealed in many books, but the most important issue is the diet for fetal development because we want a perfect body to be formed during that time.

When pregnant a mother should avoid sugar and grains for the best looking baby, as stipulated by *Deep Nutrition: Why Your Genes Need Traditional Food*. She should consume cod liver oil, fish oil, extra virgin olive oil, sesame oil, coconut oil, flax seed oil, butter and animal fats. She should absolutely avoid vegetable oils (soy, sunflower, corn, canola, etc.) and margarine. She should eat nucleotide, nutrient dense foods like liver, sardines, beans, supergreen powders and so forth since they can be absorbed the easiest and used to build our biological substrate. For strong connective tissues the mother should ingest ample vitamin C and B-vitamins to avoid birth defects. For strong joints, since they are the weakest part of our body due to evolution (in terms of being injury prone, especially the knees), she should eat bone broth soups or cartilage factors. She should also eat rich mineral sources such as Shilajit, kelp or colloidal minerals so that the growing baby is not deficient in minerals either.

When young, children should be taught yoga and Ginastica Natural for their muscles, can progress to *Yi Jin Jing* and Z-Health training for their joints and tendons (and Scott Sonnon flexibility exercises), and then later progress to martial arts (such as *Taijiquan*, *Bagua Zhang*, *Tongbeiquan*, *Yiquan (Da Cheng Quan)*, *Liu He Ba Fa*, *Xingyiquan*, Brazilian *Jui Jitsu*, *Aikido*), sports or dancing to master movement, physical coordination, and mastery of their internal energy. They should avoid the hard martial arts when young, such as Judo and Karate, because they tend to hurt the joints. Sports like football or rugby lead to frequent injuries as well. As children get older they can decide whether to pursue more aggressive martial arts.

The first step in exercise is to create a foundation of general physical preparedness among flexibility, agility, strength, speed and endurance. Then

you can work on developing special skills or attributes within the context of specific sports after you lay down this foundation. The key to doing this is a good coach and the peak performance, deliberate practice, and deep practice methods taught by Dan Coyle and others, as well as the visualization techniques taught in *Sport Visualization for the Elite Athlete*.

This is my general short guideline for exercise and diet for young children.

As to emotions, several experiments show that young children need to be surrounded by positive, caring emotions when growing up in order to develop correctly. These include the (1) mother-infant bonding experiments of psychologist Harry Harlow, where infant monkeys were separated from their mothers shortly after birth and isolated in cages, (2) studies on the growth of rats showing that they won't grow properly without exposure to tactile sensations expressing care, and (3) the investigative findings about the Romanian orphans who during Ceausescu's reign had been isolated from most forms of positive human caring. These experiments and others all clearly indicate that children have strong emotional needs that must be satisfied in order for them to grow properly. They have to be touched, played with and felt loved otherwise they either die or grow up dysfunctional. Their mental and even physical health depends on these needs as much as it depends on food and physical stimulation. People need social relationships to be healthy as they foster and maintain both your psychological and physiological health.

Children absolutely need affection to grow properly. They need to be surrounded by love, kindness, compassion, friendliness and other emotions that shape the character by feeding the soul. Children also have to be taught the right emotional responses to situations such as patience, determination, courage and perseverance, and controlling their anger rather than letting it run wild. These are character traits that are not just survival basics but will lead to success in life such as getting along with others in society, building families, gaining career success, pursuing individual achievement, or climbing various dominance hierarchies. Without such lessons on how to behave, such as the need to control their emotions, children will certainly develop errant *samskaras*.

If children are surrounded by a negative environment then like ducks that are imprinted by what they see upon hatching they will absorb those environmental traits as normal. This is the principle of perfuming where you pick up the scent of the environment around you and adopt it as your natural state or way of doing things. Therefore they must be exposed to the highest proper ways of behaving rather than the lowest ways within their environment. They must be exposed to and encouraged to adopt the highest character traits. If the wrong foundation hardens it will become difficult for children to change those adopted tendencies and ways of

thinking when they get older, but of course that is one of the purposes of religion and spiritual practice.

Children always model themselves on what they see around them, and accept those patterns as conditions that will predispose their consciousness to act in certain ways. This is what is meant by “conditioning.” Their neural circuitry becomes shaped by what they see and experience, and the process/algorithms thus developed will always thereafter control their way/pattern of processing mental events. Their normal neural algorithms will then rule their decision-making and how they will act. This is why you have to teach children strong virtues and values for they will become the core of one’s character and decision-making.

Psychologist Jordan Peterson, for example, advised that we have to teach our children how to get along with others at a very early age because without this virtue they will doom the rest of their lives. His explanation is extremely insightful in explaining the long-term implications of errant aggressive behavior, and illustrates how you should think. In a lecture on “Raising Children and Parenting,” Peterson said, “Your job as a parent is to make your child socially acceptable by the age of four. You want to burn that into your brain because people don’t know that. That’s your job. Here’s why. It’s easy to understand if you think about it carefully. You’ve got a three-year-old child, so sort of halfway through that initial period of socialization, and you take that child out in public. What do you want for the child? You want the child to be able to interact with other children and adults so that the children are welcoming and smile and want to play with him or her, and so the adults are happy to see the child and treat him or her properly. If your child is a horrible little monster because you’re afraid of disciplining them or you don’t know how to do that properly then what they’re gonna do is they’re going to experience nothing but rejection from other children and false smiles from other parents and adults. Then you’re throwing the child out there into a world where every single face they see is either hostile or lying, and that’s not something that is going to be particularly conducive to the mental health or well-being of your child.

“If your child can learn a couple simple rules of behavior, like don’t interrupt adults when they’re talking too much, and pay attention, and try not to hit the other over the head with the truck any more than is absolutely necessary, and share and play properly, then when they meet other kids the kids are going to try out a few little play routines on them and that’s going to go well and then they’re going to go off and socialize each other for the rest of their lives. Because what happens is that from four years old onwards the primary socialization with children takes place among other children, and so if the kids don’t get in on that early they don’t move into that developmental spiral upwards and they’re left behind. And you can imagine how terrible that it. ... [If the children don’t learn proper sociable

behavior]” then the peers leave them behind and those kids are alienated and outside the peer group for the rest of their life. Those are the ones who grow up to be long-term anti-social.”

Elder Thaddeus of Vitovnica also said that a child should be taught obedience, especially before their fifth year because that is the period in which a child develops their character. Since learned character traits develop for the rest of the child’s life, this is the age to firmly teach obedience and other social behaviors.

Certainly part of our job as parents is to provide our children with nurturing emotions when they are young such as kindness, love and compassion but we must also correct them when they exhibit errant behavior. Part of our job as parents is to correct their negative *samskaras*, or tendencies. We must teach them the correct emotional responses for situations in life, and also help them transform any errant *samskaras* that they have already developed, whether they originate from this life or are a carry-over from previous lives. You don’t want to be carrying negative *samskaras* with you into adulthood. At that point they are even harder to change.

The famous non-violent horse trainer, Monty Roberts, revealed a great way for parents to transform the negative behaviors of their children with overly harsh punishment while instilling self-responsibility and discipline, and the method involved making contracts with the children where there were expectations of good behavior and consequences for bad behavior. Roberts wrote, “When properly carried out, I have found this procedure to be easily the most useful tool for achieving successful parent-child relationships I have seen in over forty years of observing them.”

Roberts explained, “The primary objective of this system is to bypass the parent as the administrator of discipline or punishment. It sets up a contract [using two chalkboards] whereby child and parent bilaterally agree on the response to positive or negative behavior. A secondary goal (possibly even more important) is to bring the young person to an understanding of contracts and responsibilities. I have found this system extremely effective in educating young people in the principle ‘My word is my bond.’ There was a time when shaking a man’s hand while looking him in the eye was considered more binding than today’s legal contracts. It would be wonderful if that were still the case today. Unfortunately it is not. Can you imagine, however, how much better a chance your children would have in life if that became a guiding principle for them? Today, with integrity in such short supply, your child could be a real hero if people knew they could count on his word. And almost all children can be helped by the contract

system.”³¹

Roberts found that if you give children the chance to choose their consequences for errant behavior while giving them positive reinforcement for positive behavior you will instill within them a sense of responsibility over their actions, thereby taking yourself out of the punishment business when they agree to consequences for when they err. He truly found a powerful way to alter their errant behavior without “being the bad guy.” The details of the technique, which I highly recommend, can be found in *Horse Sense for People*.

It is not just the parents’ responsibility but also *society’s job* to make sure that the right behaviors constituting propriety, and the accepted norms for virtues, values and ethics, are enforced everywhere. In order to function peacefully, society needs everyone to think of themselves as living in a connected community where we have to behave properly within it. This requires showing respect to others, and also entails a behavioral responsibility to others for the group connectivity to function. It is not only that people need and crave cooperative connectivity for society to function (people are happiest when they are socializing together although they are also happiest when exercising, relaxing, performing spiritual activities, doing charity, engaged in sexual intimacy, or being engaged in a skill that produces the mental state of flow where there is concentration without distraction) but that a shared social identity of being a larger group helps to cement social cohesion and develop internal peace within a group.

In today’s cultural world empty of values, where people try to fill their time with significance by going to the mall or by engaging in other frivolous activities, they should instead fill their time with these activities that provide happiness and greater meaning in life. Since the flavor of the moment is based on what you want it to be, by changing your perspective you can choose to experience reality with cheerfulness and happiness or sorrow. The core experience you want in your mind-stream is something you can train to have, and you can certainly train to be cheerful and of a sunny disposition. This is how you can become happy as well.

Along with promoting common spiritual beliefs and social rules of propriety, religions help to unify the public and provide meaning through the practice of shared rituals. People need to share fundamental values that unify them and encourage them to cooperate with one another, and shared rituals also help forge a common group unity. Altruism, which involves personal sacrifice to care for others, is also a wonderful virtue stressed by nearly all religions that helps cement the group. Some scholars even theorize that altruism might even be a stable evolutionary strategy that

³¹ Monty Roberts, *Horse Sense for People*, (Alfred A. Knopf Canada, Toronto, 2001), p. 134.

makes organisms and collectives better able to survive random catastrophes. In any case, large groups and social systems can be adjusted on the basis of a shared ideology, such as religion, that causes them to think commonly and cooperate with one another.

It would be helpful if educational systems and religious catechisms exposed children to the right experiences, books, stories, movies, etcetera that idealized the character traits of kindness, compassion, patience, honesty, fairness and so forth (positive virtues and values) at the times when they could most easily be absorbed into their psyche due to the stage of brain development. As I pointed out in *Buddha Yoga* and *Husbands and Wives Were Connected in the Past*, governments will often undertake efforts at socially engineering the masses to be a certain way, but the trouble is that in these efforts they rarely set out to uplift their own people. Rather, they try to dumb people down so that they can be more easily managed or become profitable labor for the rich commercial and industrial class elites.

When done by religion the activity of social engineering to instill societal virtues is called perfuming or smoking, and this idea of surrounding children with the right environmental influences aims to shape/elevate their character in a noble way. Religions, as a general rule, try to teach irreproachable conduct by emphasizing virtue in many ways. The goal is consummate conduct that is full of compassion and wisdom, meaning that it is virtuous and right for the situation. The goal is that we become noble beings who act with dignity, and consummate conduct or best behavior becomes our everyday self.

If you expose children to a particular environment they will absorb those influences just as clothes in a perfumed room will absorb its fragrance. Thus, religions and educational systems need to think carefully about what stories, movies, materials, readings should be presented to children, and at what ages, in order to impress upon them virtuous behaviors. We want children to feel a joy of being in compliance with that type of virtue while feeling disgust at its opposite.

Furthermore, we must teach children to form positive habits. Aristotle pointed out that virtue itself is actually a kind of habit. He felt that if you learn what is good for you and then develop good habits to practice it and ultimately learn to like it, this is the key to success and happiness in life. So you must learn virtuous ways, adopt them as habits, and be taught to like and respect those ways so that you keep that virtuous mindset and behavior.

Even the posture you have for the rest of your life is in part picked up from mimicking people, which is a type of perfuming or copying. You watch the people around you and imitate their posture, so if it is lousy it is important to independently learn to “stand straight and tall like a tree.” Amazingly, you can change your personality and character by changing your

posture and the way you breathe and move. Thus you can pursue the same objective of transformation from a somatic or kinesthetic aspect.

Naturally yoga, Pilates classes, Ginastica Natural, *Yi Jin Jing*, Scott Sonnon exercises and Z-Health training will leave their mark on someone's posture, as will the martial arts, dance, Ginastica Natural and other forms of stretching and exercise, such as weight training. This is why we have books such as Sang Kim's *Ultimate Flexibility: A Complete Guide to Stretching for Martial Arts*. All these methodologies can all help to instill grace and nobility on the physical form and how it moves. We also have methods such as Aston-Patterning, Natural Movement, the Feldenkreis method, Alexander technique, and Dr. Eric Goodman's Foundation Training. There are also other body posture or movement training systems to help you move more naturally as well.

Did you know, however, that you could elevate our movements to an even higher state of grace and elegance through further types of training? What is especially important is to learn new ways of breathing to match with your pursuit of advanced physical skills. Mastering new breathing methods will not just improve your mental state but can even help you change your internal psychology. Better breathing enables you to oxygenize your cells and tissues more effectively, and you can learn to do this by practicing pranayama techniques that can even expand your lung capacity. Through special types of breathing practices, such as Wim Hof breathing, you can even alkalize your body's chemistry and allowing your mind's electrical signals to have more direct control over your body systems.

For swimming we also have Total Immersion training developed by Terry Laughlin, which is the best swimming instructional method available. As stated, children should have as their basis a training in yoga and Ginastica Natural because we want them to practice still yoga and yoga in movement. Then they will develop strength, endurance, mobility, balance, flexibility, and muscular coordination. From this stretching basis, they can be taught excellent posture and further techniques to stretch their joints and tendons. Next, we also have movement exercises such as dance and the martial arts or sports. Practicing these techniques will affect children the rest of their lives and lead to superior grace in their movements. Imagine if someone or some school gave year-round courses to children on these advanced methods that expand our possibilities for body movement and expression that take us to entirely new levels of movement excellence.

Wow! Talk about positive postural and movement transformation for life! Throw in chiropractic adjustments and the AMIT method to wake up "turned off" muscles and you have healthier bodies overall.

Yet another technique is the Yat Malmgren's method of character development, created for actors, which is a technique concerned with how to express the inner state of a character through movement. There are

functional movements that have a purpose in everyday life and movements that are an instrument of expression, which actors learn in order to play character roles. Yat Malmgren's method gives a practitioner the tools to transform their body and mind at will into the shape, form and thoughts of a new character, either subtly or profoundly. Thus, they can be used to help reshape your character too by using movement to do so just as by forcing yourself to smile you end up happier. You can learn all sorts of ways to better express yourself through appearance or movement. There are many arts one can learn for expressing the human body.

Sean Connery was an ardent student of the Swedish movement teacher Yat Malmgren, whose book on body technique became Connery's teacher for his on-screen James Bond method of walking with "the threatening grace of a panther on the prowl." You can contrast his way of walking with that of George Lazenby seen in *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*. After watching both, decide for yourself who is smooth, suave and best represents style and grace due to their natural movements. Next, go watch the videos of Fred Astaire dancing and watch how graceful movements can become due to devoted practice. Kelly Staret's *Becoming a Supple Leopard* can also help you become more flexible and move correctly.

It takes time to learn these things, but in mastering your posture and movement you can change your body and character. This is approaching the objective of self-improvement, self-perfection and cultivation from the kinesthetic or somatic angle of attack.

RELIGIOUS VIRTUES

Religions as a rule promote virtuous behavior so let's do a little review on the virtues and vices most emphasized by the world's major faiths, and in particular those which scholars doing comparative studies have found to be the most emphasized or favored.

Before we get into this, I want you to remember something. When we perform certain kinds of acts and feel emotions in consequence, a series of electrochemical reactions pass through billions off neurons in the brain that stimulate one another like in an electrical storm, and this gives rise to all sorts of neurotransmitter and hormonal secretions.

What hormones do we want our brain to be secreting? Which emotions do we want to be rewarded with so that doing the deeds that regularly produce them becomes a permanent feature of our personality? What long-lasting moods, motivations, emotions and even sensations do we want to feel inside ourselves?

Here's one answer. One of the richest men in the world who had everything, Andrew Carnegie, said, "A sunny disposition is worth more than fortune. Young people should know that it can be cultivated; that the

mind, like the body can be moved from the shade into sunshine.” Life is suffering, but your state of mind is the filter through which you view them and if it is sunny and optimistic then life is happier. Not just that, but by being cheerful and sunny in disposition you will benefit all with whom you come into contact, and thus literally change the world just by your presence alone. By cultivating a sunny mood as your natural disposition, by always smiling and being pleasant and optimistic, you refuse to give suffering authority over your life and also teach that lesson to others.

You can cultivate happiness through affection, camaraderie and connection with other human beings. You can cultivate happiness by performing altruistic actions for the benefit of others that improves their situation and thereby warms your heart. When you pursue a noble goal or surrender yourself to a noble mission greater than yourself then the unintended side effect of your personal dedication to that cause usually happens to be happiness. You can cultivate happiness by mindful self-training (such as that of Benjamin Franklin and Liao Fan) that causes you to always act with a good heart so that you avoid harmful actions to others, and thus always sleep well and feel well. You can learn, with training, how to cancel out negative emotions and afflictions that sometimes attack you and replace them with more positive states of mind such as the cherished sunny disposition. You can reduce your desires to become happier, for happiness occurs within the space between the cravings of desires. These are all possible ways of cultivating happiness, but it should be remembered that happiness is not the same as pleasure. Pleasure issues from the enjoyment of the senses and seems like happiness, but is empty and lacks meaning. It is produced by biochemical flickerings within the brain, and something that passes away quickly like the orgasm of sexual congress.

Religions and cultures don't know anything about neurons or biochemistry at all. They just want us to develop good characters and do good deeds while staying away from harmful activities. They don't want us to pursue pleasures to the extent of destroying our lives or those of others for pleasures are not the purpose of life. They want us to develop an enduring “positive dispositional constellation of habits” that includes virtuous ways, moral commitment, self-discipline, resoluteness, social responsibility, and so forth, but which virtues and values are the most important? Some cultures, after all, stress certain values over others and even morality seems culturally variable.

The question thus comes down to *what virtues and values we should personally try to cultivate in ourselves* if we want to develop an exemplary persona. To become an exemplary personality, an individual of consummate conduct, means that we have incorporated higher virtues and values into our psyche and they become our natural behavior.

If you read the Ten Commandments of Judaism, *Analects* of Confucianism, the Koran of Islam, Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, and the Holy Eightfold Path of Buddhism you will readily find lists of virtues. From these texts you will find an across-the-board emphasis on traits such as honesty, kindness, openness, tolerance, responsibility, respect, and love as universal moral virtues on how you should behave.

In Christianity there are the seven major virtues of faith, hope, love, prudence, justice, temperance and courage. There are also joy, peace, kindness, benevolence, faithfulness, gentleness, longsuffering and self-control mentioned in Galatians. Christianity's seven deadly sins are pride, envy, gluttony, lust, wrath, greed and sloth. The virtues of humility, kindness, temperance, chastity, patience, charity, and diligence are seen as antidotes to the seven deadly sins.

One might say that the core ethical virtues of Judaism, which are considered the virtues that the Jewish Prophets hold up for emulation, are loving-kindness and compassion. Jews are specifically taught to practice kindness (to the needy), compassion (for the suffering), benevolence, faith, a peace-loving disposition, and a truly humble and contrite spirit. Hillel the Elder also formulated a special addition to the Golden rule that is often cited: "What is hateful to you, do not do unto others. That is the whole Torah. The rest is commentary." Of course this is a reminder better addressed to those in power, while those in poverty are taught a different version of the Golden Rule to help others so that they survive (Do for others what you would want others to do for you). Judaism also includes the Ten Commandments which contain the injunctions thou shalt not kill (murder), commit adultery, steal, bear false witness against your neighbor (lie), or covet other's possessions. Judaism also has an entire set of "Musar literature" on virtues and elevating your behavior, the topic ultimately being how to be a good Jew. This literature includes works like *Mishlei*, *Pirkei Avoth*, *Chovos HaLevovos*, *Cheshbon Ha-Nefesh*, *Shaarei Teshuva*, *Maalot HaMiDot* and others.

In Islam the commandments include to be kind, honest and fair in your interactions; to be honorable in keeping your promises and fulfill (every) engagement; to not commit adultery; to not kill unjustly; to be humble to your parents; to be neither miserly nor wasteful in your expenditure; to not engage in "mercy killings" for fear of starvation; to care for orphaned children; and to not be arrogant in your claims or beliefs. The major virtues stressed by Islam include charity (philanthropy), forgiveness, sincerity, tolerance, honesty or truthfulness, justice, kindness and leniency, the kind treatment of animals, the fulfillment of promises, decent speech, trustworthiness, modesty/humility, patience, anger management, and respect for elders.

In Sikhism the Five Virtues one should cultivate in order to reach

Mukti (reunion with God) are truth, compassion, contentment, humility, and love.

In Jainism the five vows of virtuous behavior include non-violence, non-stealing, non-attachment, truthfulness, and brahmacharya (celibacy – restraint from sex if without a partner, and from cheating on one’s partner).

Confucianism stresses honesty above all and its close equivalents such as sincerity, straightforwardness, and fidelity. It also emphasizes the Five Virtues: human-heartedness, justice, propriety, wisdom and faithfulness. In Confucianism we transform others, and society, by cultivating the virtues as a form of character building to become our true selves.

According to traditional Buddhism, the foundation of Buddhist ethics stipulates not killing, stealing, lying, engaging in sexual misconduct, or using intoxicants. The six Buddhist *Paramitas*, perfections or perfect virtues are generosity, morality, patience, vigor or exertion, meditation and concentration, and wisdom. The *Mangala Sutta* commends reverence, humility, contentment, gratitude, patience, generosity, and other virtues. Furthermore, the Eightfold Path includes right understanding, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration. Buddhism also emphasizes compassion to end people’s suffering. The Four Immeasurable Meditations, the *Brahmanihara* or divine abodes (states, dwellings, attitudes, emotions) can be considered virtues in the European sense and include infinite joy, loving kindness (benevolence), compassion and equanimity.

In Hinduism, the deity Rama represents the perfect man and stands as a model for righteous conduct, selflessness, courage, devotion and strength. The *Manusambhita* lists five virtues for leading a virtuous life which includes non-violence, self-restraint, non-covetousness/non-stealing, inner purity, and truthfulness. The *Yamas* (don’t do these) and *Niyamas* (do these) are a set of ethical rules for “right living” within Hinduism and Yoga that specify the restraints for proper conduct. These “things you do and things you don’t” are like the guardrails on a road to protect you. If you veer too far off course on some dangerous roads you’ll experience a tragedy but if you scrape against the guardrails you can get back on track. The guardrails, or *Yamas and Niyamas*, teach you to stay within borders, to pull in your undisciplined passions and urges as regards your sexuality, words, actions and impulses to thereby keep you from trouble. They teach you how to live with this body and mind.

The *Yamas* ethical mandates include non-violence (not harming others, not killing), not lying (truthfulness, honesty, non-falsehood), not stealing, brahmacharya or chastity (celibacy if unmarried and non-cheating on one’s partner if married), non-possessiveness (non-avarice, non-greediness), forgiveness, fortitude, compassion, sincerity (non-hypocrisy) and a balanced, moderate diet. These morality/ethical prohibitions are behaviors

that would absolutely destroy communities should a large number of people develop them, and which would destroy an individual's life (make it miserable) if they were to take hold of their character.

In addition to negative things we should abstain from, Hindu ethics also recommends striving for the following *Niyamas* or virtues. Some of these virtues, when analyzed, are actually encouraging people to engage in the core methods of cultivation: *Śauca* - purity in mind speech and body; *Santoṣa* - contentment or acceptance of circumstances but with optimism/vigor ready to change them for the better if and whenever possible; *Tapas* - persistent meditation, self-discipline, austerity, and perseverance in one's purpose; *Svādhyāya* - self-reflection, introspection of one's thoughts, speech and actions, lifelong learning; *Īśvaraṇidhāna* - contemplation on God/Supreme Being as the True Self and Unchanging Reality, attunement to this supreme state of consciousness; *Āstikya* - faith in the Real Self, belief in God, conviction in the Vedas/Upanishads; *Dāna* - generosity or charity; *Siddhānta śrāvaṇa* - listening to the ancient scriptures; *Hṛī* - remorse (internal confession) and acceptance of one's past, modesty, humility; *Mati* - thinking and reflecting to understand topics and reconcile conflicting ideas, which is pursuing wisdom or understanding; *Japa* - mantra repetition or reciting prayers; *Huta* - spiritual rituals or ceremonies such as *yajna* sacrifices; *Vrata* - fulfilling religious vows, rules and observances faithfully.

In *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle mentioned eleven moral virtues: courage (in the face of fear), temperance (in the face of pleasure and pain), liberality, magnificence (with great wealth and possessions), magnanimity, proper ambition, modesty, truthfulness, friendliness, wittiness, and righteous indignation (in the face of injury).

Just as a matter of definition, civility is often cited by people as a characteristic they want everyone to demonstrate. It is a virtue associated with all sorts of others such as politeness, pleasantness, agreeability, gentility, good manners, propriety, correctness, deference, consideration, a pleasing disposition, tactfulness, friendliness, hospitality, empathy, altruism, diplomacy, refinement, modesty, grace, gratitude, etcetera. Discourtesy, on the other hand, is associated with rudeness, thoughtlessness, tactlessness, impudence, disregard, and lack of consideration for others. The point is that a single virtue, civility, stands for a conglomeration of many other virtues put together. If you say that you want society to become more civil, you are actually asking that a set of virtues be promoted to society.

Moving on to individuals who have studied the virtues academically, Erik Erikson distinguished eight virtues (basic strengths) that were relevant to the stages of human development: hope, will, purpose, competence, fidelity, love, care, and wisdom.

Katherine Dahlsgaard, Christopher Peterson and Martin Seligman

examined philosophical and religious traditions in China (Confucianism and Taoism), South Asia (Buddhism and Hinduism), and the West (Athenian philosophy, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam). This includes the Ten Commandments for Judaism, the *Bhagavad Gita* for Hinduism, *Analects* for Confucianism, Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae* for Christianity, the Koran for Islam, Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, and the Holy Eightfold Path for Buddhism. The researchers found that six core virtues frequently recurred throughout these writings: courage, justice, humanity, temperance, wisdom, and transcendence.

Jan Pieter van Oudenhaven found that there were fifteen characteristics that people most freely mentioned as virtues: respect, justice, wisdom, joy, resolution, mercy, reliability, hope, courage, faith, moderation, openness, modesty, love, and helpfulness.

Ben Franklin's thirteen famous virtues that he personally choose to cultivate in himself include temperance, silence, order, resolution, frugality, industry, sincerity, justice, moderation, cleanliness, tranquility, chastity, and humility.

In a study involving fifty-four nations, the character strengths that were the most commonly endorsed by countries as "signature strengths" (rated within the five top preferreds out of a list of two-dozen) were honesty, kindness, fairness, gratitude, and open-mindedness.

In my view you can partition these virtues into survival strengths and character traits that also help you climb hierarchies of competency; social virtues necessary so that you can live cooperatively in larger groups of people; and emotions that can help you bear the suffering and vicissitudes of life. Many virtues can be simultaneously placed in more than one category. For example:

Survival virtues or character traits necessary for the maintenance of continued existence include adaptability (sustainability is an active condition of solving problems), flexibility, resourcefulness and inventiveness (high agency behavior – Seneca's *inveniam viam aut faciam*, "I shall find a way or make one"); self-reliance and resilience (toughness, the ability to recover quickly from difficulties); delayed gratification; goal-directed adaptive behavior; resolution, firmness and will power; dispassionate reason; industriousness, effort, and conscientiousness (doing work well); simplicity; self-sufficiency; diligence, persistence, perseverance, commitment, forbearance, patience and grit; confidence, courage and fortitude; a high tolerance for pain and suffering; prudence (cautiousness) and temperance (moderation); discipline, self-control, self-regulation, self-restraint and responsibility; filial piety; familial responsibility; alertness; wisdom and knowledge; love of learning; ambition; confidence, bravery and courage; and the Golden Mean in behavior which means moderation, self-control, self-constraint, temperance, and so forth.

Performance virtues and traits for climbing dominance hierarchies of meritocracy (Artha economic and political achievements) or for gaining extreme competency or excellence such as in skills (which are "T" character traits): ambition, aspiration and determination for outstanding performance/skill; a desire to rise above oneself; resolution; planning; visualization and imagination skills; exertion, hard work and industry; diligence, self-regulation, discipline and commitment; deferring gratification; willpower, persistence, perseverance, commitment and grit; creativity, curiosity, experimentation and calculated risk-taking; use of affirmations, positive language and NLP-type reprogramming technologies; vigor and vitality; ability to deal with stress; employing best methods and pursuing excellence; self-improvement desires to learn and improve oneself (work ethic of continual improvement); desire to increase one's own experience; wisdom and knowledge; patience; cleanliness and orderliness; courage and confidence; greatness of soul; and leadership.

These are all traits belonging to the Golden Effort of pursuing excellence which involves trying to master skills, accomplish goals and climb performance hierarchies based on merit/skills.

Social conduct virtues necessary for cooperative group living and maintaining social obligations (Dharma) (which tend to be "We" character traits): honesty (truthfulness), sincerity, straightforwardness (non-crookedness), integrity, reliability and trustworthiness; fairness and justice; friendliness (friendship), hospitality and humanity; kindness, compassion, empathy, love and caring (consideration for others); respect, tolerance, acceptance, non-hatred and open-mindedness; good manners; filial piety and the Confucian six relationships; humanity; generosity, sharing, non-stinginess, selflessness, helpfulness, gratitude and reciprocity; collaboration, cooperation, group participation and teamwork; comradeship; civic responsibility; propriety and social intelligence; benevolence, charity, altruism or giving of oneself; mercy and forgiveness; humility; the ability to learn socially.

For group living, which means living in society, the Golden Rule of behavior (*don't do to others ... leading to principles such as non-harmfulness, non-hatred, non-stealing, non-adultery, non-false witness, etc., and do for others ... leading to principles of charity, friendliness, helpfulness, care, compassion, etc.*) is the paramount rule of behavior.

Leadership character traits (which are "T" character traits that help you lead the "We"): decisiveness, timely decisions and actions (without delaying); initiative; clarity, intelligence, wisdom and good judgment; an inner moral compass and adherence to a set of principles and purpose, exhibits a code of conduct that you ask others to emulate, a devotion to honor, inner self-control; prudence and emotional self-control, the ability to separate emotions from action and reduce the power of temporary feelings on judgment; vision of a better future, ability to plan and prepare; honesty,

integrity and trustworthiness; communication and persuasion skills and the ability to reach a consensus, ability to inspire and motivate others; self-sacrifice, service, and selflessness, willingness to put the group's welfare above your own and to go the extra distance for the group; fairness; a fierce work ethic; a passion for continual improvement, a strong commitment to be as close to flawless as possible, relentlessly seek group and personal improvement, has standards of excellence and standards of performance for the group; commitment to learning, self-improvement and group advancement; delegation and empowerment; respect for others, open-mindedness, empathy and compassion, fairness; politeness and civility; listening; managerial competency, accountability and responsibility, unassuming behavior, humility and the ability to admit mistakes; adaptability, flexibility, and the willingness to change; magnanimity; confidence, optimism and positivity (positive attitude); calmness and self-control when under pressure such as when under adversity, chaos or uncertainty; concentration, commitment, determination, resilience, perseverance.

Character traits so that you can bear suffering and pursue Moksha (and which help people to proceed toward an imagined goal): fortitude, forbearance, patience and acceptance; courage and fearlessness; humility and humbleness; simplicity; detachment so that you can transcend the pain and suffering of situations, transcendence; wisdom; savoring, appreciating or enjoying the sublimity of experiences; awe; forgiveness and mercy; kindness; sharing, generosity and contribution; focus and full attention; social connections; faith; hope; reverence (feeling with total devotion); piety; gratitude, appreciation and thankfulness; trust; recognizing grace (unearned blessings); humor; joy and cheerfulness; a positive attitude, sunny disposition, optimism and an emphasis on the “bright side” of life; contentment and equanimity; the pursuit of spirituality and purity; life purpose and finding meaning in life – a purpose or commitment or feeling of belonging to something greater than oneself.

These character traits all support the Golden Aspiration to attain a better future while also becoming a better person by ennobling your character/personality, mental functions (mind) and behavior. The chief goal of the Golden Aspiration is to achieve consummate conduct in your thoughts, words and deeds so that you are always working on improving yourself, your circumstances, environment and future. The hope and effort is not just to improve yourself and your own fate but to leave a positive legacy for posterity.

The Chinese say, “*An Tian Le Ming*” which means “peace with Heaven and delight in your destiny.” They also say, “*Xin Shen Si Ming*” which means “cultivate the body and await destiny.” The meaning of these phrases is to accept your present fate (when unfortunate) but work to change the

situation and cultivate yourself while waiting for the situation to change. Make peace with your present lot (which is due to karma) and don't complain to Heaven, but use the time to cultivate yourself until the situation improves, and certainly work to change the situation for the better wherever possible. But when progress isn't possible, work on yourself and your relationships.

This is how you bear the sufferings of life when the situations are uncontrollable. Of course the words of Chanakya also apply, "Fatalists get no job." In other words, if you wait for luck without making any efforts to change your fortune you will never get any work or employment. You must always be actively working to change your fortune, but when it cannot be changed then you submit yourself to fate awaiting the changes of destiny.

What cultivators must understand if they are to reach a level of spiritual accomplishment where they can lead society is that the members of society, and especially children, must be taught all these virtues, ethics, character traits, values or morals. They are the basis of consummate conduct and propriety.

Ethics comes from the Greek word "ethos" and refers to behaviors that establish a noble society. We always want to ennoble our behavior and in turn ennoble society. Morality comes from the Latin word "moralitas," and refers to behaviors that establish good character. We always want to improve our character, better personality and nature and want to live in environments where our neighbors and friends are good-natured people. Hence, we have character traits that are primarily personal or social in nature. They are We-oriented or I-oriented.

When we examine the three basic purposes of our schooling educational systems we can see that there is also an emphasis on teaching virtues that develop the welfare of either the individual or the group, the "I" or "We." As I discussed in *The Taihu School*, the three objectives of education are: (1) to produce virtuous people with good characters who know right from wrong, are committed to self-improvement, and can get along with others in cooperative relationships – which is an I and We focus; (2) to produce good citizens who care about their country, community, the public good and are committed to improving society – which is a We focus; (3) to teach people sufficient knowledge and skills so that they can secure an independent livelihood in the world and live in a self-directed way without being a burden on others – which is an I focus.

The Taihu School (pgs. 1-2) summarizes these three purposes as follows, which you should keep in mind as you are teaching children as they grow up:

To produce "good, virtuous people" who have ethical, moral standards (an inner sense of right and wrong), good characters,

ARHAT YOGA

who can get along with others in harmonious, cooperative human relationships, who are self-disciplined, who act out of principle, and who have a deep sense of their inner life and cherish values other than just materialism. This is the “spiritual purpose” of education, which is to teach individuals the difference between right and wrong, and instill within them a sense of goodness and the ideal of cultivating virtuous character traits.

To produce “good citizens” who truly love and care about the fate of their country, society and family and who are willing to strive for the public good and improve society through their personal civic contributions. This is the “public purpose” of education, which also includes teaching people how to live peacefully together in communities tolerant of the fact that other members may cherish different ideas, values and ways of being.

To train people to be able to take responsibility for themselves so that they can live in the world in an independent, self-reliant, self-directed way that is not a burden on the rest of society. This is the “private purpose” of education, or economic purpose, which is to help individuals find some particular talents or skills with which they can make a living. It is to train them so that they can be responsible for themselves and make their own independent way in the world standing on their own two feet.

WHAT PARENTS WANT IN CHILDREN

All individuals can work on developing such virtues, especially children since they are the most malleable members of society. Religion, society, family, schools, the media and the larger culture all play a role in influencing children’s behavior, and we should hope that the net influence emphasizes the importance of virtue. Parents, in particular, want their children to develop virtues, skills, praiseworthy character traits and a strong moral compass. They want them to adopt foundational values that will serve them for life. They want their *consistent beingness* to be the exhibition of virtues and high values.

You are probably an adult reading this, so the message to you is that you can start training yourself to become more of a certain way yourself through devotion to a course of meditation and training or practice. The results you get will have little to do with your goals of self-development but everything to do with the systems (processes that lead to results) you

consistently follow because that consistency in following a wise, proven, effective system can override all sorts of influences including the vagaries of fate. You are subject to all sorts of external influences that shape your personality and character, but for self-development you have to devote yourself to some type of regular and consistent cultivation pathway in order to adopt new tendencies or eliminate errant ones you don't want.

A perfect example of a course of practice is reciting prayers over and over again that impress a certain emotion into your heart, such as the Jesus Prayer of the Hesychasts. Doing so will leave an impression (make an influence) on your Qi/Prana and psyche. Of course the Jesus Prayer is also about practicing concentration because when reciting it you should think of nothing else – no other thoughts of the mind - other than the prayer. You are to become indifferent to everything else that arises within your mind and concentrate on the words of the Prayer alone. Elder Ephraim, the Hesychast, has many teachings on this.

Everyone's personality or character is made up of varying, yet relatively stable personality traits that can be changed if we put in the time and effort. That is what "The Great Learning" is in life. That is what cultivation is all about, a constant striving for self-perfection and purity in thoughts, words and deeds. We're all different from one another, even identical twins, because of our unique characters and personality traits. Thus we all operate differently in our brains. Each of us was raised and educated in our own unique social and cultural reality that put a different spin on the final product - ourselves.

We can look at the definition of "good character" in terms of two aspects: character strengths and virtues. Virtues are acquired qualities that enable people to flourish. Virtues enable people to live a good life. Character strengths, on the other hand, are psychological traits that enable individuals to develop and display virtues in life.

Both character strengths and virtues are pervasive in human nature. They are the basis of our personalities and actions, and typically become part of the package of dispositions people need to survive and flourish in life. Of course some cultures and societies may give more weight to some character strengths and virtues over others just as the Klingons, Ferengi, Vulcan, or Romulans in the Star Trek series would value certain character traits over those valued by other races. However, the virtues and strengths I wish to emphasize (such as honesty, love, courage, etcetera) are those held dear by most individuals in most societies.

A famous comprehensive study, conducted by Martin Seligman and his colleagues, examined all the major religions and philosophical traditions to derive a list of twenty-four strengths and six universal virtues considered *positive traits* in nearly all societies/cultures across three millennia. Together these virtues and strengths can be said to define "good character."

Seligman, et al identified six “universal virtues”: humanity, wisdom and knowledge, justice, courage, transcendence and temperance. Of course these are just the ones Seligman’s group focused upon, and we could easily make the case that other virtues could be raised as predominant. Since these six virtues were considered too abstract to be studied scientifically, the researchers focused their attention on the strengths of character created by these virtues.

This study is amazing in scope because it involved dozens of scholars and psychologists over the course of several years. They employed brainstorming and conducted systematic reviews of the contemporary and historical literature on strengths and virtues. Eventually they identified twenty-four character strengths that support the six universal virtues and which can be expressed in human emotion, behavior, and thought.

The main criteria for listing a character strength is that it had to be stable across time and situations/circumstances, valued in its own right for its own benefits, be recognized as valuable by nearly every culture, the world’s cultures had to promote role models who possessed the trait so people could recognize its worthiness for emulation, and parents had to want their children to also possess that trait.

Here is the result of that study, which defined good character in terms of twenty-four character strengths and six universal virtues that help us all maintain our level of well-being. Once again the six virtues Seligman and his group identified are humanity, wisdom and knowledge, justice, courage, transcendence and temperance, while the twenty-four character strengths were conceptualized as the mechanisms and processes that exemplify or lead to these six virtues.

The categorization is like dividing a virtue into the traits/strengths that support it or help produce it. If you disagree with their values or groupings, you can still use the methodology they derived to determine your own groups of values and virtues for educational purposes. I have added the correspondences of these virtues/values to the traditional relationships in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) because there is a correspondence to the energy (Qi) of your internal organs and their functioning. This correspondence provides an opportunity for cultivation of your personality and behavior, especially if you also incorporate the acupuncture meridians connected with the organ-virtue correspondence:

Wisdom and Knowledge (in TCM related to the brain): The virtue of wisdom and knowledge is attained through learning and thinking methods that help you acquire and use knowledge. Here are the cognitive strengths related to acquiring knowledge and learning how to use accumulated knowledge with good judgment.

- Creativity (Thinking of new and interesting ways to think about or do

things)

- Curiosity
- Open-Mindedness
- Love of Learning
- Perspective (Wisdom)

Courage (in TCM related to the kidneys and bladder): Courage is an exercise of the will supported by emotional strengths that help you accomplish goals in the face of adversity and opposition, both internal and external. With courage you will continue to engage in continuous improvement despite challenges and difficulties. For instance, the braver, more confident and more persistent we are the more our courage will increase, and thus we will become a more courageous character.

- Bravery
- Persistence (Perseverance, Grit)
- Integrity (Authenticity, Honesty)
- Vitality (Zest, Enthusiasm, Energy, Vigor)

Love and Humanity (in TCM related to the heart): Caring for, tending and befriending others through respect, appreciation and interest are the ways of kindness, love, compassion and social engagement that express the virtue of humanity. “Humanity” includes strengths that reflect human collectivism, cooperation, communion, friendly relations with others, and altruism. Humanism includes the ways that help you be a good individual, good citizen and good friend.

- Love
- Kindness (Generosity, Care, Compassion, Helping others)
- Social Intelligence (Emotional intelligence, Personal intelligence)

Justice (in TCM related to the lungs): The character strengths supporting the virtue of justice make for a healthy community life. They are character traits that favor fair, optimal and synergistic interactions between individuals and groups.

- Active Citizenship (Being Socially Responsible, Loyal, and a Team member)
- Fairness (Treating people equally)
- Leadership

Temperance (in TCM related to the stomach, spleen and pancreas): Character strengths that support the value of temperance are those that help us to avoid excess, avoid hubris, avoid arrogance, avoid selfishness or any other

ARHAT YOGA

trait that can become excessive or unbalanced. In cultivating temperance you emphasize the golden mean. You modulate your behavior and emotions, and prevent yourself from taking them to extremes. Temperance influences to pursue harmony and balance and to take/do all things in moderation.

- Forgiveness and Mercy
- Humility (Modesty)
- Prudence
- Self-Regulation (Self-Control)

Spirituality and Transcendence (in TCM related to the liver and gall bladder): The character strengths that connect you to the larger universe (forge connections with the larger universe) and give life meaning support the virtue of transcendence. When you value and pursue a higher purpose or higher meaning in life that connects you with a higher mission then you are hoping to experience transcendence. Think of transcendence as a combination of higher aspiration and meaning, etcetera.

- Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence (Awe, Wonder)
- Gratitude
- Hope (Optimism)
- Humor (Playfulness)
- Spirituality (A Sense of Purpose)

From the following statements that were used in the questionnaires to derive this short list of virtues and values, you can see the definition or meaning of these character traits:

Social intelligence

I play well with other children and almost never fight.

I usually know how to prevent problems and fights with others.

I usually know how to say the right thing that will make others feel good.

I know how to solve problems in a way that makes everyone feel okay.

Love

I show a lot of warmth and love toward my friends and family.

There is someone who will listen to me when I have a problem.

I am not afraid to tell my relatives and friends that I love them.

I feel loved.

Kindness

When I see another child in distress or encountering a problem, I try to

ARHAT YOGA

help.

People think I am considerate of my surroundings, nice to others, and kind.

I always volunteer to help when I see someone in need.

I do nice things for others on my own initiative, without being asked to do so.

Fairness

I relate to all children fairly, even if I do not like them.

When candies or treats are handed out in school or at home, I make sure that everyone gets an equal share even if I do not like everyone equally.

I relate to all children fairly, even if they are not nice to me.

I don't like to discriminate so I make an effort to treat everyone equally.

Teamwork

I consider the desires and needs of other children when playing in a group.

I am very loyal to my group and/or my friends.

In situations when I am placed in a group, I get along well with the other children in my group.

I know how to include other children and work together on tasks when I am in a group with other children.

Perspective

I know how to make decisions in a wise, level-headed manner.

My friends consult me before they make an important decision.

People say I am mature compared to other children my age.

In situations in which things do not go the way I want, I am able to make wise decisions.

Leadership

I tend to be the leader in games or athletic activities with other children.

I tend to be the leader of the group and the other children follow me.

Other children see me as a class leader, listen to me, and trust me.

I'm perceived as a leader when I am around other children.

Bravery

I do not hesitate to express my opinion or behave differently from my friends when I think this is the right thing to do.

I do the right thing even if others might make fun of me.

Even when I am scared to do something, I will do it if I know it is the right or worthwhile thing to do.

ARHAT YOGA

When another child is being hurt unjustly, I will rush to that child's defense.

Love of learning

I am enthusiastic and excited when I learn something new.

I enjoy places and situations where I am introduced to new information, such as movies about science and nature or visiting a museum.

I love learning new skills.

I take advantage of opportunities to learn something new.

Curiosity

When there is a conversation about a topic I am unfamiliar with, I immediately want to know more about it.

I am always interested in discovering new things that I didn't know before.

I love to explore the world around me and discover new things.

I am interested and full of questions about things I am unfamiliar with.

Appreciation of beauty

I like to stop and to look at beautiful things around me, such as flowers, butterflies, and beautiful landscapes.

I enjoy good music or beautiful works of art.

I feel happier when I see a beautiful work of art or listen to nice music.

I like beautiful things.

Creativity

I have a lot of ideas and I am very creative.

I love inventing and creating new things.

I have many creative ideas.

I am full of new ideas about things to do or make.

Prudence

I know how to stop or avoid situations that endanger me.

I am careful not to do something I will regret later.

I distance myself from situations and children that are liable to get me into trouble.

When I make a decision I consider the advantages and disadvantages of both sides.

Self-regulation

I am very calm and I generally do not have tantrums or lose control.

I have a lot of patience.

ARHAT YOGA

I am capable of waiting if asked to do so, even when I very much want to do something at the time.

I am able to control my anger in an effective way.

Forgiveness

If a child hurts my feelings it is difficult for me to continue playing with him.

It is difficult for me to forgive children who have hurt me in the past.

I often stay angry with other children even after they apologize.

I usually stay angry with other people even after they apologize.

Open-mindedness

I am open and attentive to opinions other than my own and can be swayed by them.

Even when I do not want to do something, when its importance is explained to me, I am usually persuaded to do it.

I listen to the opinions and advice of others before deciding what to do.

I respect my friends' opinions and thoughts, even when I don't agree with them.

Modesty

I do not brag about my achievements when I am at school or at home.

I am not a showoff.

I am not condescending and I don't think I am better than my friends.

I do not typically tell other children that I am better than they are.

Persistence

If I take on a responsibility, I do everything I can to fulfill it.

I am able to sit for a long time to complete a project I decided to do, such as an art project, building with Legos, or a complex puzzle.

Even in situations that are difficult for me, I do not give up or stop in the middle of things that are important to me.

I know how to work very hard and to invest a lot of effort into things that are important to me, such as hobbies and clubs.

Zest

I am a happy person and get excited about things easily.

I think life is exciting.

I know how to enjoy and be enthusiastic about the small things in life.

I am full of joy of life and vivaciousness.

Gratitude

I mostly feel really lucky for what I have in my life.

ARHAT YOGA

I know how to appreciate and say thank you for food prepared for me or a gift that I receive.

I know how to appreciate the good things that happen in my life.

I express gratitude for the good things that are done for me.

Spirituality

When things that are not good happen to me, my religious beliefs help me feel better.

I believe in God or a supreme power that protects and directs me to do the right thing.

I love and am drawn to spiritual things such as praying, doing techniques to develop the imagination, or breathing and relaxation techniques.

I feel better when I pray.

Hope

When I am in new situations, I generally assume that good things will happen to me.

Even when things are hard for me, I believe that ultimately things will be good.

Even when bad things happen to me, I remain full of hope.

When I do not succeed at something, I believe I will do better the next time.

Humor

I am good at making other children and adults laugh.

My jokes and the fact that I am funny helps me cope with social situations.

People tell me I am funny.

Making other children laugh is something I do well.

Authenticity

I do not usually lie.

Most parents want their children to be endowed with these positive character traits as well as other attractive values and virtues. Parents want children to develop good characters and specifically, virtuous character strengths. This list is just a starter on what virtues and strengths to teach children and work on personally developing, and in *Husbands and Wives Were Connected in the Past* I listed others as well including *performance virtues* such as ambition, diligence, order, industry, cleanliness, aliveness, vitality, self-sufficiency, active citizenship, greatness of soul, and leadership.

It would be a wonderful gift, a boon to any country's culture, if an

individual for their nation took the pattern of the *Pirkei Avot*, which is a collection of ethical teachings and maxims passed down to Jewish rabbis, and collected stories, maxims, examples, emotional pulls, reasonings and so forth to teach children character traits and values. At different ages different versions, or perhaps different styles of this sort of text, would be used that would emphasize the virtues that might best take hold at that particular age.

For instance, teaching gratitude to very young children is difficult but you can start teaching honesty at a young age through stories. It is a strategy of the best type of perfuming whether you use emotional stories, maxims, intellectual arguments, or other methods to influence children to develop certain character traits at particular ages. As another example, Elder Aimilianos of Simonopetra wrote an entire book, *The Mystical Marriage*, on the topic of St. Maximos the Confessor's writings on love. To select pertinent paragraphs from this text, and to add them to other writings, stories or examples that might impress children properly to develop a larger heart of love, would form part of the contents of such a book in just the chapter on love.

I find that most parents say they want their children to be honest, empathic and kind and you should certainly find these virtues emphasized. All parents have a unique perspective on the best traits to nurture in children in order to shape an overall good character, but you will often find the same virtues emphasized over and over again through different cultures, such as honesty. Children copy what they see around them, so by being a role model yourself and nurturing your children in certain directions you will play a big role in promoting character strengths and behavior. I taught how to do this in *Color Me Confucius*. As a note, it is difficult for young children to demonstrate open-mindedness, gratitude, authenticity and forgiveness because of their lack of cognitive maturity, but you can emphasize a host of other virtues.

Helping children develop a good character definitely prevents psychopathologies and promotes their life development. Parents might emphasize different personality traits they want in their children (such as honesty or the sense of shame when they lie or do wrong so that they develop the habit of self-correction), but the general idea is that parents want to raise children who have desirable, praiseworthy personality traits. Most of all, they want their children to develop an enduring positive collection of virtues. They want their children's personas (characters) to be imbued with a strong ethical compass.

All parents want their children to develop an exemplary persona. I'm sure that you want to develop an exemplary persona too. Just as actors practice being more of a certain way in order to present a certain character on film, and then some pick up those habits for life, you can do the same thing. Pursuing the road of self-development where you work on perfecting

your character in a more noble direction is not a monopoly of the Christian way, Moslem way, Jewish way, Buddhist way, Hindu way and so on. Virtues are to be pursued for their own sake because they are the right way to be. Benjamin Franklin taught, for instance, that we should create the best self possible of ourselves because virtue has worth for its own sake. One of the best ways to pursue virtue, he taught, was to correct the errata that prevent us from attaining perfection.

As I wrote in *Culture, Country, City, Company, Person, Purpose, Passion, World*, if you want a country to develop in a certain direction then you need a grand strategy. If you want your children to develop in a certain way then you need a grand strategy as well, a training philosophy, regimen and plan. You also need commitment and persistence to work that plan and work on their negative *samskaras* (character traits) to help them replace them with good ones. Religions typically have a grand strategy of personal development in that they teach their holy scriptures to help people develop virtuous thinking and behavior. They ask people to act in better ways that improve their individual lives and help elevate society as well. Sometimes a nation develops a grand strategy and then starts changing the country's educational system to impress upon children certain ideas that will push them in desired directions. This can be good or bad. In the home you must monitor what is being taught and counteract any errant notions or values being impressed upon them.

The idea behind a national grand strategy should be to bring out a country's magnificence, to make the country a source of light for all to see so that others are prompted to emulate it in admiration. Naturally we want people to think that way about our persona. A story about Confucius runs that the Duke of Sheh asked him about government and Confucius replied, "Good government obtains when those who are near are made happy and those who are far off are attracted." This means that the country becomes so good that others wish to copy its ways, to emulate it. It becomes a shining beacon on a hill that all raise their eyes to admire.

A nation's grand strategy should be concerned with development efforts that guide its military, geopolitical and economic activity. As to the social aspects of communities, the local communities know better as to what needs to be taught to children and the public so that they become good people, good citizens, and are able to live good lives. If the state permits itself to engage in vast social engineering projects, the historical tendency is for megalomania that will attempt to dumb-down the populace through policies that also make people have a harder time creating wealth, easier to be controlled and labor-fodder for the powerful. These efforts don't make the public happier or better off. State tendencies tend to make people less free, less educated, more oppressed and more malleable by an elite strata in power.

You need a fixed purpose of some kind for your country, and for your own life too. You also need a fixed purpose or philosophy on how you want to raise your children. You want the company you work for to be guided by a higher purpose as well, a higher philosophy that is centered on values other than just profits. This is why religions teach virtues, ethics, values and the importance of character. These are issues you must think through.

Take companies for instance. George Merck, president of the pharmaceutical giant Merck from 1925 to 1950 and chairman from 1949 to 1957, set the tone for the core values and standards of the firm when he gave a famous speech proclaiming “medicine is for the patient (rather than for profits).” Merck explained, “We try to remember that medicine is for the patient. We try never to forget that medicine is for the people. It is not for the profits. The profits follow, and if we have remembered that, they have never failed to appear. The better we have remembered it, the larger they have been.”

Merck therefore participated in quite a few projects that were motivated by a philosophy of values rather than primarily about profitability. This was the result of adopting higher virtues and values for life. Merck accordingly guided its development for the welfare of humanity in accordance with its mission statement. As an example, in the 1940s Merck gave away its valuable patent rights to streptomycin, the antibiotic cure it found for tuberculosis, because too many lives were at stake. Tuberculosis was one of the deadliest diseases in history at the time, a “Great White Plague” that was killing one out of every seven people in the United States and Europe. Merck therefore donated the patent rights to Rutgers University so that the medicine could be licensed to multiple manufacturers for production.

The values that become your core ideology will serve as a source of guidance for your life, and those you instill within your children will become their guides for life. They become like a bonding glue that holds their thoughts and actions together. Like a grand strategy for a company, virtuous principles should also guide companies as they grow and expand. By *aligning* with higher principles, which need no external justification,

Merck built itself into something great, preeminent and lasting because of its foundation of values. Merck’s initial core purpose was to preserve and improve human life – to make quality products for a better life. Initially Merck was governed by the philosophy of George Merck to manufacture “medicine for the people ... not for profits” and was comfortably profitable. When it switched to the philosophy of being totally “focused on growth” under CEO Ray Gilmartin, it ran into financial difficulties due to “ethical troubles” with Vioxx.

As another example of setting for yourself a prime directive that is based on virtues, character and values, the NFL championship 49er’s football

coach Bill Walsh comes to mind. Walsh won six football division titles and three NFC Championship titles due to his leadership philosophy that focused on standards of behavior rather than winning. As Walsh explained,

“I approached building the 49er organization with an agenda that didn’t include a timetable for a championship or even a winning season. Instead, I arrived with an urgent timetable for installing an agenda of specific behavioral norms – actions and attitudes – that applied to every single person on our payroll. . . .

“I came to the San Francisco 49ers with an overriding priority and specific goal – to implement what I call the Standard of Performance. It was a way of doing things, a leadership philosophy that has as much to do with core values, principles, and ideals as with blocking, tackling, and passing; more to do with the mental than with the physical. While I prized preparation, planning, precision, and poise, I also knew that organizational ethics were crucial to ultimate and ongoing success.

“It began with a fundamental leadership assertion: Regardless of your specific job, it is vital to your team that you do that job at the highest possible level in *all* its various aspects, both mental and physical (i.e., good talent with bad attitude equals bad talent).

“Beyond the mechanical elements of doing jobs correctly, I assisted coaches, players, staff, and others in assimilating the values within my Standard of Performance, including what I believed regarding personal accountability among the organization and its personnel. This is consistent with my conviction that an organization is not just a tool like a shovel, but an organic entity that has a code of conduct, a set of applied principles that go beyond a company mission statement that’s tacked on the wall and forgotten. In fact, we had no mission statement on the wall. My mission statement was implanted in the minds of our people through teaching.

“Great teams in business, in sports, or elsewhere have a conscience. At its best, an organization – your team – bespeaks values and a way of doing things that emanate from a source; that source is you – the leader. Thus, the dictates of your personal beliefs should ultimately become characteristics of your team.

“You must know what needs to be done and possess the capabilities and conviction to get it done. Several factors affect this, but none is more important than the dictates of your own personal beliefs. Collectively, they comprise your philosophy. A philosophy is the aggregate of your attitudes toward fundamental matters and is derived from a process of consciously thinking about critical issues and developing rational reasons for holding one particular belief or position rather than another.

“Many things shape your philosophy, including your background, experiences, work environment, education, aspirations, and more. By adhering to your philosophical tenets you are provided with a systemic, yet

practical, method of deciding what to do in a particular situation.

“It is a conceptual blueprint for action; that is, a perception of *what* should be done, *when* it should be done, and *why* it should be done. Your philosophy is the single most important navigational point on your leadership compass.

“My Standard of Performance – the values and beliefs within it – guided everything I did in my work at San Francisco and are defined as follows: Exhibit a ferocious and intelligently applied work ethic directed at continual improvement; demonstrate respect for each individual in the organization and the work he or she does; be deeply committed to learning and teaching, which means increasing my own experience; be fair; demonstrate character; honor the direct connection between details and improvement, and relentlessly seek the latter; show self-control, especially where it counts most – under pressure; demonstrate and prize loyalty; use positive language and have a positive attitude; take pride in my effort as an entity separate from the result of that effort; be willing to go the extra distance of the organization; deal appropriately with victory and defeat, adulation and humiliation (don’t get crazy with victory nor dysfunctional with loss); promote internal communication that is both open and substantive (especially under stress); seek poise in myself and those I lead; put the team’s welfare and priorities ahead of my own; maintain an ongoing level of concentration and focus that is abnormally high; and make sacrifice and commitment the organization’s trademark.

“These are also the basic characteristics of attitude and action – the new organizational ethos – I tried to teach our team, to put into our DNA. Of course, for this to happen the person in charge – whether a head coach, CEO, manager, or assembly-line foreman – must exhibit the principles, code of conduct, and behavior he or she is asking others to emulate. I believe I did this. ...

“More quickly than might imagine, a transformation occurred in the quality of the team’s attitudes and actions. An environment developed in which adherence to the details of my Standard of Performance became second nature as we worked to become absolutely first class in every possible way on and off the field. ...

“From the start, my prime directive, the fundamental goal, was the full and total implementation throughout the organization of the actions and attitudes of the Standard of Performance I described earlier. This was radical in the sense that winning is the usual prime directive in professional football and most businesses. ...

“I directed our focus less to the prize of victory than to the process of improving – obsessing, perhaps, about the quality of our execution and the content of our thinking; that is, our actions and attitude. I knew if I did that, winning would take care of itself, and when it didn’t I would seek ways

to raise our Standard of Performance.”³²

The case of Bill Walsh, who produced a winning organization (a sports franchise) by creating a culture that emphasized standards of performance and standards of behavior, namely virtues, reveals the importance that virtues play in life and how quickly things can change when you place them first, as was done at Merck. A higher meaning, virtues, and values should be used to lead your own life, they should be the guiding principles of any organization you join, and should even guide your company and country.

Mike Smith, coach of the Atlanta Falcons, specified seven responsibilities for everyone in order in his organization to build the culture of a winning team. He also felt that the way to build an organization was to emphasize culture because organizations with sustained cultures continue experiencing its temperament, and the temperament he wanted was success. Culture drives expectations and beliefs, which drive behaviors, and behaviors produce habits that create the future. Therefore he specified these seven requirements in order to build a winning organization through a culture of success:

1. Have fun, work hard, and enjoy the journey.
2. Show respect for every person you have contact with in the organization.
3. Put the team first. Successful teams have teammates that are unselfish and willing to put their individual goals behind the team’s goals.
4. Do your job. It is defined, but you must always be prepared for it to change (especially if you’re a player).
5. Appropriately handle victory and defeat, adulation and humiliation. Do not get too high in victory or too low in defeat. Be the same person every day.
6. Understand that all organizational decisions aim to make the team better, stronger, and more efficient.
7. Have a positive attitude. Use positive language (both verbal and body language).³³

Another famous coach, John Wooden of basketball fame, after years of coaching also came to the conclusion that the foundation of success in life was due to an emphasis on character. Woodon is famous for saying, “Success is peace of mind which is a direct result of self-satisfaction in

³² Bill Walsh, Steve Jamison and Craig Walsh, *The Score Takes Care of Itself: My Philosophy of Leadership*, (Penguin Group, New York, 2009), pp. 14-20.

³³ Jon Gordon and Mike Smith, *You Win in The Locker Room: 7 C’s to Build a Winning Team in Sports, Business, and Life* (John Wiley & Sons, New Jersey, 2015), p. 12.

knowing you made the effort to become the best you are capable of becoming.” This is what he wanted his students to strive for in life.

Wooden came up with the famous Pyramid of Success that emphasized fifteen character building blocks essential for effective leadership and life success. These building blocks included:

- Enthusiasm
- Cooperation
- Loyalty
- Friendship
- Industriousness
- Intentness
- Initiative
- Self-Control
- Alertness
- Condition
- Skill
- Team Spirit
- Poise
- Confidence
- Competitive Greatness

Several other character traits often added to the sides of his pyramid include ambition, adaptability, resourcefulness, fight, faith, patience, integrity, reliability, honesty and sincerity.

Usually people just pursue skills in life, or strive to accumulate money or assets to climb dominance hierarchies without any regards to character development. For instance, even in the Hindu Epic the *Mahabharata*, it is recounted that many great warriors “did severe penance” for many years to attain special powers and become a certain way. In other words, they engaged in cultivation as a pursuit to achieve higher bodies and attain certain special abilities or skills.

One of the lessons of the *Mahabharata* in the war with Krishna was that even though many of the heroes had super incredible skills because of their cultivation in attaining higher bodies, they were usually defeated due to some weakness. Those weaknesses usually involved character flaws.

The *Mahabharata* become one of the foundation epics of Indian culture for many reasons, including character lessons just as are found in Homer’s *Odyssey*. In my thinking, character lessons should be the center of culture, which means what we pass down to our children. Furthermore, in order to survive and thrive a culture should center itself in a traditional direction but

not be so wed to traditional ways that it cannot evolve. All cultures need to be able to adopt to new developments instead of irrevocably ossifying around what has already has produced. Culture must serve as a living, breathing way of life that changes with the times so that it remains a process of social enrichment. It must always be allowed to adopt to the latest technological and educational developments in society and the revolutionary findings of science. Furthermore, a culture should not remain closed but promote a curiosity and openness that leads to discovery and evolution, especially an uplifting of people.

Criticism that leads to self-correction is always to be admitted because this is the desired result of personal mindfulness, mental watching, introspection, self-policing practice. Therefore, criticism should be allowed for society as a whole, which is why we should always ensure that we have a free press. Furthermore, if we don't oppose personal faults and errors or wrong policies then our permissiveness can lead to gross harm and destruction. Therefore we must learn to accept many forms of self-correction and self-restraint.

The focus of national leaders should primarily center on economics and national prosperity issues, which are not an easy issue that can be handled with just one sentence. Worrying about cultural issues is a secondary concern, and therefore should be handled by religions and social institutions while the government focuses more on general prosperity. People will have different views on this matter, such as Communists for instance, but I defer to a story about Confucius riding in a carriage surveying a land.

Confucius commented, "How numerous are the people!" The carriage driver Yu asked in response, "Since they are thus numerous, what more shall be done for them?" Confucius replied, "Enrich them," which means to help them by focusing on developing the economy and by solving the issue of prosperity that solves many other issues as a consequence. Next the carriage driver asked, "And when they have been enriched, what more shall be done?" Confucius then said, "Teach them."

In this case "teach them" means to not just focus on educating people to give them wisdom, skills and livelihoods. It means to emphasize a culture of virtues, values and character building in society. "Teach them" means to teach ethics and morality after the base of prosperity is laid because when people are hungry they won't listen to lectures on honesty and not stealing.

Confucius wanted people to live with integrity and spent his whole life teaching this one lesson. However, he recognized this ancient Chinese observation that only when people had full stomachs could you then talk about virtue. If you are hungry you are likely to lie, steal, cheat or do anything to eat or save your family. When prosperity is restored then you can talk to people about proper behavior. This is why Wallace Wattles said,

“Moral and spiritual greatness is possible only to those who are above the competitive battle for existence.”

All genuine religions stress the necessity of cultivating ethics, virtues, values and good behavior – and watchfulness to ensure that we practice this goodness. They also recognize the fact that good thoughts do not eradicate our passions, vices and errant impulses, but there are ways we can fight against them to overpower them. We can also transform them or even purify them. I once mentioned, for instance, how athletes train to turn nervousness before a competition into excitement. We can also mentally reframe obligations we have by saying, “I *get to* ...” such as “I get to cook for my family” instead of “I *have to* cook for my family.” You can retrain your mind to look at problems or challenges as opportunities for growth and development so that you look more positively on life rather than evade experiences. Furthermore, you can reframe your habits to highlight their benefits rather than drawbacks as another way of reprogramming your mind. An example is saying to yourself, “It’s time to build endurance and get fast” when you choose to go running rather than just think, “I need to go running.” Also, when training to master some activity and feeling dejected enough to think you won’t master it, you can always counter your negative thoughts by thinking “not yet.” In other words, instead of saying, “I will never master playing this piano piece” you can switch to saying, “I haven’t mastered this skill *yet*.”

When bad things or setbacks happen to you you must not get overly sad or become depressed either, but like Emperor Marcus Aurelius you must stabilize your emotions and mental state by recognizing, “To expect not to encounter misfortune is foolish. It is to be expected from time to time. Let me learn my lessons, correct my errors and move on.” Since how we view things is a matter of interpretation, he also stressed that we should manage our ways of thinking. Together with the field of NLP and the philosopher William James, all three have taught that we should learn how to alter our emotions. For instance, Marcus Aurelius said, “How easy it is to repel and to wipe away every impression which is troublesome or unsuitable, and immediately to be in all tranquility.” The emotional mind remains the barrier to mental peace and happiness, and we deal with the problem of emotional bondage through self-awareness and then self-correction that involves a plentitude of remedies that can set us free. Success in ultimately regulating, taming and purifying your emotional mind to bring it to a calm, peaceful, harmonious state depends upon your rational mind using wise methods to re-train it, transform it or regulate it.

Furthermore, we should learn how to cut off negative states of mind when they arise, namely afflictions. The Eastern Orthodox Church teaches us how to cut off *logismos* (negative thought forms) once they’ve taken hold of an individual, and calls this the spiritual practice of purification. In the

Eastern Orthodox Church, spiritual elders explain that you should always protect yourself from negative thought forms, or *logismos*, that want to enter your mind and take root, just as Confucius explained. You must watch your mind, or monitor your mind with attention, so that they don't take root as habits. This, then, is not just mindfulness or awareness but a type of spiritual practice. The basic method of practice is to watch your mind with watchfulness and ignore a *logismos* that might arise, such as a desire to do something foolish or errant, by treating it with indifference. You simply disregard it when it enters the mind, and then it will quickly depart because that's what happens with all thoughts that you ignore. Colloquially speaking, we say you "pay it no mind" or "pay it no special attention" and thus it will depart. That's basically what you do during witnessing meditation by refusing to become attached; just by watching, in time the stream of thoughts within your mind transforms to leave an scenario that's peaceful and pure because it is empty of the previous afflictions. Another method is to use logic or wisdom analysis to defeat an arising *logismos*. With this technique you apply reasoning to the thought form so that you can dissociate from its attractive pull. Buddhism suggests this method, too, such as by remembering the consequences that will happen if you give in to what seems an attractive idea. You look at the *logismos*, consider it with wisdom, and in that way you can free yourself of its influence so that it departs. People often ask what spirituality is and *this is spirituality*, this is being more spiritual.

As a note, in *Color Me Confucius* many ways are revealed for eliminating, decreasing, suppressing or transforming our mental afflictions that nag. Buddhism has developed special ways to help us do this as does Confucianism, Christianity and nearly every religion.

The Christian Anthonite Fathers call this topic "guarding our minds," which is what we must do when irrational thoughts come to our mind and we cannot chase them away so they don't leave. The Christian Elder Joseph of Vatopaidi said that you can try to make use of resistance or opposition, but it often fails. If you use contemplation and wisdom reason along the lines of thinking, "You idiot, are you not ashamed? Are you a human or a devil? What are these that you think about?" then this often helps to settle mental afflictions that continually accost you. Other masters would use a different sort of dialogue to reason with one's self, but this approach is generally recognized as the method of contemplation or reasoning to root out root afflictions.

The path of religious practice is filled with various exercises and ways to help us transform our behaviors and fight against errant mental tendencies. They are all about training our mind, teaching us how to deal with the mechanism of consciousness that is our great gift, but which is not always under our control. It's a property or aspect of our beingness as a

living object, and we have to learn how to control it, train it, and use it in the most skillful ways possible. It can be used to master all sorts of information and mental processes. What should they be?

A lot of these methods have to do with mind control through some means of pacification that controls our thoughts to eliminate afflictions. You want to learn how to neutralize thoughts and emotions that keep coming back to bother you. The best methods attack the process from knowledge of how afflictions, negative self-talk, habits, desires, addictions, passions and the like all work. A more sophisticated understanding of these processes can lead to better results in mastering them. Basically we want to learn how to engineer good thoughts and good mental states as often as possible (and good results in the external world as well) knowing full well that good thoughts sometimes do not eliminate negative states nor eradicate the passions so we need to master other methods to deal with them also. For bad states of mind, the two strategies are to eliminate them or transform them so that the mind is clean and empty of their existence.

For instance, monks and nuns of nearly every tradition comment about how they have to constantly fight against the tendencies, sins, impulses or temptations of pride, lust, envy and so forth. This is a constant battle and monastic systems have developed methods of self-improvement (self-perfection) for their adherents to counter the domination of negative tendencies within the psyche. One strategy is to eliminate them when they arise, or prevent them from arising in the first place. Another is to transform them so that different patterns arise instead of negative ones just as Olympic athletes will train to transform his emotion of fear before competitions to that of excitement instead.

As mentioned of the Christian Anthonite Elders, most monastic traditions teach individuals to analyze their situation – which is called contemplation, analysis or discrimination – and use that understanding to help defeat matters. They also suggest as a solution to temptation of affliction that monks and nuns occupy themselves with other activities until errant impulses leave. Or, they suggest that they recite mantras/prayers while waiting for the impulses to leave them. Many other practices are also recommended.

This is all about quieting the mind – banishing or eliminating mental afflictions – to find internal peace, stillness or “peace of the soul,” and this is actually spiritual practice. Of course the world’s religions all word this differently from one another, such as “cleansing the heart from sin” (Christianity), “reducing desires” (Confucianism), “eliminating afflictions” (Buddhism), “pacifying the mind” (Zen) or “stilling mental agitations” (Hinduism), but it is essentially the same thing. Most spiritual practices in the world are simply the same processes called by a different name in another tradition.

These cultivation/spiritual methods of transforming our natural mental tendencies, or using strategies to *control them* – such as by using wisdom analysis or contemplation, self-observation or self-policing, busying ourselves, using harsh restrictions, applying our will, etcetera – widely exist because religions recognize that mental afflictions, habitual tendencies, impure impulses and conditioned responses often attack our consciousness and many people want to get rid of them. They either want to eliminate them, or purify/transform them, or ignore them, or control them via some type of mental management. Thus, many people turn to religious teachings, spiritual practices and virtuous values in the world to help themselves purify their mind and behavior even when to outsiders religious devotion seems foolish. Notice what is going on here. Spiritual practice is all about controlling your mind, the primary tool of who and what you are – your consciousness.

I have extensively covered some methods for cultivating virtue – which is learned behavior – and eliminating errant tendencies or habit energies, in *Buddha Yoga* and *Color Me Confucius* but the techniques for dealing with afflictions are far more than could be covered in these books alone. Some of such details provided appear in chapter 8, “Transforming Your Behavior for the Better.” Even if you don’t succeed in spiritual enlightenment, which is attaining the deva body as the initial fruit of the spiritual path, you will still produce a better future for yourself if you use some of the methods outlined or others more relevant to your situation.

The methods of Confucianism tell us to police our mind in order to police our behavior, Stoicism teaches us to deal with mental impulses by cultivating the presence of awareness and rationality, and various other religions emphasize constant mental introspection in order to help us purify our consciousness (thought-stream and mental habits) and elevate our behavior. You have to “make the unconscious conscious” by cultivating a presence of mindfulness in order to direct your life with free will, otherwise you are directing your life according to the unconscious programming installed within your neurons that you have previously created through past conditioning and now accepted as your unthinking, automatic way of doing things.

This awareness training so that you can make better decisions in real time, and the effort of reprogramming or training/cultivating/purifying yourself, is basically the spiritual path. This self-correction of our mental tendencies and processes is emphasized everywhere because this is it, this is the core of spiritual transformation. Devas and their teachers sit in your brain all the time and watch mental processes affect your neurons, and so this is why the spiritual path of all religions emphasizes self-correction for the fallible human being, one of the sentient entities of the cosmos that is really a frequently errant living phenomenon. Hence the spiritual path is

about perfecting your consciousness because eventually you can become a being with many bodies who can affect other beings' consciousness.

No one is going to help you attain the deva body or higher bodies, which have an inherent power over others with lower body vehicles, unless you are a virtuous person who can control himself or herself and approach others with kindness, compassion, friendliness and helpfulness. If you don't have *agape*, an overflowing love or compassion for humankind where you are willing to work for others and suffer for them, then how could you be trusted with such powers? If you don't have *Metta*, a Pali word for loving-kindness or friendliness, then what would you do with such abilities? This may take one or several lives of training to make this a dominant feature of your character.

What was missing from these earlier discussions was the fact that you can model yourself after the best personal example of a virtue you can imagine/find ("I want to imitate Christ") to slowly develop a new or deeper personality trait you desire, and thereby transform your personality in that way. You want to become of greater benefit to yourself and others. You want to have a core experience in your mind-stream and attune yourself to a certain way of thinking and being. You first choose your ideal model, your individual who is an ideal model of the virtue, skills, mindset or characteristics you admire and wish to obtain/master. To reach a higher level of being, you must assume a higher concept of yourself. You have to have a vision of greatness, preferably an exemplar whose actions you can imitate as much as possible. Or, you simply imagine being a certain perfected way without having to think of an individual who represents that ideal of achievement. Then you imagine you/them being that way, playing a movie in your mind of exhibiting the ideal behavior in real life such as a scene that perfectly exhibits the virtue, trait, skill, characteristic, accomplishment or mindset you're interested in. If you used an individual as the ideal, you can imagine floating into their body, merging with them, or having them come into you, and you then become that way picking up the desired traits. Then imagine being, hearing, seeing, and acting as they would. You can go back and forth like this, repeating it in various ways as done in the field of NLP modeling for skills acquisition. If you don't like what you are then you have to start working on yourself by using methods like this, immeasurable meditations, visualization practice (mental rehearsal and future pacing), Liao Fan introspection and so on. You have to curate a life of self-improvement. The great news is that you can choose to become anyway you like, and can engineer yourself to be that way by changing your mental wiring. It just takes training of your mind/consciousness/thoughts and behavior. Once someone sees your behavior they know how your mind works, so the big thing you are trying to change is not just your mindset but behavior.

Bit by bit you can become more like a model you choose not just by engineering temporary mental states, but by learning how to make them a deeper and more automatic part of your persona. Who sets your limits on how you can remake yourself? No one. No one sets any limits on how you can remake yourself at all.

Spiritual cultivation from beginning to end is all about remaking yourself into someone better, something better that represents a higher ideal, a nobler purpose, a force of consummate conduct and light in the world that benefits others. It is also about achieving some ultimate ends you decide upon because they have meaning for you, and then developing yourself or acquiring/mastering the tools to manifest those goals into reality.

Shifting gears, to put it frankly for most people life involves a lot of affliction, aggravation, pain and suffering. Many of us have been dealt a shitty hand. Nevertheless, we must all voluntarily accept that life involves some degree of unavoidable suffering, and the only real alternative is non-being. Accepting that life is suffering, we must then find a way to overcome, eliminate or avoid that suffering, and there are a variety of strategies for that which fall into the field of spiritual cultivation because that's what cultivation is all about. Then we have to actually accomplish this. You must accept your beingness as well as the condition you're in, and then determine to work for betterment. Furthermore, if you can also help others instead of just yourself, which is the career of a Bodhisattva or Buddha rather than Arhat who is only self-centered, then why not? Maybe you can manifest something that actually makes the world a better place.

Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are always working at these tasks despite the obstacles and obstructions, and use their wisdom to dissolve problems or go around them in fast or gradual ways. They will not allow themselves to be defeated because they take upon themselves noble vows, goals, aspirations, aims, commitments or responsibilities that hold for them ultimate meaning, which is why they are willing to work on them despite any pain and suffering. From a Bodhisattva's perspective, happiness is felt when you make progress in fulfilling your vows and aspirations. It is a by-product of your meaningful activities. With life "you are all in" so why not play the most magnificent game you can in pursuing a vision that gives your existence a magnificent meaning?

One of the best ways to forget about your own suffering in life is to take upon yourself responsibilities that give your life meaning, and then to commit to those responsibilities. That way, when crap happens it's still okay because it's just a bad event within an overall life of meaning. You shouldn't measure life as to whether or not you experience a lot of crap, but according to your sense of meaning because it's the meaning that provides happiness, not sensations of pleasure. You calibrate your progress through

life according to your sense of meaning, and of course you have to be aiming at the highest good you can conceive of.

You will never totally eliminate suffering in life. However, you can work to *confine it*, avoid it, eliminate it or ignore it through other activities. Taking upon yourself worthwhile sacrifices and commitments helps you ignore the pains of life or transcend suffering when the meaning of those activities is so high, whereas special lines of activity, such as the Eightfold Path of behavior in Buddhism, help you avoid suffering or confine it when you follow it. Another strategy to reduce suffering is to associate with like-minded people engaged in other vows, responsibilities, contributions, pledges or commitments that are similarly difficult, for the sense of camaraderie adds to the feelings of fulfillment as you make progress in achieving those difficult objectives. This is why Buddhas and Bodhisattvas commonly associate with one another. It is due to common commitments to touch people's lives to raise human welfare and well-being.

Spiritual cultivation also teaches that we must develop different mental habits as an antidote to the suffering of life, such as non-clinging or detachment from our emotions. We are told we can develop a different mindset too such as a sunny disposition and optimistic outlook. Suffering affects people less when they have an optimistic, happy outlook on life.

If we become harder and stronger we will also become able to better handle difficult times and issues. We can also try to protect ourselves from suffering by avoiding it through wisdom or wise behavior, or by changing our environment permanently by improving situations to minimize it or eliminate it. Cultivation also teaches us that we can also learn to accept it fully until it passes, or cultivate a disposition of transcendence like Jesus. It teaches that we can cultivate the higher spiritual bodies so that we can jump out of the lower realms, like this earthly plane where suffering predominates, and then live in higher realms where suffering is less. We can reinterpret suffering with a higher meaning too. We can choose to pursue a higher ideal, a personal vision in life with a higher meaning by taking on responsibilities with a purpose within this realm's field of suffering and then, because of those high objectives simply ignore the sufferings that come along with life. This is similar to Proust's ideas that the art of living is not about a great lifestyle but locating worth and meaning despite your circumstances, and putting suffering to good use. Such aspirations are represented by the Buddha/Bodhisattva vows and the occupations of the Orishas in Yoruba.

What should religion be teaching people? That we should aim at what we consider the highest good, train ourselves or turn ourselves into something that can attain it, and then go and try to manifest it in the world. We should try to be a light to the world as our best self, or in some field or in some way. This is what the universities and colleges are supposed to

teach us, which is to make ourselves into something so that the world that created us is happy we are here, but they forget this part of their obligation.

This is also why I often speak of the Bodhisattva and Buddha vows of behavior, and the occupations of Orishas, hieromonks and Great Schema (who are as living angels in the flesh), *ikigami* (living *kami*), masters, great yogis, gurus, sadgurus, and so on. They involve taking on responsibilities, but only those that you can bear, only those that are tolerable to you at your level of being and capability. You shouldn't take on excess that harms you but learn to act wisely, skillfully. You are not supposed to become a martyr, take on burdens you cannot bear and then live a pathological life like a suffering ascetic. You should only take on the responsibilities you can effectively handle that you *want to assume*, and then bear those burdens and responsibilities properly.

As you learn more, do more, accomplish more and get wiser and more skillful your responsibilities or objectives are always subject to update. Even your highest goals and commitments are subject to reinvention, so you should never fear establishing vows since they provide your life and the world with meaning. The key to your own happiness and development in life is to aim towards something of exceptional purpose, and that something should ultimately have great meaning to you as a tremendous source of positivity. It should be a light you want all to see.

For a meaningful life you must orient yourself to the highest possible good you can conceive of and then become committed to that vision. If you don't get tied up in yourself, or your marriage or career then your energies can be focused on contributing to a larger cause that might be your responsibilities or your vows and so on. Then you have to cultivate yourself to change in that direction, and become committed to manifesting that highest vision in yourself and the world. You *choose the game you're going to be playing* and then commit to it.

The fact of taking on an engaging responsibility will positively give your life meaning. In working on manifesting the solution to a problem you will often forget yourself and your ego and also the pain of the world, for the world is replete with suffering. The journey to play a game of excellence with commitment then makes all the suffering worthwhile. Fulfillment is more important than achievement and the journey more important than the goal. Hedonism and aimless drifting in life do not provide such satisfaction. The drive to collect money or resources does not either because wanting something and liking it afterwards are two different things. The satisfaction comes from the journey of incremental progress, although work, which provides the reward of feeling aliveness. There is not just the satisfaction or thrill of progressively achieving your goals but of improving yourself due to those efforts.

This is all a decision about values, about your integrity as an individual,

and then making the effort to transform, change, elevate yourself to achieve that highest ideal of being and commitment. That's why we are discussing virtues and various methods to develop them, train in new directions or change yourself. This is what gives life meaning.

The question is how to become a certain way? Once you've identified certain character traits or skills or values or whatever that you don't already possess, the question is how to become that way.

Now consider an actor who practices to be a certain way. Consider an athlete who trains and practices as well in order to master a particular skill or develop a certain attitude. Isn't sports training about developing skills that we don't already have? Isn't it about developing certain movements, talents, skills, and even character traits to a state of optimal excellence? Isn't this similar to a larger life objective of developing certain skills, certain virtues and certain character traits that we deem important or even necessary to become our highest and best self that we commit ourselves to becoming?

If you can train to develop various athletic skills you don't already possess, or can train to improve what you already have, then you can also train yourself to adopt more of a certain personality trait, and thus transform yourself along the pathway of virtue and values towards the higher spiritual attainments or anything else you desire. However, if you just want to be like musicians who want to temporarily play like a famous performer, or actors who want to develop temporary characteristics to play a role on screen, then you can stop your training and practice at that level too.

You can use the Buddhist immeasurable style meditations to saturate yourself with the emotions, traits, values or characteristics you want to master if you want to move in those directions. Or, you might try to hold onto an emotion, feeling it inside you, and continually recite a prayer or mantra so as to impress your Qi and psyche with it and move yourself towards that characteristic as a defining feature of your personality.

There are many ways you can work on transforming yourself. While in the flesh condition, I suggest putting in as much cultivation effort as possible to change your body, your character and how your mind works. Put in as much cultivation as possible. Get as much gain as possible from work at transforming your body and Qi, purifying your mind, and also your behavior. Work on transforming your normal behavior reactions, your personality and character. Work on increasing the powers of your mind. Do as much merit as possible too. Rare are true cultivation teachings. When will you ever encounter these instructions again?

Top athletes commonly practice mental visualizations to learn and rehearse their skills, and as a stimulus method to get themselves into a positive emotional state prior to a game. For instance, Atlanta Braves

pitcher John Smoltz experienced a great turnaround in his baseball career when he finally learned to visualize his previous successes while on the mound. He would remember and then bring the strong emotions associated with those previous successes into his present reality for the game at hand. The Brazilian soccer player Pele would also visualize his previous successes before every game and try to remind himself of the fun he felt playing to bring up those evoked emotions, and those of the best moments of his career, into the forefront as a type of entrainment for his mental state.

Musicians, when starting out, often try to master the style of certain great performers who came before them as do singers, poets, painters and even copywriters. Method actors also practice role-playing to master various character traits (different from the actor's off-screen real-life personality) in order to become certain characters on screen. Method actors engage in all sorts of deep practices like this to master character roles.

For instance, Robert De Niro actually became a taxi driver for his role in *Taxi Driver* to learn his role. Jim Carrey was Andy Kaufman "24 hours a day" in preparing for *Man on the Moon*. He also, I might add, regularly used visualization to help manifest his future and once wrote a \$10 million check to himself for "acting services rendered" before he ever became a star. He would periodically look at the check to put himself in a success and moving forward mindset.

Another method of self-transformation or purification is known as desensitization. I once knew a stock trader who desensitized himself to the heavy emotions of greed and fear involved with trading wins and losses by sitting in front of a roulette table in Las Vegas for eight hours every day, betting red on every turn with some minor rule variations, in order to desensitize himself to the emotional ups and downs of trading profits and losses. One of my anatomy professors attended so many autopsies of cadavers, which originally frightened him, in order to desensitize himself from the disgust of dead bodies too. Male gynecologists, after seeing so many vaginas, no doubt have lost a great deal of the sexual excitement men normally experience when they view sexual pictures. I know several masters who would sit in graveyards for many weeks until they could dispel the emotion of fear.

There are lots of ways of doing this. The actor Jack Nicholson went naked around his house for three months, from dawn to dusk whether he had visitors or not, to address his body image issues and retrain himself because he was too self-conscious about his body. The question is not whether you can desensitize yourself, but what you choose to desensitize yourself to.

As another instance, once someone gets used to the squalor and poor of certain Third World countries they tend to entirely dismiss it, ignore it or blank it out when they see it, and thus they lose a bit of their natural

compassion for mankind. It is indeed difficult to walk through the world correctly with the proper balance of wisdom and compassion. Too much compassion and you go broke trying to help, or collapse with a broken heart from compassion fatigue. Too much wisdom or intelligence and you ignore problems entirely or forget the emotional aspects of situations. It is very difficult to strike a balance between compassion and wisdom, helping when and where you can in ways you can, or waiting until better resources, circumstances, and abilities are available. Nevertheless, you need to give rise to both wisdom and compassion and impulsive compassion needs to be evaluated by wisdom, and wisdom/intelligence needs to be evaluated through the sieve of compassion.

To change the mental conditioning already installed as the primary processing pattern within your brain you have to either leave your comfort zone to develop something new by pushing against your borders, or simply get out of your head entirely (become more open due to emptiness meditation) to allow in new influences and thoughts from others that might override what you already have as your set of internally processed conclusions. Otherwise, without that ability to grow and change beyond yourself you will always function according to your pre-created patterns.

Most people don't want to change, however, because change is uncomfortable and they are in love with their own shit, their own way of doing things. That's why it's important to instill within a nation or spiritual tradition the love of learning and self-improvement. For instance, the famed golfer Tiger Woods chose to reinvent his golfing swing three times. Yes, three times he decided to undergo a complete structural overhaul by disassembling it, reconstructing it and then mastering it. Who is willing to do that? Only those people who desire excellence in themselves.

Buddhism says that all of us create strong habit-energies that cling to and reinforce our ego-concept – self-love, self-pride, self-conceit, self-delusion. Arrogance, pride, conceit, hubris and lack of humility all spring from such roots. They all revolve around the thought of the I, which is the thought of having an inherent ego, or self that is the problem of fundamental ignorance

We also have particular habitual ways of discriminating the inputs of our senses, habits of intellect (*manas*), and habits of judgment (*manovijnana*) from which issue a habit-energy of sometimes wrong speculations, conclusion algorithms and errant decisions. We also have strong blueprints or action patterns that we've developed within our mental system for unthinking processes too. These are all the things you work on transforming through the spiritual path. It is about mastering and perfecting consciousness. It is not about worshipping God. You are a sentient being that will last a very long time through the cycles of reincarnation, or via the longevity of very high transcendental spiritual bodies, so it is about the self-

effort of cultivating perfection of your mind, its thinking processes, its automatic processes and your behavior in word and deed. You are an object in the universe with consciousness, which is the only thing that differentiates you from insentient matter. So you must work on perfecting, purifying and ennobling that very central part of yourself that defines you – your consciousness and its exhibition through movement, action, behavior, words, deeds, etcetera.

In cultivation – on the spiritual path – you want to make a significant adjustment from your primary persona and elevate it to something better. This takes work because it has already been shaped and become somewhat solidified according to influences from your genes, your family environment, your schooling and friends as well as the influences of your culture, country, religion and person experiences. We get our character in accordance with these influences and especially our family's traits. It has been influenced by all sorts of forces, and is still influencable by all sorts of new forces all the time including planetary forces, the weather, and so on. As solidified as you might feel it is, it has great plasticity so you can definitely change it. You can improve it through consistent training and effort but you want the right guidance and direction. You will definitely be a different person years from now, and the question is whether you want that to just happen to you or whether you want to guide the process.

You want to elevate, purify, uplift, upgrade, spiritualize or ennoble the current personality and learned conditioning embedded within your neurons and mental processing systems. If you successfully change your processing significantly, this can change your karmic fortune and even change your biochemistry since you will start reacting a different way with your emotions. Emotions are related to hormones, which produce physiological changes within your body, so if you change your thoughts and hormones you will not just change your fortune but also your body and mental states as well. When your life force is flourishing, this is related to the internal secretions of hormones that you can harmonize and replenish through the process of cultivation, and calm mental states are related to these factors as well. If you think about it you'll probably agree that you'd want all of these factors – your health, vitality, Qi, thoughts and emotions – to be more harmonious, pleasant and comfortable, wouldn't you? So how can you transform them in an uplifting direction?

Naturally we always want to be transforming towards a better state of existence or beingness. That's what the existence of a sentient being should be all about. That's why you work on improving your body, your skills, your thinking processes, your mental state, your emotional responses and baseline level of happiness and so forth. This is something I have emphasized in this book and a bit in *Buddha Yoga*, *Color Me Confucius*, *Nyasa Yoga*, *Move Forward*, *Quick Fast Done*, *Visualization Power* and *Sport*

Visualization for the Elite Athlete.

In brief, you have the “always watching your behavior” methods of Liao Fan and Ben Franklin to help you cut off your behavioral errors, and which push you to proactively do good deeds and practice virtuous ways just as is stressed within Christianity, Sikhism and other major religions. Mental introspection *is* a method of cultivating virtuous behavior through self-awareness, which you can also call self-policing, watching or mindfulness, but it doesn’t necessarily change your steady-state emotional tone. It doesn’t dissolve the root causes of issues that continually give birth to the same problems but it can help cut off errors. What we are really seeking is a baseline transformation of your character where you shed bad behaviors permanently, at a deep level. This is called cultivating a mind of purity. Inhibiting behaviors through restraint or policing protects them from manifesting, but we need to go deeper. We need to correct our mechanism, so we need a method that purifies those deep impulses so that errant desires never arise.

In fact, at first it is quite uncomfortable, like wearing a straight-jacket, if you just adopt rigid rules of behavior such as the Amish, Orthodox Jews or monastics do to run their lives. You can prevent bad habits/behavior through willpower and awareness, but not necessarily instill virtues and correct responses in their place. It takes a different sort of deeper work to change your core emotional being. You must go deeper than just blindly following rules to make something part of your life and personality, although suppression will leave its mark. In many cases if you do not solve the pressure of emotional impulses but simply block them, then in a subsequent life, living in a new situation without restraints, those untransformed impulses will blossom in full glory because you never eliminated, transformed or purified them in the first place. Therefore, how to deal with them through wisdom is the real issue.

Some training systems can leave you with lasting virtues such as the Marine Corps, which teaches soldiers life-long habits (action patterns) of order and discipline. Certain religious systems can do this too. Also, certain spiritual practices can leave a lasting impression on you such as regularly reciting the Jesus Prayer, performing *yidam* sadhanas, yoga, practicing martial arts and so forth. The path of spirituality is definitely a path of consistent character transformation if you have the right practices and an expert teacher, spiritual elder or guide who can help you become a different person.

American General George Marshall comes to mind as someone who became fanatically devoted to adhering to a strict but very high code of personal ethics/conduct, just as George Washington did, and thereby dramatically changed his persona. This is one of the reasons that these two men reached great heights in their lives. Teddy Roosevelt, who knew his

weakness was physical health, worked hard at building himself up physically to re-create himself in the way he wanted. He went about transforming himself a different way whereas most people remain lethargic and choose to do nothing at all to improve themselves.

King Louis IX of France (1214-1270) adhered to the *prud'homie*, which was the code of conduct for an honorable man in the thirteenth century, after being taught by his mother who said, "I love you, my dear son, with all the tenderness a mother is capable of; but I would infinitely rather see you fall down dead at my feet, than that you should ever commit a mortal sin." Trained in this way, in every action he took he considered virtue, religion and the well-being of his people, and by his wisdom and compassion that considered the people rather than himself at center stage he became revered as a great king and saint.

Most people think, "I'm fine the way I am," "I don't know how," "I have no guide," "the work is much too daunting." However, we should all be engaged in a process of constant self-improvement, which is what Confucius called "The Great Learning." We must all adopt a standard of performance and strive for an ideal of perfection, and this should become part of you life's calling.

There are many other examples of the various means we have in this world for training or transforming our bodies, personalities, thinking processes, emotions and behavior. Most armies are skilled, for instance, in breaking people down and then building them back up again into new people. American Seal training is a perfect example of this where they teach people to stop being do-it-yourselfers and to become team members who give help and get help from others. Sports are another area where we see the results of long-term training regimes.

It is truly hard to go against your deep personality, an example being that many professional comedians seem to be "always on" trying to be funny, but in their personal lives are rather serious (Jim Carrey) or even suffer from depression (Rodney Dangerfield). They even try to escape the "funny" roles they play in movies so that they can express their inner serious side, as was done by Steve Martin and Robin Williams.

Those who try to be funny all the time when it is against their core often suffer a sudden severe snap-back, just like those who experience compassion fatigue from trying too hard to help. To truly change yourself you have to go at this sincerely but slowly, which is what the road of spiritual practice is all about. You have to reach a natural pace that expresses your true self. Some things can be accomplished quickly in life, and others require slow maturation such as the process of perfuming and smoking as previously discussed. Naturally it is best if you can eliminate as many behavioral errors as possible when you are a young child for this is the time when you are the most malleable and establish the core basis of

your personality. Nonetheless even in your twenties, when you finally become really awake, you have a tremendous capacity for radical change and transformation.

Zen Buddhism says you should police your mind using a sword to chop off errant thoughts and behaviors in real time. But what do you replace them with? What thinking processes will give you the highest alternatives in each situation you encounter in life? Don't you have to train in logic, inference, deduction, compassion and so forth so that you have a strong basis for being able to determine the best decision in each situation? All mental pursuits belong to the field of spiritual cultivation. You want your mental algorithms to become the best they possibly can, which is the purpose of education rather than just fact memorization.

Dropping/cutting off what you are doing or about to do when you see it is wrong is one thing. However, rousing the vigor and energy to move yourself out of inertia and lethargy to actively do something virtuous in the real world, or acting that way during a difficult situation, is another. And what should that effort be that constitutes your highest, best self and the light you want to show in the world? What decision on how to act is best in that moment, and for the intermediate-term and long-term? This requires wisdom and compassion (and a bit more) to determine proper conduct and activity in the context of your present situation, the future situation, and especially your future self. A good question to ask yourself is whether you are aiming yourself in the direction you want to go?

As Christianity puts it, gaining control of yourself is the "toil of the soul." It is a toil, but it is a responsibility that comes along with being human, a sentient being with consciousness who can do great harm to others if not careful and in control. Additionally, other than your training to *be a certain way* (such Marine training to stay calm, cool and collected under fire) you must use the reminders of vows, commitments, duty, responsibility, ideals, aspirations, inspirations and so forth to motivate/push yourself to make the effort required to move out of your comfort zone and do what you wouldn't normally do. Vigor is required so that you *do* make an effort instead of just lying fallow due to laziness, inertia or indifference.

The commitment to personal effort is absolutely necessary to make you the better person you want to be because *you can't just think about it and have it happen*. You have to start upon the road of consistently performing virtues, act according to new values, and adopt changes in the way you live in order to change your fortune, your mental conditioning and behavior. All of us will take whatever conditioning we have adopted with us into another life, so the long-game is all about self-improvement. We have a choice of emphasizing what we do well so that we become even better at it, or cutting off and purifying errors so that we don't have those stains in the future. That is what cultivation is all about. Teaching this to the world elevates the

world.

Religions are supposed to help you do this. Spiritual training is supposed to help you do this. The self-improvement movement is supposed to help you do this. For instance, an exposure to ashrams, temples, churches, synagogues, mosques and so forth is supposed to lead you step-by-step to doing virtuous deeds, enable you to transform your *gunas* and *samskaras*, and finally help you become so perfect that you are qualified for the reward of the highest immortal bodies.

One principle is that you should match any self-improvement efforts with an emotional mindset that rewards you for your efforts, for your commitment to the process. When there is an emotional reward that accompanies your efforts (the highest viewpoint of thoughts and emotions you can generate at the moment) this will help you achieve any personal goal you set of transforming your Qi and psyche over time.

There are also religious texts or motivational stories you can read that can help motivate you and move your emotions. This is why Christian monastics read the lives of past saints, Hindus and Buddhists read the tales of past masters, Jews read about previous rabbis and the prophets of the Bible, and so on. Some stories can offer insight into the benefit of adopting certain behaviors or the wisdom of shedding impediments. Some provide motivation to become just like that. Some notify the saint that someone is thinking about them so that they might be prompted to intervene in a helpful way. The warning when reading such texts, however, is not to get excited about a past saint's example and go to ascetic extremes with unnecessary religious devotions that actually hurt your mission. Too many people try to outdo the behaviors of former saints and then hurt themselves in the process.

Listening to a certain type of music over and over again is another way to reprogram your baseline emotional state. It's also a method you can temporarily use to change your emotions, such as psyching you up to prepare for an event. You can also take your emotional reactions and turn them into their opposite, such as what professional athletes do before competitions. Through training and practice they learn how to turn nervousness into excitement. Soldiers are also trained so that they don't experience fear, which is emotionally debilitating, but just get busy preparing to do whatever activities are necessary for an engagement. Many types of athletes, such as martial artists, go through training protocols to decrease their threshold of fear reactivity that involves flinching, bracing or resisting force. All these things can be trained for talent is something that can be learned. Confidence, for instance, is something you already have that is covered over by habitual patterns of tension, and you can train yourself to dissolve these patterns.

Something I learned a long time ago is that to truly master a character

trait you must often master several others along with it. For instance, mastering courage or bravery also means being realistic and mastering caution (prudence or wisdom) to prevent recklessness. The pursuit of joy can lead to you imposing suffering on others if you are not aware of what you are doing, so it must be balanced with awareness, wisdom and compassion. How can you be happy if you are hurting people to experience it? The competitive nature of “I want to win” can also produce recklessness unless it is also matched with “I hate to lose.” The best stock traders and athletes I have met not only wanted to win or make money, but also “hated losing” as a counterbalance to the strong desire of just wanting to win. You need both of these feelings to excel.

To explain, in *Breakthrough Strategies of Wall Street Traders* a famous trader and coach, Raymond Barros, told me, “I think [people] need to do ... two things [to become successful trader]. It's going to take time to become wealthy and it's going to take effort. It's not going to just happen. As I said, trading is the most difficult occupation in the world so newbies have to come in with that expectation. When I do coaching and look at the questionnaire I like to give, if they don't pass that understanding requirement that they must be prepared and committed to putting in a fair bit of time then I'll knock them back. I won't take them as students.

“The other thing that might be surprising is that I won't take an individual on as a student if they don't have any pain about not making it. They have to hate not getting to where they want to go. For me it's not just wanting to get there, not just having to commit to get there, but what about failure?

“When it comes to motivation, what people don't realize is that motivation is comprised of four parts, not two. You've got the pleasure of success and the pain of not getting there, but there is also the other side of that. There is the pleasure of not achieving it. If I don't take any action then there are things I am not going to have to give up whereas if I'm going to become successful I'm going to have to put in time, effort, and money. Well, if I don't take any action then all of that time can be used for something that I might really enjoy. That's one thing.

“Then there is the pain of taking action as well. There's usually fear. To get from point A to point B you usually have three or four fears that are going to block you from doing it. If we don't do it then we won't have to confront these fears. So you need to look at the pain-pleasure equation from four angles and that is what is really critical.

“Going back to what I was saying, if someone doesn't hate not getting to where they want to go - where failure is not an option - then usually trading knocks them out. The path is just too difficult.

“Yes, they need both sides. They need to want to be successful and they need to hate to fail.

“... I think the hardest part is this. I've always been someone who hates to lose. Let me answer it in this way. When I was a kid I used to play badminton a lot. I played a lot of badminton from a very early age. From around ten or twelve years old I was playing against the adults. I was playing the junior championships in Hong Kong and of course I would initially get thrashed. I thought I was pretty good, but you're playing an adult and you're a ten-year-old child. I used to absolutely hate losing and my dad said to me that it's okay to hate losing but you need to learn from it. You just can't keep doing the same thing over and over again and not learn from your losses. I eventually became the youngest junior badminton champion in Hong Kong. I think I was about sixteen, fourteen, or fifteen at the time.

“I was lucky I had a role model that taught me the right lessons. The reason I think I succeeded was because of that. My mind can be very slow at learning when it comes to trading. It took me seven years but eventually I did learn. I had the good fortune to find someone who would give me the time and the means to learn what I needed to learn, but I had to contribute to it. I contributed with commitment and with the continuing effort to change whatever was not working so that to me is the story. I persist, I'm committed, and if something is not working then I will change. I may not find it straight away but I will continue changing until I find what I need.”

In other words, to change yourself you cannot just push yourself blindly in one direction but must cultivate attendant virtues or characteristics that help restrain you from extremes and yet keep you pointed in the direction of excellence without hubris. The initial principle is arousing the desire and willingness to change and to make an effort towards improvement or accomplishment. This involves breaking your past programming, breaking your boundaries and working to actively transform yourself in the direction of higher qualities. Everyone at one time or another gets possessed by stupid ideas or habits, and you need to learn how to break their control over you through detachment, awareness or mindfulness otherwise you will always be under the control of errant thoughts due to entrainment. How can you become a Buddha if you are like that?

You should not be afraid to live outside of the limits of your normal persona if you want to create a new one replete with virtues and excellences. It takes courage and energy to go in that direction, and that's one of the purposes of spiritual practice, which is to push us to become or want to become better human beings. You should have an even higher target, though, which is to be worthy enough to attain the higher transcendental bodies. That accomplishment is part effort since the process is Yoga on through to the end, but you have to earn the merit to deserve the attainment, to be entitled to the achievement. Possessing the requisite merit for the attainment means character virtues, behavioral virtues, good

mental processes, a healthy body, and a track record of commitment to helping others. No one will help you attain higher spiritual bodies, with the power over others, if you are not pure of mind and devoted to helping others.

You can arrive at a model of better behavior through reflection to determine what is right/optimal and then practice to master your new mental model. This is noble, but by imitation of what is already admirable or excellent is often much easier than having to figure things out from scratch. If you arrive at a conclusion of what is optimal or best through the hard road of experience, this is usually a bitter road of hurt you must travel in order to point yourself in the right direction. Why not avoid the bitterness by the emulation of “already successes”?

This is why people imitate Krishna, Jesus, Buddha and other spiritual heroes such as past masters and saints. They serve as exemplars who cultivators can honorably emulate because they had great characters and personalities, performed great deeds, and accomplished much for humanity in addition to succeeding at the task of attaining transcendence. You can personally use visualization practice, concentration, mindfulness, remembrance and immeasurable meditations to advance you in their direction, and thereby change your Qi/Prana deep enough to the extent that it becomes a characteristic of subsequent lives.

Cultivation is about enabling you to build the patterns you want in your consciousness and about helping you adjust your mental processing algorithms so that you can act in a certain way. The idealized stories of these saints, which of course whitewash their faults, serve as wonderful assists to guide human beings in the directions they need for better behavior. A big error to avoid, however, is once again misinterpreting them by trying to exceed what they themselves did in terms of poverty, humility, asceticism and so forth. Extremes can always harm your body and therefore your cultivation since it involves divinizing our body. In taking upon yourself the practice of Buddha mindfulness, you simply want to keep their virtues in mind.

Confucius said that whenever you see a worthy person you should emulate him. On the other hand, if you see someone unworthy, you should not jump to immediate criticism but turn within and examine your inner self to see if you have those same errors. The purpose of judging others is for self-correction, not for outwards criticism.

This is what self-policing, introspection, watchfulness, inspection, reflection and contemplation are all about, and why religions stress them through the path of practice. You have to put aside any arrogance that you are greater/better than others and don't need to change yourself if you are to attain many higher bodies. Only the elites within societies adopt such notions that they are better than others, and then set about oppressing

people with less resources or power.

Whenever you are with other people, however uneducated or coarse they might seem to you, you will surely be able to learn from them. We are all the original nature, we are all Shakti, so *they are also you*. Who knows what each one, which are parts of *you*, will ultimately turn out to be as time goes by? Who knows what they will eventually offer the world and universe from their own unique perspective? Each person has infinite qualities, and who knows which of those qualities will eventually be developed and shine for all?

If you are a monk or nun and don't succeed in enlightenment, this is still what you should be working on regardless – the task of polishing your mind and behavior, fixing your automatic tendencies and conditioning – because you are going to take these behaviors with you as your character traits and persona into subsequent lives, and they will determine your happiness and fortune.

(2) INTENSIFIED PREPARATORY YOGA PRACTICES

We have extensively discussed a bit of the foundational stage of cultivation that all genuine religions embody, which is a Stage of Cultivating Wisdom and Virtue. This serves the self and it also serves society, it serves the “I” and the “We.” As to the commonality within religions regarding intensified cultivation paths within them, which Buddhism calls the Stage of Preparatory Yoga or Stage of Intensified Yoga Practices, this point is emphasized in chapter 5, “Varieties of Foundational Cultivation Practice.”

I have written many books on meditation and cultivation practices such as *The Little Book of Meditation*, *Color Me Confucius* and *Nyasa Yoga*, and told you about many others that are mentioned in this book. You can find a few sample meditation techniques in chapter 6, “Meditation & Cultivation Practice.”

As for emptiness meditations, the several dozen in the appendix of *Buddha Yoga* show how to meditate with the objective of cultivating “emptiness” or empty mind. Many religions describe the universe as originating from a void in order that you cultivate emptiness meditation practice. When religions say you must give up (abolish) your own will, or offer everything away, or offer everything to God, or abandon personal desires, or give up your will (submit) to a spiritual path of obedience (within a genuine established tradition rather than some cultish sect) these are all alternative ways of getting at the basic principle of emptiness practice. To do this properly you need an excellent spiritual guide, an accomplished spiritual master.

Cultivation exercises/techniques for your Qi/Prana can be found anywhere, but I highly recommend *Nyasa Yoga* if you want to understand

the stages of the path and what all the various spiritual exercises are trying to accomplish, especially the secretive tantric practices within the yoga traditions, including Vajrayana Buddhism. Tantric practices don't just exist in Taoism, Tibetan Buddhism, Shingon, and the Indian yoga traditions such as Nath Yoga or the Aghori sects. Most religions have them but without an understanding of the principles within Nyasa Yoga you won't be able to identify them, or make your practice even better.

The problem with inner Qi/Prana work practices is that once you start working on them then devas will usually become involved and cause you trouble due to lack of their self-restraint, which is why masters want people to seek empowerments for permission to practice them. It's not that they are secretive or dangerous in any way. *Devas* are dangerous, which is the trouble to be feared. You can read the *Surangama Sutra* chapter in *Meditation Case Studies* which explains that they will cause you troubles and then just walk away, so masters want to make sure that the devas stay under control. An empowerment is a way to keep track of who is using such practices.

As a short reminder, Chinese Confucianism emphasizes mental watching of your thoughts which you practice via meditative introspection, but his successor Mencius said that we also need to cultivate our Qi vital energy. You need to cultivate *both* your vital energy and mental practice through emptiness meditation, empty mind, detachment, concentration, mental watching, etcetera. So you need to cultivate your consciousness along with your internal energy or Qi/Prana.

Spiritual cultivation is definitely a mind-body cultivation project in that you need to cultivate *both* your Qi vital energy and your inner mental state and mental processes no matter what path or religion you follow. There is a mutual dependency of your mind on your Qi/Prana and your Qi/Prana on your mind, so both must be cultivated on the spiritual trail.

If you work at becoming a more ethical virtuous individual, rather than remain just an impulsive animal that constantly gives into your desires and passions, this path of pursuing virtue will also start to purify your Qi or vital energy. Thus the path of virtue is a type of Qi practice as well as behavioral pathway too. *Sariras* are relics found in the bodies of saints after they die, and in rare cases they have also been found in the bodies of individuals known to be extremely kind, compassionate and virtuous because those traits also transformed their Qi. Also, after meeting a group of people you can often guess who is a banker or lawyer because that occupation has changed their Qi and thinking. Furthermore, you can often tell who went to college and those who didn't because the four years of mental work at college will have changed their Qi sufficiently for you to be able to sense a difference. It becomes less coarse or impure due to an emphasis on intellectual pursuits.

The same thing can be sensed with those who practice virtue.

Practicing virtue deeply will change your Qi and thus your energy, personality, behavior and body. Everyone will be able to tell, an example being the case of basketball coach John Wooden who lived the virtues he preached. Kareem Abdul-Jabbar spoke of him, “It is a rare experience to meet an individual who affirms the positive values you were introduced to in childhood, as I was by the nuns at school and by my father, who was a cop. You wonder if such values work, and then you encounter an individual like John Wooden and see the success he’s had as a person, not just in terms of wins and losses, but as a man trying to live his life with some balance and honor, and then you know it’s possible. He was the real thing. His example in my life continues to be bright and shining.”

Even the culture you grow up within will influence and change you. For instance, the Japanese culture is known for excessive rigidity and formality, which changes the Japanese people into conformists. In fact, since it is unnaturally too strict people often rebel from it through J-Pop and all sorts of other unorthodox, rebellious avenues in order to escape from its imprisonment.

If you work on your Qi sufficiently deeply it will become embedded with your personality traits as was demonstrated in *Buddha Yoga* where personality traits of organ donors were seen to be passed onto the organ recipients. This is because their Qi, impregnated with their personality characteristics, were passed along with the organ to the donor. You therefore have to be careful what type of values, virtues, emotions and traits you impress into your Qi/Prana from consistent worldly and cultivation behaviors. What types of hormones, due to your thoughts and behaviors, are you satiating your body with all the time, thus contributing to your personality traits? This is why you must always do things with the highest ethics according to your highest, most ideal self. What characteristics, traits, habit energies or emotional tones do you want impressed upon your Qi that is your soul body? What personality or character trait do you want passed onto a subsequent life?

Buddhism emphasizes emptiness meditation and witnessing meditation practice but also inner energy work via *anapana*, the white skeleton visualization method, mantra recitation, concentration practice, pranayama and several other practice techniques. With the white skeleton visualization, the hundreds of bones within the body are imagined to be washed clean with a bright shining Qi, as well as the muscles and viscera, and then threaded together as a single unified whole. Buddhism was born within an India that was populated by hundreds of different cultivation practices during Shakyamuni’s day, and Shakyamuni surveyed all these techniques before introducing a limited few to his followers.

Buddhism’s mantra practices, when used to move your Qi according to a rhythm, become Mantrayana practice that belongs to the category of inner

energy work. Vajrayana Buddhism, the Buddhist Esoteric school found in Japan and Tibet, emphasizes meditation, mantrayana, pranayama, yoga and various internal Qi practices as well. The basis of these practices is Qi work, also known as inner energy work or breath work. Yoga contains a vast set of techniques for cultivating your body and Qi/Prana along with morality teachings thrown into the mix. Taoism, like Indian yoga, contains an entire compendium of practices too numerous to go into, but which work on transforming your Qi energy. Martial arts sometimes uses visualization and breathing practices in conjunction with physical movement training. Christianity has prayer recitation, hymns that are sung, and the injunction to watch your thoughts and improve your behavior. Thus it has inner energy work practices as well as mental practices too.

And so on it goes ... Islam, Judaism, Sikhism, Jainism, Shintoism and the other great religions all have similar spiritual techniques. They have techniques for you to cultivate your thought-stream (mind or consciousness), behavior or good deeds, and inner vital energy or Q/Prana. This is the necessary triumvirate. There are so many types of practices that work on your mind and especially your Qi.

Each of these many spiritual traditions has developed various systems of intensified practice for any individuals who want to totally dedicate themselves to a spiritual life, which doesn't just involve Qi and your mind but also character building and active engagement with the world through helpful efforts. Most of them even developed monastic systems for men and women who join a fraternity of like-minded monks and nuns.

For instance, Buddhism and Jainism developed monastic systems. Christianity also developed monastic systems that produce enlightened adepts such as the Benedictines, Trappists, Cistercians, etc. and there are also monastic lineages within the Eastern Orthodox and other churches. Islam developed Sufism, which is devoted to its esoteric path of intensified practices. As an antidote to the overly scholastic mental path of Torah/Talmud study Judaism developed Hasidism, with its emphasis on living prayer that moves your Qi and devotional activities. Taoism developed its own monastic system within China while many Hindus and Yoga sects within India developed their own ascetic and monastic traditions too. An inner ascetic path devoted to spiritual cultivation that involves a fraternal brotherhood or sisterhood is found in nearly every genuine religion.

Within each of these systems, and especially the monastic systems, is a path of intensified yoga practices to help individuals cultivate their mind, mental processing skills, mindset or perspective. It helps them cultivate wisdom and judgment, their personality and character, their deeds and behavior. It should, but doesn't always do a good job of helping them cultivate their body health and physical abilities, inner Qi energy, and so

forth so that they can attain the deva body while alive and then continue cultivating onwards from there while their human body remains below.

The accomplishment of the deva body commences the Stage of True Cultivation practice where you use the deva body and then start cultivating to attain the Causal and then Supra-Causal and Immanence bodies. In Japanese Shinto terms all the new Arhats who attain the deva body become *ikigami*, which means a living human *kami*, a living *kami* in the earthly world. In other traditions the relevant word used is saint, sage, sadguru, master and so on.

All the major religions have general spiritual practices that help the general public accomplish the task of spiritual cultivation unbeknownst to them. This is because people normally don't want to put any effort into intensified practices and so religions, which have been shaped by successive generations of past enlightened masters, have developed ways to get people to work on their inner Qi body and cultivate their mind and behavior to rise above the level of their animal nature.

On the public level religions offer the opportunity for devotion and reverence through prayer and ritual that will change the Qi/Prana of participants. This is perfect for the common people who don't want to cultivate too much. Their participation, without their knowledge of the process, helps them purify the integrity of their inner subtle body so that their bodies function better while they are alive (due to better Qi flow) and they do not perish too quickly in the afterlife. The main activity during most religious ceremonies is reverence and devotion, which cause your Yang Qi to arise.

An individual who comes to mind during this discussion is therefore Hanuman, the intelligent monkey king of the Indian *Ramayama* Epic (who thus represents our animal nature). Animals are governed by sexual desire and violent instincts, but Hanuman practiced *brahmacharya* (celibacy) and was known for his ardent devotion to Rama even though Rama was a human and Hanuman was a monkey. His celibacy and devotion to Rama represent the bhakti yoga path of cultivation that the animal, man (mankind), can follow as a road of spiritual cultivation. Hanuman represents animals becoming human, and was portrayed as someone we should emulate because he employed a method of cultivation that changes our Qi and nature.

Just the rhythm alone or the sound of certain prayers recited over and over again can set up a resonance within the body that helps to move your Qi. Thus, mantra recitation can help open up your Qi channels and transform your Qi to create the independent spirit body by purifying it and strengthening it. This is why people report a great inner delight or blessedness from reciting certain prayers. Certain spiritual hymns, chants or songs (or musical narrations and devotional singing such as the *kirtans* of

India or *dhiker* of the Sufis) can open up your channels, or move your Qi so that afterwards you feel peaceful internally. For instance, the Sufis explain that through the practice of *dhiker* you can attain the exalted stations that will remove the veils standing between you and the Supreme, including the Station of Closeness to Allah. Youtube has many videos of “Zikr Nasqhbandi” that show the *dhiker* chanting technique from the Sufi Nasqhbandi lineage. Through the practice you will purify the Qi and Qi channels of your subtle body. They therefore explain that faithful application or devotion to such practice will temper the influence of the lower elements of the human nature.

This is also why many high masses in Christianity have the prayers sung, which is to move the Qi of audience members so that it transforms their bodies. Many monks sing hymns in church services, which is another mantrayana technique like *dhiker* (*zikr*). In addition, if a ceremony stimulates your emotions, which moves your Qi, and the sounds also move your Qi, this is a superior form of Qi transformation achieved through a religious practice. It is one of the benefits of attending properly constructed high masses or Orthodox masses in Christianity.

Unfortunately, communities have lost this understanding as have many priests and other religious functionaries. They think they are performing a simple ceremony when the oldest ceremonies were actually designed as a process of Qi/Prana transformation when performed properly. If the music moves you during a religious service, for instance, this is a form of Qi transformation. The priests and congregation, if they know how to participate correctly with their hearts and minds, can all benefit from attending well-designed rituals and ceremonies even if audience members do not belong to those traditions or congregations.

When monks and nuns in monasteries perform such services day after day, or when adherents attend *kirtans* and sing along in a way that moves their Qi/Prana and emotions, this is a definite form of Qi transformation. To ordinary people it usually just looks like a colossal waste of time since they don't know the benefits of the process going on. And yet if you know this secret and attend such common services with a mind of reverence - or letting yourself feel strong positive emotions such as joy, love, compassion, or transcendence - and also let yourself be spiritually lifted by the music or incense or hymns and so on, you can also receive the benefits of some degree of Qi transformation at that time. The purpose of Christianity is to produce *Homo Deus*, the spirit body (deva body) attainment whilst alive, and attendance of services will help you achieve that goal if they are conducted correctly. This is an attainment that many Christian monks and nuns have achieved, and in Christianity the process is called *theosis*. In fact, the purpose of any religious services of any religion are to help you become *Homo Deus*, a man or woman with the deva body attainment and higher, but most

services are constructed improperly to produce for you the most progress in this direction.

It is easy to encounter services with this highest intent in the Russian, Serbian, Armenian, Romanian, Ukrainian, Bulgarian, Coptic, Syriac, and Greek Orthodox Churches. In fact, many of the previous elders within such traditions became enlightened (many present elders are enlightened too), and they or their deva students are even today using their spiritual bodies during their services to help practitioners. This is often why people feel deeply moved or affected during Christian mass. Naturally the same thing goes on for Hasidic Jewish services, Hindu ceremonies, Sikh ceremonies, Jain ceremonies, Buddhist ceremonies and Islamic prayer meetings of the right type too. Never think that such things are useless. Their efficacy in transforming/helping people depends upon how hard you work at them and who is invisibly officiating behind the scenes to help purify the Qi/Prana of audience participants.

Thoughts can move your Qi, but emotions can do it better. If you use this approach, the problem is guiding you to practice arousing the right emotions to the proper degree to help transform your Qi, but not letting you get caught up in any sort of excess that causes trouble in the regular world. Only those ensconced safely within a religious tradition can become a “Fool for Christ,” “drunken Sufi,” “Krishna consciousness” *bhakti* devotee, “crazy monk,” Indian *mast*, or someone else continuously lost in inner rapture and still be taken care of as they progress through such roads of transformation. These are the individuals who follow a *bhakti* path of reverence, whereas most spiritual adherents nowadays follow a path of Yoga or Jnana (wisdom).

Visualization can move your Qi, but reciting sounds can do it better, and better than reciting sounds is reciting rhythmical sounds that can produce a steady-state reverberating resonance within you. This will definitely transform your Qi/Prana as long as you continue such practice, which is often achieved through mantra/prayer recitation, chanting of hymns, spiritual singing and so forth. *Reciting rhythmical reverberatory sounds + positive emotions + visualization efforts + feeling the sensations in body locations* is even better as a cultivation method. Of course you can also eliminate any of these factors according to circumstances, such as excluding the mental images when reciting certain types of prayers. In any case, when you finally start moving your Qi/Prana substantially while enjoying a positive emotional state this is often called “communion with God” in various religions.

All these spiritual methods, and many others, have been developed based on just a few basic principles. Once you understand this principle of moving your Qi/Prana in a positive way by stacking methods, and hold onto that transformational state for as long as possible each day, you can use that technique to make cultivation progress of purifying your inner Qi

body. If you hold onto a certain emotional state then you are also transforming your personality too, just as a piece of meat soaking in a sauce will pick up the flavor based on how long it soaks.

Naturally these results of Qi transformation can be accomplished by mantra recitation, whose sounds are sometimes specifically chosen with vibratory objectives in mind. Some sounds vibrate the Qi in certain areas of your body very effectively, such as “Ohm” being easily felt in the head while ”Ah” is easily felt in the chest, thus moving the Qi/Prana in those regions.

What would be really wonderful is if someone took popular simple syllable mantras, which can be recited while you are concentrating on body part segments, and matched them with other additions that improved the sadhana’s ability to transform your Qi/Prana. Some sample mantras:

- Om (can be felt in the head and chest as a single unit or in the entire body), Ram (can be felt within the entire body and especially within the chest region)
- Ram-Vam (used in a dualistic partitioning of left-right side or top-bottom of body); Ah-Lah (Allah from Islam) can be felt in a dualistic top-bottom partitioning
- Ohm-Ah-Hung, Ohm-Aum-Hum, Hreem-Shreem-Kleem, Hreem-Kleem-Shreem (can be recited according to a tripartite partitioning of the body into the three regions of the head and arms, chest and arms, and lower abdomen to legs)
- Om-Ah-Ra-Tah, Om-Ah-Vah-Lah, Jai-Ram Sri-Ram (used in a four part partitioning of the body)
- Om-Ah-Vah-Lah-Hum, Om-Mani-Bey-Me-Hon (sounds recited according to a five part body partitioning scheme that corresponds to the five Prana of Hinduism and their location within the body)
- Ahh-Szzz-Hoo-Shoo-Foo-Ssss (corresponding to the Taoist six organ sounds for the internal organs of the heart, lungs, stomach, liver, triple warmer and kidneys)

Such mantras – and many more are possible – can be recited while focusing on the sounds and vibrations they make within body segments AND while also feeling particular emotional states and/or holding onto particular visualizations or grabbing those areas to help improve their efficacy. Many variations on this can be tried. You can even sing mantras if done correctly, an example being Gregorian chants, *kirtans*, and *dhikar* techniques. A common practice is to recite (or sing as just explained) the seed *bijas* (sounds) on various charka locations, which are sections of your body, in order to stimulate the Qi/Prana in those regions. When you do

this all sorts of phenomena will occur.

In reciting prayers the emphasis does not have to be just a mental concentration on the meaning of the prayer or emotion it raises. The rhythm of recitation, its effect on your breathing which moves your internal Qi/Prana, and so forth will all work together on transforming your Qi.

By watching some Youtube videos you can listen to how masters recite some of these simple mantras, or the famous Christian Jesus Prayer of the Heart, and sometimes feel the Qi/Prana moving within you:

“Neem Karoli Baba Chanting Ram Nam”

“Anandamayi Mai: Jai Ram Sri Ram Jai Ram Kirtan”

“Pray 100 Jesus Prayers with Elder Poryphrios”

“The Jesus Prayer Said by Orthodox Saints and Elders”

There are mantras specifically constructed to help move your Qi/Prana, such as this famous “kundalini raising” mantra from India that makes use of the Yam, Ram, Lam, Sham and Vam sounds that are traditionally associated with chakra locations within the body:

Aim Hreem Kleem Shreem Yam Ram Lam Sham Dam Vam Tam.

Other mantras with interesting sounds that set up rhythmical movements of your internal Qi to produce purifying transformations – and I’m just picking out a random few out of thousands attended to by enlightened spiritual masters – are the following:

Aim Hreem Hamsah Soham Swaha

Yo Hah Mah Tah Lah Rah Hum (Mount Lao, China)

Mah Lah Rah Tah Hum (Mount Lu, China)

Om Ah Vah Lah Hah Mah Tah Rah Zah Mah Tah Hah (Taoism)

Om Ah Rah Pah Tah Rah Sah Hah Fah Lah Rah Hung (Taoism)

Om Ah Hung Lah Rah Tah Soh (During Sexual Cultivation)

Om Ah Rah Pah Sah Mah Tah Hah Lah Rah Mah Tah Hah Sah Tah

Lah Rah Mah Tah Hah Sah Lah Rah Hum (Shinto)

Om Ah Hung Hah Hung Om Hah Soha (Tenrikyo)

Rah Mah Tah Sah Lah Hah Hum (Wicca)

Om Ah Tah Rah Lah Mah Tah Hah Sah Rah Lah Mah Tah Hah Lah

Soha (Zoroastrianism)

Om Ah Lah Rah Hah Sah Mah Tah Lah Rah Hah Soha (Judaism)

Om Ah Vah Lah Hum Ah (Orthodox Judaism)

Om Ah Hung (Vajrayana)

Om Aum Hum (all three syllables are derivatives of the Om sound)

If you recite the sounds of such mantras in different sections of your body while simultaneously feeling (holding onto) various emotions - such as the six virtues identified by Seligman, the immeasurable emotions of Buddhism (joy, compassion, loving kindness, equanimity/emptiness), or other positive emotions - and/or by holding the image of a spiritual great who inspired you, then your Qi will transform in these directions.

You can transform yourself in any direction you want, just as you can choose any Buddha vow you want. You are free to strive for any aspiration you want in the universe. You don't even need to restrict yourself to one, for just as you are a plurality of living sub-personalities or programs for different functions in life (each of which is a representation of you but focused in a certain direction that is functionally specialized), all of them can be optimized to excellence. You can become a plurality of personalities (or think of it as capabilities) to execute many different vows in the universe and link them into a unity.

Every time you perform a different function you can be an entirely different personality in order to execute that function with excellence. When a function on your part calls for an entirely different approach than your normal personality or ways of doing things - a different you that varies from your baseline - to do it properly it is proper to learn how to be an entirely different you like a suit of actor's clothes you put on to do a part/role. You do not always have to cling to your old self, your old identity, your old Qi and habits or mindset or other patterns if you have to do something new or different or important. You should specialize how you optimally behave and function in regards to different functions, goals or circumstances.

The four immeasurables of Buddhism (joy, kindness, compassion, equanimity) are commonly used for such sorts of practice within Buddhism, so for instance you are taught to imagine breathing out compassion onto yourself and others, or projecting light or energy into the world or on others, or you imagine being a certain Buddha with certain powers and personality characteristics. And of course, there are many different characteristics/attributes you can practice mastering.

One could even create a mantra for courage, namely calmness and confidence, if it raised your Yang Qi in the right way. If you then recited it while feeling the emotions of calmness, confidence, strength, persistence, fearlessness, and energy - not being intimidated or afraid to face a situation or the unknown - and perhaps visualized someone truly courageous during your recitation (since that mental image would help you raise the emotion of courage inside you), this would be another way of cultivating courage too.

Because we are the original nature, most of us have great inner confidence but it is covered over by habits and patterns of tension that we

need to strip away. How to eliminate these false layers and be our pure and confident original nature that fears nothing, rather than trying to add confidence on top of garbage, is yet another type of cultivation technique. As another instance, the *Raag Aasaa*, from Sikh music, is designed to evoke strong emotions of inspiration and courage so that you find the strength within you to achieve success even though difficult, and develop a determination where failure is not an option. There are all sorts of cultivation techniques to help you develop courage and confidence as a personality trait, and you just have to find them and start consistently practicing. You can remake yourself into anything you want.

In music theory, songs/sounds have been classified as evoking certain emotions that you can also arouse while reciting mantras, prayers, hymns or singing songs. Music and these other activities can be used to regulate the mind by bringing it into a more harmonious state. For instance, in Indian culture a *raga* is a set of rules on how to build a melody to ignite a certain mood in the reciter and listeners, and thus can be used to create hymns and songs that assist in spiritual cultivation. There are Hindu devotional songs, such as *bhajans*, that evoke love for a deity and since love is one of the emotions that generates Yang Qi, singing *bhajans* helps to calm, purify and transform your emotions. Thus it is said that some Hindus achieved *Moksha* through devotional music to God. In other words, some people used music as a portion of their cultivation to sufficiently move, transform, purify their Qi/Prana to achieve the deva body. Of course, for most people this usage belongs to the Stage of Wisdom and Virtue Provisioning rather than the Stage of Intensified Practices.

Nevertheless, the point must be made that singing various hymns can move your Qi/Prana, and thus singing qualifies as a spiritual practice in certain circumstances. As just a few instances, uplifting music that transforms your Qi/Prana includes hymns and songs like the “Agni Parthene,” Bulgarian “Megaloschemos,” Gregorian chants, the “Hallelujah Chorus” in Handel’s *Messiah*, Schubert’s “Ave Maria,” “Ode to Joy” and so forth where you end up regulating, harmonizing, circulating or transforming the Qi/Prana of your body by listening, singing or somehow otherwise participating in the music. In singing or reciting mantras while holding onto deep emotions you will also impress your Qi/Prana with those emotions to help change your personality and fortune in those directions.

Some of the musically evoked emotions catalogued by musicology and related keywords include the following:

- Wonder – feeling of amazement and fascination, elation, magical, dazzled, moved, reverence
- Transcendence – feeling of inspiration, thrills, spiritual gloriousness, beyond the earthly, forgetting the body and self

ARHAT YOGA

- Peacefulness – calmness, serenity, meditateness, quiet, harmonious, relaxed, soothed, tranquil, steady
- Nostalgia – feeling sentimental, dreamy, melancholic, fondness, pleasant remembrances
- Tenderness – affectionate, gentleness, kindness, tender, soft, in love
- Power/Energy – feeling strong, heroic, courageous, triumphant, energetic, fiery, pumped up
- Defiance - indignant
- Joy (Joyful activation) – joyful, feels like dancing, bouncy feeling, animated, amused, stimulated

It is too bad that the emotion of hope (faith, optimism, positive expectation, aspiration) was not a category although some might match this with courage and thus energy. Other feelings – amusement, erotic or desirous, sadness, tenseness or fear, dreaminess, etcetera – have also been catalogued by U.C. Berkeley scientists as provokable by music. The point is that music can evoke strong emotions, so it can be used for cultivation efforts in various ways. For instance, upon hearing upbeat music many people instinctively try to coordinate their movements with its rhythm to hit its beat. Because it can change their emotions, people play music when they want to evoke special moods in themselves or change their emotions. In other words, you can manage your emotions by playing appropriate music. In cultivation we are taught to manage our emotional mind, or uncontrolled instinctual brain, with our wisdom mind. The methods include expedients such as this.

Americans might play John Denver's "Country Road" to evoke nostalgia, George Harrison's "My Sweet Lord" to evoke the sense of longing, the theme song from the movie "Rocky" to feel energy and inspiration, and so on. These songs are just indicative of those that evoke emotions to help you manage your mood. Music can give you chills, it can give you energy, it can cause you to have tears. It can move you to having a peak emotional experience just as exposure to art can sometimes provoke a similar response. Basketball star Kobe Bryant, for instance, used to listen to the icy chilling *Halloween* movie theme song to get into the zone and tap his killer instinct before every basketball game.

If you pay attention, you can discern that some rituals or religious ceremonies (such as Christian masses) are designed to evoke such feelings within us due to the sights, sounds, and smells that surround us at that time. Even the clothing of the religious officiators, their movements, the incense burned, the songs/hymns sung and prayers recited and order of events are designed to take us to a different mental state that moves our emotions and transforms our Qi. The whole idea is to evoke within us, or give us,

emotional energy of a certain type to help us transform our emotions and Qi.

A Shinto ceremony, Shingon ceremony, high Latin mass, Brahman fire ceremony, or Zoroastrian fire ceremony conducted by a *mobed* or *dastur* (high priest) are all designed to evoke within you a certain mindset and emotions that provoke Qi responses within your body. This is one reason Confucius emphasized rites to help regulate people and society, but of course there is a limit to what can be achieved by rites and ceremonies. Confucius did say, however, that if the rites were not in line with propriety then this was a reflection of chaos in society. All things have to be done with propriety in mind. Confucian “rites” were not just ceremonies because the word “rite” or “ritual” represented the expected behaviors (etiquette, propriety and social norms) between people and our responsibilities in how to act and behave with our greater community.

Now, if you were to recite a prayer in tune with your breathing, and concentrate on its meaning that also aroused a certain emotional state that you could maintain during the prayer, and if the actual words of the prayer not only had the meaning of generating a particular emotional/mental state but used words *whose sounds also helped to rhythmically resonate your body cavity* and evoke the response of stimulating your Qi, then this would not be a great prayer but a fantastic prayer. To pray such unceasingly would then be an intensified practice cultivation method. And if such a prayer led to the state of no-thought or silence/internal peace where the incessant talk within the mind was silenced, this would be excellent too.

In the best of worlds you want the prayer as a whole to have a rhythm that moves your Qi. You want the words within it to evoke both a meaning and emotional response, and in the best of worlds you want the sound of the words to be like mantra syllables that resonate/push/vibrate your Qi. The basic foundation is that you want a prayer to evoke emotions in tune with its meaning so that the Qi of that emotion is automatically aroused when you recite it, that particular emotion purifies your Qi, and you want to be able to recite it without distraction.

Reciting such prayers is a superior type of spiritual cultivation. Hesychasts use this type of practice and mantra reciters use this. Some people recite millions of prayers and mantras to achieve the Tao since this will quiet their mind, attract higher beings to work on their Qi, and the sounds themselves will also help to transform their Qi. Now you know a superior way to conduct yourself during such practices. Mantra recitation is not just about reciting a sound and hoping that a particular family of Buddhas will extend its help to you. If you recite a mantra while vibrating (moving) the Qi within your body and holding onto an emotion that provokes your Qi into moving or just purifies your Qi (such as compassion, kindness, etcetera), your practice becomes a million times more effective.

Plus, the additional benefit is that you can use this to transform your personality and behavior. The goal is not just to transform/purify your Qi/Prana but to change your personality and behavior so that it is of more benefit to yourself and others.

Just as with organ transplants where the Qi of the donor will influence you, this type of mantra work will really change you too. If you ever wanted to become a better athlete you would model yourself on professional winners and superstars just as actors models themselves on selected individuals to play character roles. You can choose the way you want to become in life, and what you want to master in terms of mental states and ways of being despite the sufferings of life. You can even change your baseline mental state, reshaping in certain directions, through the devotion of spiritual cultivation.

Through intensified practices of all sorts one can learn to do amazing things. As an example, Demosthenes trained to correct his speech impediment by talking with pebbles in his mouth, and Plutarch also had “an inarticulate and stammering pronunciation” that he got rid of by speaking with pebbles in his mouth. You can even train your voice to become so strong that it can penetrate other bodies, such as with polyphonic overtone singing (Tuvan throat singing). You can train your voice control through yodeling, kulning (ancient Swedish herdingcall), the Anthroposophy speech method of eurythmy, cold calling, and other techniques that teach you how to alter its pitch, tone, frequency and message to produce results in the world. There are all sorts of ways to master the sounds coming out of your mouth.

I actually once met a Russian woman with a very attractive voice who told me it was because when she lived in Russia she was part of a group of young women who were specifically trained by the KGB to talk seductively. You can also learn how to “speak correctly” and strengthen your voice by following the instructions of speech pathologist Mort Cooper, author of *Change Your Voice, Change Your Life*, and *Stop Committing Voice Suicide*. Cooper’s premise is that the voice should appear up in the face around the lips and nose in an area called “the mask.” The idea of talking through the mask or into the mask means that you are talking around the lips and nose where great voices come from. If you practice doing this then of course it is like *intensified practices* for your speaking skills rather than spiritual yoga.

Similarly, you can master various forms of singing, such as opera or the Gregorian chants of Christianity, in order to learn how to move your own emotions and the emotions of others through sound. You’llalso learn how to move sound energy, and thus Qi, within you by practicing these arts. There are all sorts of ways to master sounds and speaking, just as can be done for thinking, that fall into the category of intensified practices for the voice. They have nothing to do with spiritual cultivation, but are just

examples of how you can go deeply into any activity *with intensified practices* to produce a certain exceptional result that requires study and practice.

We're into this discussion because one aspect of spiritual cultivation is that religions normally turn chants, songs, prayers and mantras into forms of cultivation because the sounds and emotions will move your Qi, but people normally don't know this is one of their hidden purposes. In fact, when a group of Benedictine monks stopped singing their regular set of Gregorian chants, which normally set up inner harmonics within the body when sung, they became ill and depressed from the deficiency. Singing Gregorian chants is a form of inner energy practice, and when they skipped the practice they removed the means they were using to move their Qi/Prana.

Of course, it is not just the sounds of the mantra or prayer or chant that is important. Sometimes it is the meaning. For example, here is how Elder Ephraim of Katounakia explained you should recite the Jesus Prayer, which is a method for practicing concentration and ignoring distractions. When you recite this prayer over and over again, of course higher heavenly beings will come and help transform your Qi, which is the main benefit of the practice. Furthermore, in the advanced stages of the Twelve Year kundalini transformation period you will receive all sorts of troubles from devas masquerading as devils as recounted here and in the *Surangama Sutra*, and reciting the prayer can help:

“Prayer is a struggle. It strengthens the fight of the faithful against the devil but it is itself also a painful and bloody struggle. All our effort is to concentrate our nous on the words of the Jesus Prayer.

“We should make our nous deaf and mute to any other thought, either good or bad, that evil brings us. We should not listen to the thoughts that come from outside or answer them. We need to despise them completely and not converse with them. Thus we should seek in every way the complete muteness of our nous because only with this action can we keep our soul in calmness so that the Jesus Prayer can act effectively.

“It is known that the thoughts are led from the mind into the heart and disturb it. The troubled mind also troubles the heart. Just as the wind raises the waves of the sea, so the wind of thoughts raises waves in the soul. Attentiveness is necessary for prayer. That is why the Fathers talk about prayer in combination with watchfulness. Watchfulness keeps the nous in constant alertness and readiness and prayer brings the divine grace...

“The Holy Fathers teach that even if man is not always under the dominion of the demons he is, however, under their influence and persistent hostility. They continually turn around the soul and try, by all means, to make the faithful sin, either through the senses (when the object is near) or through the imagination (when the person or object is far away) or through the movements of the flesh. For the whole of man, who

consists of soul and body, receives the influence of Satan and gets captured by him. ...

“Imagination is the most cunning weapon of Satan; imagining the past and imagining the future; imagining good works, imagining bad ones. Various thoughts come and preoccupy the nous, so that it ceases to meditate on the name of Jesus. He tries to make man not to show interest in God and express his love. Primarily he coaxes him to call to mind the various faults he has committed in his former and recent life. ...

“Events that happened many years ago which he felt pleasure for, being forgotten in the meantime, appear now in all their intensity and range. He may even reach the point of disgust and despair.

“Blasphemous thoughts come upon the athlete of prayer ... incredulity about the great matters of faith, like the divinity of Christ and the purity of the Most Holy Mother of God and the Saints, etc. Many times these thoughts are expressed and verbalized during prayer, without the wrestler of this struggle knowing it or wanting it. ...

“Blasphemous thoughts must be opposed with contempt. Only in this way do they disappear. Blasphemous thoughts are inspired by the devil they are not ours. Here we can affirm that the Lord's word has validity: ‘You cannot serve God and mammon,’ (Matt. 6:24) that is, the nous cannot do two things simultaneously. It cannot be enchanted by the sweetest nectar of the Jesus Prayer on the one hand and on the other hand, while it is praying, doubt the power of prayer or dogmatic truths. The latter is the attack of the devil. Contempt then is needed and if the blasphemous thought continually attacks us, it needs confession to the spiritual father. Then it disappears immediately. Moreover, the same happens with persistent thoughts. A thought that persists, especially during prayer, needs to be confessed. Thus the devil who hides under it immediately disappears, like the snake when we lift up the stone...

“The athlete of prayer must not let himself be shaken. He must oppose imagination with the continuous invocation of the name of Jesus, and he must be concentrated within the words of the Jesus Prayer. He must stand bravely in the conciseness of the Jesus Prayer. He must not think of anything during prayer, either of wrong or even good works...

“Many times the devil, he continued, appears and talks to the athlete of prayer. He challenges him and tries to open a dialogue with him. Sometimes he blames the athlete, sometimes he praises him, sometimes he scoffs at him, sometimes he interprets certain acts wrongly. The inexperienced in this spiritual contest start talking with the devil and answer his questions and his assaults. However, this is an error, especially for the beginners, because the inexperienced in these situations are defeated even if it seems that the devil was put to flight by their replies. Confusion and fear remain. And later, when they recall this scene and all that was said, they will be shaken and

troubled. The Fathers recommend that those who do not have the experience and the necessary strength should not answer. They must be indifferent to the devil and despise him. They must do the same in the war against their thoughts. Thus contempt against the devil and perseverance in the Jesus Prayer are needed. ...”³⁴

Elder Aimilianos of Simonopetra also warned, “See, in other words, if when you pray your mind is distracted and cut into pieces by desires, thoughts, passions, or by any other foreign element that is not spiritual or immaterial. If there is something that is able to divide our mind and cut it into pieces, this means that we do not love God, for the love of God is like a strong, surrounding wall that protects us and prevents anything from outside entering our inner, spiritual world.”³⁵

Another principle that should be added to all cultivation routines is exercise, specifically stretching exercises like yoga. The Buddhist monks in China became weak and emaciated due to a lack of exercise, which is why the first Zen master Bodhidharma taught them tendon stretches. The *Yi Jin Jing* tendon exercises became the foundation for Shaolin kung-fu, which is now world famous. In Zen practice you often do walking meditation after sitting practice in order to smoothen your Qi too. The purpose is to have you *feel all the lived flesh of your body*, all its vital energy (Qi/Prana) as a single unit because you want your Qi to be felt everywhere, which is a sign of excellent Qi transformation. You therefore use walking exercise to harmonize all the energy released during sitting practice. You try to balance it all over your body everywhere to help transform your body.

Walking meditation can be a type of Qi exercise rather than just physical or mental emptiness exercise if you know how to do it correctly. The same goes for yoga and martial arts, which can be tools for developing your human potential if you approach them correctly. If you practice yoga or the martial arts while attempting to simultaneously cultivate your vital energy (Qi/Prana) then you are on the right track to physical cultivation.

I really suggest that spiritual adherents work on stretching the muscles in their pelvic region so that they can eventually do leg splits. It helps if they start doing this when young, perhaps with their parents’ encouragement, so that the flexibility gains remain for life. The pelvis is the region separating the top half of the body from the bottom half, and it is particularly difficult for energy to travel from the upper body through the hips to the lower half of the body reaching the feet. Martial arts exercises are designed to unite the

³⁴ Elder Ephraim of Katounakia, “Prayer is a Painful and Bloody Struggle,” accessed August 3, 2019, <http://www.orthodox.net/articles/prayer-is-a-painful-and-bloody-struggle-by-elder-ephraim-of-katounakia.doc..>

³⁵ Elder Aimilianos of Simonopetra, *The Mystical Marriage* (Newrome Press, Columbia: Missouri, 2018), p. 4.

upper and lower body because then you can generate whole-body power. Martial arts body alignments, together with deep abdominal breathing exercises, are specifically designed to connect the lower body to the waist and upper limbs so that the whole body can be sensed and felt as one single unit. You can even see a division between the two separated halves in thermographic images of the human body where the hips mark a clear delineation between the upper and lower halves of the body. There is a temperature drop in this region indicating that the muscles in the pelvis are rarely opened.

This is also the region of the body where we are told to master restraint through control, which then creates very subtle psychological energy blockages. The pelvis/waist is traditionally an area of control and surrender. Not only do we have the structural difficulties of exercising all the pelvic muscles for better Qi and blood flow, but on top of that we have been constantly taught for many lives to restrain with discipline (hold back) our piss, shit, farting and sex, which flow through this region. Therefore there are subtle psychological blockages/barriers affecting the energy flow through this region that have run through many lives. This is why I recommend dancing, yoga, Pilates, Ginastica Natural, stretching, martial arts and other exercises not just for the body in general but with a focus to particularly opening up the waist region and pelvis, and afterwards the legs and feet. You can add this emphasis to the previous discussion on movement exercises.

A note related to the topic of the pelvis has to do with celibacy, which is an issue of preventing energy loss on the road of spiritual cultivation. Qi energy is needed to transform your Qi channels within your subtle body. In particular, without sufficient Qi you cannot open up the Qi routes within your flesh. When that energy it is lost through sexual leakage this will therefore hamper progress in your practice. Of course, this is for men who ejaculate too much because when women orgasm they can recover energy quickly, so this warning is primarily for men. Now, the denial of carnal issues and lust is also good training for the mind and willpower. How do you help yourself with this issue? Decreasing one's food or becoming vegetarian helps to decrease sexual desire but the problem always remains, and keeping busy with other activities is one way to help cope with it.

In the Army, Navy and Air Force it is common for generals to keep the troops constantly busy doing things, even if they are mindless activities, because busyness will keep the soldiers occupied and prevent troubles and various sorts of mischief-making. The same principle holds for monks and nuns in monasteries, which is why you need to keep them on a regular routine of busy activities. It is not that there is anything wrong with sex and energy loss, although losing too much Qi energy leads to health issues. The problem is that without that energy you will not be able to sufficiently

circulate your Qi to produce spiritual transformations. You will lack the necessary Qi power required to open up your Qi channels.

As stated, for an ordinary person who is not a spiritual cultivator the stage of intensified practices refers to going deep into mastering some topic or skill such as medicine, archery, painting, mathematics, yoga, copywriting, gardening, salesmanship, movie directing, skateboarding, tap dancing and so forth. Intensified practices entail deeply practicing what you have studied to truly master those subjects and learn them fully. Most people will *not* succeed in achieving the deva body attainment during this life, so they should also be working on developing other useful skills rather than solely working on spiritual cultivation. Even if you don't succeed in the Tao you should be developing skills during this life that are careers, livelihoods or activities that can help people, or simply the skills or achievements you want to master.

You can simply become any way or any thing you want in life if you devote yourself to intensified practices of the right sort and keep at a deep, deliberate practice schedule with perseverance. Bruce Lee, for instance, had bad eyesight and one of his legs was shorter than the other. Even so, he had a dream and mental image of what he wanted to achieve in life, and he worked hard at becoming the quintessential martial artist and the first Chinese superstar in American films. The beauty of consciousness is that through learning and practice it enables you to change whatever you are to become anything else you want. It also allows you to master any skill you desire. Naturally, the foundation of developing yourself is to first become virtuous, and then to work on transforming yourself in other ways while keeping to virtuousness as your unshakeable basis.

There is a great potential inside you. You have the potential for change and transformation, even perfection, in any direction you desire, but you must subject yourself to a development path that includes a road of specific practices. You must also control your errant/wrong thoughts and impulses to achieve your target. You have to lay a disciplinary structure on yourself to put the wandering chaos in check and then you can move to a higher state of attainment or being.

We are talking about this as it applies to the task of spiritual cultivation, which requires work on your mind, behavior, body and internal energy. That work requires a certain pathway of development that relies on the cause and effect principles ruling Qi transformation to develop an independent inner Qi/Prana body. Your mind, meaning your consciousness, can be developed through study, critical reasoning, concentration exercises, visualization efforts, and meditation so that you have the skill of producing inner quietude and can let go of your Qi. Other mental skills, such as attaining a super memory, can be mastered too. You can even learn how to use your mind to control the movements of your

internal vital energy, or Qi/Prana, which is part of the spiritual path, just as biofeedback training can gain you control over your body temperature. The big point is that in addition to mental skills and a mental state that is more quiet, open and free, you have to work on your inner Qi body.

Human beings as living entities basically have two abilities – cognitive skills and physical skills. You can learn to master both, and on the road of spiritual cultivation you are lead to master certain cognitive skills and physical skills that will help lead to the deva body attainment. We are basically a biological substrate that has volitional decision-making capabilities, and we should maximize the benefits of both of these properties in order to improve our lives.

For cultivating your body there are stretching exercises and various elegant movement schools, as mentioned, just as there are various ways to train your voice. For your behavior you can model it on any person you want or towards any ideal you desire. You must orient your behavior in life to the highest good you can conceive and align with that ideal. A key technology for making this happen is not just imitating someone or NLP modeling (mental rehearsing and future pacing) but the mental watching or policing of your thoughts that guide your behavior. The Eastern Orthodox Church calls this watchfulness (when you watch your behavior) so that it aligns with your highest ideal.

These are all activities that belong to the stage of intensified practices, but in terms of cultivation we want to limit ourselves to a discussion of intensified yogic spiritual practices – prayer, vigils, fasting, pranayama, meditation, mantra, visualization, and so forth. These are also called preparatory practices for the initial fruit of the path – the subtle body or spirit body – which is traditionally called the third stage of the spiritual path. It is the Stage of Realizing the Tao.

As to the topic of the best practice schedule for all these intensified efforts, we need to remember a few principles.

First, it is best to keep to a regular, consistent practice schedule. This is imposed on people in Islam through the public necessity of reciting prayers five times per day. For monks and nuns, their behavior is usually regulated by the practice schedule within whatever ashram, monastery or nunnery they live in. The key is to know the principles of practice, select your practice techniques, and then just be regular in following a practice schedule. Don't undertake practices that exceed your strength by going to extremes.

Shakyamuni Buddha repeatedly called for moderation in cultivation efforts by avoiding extremes, but often those who start upon the spiritual journey try to outdo the previous saints and sages in ascetic extremes that hurt them. This is to be avoided, but it often happens in Christian asceticism and monasticism and other schools as well. Even Muhammad

once exclaimed, repeating it three times: “Woe to those who exaggerate [who are too strict]!” Furthermore, on another occasion he said, “Moderation, moderation! For only with moderation will you succeed.”

When astrological/astronomical impulses and local *feng-shui* energy forces are beneficent, by *going along with their flow* you can accomplish more with less effort in terms of Qi development/purification. You should also make use of such opportunities correctly, but typically only an enlightened master will know how to use them. You should also make use of correct timing for things like asking a sage for help if he/she is visiting the area. To provide an example of their possible helpfulness, once Fr. Karol Wojtyla visited the enlightened Padre Pio who told him he would reach the highest level within the Catholic Church. Wojtyla thought it meant a Cardinal’s position but he actually became Pope John Paul II. It was Wojtyla’s good sense that caused him to visit Padre Pio and even ask.

The point is to make use of any opportunities correctly to achieve better cultivation results. Grab at the chance. And at the minimum keep up the momentum of a regular practice schedule.

A good amount of practice is about two hours per day, which is a lot. Professional athletes and musicians practice 5-6 hours per day, so there is never any reason to exceed this except during special practices. The question is, what can you practice?

Well, you have sitting meditation, otherwise known as emptiness meditation, of which I revealed nearly several dozen types in *Buddha Yoga*. And of course you should always be doing mental watching, mindfulness or self-policing of your thoughts and behavior.

You also have *nei-gong* energy work, which is the entire content of my book, *Nyasa Yoga*. The *nei-gong* energy work means to work on your Qi/Prana in different parts of your body, or your entire body as a single unit. *Nyasa Yoga* shows how to divide up your work into body segments, or sections. You can work on acupuncture lines, marma points, limbs or body sections, internal organs, chakra locations, and so on. For instance, here is one such method of the many available.

There are seven days of week, and you can work on cultivating the Qi of the body as one single unit, two units (top and bottom or left and right), three units (head and arms, chest, abdomen and legs), or more based on the day of the week. You basically vary the sadhana you cultivate according to the day of the week and even use one syllable, two syllable, three syllable, etcetera mantras that correspond to the days of the week.

You can work on cultivating Yin Qi on Mondays (Monday = moon = Yin = feminine), Yang Qi fire cultivation methods on Tuesdays (Tuesday = Mars = fire = masculine), Yin water cultivation methods such as gland Qi work on Wednesdays (Wednesday = Mercury = water), Yang wind or pranayama or mantra cultivation methods on Thursdays (Thursday =

Jupiter = wind or wood element), space or emptiness meditations on Friday (Friday = Venus = space), muscle or earth meditation work on Saturdays (Saturn = solid = earth), and Yang Qi or light meditation methods on Sunday (Sunday = sun = light = masculine) and so forth.

The Anglo-Saxon names of the days of the week derive mostly from northern deities, and you can use these indications for the type of practices you might try just to establish some variety within the slow, regular process of continual cultivation that is necessary for the path. For instance, Sunday and Monday are very obviously the sun's day and moon's day, so you can engage in extra Yin Qi or Yang Qi practices on those days, or test/measure yourself on those days in regards to such practices. Tuesday is Tiwa's day, who is a god of war like Mars, so on Tuesdays we have fire practices. Wednesday is Wotan's (Odin's) day, a god of thunder and prosperity like Jupiter, so we have wind, wood, Qi and prosperity or expansiveness practices on Wednesdays. Friday is Freya's or Frigg's (goddess of love, similar to Venus), which corresponds to feminine practices, compassion practices, and space or metal practices since these are the Chinese equivalents.

There are all sorts of things you can do to keep up variety in your cultivation practice, which helps with maintaining your commitment to practice. In all cases, remember that you also need to consistently perform emptiness meditations where you let go of all your thoughts. You also need mantra or prayer recitation practice as well, which moves your Qi and notifies spiritual beings that you are cultivating and looking for assistance.

You should also devote yourself to stretching exercises such as yoga and Pilates or Ginastica Natural. In particular, since humans tend to especially hurt their spines, hernias and knees, you should regularly do exercises for these areas of your body. Everyone should perform mobility exercises for spinal elasticity such as found in Z-Health, yoga and Ginastica Natural, especially since back pain is one of the most frequently cited human troubles. Exercise can help prevent back pain from ever manifesting, and you should visit chiropractors to help keep your back bones in proper alignment.

All men, especially, should also regularly exercise to strengthen their abdominal wall to prevent a hernia. Our propensity for hernias is due to the descent of the gonads during the formation of a male human body as a fetus. The gonads do not grow in their place but descend because the human form is evolutionarily developed from a fish. This descent creates a weak spot in a man's abdominal wall that easily gives rise to inguinal hernias.

When men lose too much energy from sexual excess, this loss of structural integrity within body tissues further weakens that abdominal wall and men often get hernias in response without knowing that this is a

contributing factor. Spiritual masters, who tend to leave their physical body for prolonged periods of time (thus weakening its structural integrity at those times), also suffer from hernias for the exact same reason of weakening its structural integrity when their inner Qi-body leaves for elsewhere. This is another reason they should (1) practice abdominal exercises throughout their life in order to strengthen this region, such as *navli kriya*, and (2) eat healthily in order to replenish their depleted energy when their spiritual body is away. Too many ascetics botch up these two principles.

Another area of concentration is the hips or pelvis since thermographic energy pictures of the human body show that our energy has a hard time passing through the hips to the legs, which are colder than the upper part of the body. The difficult transition point is the hips, pelvis, waist and lower abdomen, which is why even martial arts principles state that we have trouble linking the top of the body to the bottom half. Therefore you should do any and all exercises for the waist to stretch its muscles, including *mula bandha* for your sexual organs and *navli kriya* specifically to prevent hernias. The stretched or loosened tissues will then let Qi energy pass through without obstruction, which is what you want. This will not just help you perform better sexually if you are non-celibate, but will also decrease your sexual desires since energy flows will not encounter the normal obstructions. Thus your Qi flows will *not* give rise to the usual feelings of irritation in the hip region that normally prompt sexual desire. If you use various exercises to stretch all the tissues in this region, including the abdomen, you can greatly lessen the problems of sexual desire.

Daily exercises to stretch your spine, strengthen your abdomen and open, exercise or stretch your hip/pelvic muscles should become part of your regular spiritual cultivation practice routine.

As for your knees, the important principle for the knee is not to hurt it. You really want the knee and other joints to form good cartilage because many people develop joint arthritis when they get older. Therefore it is wonderful when a pregnant mom regularly ingests bone broth soups (with glycosaminoglycans) when a baby is in the womb, and for you to eat them when young so that you build up good knee cartilage. Collagen 1&3, collagen 2, bone broth supplements and glucosamine supplements are also useful for damage prevention or repair of the knee joint. These are very important additions to your diet if you engage in sports that might hurt the knee such as football or the hard martial arts, both of which I don't recommend because of the damage they typically inflict upon individuals.

As to cultivating your mind you have available the study of cultivation topics or the lives of past spiritual greats. You can also engage in visualization practice to learn concentration and mental stability since it focuses your intention. Furthermore, there are countless types of mundane

educational training regimes for developing your thought processes such as lessons in critical reasoning, logic and analysis, and various means to counter mental afflictions.

(3A) CULTIVATION GONG-FU – SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCES

As to the common fact that spiritual paths usually give rise to spiritual gong-fu, I have excerpted the best synopsis of cultivation gong-fu examples within chapter 7, “Gong-fu You Will Experience on the Cultivation Path.” The two best books for gong-fu are *Tao and Longevity* by Nan and Chu, and *Meditation Case Studies* by myself. *The Little Book of Hercules* is of help in this regard as well.

There are two aspects to spiritual experiences: (1) the run of the mill inner energy sensations or “supernatural” experiences that occur to ordinary spiritual practitioners, and (2) the advanced aspects that occur to individuals going through a genuine Twelve Year kundalini transformation that will produce the independent deva body capability after twelve years of suffering. In his talk on the Jesus Prayer, Elder Ephraim of Katounakia spoke a just a little of the mental agony one is to go through when the devas get busy at working on your Qi and channels for those going through the Twelve Year kundalini transformation. In the Eastern Orthodox Church, those who go through it and attain the deva body and higher are usually awarded the rank of Elder or Great Schema, which is the title for the level of spiritual excellence that corresponds to the Arhat ranks of attainment.

As to your personal experiences, the big thing to note is that internal energy movements are due to Qi/Prana flows within your body, and in turn those are often due to the intercession of spiritual beings trying to help you open up your Qi channels within your tissues and transform your Qi. As a service for everyone across the world, they are doing this all the time starting from when people are just children. They give them emotional experiences that raise their Yang Qi and Yin Qi (including nightmares) so that their bodies grow properly. This is one of the jobs of the enlightened local, provincial protector gods with many bodies but people don’t know it.

If a master from the past wants to be born again he can break off part of one of his higher bodies (a *nirmanakaya* emanation) to become a baby in someone’s womb, and as a child he will experience a lot of such experiences because his “dad” will be working on his Qi all the time through that connection. Such masters usually attain the deva body at a young age, which requires that they have strong developmental experiences that cause their Yin Qi and Yang Qi to arise.

This is why Padre Pio was given frightening dreams and visions of

devils when young (which caused his Yin Qi to arise), and Ramakrishna would see visions of gods and deities (which caused his Yang Qi to arise). When five or six years old Nan Huai-chin was dressed as a girl by his parents so as to ward off bad fortune (a local custom in the Chinese countryside where he was born), which gave him a chance to cultivate his Yin Qi. Other masters who are reborn cultivate their Yin Qi another way at later ages, and it is common for all of them to go into trance-like states of no-thought. Yang Qi can be cultivated by heroic deeds, watching heroic movies, and through martial arts practice or other sports. There are all sorts of activities that young masters will go through to cultivate not just their physical bodies but their Yin Qi and Yang Qi.

Visions of angels, saints, lights and so on, the hearing of voices, the smelling of beautiful aromas, and so forth are also due to the training efforts of devas and spiritual masters who practice inside you. Sometimes people who practice hard will be bombarded by a barrage of thoughts. Sometimes your heart/mind will recite a mantra or prayer all on its own after you put in a lot of mantra or prayer effort. There are many types of experiences like this on the road of cultivation that are not being caused by you but by spiritual helpers.

You are not suddenly spiritual, enlightened or psychic when such things happen, nor have you “opened up your chakras.” Chakras just means sections of your body as delineated by spinal nerves, as explained in *Nyasa Yoga* which has the only true explanation of chakras in print. In any case, there are many experiences on the road of cultivation where a heavenly deva goes into your brain, projects an experience and you experience it. Yes, you experienced something, but it wasn’t anything happening in the real world. It was just an illusion given to you from someone else. A master, for instance, can cause you to see something such as a man walking on a wall while everyone else sees nothing. That’s because the image is being projected into your brain and isn’t really happening.

From the aspect of this not happening in the real world your “seeing” of the event is certainly an illusion or delusion, but from the aspect that you really experience seeing something (because a spiritual being projects it into your brain) it is certainly a real experience. During cultivation practices people might also feel illuminated internally, seeing lights inside themselves, or may shine externally. These are all due to the intercessions of spiritual beings that we otherwise normally call “blessings” or “grace.”

The big problem when devas give people such experiences is they fail to perform a double tap. A double tap is what hitmen do when they want to kill someone – they fire a bullet into them twice, not once, which is something the military does as well. Hence, devas usually give people some unusual experience but fail to afterwards provide them a thought on what it means. They fail to inject an explanation into the brain – the second tap. As

a result, practitioners commonly misinterpret what happened and then act incorrectly in response, thus making all sorts of errors in their life due to unwise guardians.

Therefore, don't be misled by spiritual experiences. Don't lose your head and be taken in by such things. They can provide positive inspiration or mislead you greatly and produce negative results in your life. This is why masters tell people to ignore such things, and call them "Mara" so that you pay them no mind and don't invest them with any special meaning nor do anything because of them.

It is interesting to read books like *Athonite Fathers and Athonite Matters* (by Elder Paisios of Mount Athos), which is written from the standpoint of the Greek Orthodox Church. It proves that the exact same types of spiritual experiences that occur to eastern spiritual practitioners happen to Christians also whereas we usually think all the strange and exotic spiritual experiences only happen to eastern spiritual path practitioner Sof meditation and other techniques.

Please remember that whenever you see a master perform a superpower or miracle – such as levitating or radiating light from the face – it is not a capability of his physical body but the usage of his higher bodies (one or more) that makes such things possible. What seems a miracle is simply something done through higher body achievements, or by other higher beings. Spiritual masters won't tell you why they know your mind, know the future, can see things at a distance, or communicate with animals. They certainly won't tell you that they can alter your thoughts, change your emotions, or even give you energy to heal you either. Think of all the trouble that would bring upon them, and all the endless requests for aid that would beat a path to their door. The tradition throughout history is to keep such powers and interventions secret, especially as there are times when you can do nothing to help people at all due to their karma and they still blame you when they aren't helped.

As the previous quotes from the *Avatamsaka Sutra* showed, with higher spiritual powers you can do many things to help someone's consciousness, and the yogic schools of India list many physical superpowers too as do the annals of the Catholic Church in its descriptions of the powers of saints. However, individuals with such powers always attribute such powers to something else such as the grace of god or intercession of others rather than themselves. If you say it is from you then there will be no end to requests for assistance, and no end of complaints. Never will you find peace if people chase you for assistance.

When we read the account of the modern Greek Saint Porphyrios of Kavsokalyvia we can see examples of the typical powers attained by higher bodies. Although Saint Porphyrios attributed them to grace because the Orthodox Christian Church doesn't want people to easily know about the

transcendental body achievements, they were due to his spiritual attainments. It is also interesting to note that Tantric Hinduism offers us mantras we can recite to request precisely the same abilities because they are the standard abilities of higher body attainments.

Here is an account about Saint Porphyrios and his abilities after he attained the Tao, from *Elder Porphyrios: Testimonies and Experiences* by Klitos Ioannidis:

“The first sign of these gifts was when his elders were returning from a far-away journey, he was able to ‘see’ them at a great distance. He ‘saw’ them there, where they were, even though they were not within human sight. He confessed this to Fr. Panteleimon who advised him to be very cautious about his gift and to tell no-one. Advice which he followed very carefully until he was told to do otherwise.

“More followed. His sensitivity to things around him became very acute and his human capacities developed to their fullest. He listened to and recognized bird and animal voices to the extent that he knew not just where they came from, but what they were saying. His sense of smell was developed to such a degree that he could recognize fragrances at a great distance. He knew the different types of aroma and their makeup. After humble prayer he was able to ‘see’ the depths of the earth and the far reaches of space. He could see through water and through rock formations. He could see petroleum deposits, radioactivity, ancient and buried monuments, hidden graves, crevices in the depths of the earth, subterranean springs, lost icons, scenes of events that had taken place centuries before, prayers that had been lifted up in the past, good and evil spirits, the human soul itself, just about everything. He tasted the quality of water in the depths of the earth. He would question the rocks and they would tell him about the spiritual struggles of ascetics who went before him. He looked at people and was able to heal. He touched people and he made them well. He prayed and his prayer became reality. However, he never knowingly tried to use these gifts from God to benefit himself. He never asked for his own ailments to be healed. He never tried to get personal gain from the knowledge extended to him by divine grace.

“Every time he used his gift of discernment, (*diakrissi*) the hidden thoughts of the human mind were revealed to him. He was able, through the grace of God, to see the past, the present and the future all at the same time. He confirmed that God is all-knowing and all-powerful. He was able to observe and touch all creation, from the edges of the Universe to the depth of the human soul and history. St. Paul’s phrase ‘One and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He

wills' (1.Cor.12:11) certainly held true for Elder Porphyrios."³⁶

(3B) SPIRITUAL BODY ATTAINMENTS

As to the commonality that most religions assert we can attain five spiritual bodies, this appears in chapter 4, "The Sequential Stages and Five Bodies of Spiritual Cultivation."

No one who has these attainments wants you to know they have them, but the attainment of the higher transcendental bodies is what the spiritual path is all about. It is about good behavior, mastering your mind and capabilities, and this. The transcendental spiritual body attainments are the intended purpose of the intensified cultivation practices although religions usually say that the purpose of the spiritual road is to attain spiritual bliss, become one with God, return to the Father, win a reward in heaven, leave suffering forever and all sorts of stuff like this.

Why don't masters tell you very much about the higher body attainments? It is as Nan Huai-Chin stated, "Very few can achieve genuine rotation of their Qi and circulate it within their body everywhere and among their meridians. Even fewer really understand the stage of separation and unification of body, mind and the origin of Nature. Therefore, even if one sincerely wants to teach this, a student with the ability to receive this supreme instruction is rare. After this stage, a person goes beyond earthly things and enters into the metaphysical realm. Even if a teacher wished to describe this in detail, a student with the wisdom and experience to receive these instructions beyond the realm of the human world would be exceptional."

A higher body is more pleasant than a physical earthly body, lasts/lives longer, and frees you from most sufferings. A higher transcendental realm is a more pleasant living environment too. A saint can do miracles only because he has one or more higher bodies and has learned how to use their powers in the higher realms of energy that can affect the earthly plane. It is as simple as that. You don't know how to do these things but they are common skills for people who practice them on higher planes. You call them miracles, but they call them common powers that you have to practice to be able to employ.

When you lift up the covers of most religions you will clearly find that there is a common agreement that man can cultivate various stages of spiritual advancement. We can measure these spiritual stages via bodies, samadhi, or other yardsticks but they basically come down to bodies

³⁶ Klitos Ioannidis, *Elder Porphyrios: Testimonies and Experiences*, (Holy Convent of the Transfiguration of the Savior, Athens, 2007), pp. 36-38.

composed of sequentially higher etheric substances that can inhabit different realms or planes of being. If you attain the deva body, which everyone does upon death, you attain the body of a god.

Religions don't say that! Yes, they do. Even Christianity says, "Ye are gods," with Basil of Caesarea even commenting that "becoming a god is the highest goal of all" and Saint Cyril of Alexandria saying "we shall become sons by participation," which refers to this process of deification, divinization or *theosis* to attain the initial fruit of the spiritual path, the deva body, and then higher. These attainments are equivalent to Christian *apotheosis*, which is glorification of an individual to a divine level. Christianity states that God wants us to return back and be born again by the Holy light within us, which is basically our vital energy or Qi, in order to attain a deva body before death, or to put in as much spiritual cultivation work as possible before that time. The method is to become free from the captivity of our passions and desires by detachment or self-denial, which is another way of describing various aspects of the process of cultivation. Elder Porphyrios said that the faithful are called to be uncreated, to become partakers in the divine energies of God, to enter into the mystery of Godliness, to overcome our worldliness and to become transcendent. Becoming transcendent is the goal of Christianity. It is to attain the deva body while living and become *Homo Deus*. That is the true goal of Christianity and matches it exactly with the religions of the east.

This is why Saint Irenaeus said, "If the Word has been made man, it is so that men may be made gods" which has become the standard in Greek theology. Father Tychon of Mount Athos would (because of his body attainments) frankly tell people, "I live with the angels and archangels, with all the saints." This is just a short reminder that many individuals in the Eastern Orthodox Christian Churches, male and female, regularly attain the Tao meaning that they achieve the higher body attainments due to their Christian monastic practices and the many spiritual gifts/talents that go with them. The Church services might seem onerous for such traditions but you will find many enlightened elders in such denominations if you are seeking a true spiritual teacher and guide.

In *Athonite Fathers and Athonite Matters* you can find lots of stories of monks using their spiritual bodies to create physical manifestations of themselves in front of other monks, and even bring them food. This is the *yang shen* emanation stage mentioned in Chinese Taoism, and found in Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and many other religions too. The stories about the monks at Mount Athos having such powers just goes to show that the Eastern Orthodox Church, a western spiritual path, produces the same stages of spiritual accomplishment as achieved by the masters, gurus, and yogis of the east. This is because the true spiritual path stages are non-denominational. As stated, many within the Eastern Orthodox traditions

have achieved the Great Schema, and thus have some stage of attainment.

Once you attain the deva body, or subtle body, then you have progressed past the stage of “realizing (seeing) the Tao” to the Stage of True Cultivation Practice. You’ll be introduced to everything the spiritual path entails, and it will then be up to you to cultivate more internal energy and meditation techniques until you master various skills and reach the highest body attainment, the Immanence body equivalent to Complete and Perfect Buddhahood, which is also called the Stage of No More Learning for this planetary system. Since you have a deva body you can also start helping human beings in your vicinity.

As Saint John Chrysostom explained, a city or diocese with a monastery that trains monks or nuns (some of whom can attain the deva body and thereby become saints) means that the jails in the vicinity will be empty and the hospitals empty. Where there are no monasteries (where people practice to attain enlightenment and individuals succeed) then the jails will be full, the people sick, and there will be crime and destruction. This holds true for every spiritual tradition because it becomes the center of teaching for the entire deva community in the vicinity.

That’s how powerful the influence of a great spiritual teacher or teachers at a monastery, ashram, temple, synagogue, mosque, etc. can be in getting the local devas to do good deeds to help the human condition, and why such institutions, regardless of their religion, need to be supported when they have a saint in charge.

And then again, the world goes on with wars, famine, plaques, crimes, cruelties and thefts so that all the help they try to render seems like a drop in the bucket. They can know your mind and your future, and sometimes here is nothing that can be done to help you. Sometimes the momentum of events is too strong to do anything to stop a trend. Sometimes ugly karma is too fixed and trying to render help is useless.

Wise enough and knowledgeable enough to be advisors to kings and heads of state, even the greatest of saints simply cannot prevent the karma of death, or prevent a nation from legislating some foolish policy when it has the karma for self-destruction. You never have to worry about the presence of spiritual masters with such powers. You only need worry about their absence.

(4) HEAVENLY CAREERS

As to the common claim that success on the spiritual path enables common people to become spiritual helpers of mankind, I have included this in chapter one, “Arhat Yoga” and *Buddha Yoga* in general. *Buddha Yoga* teaches you how to make vows like Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and deities.

We call these individuals the *ikigami* of Shintoism, Orisha of Yoruba, *Yazatas* of Zoroastrianism, *Sapta Matrikas* of India, city protect gods or guardian deities in Chinese culture, *grama devata* village deities in Tamil Nadu (India), *Genius loci* of Roman culture, *Landvaettir* of Norse mythology, and Christian “tutelaries” or tutelary spirits (deities) that are guardians, patrons or protectors of people, cities, trades, activities, and so on. Such individuals are also called angels, archangels, archai, etcetera as well as saints, sages, *tzadik*, gurus, sadgurus, sheikhs, imams, fakirs, masters and yogis who become Bodhisattvas, Buddhas, etc. who choose to serve as intercessors and protectors of mankind. When you die you become a deva by default, and you will earn these titles if you choose to act in such ways too.

This is exactly a description of all individuals who achieve the Tao by attaining the higher spiritual bodies. People would not normally think that an African religion like Yoruba would have these same high teachings, but Yoruba is right there alongside of the big boys with a correct description of the spiritual career of successes. Yoruba says that through cultivation, which has the target of evolving us towards transcendence, we can achieve the destiny of becoming spiritual Orishas who can act as compassionate avatars of God. As Orishas with higher spiritual bodies that are one with the ultimate source of energy we can involve ourselves with doing good and beneficial things for humanity, guiding people on how to live and succeed on earth while living in the higher realms with others having similar purposes.

This is the Bodhisattva and Buddha of Buddhism, the sage of Confucianism, the saint of Christianity, the *tzadik* of Judaism, the supreme/accomplished yogi of Hinduism and Yoga, the Taoist immortal and so on. It is *exactly* the same because this is the common path, the common outcome of the universal pathway.

If your teacher – who might be a priest, monk, nun, archbishop, cardinal, pope, patriarch, elder, starets, rabbi, dastur, imam, sheikh, fakir, hieromonk, Grand Schema, sage, saint, guru, sadguru, master, immortal and so forth – attains the deva body, or deva and Causal body, or deva and Causal and Supra-Causal body, or deva and Causal and Supra-Causal and Immanence body then they are no doubt performing some of these helpful activities. They’re just hiding the fact that they have these higher spiritual body attainments. They cultivated them through the intensified practices and because they were virtuous people “Heaven” helped them achieve a higher stage of attainment. That entails attaining a body derived from your physical body composed of Qi/Prana, which is the first stage of purification or divinization. If they frequently exhibit miraculous powers or exhibit knowledge they shouldn’t be able to know about you (such as your problems or what you are thinking) then you can be sure that they have at least one higher body attainment. That’s when they become an

“experienced spiritual father/mother.” This is what qualifies them to become a guide for individuals, communities, religions, even nations.

Many religions have set up a means whereby people can supplicate the deceased saints or former religious greats of a tradition when they need certain types of aid and assistance. You don’t need to be a member of that religion or tradition to ask for help. You just need to ask for help and a saint/sage will respond if they can because they are non-denominational in outlook. There are tombs, shrines, mausoleums, stupas, *obel*, churches, temples and other types of buildings built that we might visit so that we have a place to go where we might ask a saint for assistance.

The Catholic Church and Eastern Orthodox Churches have even made “saint days” so that we might recollect their names and call upon them for help, as they are also often associated with certain types of aid. Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism also have many mantras you can use to request help from those already enlightened, meaning that they have attained the higher bodies and can sometimes use them to aid you. This is why Moslems built tombs or mausoleums to accomplished Sufi saints so you have someone to go to for help.

In Islam we have the tombs or mausoleums of great Sufi masters and other Moslem saints where individuals can go and recite prayers to the deceased masters to request aid. In Judaism we have the *obel*, or tombs of enlightened Jewish rabbis (not ordinary rabbis). In Christianity we have churches and cathedrals containing the incorruptible bodies of saints who achieved the higher bodies; their incorruptible body that hasn’t decayed is proof of their successful spiritual cultivation and higher body attainments because it shows that their cultivation was able to purify the Qi/Prana of their physical nature. Many saints from countless traditions have achieved an incorruptible body.

Of course while alive you can go to the Christian spiritual elders, hieromonks, and Great Schema for advice and guidance as they too are enlightened and welcome people from all traditions. In Taoism we have temples for immortals, which are those who achieved the Tao in the past. In Buddhism we have the stupas or the relics of accomplished Arhats, who are the enlightened ones, as well as temples where we can go to ask Buddhas for help such as Kuan Yin and so forth. The individuals answering the prayers of visitors are the very same Arhats masquerading as ultimate ones. In Hinduism we have temples for gods and goddesses where help can similarly be requested from higher powers, namely devas and accomplished masters.

All the world religions have visitation spots available for the common people able to ask for help who are kept in the dark about how it all works.

There are also mantras and prayers containing the names of accomplished masters that we might recite so that they know we are seeking

aid. There are also mantras and prayers connected with gods and deities that we might recite, but these are answered by the same individuals who masquerade as those noble ones and then divvy up the task among themselves of responding to render aid. There are so many requests for aid from human beings that you really need help to respond! This is why masters have students who they are training all the time.

There are also enlightened adepts who have taken it upon themselves a pledged commitment – which we call a “vow” – that is the task of responding/helping anyone who reads/recites a particular type of religious text, prayer, scripture, hymn, or mantra. They always come to give you thoughts, work on your Qi/Prana, and so forth when you become engaged with one of the items they have vowed to “protect.” If you have a pressing problem and are lucky they will sometimes give you a “deep idea, a palpable force of determination, a kind of conviction and intense feeling” to do something or be a certain way that is so clear and so deterministic that it sets you in a new direction with absolute conviction. When you have transcendental bodies that can split off and render assistance everywhere through *nirmanakaya* projections, and when you live for a very long time, such vows of helping people are part of the work of keeping yourself occupied rendering assistance.

If you have a spirit body that will live for a very long time and the ability to possess people to affect their consciousness or energy, sometimes you can make some really easy “saves” after someone asks you for help. How do you set it up so they can ask for help? You establish prayers, mantras, buildings/tombs, ceremonies (such as Indian *yagnas*) and so forth where the participation or visitation of attendees shows they want help. This explains why many religions have set up a multitude of saint days, mantras, prayers or ceremonies for help pertaining to various affairs.

Sometimes enlightened masters can help and sometimes they cannot. Some specialize in certain types of aid, such as healing, which is why healing mantras were developed in ancient times. For instance, in ancient India advanced medical care was virtually non-existent, so accomplished masters set up a number of mantras where the poor could request aid for various types of health problems. A relevant spiritual individual hearing the mantra would arrive and try to use their Qi/Prana and other means to help cure/heal the individual, and if they could not they still did their best in an era when doctors were expensive or few and far between. Many of these mantras still work in that someone will usually respond, but that does not mean that they will always be able to help you. Ancient Greece, Rome and Egypt had special temples established for healing where spiritual beings could try to assist humans like this.

These are all examples of the compassionate work of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

Now as a reminder, if you don't succeed in achieving the subtle body during this life, which is the case for most people, then you still have the option of helping people as a heavenly career in the afterlife. During this life you can make Bodhisattva vows and start training/working in the areas of life and assistance of most interest to you and making an impact in that area. In that way you make progress even if you don't succeed. If you don't want to do that, you should still be working on creating and fulfilling a list of life goals for your time here on earth, and working on develop useful skills and changing your character and behavior.

You want to avoid the regrets most people have at the end of their lives by doing the things they most commonly say they regret. You should create a bucket list of things you want to do/experience in life, and annually update your goals for the year and for life in general. Regardless as to whether or not you succeed in cultivation, or want to make Buddha or Bodhisattva vows, you still need to work on determining a personal life purpose, something worth doing. Then you have to start doing it.

You must decide how to use your life, which has the gift of higher consciousness, in a way that holds a higher meaning for you other than just the maintenance of protoplasm. Success in life is not about gaining money, power, fame or countless other high-level trophies. It is not about climbing dominance hierarchies of achievement. It is about attaining peace of mind and contentment, a state of bliss that is the direct result of self-satisfaction knowing that you made the effort to become the best of which you are capable. You choose the directions in which you want to make an effort and impact and then do your best to achieve your objectives. This is what gives your life meaning when you choose higher objectives. Life is not about striving to be the best but about working to becoming your best and doing your best for something truly meaningful and worthwhile.

Therefore you have to subordinate yourself to the highest good you can conceive that is good for you in the now and future, good for your family and the community, and good stretching across time and effect. You should be striving for a *better you* that can live more meaningfully in harmony with your family, community and world. You want to live properly as an individual, with virtues and values and character strengths and propriety, so that you are a living betterment for your family and community, or even your state, country and world. You want to be advancing your perfection and your position in the grand scheme of things without disrupting others or the whole system negatively, unless of course you are replacing what's negative with something more positive.

Therefore you have to sacrifice yourself to the process of cultivation which is self-development. You have to engage in character building and character improvement. You have to increase your cognitive skills and capabilities. You have to improve the state of your body, and work toward

attaining the higher body achievements that free you from suffering and give you extra skills and capabilities. You have to aim at the highest good you can conceive of, the highest attainable ideal, and then become committed to that. You must strive to turn yourself into something that can attain it, which requires a process of constantly updating yourself with self-improvement, and then go out and contend with the world to manifest it. In life you must concentrate on who you could be and then become that person, become that way.

Part of this subjugation, subordination or commitment to a model ideal (others might say “ideology”) is the fact that life is suffering and you can ignore or transcend its suffering by pursuing goals, missions or ways of being that have high value, such as taking on the pursuit of some goal that minimizes the suffering of others. The journey of pursuit, which will no doubt be marked with achievements since Buddhas will help you achieve and change in any admirable, meritorious, praiseworthy direction you want, is then intrinsically rewarding.

Value is what enables you to justify the sufferings of life and difficult conditions we all encounter. Taking on a responsibility gives your life meaning. Meaning is found in the adoption of responsibility, and so if you take on ultimate responsibilities, like a Buddha or Bodhisattva who makes great vows, you create a life of *ultimate meaning*. That commitment and its stages of incremental progression give you *aliveness*.

Your free will, voluntarily applied to a valuable effort/goal of your own choosing, is what makes life worthwhile and gives it meaning. Your voluntary adoption of responsibility to better whatever is in front of you constitutes a nobility of striving that can help you forget the pain and suffering of life. Maybe in life you can be triumphant and transcend suffering and maybe you cannot, but aiming for meaning is actually more productive than aiming for happiness. That’s because from meaning you will get happiness, contentment and bliss because you’ve justified your existence and become at peace with how you conduct yourself in the world.

You can justify suffering and transcend it if you undertake a nobility of striving, so try to be a light unto the world. In aiming only for personal happiness and joy, on the other hand, you only get a series of infrequent upbeat sensations from pleasures and must constantly chase after more to get another hit since they pass away quickly.

The way our consciousness works, sensations can only give us a short boost like a sugar high that doesn’t last for long, and many of the activities that provide great sensations can turn into harmful addictions like drugs, gambling, alcohol, sex, shopping, abusiveness where you feel powerful and so forth. On this road, you’ll always pursue shallow, trivial pleasures that don’t sustain you and whose pursuit can even destroy your life and fortune. You can, however, live a life of meaning and then get both meaning *and*

happiness if you set for yourself a noble aim such as a Bodhisattva ideal. Happiness and contentment appears when you start working toward that ideal or vow and see yourself progressing in that direction.

Therefore you have to conceptualize an ideal, which doesn't have to be perfect, but which you start working towards just so that you start moving forward. The yardstick of success is never how far from the ideal you are but how far you have come from a previous version of yourself. You will definitely be a different person thirty years from now, but the difference is that with this viewpoint and mindset guiding you then you can move in the direction of metamorphosis that you want, whereas by doing nothing whatsoever you are letting conditions shape you into whatever fate wants. We can live the constant transformation of our lives into whatever we want as a goal or target. Wouldn't you rather have control over your life and what you develop into? The truth is that you will undergo incessant change, but can guide it to become a better you. Furthermore, you will certainly remain miserable if you just stay the way you are without trying to alter things in yourself and improve outside affairs for the better.

You must choose the game you want to play, or life will impose things on you and you will then have to submit to *its* conditions. Don't submit. Accept but never fail to raise the vigor and desire to change things for the better. Choose to change your environment for the better, choose to make things happen. Choose to make yourself better. Choose to become the person you want to be. Choose to become the best of which you are capable.

You're alive so "you're all in." You are all in, so *play the most magnificent game you can*. The way to justify your life, your play, is not "achievement" but "responsibilities" – the responsibilities that turn into achievements. This is what gives life meaning and it also silences suffering by allowing you to ignore it while you single-mindedly pursue your aims. The greatest aim is to do good for yourself and others. If you damage yourself you cannot do good for others, so in the helping of others you must also protect yourself by proceeding with wisdom, and also reward yourself with rest and joy to keep yourself going. After all, you are not a machine that can work without respite so you need frequent stretches of rest and relaxation. The highest responsibilities are those that bring up an entire system, or big sections thereof, but the ideal responsibilities are realistic ones you know you can achieve and then work towards.

Once you set a goal, vow or objective, then you embark upon what the Japanese in martial arts call *Fukutsu no Seishin*, which is a persevering spirit that never gives up, never quits, and continues through adversity of every kind. It is an indomitable will that stays on the path of actualizing your vow. If the value of what you want is high enough then you will be willing to voluntarily take responsibilities upon yourself and persevere in facing the

inescapable suffering you will inevitably bear.

This is a description of the Bodhisattva and Buddha vows that they undertake with a will of fire. You develop life meaning and a true identity because of such choices. When without deviation you pursue activities with rectitude that for you hold tremendous interest and meaning then you gradually build yourself into a new person, an entirely new identity. Even though you take very small steps in a chosen direction, through consistency you actually become the Buddha or Bodhisattva you set as your ideal by continually acting that way.

Acting the right way along a chosen path transforms you. If the objective has real meaning to you and is truly, deeply worthwhile, then your engagement with that pathway and that objective will make you truly alive. That journey will make your life worthwhile, and you will feel truly alive in trying to be/actualize your true self, your innermost self, your most ideal self, your best self, your highest self, your exceptional purpose that is a source of higher meaning, positivity and purpose other than just existing. The journey will gift you with aliveness.

Life purpose involves becoming in sync with something transcendental that is currently beyond you, and because that higher objective is truly worthwhile you can push aside the adversity, sorrow and suffering that characterizes life to give yourself true meaning. If you decide to do whatever you have true passion for then you will eliminate a lot of crap. This is why I tell individuals to think deeply and create their own unique Bodhisattva and Buddha vows of what they truly feel is important, a transcendental ideal of abilities, powers, dignity, nobility, gravity and service beyond them that they can align with. When you become aligned with such an ideal or vow then your Qi will conform to it, and then your molecules and internal structure will conform with your mission as well. Your life and even your physical structure will become non-contradictory to the way you want to be, the light you and exceptional purpose want to be, just as happened with the taxi drivers of London, the musicians and athletes who practiced extremely hard, and certainly also with doctors, soldiers, farmers or anyone else who devote themselves to a certain thing or way of being that they take as themselves or life goal. If your ideal or commitment is deep enough then those positive changes can even carry forward to a subsequent life, and bit by bit you will become the very ideal you want to be rather than just an existing thing. A transformation starts with your mind, proceeds to your Qi and then even to your physical structure and your fortune.

This has been discussed a lot in *Buddha Yoga*. You need to develop a vision for your life and then take responsibility for it. You need to conceive of ideals for your character and behavior. You have to find enough maturity within yourself to acknowledge faults and dysfunction, but the strength to

want to make a change in the direction of betterment or perfection. Then you have to leave your comfort zone, and break your prior habits and conditioning that in part depend on your already wired mental circuitry, to transform yourself into the model of a better tomorrow.

Start to transform yourself into something that is a light to the world, that is a light that shines for the world, an ideal that represents higher perfection. That involves the road of cultivation practice. You have to cultivate for the Great Betterment, the better future, the Great learning that is the long game of existence. It is like an actor who chooses to play a role in a grand play that goes on forever. If you could become anything you want or do anything you want, what role is it that you would want to play in this long game? This is the question for you to think about, and many ideas are found in *Buddha Yoga*.

(5) FOUNDATIONAL, PRIMORDIAL BEING AND CREATION

Lastly, most religions share some common theological elements regarding views on the primacy of God, the fundamental essence, and the origin of the cosmos. Surprisingly, the great religions do not differ but actually converge on these points. The public believes there is a Creator God, which is a concept that gives their life meaning, for without a Creator you're in a universe that arose by accident where there is no transcendent meaning. Life then has no meaning or intended purpose and is pointless ... except for any personal life purpose that you set for yourself. If you say life has no meaning, for whatever reason, there is still the possibility of a meaning you attribute to it that you construct yourself, thus making it truly valid, which you then can act upon by what you do. Whether it is considered arbitrary or not doesn't matter because it gives you meaning. The point, however, is that in the case there is no personal God, many people might feel that any set of morality ethics we make up is arbitrary since there is nothing God-given.

This is in part why the Bible, spawning the Judeo-Christian tradition, puts forth the idea that an empty state of potential, which one can equate with the Parabrahman or Nirguna Brahman of Hinduism, became a state of manifest reality through the Logos, or Spirit/Word of God that one might easily equate with the vibratory Shakti realm of Hinduism. By saying that "God spoke" the western traditions put a moral order into the process of Creation. Buddhism says we don't know how Creation came about, and Hinduism states that Creation was the desire, will, dream, or play of the Ultimate Divine, which anthropomorphizes it once again.

Most all the major religions put forth some idea of either a Creator God entity-being, or an evolutionary process of creation that comes from a

perfectly pure non-conscious substance that never moves or changes that they also call God, the Supreme Beingness, primal origin, True Self, original nature, ground state, or foundational state.

While most people think of God in terms of the image of a person with emotions who has a tendency to personally get involved with humans and intervene in their affairs, they usually don't know that the major religions of Judaism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism and Taoism all concur that the immortal primal essence is a changeless, pure, eternal substance without consciousness, and therefore not a person or being. It isn't a person, being, ego-self or living entity, and yet it is the ultimate source of life since it is the primordial foundational substrate of everything. This is a overt dogma in religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism, but you have to consult individuals such as Thomas Aquinas, Moses Maimonides, and Ibn Arabi to see the same conclusion arrived at for the western religions of Christianity, Judaism and Islam too!

Nevertheless, religious people like to think of a Supreme Principle in anthropomorphic terms as a being stronger and wiser than mankind, a foundation of safety and security, a punisher of evil deeds, a dispenser of justice, and so forth even though this personalizing conflicts with the more complex theological doctrines of their religion. The complex theological doctrine is that the original, fundamental, primordial nature/substance is pure, self-so, eternal, peaceful, and changeless. How can that be a being?

Within the universal field of Creation life has somehow come about, whether via a Creator, an evolutionary process or some other means. Sentient life has somehow appeared and we are exactly that. You cannot deny this unless you deny consciousness, and if you deny consciousness you have nothing but annihilation. So we are an existence, but not a self-so, permanent, independent inherent existence. We don't inherently, intrinsically exist from self-so creation. We are essentially a changeful agglomeration of forces, simples, bodies, conditions, etcetera that has sentience due to our pattern, so let us play the great game of being. Use this great gift of consciousness you have within the field of existence, which is also a field of suffering you can improve for yourself and others.

Of the endless animal, insect, plant and other life we see around us, we happen to be *intelligent life* with minds that can think and analyze, communicate and imagine. We can use our intelligence and wisdom to guide our behavior to bring about whatever we wish because our consciousness is like a wish-fulfilling jewel that enables us to do/create whatever we want. We can even become however we want too. Unlike insentient objects, we can change our personality and characteristics – our *properties* – that exist because of our conditioning.

We are beings with consciousness. That is our predominant quality. You can also say we are living objects with consciousness, or processes of

consciousness. However, our consciousness is wired to act in a certain way due to the construction of our brains, nervous system, hormones, our prior conditioning and so forth. We've built up memories and neural circuitry patterns in our brain that is linked to ways of processing sensory inputs and creating thoughts so that we function in certain ways. The net total of our memories, processing algorithms and patterns is called conditioning. It produces a particular view of reality that is shared among other humans, but is impartial and even false in many respects. Yet, this is what consciousness gives us. Consciousness is the great miracle of existence that has developed to enable better replication of living organisms. For humans it has enabled us to undergo cultural evolution that is more powerful than natural selection.

The trick in life is to figure out what to do with consciousness, that precious treasure or gift that lets us realize we are alive and can experience things such as joy and bliss, thrills, excitement, transcendence, awe and wonder. Our job in life is to learn how to master our consciousness, for it as imperfections and is not under our perfect control. It often does things we don't want it to do such as sprout nuisance thoughts and afflictions when we just want it to be quiet and peaceful. It is fed by sensory inputs that are incomplete, imperfect and inexact. It has a hard time maintaining concentration. It has all sorts of processing faults and it does not always leave us with being emotionally happy. It always produces a certain perspective, mindset or view and we have to learn how to be fresh and present in each moment of life so that we are not automatically controlled/entrained by that view and can let new information, experiences and perspectives in. We have to learn how to detach from what's going on within our heads – take a step back and look at what's actually happening in any situation internally and externally – to look at things differently and from a higher perspective.

This is called detachment (from the stream of consciousness), or cultivating awareness, cultivating presence or even transcendence, for it is always possible that a better/wiser thought or reaction or view is available if we can step out of entrainment with the momentum of our current thought-stream. We not only have to become better at our deliberate, voluntary thinking but have to give ourselves space to be free of that conditioning to allow in new revelations that are even better. Furthermore, for those situations in which we need automatic reactions, we want to have trained ourselves to automatically react in the highest and best ways possible as athletes do for certain specific conditions. I consider this optimal gracefulness. It is a type of elegance training, which I highly encourage.

Another existential road of endeavor is to try to maximize our mental capabilities by learning new skills or knowledge that makes us more

effective in controlling our environment to bring about whatever we want whether that be safety, success, happiness, the elimination of suffering, achievement, or the execution of our responsibilities. This is not an extraordinary feat because we do this all the time, but we rarely set out to learn skills in a planned fashion according to the guide of the highest possible pattern. We typically train ourselves to be sub-optimal in how we think, make decisions and do things. Today's job market necessitates that people reinvent themselves again and again and they do, which proves that there really is no limit to how we can remake ourselves.

That truth that we can reengineer ourselves and become something different even extends to our character and personality. You can absolutely change yourself, you can improve yourself. You won't be the same person thirty years from now, but the secret is that you can train to become the way you want during that journey rather than just let change happen to you. In cultivation you grab hold of that process and orient yourself to an ideal.

A noble objective is essentially to create/engineer/bring about better states of being for ourselves and others, an absence of suffering and surfeit of joy remembering that we are all the same Shakti. We are all brothers and sisters so you should follow the Golden Rule and not impose any harm or negativity on others because of your personal pursuits. As Jainism teaches, non-violence should extend to all sentient beings. You may pursue any goal you want in your existence but don't do so in a way that hurts anyone else. In fact, if you're not warm and loving with others you won't enjoy life. This is a reflection of the Golden Rule of not doing to others what you don't want done to you and treating others how you would like to be treated.

For life, the golden mean of "moderation in all things" also applies rather than going to untenable extremes in whatever you do. Furthermore, you also need to develop wisdom (prudence) in order to make proper determinations. For instance, if you make the mistake of identifying joy and happiness in life with transient pleasant sensations (such as temporary emotions of excitement, highs, thrills, orgasms, elation, etcetera) then you will pursue them constantly throughout life, one after the other, rather than seeking a significant meaning. Then you will never find peace, tranquility, and contentment, which is really what you are seeking. You'll become like a dark Dionysus who is always seeking after short-term pleasures but because they never satisfy him, ends up devoting his life to an endless string of empty, meaningless orgies of drunken revelry.

It's a lousy strategy of going through life satisfying the whims or desires of the moment and pursuing pleasure for transient feel-good happiness rather than learning control of your mind and mental processes. Constantly pursuing those whims that are just bioelectrical flickerings within your brain can lead you into permanent unfortunate circumstances. It can create the habits of hedonism and self-indulgence. What you should be pursuing is the

higher and more satisfying objective of *meaning* through the dedication of your thoughts and behavior to meaningful activities and goals of higher purpose. The world you see is actually an ever-flowing stream of thoughts, and it's a stupid, defeatist strategy to use that consciousness of yours to be chasing after effervescent thoughts that cannot provide lasting satisfaction within that ever-changing stream when other strategies are much, much better.

Any life that pursues pleasure and pleasant sensations as its primary goal – rather than the deep satisfaction that comes from meaning – will never find an end to this pursuit. What happens is that people on this road end up craving more and more of them, and with each round you will want them larger, bigger and even more revolutionary. This type of pursuit is not the key to bliss in life, nor joy and happiness either. Yes, you can be happy and experience joy along the pathway of your life, but destiny is such that nothing is permanent. You cannot say that you won't ever suffer in life, and there are consequences to always pursuing pure comfort.

Therefore, you must accept the fact that enjoyable mental states, fine mental states, happy mental states and so forth will always eventually be replaced by others, meaning lesser states that are not happy, not fine, not enjoyable, not fulfilling. Happiness is fleeting, but it indeed exists for as long as it lasts. It is futile and errant to try to cling to it as something permanent, and to run after a state of permanent happiness that can never be achieved. You have to train consciousness to deal with life and improve things for the better when you can, and to deal with misfortune and pain, suffering, affliction when it arises. Suffering is the default condition for life, not happiness, so we need a strategy to deal with it.

The right pursuit is to seek to develop internal peacefulness, tranquility, serenity and equanimity that is called bliss (peace of mind). There is existence, aliveness and consciousness/awareness, but also harmonious mental peace rather than irritation, afflictions, frustrations, or excessive neuroticism (moodiness, worry, fear, anger, envy, jealousy, guilt, loneliness, depression, etcetera). You do not want to destroy consciousness, therefore you still have your existence as a being. However, consciousness comes with afflictions and defilements, which are unavoidable, inevitable. Therefore you must in life pursue a course of mental training that reduces mental afflictions and defilements as much as possible, and teaches you how to deal with them and produce better mental states. The goal is pristinely aware consciousness that can use and enjoy all its capabilities without discomforts or irritations.

This mental ideal of clear and capable consciousness is called equanimity or lucidity. Some schools call this transparent luminosity, a mind like a mirror, mirror-like wisdom or pure reflexive awareness. It means there is presence, apprehension and understanding – knowing or

Knowledge and thus a field of experience of many qualities – yet there is no attachment to the thought-stream which is also lacking in disturbances, defilements or afflictions. It is a calm, quiet, clean feast of lucidity and subtle bliss. In this state, your mind does not flutter upon contacting worldly contingencies. Everywhere moving happily, this is the highest blessing. Religions and spiritual schools teach you to be mindful of what you are doing every moment because the mindfulness they teach is exactly this - concentration without distraction. With mindfulness you experience the focus of the mind without elaboration.

The terms mental radiance, splendor, brilliance, or effulgence capture the same notion of pristine clear understanding, which is once again the ideal of pristine clarity without irritations, interruptions or uncomfortable feelings. Sometimes this lucidity is called “immaculate consciousness,” “illumination” or “the light of the mind.” People also use the words “pure and clear” to denote this mental clarity, which is also called bliss. All these things just mean extremely clear consciousness producing Knowledge.

The general idea is to pursue/cultivate a calm mental state, sharp and aware – free of defilements, afflictions and irritations, and without distractions such as uncomfortable body feelings, negative sensations and bad emotions – where you are truly awake and aware with clear and open cognizance rather than sleepwalking through life like a preprogrammed robot following its many instructions (conditioning). Spiritual schools teach you mindfulness, which is to be mindful of what you are doing every moment, because mindfulness is exactly this – concentration without distraction. Mindfulness means to be focused in the present. Paying attention is being aware of what you are doing rather than distracted with wandering thoughts. With mindfulness you experience the contents of the mind without elaboration such as other afflictions or defilements that typically characterize the wandering mind. If and when they arise, you use expedients to banish or manage them. Being focused on the present moment is called calming the mind.

The key is not to seek happiness but rather to seek the mastery of the mind and of course the absence of pain, suffering, mental afflictions and miserable states of neurosis that irritate, distract and disquiet you. This mimics the fact that the original nature is free of pollution. If you get rid of negative states of mind then neutral states of mind like peace and equanimity, or positive states like joy, happiness, and bliss, are what is left. Hence, the more you pursue eliminating suffering the more you approach reaching joy or the comfortable equanimity of bliss, which has just been described. It is not a state of non-existence or unawareness but a combination of existence, consciousness and comfort that functions with vivid cognizant awareness.

If sadness and misery arise within the mind then this is proper. There is

nothing wrong with this. The pristine mind should experience whatever naturally arises within it with full attention of the experience. When you are sad then be sad, when angry be angry, when in love be in love. Whatever arises are the contents of the mind, and you should experience them. However, the path of cultivation means that you have decided to learn how to eliminate unwanted mental afflictions, how to focus and concentrate, how to stay undistracted, how to manage your emotions so that you think and act with wisdom, and various other mental skills. The path of cultivation means learning how to use this rare but marvelous gift of consciousness. Suffering can never be totally abandoned, so the cultivation path is learning how to use the mind, and the idea of eliminating suffering is just one of the major objectives.

The hero in life is the man or woman who voluntarily undertakes a cultivation path of transformation to master their mind according to their will. He or she learns how to quiet their afflictions on demand and dissolve their defilements, to get them under control, and thereby can experience peace, tranquility and contentment as well as joy, happiness and bliss in whatever that comes. It is not that they attain success, achievement or happiness in life but *learn to master their property of consciousness*. Then they can handle whatever comes. Also, they don't remain passive but strive to produce better conditions for all.

You exist with cognizance, rather than non-exist due to extinction or the absence of consciousness that would render you no knowledge of your existence. You are living and aware, so that means you are conscious, sentient, and can produce Knowledge or knowing. And when you are experiencing equanimity within that active consciousness, without suffering or irritations/affliction, that comfort is blissful. Bliss is not a state of no-thought such as deep sleep or coma and so on where there is an absence of the operational weaving of the mind because then your existence is irrelevant.

We are talking about always experiencing active consciousness, alive awareness, pristine sentient cognizance, which is all the effulgence of the mind in being able to create a clear field of experience with qualities. This is also called lucidity and radiant illumination. Thus we have Hinduism's *satchit-ananda*, or existence, consciousness, and bliss as the ideal of human beingness. There is the presence of existence and consciousness, meaning that there is the pattern of a body vehicle with certain properties and the I-thought arises within it, thus making it a *sentient* being – a being with consciousness. It enjoys a field of experience of qualities due to a mind that reflects phenomena due to its abilities. And, at optimal functioning within that mind-stream the taint of suffering and affliction within both mind and body are absent, which is peacefulness and physical bliss. The I-thought is there, of course, but not overtly obvious because the mental defilements

within the mind are quiet, so the mind is in a state of being centered and focused without distractions, a state of presence where there is lucid clarity of the mind while thinking and the world appear within consciousness. Since there are few mental afflictions, this is also called “concentration” or “flow,” a state of “no mind” or “experiencing the moment” due to vivid clarity, mental quiet and lucidity. “No mind” doesn’t mean having no thoughts because that’s the state of sleeping or non-existence.

There is also a strong *feeling of being alive*, or feeling that you are alive. This is either a fullness of Qi, or a subtle sense of physical bliss that enervates all your Qi channels, or a vivid but subtle physical sensation of aliveness throughout your body that is so comfortable that the body’s presence is almost forgotten because its energy flows so well, its organs and muscles are so healthy and well-aligned (due to stretching, exercise, detoxification, proper diet and nutrition, health, etcetera), all its cells are firing with flow, and thus the feeling of the body is so comfortable that at times it seems almost non-existent (you don’t notice it but notice a fullness in the feeling “I feel most alive”). This is the state of “no extremities” or “no body” in the “no mind no body” of Zen. The body has “no partitions” due to excellent Qi flow, which is the same meaning as emptiness. All its parts feel comfortable, light and agile. They are threaded together into a body unity that is a harmonious organic whole. Because consciousness exists, consciousness can through physical cultivation of the body pursue pleasurable physical sensations of comfort and bliss other than just mental happiness, peacefulness, or bliss.

Thus you have the spiritual aspiration of *sat-chit-ananda* or “existence, consciousness and bliss” as the objective of your highest experience, experiential state or state of experiential being. It is the objective of optimizing the state of mind and body to be at their very best.

In Chinese this is “Shen Xin Ping Heng,” which means “body and mind balanced.” It also means that body and mind are unified, body and mind are one. The Chinese don’t mention existence (*sat*) because beingness goes without saying, and mind refers to consciousness (*chit*) while body refers to bliss (*ananda*). You cultivate your body and thereby adjust it gradually until it reaches an always and ever comfortable relaxed state of health and energy where your Qi/Prana circulates freely, smoothly and the body feeling is as if forgotten. This is “bliss” or ananda, and is achieved because your Qi is able to reach everywhere inside you. It flows so freely inside you because of the diet, exercise, meditation and *nei-gong* you have cultivated, that it feels as if your entire physical body disappears. Tension within your body will have been dissolved due to your cultivation work, and you will find it comfortable in whatever position you assume. Body and mind therefore “become one” because the body can follow the commands of the mind with grace and ease, and because the Qi that animates the body

and mind flows freely everywhere without obstruction. You have to be healthy to reach this state of body and mind.

The mind is peaceful but alert, pristine with clarity but lacking in disturbances. In spiritual circles this is sometimes called a state of calm *concentration* because disturbances, such as afflictions and irritations, are absent within the thought-stream, which is thus considered pure or empty or pristine (even though there are still thoughts of experiencing the world which requires the I-thought, discrimination and so on), but essentially it means that there is a clear mind and emotional balance. Thus the *balanced mind* is pristine awareness, purity of consciousness, being centered, flow, or the state of “state of presence” without distractions inferred within *sat-chit-ananda*. It is the state of always “experiencing the moment” or “enjoying the moment” rather than being entrained in thoughts and swept away from presence. You experience the *moment* due to vivid mental clarity, mental quiet and lucidity. This doesn’t mean you don’t have any thoughts but is called “emptiness” because distractions other than what the mind puts its attention upon are not present. Hence you can be concentrating on a problem with lots of thinking and still be in the state of emptiness, clarity, pristine awareness or presence.

In terms of the original nature taken as the sole entity, it *is* existence or being even though devoid of all phenomena, like empty space. This is *sat*. Its manifestation of Shakti produces countless sentient beings that have consciousness, thus making Parabrahman sentient because Shakti becomes sentient. This is *chit*. And because within Parabrahman itself there is no movement, taint or pollution of its purity, this equanimity is bliss or *ananda*. The sentient beings within Shakti pursue happiness, comfort, peace, no-suffering or bliss. Furthermore, in the field of manifestation, emanation or Shakti, all things are equally the same as not truly being *real* living beings (they are just manifestations of Shakti), and so suffering and joy do not truly exist in any real sense but are actually just neutral processes that *apparently exist* along with everything else. This essential neutrality or lack of a true nature or true property means bliss or equanimity once again.

The pursuit of joy over the years will never give you anything other than a sequence of fleeting moments of pleasant sensations and happy emotions that are unsatisfactory in the long-run since they are temporary and do not stay. Furthermore, by pursuing the novelty highs of alcohol, drugs, gambling, gossiping, abusiveness of power, shopping, risky sex and so forth you often lose self-control, and the substance or experience claims control of your consciousness instead. Any debt you create will end up controlling your life as well. As a human you definitely need to pursue pleasure at times because you aren’t a robotic automaton without feelings, nor should you try to become like the Vulcan Spock of *Star Trek* who tries to suppress them. However, you should not be pursuing the pathways of

intoxication (alcohol and drugs), adrenaline-rush excitement (gambling, fighting), risky sex (that might sicken you, kill you or destroy your family), sadistic oppressive power over others (physical or mental abuse), excessive shopping (and other activities causing debt), an unhealthy obsession, excessive interest in gossip or watching people fight and so forth.

Emotions are needed for your survival, which is why evolution has given them to you, but you cannot pursue the wrong pathways that lead to decline or pursue comfort and pleasure full-time or your life will have no meaning other than pursuing happiness and joy at the expense of everything else. Your memories won't even be able to recall most of those joyous experiences anyway, however real and alive you felt at the moment of those experiences. Since mere memories of past pleasures will not satisfy you, you will then always need to chase after new and more pleasant experiences if you think this is what life is about, and then you will be on an endless treadmill. You will have doomed yourself to an endless form of suffering because you will have entered a bottomless pit that never finds any conclusion of satiation or contentment. Only through dispassion can you become released from an eternity of craving after pleasurable desires where they control you, without end. Only through mental detachment from and purification of your states of consciousness can you find contentment and fulfillment.

In actual fact, the more you crave joy and happiness the more stressed and dissatisfied you will become because you will never attain any lasting peace along these lines. If you wanted to pursue anything mentally it should be continuous bliss or contentment where the mind is not irritated by miscellaneous unwanted thoughts and afflictions bound to arise. Instead, when you desire and crave them without experiencing them you become like a junkie seeking his next fix who hopes it's a higher high because the previous ones don't satisfy him anymore.

Now, if to some extent you extinguished your self-illusion by recognizing what you really and truly are, which is the view of enlightenment as to your true self-nature, you would still experience joy in life when it comes to yourself. In fact, even more because you will find an emptiness or detachment of mental freedom because you don't cling so much to things. You would also certainly be free to pursue joy, pleasure and your inherent desires as you should with moderation, but you would stop making them the entire purpose of life since that is a fruitless impossible task. Mastery of the mind, body and behavior is the important thing because that skill will serve you through countless incarnations.

Furthermore, if you got deeply involved with acts of service that represented meaning to you, rather than just set out to pursue your own joy in life, then through that pursuit of achievement you might actually silence some of the pains and afflictions we all feel because those purposes will

make any suffering in life worthwhile. This is the path of the Buddha and Bodhisattva.

Whatever experiences you pursue for joy, thrills, excitement or elation will not give you lasting satisfaction or contentment in the end. The more you devote yourself to chasing them the more dissatisfied you will become. We need a different strategy, based on higher insight and wiser thinking that leads to a better understanding of the problem and goal if we are to ever ultimately find some type of meaning to life and satisfying contentment. One secret is to certainly jump out of the endless hamster's wheel of seeking pleasurable sensations and emotional candy. The universe is filled with transient, ever-changing conditions so pursuing pleasure is doomed to failure. What we should be pursuing instead of a sequence of ephemeral pleasures is the longer-lasting goal of *meaning*.

King Solomon of the Bible *Ecclesiastes* (2:1-11) commented, "I said to myself, 'Come now, I will test you with pleasure to find out what is good.' But that also proved to be meaningless. I tried cheering myself with wine, and embracing folly – my mind still guiding me with wisdom. I wanted to see what was good for people to do under the heavens during the few days of their lives. I undertook great projects: I built houses for myself and planted vineyards. I made gardens and parks and planted all kinds of fruit trees in them. I made reservoirs to water groves of flourishing trees. I bought male and female slaves and had other slaves who were born in my house. I also owned more herds and flocks than anyone in Jerusalem before me. I amassed silver and gold for myself, and the treasure of kings and provinces. I acquired male and female singers, and a harem as well – the delight of a man's heart. I became greater by far than anyone in Jerusalem before me. In all this my wisdom stayed with me. I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure. My heart took delight in all my labor, and this was the reward for all my toil. Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun."

Therefore the correct aspiration/objective is to pursue something different. We need to master our minds and reduce our craving for pleasant sensations, as Buddhism and Hinduism teach, and not allow them to control our lives as Stoicism teaches. We should allow them to occur when they do but also allow them to pass away as they must without us running after them. *Yes, it is proper to pursue pleasant sensations since as living sentient beings we are constructed to do so, but we shouldn't allow them to control our lives, especially since they are actually just transient, ephemeral, meaningless vibrations in the brain.* Remember that they disappear as quickly as they arise, and even our memories of their pleasantness will not quench our thirst and craving for more. Think of all the discomfort and suffering we undergo for ephemeral, meaningless vibrations that occur in our mind!

If you have a family then of course you should pursue pleasant things for them. And you should seek *Kama* for yourself as well, for we all need comfort, pleasantness, self-esteem and gratification in order to live. But we shouldn't lose ourselves *in addictions to pleasant sensory pursuits, mental novelties and adrenaline-rushes such as the intoxication state of alcohol, the excitement of gambling or fighting, the sensations of drugs, the highs of sexual activity, the novelty of shopping (that creates debts), the stimulation of stimulants, the sadistic pleasure from abusing others with your power or watching them be abused, the feeling of being clever from engaging in trickiness, an unhealthy obsession, and so on.* Excessive pursuits of pleasure in its various forms have led many men and women to permanently ruin their lives through harmful indulgence and resulted in poor health, unpayable debt, unwanted children, broken social bonds and so forth. We just should not do things that make us feel weak because that takes away from the strength we have in living according to what we know is right.

Since the typical human reaction to happy sensations and joy is not satisfaction but additional craving, greed and desire for more, we need to learn how to become satisfied with moderation, and train our minds so that we can find contentment in acceptance rather than feel a need for more stimulation. Moderation is one skill to learn, and detachment is another, and being able to cut off desire entirely is yet another useful power of the mind.

We surely want to experience times of joy and pleasure in life – there is absolutely nothing wrong with *Kama* nor the pursuit of *Kama* because we all need it just as we need sleep and days of rest. Without emotions we would just be like thinking machines so the pursuit of *Kama* is a necessary part of our existence. We actually need positive emotions as a reward when we make progress in our lives and accomplish milestones of achievement as we march towards our goals, otherwise we'll abandon our goals because of all the obstacles and problems. However, the right objective in life is not to pursue those emotions but to pursue higher meaning in whatever you do, and to pursue objectives that make the world a better place as your legacy. You must always be careful as to what you are ultimately setting out to achieve and manifest in the world for yourself and others. You should always keep a higher mission in mind because that makes life worthwhile. The true end target is the elimination of suffering for yourself and others so that more and more individuals – the other parts of Shakti with consciousness – can find mental peace, equanimity and what we call bliss. Bliss satiates you so through bliss you can finally find comfort, peace, contentment and fulfillment. The peaceful equanimity of bliss imitates our original nature.

The conditioning inside each of us is pretty well set and rarely has algorithms that consistently produce mental peace and bliss. But that is what cultivation is all about, which is to retrain the mind so that we can

consistently experience those states. It's also about ennoblement, spiritualization, and purifying our baser nature so that we can frequently touch the inner purity of ourselves. It includes improving all our common faults, bad habits, negative mental blueprints, mental dysfunctions, and faulty action patterns and tendencies. In short, we need to conquer consciousness to become its lord and master, and conquering it means purifying it of ilk by replacing what's errant with what's better. In the best of worlds, the definition of "what's better" means operating processes that are wonderful, optimal, or ultimate in excellence ... behavioral functioning patterns that are transcendent.

In trying to accomplish this some problems will definitely confront us. It has taken a lifetime to create a self-image and personality made up of your habits and attitudes that make you "act like you," but your character also contains errors and deficiencies with room for improvement. Your prior conditioning that has produced your personality runs your mental processing algorithms and is hard to change. Afflictions and negative emotions always normally arise within your mental operating system, especially when we face adverse circumstances, but we cannot let them defeat us and have to work to get rid of this programming. A major problem is that internal afflictions (negative states of mind) will automatically arise, or our consciousness will operate sub-optimally with faulty processes. We have to learn how to change these tendencies.

Our behavior is our deliberate thoughts expressed, although of course some behavior is unthinkingly automatic because it is the product of the subconscious. What is in your subconscious, namely what is in your conditioning that is essentially the patterns/contents established within your neurons? You can't read what's stored in your neurons as behavioral defaults so you can only tell by your behavior, which shows us how your brain has responded. However bad your behavior is, cultivation teaches us that better patterns of consciousness, better methods of thinking, and better emotional control processes are possible. We can learn them and thereby instill better processes within us as our defaults. Furthermore, installing better processes and reactions will uplift our fortunes.

Take something as simple as your calligraphy, your body movements, how you answer the telephone, how you dress, how you drive a car, or even home cooking. These activities can be described as coarse, simple, ugly, rude, sloppy, beautiful, elegant, or even noble. In what direction do you want such skills and behaviors of yours to develop? Religions place the focus on having us develop our character, values and virtues but there are other areas of life, and other skills and knowledge to develop and master too.

Buddhism says we should vow to master all *dharmas* because we have a lot of time ahead of us as we achieve or live in the higher transcendental

bodies. But what for? What's the ultimate purpose? You must decide this for yourself.

It turns out we have discovered a set of cultivation technologies where you can unlock higher transcendental bodies from the dense structure of the material body, and they will live much longer times in higher realms. Since the universe is filled with life, no doubt beings from other world systems have discovered the same finding. The universe is in fact populated by countless inhabited worlds and higher realms of being.

When a body in a much higher realm finally gives out and dies, its vital energy matrix can be reborn in another body vehicle since there is enough structural integrity remaining for it to be recycled. Buddhas and Bodhisattvas help oversee this process of reincarnation so that living entities are not simply lost as normally happens when matter usually deteriorates. If the body is high enough, it can carry with it some skills and character traits to a new life and even remember past lives if memory remnants are carried over. Thus, there is a greater degree of continuity when higher bodies are reborn but for the human level we forget absolutely everything. Nevertheless we do carry forward some of our skills and personality traits that are deeply impressed within our Qi.

Such higher bodies can enter into the bodies of denser beings and because they are more subtle/ethereal can override the energetic processes within those lower bodies, including the processes of consciousness since they depend upon the vital energy of the body, namely your Qi/Prana. This provides higher spiritual beings with the powers of overwriting or altering our consciousness.

As many sutras explain, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas use such powers to help sentient beings since they are suffering. All sentient beings come from the same original nature and the same Shakti so share the same body, hence it makes sense to help a different part of yourself. Or, you can cultivate these bodies and put off reincarnation for a very long time to escape the lower realms of continuous birth and death. Cultivating the transcendental bodies and going off to live in a pure realm for your own happiness is what Arhats do, not what Buddhas and Bodhisattvas do, but that choice is entirely up to you. If you earn the merit you have the choice.

Christianity says you have to expand your soul in order to accept all people, paths and faiths. One of the reasons for such open-mindedness is because you will become able to know the mind of all beings if you achieve the higher body attainments. This includes the ability to know the pain of all (lower-bodied) beings. Wanting to live in peace, that's why some Arhats go off to live in far away higher realms forever. If you get to the point where you feel the pain of the world the only proper response is to respond with compassionate relief, but compassionate acts guided by wisdom and knowledge. Love without wisdom can result in catastrophe, so there must

always be an offset or system of checks and balances to prevent you from making the mistake of going too far in any direction.

In the *Vimalakirti Sutra*, Vimalakirti said to the Wisdom Buddha Manjusri, “I am sick because all living beings are sick.”

Elder Paisios of Mount Athos said that he would feel the pain of society containing all people’s problems, and because people were unhappy we should pray for everyone.

Nan Huai-Chin said to his student Sami Kuo, “Do you know why I’m sick? I’m sick because all the people of the world are sick.”

The Sufis say that when you attain union with the universal body you will know the thoughts and feeling of beings. If they are joyful you will feel joy and if they are sorrowful you will feel sorrow.

In his book *The Orthodox Way*, Bishop Kallistos Ware said this about a *staretz*, which is an enlightened Christian orthodox monk – “He makes his children whole by praying constantly for them, by identifying himself with them, by accepting their joys and sorrows as his own, by taking on his shoulders the burden of their guilt or anxiety. No one can be a *staretz* if he does not pray constantly for others.” This means taking on their burdens as his own and using his various bodies to help them with his powers.

Nisargadatta Maharaj would say, “Every existence is my existence, every consciousness is my consciousness, every sorrow is my sorrow and every joy is my joy – this is universal life.”

Nisargadatta actually told us what he was doing when using his higher bodies to know people’s innermost minds – their thoughts and emotions. He said, “I find that somehow, by shifting the focus of attention, I become the very thing I look at, and experience the kind of consciousness it has; I become the inner witness of the thing. I call this capacity of entering other focal points of consciousness, love; you may give it any name you like.”

In other words, out of love he used his higher bodies to find out people’s problems and then used them to intervene in various ways to help people. He said, “I find that somehow, by shifting the focus of attention,” because he wanted to hide the fact that he was using transcendental bodies, as every master does. He called his behavior love, but you might alternatively call his behavior compassion. However, Confucius also called this “loving the people,” or “teaching the people” and the *Avatamsaka Sutra* of Buddhism introduced countless Buddhas and Bodhisattvas who enter into us to do this.

Milarepa, a great Tibetan sage, once said, “Long accustomed to contemplating compassion, I have forgotten all difference between self and other.” He also said, “Just as I instinctively reach out to touch and heal a wound in my leg as part of my own body, so too I reach out to touch and heal the pain in another as part of this body.” This is exactly the same thing as Nisargadatta’s method of intervention to help others.

In Buddhism, this sort of compassionate help is symbolized by Kuan Yin, the “Goddess of Mercy.” Kuan Yin is another name for the Buddha Avalokitesvara who is represented as both male and female, and whose name means “one who hears the cries of the world.” With his higher transcendental bodies, Kuan Yin is always listening to the cries of pain/suffering in the world, and using his *nirmanakaya* emanations responds to rescue anyone in need who calls upon his/her name. Incidentally, this is why Indian spiritual masters sometimes give themselves long names with unusual epitaphs (Sri Sri Sri Sadguru, Sri Mahareesh Maharaj Mahayogi, etc.), because in reciting it or mentioning the unusual sounds/name they can sense/hear it through the clutter of all the other thoughts in the lower realms and then check things out so they can respond accordingly.

This is what anyone with a higher transcendental body, who can give off countless *nirmanakaya* projections in all directions, can do. It’s up to you what you choose to do once you attain the nearly immortal higher spiritual bodies. For instance, many very kind spiritual masters created prayers and mantras so that you can request their aid. They let it be known that they could be called upon to render assistance for certain types of situations because they want to help by rendering assistance if possible, but of course there is a karmic limit as to whatever aid they can provide. Nevertheless it is as Elder Prophyrios the Christian saint said, “When we call upon a saint to help us, he or she will help us at the very moment that we ask for it. When we say for example, ‘St. Nicholas, help me,’ St. Nicholas can help you and at the same time help all those who call upon him, regardless of where they are.” This explains the use of *nirmanakaya* emanations exactly.

Quoting Sri Nisargadatta once again from *I am That*, he said, “There are people in the world who do more good than all the statesmen and philanthropists put together. They radiate light and peace with no intention or knowledge. When others tell them about the miracles they worked, they also are wonder struck. Yet, taking nothing as their own, they are neither proud, nor do they crave for reputation. They are just unable to desire anything for themselves, not even the joy of helping others. Knowing that God is good they are at peace.”

How can you cultivate a mind like this? What virtues must you cultivate to prepare yourself for being able to know the minds of all beings, which is a Supra-Causal and Immanence body attainment? What virtues must you cultivate to be able to help countless people?

First, let’s talk about helping others. In order to want to help others you need compassion, kindness or love as an internal motivation, otherwise you won’t do anything due to indifference. In order to render the right type of aid you also need to cultivate wisdom to know how to proceed. You need the right actions for accomplishing what you want, which requires understanding and a plan. You need knowledge to know the right method

of what to do and the skills to do it.

Those who become Buddhas or Bodhisattvas become dedicated to various kind, compassionate, helpful missions that they assume as personal responsibilities, vows and commitments. This dedication to the welfare of others, to being helpful to others in pain and those inundated with difficult problems and challenges, becomes one of their purposes in life.

We prepare members of society to be able to perform such service by stressing altruism and civic virtues in our religious and educational curriculums. We teach that people should sacrifice themselves by working for the good not just of their family but for the community as well. The emphasis on the community and intra-community cooperation reflects the fact that we can only live through dependence upon a large network of other people and their efforts to provide food, sanitation, services, justice, government and so forth. We can only survive through a large network of social dependencies just our personal existence depends on many universal interrelationships of co-dependent determination.

We can call the willingness to sacrifice ourselves for others “love,” “compassion” or “altruism,” and if you decide to make altruistic efforts that involve sacrifice on behalf of others you should do so as wisely as possible since you do so at a loss. You shouldn’t simply sacrifice yourself without wisdom, without taking into account your own flourishing, happiness and existence.

We might, through mental rehearsal (visualization practice), even train ourselves to become better at contributing to society in some particular compassionate way, or becoming more of a certain way in terms of adopting personality traits, but you must reinforce mental rehearsal patterns by acting that way in real life. In *With Winning in Mind*, Olympic Gold Medalist Lanny Bassham teaches that whenever you actually perform deeds in line with whatever you practiced visualized doing then you should say to yourself, “That’s the way I am” or “That’s like me!” to solidify a new self-image of being that way.

In *Visualization Power* (and *Sport Visualization for the Elite Athlete*) I detailed all the various ways people use visualization to help reprogram themselves to develop new skills or become a new way personality-wise, in effect “changing their properties” since from the enlightenment view they are just “living objects with particular characteristics,” but I left out this instructions to recite this powerful affirmation “That’s like me!” or “That’s the way I am” after actually acting out the way you imagined becoming through visualization, mental rehearsal or other training methods. It is a method of mentally sealing in that new property you wish to have. Olympic athletes have found it helps to say this after they make the perfect shot or execute a move in the perfect way they practiced envisioning, so you should always use these affirmations too after you catch yourself performing deeds

or exhibiting qualities in line with your personal aspirations of becoming a new way.

To acquire a new skill or become a certain virtuous way that expands your character or personality and goes beyond your current self-image requires patience and persistence of commitment. When we do decide to change in a certain direction, or help others in a certain way, we need to keep working at it until we achieve the result we want. Persistence – not giving up – lets us run many experiments to produce incremental improvements. Not all problems, challenges or changes can be accomplished through one fell swoop, so we need to recognize that helping others or changing ourselves is usually a commitment.

This means we must at times cultivate the patience not to rush matters in life, whether it is for personal development or accomplishment. We need to cultivate forbearance to stand frustrations, annoyances, challenges and irritations while we are working for change. At the same time we need to cultivate diligence and carefulness so that we do things properly. Helpful interventions are a matter of how you do things, which is why I often criticize devas for their lack of a double tap (and just skillfulness in general). They often rush in to give people dreams or visions, for instance, but fail to finish off that intervention by also providing an interpretation of what it means so that the recipient takes the right direction afterward. Too many people go astray for lack of the double tap. They undergo some spiritual experience and then are misled down false trails misinterpreting what it means.

This brings up another issue, which is that we must be careful that the trajectory of our aid goes according to plans and is actually beneficial. We have to measure how things are going, and monitor progress to see if they are on track. We need to create the habit of vigilant introspection, asking “Am I doing the right thing?” Once again, this is the power of detachment rather than entrainment, which means becoming too engrossed in a situation or bound to a stream of thoughts. If things start to go wrong we need to step aside, introspect, and then correct and adjust matters.

We must especially correct our own errant tendencies and dysfunctions so that we don’t repeat errors. This is why some religions emphasize confession and review so that we catch, admit, repent and reform our errors. They also stress the penance of fixing things when our behavior and activities go wrong. Whether or not there is such a thing as karma, it is our responsibility to fix whatever we break.

Whether for personal goals or helping others, the necessity of altering our path of accomplishment reflects the 8M Method for changing your fortune and destiny revealed within *Quick, Fast, Done*. Four of the eight Ms are the requests for transcendental aid accomplished through Mantra, Meditation, a spiritual Master and Merit. The other four Ms include the

skills necessary for worldly accomplishment, which are as follows:

“The First M you need in order to achieve a goal in business or life is Motivation, or the passion and strong desire to change things for the better. You cannot just magically attract success to yourself through some hocus-pocus type of manifestation that just involves wishful thinking. You must make things happen, and to do that you need a level of desire, inspiration and motivation that is strong enough to keep you working on creating that new future.

“Motivation is the spark of ignition that initially gets things going and which also keeps you moving forward. Without sufficient motivation the entire process of accomplishment will never ignite and never be completed.

“Don’t expect that you can just wish something into manifestation as people claimed in *The Secret*. You need work to create a new future, a new life. It is not enough just to think it; you need to act and to act you need motivation to power you forward.

“The Second M that one needs is a Model, Method or Master plan of action for accomplishing that change you desire. The fastest way to do that is to find other successful people and model (copy) them for the progress steps you need to make. You model the successful masters who are already the best at it by finding out exactly what they did to get that way, and then do the same things.

“You definitely need a method to achieve any great objective. You need a systematic plan involving daily, weekly or monthly disciplined effort, i.e. what we have covered in the earlier chapters. You need a plan of directions for getting to where you want to go and then you must align yourself with this plan of action for success.

“Once the motivation and plan are ready, the Third M that you need is to actually start Moving forward with Massive intelligent action. Now is the time to work smart and work hard. As Napoleon Hill said, immediately start moving forward after you have made your plans even if you don’t feel absolutely ready. You need to employ massive, intelligent and disciplined action in pursuit of your desired destination once you decide what it is.

“Once started, you will need to keep the momentum (progress) going, which usually requires some type of management method to ensure that you keep on a road of effective action until your goal is accomplished. You ultimately need perseverance and grit to keep pursuing your target, which requires some type of management system to keep you marching forward on track. Without some management system that keeps you locked on target and moving in that direction, you are likely to be defeated by feelings such as boredom, frustration, or even indifference that are likely to arise along any long path to success.

“The Fourth M is that you need a Monitoring system to measure your progress at advancement and keep you on track to your desired destination.

You should track your progress using a feedback system that compares how you are doing with what is expected. A measuring system (such as a monthly ledgering journal) will keep record of the progress you make and milestones you accomplish, and by frequently reviewing it you will be able to spot when you are off target. As Ernest Hemingway said, “Keep track of your output - kidding yourself is for amateurs.”

“Are you staying on course or drifting off course? Are you getting closer to your goals or moving farther away? Are you achieving the sub-goals and tasks you set for yourself? Are you making errors in execution?”

These are great instructions regarding the method of accomplishment, but they miss the heart of the issue. The real issue is how to raise compassion in the first place that would prompt one to benevolently act on behalf of others, especially when the task may be burdensome and onerous, fraught with loss or obstacles. Mother Teresa used to say, “If I look at the mass, I will never act. If I look at the one, I will.” This is the matter of becoming a more noble human being. Everyone should ask themselves, “What attitude must I cultivate that changes me so that I naturally give rise to the desire to connect with others and lend them aid rather than give in to criticism, contempt or indifference? What mindset or virtues must I cultivate to be able to look upon perfect strangers with respect and as potential friends rather than viewing them with derision, malevolence, resentment or condescension?”

One of the attitudes you must learn to cultivate to become enlightened is open-mindedness. To be able to accept what you see in the minds of beings, and being able to know their entire past history of secrets, sins and misdoings, you need to cultivate open-mindedness, great tolerance and acceptance. This is related to patience and endurance because while it is often easy to accept new insights and ideas it is difficult to accept and bear irritations despite open-mindedness.

While you must cultivate an open mind willing to accept everything, for the reality of situations is just what is, you must also take a stand when you see something wrong. You often must take a stand against what some people say are culturally relative traits we should just accept, for these people forget the Golden Rule. Being open-minded does not mean to accept things that are errant that can be changed such as accepting errant customs or traditions because “their properness is culturally relative.”

It is wrong to cut off a woman’s clitoris as done in Islam. It is wrong to do foot-binding and cripple women as was done in China. It is wrong to burn widows as was done in India, or to bury servants with their master when he dies as was done in many ancient cultures. Is slavery now to be permitted because it is culturally acceptable somewhere? We have struggled for thousands of years to get to where we are today.

Killing, stealing, lying and so forth are some of the standard behaviors

recognized as universal virtues. There is a reason they are emphasized by the world's religions. If they became the predominant, permanent character traits everywhere we would all be residing in a living hell. Some behaviors are wrong and you have to take a stand against them. The law says some things are wrong, such as murder, and you should say some cultural behaviors are wrong too.

Then again, because you will have this capability to see others' minds that others will not, you also need to cultivate humility so that you do not become an arrogant person who only sees the faults of others and does not correct his own errors and dysfunctions. You need to cultivate tolerance and love. We all have afflictions within ourselves that can become malevolent monsters if we are given power over others, the ability to strike down those we don't like, resent or fear and so forth. We all bear traces of ill-will towards others that can cause dramatically negative behavior on our part, whether by small words or big deeds. If our personal afflictions are not eliminated, managed, controlled or brought into alignment with purity and wholeness then we can become monsters in the world if we attain power over others. This is why self-control and the emphasis on transforming yourself into an individual of virtue and purity are emphasized on the cultivation pathway. Ego, conceit, pride and arrogance especially stand in the way of self-correction and transformation.

Pride and conceit are common stains of many enlightened people who become arrogant because of their status, and therefore humility is emphasized by many religions, especially Christianity in its Hesychast Prayer ("Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me a sinner"). The entire story of the war within the Indian epic, the *Mahabharata*, concerns various high status individuals who put dharma and righteousness aside, and so had to be defeated in battle because they had a degree of power and refused to submit to what is right. Most people in life become arrogant and overconfident due to either superior skills they developed or accumulations of money, power, status and resources, but these are all transient accomplishments and attainments for a non-egoed being to become conceited about. Nevertheless, many men and women come to think of themselves as preeminent and then take liberties in life that end up hurting or destroying others because they never think of the impact of their actions on others but simply pursue what *they* want.

On these matters of pride and arrogance Confucius commented,

- If I am walking with two other men, each of them will serve as my teacher. I will pick out the good points of the one and imitate them and the bad points of the other and correct them in myself.
- When you see a good person, think of becoming like him/her. When you see someone not so good, reflect on your own weak points.

- Attack the evil that is within yourself, rather than attacking the evil that is in others.

Jesus said that before we cast a stone at another we better examine our own faults first, thus emphasizing the principle of self-reflection and self-correction. The ancient Greeks said we should prevent ourselves from feeling we are greater than others and thereby avoid arrogance and *hubris* in our behavior. The big emphasis in the Greek world was always against *hubris*, which is excessive pride, arrogance, self-importance, haughtiness or conceit that causes you to go too far. Those in power must always watch themselves and refrain from going too far in unjustly abusing others or oppressing the weak. Although we see errors and faults in other people's behavior that may give rise to feelings of resentment or ill-will, we must cultivate properness/propriety in our own behavior as regards others despite feelings of dislike or irritation, and this requires that we learn humility.

Basically, while seeing the errors of others you have to cultivate acceptance and humility yourself just as Confucius demonstrated. We all have malevolent crap inside us that comes out now and then. Part of cultivating humility is recognizing that you are the brother or sister of all other living beings since you are made of Shakti and your True Self is the one shared fundamental nature. Realizing this fact is achieving the wisdom of equality. Ultimately there is no distinction between your self and others.

The enlightened Elder Porphyrios of Mount Athos would tell people to read the following from Saint Symeon, The New Theologian, since it summarizes the viewpoint of the enlightened being and therefore how you should train in viewing other people: "We should look upon all the faithful as one person and consider that Christ is in each one of them. We should have such love for them that we are ready to sacrifice our very lives for them. For it is incumbent upon us neither to say, nor think of any person as evil, but we must look upon everyone as good. If you see a brother afflicted with a passion, do not hate him. Hate the passion that makes war upon him. And if you see him being terrorized by the habits and desires of previous sins, have compassion on him. Maybe you too will be afflicted by temptation, since you are also made from matter that easily turns from good to evil. Love towards your brother prepares you to love God even more. The secret, therefore, of love towards God is love towards your brother. For if you don't love your brother whom you can see, how is it possible to love God, Whom you do not see?"

You can rightly say, "I am everything" because you are the original nature, and also Shakti. You are defined through the existence of all things. Therefore this also means, "I am that person," or "They are one of my aspects." One way of compassionately looking at people is to therefore

think along these lines when you see them, “That’s me – one of my aspects since all beings are all Shakti, they are all the original nature. We really are one, so I should treat them as if they were me. You never know what that person will eventually become given enough time and development from where he/she is now. How can I help them?” The fact that we are all the same Shakti, or primordial state, places slave and master, commoner and noble on the same metaphysical, transcendental footing. This is why Confucius stressed meritocracy as nobility, rather than nobility due to birth. You are all the same original nature, and it is what you make of yourself that matters.

Buddhism also says that we need avoid jealousy and envy, and can generate merit by becoming happy when other people become happy. Why should we be this way? As just stated, because they are also *you*, so you should celebrate rather than succumb to envy and jealousy when a part of you experiences great good fortune. You should experience what is known as sympathetic joy.

With all this in mind, it becomes apparent that to achieve the mind of enlightenment, which comes with the Supra-Causal body of enlightenment, you must cultivate empathy for all living beings especially since you will be able to know all minds. You must cultivate empathy and compassion and helpfulness rather than indifference. You must cultivate an attitude of *unlimited good intention* that gets continually expressed in your thoughts, words and deeds. You must Some people cultivate joy in life by inflicting pain on others or using their power over others, but you should never cultivate a feeling of joy over other people’s suffering. And yet, because an enlightened individual will see many strange things in the world, he or she should actively cultivate a sense of humor, and should not take themselves so seriously. Humility, simplicity, wisdom, open-mindedness, compassion and service characterize the enlightened. With very long lives they seek for meaning in missions rather than fun or pleasure, and their vows and pledges include working to help others, especially one’s community, country, and world without neglecting one’s close relationships.

Jesus also said to love thy neighbor, and to treat others as you would want yourself to be treated, so one of the specific emotions to cultivate along these lines is love. Confucius said we must teach the people after our enlightenment, and the meaning of “teach” is love and rendering help/assistance. In Buddhism, the top stage of the Bodhisattva bhumis of enlightenment is called “Cloud of Dharma,” which means that at that stage of transcendental attainment you should give teachings and help to all sentient beings like the rain from clouds that falls everywhere. Thus once again from this as a guide we are reminded that you must learn to teach all sentient beings, helping them in all ways. You must learn how to love the multitude at large, treat them like brothers, and love them (which means

-serving them in need and deed). They are all Shakti, they are all the original nature, they are all aspects of you.

From a practical standpoint you can succumb to compassion fatigue when you set upon the road of helping others, so you must only take upon yourself that which you can handle. You must also associate with those of like mind and ability to help keep you on track, for even a sage needs the company of good friends, individuals of the same benevolence and morality who share similar missions. As you move forward in life you are bound to encounter negative emotions due to obstacles, problems, suffering, pain, challenges and constraints. To successfully pass through such tempering you need a positive mindset that includes supportive friends so that you can continue on a meaningful path towards your objectives with perseverance, grit and resilience. Otherwise your goals will just get punished out of existence due to the gross negativity encountered, which can defeat you and cause you to abandon your vows or quest.

This is why when you generate the aspiration to achieve some goal or vow or agree to some ultimate responsibility, you must remember that it entails an *entire framework* of how you should be, and it's hard to accomplish that transformation alone. It sets up a framework of not just actions you need to take but mindset, perspective, goals, behaviors and emotions you need to adopt or experience, including emotional rewards you can expect to receive along the way as you make progress through the slop to achieve it. For life is difficult, and any type of personal transformation or worthy goal achievement quest is bound to encounter problems that will give rise to internal negativity. Therefore you need to conquer your mind to keep going as well as need to enjoy emotional rewards to keep going as well. You don't put happiness aside but enjoy it fully. Without positive emotional enjoyments you wouldn't be able to make worthy aspirations in the first place.

Setting vows, pledges, aspirations, assuming responsibilities, aligned purposes and so on sets up an entirely new personality you will become *for that*. Your new identity isn't all pain and suffering because you create it to enjoy a meaning that eliminates suffering and brings joy to yourself, so it's not all work. Disciplining yourself on a road of aspiration takes you through adversity as you achieve meaning. Naturally this involves emotional and other rewards on that trail of meaningfulness otherwise without positive feedback and without it being engaging life's difficulties might defeat you. Even so, as the *Diamond Sutra* points out, don't bother to cling to joy, power, money, status, prestige, position, pleasure and so forth on your path because they cannot stay and there really is no such thing as a sentient being who enjoys them. You enjoy them, you experience them when they arise but you don't cling to them. They simply track your progress.

This is why fraternities of monks and nuns tend to produce enlightened

adepts the quickest, for those who have succeeded all work on the others who have not yet attained the deva body. They help them keep going and approach it all with the spirit of friendship, or you might also say understanding, love and compassion. This is also why I told you to seek a master within a well-recognized holy tradition.

Whether we are speaking of transforming yourself, developing skills, cultivating the spiritual path or undertaking vows this isn't just something mechanical because the living of life along these lines is and should be rewarded by positive emotions as you move forward. It cannot all be just hard work because there has to be rest and play and emotional rewards along the way. You don't eliminate or silence your emotions but welcome all the positive ones that come your way, try to silence/eliminate the negative ones or try to upgrade/transform them into something else that is productive rather than inhibitive, discouraging, hindering.

When you reach the Supra-Causal body and Immanence body you have reached the stage where you can see the source of the various types of life. You will then learn about the minds of various types of sentient beings. Buddhism also says you have to get to the stage where there is no difference between male and female, which is at this same stage of attainment. Saint Paisios of Mount Athos, representing the Christian tradition, confirmed this saying, "There is only one angelic habit for both monks and nuns. "There is neither male nor female."

An enlightened mind must be able to accept being both sexes, and thus without gender because they transcend it. That's why if you pray to Buddhas to become a different gender *in the next life* they will help you be reborn into that body state. Buddhas can transcend the two sexes and transcend being a certain type of sentient being, and thus can sympathize and communicate with animals or other forms of life. So together with the concept of being neither male nor female gender is the idea that you are ultimately neither this species or another, which is why compassion is regularly extended by saints to all forms of life, recognizing that they all have consciousness. Thus you will often find saints using their various bodies to go into animals to communicate with them, whether it be tigers, elephants, cows, horses, parrots, monkeys, snakes, rabbits and so on.

There is also the need to cultivate the realization that you are not a permanent independent self, and therefore you do not receive any reward for any merit you produce. Everything you are passes away, everything you receive or experience or achieve passes away. You and the universe are essentially a continuous process of transformation, but you can work to make that stream – your life, your fate, the fate of others, and the fate of your world and galaxy and ultimately the universe – ever better and it will ascend in total over time. In any case, this is why saints and sages become indifferent as to the rewards of name, fame, prestige, status, money, wealth,

property and so forth and yet by their efforts they are continuously making things better for all.

There is no true you or I-self other than the original nature and since you are not a true self, who can receive a reward? Doesn't running after money seem ridiculous when you realize this? It is not the money that is important but what you can do with it that is important. But also, from a practical standpoint you will be both miserable and hampered in doing anything without money, so yes you do have to pursue it. Everything has to be approached with wisdom rather than the extreme of radicalism.

Since both the I-self and objects are not real, how can the experience of receiving and enjoying them be real also? It is real for as long as it lasts, instantaneously, and then passes like a dream. Knowing this, thus you should become indifferent to the rewards of fame, name, status, money, power and so forth but definitely use them. You should wear them like clothes, which is for an instrumental purpose, wearing them without attachment and without paying them much mind. Then again, of course you must take care of them and not treat clothes with indifference. The point is that you should not grasp at luxuries as the point of life. You use everything, but you shouldn't grasp at the rewards of merit.

In the *Diamond Sutra* you commonly hear not to hold onto the idea of being an ego, personality, being or life because this is a false idea, an incorrect conclusion. It comes from the fact that your thinking is wrong, it is a viewpoint of ignorance from not thinking correctly.

The *Diamond Sutra* also talks about agglomerations, with the message that what we take as objects have no temporal parts. There are no definite objects, just "simples" (like atoms) that are arranged in a particular way that we mistakenly take as a true (permanent) larger object due to our faulty senses and wrong thinking. Nothing is a proper part of anything because objects have no temporal parts.

Let me explain more clearly. The smallest building blocks of things – which you might call atoms, muons, particles, strings or simples - are individual and separate items that never unify or come together to make anything. They may rest next to one another, but they never cease being individual. They never come together into being non-individual, and thus are not temporal parts of anything. We're the ones who say they combine to form something and we do that because we have a mind. Thus there is the statement, "The Buddhas did not teach that any entity whatsoever ultimately exist," which is true from many aspects.

Nothing is a proper part of anything. Simples might be next to one another in agglomerations, but in truth they never compose any whole. A while is just an identity in our minds, and who says our identity formalization is correct? In other words, objects that have parts do not exist. The parts, or simples, might be arranged in a certain way that we call a

particular thing, but that's just a conventional way of speaking. This type of designation is not correct in the highest sense. It's an imagined order created by a being with consciousness. It's not an objective reality but a subjective one. In the objective sense there are only simples, and the simples are ultimately the original nature so there is only one thing – the fundamental essence, which is why you can say “Everything that exists is God” or “What exists in truth is the Self alone.” This means there really isn't a universe of moving Shakti either. That's just an apparent realm, an illusion since it is really just the formless original nature in a functional form and our perception cannot let us realize its true changeless, unmoving, pure nature. But that's what everything is, and only a mind gives order to the whole mess and creates names and labels and meanings and all sorts of other narratives but they are all made up, imagined illusions. You are living inside a dream. The mind produces thoughts – a field of experience with qualities – and apart from thoughts there is no mind, and if there are no thoughts then there is no independent thing called the world. Usually masters who try to explain this to people decompose the body into the five elements or *koshas* (sheiths or skandhas), such as Kabir who said, “I am not a Hindu, nor a Muslim am I! I am this body, a play of the five elements; a drama of spirit dancing with joy and sorrow.”

So agglomerations aren't anything real, specific, sovereign, absolute, independent, lasting. What is the limit or border of an agglomeration ... when does the agglomerating stop? It doesn't – it is really the entire universe of Shakti unless your mind carves it into specific limited pieces/shapes/forms, but that's just being fictitious. It's being arbitrary. It's subjective and therefore false.

We might give something a name or label because of its form or shape, such as our body, but it really isn't a true independent self-so thing. What we just identified is just an arbitrary agglomeration we made up in our head. It's just a conventional way of thinking, of identifying things.

Objects that have parts therefore do not exist and it is just that our senses give us foggy information about “reality” that causes us to think this way, and so they and our mental conclusions cannot be trusted. We don't see the world as it is but as we are. The truth is that the component parts of an agglomeration never really compose a true thing. They always remain simples that never unify into being non-individual as part of something larger. A particular thing is not really a *real* particular thing. That is just a conventional way of speaking. And ultimately it is either Shakti, or the original primordial essence depending on where you stop the analysis using correct thinking.

Thus Ramana Maharshi said, “The gross body which is composed of the seven humours [*dhatus*], I am not; the five cognitive sense organs, viz. the senses of hearing, touch, sight, taste, and smell, which apprehend their

respective objects, viz. sound, touch, color, taste, and odor, I am not; the five cognitive sense-organs, viz. the organs of speech, locomotion, grasping, excretion, and procreation, which have as their respective functions speaking, moving, grasping, excreting, and enjoying, I am not; the five vital airs [*prana, vyana, samana, apana, udana*], which perform respectively the five functions of in-breathing, etc., I am not; even the mind which thinks, I am not; the nescience too, which is endowed only with the residual impressions of objects, and in which there are no objects and no functionings, I am not.” In other words, he is the original nature. The next level up is that you are all of Shakti. The next level is that you are a portion of Shakti, an agglomeration that is a dependent nature (since everything else defines it), ever-changing and which has no real identity. Going downwards you have to say that there is no such thing as an agglomeration – that’s just a way of speaking. It’s just the conventional talk of a sentient being who has a mind and who is a non-fixed transient form within Shakti, a form with consciousness.

This understanding is called mereological nihilism. You can find it in the Buddhist *Diamond Sutra*. The idea of mereology is that simples are not a proper part of anything, and thus agglomerations are simply things we made up in our heads. Of course they work, but essentially there is only Shakti or the original nature. If there is form there is only one form, Shakti, and no smaller forms within it. There is no such thing as an agglomeration that ultimately exists, and there is no such thing as a simple that ultimately exists either. There are no such things as independent real objects that have parts, and there are also no such things as parts since they are ultimately empty. You may call something a simple, or part, but if you keep dividing it you ultimately end up with empty space – emptiness. Now if you think of yourself as the product of conditions or energies rather than simples like atoms or quarks, then you are essentially generated through the combination of an infinite number of conditions meaning that you are nothing yourself at all. There is no inherent you – there not one thing that is you since you are completely defined by this collection of infinite dependent origination conditions. You are just the sum result of these cause and effect conditions and within them there is nothing that is wholly, intrinsically, inherently you at all.

Together with the understanding that all things are impermanent and ever-changing, and all things are interdependently defined (including simples), this is the basic view of higher spirituality. These types of understanding are called *prajna* transcendental wisdom.

What’s the point of it all? You can understand your real nature, which is realizing the truth of your true nature. You can therefore understand that what you take as your self is an apparent self. Since you are an apparent self, why pursue mental clinging?

Furthermore, if this is what you are then you have a tremendous potential for change, so you are never bounded within suffering. You only have potential. Although you are a conditional collection of simples, or infinite collection of conditions, you can start thinking, acting and emotionally practicing in a certain way that will eventually become so regular, so deterministic that you build your character in that certain way, and that character will become your destiny. Thus you can create for yourself a new fortune. Through deliberate consistency of practice you will imprint or influence your Qi/Prana vital energy in a certain way, which is what reincarnates, and thus you can create for yourself a new life of your design as well.

What you habitually refer to as “you” or “I” is not an unchanging essence but an ever-changing bunch of separate parts that have come together in a particular agglomeration whose bodily structure can produce thoughts, perceptions, feelings, consciousness (a field of experience that has qualities) and so on that together creates the illusion of being a separate “I” and “me.” “I” is just a conventional name attached to an ever-changing conglomeration of parts, where there really isn’t any such thing as an agglomeration. So “I” is the illusion we take as “myself.” It is the announcement of an apparent self. This combination of yours is really just an apparent self.

Nevertheless it has (you have) consciousness, and you can use consciousness to create of yourself whatever you want if you put effort and energy into that self-chosen objective. Your basic energy or substrate, the fundamental primordial nature, has somehow for whatever reason or no reason at all produced a being – you – that has sentience and you can use that sentience to think, do, create or become whatever you want. You have the gift of the great wish fulfilling jewel, consciousness, to accomplish whatever you desire.

Mereological nihilism and the *Diamond Sutra* state that since the building blocks of matter never compose any wholes, no “composite objects” exist. “Composite objects” is simply a conventional way of speaking to indicate things. We, too, are made of atoms (simples) so are just atoms in what is ultimately a patternless soup of infinite atoms, but we have been labelled as “people” rather than as atoms for the convenience of humans.

There is only one big soup of smallest component pieces and energies everywhere, but wait ... that itself is an illusion since the ultimate substrate (True Self or self-nature) of such a chaotic mess is one pure, absolute primordial substance without parts or divisions like empty space. That foundational essence is the fundamental, elemental, primordial substrate, and everything is ultimately *That*. Everything is ultimately the purest One that permeates everything, yet Shakti is apparently there, and the two are the same entity.

The whole of Shakti doesn't really exist as the absolute reality of energies or formations of any sort because their absolute nature is formlessness. They are just as an effervescent temporariness of apparent reality at each and every moment of time. Thus they are neither real nor not real. Also, the parts we identify within Shakti are delusions we mentally create of it by using our subjective minds and senses. Without a mind, there are neither parts nor a universe. Of course that mental partitioning or differentiating works for us in creating a conventional worldview, but it's all a delusion. Ultimately it is errant thinking. The (composite) things we mentally identify as existing have parts – simples – that our senses hide from us, and those simples never compose anything as a definite agglomeration. They never stop being individual despite their arrangements, so their arrangements don't amount to anything *real*. They are just next to each other in no *real* particular pattern. Furthermore, even the simples are ultimately Shakti or the original nature.

Formations are just agglomerations, but agglomerations are portions of other agglomerations. Where does one end and another begin? No one can actually say except through a conventional definition that isn't absolute. Agglomerations never compose anything definite and limited so you cannot identify an agglomeration by saying, "It ends here with these borders." That's a falsity due to infinite dependent arising defining every part of it. With a mind/consciousness we discriminate identities and limits, but that's due to the property of having a mind thanks to our anatomical structure, which we also take as a limited agglomeration in our minds because we forget about the infinite conditions or interdependencies that causally penetrate/define it. Putting it another way, objects and even the world are illusory in that you imagine that the world is something separate and independently real, outside of the Absolute or Shakti, but in reality this is not so. An object is blended in with everything else and it is our minds that make arbitrary divisions that identify it as an object. Due to the limitations of our senses we cannot even perceive it fully or correctly!

You can look at the "Quantum Cloud" sculpture of Antony Gormley to get an idea of how infinite conditions appear to form a localized object in space, namely our body, that is just the intersection of endless conditions. When we ask what the world is made of objectively and answer energy or energy fields and simples (such as photons, electrons, quarks and neutrinos), you need a mind to know them and ultimately they must be further decomposable into the original foundational essence.

In truth, we too are just agglomerations of simples (atoms, muons, whatever) arranged in a certain way and part of larger agglomerations and larger agglomerations and ultimately Shakti. Your community or network of friends and relationships also can be considered a larger agglomeration if you so choose to think that way. We are essentially just processes within

larger processes without any distinct identity or border separating us from anything else that would make us a unique, separate “thing” that is totally independent of being a part of everything else, or which has the limited borders we ascribe to ourselves. This is also, by the way, why you have a responsibility to your community since it helps define you.

Our physical bodies might be decomposed into particles, muons, light, energy or whatever as final units, but aren't they all intermixing with everything else as one grand soup of Shakti? Our senses give the *false impression* that there are multiple composite material objects but there is just one big soup that is infinitely interconnected, one eternal sea of Shakti, and *That* which transcends Shakti is the primordial essence. We are just a particle or drop within the Shakti soup, and you cannot even say “drop” because our smallest component pieces would have to be the drops, and perhaps there is no such thing as a smallest drop or smallest “simple” since their ultimate basis would be emptiness. The point is that our existence exists because we are entangled with all else in an infinite entanglement or interdependence.

We are like a flow within this soup, a process within an effervescent soup of transformations everywhere even though we think we have solid borders. But consider this. If spiritual masters can see our futures, which they can as many stories testify, are those fortunes/fates not already written somehow in the etheric realms so that it becomes possible for them to see them? If so, then what we are now is definitely connected to a future that already exists predetermined because of our trajectory. What we are now and our trajectory of actions are already determined because a fated future is already known/existing. That would make us a process that exists in the here and now, and because of infinite intercausality of cause and effect its future is already set too even though we normally cannot predict futures for sentient phenomena. In other words, that future *also exists now*. Through cultivation we actually try to change a predetermined fate. We try to improve it, to make it better.

This brings up the quandary of individuals seeking wealth, fame, power, prestige, fortune and so on who want to improve their fate in these directions. If such bounties are already in your fortune then one will attain them, and perhaps that fortune requires hard work and effort and perhaps not. If they are not prizes within one's fortune, all the study and effort to attain them will never materialize anything at all ... unless you have some way to change the fortune.

Fortune comes to those who cultivate the cause for it, whether in this life or in previous lives, but if you cultivate the causes of prosperity isn't this effort itself also part of your fated fortune that you do so, and if so then isn't everything to some extent predetermined? You are always ruled by cause and effect, but at what level do you escape a pre-known fortune and

by what efforts?

I suggest you think about it this way. There is a material realm, subtle realm, Causal realm, Supra-Causal realm, the Immanence realm and so forth, and each of these has templates for the future of everything that intertwines. Your physical fortune can be known from what you do now, and by referencing the template in the subtle planes. If there weren't already existing templates then no one could know your future, which masters clearly show they can do.

Spiritual masters emphatically say that we can change our fates, but not fixed karma that is so deep that new causes cannot alter it. The possibility of changing our fate means that we can through our actions change some of the templates in these etheric realms as well as the physical realm. We already know that the higher realms cause you to have certain thoughts and impulses, which we can know via the fact that masters with etheric bodies can give you thoughts and planets give us energetic influences that affect our psychology, which is known through astrology. Thus your fate is bound to a conditioned consciousness- somewhat predictable because it is limited and conditioned - which causes you to make certain actions that produce your fate, which you already know. Thus the key is to change your conditioned consciousness and your actions.

It is said that “refraining from evil and practicing all forms of kindness brings about the dispersion of disasters and the coming of fortune,” and this is the principle of creating one's destiny. In translation this means that we must exert ourselves to do good deeds that we wouldn't normally do, and think in virtuous ways with a larger perspective, which together go against karmic forces and help us change our fortunes. In short, to change our fate we must change our consciousness and our actions, our thoughts and deeds, our character and behavior. We can think of ourselves as an insentient process or person just as we can think of electrons as waves or particles, and through this type of analysis we can analyze how we can change ourselves and our fortunes that are akin to predicting particle trajectories in a field of forces.

Now, on top of these quandaries we feel we have one single unchanging identity from birth to death, and therefore identify as an independent individual, a being, an ego, a personality, an entity, an *atman*, a life. Sure, we can call ourselves whatever name or term we want because we have consciousness and a mind, so conventionally we can designate ourselves as such an identity. But in truth, we are simply narrating a story within our minds that isn't reflecting the true reality. We are more akin to a process that seems limited as a small self but is essentially the whole of manifest reality. Our small self-identity is an abstraction, an idealism, a simplification but an error because it is not the true reality of the situation.

This is why in the *Diamond Sutra* we find Shakyamuni Buddha saying

that “even though immeasurable, innumerable and unlimited numbers of beings have been liberated, verily no beings have been liberated.” What beings? Truly there are no such things as beings other than what we designate in our minds as beings. This is just a conventional way of speaking, but not an ultimate truth. Conventionally speaking, yes there are beings and objects, but in truth, no. It’s just a false way of thinking. It isn’t reflecting the true reality. It’s errant, it’s Maya, it’s delusion. In any case, this is why Buddha also says “there are no sentient beings who can be saved.”

Even thoughts and emotions are just biochemical, bioelectrical processes in your brain, and also part of the grand soup, and thoughts/conceptions are not always right either. Not to mention they are always limited (which needs to be the case otherwise you will drown in a sea of infinity), and conditional based on your own processing system, so what is the ultimate reality? How can you know it? You cannot, you can only surmise it. You cannot reach it with thought, but you can think about it. You cannot realize It but can only be It, which is what you already are.

For us there is only a stream of consciousness where thoughts and emotions arise and pass away like a dream, but there is no permanent self that owns them. The apparent self that thinks it owns them is an effervescent process within the soup. You can say it is a section of the soup or you can say, because of infinite interconnections, that it is the soup ... the entire soup. Or, you can be conventional and say you are a limited and independent person, a being or life, but now you know better. For the conventional world, we have to stick to conventions. Otherwise we have no meaning, and meaning is how we live.

Every moment your neural biochemistry creates a flash of experience, and then it immediately disappears to be replaced by something else. The flow of flashes is like a rushing river, an ongoing torrent that never stops like an endless flow of cinema projections across an empty movie screen. The tableau of experiences in your mind that creates the world and the I-sense experiencing the world is composed of flashes of mental appearances that appear and fade in quick succession, and which do not add up to any enduring essence. It’s like a never-ending stream, a dynamic continuum of a field of experience with qualities that most people mistake for their true self. Through thought processes, you actually narrate this into an autobiographical self and continuous worldview, which we call consciousness that involves an I-self and objects.

Consciousness is the great miracle within Shakti, a marvelous mysterious functioning that we possess, that we are. It is what enables us to know and experience. The great treasure it is, but on another level, who says having consciousness is right or the highest thing? Maybe something higher than consciousness developed elsewhere in the universe and, because it is different than consciousness, we don’t have that ability nor

know anything about it. Could there be something different or greater than consciousness other than insentience? How would we know since we couldn't conceive it? Furthermore, who says *our* consciousness is right, meaning who says *our* method of identifying objects within reality having particular characteristics is right? Animals certainly have different mental streams than we do, and as to life in other galaxies who can say whether it has consciousness like ours? The only thing you can say is that the earth is conscious since our bodies are essentially the earth element, and we are therefore the earth. By virtue of the fact that we have consciousness then the earth body, which includes us is consciousness, and the same goes for the universe. The universe is conscious, not as a single living entity, but as a Shakti that is conscious because billions and trillions and zillions and gazillions of beings within Shakti are conscious. Even just one conscious being within Shakti makes Shakti conscious.

Now anything that you identify as a specific appearance is a conventional designation, a conditional rendering within your mind, and therefore an illusory designation. It is a delusion, a falsity, an illusion. You just take whatever you see to be that. Your identification scheme works in producing a conventional world, otherwise you wouldn't "have consciousness," but the flashes of experience – your worldview – are just conditional mental occurrences created within your brain. They are inexact, often errant, conditional and incomplete because they do not encompass all the details. When you "let in the light of the world" in viewing say a tiny object, even then you only let in a tiny fraction of the light and leave things out because you are limited in your ability to create full perceptions. Thoughts and perceptions are just apparent experiences within your head that don't reflect true reality. We call this apparent worldview consciousness but it is really just the result of a mechanism.

This is not your True Self, your true self-nature. The flashes of experience that you identify as "consciousness" appear and disappear in quick succession and through our narrating self – the thought processes of the brain – we turn this into a world, specifically the worldview of a human being. We can do this because of our biological structure while insentient objects cannot do this. Humans have a similar worldview, animals a different worldview, and alien life on other planes and planets no doubt have different mind-streams as well. Who has the correct one? Who has the complete one? Of course no such thing is possible. Even our perception of the universe is errant. Wait a second, no it isn't ... it's right because it works for us. We can only say that it is relative to us, conventional.

There is perhaps a limitless ocean of alien mental states in the universe belonging to beings with different brain structures, hormonal systems, sensory apparatus, and stages of development. Who can say what else they have that evolution in their realms has produced? Some animals, for

instance, can sense/feel the infrared or ultraviolet light spectrum while we cannot. We see only a fraction of the electromagnetic spectrum. Who knows what cognitive skills and mental scenarios are like for the nearly infinite variety of other sentient beings that surely exist in this world and others? Maybe there is something else other than consciousness too.

Our own cognitive skills and many mental processes are not instincts programmed into us like those of ducklings when they hatch, but constructed during the course of childhood through our experiences with objects and social interaction. We can “have consciousness” because of our specific agglomerative structure, and from another aspect we can say consciousness has become possible because our genes produce our particular neuroanatomical structure. And of course even though our genes give rise to a body structure capable of the processes that become mental consciousness, to develop our consciousness the neural processing mechanisms need a workout just as muscles need a workout to develop. Without certain stimuli they will develop this way rather than that. Furthermore, cultural evolution plays a role in this as well. We are experiencing different states of consciousness than our forbears because of our cultural evolution rather than just genetic evolution. And each of us internally develops our own likes and dislikes, and ways of making decisions and processing events due to our personal experiences, training, family influences, environment and so on.

Through consciousness we create our own conventional world. In comparing consciousness just across human mind-streams, who can say your worldview is the best one? It certainly isn't the best of them all. That's why we are told to meditate in order to free ourselves from being too tightly bound to our internal prejudices and perspectives. It gives us a freedom of mind so that we can look at things completely differently. Being constrained by a fixed worldview is like being bound by Sharira law. We train through meditation so that we can experience a more flexible mind that is always open to newness, novelty and the ever-changing experiences of life. It is also good that we can train our minds to create better mental and physical states within our worldview too, which has obvious benefits to our happiness.

Now let's summarize. Your senses, your memories and your cognitive processing turns the flashes of experiential input you have into mental scenes you comprehend. It turns them into the world, and with your emotions and judgments added you then have a worldview. You have somehow developed an I-self within these flashes of experience, a narrating self who tries to impose order on this never-ending story and tries to append meaning to everything through names and labels and interpretations. But this is all relative, conditional, a falsity, an unreality, a great fiction – what you are seeing within yourself is a Grand Illusion called

Maya, a personal worldview of limitations and errant perspectives. There is only a stream of consciousness happening, which is conditional on your structure and unconscious processing algorithms, and within it the interpretations are not absolutes. There isn't any permanent self that owns the stream either for it is just a process within an apparent self that is also a process.

For instance, we have a feeling that we are a single unchanging identity from birth to death but this is not truthful. As Buddha explained to King Prasenajit in the *Surangama Sutra*, the only thing that hasn't changed during your entire life is that which is fundamentally free of production and extinction, which is your fundamental nature or primordial ground state of being. It never changes whereas everything else does. In other words, the ultimate source of life never changes, but life does.

Neurologists have found that your brain has developed many faulty processing mechanisms. For instance, sometimes in optical illusions we perceive colors as different than what they truly are. Many of the gaps between conscious events are filled in through approximation algorithms that are just guesses, and the truth of the matter with perception is that you're not seeing what is actually before you. You see what your brain tells you is there, and it is engaging in prediction algorithms rather than absolute truth algorithms to provide you with a perception.

We are always just experiencing an imagination of the world. Error upon error upon error! For instance, in trying to identify phenomena your mental processes are engaged in guessing based on previous experiences (memory) so not all of your first impressions are correct. In fact, your brain invests as few resources as possible when processing decisions or interpretations so that so that everything runs quickly and smoothly. If every activity required full mental effort then it would be exhausting, and your brain already uses up 20% of your body's energy!

You are not even in control of the mental processes within you that create the experiences of consciousness. You cannot control your mind because thoughts and experiences are arising all the time according to their own algorithms, never ceasing, and you simply cannot stop them or make them perfectly into what you want. You can train yourself to develop new algorithms so that cognition becomes better, your emotions become better, achievement becomes better, sufferings/afflictions are lessened and life becomes better. You can configure yourself in an entirely new and different way, and thus change your life and fortune.

That is spiritual cultivation. It is about how you use your brain, and retraining your brain. It has both deliberate and unconscious processing algorithms, and you want to gain some control over each of these. After all, you are a conscious being, so you want to gain some control over this thing you have called consciousness. Since this is what you are, you want to

perfect it in any way, shape or form you can because thus is you. You want your life experience of consciousness to be better.

Can you shut down completely the destructive inner voice and negative self-talk that often afflicts you? You don't choose your desires but only feel them and then act accordingly so how can you control them rather than let them control you? You are not even in control of these things, so how can you be an absolute Self, let alone a singular separate self?

Who is the real you in all of these automatic processes? You may have the perception of being a self, person, being or life but this is merely what you are calling your apparent self within this processing that is occurring within a body unit that is an ever-changing conditionally defined mereological collection of simples. To be a self entity is just a relative story you are narrating in your consciousness, which in turn is conditionally derived out of your body and biochemistry and vital energy, and in truth there really is no such absolute true thing as consciousness that is giving you this story. Within it, however, we weave our own web of meanings. We have life, we experience, we enjoy, we are the miraculous existence within Shakti, the beneficiaries of the great miracle of consciousness. How will you choose to use it?

You have consciousness and I have it and all humans have it, so the key is to make it as peaceful, happy, harmonious, enjoyable and blissful as possible. What is the right objective? How about at a minimum to free it from suffering, afflictions, and bondages? If it isn't always joyful or blissful then fine, but let's certainly eliminate from within it continuous suffering and afflictions. Isn't that a good objective to start? Being free of suffering and afflictions, we sometimes call this bliss, peacefulness, equanimity or no-self. It doesn't mean that there is no concept of a self, but that it quiets. Without the concept of a self you are totally insentient.

There is also a type of experience of extreme or pristine mental clarity (bright mind or bright consciousness) while you feel alive with energy, but where your body's energy is circulating so smoothly that it doesn't bother you with discomfort and you can even forget its existence. This is called bliss *and* consciousness. A third necessary addendum to the experience of clarity and bliss is existence, for you cannot experience anything if you are non-existent, which is then the bliss-consciousness-existence of Hinduism.

Without existence you have extinction or annihilation, and then there is no sentience or life. Hence it goes without saying that in spiritual cultivation you do *not* give up the ego I-self entirely so that you are non-existent. What would be the point? If you gave it up you would just be all of Shakti without sentience, but Shakti also has other beings with sentience so you would be all of Shakti and some of It has consciousness (or you could even say that since Shakti is one body and has all these consciousnesses then Shakti as a single entity, the universe, has consciousness because the non-

sentience materials and energy through interdependence are Its body).

Let's go back to the fact that if you gave up your consciences you would just be all of Shakti without sentience. Well, you *already are* Shakti and your sentience isn't really sentience – because there really is no true such thing – so there is no point to giving up the ego or I-thought. You are not after annihilation. You are sentient Shakti, so the point is fully being sentient Shakti, and thus mastering sentience, perfecting it to its fullest to be its best as can be enjoyable, meaningful and that is sentience. Sentience is the great miracle of the universe, the great treasure, a subtle and mysterious functioning within the Great All. Hence in spiritual cultivation you don't head towards extinction. You're not supposed to be a rock without consciousness that doesn't experience anything. You are a sentient being, that's your functioning in this great soup of Shakti, so use consciousness to the hilt. Enjoy it – it is what you are. Perfect it. Transcend its limitations and bring it to something even higher that is blissful.

Buddhism understands all this and stresses impermanence, suffering and emptiness – emptiness means there is no way to hold onto anything because everything is always changing, therefore what you try to hold onto is only an apparent existence (empty of a real existence) since it has already changed into something else entirely. The pursuit of no-self in Buddhism was a teaching meant to break the small idea of self that we all grasp onto, and thus to liberate people from suffering. There will always be occasions for suffering to arise within a mind-stream but there is the suffering that arises and passes away, and the frictional suffering we self cause by foolishly trying to attach/cling to mind events because we don't know what we truly are and thus use our minds wrongly.

There is no independent self but there is an ultimate True Self beyond birth and death and impermanence. It has no concepts of self or existence because it is perfectly pure and clean. In it there is no suffering or joy, increase or decay, so this is real bliss, real equanimity, real peacefulness, real extinction of thought and the notion "I am a self." Thus when you truly let go of clinging and attachment, and just function frictionlessly, you are truly home. You are already Shakti as your body and already the True Self that is the ultimate witness. You are no longer using your mind wrongly when you stop trying to turn yourself into an independent small self by clinging to thoughts that you are an independent small self. When you just let go of all thoughts of self and others you are just what you are, and truly home.

You have a mind, you are a conscious being, and it is the nature of consciousness to naturally produce afflictions. Buddhism stresses that you should therefore learn concentration so that you can ignore distractive afflictions and bring about better mental states of consciousness, which can be done by mastering your mind-stream and also moving to or bringing about better environmental states (which it calls beautifying Buddha lands

or establishing majestic Buddha lands while Christianity calls this purifying the surroundings) because your (environmental) circumstances give rise to mental states. Thus you work on improving/perfecting your mind, your relationships with other sentient beings and phenomena, and phenomena themselves.

Buddhism also stresses detachment, which means not grasping at mental experiences. Why? Because they cannot stay, so you shouldn't cling to what must depart or you add another layer of frustration to your mind-stream. These are just instructions on how to use your mind properly. Detachment means not becoming bound by desires and falling into blind entrainment that traps you like an animal run by instincts. You cannot hold mental experiences because they are destined to leave, and since they cannot stay why should you add a friction to your mental realm by trying to cling to them? That's a fruitless pursuit that produces suffering and anguish. Enjoy what arises and when it leaves then let it go, unless of course you can prolong what you want. When you train to have concentration you train to hold your mental state stable, in one place, but this is an entirely different phenomenon.

You cannot silence thoughts completely (because you cannot turn off the processing of your mind) or make them into what you perfectly want. You can try to master *what you can* of the process that creates them or master how to deal with the mind-stream that is arisen, but ultimate absolute mastery is impossible because a lot of conscious experience is automatic and out of your control. To some extent it is robot-like or mechanical, just as Gurdjieff said. Nevertheless, you can create patterns for some of those automatic arisings that are the best, optimal reactional patterns you can think of, as is done in sports training through visualization work, mental rehearsal and practice. But remember that consciousness is an automatic functioning, an endless torrential river caused by countless mental transformations all interacting with one another to produce the thoughts that finally manifest.

Buddhism says the goal in life is to end suffering, which entails eliminating or lessening neurotic mental states such as worry, anxiety, frustrations, afflictions, distress, anger, irritability, sadness, confusion and so on. If you want to pursue joy or "to be happy" as the ultimate mental achievement then you should actually pursue a steady state mindset of equanimity and bliss (similar to a sunny disposition but more elevated, refined and smoother) that is conjoined with pristine clarity. You do not want to silence consciousness with absolute no-thought because then you have no consciousness – you have extinction. If you silence consciousness you have either sleep, coma or other states of oblivion similar to non-existence. That isn't right.

One good goal among many possible goals is to cultivate a crystal clear

mindset in conjunction with a blissful feeling of aliveness where the body doesn't feel heavy or burdensome and perhaps not even present because the Qi flow is so smooth that you don't notice it. Happiness or joy can be considered an irritation or disturbance compared to this type of state that is much more refined and satisfying. The idea of cultivation the realization that you are no-self, not a small independent self but an agglomeration or interdependent drop within Shakti that is dependently defined and impermanent because of always changingness, helps people let go of cravings and experience mental peace and tranquility too. People walk around trying to actualize this realization in real life as a type of cultivation method, which normally leads to dispassion and detachment and mental equanimity.

We typically desire experiences where we feel thrills, excitement, novelty, or feel "being alive," but aren't these feelings just an irritation or disturbance on true peace, tranquility or serenity? Sure, it's great to pursue those things and to experience them, and furthermore you should never block them because they are the rewards of our miraculous conscious existence, but you don't want them every single moment do you? They can break the monotony of the mind-stream by injecting pleasure, but to experience the excitation of happiness all the time is a type of unsettlement and irritation. What you are really seeking is peace and tranquility but with awakeness rather than sleep. Therefore you are seeking equanimity with crisp consciousness, crystal clear awareness that lets thoughts arise but they don't arise conjoint with suffering, which means peacefulness. You can say this is a type of emptiness or no-thought but of course there is thought there. What we are always looking for is an absence of distraction, irritation and suffering.

So, yes, you must surely pursue money, fame, power, status etcetera for any missions you decide to undertake in life, and you must surely freely enjoy *Kama* without guilt or worry (to the extent appropriate, which means not hurting others and other proprieties) because that is a part of being a sentient being. Detachment does not mean you don't seek these things. Without *Kama* (pleasure, comfort, gratification, positive sensory and emotional feelings) you cannot live and life is not worth living, for without positive emotions that give joy to life you would just be like an analytical computer without sensations or feelings. Then you are simply a functional process without life, insentient Shakti once again, which you are not.

Money, power, status, position, prestige, sex, food, desires are not the ultimate objective to run after because they are impermanent, and there is no self who attains them or enjoys them. But that's a non-conventional way of speaking, and in the conventional sense of course they are proper. But remember this ... they are merely fluctuations in your brain and there is no one who ultimately enjoys them, and yet there is enjoyment. Thus you

shouldn't bother holding on to them, but by all means enjoy them.

Buddhism states that a Bodhisattva is insentient as to such things, which is a type of realization to cultivate. If they come you enjoy them fully to full flower. If you need them then you cultivate them and pursue them for your mission. However a true yogi, sage, saint, Bodhisattva, etcetera is untouched by them and is internally free. He does not reject them, because they are his environment, but he simply experiences them while remaining unattached and when they leave they are gone. Such things are like the clothing a Bodhisattva drapes around himself to cover his natural nakedness and thus while he may seem polluted by the world due to wearing fine clothing, that interpretation is actually a false conclusion. Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are insentient as to the rewards of merit.

At the level of non-enlightenment where you have not yet attained the ultimate transcendental bodies and exist/live at that level where this world is then but a dream, this is a possible viewpoint you can try to cultivate as you go through your worldly affairs. If you understand this discussion then it is to be considered a high level, deep spiritual realization. This is considered "*prajna* wisdom," an understanding of transcendental things.

On the road of spiritual practice one must cultivate this mind, meaning this understanding, this wisdom. It doesn't mean to stop striving in the world and become an ascetic monk. It simply means not to grasp at things too tightly and hold on to them and have trouble letting them go. It is the nature for phenomena and mental experiences to go away because everything is impermanent. They are only mental events within an never-ending rushing stream that constitutes your mind. Don't let them become the master. You aren't even a true self, so what emotions are you trying to satisfy if you devote a lot of striving to them? Should you be trusting those emotions since they are conditional inventions, or should you pursuing something higher and more lasting, like peace and equanimity or even *meaning*, since running after sensations one after the other never brings peace and contentment? Hence, a Bodhisattva does not pursue fame or fortune, unless, of course, he needs it for his mission.

With that desire to help others because of a personal mission, with that urge to render kindness and compassionate aid to others, you must also cultivate the wisdom as to how to do so along with the vigor and persistence to actually do so. This involves learning or mastering a large number of techniques and bodies of knowledge, which is one of the reasons I wrote *Buddha Yoga*. You cannot just go into someone's mind, instantly figure out what's going on, and from an outsider's perspective know the perfect solution of what to do. Yes, Buddhas can figure out what's going on *rather instantly*, but coming up with a solution is the problem. To render the proper sort of help takes some consideration because a good solution isn't like instant noodles. Even if you know

someone's future and try to get them to do something different to avoid it, you need wisdom as to which course of action will produce the best result to bypass a catastrophe. This takes a lot of wisdom.

Part of wisdom is responding to others in a way they can accept. In the Buddhist *Surangama Sutra*, Avalokitesvara (Kuan Yin) tells how he/she developed the ability to generate thirty-two types of different emanation bodies, or response bodies, to respond to the needs of sentient beings. This is just a figurative number of *nirmanakaya* emanations indicating that this enlightened hero will generate projections into endless sorts of people who will then, in turn, give aid to humans. Some of the kinds of individuals Kuan Yin would touch (manifest within) include other Buddhas, Arhats, kings and queens (princesses or noble ladies), young men or women, devas, military men, elders, monks or nuns, scholars, magistrates, priests and so forth. To send a *nirmanakaya* projection into someone to help guide them or heal them is the same thing as saying "Christ comes to live with you."

Life is an infinite game. The attainment of spiritual bodies is a long game you are playing, not a finite game but one that can and will last forever as long as Shakti lasts, so you want your moves to count toward something worthy and worthwhile, whole and genuine and compelling. Won't you think about these things? What for you is a triumphant call for being in the world? As we have seen, society has labored for thousands of years to evolve enough to give you the opportunity to manifest what you can manifest if you step forth and choose to do so. You are actually on a heroic mission to transform yourself into anything you want and offer the world anything you want.

WHAT IF YOU DON'T SUCCEED

Hence, we have focused on the secret internals of the genuine religions and found a path of virtue and wisdom provisioning, a pathway of intensified practices that is a phase of preparation, a recognition of the deva body that is the spiritual achievement and yet higher transcendental bodies with even greater powers, and the fact that the successes along this pathway are known as saints, sages, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas who want to be known so that we can call upon them for aid, and they are trying to aid us all the time in various ways.

How can we prepare for such an achievement? It comes down to cultivating wisdom and virtue. It comes down to a pathway of self-control and self-perfection. It is a mind-body pathway that encompasses your thoughts and behaviors.

Most people focus on the outer rituals and dogmas of religion to say there are definite differences while ignoring this fundamental stuff inside of them. They ignore this important stuff that is the key stuff because they

only focus on “materials that manage the masses.” They ignore this universal, non-denominational material that you can authenticate by your personal efforts and then achievement. Of course, it is also proven by the testimonies of witnesses throughout history. For instance, there are many accounts of the miracles which accomplished ones can perform when they use their higher bodies. It used to be in ancient times that Arhats would rise into the air upon their death and demonstrate all their superpowers, and sometimes even during life to convert people to the path, such as in the following story from the Lotus Sutra where two sons, at the request of their mother, demonstrated their powers for the benefit of their father.

“The two sons, being concerned about their father, leaped up into the air to the height of seven tala trees and there performed various types of supernatural wonders, walking, standing, sitting, and lying down in midair; making water come out of the upper part of their bodies; making fire come out of the lower part of their bodies; making water come out of the lower part of their bodies; manifesting huge bodies that filled the sky and then making themselves small again; after becoming small, making themselves big again; disappearing in the midst of the sky and then suddenly appearing on the ground; sinking into the ground as though it were water; walking on the water as though it were land. They manifested these various types of supernatural wonders in order to cause the mind of their royal father to become pure and to make him believe and understand.”³⁷

Unfortunately, such demonstrations are rarely done today although many masters do privately demonstrate powers to students, but don't tell them what they entail by placing them within the framework of multiple bodies, higher realms, endless lives, the pursuit of better mental states, the perfection of the individuals personality and character and behavior, and so forth that constitutes the spiritual path. Then they are simply demonstrations of power, or compassion. Even so, people are focusing on the other stuff that separates traditions apart from one another instead of the materials that lead to the transcendental attainments.

Is Jesus really the only son of God? Is Mohammed really the final prophet? Are the Jews really the chosen ones? Was Buddha really the only fully enlightened Buddha? Are any of those Hindu deities real?

As long as you cultivate wisdom and virtue, engage in intensified practices, and attain the initial fruit of the path it doesn't really matter because you can do this in any tradition. Afterwards you'll find out the truth, just as you'll find out when you die and your vital energy body leaves the matrix of your physical body of denser matter.

Hence in life, why not focus on the few things the major religions can

³⁷ *The Lotus Sutra*, trans. Burton Watson, (Columbia University Press, New York, 1993), pp. 313-314.

agree on, which is the cultivation path?

Until you pass away, you still have (1) a cultivation pathway (2) that definitely produces gong-fu you cannot deny because it happens to you, and (3) at the highest excellence wins you a spiritual deva body (which the major religions and spiritual paths all agree upon as true), (4) and which you can use to enjoy the earthly heavenly plane or Pure Lands if its stage is high enough.

But what if you don't succeed in attaining this initial fruit of the spiritual path – the etheric deva body composed of your vital energy that is also called the subtle body?

If we examine ourselves honestly we can say that human beings seek to enjoy some very specific things in life. The Hindu tradition says people are pursuing four major objectives – *Artha* (material prosperity and affluence), *Kama* (pleasure, comfort, gratification), *Dharma* (righteousness, moral values) and *Moksha*, which is spiritual liberation to free us from suffering forever. This four-part schema recognizes that material achievements alone will not satisfy human beings.

Typically people pursue the four P's in life: Profit (money), Power, Prestige and Pleasure. However, such pursuits, while attractive, just like *Artha* and *Kama* seldom satisfy us for long. The specific things that individuals are most concerned with obtaining in this seeking are:

- An independent livelihood that incorporates a degree of self-determination, autonomy, personal freedom and volition where there is a sense of autonomy and control (vocational/career success that produces financial freedom, autonomy and independence)
- Engaging, meaningful and fulfilling work, career, livelihood or activities (engagement activities)
- Prosperity or abundance (a high standard of living), excellence in human living, personal accomplishment and associated feelings of personal fulfillment (regarding *Artha*, wealth, power, status, prestige, experience, education, appearance or skill accumulation-mastery-competency and the climbing of dominance hierarchies so that we have high status within them and the social chain)
- Feelings of self-esteem and competence from personal accomplishments, achievements and recognition, acknowledgement or status given by by others (due to praise, respect, appreciation or getting noticed) as well as general social acceptance and approval (Note: John Dewey said that the deepest urge in human nature is the desire to be important, Freud believed that the chief human desire apart from sex was to be great, and Lincoln said that the greatest human desire was the craving to be appreciated)

- Close, loving, affectionate, intimate family relationships (positive relationships)
- Good social connections, relationships, and interactions with your friends, family and community as well as close, loyal friendships and companionships (acceptance by others, fulfillment of the need to belong **within your group of friends, the community and society**)
- A high level of health and energy and positive emotions
- A state of flow where you engage in unbroken concentration, without distraction, on a challenging activity requiring skill where you demonstrate competence of control and mastery
- **Peace of mind, psychological well-being (internal harmony, balance and positivity without negativity, turmoil and confusion)**
- **Ample leisure or free time for relaxation or play**
- Frequent positive states of mental delight, pleasure and sensory or emotional gratification such as experiences of novelty, variety, creativity and imagination and other aspects of *Kama* or pleasure
- **Personal growth and self-improvement in personal potential, personal conduct,** perfection of one's virtues, values and character, and any progress in self-actualization
- Worthy ideals, goals, aims, aspirations, engagements and a sense of purpose in life or purposes for life that give it meaning (serving something bigger than oneself) or direction for daily activities, interpersonal relationships, and life events or provide a sense of belonging and identity

Sometimes the items of essential importance to your life are broken down as your work, career or vocation; wealth (money or economic resources or standard of living); friends, family (parents and siblings), spouse, children, and social connections within your community and society; educational trajectory; conduct and self-improvement; how you protect yourself from temptation; goals; meaningful activities; taking care of yourself (attention to your mental and physical health); personal achievements, personal interests or useful things you do when not working (free time activities); positive emotional experiences; life balance; and life purpose.

The psychological components that comprise our happiness include the state of internal harmony and balance (inner peace, contentment, serenity, a positive relationship with oneself), positive emotions and feelings (cheerfulness, happiness, joy, merriness, feelings of comfort and moments of pleasure), a sense of well-being, feelings of achievement, fulfillment and satisfaction, an optimistic or sunny attitude/disposition, freedom and autonomy, a feeling of being loved and accepted by others, engagement

with life (a state of flow or feeling of being fully alive and engaged with the presence of the moment through a lucid pristine state of consciousness) and association with meaning. What people consider meaningful in their life as the greatest components of happiness and satisfaction includes family, work, interpersonal relationships, health, and personal growth.

This is the package of life. It is an undeniable fact of life that many people pursue wealth, power, status, privilege and so forth for the goal of happiness and that religions teach us that the optimal, ethical manner in which to conduct yourself in life is exactly what lets you move up these dominance hierarchies. The karmic reward, the consequential cause and effect reward of prior good behavior that you must learn is what allows you to achieve and enjoy such things.

For instance, if you are honest you can become successful. If you sacrifice yourself for others you can become a leader, and thus rise in status and power. If you achieve something remarkable in an honest and ethical way then you will derive prestige from the crowd. Hence, since domination strivings cannot be silenced within our biological natures, spiritual teachings have taken mankind's most materialistic drives and provided achievement pathways that channel those strivings with ethics and morality so that their attainment is the reward of merit rather than oppression and harm to others.

The "good life" involves all such positive factors as well as *Artha*, *Kama*, *Dharma* and *Moksha*, and avoids or eliminates unnecessary suffering. It also involves being who you could be, activating your highest capabilities and being the best you can by going beyond your current limitations and conditioning to become something better. It involves being your true self of highest capabilities and aspirations, who you actually are in your own genuine being if you embrace the courage to become that way, which involves effort since you come pre-packaged according to the limitations of your conditionings.

I have already provided indications for how to obtain financial freedom, material prosperity, an independent livelihood and wealth to last generations in *Super Investing*, *Bankism*, *Buddha Yoga*, and *How to Create a Million Dollar Unique Selling Proposition*. Selecting a proper career that suits you is one of the best ways to secure a stable income. How to achieve worldly accomplishments, vocational success, your life goals, material goals and skill goals, and climb dominance hierarchies is covered in *Visualization Power*, *Quick Fast Done*, *Buddha Yoga* and *Move Forward*, which contains my philosophy on life.

In *Husbands and Wives Were Connected in the Past* and *The Taihu School* I gave indications on how to find your spouse, how to conceive kids, what to teach your children, and how to bond your family together. Picking the right marital spouse is one of the greatest causes of happiness in life and

even more important than the college or university you go to. In this book you have already gained some idea of the virtues to teach your kids too.

In *Color Me Confucius* and *Culture, Country, City, Company, Person, Purpose, Passion, World* I revealed how people have historically banded together in groups with a common intent, and thereby experienced good social interactions and high quality friendships. These two books also contain my methods for improving your conduct, cultivating virtue, perfecting your character and self-actualization.

In *Detox Your Body Quickly and Completely, Look Younger Live Longer, Prevent and Reverse Atherosclerosis* (Reed) and *Move Forward* I revealed how to create greater health, energy and longevity in your life. Proper diet and exercise are the best ways to remain healthy, but this also includes periodic detoxification efforts and the right nutritional supplements. *Buddha Yoga* also covers some of these topics along with *Nyasa Yoga*.

According to Taoism, one of the keys to longevity is keeping the intestines clean so that poisons can be eliminated from the body. My own teacher stressed the importance of emptying the intestines for Arhats who wanted super-longevity, but what if they are impacted with wastes? Then you have to cleanse these channels of elimination. The Edgar Cayce readings also say, “[if] the assimilation and eliminations [were] kept nearer normal in the human family, the days might be extended to whatever period as was so desired, for the system ... is able to bring resuscitation so long as the eliminations do not hinder.” I once heard an anecdotal story of a man who found a storage shed full of hundreds of empty bottles of Metamucil intestinal cleanser (which contains psyllium fiber), and the house belonged to a couple where the wife died at age 104 and the husband at age 102. Keeping the intestinal channels of elimination clean is thus one of the secret keys to health and longevity, which is why colonics and intestinal cleanses are a powerful means of maintaining health.

Because of the importance of internal cleansing, in *Detox Your Body Quickly and Completely* I revealed how just Nature’s Pure Body Whole Body Program & Colon Program (Pure Body Institute) together with Vitalzym (World Nutrition) would produce a great internal body cleanse and clear out your intestinal channels of elimination. If you add regular pranayama practice to this protocol then you would really be cleaning your body in a major way, which should be done on a regular basis. Dr. Richard Schulze also offers a set of detoxification products for the intestines, liver and kidneys and I once saw an individual with skin and energy so clean that I commented about it with compliments (a chiropractor), and he told me that he was regularly taking the Schulze detoxification protocols. Frequent cleansing will make you look great, improve your health and longevity and let your vital energy flourish as long as what you do is not stripping away your internal energy it is too strong or intrusive.

Continuing, CoQ10 (along with some other supplements like PQQ) provides our cells with extra internal energy that enables them to eliminate internal cellular debris so that they can get back to devoting their energies towards cellular repair and proper DNA/RNA replication. In other words, you can help your cells perform internal cleanses by supplying them with COQ10 so they have more energy. What foods should you eat that are most easily absorbed? I once saw a Youtube video about Annette Larkins who looked so young because she was regularly juicing and eating raw foods. If you supply your body with nutrients in a form already micronized then it can most easily absorb it. This is why I recommend juicing, supergreen and super red powders along with nucleotide-rich foods. Also, Shilajit (with fulvic acid complex), kelp powder and colloidal minerals can supply you with necessary minerals in highly absorbable form. The easier it is for your body to digest and absorb food, the easier it is for your body to repair cells, grow and glow with vitality and longevity.

Now for the junk floating around in our blood. Vitalzym and porcine pancreatic glandulars help break up unwanted floating toxic complexes in the blood. This can cut down on the work required by the liver and intestines, which can be cleansed periodically through the protocols within *Detox Your Body Quickly and Completely*. For cleansing your arteries so that blood circulation is improved you have all the protocols within *Prevent and Reverse Atherosclerosis*. If you want to exercise all your cells then power plates, which vibrate/shake every cell in the body, trick them into thinking they are being exercised even though they are being passively moved. Thus,

- Cleanse intestines and internal body – use Nature’s Pure Body Whole Body Program & Colon Program (Pure Body Institute), Vitalzym (World Nutrition)
- Cleanse the blood – use Vitalzym and pancreatic enzymes remove floating toxins complexes in the blood
- Increase blood circulation – use *Prevent and Reverse Atherosclerosis* (Reed) protocols that strip clean arteries of cholesterol using substances such as nattokinase, EDTA, vitamin C, etcetera
- Increase cellular energy to get rid of internal debris – COQ10
- Green and red superfood powders with fresh juices, nucleotide-rich foods, clean fats, and Shilajit (with fulvic acid complex), kelp powder or colloidal minerals are the most absorbable foods for staying young, looking great, increasing your energy, maximizing cellular repair and youthfulness, and longevity
- Exercise all body cells – power plates that vibrate the body

In *The Little Book of Meditation*, *Color Me Confucius*, and *Meditation Case*

Studies and many other books I revealed methods for pacifying your mind, learning how to relax, and eliminating mental afflictions. Entire traditions are devoted to this task of changing your character/personality, your habitual cognitive and behaviorist disposition, and gaining control of your mind and behaviors. You basically have two skills as a human being – physical skills and cognitive skills. Why not learn to master both? You should learn to maximize the health and capability of your body - your biological substrate - and the wisdom, compassion, effectiveness and skillfulness of your volitional decision-making capabilities.

In *Color Me Confucius, Buddha Yoga, Move Forward*, as well as *Quick, Fast, Done* and *Culture, Country, City, Company, Person, Purpose, Passion, World* I revealed how to go about determining your life purpose and how to set worthy ideals for your life.

People also want to cultivate virtue and improve themselves in life or master various skills. Essentially you have two types of abilities: physical and cognitive, both of whose many aspects you can choose to master. This is the basis of *Color Me Confucius, Visualization Power, Sports Visualization for the Elite Athlete, Move Forward, Buddha Yoga* and *Quick, Fast, Done* as well as *Culture, Country, City, Company, Person, Purpose, Passion, World*. Other books on the strategies and philosophies of learning, such as those by Daniel Coyle that talk about deep or deliberate practice, are useful along these lines. And of course if you want to learn specific skills there are courses, schools and books readily available for almost anything you want to learn or know.

People pursuing *Artha* and *Kama* want to experience excellence in human living. They want to accomplish and experience things, and want to have remedies available for when they go astray or get into trouble. This is why I recommend books like Tim Ferriss's *The 4-Hour Body, The 4-Hour Chef, Tools of Titans* and *Tribe of Mentors*.

A small book I recently came across with good ideas along these lines is world poker expert Phil Hellmuth Jr.'s *#Positivity*. In it Hellmuth wrote, "I loved poker, and I was good at it. But I figured if I was going to continue playing, then I might as well work towards becoming not just a good player, but a great one – maybe the best in the world. Why not?"

"To get there, however, I knew I'd have to do more than just write down the goal. I'd have to figure out exactly what I had to do to get there. To become a great poker player, there were key skills that I'd have to master. I'd already seen – and personally experienced – what happens when you don't have all the skills in place to play at the top of your game. If I wanted to be great, I knew I'd have to master each one.

"As I pondered the skills I needed to reach the top, I came up with a concept I call the *Winning Pyramid*. I took all the necessary building blocks needed to achieve world-class success in poker, and structured them in a way that was not only easy to understand, but also created a hierarchy to

show what skills were most important.

“The pyramid was a triangle made from ten blocks, with each block representing a key skill I needed to master. [The top row has one block – the most important skill. The second row has two blocks, the third row has three blocks, and the fourth row has four blocks.] I listed them in order of importance, with the bottom being the least important, and easiest to implement (at least for me personally), and the top being the most important, but also the most challenging to master.

“Each row contained skills that were related, so that each level of the pyramid represented an overall strategy as well. ...

“Creating my pyramid was a turning point in my life, I had already written own my life goals and for the first time I clearly understood where I wanted to go and who I wanted to be. Now, with the Winning Pyramid, I knew exactly how to get there.”³⁸

Hellmuth also recommends writing down your goals so you have something clear and precise to work towards. He also used the Jim Carrey method of taping his yearly goals, life goals and positive sayings to his bathroom mirror. If you do this, which I recommend, you will look at them each day to reprogram yourself according to your chosen saying and also be inspired to achieve the goals you have posted.

Now, of all the things we normally pursue in life as *Artha* and *Kama* including money, power, fame, status, exclusivity, health, energy, pleasure, loving relationships, social relationships, peace of mind, personal achievements, self-actualization, worthy ideals and efforts and so forth, what’s the most important of all these concerns?

Many would say that a suffering-free and affliction-free life is key because if you are stuck with suffering you cannot enjoy any of the rest. To become suffering-free therefore necessitates health and peace of mind, which would then become the top concerns.

Others have said that the greatest thing you can cultivate in life is a sunny disposition that overrides such troubles and afflictions as they come because then you are always operating according to some degree of internal bliss even though you may encounter suffering. But of course you want to be suffering-free so this objective overrides happiness.

A happy life is rarely achieved in solitary confinement so it necessitates good social interactions and high quality (deep loyal) friendships, namely loving relationships. Interviews with prisoners of war who were tortured or put in solitary confinement for years, and with longevity experts who studied sociability and community involvement, have taught us that loving, caring social relationships and friendships are the most important things to

³⁸ Phil Hellmuth Jr., *#Positivity: You are Always in the Right Place at the Right Time*, (Phil Hellmuth, 2018), pp. 23-28.

a fulfilling life. However, many recluses do not treasure this at all as their top priority but they certainly want to be suffering-free.

Overall, it is hard to separate things out from one another and say just one objective is best, but I personally think that the supreme objective is to be suffering-free or have solutions for the sufferings encountered because of life/existence. Next would be the requirements that would get you there, and then the requirements that would bring you to a steady-state of bliss, happiness or a sunny disposition – however you wish to word it because these are all different degrees on the same spectrum of the idea of a positive mental and emotional state, for that is what you want within the consciousness *that is you*.

The big question that also remains, after every worldly concern is addressed, is once again *Moksha*. What is the spiritual path of liberation, realization or enlightenment and what is the end result?

Usually it is described in terms of some sort of ultimate spiritual bliss (a mental state such as the aforementioned), or a wonderful heavenly life of peaceful living, being in tune with God’s way or nature’s way (and thus not suffering afflictions in life), or achieving an end to endless incarnations of suffering. All of these “utopias” are in some way a solution to pain and suffering.

Frankly, there is no such thing as a spiritual state that will last forever, a mental state that will last forever, an environment or phenomenological state that will last forever, a heavenly spiritual location that will last forever, or a spiritual body that will last forever. Everything changes, everything is ruled by impermanence and suffers from decay. Of course you can delay decay and work towards rejuvenation and beautification, such as the rejuvenation of your body and beautification of your surroundings, your environment, society, the Buddha land you are in ... can’t you?

Rejuvenation, maintenance, improvement and self-perfection are actually taught in some religions such as Taoism, Buddhism and some tantric Yoga schools as regards your body, but there really is no such thing as an emanated state of permanence since Shakti is characterized by constant change, transformation and movement. You might be able to cultivate a spiritual body of compositional materials so high that it lasts a very, very long time and when finally reborn (because of eventual demise) you still retain some memories, but no body lasts forever. Impermanence rules the created universe, so impermanence and decay rules everything.

If you are to live life after life via reincarnation, which is true since higher Buddhas work to make sure the energy of your higher bodies within whichever one you presently have never structurally dissipates, the questions then come down to a purpose for yourself throughout it all, meaning a direction to head and way to be. Next, after you have chosen a way to be and worthy objectives for your life and being, how do you

cultivate wisdom and skillfulness for your way of life and selected undertakings? Remember, these are for your mind and body, which you then apply to your way of being – your living way, relationships, environment, property, your personal actions and so on. Furthermore, how do you improve your mindset to handle all the afflictions and sufferings you will no doubt encounter along the way, and in life in general since existence necessitates suffering due to the fact it is characterized by constant change and each moment of change, if felt, is actually an affliction as one state transforms into another either smoothly or jumpily. Because you cling to things that must change you always suffer mental affliction unless you can learn presence of mind, which means detachment, letting go, openness, and other words developed by various religious traditions.

For instance, how do you take care of and cultivate your body vehicle so that it is healthy, athletic, pain-free, trouble-free and brimming with energy since that is the vehicle you will have for your life? You want it to be as excellent as possible, don't you? Surely the difficulties of life might be overcome with the help of some spiritual philosophies, and surely some philosophies might offer you a pathway for your development.

When we *really* examine the world's religions we truly find the standard commonality of a universal path for the attainment of higher spiritual bodies. This is the heavenly reward people are promised, and most people attain the lowest heavenly rung after dying. But adepts attain it while alive and then attain higher bodies still because their subtle body is more purified than that of normal individuals who die since they purified it through a devoted path of yogic spiritual cultivation. This is why they become living saints, *ikigami*, Orishas, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, sages, elders, prophets and so forth.

One problem is that most religions neglect to stress the health and welfare of the physical body that becomes the template for the higher body achievements, and so ascetics, recluses, sadhus, yogis, renunciates, cenobites and so forth sometimes mistakenly harm or even destroy their bodies during their cultivation because they don't know its actual purpose. They go to ascetic extremes and cause it injury. Some ascetic practices, as Shakyamuni Buddha pointed out, are simply too severe and thus harmful to the physical body. One should not engage in self-indulgence, but one should certainly not engage in self-mortification either. The proper way is moderation, which we call the golden mean.

Now on the other hand, if you end up with too much micro-concern on your diet or spending all your time focusing on sculpting the human body into better shape, as done in the field of bodybuilding, you've gone the wrong way as well. You can even take the practice of yoga too far also so that your muscles are in constant soreness or pain, and you've loosened your joints so much that their muscles become easy to damage. You should

aim to get your body into good shape through appropriate diet and exercise and from that as a base work on mantra, prayer, meditation and inner energy practice (kundalini yoga, *kriya* yoga, *anapana*, *neijiaquan*, *nei-gong* and Vajrayana practice) to try and achieve the fruits of the path.

I've already taught you that you can use Z-health for joints, *Yi Jin Jing* for tendons, yoga and Pilates for muscles, Ginastica Natural and the martial arts and weight training for movement, and that there are other muscles and movement modalities that you can master to bring grace to the human form. This includes Terry Laughlin's Total Immersion swimming, the Feldenkrais method, Alexander technique, Natural Movement, Aston-Patterning, Dr. Eric Goodman's Foundation Training, Ginastica Natural (Natural Gymnastics) and the Yat Malmgren technique. As previously stated, Bodhidharma introduced Shaolin kung-fu to Chinese Buddhist monks because they were neglecting their bodies in total and therefore what they were following, due to its absence was NOT the complete spiritual path. What you also need to learn are new ways of breathing because they can help you change your mental state at will.

The possibilities are endless for just this one aspect of your existence - your body movements - and we haven't even talked about altering your diet for better body structure, techniques for adjusting your physical body to relieve pain, or mastering your internal energy through kundalini yoga, *nei-gong*, *anapana* and the like.

There are endless things you can do to master your many possible skills and capabilities. You can devote a portion of your life to mastering your voice as I've already mentioned, or mastering the active literacies. You can devote a portion of your life to mastering various amazing abilities such as echolocation, magnetokinesis, agrokineseis (ability to influence plant life through the mind), electrokinesis (storing and generating electricity internally), pyrokinesis (ability to speed up an object's atoms or increase its thermal energy until it ignites on fire), mental calculation, super memory skills, musical skills, imaginary visualization skills, absolute pitch, super odor or taste identification abilities, thermoregulation, warm Yang Qi or heat generation, cool Yin Qi generation, breath retention, super climbing skills, super Parkour skills, super eye-hand coordination, omniilinguism (super linguistic speaking and comprehension skills), aura reading (sensing other's energy), super balance skills, pain withstanding skills, super stamina and endurance, or associating a sensory pathway with other cognitive pathways. Some of these require special genetic gifts and others simply training because talent can be learned.

All the pathways to higher spiritual attainments involve meditation and inner energy work. Those are the two essential wings of the plane that lets you fly, the two wheels of the bicycle that lets you move ahead. If the pathways don't specifically mention the necessity of inner energy work it is

because they disguise it as something different, such as the noetic prayer of Anthonite Christianity which is supposed to move your Qi and your thoughts at the same time. Also, they typically don't describe it because spiritual beings are supposed to do this for you automatically when you recite their prayers, read their holy books, or perform various rituals and ceremonies that they have vowed to "protect," which means take care of (energetically work on) the practitioners who become involved with them. Those are usually the spiritual pathways that rely on prayer and reverence to cultivate inner emotional states of piety, compassion and so on to transform your Qi. Other pathways do it directly through yogic exercises such the sadhanas of tantric India, Tibet and so forth. There are many ways to do it.

I want to emphasize that Islam, Judaism, Christianity, Bahai, Druze and other genuine religions have all developed cultivation systems that have produced saints, namely individuals with all the higher body attainments as the masters attain in the east. They just don't tell you this, but the spiritual path and the accomplishment of spiritual bodies that enjoy the fruits promised by religion is non-denominational, a fact everyone discovers in the end. According to the Eastern Orthodox Christian Church, if you divinize your body you can become a god and join the community of saints, which is exactly what happens during the process of spiritual cultivation. This is exactly the same target though worded using divinization, *theosis*, *theoria* and so forth. Many Christian monastic lineages provide exactly the same message. Is this not the path of accomplishment in Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Judaism and the rest?

Even the worldly and practical Confucianism clearly used meditation, Qi cultivation and proper behavior as the cultivation path. According to Confucianism you could work on becoming what has been translated as a virtuous individual, gentleman of benevolence, exemplary man or woman, or man/woman of consummate conduct. At the highest stages of cultivation you could become a saint and then sage who could help restore order in the world. Mencius even gave the various ranks of achievement that correspond to the Arhat attainments that everyone else has recognized. Most people have no clue that Confucianism is actually a spiritual pathway. That's how well hidden this material is within Confucianism.

Judaism created its own systems of prayer, study and contemplation for the spiritual path that now includes kabbalah meditation, prayer and other practices that have produced many enlightened rabbis that the Jewish call prophets (in the Bible), and *tzadiks*.

Islam developed the Sufi path for Moslems who wanted to reach Allah in the most direct fashion and it regularly produces enlightened mazjoobs, Imams, muftis, pirs, fakirs, sheikhs etcetera that are the direct equivalents to the Srotapanna, Sakradigam, Anagamin and full Arhat stages of Buddhism,

which are the standard levels of achievement.

Of course the Buddhist monastic system and its cultivation technology is well-known for producing Arhats, male and female.

Taoism, with its methods of inner quiet and internal energy cultivation, has produced “immortals” as its spiritual product, and they are the exact equivalents of the Buddhist Arhats too. Ordinary individuals who practice its exercises but don’t succeed attain the mundane benefit of better health and longevity, which is the fruit in all other pathways as well. As with all the other paths and traditions, you have to be a good, virtuous individual to succeed on the path in attaining a deva body whilst alive.

Hinduism, with its many denominations (Shaivism, Vaishnavism, Shaktism, Smartism, Shrautism, Suryaism, Ganapatism, Kaumaram) and the many Yogic traditions of India, have created many cultivation paths and cultivation methods that have produced sadgurus, gurus, swamis, yogis and other titles recognizing men and women of achievement.

Within India we will find that Jainism, which revolves around the idea that the soul can liberate itself from matter via individual effort, also developed successful methods of cultivation as did Sikhism and of course Buddhism. In fact, all the masters in India’s various traditions, once out of their physical shell restrictions, help the students of every other tradition attain the higher bodies. The help they extend to individuals of other paths is non-denominational. That’s what a Buddha is ... everything is the same Shakti and circumstances simply put you in a different race or religion or path. Everyone deserves to get out. The most you can do for ordinary people, however, is at times refresh their Qi/Prana through various experiences to make sure the body is healthy and that its integrity holds so that it does not dissipate upon demise.

In fact, the masters of every sect and religion regularly cooperate in helping individuals of every faith attain the deva body and higher. They rotate being on duty inside individuals’ bodies (with their students) to help circulate their Qi during the Twelve Year kundalini transformation period. For instance, if someone going through this transformation period discovers that an adept in another religion has attained the higher body achievements then it’s a tradition that the “discovered” enlightened individual has to do internal energy work on that student’s body as a sort of penance. It is tradition to try to keep the accomplishments secret. Normally, however, you are simply encouraged to call upon past saints who will then arrive, surmise your situation, and then use their own energy through a *nirmanakaya* to help you transform your own to some degree.

Masters don’t want the public to know that there is such a thing as these higher body achievements, and don’t want people to know that they have them for obvious reasons even though this is the reward of Heaven promised to practitioners of every religion. No one likes to go into a

human's dirty body and spin their Qi to help transform/purify its Qi either, which is boring and dirty work, which is another reason this tradition of "you were discovered so you have to do work" was created. There are many reasons other than just humility for why everyone hides their spiritual attainments. Kings hope to enlist such individuals to give advice or do favors for them, but karma prevents miracles from happening. You can never force an adept to help you no matter what you threaten either. Capabilities are limited, karmic restrictions are strong. Higher beings will also simply block their powers to make blackmail impossible.

Peeling aside the coverings of dogmas, rituals and so forth that separate religions from one another we find all this as the secret path and principles of spiritual cultivation. All the genuine religions have borrowed from one another to develop their techniques with the common aim, or independently developed their own unique pathways whereby we can cultivate our bodies, minds and behavior to reach higher spiritual states, yet ordinary people don't realize that religious practices and spiritual paths can actually lead to transcendental attainments. They are blinded by the common focus on good behavior (compassion, tolerance, overcome craving, anger, and restrain selfish interests) and think this is all just a materialistic or social emphasis, failing to recognize that there is a transcendental reward to this. It's kept hidden, but at the highest level of transformation Christianity is *supposed to transfigure us* into saints, Hinduism into gods/deities, Buddhism into Arhats or Bodhisattvas, Taoism into Immortals, Confucianism into sages, Judaism into *tzadik*, Islam into "real men," and so forth. Normally people think of religion as a process of metamorphosis due to changes brought about by virtuous good behavior, but they neglect these transcendental achievements to their body that is the *real crux* of the spiritual path. They have to deal with internal energy movements.

That's why when someone using noetic prayer within Christianity finally gets their internal Qi to move, and their emotions to experience bliss or rapture, they keep continuing the practice because they don't want the transformation to stop. It's not that they don't want the experience to stop. It's that they need the transformation to continue in order to eventually complete that's required of purifying their Qi/Prana so that they can generate the independent deva body while alive.

Many, many people in the world have achieved the higher spiritual bodies. Such personages are in every tradition including the western paths that people normally think do not have them, but you will certainly find many westerners who have multiple spiritual bodies because of various levels of attainment. Don't get fixated on just Tibetan gurus, Indian yogis or sadgurus, Taoist masters, Jain masters, or Buddhist monks and nuns if you are seeking enlightenment, which means the attainment of these bodies and

the concomitant, attendant mental state and powers that goes with them. All the religions have “ascended masters” (individuals at these stages of achievement) and they specify their names so that we can ask them for help.

Spiritual masters have all practiced various forms of cultivation, experienced the gong-fu of the path, attained the deva body, next learned about the true path in general (due to its attainment) and the falsities of various religious teachings within the earthly heavenly plane, and then did or did not choose to cultivate further to attain yet higher bodies and become Buddhas and Bodhisattvas devoted to helping others.

Spiritual beings do a lot of work over time on our bodies to help us grow correctly and to make sure that the integrity of our etheric subtle body does not disintegrate upon physical death but simply releases the deva body that is lodged inside our physical matter matrix. This is one of the jobs of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas including the local protector spirits within your vicinity.

From these efforts it shouldn't be hard for you to understand that part of the task of the great religions is to help us transform our Qi through religious/spiritual activities such as the positive emotions aroused during services.

We need help in life. We need help to attain the stages of the spiritual path, and regular life help in general. We need help to solve problems and deal with suffering. We can ask wise ones for advice, and we can go to the shrines or temples of deceased enlightened masters and ask for help when we are really in trouble. People give flowers, food, gifts of candy and so forth trying to win favor from previous masters, Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and deities but gifts are to no avail. If you have virtue and merit then a Buddha or Bodhisattva will try to intervene where they can, but don't expect miracles. Sometimes karma has to play itself out, especially if you are in a wavefront of your karmic wavefunction that specifies that suffering is due. This is especially the case when it is time for people to die.

Buddhas and Bodhisattvas aid us as their chosen occupation. They don't have to help people but they voluntarily choose to do so, thus taking upon themselves a responsibility that entails suffering but which also provides meaning in this effervescent universe. They have established their own unique vows that become part of their life purpose. You too can do such a thing if you desire. It entails aligning with your highest you, your highest and best self, the person you want to be, the light you want to be or want the world to see.

Cultivation is the pathway for becoming able to accomplish this so it isn't just about prayer, worship or meditation. It's about your behavior and activity in the world, it's about your character and personal values, it's about developing wisdom and skillfulness. If you don't succeed in attaining the spiritual deva body during life, you have a chance after death since you

automatically attain a deva body when you die because your spirit of vital energy detaches from the matrix of your physical body at that time. However, it is much coarser than the ones that saints develop since they undergo many practices of purification.

Although it is less purified than if you had cultivated during life, your *yin shen*, or after life body, is still a deva body that can tread the path of spiritual attainment. But why wait for the afterlife? At the minimum you should be working on transforming your current body during life through diet, exercise, meditation, mantra/prayer and inner energy work. Since it is a long game we are all playing, you should also be working on perfecting your habits and behavior since you will carry these tendencies as your *Gunas* and *samskaras* with you everywhere, including into subsequent incarnations.

What you now have in the following chapters are excerpts from of my previous writings on these various cultivation topics that comprise the basic universal spiritual path, or we could say universal religion. There are the basic cultivation practices of the spiritual path, the gong-fu you will achieve or experience, some of the various ways for transforming your behavior, and the stages of the path in terms of body attainments.

Cultivation is all a pathway of yoga. It is about mental and body attainments in the end. It is about spiritualization of your mind, body and character that results in behavior, basically raising those skills to a higher state of excellence so that you have a better life and produce better conditions for others too. “Mental attainments” doesn’t just mean our mind-stream or mental state or cognitive skills. It means our basic character, personality, ways of processing decisions, our virtues and then our behavior, which is our thoughts expressed. Or, behavior can be simply automatic, without thinking, in which for some cases we can install new automatic reactions. Our behavior tells us how our brain has responded and it is up to us to improve those thinking algorithms that get expressed. We can configure ourselves in a new way. As you can see, essentially it is all about becoming a better, higher human being.

CHAPTER 3: UNIVERSAL CREATION

The basic idea on how the universe was created is shared by a number of spiritual traditions. The common similarities you typically find, which even extend to stories about ancient gods and goddesses in various cultures, is that the original nature is a pure, infinite, vast state akin to a void, empty space or nothingness. From within this primordial state all the rest of manifest reality is somehow born.

That first step of Creation is explained in different ways by various traditions. Buddhism says we don't know how it happened. Hasidism and Kaballah doctrine say that God created reality through an *act of will*, such as a desire to share. Various traditions within Hinduism profess the idea that the original nature *desired* to be known and so created manifest reality, or manifest reality is simply the *play* of the divine, or the *desire* of the divine, or *will* of the divine, and so on. The basic idea is that Creation manifests, emanates or effuses from the supreme absolute nature through some unknown process, but the divine original nature never changes because It is eternally pure and changeless.

I have summarized the various ideas on this process in several books, and pointed out that they are all constructed in such a way to get you to equivocate an empty mind of very little thought that is some view of emptiness (that nonetheless is still a thought construct). This is called clear awareness, pure consciousness, and other terms that are matched with the purity of original nature, empty like space. Thoughts, on the other hand, are matched with whatever emanates from the original nature.

Emptiness meditation leads to yet another type of meditation, namely mental watching which is the original nature and Shakti conjoined. The original nature gives birth to manifestation, so your mind of pure

consciousness gives birth to thoughts. That's Shakti and the primordial state, the fundamental essence. Then, since the fundamental nature is your True Self like a true-I, we have meditative efforts to watch your thoughts with awareness, which is called watchfulness or mindfulness.

Watching your thoughts leads to many benefits for a being with consciousness. It leads to better behavior and improved states of being. It puts you into a state of presence where you know what you are thinking and doing, and can act with more wisdom rather than just act like an animal that follows its limited, learned programming.

In this case you, too, have preconditioned programming such as your memory and mental processing algorithms you've developed over the years that automatically arise. You want to create a mindset of *clarity, lucidity and presence* where you see what comes up internally in your mind, but you don't just robotically follow it. You want to give yourself a gap, a break in your thought-stream where you can step aside from the momentum of thoughts and allow other thoughts to arise that are better, and then follow them if they are better decision makers. This capability raises humanity up to a higher standard of well-being by separating us farther and farther away from our animal nature of impulses. You decide to devote yourself to that goal or not, which is that of ennoblement, transcension and spirituality.

Coming around full circle, to realize the detachment of emptiness that helps you let go of your programming, it helps if you realize that you are an infinite dependently defined mereological construction that is just a bag of chemicals and energy somehow providing an illusion of consciousness that doesn't really ultimately exist in the real sense. It just conventionally exists for truly there is only chaotic Shakti without patterns that ultimately mean anything, and consciousness is itself a relative, conditional, limited worldview of simplifications and errors. That being the case, now you have to decide the goals of your life or purpose of your life. Part of the answer is to eliminate or reduce suffering in your mental experiential realm and pathway of life because you will be forced to deal with suffering on an ongoing basis. As to the meaning of life, this will be left to whatever you decide it to be whether it is the pursuit of joy, comfort, equanimity, service, learning, self-perfection, compassion and so forth.

Now in summarizing these explanations that appear in various religions I have never introduced the Taoist notions too deeply, except for a little bit in *Color Me Confucius*. Since Taoism is the home-grown viewpoint of the Chinese philosophical tradition, here are the basic Taoist views which, once again, also reveal the same idea.

The *Tao Te Ching* says, "The Tao produced One; One produced Two; Two produced Three; Three produced all things." This couplet explains the process of Creation according to Taoism.

The Tao, or absolute nature, is called Wuji in some schools of Taoism. This is our original essence, True Self, fundamental substance or true self-nature. It is our original natural state before things become differentiated or distinguished, before energy or forces form. This primordial, unchanging, pure substance/essence – naturally peaceful and calm – is what somehow gives birth to Shakti, Creation, which is akin to the process of energy somehow appearing out of pristine empty space.

Yijing cosmology explains that Wuji produces Taiji - the One - which then splits into Yin and Yang (Liang Yi), or Two. For instance, you might say that the Tao is the absolute nature that produces Shakti, the One, and Creation proceeds forwards from there. Or, you might say that the nothingness of the absolute nature produces space, as explained by the theories of quantum gravity, which is the Tao producing the One that in turn produces energy and then an explosion of things from there. Some people even take the One as representing Taiji Itself, the original nature, that then produces as Its first emanation Shakti, which is then the Second thus making Two elements.

When “The Tao produced One,” we’ll take it to mean that the Wuji produced Taiji; the Supreme Ultimate or original nature somehow gave rise to a first manifestation, Shakti. In Hinduism this is *Purusha* producing *Prakriti*, otherwise known as Shakti. In Judaism this is *Yesh me-Ayin*, something from nothing, while in Christianity it is *ex-nihilo* Creation where God calls the universe into existence out of nothing without changing one thing into another. In Buddhism, this is the creation of karmic forces within the twelve links of interdependent origination. In Taoism this is the formless, beginningless original nature producing Shangqing, the Supreme Pure One who is also known as “Lord of the Numinous Treasure.”

This manifestation, which appears just as a puff of wind seems to magically appear within an endless unmoving sky, which is the appearance of Shakti within *Purusha*, next produces a first phenomenon other than the entirety of Shakti. Taoism says that Taiji splits and produces a Second, “the One produced the Two (Second),” which is like the separation of an original universe of only space (Yin = passive, non-moving) into space and energy (Yang = active, moving, transient).

Next the *Tao Te Ching* says that, “The Two produced Three,” meaning that the very first next thing must be a new transformation that is neither space nor that original energy. From Shakti that is the first emanation, together with the primordial support that is the base of creation (Taiji), a second emanation is produced, and then these three subsequently produce the “10,000 things” - everything else in the universe. Somehow those primal forces developed into everything else in the cosmos, which Buddhism calls the Triple Realm.

Taoism also represents this process anthropomorphically using the

symbolism of the Three Pure Ones, or celestial rulers. Each ruler (deity) represents something within the sequence of Creation.

The first of the Three Pure Ones (Three Purities) is Yuanshi Tianwang, who represents the absolute nature or Wuji of *Yijing* cosmology. His name roughly translates into “Lord of the Primal Beginning,” “Universally Honored One of Origin,” “Celestial Worthy of the Primordial Beginning,” “Heavenly King of the Void and Chaotic Primordial Beginning.” The Primordial Beginning means the original nature, the fundamental substrate, the self-so uncreated original essence that is primordial. This simply means our fundamental nature or original natural state. Yuanshi Tianwang is also called the “Jade Pure One” or “Honored Lord of the Origin.”

As the Ultimate, He is the Source of all. He is the original nature or fundamental essence since He is lord of the primal beginning of energy and matter, lord of the origin of things, lord of the primordial beginning. How the beginning (Creation) happens no one can say, which is why Buddhism names the first step of the twelve links of interdependent origination as “Ignorance.” Ignorance means we don’t know how Creation happened out of a changeless, pure original nature.

Yuanshi Tianwang’s existence is self-so since in representing the original essence He does not come from any prior cause or conditions; He is there before Creation (manifestation, emanation, or evolution) started. Thus He stands for the Tao, absolute essence, True Self or original nature since this is the primal beginning. Or, you can similarly say this is the origin of the primal beginning of created things.

One of Yuanshi Tianwang’s titles is the “Heavenly King of the Chaotic Never-ending Primordial Beginning” which represents pre-Creation when the manifest Universe of forms and energies was still null and non-existent. Being non-existent, Taoism sometimes refers to this as chaos since chaos is the opposite of order and implies no rules of cause and effect, nor patterns and phenomena. Chaos is the opposite of the cause and effect of dependent origination.

Yuanshi Tianwang does not have the will to be a Creator, and yet Creation happens because He exists as an inevitable part of the process of Creation as its support or foundational essence though he plays no role in its manifestation. This is a description of Purusha, which is unmanifest formless existence or True Self, that matches with the descriptions of the original nature found in Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sufism, Christianity, with Plotinus and so on. In Christianity this is the Father.

The second of the Three Purities is Shangqing, the Supreme Pure One who is also known as Lingbao Tianzun, “The Celestial Worthy of the Numinous Treasure” or “Lord of the Numinous Treasure.” This indicates that He represents Shakti, the Taiji that eventually becomes differentiated in two parts, or we can say many parts. In Christianity this is the Holy Spirit.

Since Shangqing is said to have been responsible for separating Yang from Yin (or the “clear” from the opaque), He is the Shakti that starts differentiating itself into multiple forms, phenomena or energies. Thus He is also seen as the creator of Time because time cannot exist in a state of eternal changelessness, which is the state of Purusha (Yuanshi Tianwang) the fundamental essence.

Shangqing usually holds a Ruyi, which is a ceremonial scepter representing authority. He has authority over all of Creation since He represents its manifest existence and evolution into various forms through the laws of nature, meaning the laws of cause and effect or dependent origination that rule all of causality. Thus He is also called Jingbao, the “Treasure of the Laws of Nature.” He is also called “The Universally Honored One of Divinities and Treasures” since Shakti, as explained, becomes differentiated into all sorts of forms and phenomena and functions that are here called divinities and treasures. Shangqing represents the entire field of manifestation, or Creation, and everything within it are His treasures.

The third of The Three Pure Ones is Taiqing - the Great Pure One or Grand Pure One. He is also known as “The Universally Honored One of Tao and Virtues” or “The Celestial Worthy of the Way and its Power” (Daode Tianzun). Through his title as Taishang Laozun He is known as the “Highest Elder Lord” or “Grand Supreme Elder Lord” to denote that he is the highest sentient aspect within the field of manifestation/Creation that is a teacher or leader of mankind.

In Christianity this is the Christ who appears in the realm of manifestation (Shakti or the Holy Spirit), that is one with the original nature, the Father. In Buddhism He represents the enlightened Buddhas and in Hinduism the Avatars who are masters that teach mankind and make efforts to uplift humanity. When Chinese culture describes an enlightened individual by saying that “Heaven has produced a sage,” this is indicative of Taiqing.

Pictures of Taiqing usually show him holding a fan. This indicates several things, including that He has mastered the moving energy, Life-force, *Prakriti* or Shakti aspect of Creation. As the primordial Life-Energy or moving aspect of life and Creation He is often called Jiangsheng Dadi, “Great Emperor Who Sent Down Life.” A fan also means that he can cause wind, meaning that He can create phenomena through his understanding of nature.

In conventional terms, because He is a sentient being with a mind that can form thoughts to know things He can develop understanding/wisdom that lets him gain control over phenomena. Active consciousness (knowing, knowledge or awareness) appears as a movement of energy and He represents the moving aspect of Creation as a sentient being.

Taiqing is also described as the educator who brings civilization, which fits nicely with the Confucius description of a sage. He is usually equated with the highest teaching, which is that of civilizing influences such as ethics and the knowledge of the pathway to Tao (self-realization). As an educator who teaches or transmits, you can also say that He represents gaining control over the forces of movement or transformation in the field of manifestation. He learns to master the transformations of phenomena and uses that knowledge to change things to make them better. Since He masters the laws of dependent origination and their manifestation, He is said to preach the Laws of Nature - how things are “meant” to be.

As you can see, the Taoist explanation meshes with the cosmologies of other large religions including Buddhism, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and even Christianity. From the Taoist explanation it is even easy to see how the Trinity of Christianity can be justified. Of course Shakti and the original nature are one and the same, so of course the Holy Spirit and God the Father are one and the same as well since those are simply the Christian terms for Shakti and the original nature (Parabrahman, Shiva, Purusha, True Self, self-nature, absolute nature, etcetera). Thus the New Testament has John 1:1, “In the beginning was the Logos, and the Logos was with God, and the Logos was God.” Well, the Logos, the Word, is something that moves and vibrates which is Shakti, and God is the original nature. They are one and the same thing.

What about Jesus? Well, all phenomena within the realm of Shakti are also Shakti ... a phone, tree, rock, even Jesus! They are all Shakti and also the original nature. So there is no problem with Jesus being the same as God the Father and the Holy Spirit. The tripartite identity of Jesus being equal with the Father and the Holy Spirit is no problem at all.

The real problem is that this is the case for all other phenomena as well! What has to distinguish Jesus from everything else is what must distinguish Mohammed from all other prophets, Shakyamuni Buddha from all other Buddhas, Confucius from all other teachers, etc. and that is the theology of Christianity in terms of how different he is from others, or how much better or greater he is above all others.

Another school whose Creation process I don't often describe is that of Judaism, which uses the Kabbalah to elucidate some of its most esoteric doctrines. The Kabbalah says that the Deity prior to His Self-manifestation as Creation is Ein Sof, which is described as a single infinite unity beyond any possible description. This, of course, is Parabrahman, Allah, Father, True Self, fundamental essence, original nature, primordial ground state and so on. Sometimes Jewish theology refers to *Atzmut* as the divine essence, in which case it plays the role of *Nirguna Brahman* (attributeless essence) of Hinduism while case Ein Sof becomes *Saguna Brahman* (essence with attributes that is the first cause of Creation).

Creation proceeds through an unknown process that necessitates the unmanifest fundamental essence becoming manifest, thus we have *Yesh me-Ayin*, something from nothing, or manifestation out of the pure oneness that is empty like a void. With Creation, Kabbalah doctrine then says “There is no place empty of Him” since we have interpenetration of Creation and the original nature that is the essence or ground state. Both the famous scholar Moses Maimonides and the kabbalistic *Sefer Yetzirah* accept this explanation, with Maimonides saying, “He made His *Ayin*, *Yesh*.” This is usually translated in alternative ways such as “He made that which wasn’t into that which is,” or “He turned His nothingness into something.”

Like all the other religions Judaism encourages formless emptiness meditation on the path of intensified practices. Thus the Hasidic master Dov Ber of Mezeritch once advised as instructions, “one should think of one’s self as *Ayin*, and that ‘absolute all’ and ‘absolute nothingness’ are the same, and that the person who learns to think about himself as *Ayin* will ascend to a spiritual world, where everything is the same and everything is equal.”

To summarize all the various theories of Creation I am including excerpts from two books.

From *Color Me Confucius* you will have three chapters, which show that even Confucianism follows the same line of thinking about the original nature and evolution, namely Creation.

From *Buddha Yoga* you will find a concise summary of some of the ideas from various traditions and how they lead to the quandary of discovering a life purpose for oneself since you are essentially and simply an evolute of the original nature. That being the case, you must decide upon what the light is that you wish to be in the world.

From: COLOR ME CONFUCIUS

CH. 1 – “The Supreme Ultimate”

Confucius approached the topic of spiritual cultivation in a unique way. He said we should all mindfully watch our thoughts and behavior to put ourselves on the pathway of propriety and virtue. The purpose of continually being aware of our thoughts and behavior, which you can today call mastering the state of “presence” or “awareness,” is so that we can cultivate our thoughts, speech and behavior to become better people. The mindfulness of watching our thoughts helps us purify our conduct by taking it from lower animalistic tendencies to higher principles, thus divinizing it. Purifying our mind and conduct, done through mindful witnessing and ennobling, is part of the Great Learning required of life. It is the pathway to

becoming a better human being, and ultimately a saint or sage.

Confucius also expected people to learn about and then be mindful of cause and effect relationships in the world. With a causal understanding of how situations come to be and how they normally develop, people can learn to guide events to more auspicious states that are better for all. Life involves learning how to improve our thoughts and behavior so that we can master events and guide them to more beneficial outcomes, especially outcomes that would improve the well-being of everyone. Isn't this what a saint or sage wants to accomplish?

In recognizing the importance of cause and effect, the fact we should learn from the past and stressing that we learn how to “master change” to improve situations, Confucius said that we should ultimately trace all things back to their ultimate sources. This includes situations, phenomena and even our thoughts. If you understand history, for instance, you can derive common principles behind the sources of conflicts and thereby know how to avoid or change them in the future.

A true spiritual cultivator was also expected to trace his thoughts back to their origins to see why certain emotions or thoughts arose inside him. With an understanding of their roots, he could then work at untangling or purifying any of their root misconceptions. Cultivators were even expected to trace consciousness itself back to its most ultimate roots - whatever it was. For consciousness, which means thoughts and emotions, that origin was called our “inherent bright virtue,” which is a mental state of pure awareness absent of thoughts yet ready to give birth to thoughts.

On a more mundane level, the meditation practice of Confucian introspection – where you constantly shine awareness on your thought processes - was developed to help people police and then uplift their thoughts and behavior. By watching your thoughts rather than getting entangled with them, in time the habit energies of unnecessary mentation will eventually die down and you will experience a more peaceful, blissful state of mind. This is how to reach the peaceful empty state of clear awareness from which thoughts arise. This is why people all over the world engage in sitting meditation practice, which is so that they can eventually realize their inherently bright virtue – the pristine pure awareness of consciousness that separates us from insentience.

Mencius added that the process of spiritual cultivation also involved cultivating your Qi or vitality, which is something you should do on a daily basis. Thus, a Confucian was to cultivate both his mind to a state of purity (where it became so clear that an individual could know his own thoughts with clarity and without losing himself) and his internal energy that permeated and composed his body.

Confucius relied on the *Yijing* for his worldview of phenomena and the metaphysical order. The *Yijing*, which therefore represents views that we

should reference to unravel Confucianism, enters into the transcendental and material spheres. It states that the entire universe comes from Taiji (Tai Qi), which is an fundamental Supreme Ultimate – an original nature.

The Supreme Ultimate stands for the foundational essence, energy or absolute nature that transcends all subsequently created, manifest, conditioned phenomena of the universe. It is the single, pure primordial origin of the universe spoken of by philosophers. It is the Great Tao of Taoism, Parabrahman of Hinduism, original nature of Buddhism, Allah of Islam, Ein Sof of Judaism and God the Father of Christianity.

The Supreme Ultimate is the absolute origin of the universe of created things. It is like one pure energy from which all other energies and matter are derived, and being the most fundamental existence before all else is self-so, uncreated, self-sufficient, infinite, eternal, unchangeable. Being the origin in a state of aloneness it is single, pure, ultimate, self-born. Unmanifest into anything else due to changelessness, yet it is the single foundational base that has produced infinite variations of manifestation within itself. It is the single, non-dual, undifferentiated supreme essence of all existence that transcends all created phenomenal things since they are evolutes from its single nature and appear within it. As simply an energy or essence or foundational state, within it there is no knowingness and no consciousness because such things are constructions. There is only itself.

Basically there is nothing prior to the Supreme Ultimate in existence or beingness. It is not a living being, but it is the root source of all things, the primal essence from which everything arises and which nothing can possibly transcend. Like space it has no divisions or secondary characteristics. It is Reality and so is sometimes called the “I without I” since it is our True Self - true pure beingness without differentiation such as consciousness and the thought “I am.”

As the ultimate original energy that has developed into an infinitude of others, it is a purity that transcends all composite forms, phenomena, conditions and appearances. It transcends all forces and matter and creations including consciousness, which is a construction arising within matter. Consciousness arises within living beings structured in a certain way and animated by energy. It is just a product of the right causes and conditions. The Supreme Ultimate is the ultimate source of all life and consciousness that have somehow formed/evolved/appeared within it.

When any living creature says “I” it actually refers to this underlying essence, the true self of the Supreme Ultimate that is the common self (nature) of all things. When anyone says “I” it is in truth the self-nature announcing itself. Besides the fact that “I” points to the individual, every living being saying “I” is actually referring to the common single source essence that comprises the entire universe - the Supreme Ultimate.

The Supreme Ultimate becomes many forms or bodies; all the many

phenomenal worlds in the universe arise and subside within it while it doesn't change. Being the Supreme Essence at their foundational nature, every living being can rightfully say, "They are all me. Every existence is my existence, every consciousness is my consciousness for I am just the original essence." In other words, the total functioning and appearance of the universe is just *you* because you are ultimately the Source Essence or Supreme Ultimate. All beings are therefore your brothers and sisters.

The Supreme Ultimate was never born and will never die, so you (because you are that energy) were never born and will never die. Exist or not exist as an individual you are still here always. As the Supreme Ultimate existed before consciousness appeared, because you are this foundational essence you were there before consciousness appeared. Through logic you can realize that your body, your vital energy and even the consciousness in you in their utmost pristine purity are all the Supreme Ultimate. The consciousness of you and every other being as well as matter find their ultimate unity and identity in the Supreme Ultimate, or original nature.

The objective of Confucianism, in tracing all things back to their ultimate source, includes helping you reach an experience of an "empty," clear, pristine or pure state of mind that resembles the Supreme Ultimate, which is called cultivating your bright virtue. For instance, what transcends thoughts is the natural mind that is there before their appearance - a state of consciousness that is alive and aware but absent of thoughts. What is there is a state where thoughts are unborn but their birth is not suppressed. This state of purity and clarity is to be considered as "pure consciousness" or "pristine" awareness. This is your bright virtue, namely the ability to form thoughts out of seemingly nothingness or emptiness because you have sentience or awareness. Like the Supreme Ultimate that is itself empty of all other things, like space, your natural mind is empty of thoughts but like the Supreme Ultimate can also give birth to all things – thoughts and emotions arise and depart within it according to conditions.

Our mental bright virtue is a pristine awareness absent of thoughts ready to know whatever appears rather than an inert absence of thoughts (thoughtlessness) equivalent to insentience or the lethargic ignorance of sleep. This clarity of perception is what you are to cultivate as Confucian practice, and is called empty mind in Buddhism, pure awareness in Vedanta or just bright mind.

Your mind should be comfortably quiet and aware but not suppressing thoughts. You must always allow thoughts to arise and when they are born (appear) you should clearly know them and manipulate them with skillfulness as necessary. You should always "know your mind" or "know your thoughts," but you don't have to act on everything that arises within your head. Some thoughts need to be ignored. You should know what you are thinking and why, but you should not get so entangled with your

thoughts and emotions that they totally possess you and you fall into confusion. Rather, you have to develop the mental skill of standing apart from them so you can evaluate them with wisdom and transcend their pulls. The goal is to become their total master so that you can use them skillfully or ignore them as you like.

In Confucianism you are to cultivate a bright state of being where your mind is clear like a cloudless sky and your thoughts are always known with clarity. Because you do not cling to them they are like birds flying across the sky that leave no trace of their passage. This fully aware brightness of being is the state of conscious aliveness. It is called a state of bliss, serenity, peace or calmness but it is really just equanimous peaceful awareness, which is the natural state of your mind.

Inertness is not the ultimate state of existence because the Supreme Ultimate somehow gives birth to the cosmos without itself changing, and therefore no-thought, not knowing, confusion or ignorance are not the ideal states of a sentient being. We are to know things and master them.

A person following the Confucian path should cultivate in an analogous fashion to the Supreme Ultimate that has all things arise within it that operate according to laws of cause and effect. We are to know them. The base or foundational state of the mind should always remain clear and pure like an empty sky or the Supreme Ultimate, but consciousness should always allow all thoughts to arise within it without attachments or rejection just as the Supreme Ultimate allows all phenomena to appear. All the things that arise in the world, and ultimately in the mind, are impermanent and ever-changing, so there is no reason to suffer by giving rise to internal attachment because we wish the world were otherwise.

All the things that arise in the mind are just creations of consciousness just as all things in the universe are the creations of the Supreme Ultimate. In the sense that thoughts reflect a world they are true, but in the sense that they are not absolutes but just conditional imperfect reflections they are false. Everything that arises within the mind is a form of consciousness layered with emotional likes and dislikes that distort the already imperfect images (that are not perceived absolutely correctly), but to make correct decisions and rise to the heights of correct thinking one has to put aside these emotional biases and navigate their thoughts using wisdom.

In Hinduism it is taught that the purity of empty consciousness and the thoughts that arise within it are like the union of Shiva (the Supreme Ultimate that never moves or changes like space) and Shakti (the scintillating universe of matter and energy in constant change and motion). Once again, this is the model of correct spiritual cultivation reflecting the fact that Purusha and Shakti, Brahman and Maya together constitute the entire universe.

Your mind at rest must become empty and clear like the pure and

stainless Supreme Ultimate, but must also allow thoughts to arise within it and you must know them or you are insentient. For humans the external realm of conquest is the universe of matter and energy whereas the internal realm to be conquered involves your thoughts. It is not only the natural world we must master. You must learn how to control/use your thoughts, which is akin to “guiding the changes” as instructed by the *Yijing*, so that you can use them to investigate matters, solve problems, and guide your conduct to always create the best state of affairs.

The ultimate aim of Confucianism is that you elevate yourself to transcendence or sagehood, which requires mastery of these principles in application. The pathway requires that you must understand the nature of the Supreme Ultimate, which is the unchanging, pure, ultimate source of all things. Then you have to cultivate your mind’s awareness so that it operates in an analogous fashion.

You absolutely can achieve this through a self-perfection pathway of spiritual cultivation. The pathway is to practice witnessing the workings of your consciousness until they calm down, clarify, and then the empty but perfectly free nature of clear awareness – your natural mind - can be directly experienced. This is called emptiness, purity, base consciousness or pure awareness. The Confucian way is to use meditation and mental watching to continually cultivate a pure mind of base awareness, proper thinking and virtuous behavior until they all reach the highest standards of excellence.

Within the perfect clarity of mental knowing your thoughts will always arise, and you should always know them clearly (which is another meaning of “tracing things to their source”), understand what they indicate, and comprehend the cause and effect of what they will probably lead to. In knowing one’s thoughts and circumstances, a person can learn to perfect their behavior and master situations, and in this way becomes a sage.

Additionally, because the Supreme Ultimate is pure, your thoughts and behavior must also ultimately become pure in terms of virtuousness and morality, which are the highest states of humanity and divinity. This is the road of Confucian cultivation.

CH. 2 – “THE MANIFEST UNIVERSE”

How does Confucius characterize the manifest universe that Buddhism calls the Triple Realm, Hinduism calls Shakti or *Prakriti*, Taoism calls the Cosmos, and Christianity calls Creation or the Kingdom of the Father?

Confucianism speaks of the manifest universe as “Nature” or the *union of Heaven and Earth*. Everything in existence appears as the union of Heaven and Earth where Heaven and Earth stand as opposites. Earth stands for the planet earth as well as the manifest realm of solidity and appearance. Heaven stands not just for the vast heavenly cosmos of empty space and

the invisible spiritual reality of gods and deities, but also other unseen or unfathomable forces that create and order the cosmos.

In its ultimate aspect Heaven stands for the unmoving, unchangeable source essence or Supreme Ultimate – the original nature whose sublimity is often referred to as an emptiness or void in Buddhism (or formlessness in Vedanta) due to its purity of not being composed of anything else. This is the Purusha (or Shiva) of Hinduism, Parabrahman of Vedanta, the original nature of Buddhism, the Ein Sof of Judaism, Allah of Islam and the Heavenly Father of Christianity. The ultimate essence of your physical body is also *This* at the utmost root and in the Yoga schools of India you are taught to cultivate the constituent components of your body back to more primordial energies, and then ultimately *This*.

Heaven is vast, and all things appear within it. All of Creation falls within its vast space just as all things fall within the Supreme Ultimate. Looking up at the skies, all things *do appear or manifest* within Heaven including the Earth. The Earth doesn't just stand for the earthly globe or solid matter but for the tangible reality of the manifest universe. It all appears within space, meaning Heaven. It also all appears within the original nature, the Supreme Ultimate or primordial essence.

Matter and motion stands for Shakti, the manifestation or Creation that appears within the Supreme Ultimate (represented by Heaven). Manifestation does not have to assume the status of solidity (for instance magnetism is a manifestation), but is something that is different from the purity of the original energy. It is some type of derivative product. Evolutes (manifestations) must be considered emanations or condensations derived from the original essence through myriads of complex transformations.

Mencius said, “the union of Heaven and Earth gives birth to all things” and “Heaven and Earth are the origins of life.” In other words, Shiva and Shakti, *Prakriti* and *Purusha*, Nirguna Brahman (without attributes) and Saguna Brahman (with attributes), the original nature and its evolutes, the absolute essence and the Triple Realm, the Supreme Ultimate and Manifestation together produce all things. The two opposites interpenetrate; the always moving manifestation is within the unmoving changeless Supreme Ultimate (symbolized by the vast emptiness of Heaven) and the Supreme Ultimate permeates all Creation as their source essence substance. The two are the same entity. Everything together must be considered as melded into one single whole with nothing existent outside the ultimate oneness. Cultivation schools use this analogy to point out that thoughts appear within the purity of consciousness that seems to be an emptiness, stillness, formlessness, voidness or no-thought.

Through cause and effect the origins of life and consciousness can be traced back to more fundamental universal forces. The ultimate root source or end point of all those trace-backs is the singular Supreme Ultimate, the

purest source energy/substance of everything. Because of cause and effect ruling all things we can be sure that consciousness, or life, appears as a result of prior forces too even though with modern science we cannot yet trace it back to its ultimate origins. Its production is simply described as a result of the union of Heaven and Earth within Confucianism.

To reach the enlightenment of a sage you must transcend any habit energy of clinging to your thoughts so that you imitate the nature of the Supreme Ultimate, or original nature, that never moves like space yet lets everything freely appear within it without clinging to anything. This is why a Confucian practitioner aligns themselves as the witness or observer who watches their thoughts that are always changing within a base of seemingly pure, unmoving clarity – the pristine empty awareness of the mind, its bright virtue.

The fundamental method of Confucian cultivation is to mindfully watch, witness or observe your thoughts and behavior in all you do in order to develop clarity and self-correction. Your awareness never interferes with your thoughts just as the Supreme Ultimate never interferes with Shakti, its emanations of Creation, and yet the Supreme Ultimate is manifest in everything because it is their source essence or foundational energy. It interpenetrates everything like space and so you must come to recognize that your thoughts (which are the only things you know) are consciousness, and the world you see is just your consciousness-only too.

Confucianism is no different than other great spiritual traditions in emphasizing that what characterizes the manifest universe is constant change. Everything around you is always experiencing a continual state of transformation. This fact has implications for how to manage your mind and behavior. In life we are to learn how to master or guide these changes just as we are to learn how to master and guide our thoughts.

Inherent, incessant change is the dynamic inherent in the universe that qualifies every one of its manifestations. The implication of constant change is that we should avoid strong attachment to thoughts, such as afflictions, that naturally arise in our minds because they will change. That is their destiny. We tend to hold onto them but they are not meant to stay in our minds except during the process of concentration. For instance, we should not hold onto mental afflictions and rehash them. In general, all things in the world and in the mind are impermanent and always changing, thus we shouldn't put ourselves into a mode of suffering by attaching to them while wishing this truth was otherwise.

Furthermore, just as we should not hold onto errant or afflictive thoughts or wrong emotions when inappropriate we should prevent society from becoming ossified by inflexible social rules and structures, which mistakenly happened to Confucianists in the past. Religious rules, ritualistic (traditional) expectations, social obligations and so forth should never

become so inflexible and encumbering that people find their country or culture claustrophobic and oppressive. No one wants to be micromanaged by inflexible, unchanging rules and expectations – from either the government, society or religion – that end up turning life into a psychic prison. This outcome is wrong as well as an errant interpretation of the proper application of Confucianism.

The dynamism of the manifest universe is called “transformation” in Taoism, “impermanence” in Buddhism, “change” in Confucianism, “Shakti” (movement) in Hinduism and “complex interaction” in Islam. Ceaseless transformation is a primary characteristic of the cosmos and the reason that one is told not to attach to mental thoughts on the road of self-cultivation, for why should you cling to something that naturally changes every moment and is destined to leave? Because change is immanently inherent in situations, this principle should also give us hope that we can change unfortunate situations into something better, which is the Confucian ideal of improvement by managing changes. The Confucian ideal is to learn how to manage change to bring about better states of existence.

While the Confucian Shao Yung refers to the words “change” and “mutation” to denote the alternations characterizing the phenomena of the universe, the term “*sheng sheng*” (production and reproduction) is also commonly used in Confucian and Neo-Confucian texts to indicate the ongoing process of incessant change that characterizes manifest reality. As with Taoism, Confucianism clearly recognizes that the complex interactions within the infinite web of the universe are an on-going process of ceaseless transformation.

The major theme of the *Yijing*, central to Confucianism, is continuous creative change. Confucius said, “with vitality and endurance Heaven acts without ceasing! Heaven’s motion is the healthiest.” In Confucianism, Taoism and Chinese culture in general, this change or motion is said to be brought about by two polar forces of yin (passivity, rest or non-movement) and yang (activity or change) perpetually interacting to generate the universe.

Buddhism uses the terms “birth and death” to describe the endless process of change while Hinduism uses the trio of appearance-production, preservation-duration, and cessation- dissolution to signify the same thing. These are symbolized by Brahma the Creator, Vishnu the Preserver and Shiva the Destroyer. Western science simply talks about interactions, evolution or transformations when it talks of change. All major religions agree that the changeful nature of manifest creations means that all phenomena are unstable, existing like ungraspable illusions as contrasted with the unchanging Supreme Ultimate, which is unmoving like space.

Why all this emphasis on change and stationarity? So what?

The reason for the emphasis is as follows. Confucianism explains that

we must accept change as a natural part of the cosmos. We should learn to be flexible rather than fixed and rigid. We must inquire and research and adapt ourselves rather than let things stay constant. Human beings should “model themselves on the ceaseless vitality of the cosmic processes.”

Although change characterizes the manifest universe and the unseen forces that produce man and phenomena, because things are interconnected we can learn how to master the changes in an active fashion to produce better states of the future. We absolutely must learn how to properly manage and master change, for this is what leads to progress and freedom from lower states of existence. An understanding of scientific principles, for instance, is a type of wisdom that together with risk taking, curiosity and an aspiring mind has produced wave after wave of innovations that have enabled humans to gain control over their environment and improve their lives.

This emphasis is one of the highlights of Confucianism, which extends from the idea of mastering oneself to also mastering “others” such as situations and phenomena. One can and should learn how to both accept and manage the changes of life and circumstances, bringing all to more favorable positions. This does not mean fighting against the ceaseless vitality of the cosmic processes, but using and managing processes for specific purposes of betterment.

This attitude is especially useful for when we encounter obstacles and difficulties in our lives. We need to persevere through hardship with strength of will and quiet determination while we try to change negative circumstances for the better. We must work on bettering our own positions as well as improving the greater world. In particular, our actions should be appropriate for any situation, as well as be in accord with proper timing and circumstances. In strategy, a Confucian always makes use of opportune timing and circumstances to accomplish more using less.

Taoists also believe that we should harmonize our actions to be in tune with universal changes, whether they be of the seasons, phenomena, relationships, and so on, so that we are not fighting forces stronger than ourselves. Confucianism insists that the human processes which develop society, especially the relationships between people, should also be in harmonious accord with one another. People need to learn their role in the network of relationships that define a family or community and thereby fulfill behaviors that maintain peaceful social harmony. In other words, people need to know their duties and responsibilities within families and society such as the proper way of behaving toward others and how *not to be errant*. By acting in accord with these norms, one produces a cooperative, cohesive society which can act as a thriving whole. This mirrors the fact that all things are interconnected in one whole because they ultimately share the same ultimate Supreme Nature.

In *Inquiry on the Great Learning* the Confucian master Wang Yang-Ming said, “The great man regards Heaven and Earth and the myriad of things as one body. He regards the world as one family and the country as one person. As to those who make a cleavage between objects and distinguish between the self and others, they are small men. That the great man can regard Heaven, Earth and the myriad of things as one body is not because he deliberately wants to do so, but because it is nature to the humane nature of his mind that he do so. ... Everything from the ruler, minister, husband, wife, and friends to mountains, rivers, spiritual beings, birds, animals, and plants should be truly loved in order to realize my humanity that forms one body with them, and then my clear character will be completely manifested, and I really form one body with Heaven, Earth and the myriad of things.”³⁹

Wang Yang-Ming also said, “Heaven and earth are one structure with me; spirits and gods are in one all-pervading unity with me.” Again, “Man is the mind of Heaven and Earth. Heaven, Earth and the ten thousand things form originally a unity with me.” He also said, “Man is only separated from Heaven and Earth by his body.”

Thus man must cultivate not just his mind but also his curate body to become one with the Tao. Confucianism offers some pointers on this, but for better guidance on this aspect of the Confucian way we should turn to Yoga, Taoism and Buddhist Vajrayana.

CH. 3 - THE PROCESS OF UNIVERSAL CREATION

According to the *Yijing*, the manifest universe appears due to the evolution of yin and yang forces that originate from the Supreme Ultimate. These energies somehow develop out of the single absolute essence that is so pure and alone in itself that it is considered undifferentiated or without attributes (since any secondary characteristics you could identify would already be admitting of a second essence). Thus the Supreme Ultimate is therefore often compared to a great emptiness like space to denote its absolute purity. Incomprehensible, it is often used as a subject of meditation to help people free their minds of thoughts. They are taught to let their minds be pure and empty just like It, the Supreme Ultimate.

The *Yijing* does not say how the changeless Supreme Ultimate, a solitary existence transcending everything created, produces the dualities of yin and yang. It does not say how forces developed from a supreme Oneness that is simply one single unchanging essence that permeates/is the whole of existence, and unable to evolve into anything else since it is the primal and only (sole) existent essence.

³⁹ Wing-Tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1969).

This mystery of manifestation in Buddhism is called “Ignorance,” which means “we do not know how” the unmoving, pure, changeless absolute nature gives birth to the first formational (karmic) forces of the created manifest universe – we are *ignorant* of the process. Some Hindu schools suggest that a perturbation or stirring arises within the Supreme Ultimate that ends up kick starting Creation, but once again no one can say how. Nevertheless, according to the *Yijing* the Ultimate One gives birth to the dualities of yin and yang forces and then the rest of the universe, eventually including myriad forms of life. With life comes consciousness, so consciousness is born within matter from the complex interaction or evolutionary development of all these forces. It is an evolutionary or transformational consequence of a large set or long sequential series of prior cause and effect interactions. Who knows what life will lead to, but we can certainly learn to guide its changes.

In the *Yijing* the Supreme Ultimate stands for our absolute nature, which is the “fundamental essence” or “original nature” of Zen Buddhism. As stated, the Supreme Ultimate is that primal energy from which existence somehow flows (being itself the only unchanging and thus *real* existence), but no one can say how the flow begins since the pure Ultimate without contamination (The One Without a Second) is pure, changeless, motionless, and eternal. The *Yijing* only states that there is a constant alternation of forces in the *manifest* universe, such as yin and yang, that through interactions evolutionarily produce the five elements and then the entire universe from there. The propositional support of all universal forces is the Supreme Ultimate, which is therefore their ground state, Mother source, fundamental essence or truest nature that is inseparable from their own existence, permeating them with the support of its own self-so existence.

The creation of yin and yang, which is a foundational principle within Chinese philosophy and culture, is simply an analogy for the creation of energy, karmic forces, creational energies or foundational forces in the universe from which everything else is developed. It is through their mutual interactions, with forces fundamentally interpenetrating and mutually producing each other, that all matter is somehow developed in transformations.

The *Yijing* basically incorporates the foundational notions of creativity and change within the two concepts of yin and yang said to characterize all processes and relationships. Through two fundamental forces of yin and yang, which develop into other forces via transformations, changes, interactions or evolutions, it provides a theory of manifest reality, how it came about and how to interpret it or guide it.

Thus the yin and yang of the *Yijing* are just Chinese names for the foundational, formational forces of the universe (Creation) and their interactions. They don’t stand for two forces but for many forces. For

instance, according to the *Yijing* symbolism used to explain the evolution of Creation, the two primal yin and yang forces differentiate into four phenomena (images) or forces named Lesser Yin, Great Yin, Lesser Yang and Great Yang. These four forces then intermingle to become the eight trigrams (*Bagua*) that then produce sixty-four forces symbolized by hexagrams of the *Yijing*. Hence, yin and yang actually represent innumerable forces other than just two.

All of these evolutions of yin and yang symbolize forces being composed of more primal components, and those components are composed of even more primal components still. An equivalence in matter is that solid objects are composed of atoms that are composed of electrons, protons and neutrons, which are in turn composed of quarks and gluons, and so on. Eventually at the end of this chain of causality you arrive at the singular Supreme Ultimate or foundational energy that cannot be further subdivided. Therefore it must have been the self-existing self-so beginning. But how the oneness, purity or singleness of the Supreme Ultimate can generate another thing within itself different from its solitary pureness (since it allows no change in its purity of being) is a great quandary.

Nevertheless, there is in the *Yijing* the Great Primal Beginning that generates the two primary forces that then generate the four images (phenomena). The four images generate the eight trigrams that determine good fortune and misfortune (phenomena) and so on. As the *Yijing* further states, good fortune and misfortune create the field of action.

Forget about whether yin and yang become four forces, or five, or eight or nine or whatever. You have to grasp the symbolism being communicated. The *Yijing's* philosophical principle is that essences, substances, forces, energies or phenomena develop into other things through an interdependence of cause and effect expressed within evolutionary transformations.

The distinctions and transformations of yin and yang are said to produce the five elements of the universe, which is another way of analyzing its components into more primal forces. Once again, all of these symbolic schemes are simply representative of forces being composed of higher, more transcendental forces, and those forces or energies are composed of yet higher transcendental forces still. At the end of the stream of tracing things back you end up with one single energy or force that the *Yijing* calls the Supreme Ultimate. Other schools call it Parabrahman, the original nature, Allah, Ein Sof and so on as previously stated. Starting from this one Supreme Ultimate you somehow generate firmer/denser (more condensed) spheres or realms of existence/energy, and looking upwards from the densest sphere of energy (ours) we say you get transcendental spheres or purer realms of essences/energies above us.

Thus in Chinese culture the material world is transcended by the

spiritual world of Qi, which is transcended by a higher spiritual world composed of Shen, which is composed of a yet higher spiritual world composed of Later Heavenly energy, which is composed of yet higher forces composed of Primordial Heavenly energy. According to the *Yijing* (as well as Buddhism), all these various forces, energies and realms interpenetrate. They all simultaneously co-exist within each other and through perfect interpenetration comprise one whole. They are integrated into one single body by their interrelationships that involve them in an endless cycle of production and reproduction. Nothing exists independently of this whole because it is all interconnected. The Confucian Zhang Zai aptly said, the sage “forms one body with the universe.”

According to Confucianism, Nature is to be seen as a unified, interconnected, and interpenetrating whole of constantly self-generating interrelations of higher and lower forces. This is similar to the *Hua-Yen* viewpoint of Buddhism where the universe is like a great chain of being, an infinite net of interrelationships in a container or womb where each individual phenomenon is in a continual process of transformation that involves and links all other life, matter and forces. No single thing is a substantial, independent thing but rather is a conditional creation whose existence is dependent upon everything else. Everything is linked in a single whole, so each part within the whole is interdependent with all others. Buddhism therefore says that all things are fundamentally “empty,” with “empty” meaning that *they do not exist independently* (because they don’t) and are impermanent since they don’t endure. The are “empty” of real existence that doesn’t change since they are transient existences. The *real* is what stays and endures changelessly so being impermanent they are disqualified from being real. They are “empty of true reality.” Only the original nature, the changeless Supreme Ultimate, merits the title of being *real*.

Each part of the cosmos is therefore like a drop of water in the great ocean that is inseparable from the greater ocean due to interdependence and by virtue of being in the ocean is linked with all its other drops. Every part is simultaneously both a drop *and* the entire ocean, with the analogy that every part of the cosmos is fundamentally a part and the whole universe. When in the ocean a drop is but the ocean itself, and only separated from the ocean does it become a drop. In the universe there is no way to separate anything from itself to become independent since the universe defines every thing through massive, inconceivable, infinite interdependence. Thus there is no such thing as a drop, thing, entity, life, ego, force, energy, substance, phenomenon, etc. that exists by itself separate from the Supreme Ultimate for everything is ultimately bound together, and thus everything (all phenomena and conditions) works together to define even the tiniest phenomenon. The universe is thus seen in a single atom.

The billions of drops that comprise the ocean do not have any

consciousness, so as phenomena they do not know that they are drops, nor that they are in the ocean, nor that they are part of the ocean, nor that the ocean even exists. Insentience is the original state of changeless Reality and its manifestation of phenomena. It is just a wondrous miracle that sentient consciousness has somehow developed within the womb of the insentient Universe. Somehow a union of forms has given rise to living beingness with consciousness. How consciousness has formed via evolution no one knows. We only know that life has evolved out of matter and consciousness out of life, and we are conscious biological mechanisms within this Great Ultimate. We are also impermanent temporary phenomena, the result of the accumulated effects of countless past causes and conditions.

What is important to know is that like the drops of water in the ocean we are intimately bound up with one another such that the burdens and benefits of others are also ours through the interdependence or interpenetration of existence. For instance, if someone altruistically creates benefit for others then they benefit, and we do too. We all share in the benefits from the aggregate strivings of others creating the world and environment in which we live. We can, through our individual actions, therefore make the world a better or worse place in which to live because the world is created through the composite efforts of all human beings. No matter how small or insignificant you feel is your contribution, the world is created by summing together all such contributions, so your efforts count. Are you therefore making the world a better place, or making it worse off through your actions and behavior? Confucius asked us to pursue virtuous ways to make it better.

One can say about each and every phenomena in the universe that everything actually is just the Supreme Ultimate, everything is from the Supreme Ultimate, everything is permeated by the Supreme Ultimate, and everything is in the Supreme Ultimate. Everything is a manifestation or evolute of the Supreme Ultimate foundational energy or essence, and no single thing has been created for any particular reason. Every phenomenon that exists has happened to become created as a result of matter and energy interacting and transforming according to the laws of nature that have developed. We, like everything else in the universe, are also just phenomena created without any particular reason, but we are one of the phenomena that has consciousness. In particular we are animals, and as animals the spiritual path for us - whatever we might argue it to be - should involve cultivating our consciousness. We should cultivate both our reasoning abilities and actions/behavior to produce better states of being for ourselves and others. This is the spiritual path.

Within this whole matrix of Creation the *Yijing* poses no Creator God because the universe is simply a self-generating process, contained within itself, whose ultimate support or foundation is the absolute *Taiji*, the

Supreme Ultimate or highest nature that is simply a single solitary essence without any intentional purpose. It is neutral. We are the ones who must therefore choose a purpose for our lives. How could this ultimate unchanging essence or energy – the highest purest One – ever be a being, person, entity or life with a purpose? And also, what is the Universe evolving to in terms of a purpose since things are simply happening?

Since there is no ultimate Creator God and no ultimate intended purpose to Creation and what it is evolving into, in Confucianism *you must become the creator of your own life and the manager responsible for developing your own destiny through wisdom!* This is why you need to learn how to master the changes of phenomena, including the complexities of human situations. Man must learn how to “master the changes” so that he can make things better, beter control his life, and recreate the world after the ideals he chooses. The idea of responding to the world and creating appropriate institutions, laws or solutions to problems is another example of “mastering the changes.”

Within this scintillating whole, a true Confucian must learn how to guide situations and circumstances to states of prosperous cooperation and how to also be in harmony with all states, interactions or relationships he encounters. He must learn how to control himself and adjust himself to the forces that affect him and how to change or guide those forces to something better. Because man is a self-conscious individual who can use intelligence, his capability for being able to guide changes should be viewed as part of his ideal character. Developing his mental and behavioral skills to the fullest is what helps to separate man from the animals and rise above them by creating culture and life purpose where there is none. This is part of the spiritual path for life.

How to “master your mental processes” and “guide the changes” is therefore what one should strive to master in life, and is the basis of the teachings of the *Yijing*. The *Yijing* clearly stresses that one of your highest capabilities is learning how to “master the changes” of phenomena in order to bring about whatever you want. Confucianism teaches how to do this in regards to yourself. Because your mind can do this it is the wish-fulfilling gem of Buddhism.

The best transformations you can create are those that promote the positive, namely harmonious prosperity and auspiciousness for all. This includes the harmonious growth and development of individuals, communities, societies and the world. Since few actions are perfectly good, pragmatism suggests that we shouldn’t bemoan the fact that no actions are perfect when we try to achieve such objectives but nevertheless our actions should accent the good in the greatest degree possible.

No sun exists without sunspots just as there is no such thing as perfectly empty space or perfect pure yin or yang. No fish can live in the

perfect purity of distilled water either. Therefore no action you take in the world can be perfectly good, for we can always find some minor flaw in it. Because nothing is perfectly good, the rule is that we should maximally lean towards the good in all our dealings. That's the best you can do.

This is called skillful means, which means accepting that errors will always accompany whatever we try to do in life and that it is almost impossible to be perfectly pure, so you just have to act with maximum skillfulness. Nevertheless there is still the ideal of perfect behavior, which Confucius indicated is to "act without making serious mistakes." The practical ideal is to maximally lean towards the good in all that you do. In Confucianism this is called exemplary action or "consummate conduct."

Wang Yang-Ming taught that cultivating personal morality was the way that individuals within society could create social well-being. Along these lines, Confucius said that ordering the world ultimately started with self-cultivation, meaning that it started with everyone adopting the personal aim of perfecting their own self-behavior. He felt you must cultivate yourself and develop strong moral bearings before you can truly succeed in bringing about beneficial change in the world. Positive change must start with individuals, meaning *you*. In addition to tracing the mind back to its ultimate source – the Supreme Ultimate Essence - the road of self-cultivation towards better thought and behavior is a critical part of the great road of Confucian cultivation. It is the heart of the Confucian way.

Wang Yang-Ming said, "Man is only separated from Heaven and Earth by his body," which means that he must not just purify his thoughts and behavior but also transform his body so that it more easily becomes something reflecting the unity of Heaven and Earth. By working the chain of causation backwards, logically the first stage of transformation is for the matter of the body to be purified into Qi, Qi into the more transcendental Shen, Shen into Later Heavenly Qi and Later Heavenly Qi into Primordial Heavenly Qi. Can man really attain a body composed of such purified transcendence? If so, that road must start with the purification of your Qi. This is a pathway explained in Yoga, Taoism, Buddhism and many other spiritual schools across the world which state that the proposed ideal is not just hearsay but something doable.

Mencius once said that he was good at nurturing his vast and overflowing Qi that is, in the highest degree, unlimited and unmoving. He said, "If it is nourished with integrity and is not injured, it will fill the space between Heaven and Earth. This Qi is the companion [produced by] of rightness and the Way; without rightness and the Way, this Qi will starve. It is born from an accumulation of rightness and not an occasional show of rightness. Action that is below the standard set in one's mind will starve the Qi." In other words, performing virtuous actions is one way of transforming your Qi, and this can help kick off this set of Qi

transformations. The purification of your Qi is part of the transformations required for producing a sage, and the purification of Qi has to do with your behavior.

On the road of cultivation to become a sage, you must be clear that you need to cultivate both your thoughts/mind and your Qi, your behavior and your body. Sages rarely stress this, but cultivation is a mind-body affair that requires you to purify your mind, behavior and your Qi through ardent cultivation efforts.

From: BUDDHA YOGA

CH. 1 – “From The Original Essence To Everything”

Let’s start with some basics.

Christianity said that everything in the universe started with “God the Father” who was pre-existing. He always is and always was.

Hinduism calls God “Parabrahman,” “True Self” or “Supreme Self.” If you trace all the energies and phenomena of the universe back to an ultimate origin, that primordial foundation of everything must be the True Self or self-nature since It is the Source from which all things arise. It is your self-nature. You arose out of It composed of It so you are It in essence and It is your True Self. The foundational nature of your own self must at its utmost be this primordial absolute essence that precedes Creation - Parabrahman.

Buddhism calls God the “original nature,” “fundamental essence,” self-nature or *dharmakaya*. Buddhism says that this primordial source is pure, changeless, blissful, and eternal. It is immaculate, unqualified, signless, omnipresent, and imperishable. Its purity is like the emptiness of space wherein you can see no divisions, attributes or characteristics. Because of Its purity this fundamental essence is absolutely devoid (empty) of anything other than Itself (emanations, attributes, characteristics, energies, phenomena) and is thus imperceptible. It is just one state, substance or essence that, having no parts or components or issuances or evolutes or attributes because of Its ultimate purity, is itself unknowable or unfathomable by thoughts and mental images.

Judaism says God is “Ein Sof” (infinite) prior to self-manifestation, prior to His production of any spiritual realm that has attributes and phenomena. The mystical *Zohar* explains, “Before He gave any shape to the world, before He produced any form, He was alone, without form and without resemblance to anything else.” This view accords with the other religions. The original nature of everything is not a chaos but an immaculate void empty of energies, forms and phenomena.

Islam says that the primordial level of existence is “Allah,” a primordial divine essence transcending (prior to) manifestation that exists as primordially pure Aloneness (*Abdiyah*) at a level of non-Creation.

Confucianism, following the principles of the *Yijing*, calls God the “Supreme Ultimate” that transcends the evolutionary birth of all other universal energies, phenomena and characteristics such as Yin and Yang.

In short, the original fundamental nature of the cosmos is not a being or person although It is often referred to in an anthropomorphic manner such as “He.” It is one single, pure, unknowable essence that transcends all evolutes or creations. Mind and matter ultimately come from this foundational source or fundamental nature that we might want to call an ultimately pure singular essence or substratum.

Somehow the universe originates from God, the original nature that is our fundamental essence. How does this happen?

Christianity calls the universe “Creation” or the “Word” and due to Biblical contents Christians believe that “in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” through a sequence of events. Some Christians say that Creation proceeded *ex-nihilo*, meaning out of nothingness. This is because the primordial Supreme Essence - the source essence of the universe - seems like a great void, emptiness, or nothingness since It is without attributes. It also seems like Emptiness since It is Unmanifest at the time of Creation due to the fact that It doesn’t yet contain any evolutes from Itself.

When not literally following the Bible, the Jewish esoteric tradition says that before Creation there was only *Yesh* (nothingness) or Ein Sof, and that by Divine Will we had *Yesh me-Ayin*, the creation of emanated realms that were essentially the creation of something from nothing. Jewish theology is that “He turned His nothingness into something.” All created things are complex while *Yesh* is simple, meaning a pure Oneness of substance that is the same, equal everywhere.

Buddhism says we don’t know how Creation happened or occurred out of an original, primal, absolute nature that is impossible to transform into anything else because It is changeless, free from modification - there is only Itself there. Changeless in nature, It is singularly alone and perfectly pure which means there is no differentiation within its wholeness and thus no chance or way for It to transform into anything else. It says we are *ignorant* about that process of Creation because logic says Creation cannot occur since no change can transpire to an absolutely changeless essence, so Buddhism calls the first step of creation “Ignorance.” Ignorance means we don’t know how the first step of evolutionary phenomena occurred since something changeless in nature cannot change to produce an evolute.

Using the ideas of personification, Hinduism calls Creation the “play,”

“desire” or “will” of the absolute even though Parabrahman is not a person and therefore there can be no such thing as will, play or desire in the process of Creation. If creation occurs then it is just a natural process. Hinduism also recognizes that if Parabrahman (the source essence) had become the world then Parabrahman would have undergone some distortion or change, but of course this cannot happen since It is changeless. Thus it says that the Gods cannot conceive of a cause to produce the universe at the stage of Parabrahman, which is why Buddhism says we are “ignorant” about the process. Parabrahman is Itself a self-so existence and the causeless cause that is not in any way associated with whatever is an inseparable part of it, pervading it as an evolute.

To get around various quandaries involving this changeless purity issue, some schools of Hinduism postulate that there is a Nirguna Brahman (God without attributes) that is matched with a Saguna Brahman (God with attributes), and these two principles have no control over each other. They say that the process of emanation does not arise within Nirguna Brahman because It is changeless. Rather, Creation or emanation arises within Saguna Brahman, also known as Ishvara, and appears in the form of relationships between causes and effects where present evolutes serve as the cause for subsequent evolutes to evolve. Furthermore, all the causes, effects and evolutes are linked together in an infinite net of interdependence within Saguna Brahman where all levels of manifest reality and all phenomena are interpenetrated by one another with infinite cause and effect interrelationships.

Nirguna Brahman is therefore the causeless cause of whatever appears within It, but is not involved in the acts of evolution/Creation that characterize Saguna Brahman since It does not create or cause anything because no change ever occurs to It. It is the *support* because It is the fundamental, foundational, primordial essence. All things are derived from the primordial essence and are inseparable from It. However, all evolution only happens to the first evolute, also known as Saguna Brahman, Ishvara, Shakti, *Prakriti* or the embryonic essence *tathagatagarbha* of Buddhism that is the ground of all produced things, but a production itself rather than the original nature. It is the edge of conventional reality. In some religions this is called the Matrix Womb of Creation. In Christianity Shakti is the Word.

Gorakhnath of the Nath Yoga tradition describes the first emanation of the original nature (*Anama*, the nameless, self-existent One) as *nija-shakti*, and states that *nija-shakti* is completely indistinguishable from the original nature, but somehow becomes immanent within It. In other words, *nija-sakti* is the first manifest aspect (first evolute) of the original nature that can be called a transcendent aspect of creation or manifestation. *Nija-sakti* has the attributes of absolute purity, motionlessness, imperceptibility, and eternity (eternally present with the Nameless One, or foundational essence).

For meditation purposes is described as like an undisturbed state of consciousness that is not different from the absolute nature and yet is unaware of anything.

Islam calls Creation an emanation or effusion from the absolute that occurs in a process of Divine Descent. According to this scheme the First, Original or Primordial level of existence is Allah, an incorporeal unmanifesting existence that is the original nature or source essence just as identified in every other religion or spiritual school. This is *Alam-i-HaHoot*, the Realm of He-ness (Is-ness). It is the primordial Divine Essence prior to manifestation and which exists as Aloneness (*Abdiyat*). According to Sufism, *Abdiyat* is primordially pure and incapable of being conceived; this essence exists and cannot be exemplified with anything. It is at the primordial level of non-Creation and somehow everything emanates from It despite its absolute purity or aloneness that therefore lacks causes.

From the First (Allah) or Real emanates the existence of a second. According to Islam this is an utterly incorporeal substance called *Alam-i-YaHoot* (the Realm of First Manifestation) that is an existence dependent on the first which *appears* different from its own essence (Allah) and yet is not a separate, independent entity. It is *Wahid-ul-wujud*, or Unitary Existence since it encompasses Everything – the Shakti of Hinduism. In Islam *Alam-i-HaHoot* is said to have no attributes (like *nija-shakti*) and yet the first manifestation of *Alam-i-YaHoot* is by definition an attribute. To explain it one must say that the attributes of God are neither other than God nor identical with Him. They are *appearances* and thus seem different or apart from Him but they cannot be other than Him since they are Him. God permeates everything since everything is God-substance.

Some spiritual schools postulate a purely mechanical or naturalistic process of creation, and say that somehow the universe just evolved or formed due a first spark or impulse from an absolutely pure substrate that set off an endless sequence of transformations. However, once again this begs the question that if the original nature (the absolutely pure foundational substrate) cannot change then how did it give birth to everything?

Vedanta gets around the issue by saying that since the absolute nature doesn't change, then all other existences are like a dream that don't truly exist, and thus you don't need to worry about them since they are illusions that are unreal. Only the original nature is Real since It is unchangeable, motionless, eternal and thus dependable, which are the qualities of Reality. Furthermore, from the standpoint of the original nature that is Everything, they also don't exist since all that exists is Itself and only Itself.

The Greek Parmenides taught that reality was a single unchanging Being whereas Heraclitus wrote that all things flow, so one was talking about the unchanging absolute Reality that exists in a state of

Unmanifestness, and the other about conventional reality that appears to us because of conscious experience. In Plotinus you will find similar views on the metaphysics of emanation “from the One.”

Christianity says the universe or Creation is the “Kingdom of God” that is brought into being through a series of progressive creative acts.

Buddhism calls the emanations of Creation “karmic formations,” or a set of energies and manifestations that develop into other consequential energies and manifestations through a complex interdependence of cause and effect relationships. They all develop through a process of “dependent origination.” Buddhism says that everything that develops is conditional on the existence of everything else, and every single phenomena manifests through a complex web of infinite interdependence (cause and effect) tying everything together into one scintillating, ever-changing whole. Every member, piece, part, component, phenomenon, form, energy, etc. of that whole of manifestation is characterized by “impermanence” since every part is ceaselessly changing, which makes conventional reality like an ungraspable dream. Only the original nature never changes.

In Buddhism the original nature is also called the *dharmakaya* and sometimes Buddha-substrate. It also uses a term *Tathagatagarbha*, which means the womb or embryo of production that is equivalent to the Saguna Brahman or Shakti of Hinduism that gives birth to everything. This womb of production is also called the storehouse, container or alaya. The alaya (Shakti or realm of manifestation) is like an ever-changing, fluctuating medium; it is not the unchanging ultimate substance of Reality but its first-level projection. It contains all the forms and functions, laws and principles of the universe, which are its second-level projection. The world of life and death we know are later level evolutes.

Regardless of the fact that the universe consists of infinite energies or phenomena, Buddhism in the *Avatamsaka Sutra* clearly says that this is a case of “All in One, and One in All. The All melts into a single whole wherein there are no divisions in the totality of reality.” In other words, all things taken together should be considered as one single body. The single body of all phenomena and energies is also just the original nature. The original nature and the realm of phenomena are one and the same. All genuine religions agree on this principle.

Hinduism calls the manifest universe “Shakti” to also denote a moving, seething mass of energy and manifest phenomena constantly in a state of flux and transformation. Shakti is often compared to a dancing woman since (a) the universe is always moving like a dance and (b) Shakti is like a mother’s womb that gives birth to all things. Everything ultimately came from formless Parabrahman, which is alternatively called changeless Shiva, *Purusba* or Nirguna Brahman and other names. When the unmanifest

formless original essence is called *Purusha* then Its manifest aspect is called *Prakriti*, which is Shakti or the *Logos* (Word).

Islam says that somehow everything emanates from the primordial level of non-Creation, Allah, despite Allah's absolute purity or aloneness, and it is through "complex interaction" that the various realms gives rise to one another and mundane reality.

Taoism says the universe arises from a primordial void and is like a giant vessel, vat or container of ceaseless "transformations." The *Daodejing* (*Tao Te Ching*) simplistically explains the process of creation by saying that "the One gave birth to a Second, next a Third manifestation arose and then 10,000 things."

Confucianism relies on the *Yijing* for its view of phenomena which says that the entire universe comes from *Taiji*, the Supreme Ultimate that is a formless, eternal, self-sufficient, perfect, primal absolute reality that transcends all the manifested, conditional phenomena of the universe which themselves are all characterized by ceaseless "change."

Hence Buddhism characterizes the realm of manifest Creation as *impermanent*, Taoism says it is always involved in *transformation*, Confucianism describes it as characterized by ceaseless *change*, Hinduism characterizes it as always *moving* (dancing), and Islam characterizes it as produced by *complex interactions*. Once again these are all similar ways of describing the same thing. The only Real, non-changing substance or essence of the universe – and which is thus perfectly pure, infinite without borders, self-existent and eternal – is the foundational, primordial self-so essence. All manifestations within It lack absolute existence or inherent existence.

Many spiritual schools or religions, like Judaism, say the universe originated ex nihilo, out of nothingness or Emptiness, but this is only because you cannot mentally conceive of a formless nothingness but they wished you to create a mental image of something empty, clear and peaceful as a practice for the spiritual path. For instance, a meditation instruction offered by Moshe Cordovero for Judaism is: "Whenever one forms a conceptual image of God, he should immediately backtrack, recoiling from the false notion, as any notion is shaped by man's spatial world. Rather, he should 'Run and Return' towards imagining Divinity, and then reject it." This type of instruction is meant to help one in meditation to cultivate an empty mind free of mental attachments.

In Judaism the pre-existing nothingness of the ex-nihilo creation process simply means the absolute purity of an essence without emanations, differentiations or attributes is like empty space. Infinite empty space without borders is akin to nothingness. If someone ends up pondering the ultimate source as a type of nothingness, they will abandon (clinging to) thoughts in that attempt and then they will be naturally meditating. Moses

Maimonides of Judaism therefore concludes that the highest form of praise we can give God is silence, which means eschewing thoughts to be like this/Him. Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism, Yoga and other religions also say mental silence is the Way.

Naturally everything that exists in manifestation must come from an original primordial something – a First Principle, an original essence or fundamental source nature rather than an inert absolute nothingness – but It must be so pure, transcendental or refined that It seems like a “formless nothingness” everywhere compared to all its evolutes that appear within It but are It in their absolute existence.

This is what “nothingness” really means in such dialogues – a pure essence or whatever so empty of phenomena that the purity of its nature can only be referred to as nothingness, empty like the void of space. This solitary essence shares no resemblance with any of its evolutes but is a primal substrate - an absolute existence or true reality - that is perfectly pure, changeless, stainless, immaculate and eternal. It is a self-so, self-evident existence that never changes by differentiating into something new, and yet somehow manifestations have arisen within It.

This is why a yogic text like the *Siddha-Siddhanta-paddhati* by Gorakhnath states that *Anama* – the Nameless origin (fundamental nature) that is self-existent, self-made, and self-manifest – gave birth to the first evolute of *nija-Shakti* that is eternal, pure, motionless, imperceptible *and an undisturbed state of consciousness*. The first evolute was described as a peaceful, pristine state of consciousness because this skillfully leads you to meditate according to this description – you should meditate with a formless, empty mind that is akin to undisturbed consciousness.

In fact, the only reason evolutes are described as consciousness, or the original nature is described as consciousness (ex. “Luminous Mind”) in spiritual schools is to encourage you to meditate in such a way that you don’t hold onto your thoughts, thus mirroring the nature of empty space that lets all things appear without the obstruction of resisting them or clinging to them. During meditation practice you should let thoughts appear in your mind, become aware of everything that arises, but you shouldn’t cling/attach to anything. In this way you are practicing pristine awareness, luminous mind, non-attachment, or being like the original nature. The descriptions within spiritual schools are just expedient means to lead you to this type of meditation practice. One school uses this method to get you to let go of your thoughts and practice formless mind, and another school uses a different method but they are all trying to get you to do the same thing as a cultivation technique. During those times it is easiest to transform your Qi.

As another example, within Sufism the first evolute of *Alam-i-YaHoot* is an essence described as “like awareness.” Although it is really an essence,

sphere, energy level, or plane of manifestation it is said to be able to know of its own existence, so the descriptive schemes of Ibn Sina and al-Farabi call it the “first intellect.” Once again, this is simply a form of skillful means to get you to meditate by creating an image of this in your mind. Only a sentient being can have consciousness, rather than an energy or plane of existence, so this is just a method of explanation that prompts you to practice meditations where you are just consciousness without thoughts. You would be practicing emptiness meditation if you were like this. The emphasis on consciousness has only this purpose since “emptiness meditation” is the major method of achievement on the spiritual path.

Everything within Shakti (the manifest universe) automatically develops from the one changeless ultimate Source, and manifests due to natural transformations of interacting causes and effects. The manifest realm of energy and phenomena proceeds mechanically due to scientific laws of dependence that rule transformations, and through these transformations life was eventually produced.

Life is a special type of manifestation that is often capable of consciousness. “Sentient life” means the ability to know and think via thoughts, called Knowledge. We are among the class of manifestations called “sentient living beings” who have evolved out of uncountable transformations and unlike insentient matter can think and reason. We can generate Knowledge. We can know the world. Through understanding and reason we have determined how to cultivate better lives and higher states of existence. We can determine wise courses of action and improve our behaviors in the world to achieve goals. We can penetrate countless realms of knowledge and through logic trace our beingness of existence back to the unmovable, unchanging pure original nature, which is what we ultimately are.

Confucius said we must trace all things back to their ultimate source, which is the original nature, the primordial essence. Buddhism says we must cultivate the mind to discover its ultimate essence, which is also this source nature. Islam says we must become one with Allah through an unveiling process that strips away the planes of existence. *Patanjali's Yoga Sutras* say, “The highest value a Yogi aspires for lies in re-absorption of primary constituents into their world-ground. Such a state supervenes upon total dissolution of the bodily and psycho-mental life, which is pure consciousness or feeling of void.”

While the road of spirituality poses the ultimate attainment as *moksha*, liberation, salvation, emancipation, *nirvana*, release, Buddhahood, selflessness, egolessness, enlightenment or self-realization, you should consider the path of tracing yourself back to an ultimate essence as a pathway of cultivating higher bodies, each of a progressively higher

transcendental substance. Each is composed of a higher or *more subtle form of energy* which Buddhism calls “winds.” Each body vehicle is also more blissful than the previous from which it was generated.

The roads developed in religion to allow you to do this are called spiritual cultivation. They are roads that help you trace the human manifestation of the original nature back to the one absolute source, or God, and the human manifestation or evolute includes your body and its ability to form consciousness. You must trace them back to their ultimate root source by generating spiritual bodies (that have a concomitant or attendant stage of consciousness) of more refined substances/energies until you obtain the final one composed of the first effusional plane of the absolute nature ... or the highest evolute that is physically possible.

All the various teachings of religion are primarily expedient constructions with one grand purpose only: to enable you to accomplish this great task of realizing the source nature of the universe, which is your True Self. That’s when you become a Buddha - a fully accomplished, fully perfected and completely enlightened being because of your transcendental body together with all the abilities and powers thus attainable.

Finding the One Source, which some call “God,” is therefore the entire purpose of cultivation proper. By cultivating a body of the highest energy realm possible you can end up living an incredibly long period of time in that body and escape the ceaseless chain of transmigrations called reincarnation.

People decide in life to cultivate spiritual practice privately on their own or together in groups. Those groups can be a person’s family, a community of followers within a tradition or under a teacher, or even a more formal organization with strict cultivation rules and schedules such as a monastery.

In most cases ordinary people can only devote a little bit of time during the day to the pursuit of spiritual cultivation. Some, however, can spare more time than others. Since progress is a function of the time you daily spend in practice together with the consistency of your practice over time, some people decide to become solitary sadhus, religious mendicants within a tradition, or decide to join a community of fellow strivers so they can practice more. This enables them to practice 5-6 hours per day, which is the average amount of time that top musicians and Olympic athletes devote to practice. When individuals decide to devote their whole life to this journey they often become monks and nuns, swamis, rabbis or priests of a particular tradition, whatever it may be.

This book is about how to do this in the most efficient way with the little time you have in life, and how to prepare yourself for success at this task in the afterlife if you don’t finish the task while living. Consider that if you spend a great deal of time in spiritual cultivation but don’t succeed

during life, you don't want all that time to have gone to waste. This book will tell you how to prevent that possible waste by making sure that your actions accumulate into a positive result of worthwhile merit. If you don't succeed in spiritual cultivation you can still succeed in other ways.

What is the sequence of spiritual progress that all must pass through? It is described as a pathway that spiritualizes/purifies both your physical body and your consciousness. It also requires you to purify/improve your behavior. Therefore spiritual success necessitates a physical body attainment and mental attainment, namely the purification of your thoughts and actions since they are behavioral deeds controlled by your thoughts. The major technique for this is the practice of meditation and contemplation on proper thinking and behavior that you then adopt and make part of your life.

Most spiritual schools promote meditation in order to emphasize the practice of purifying/improving your thoughts and consciousness workings in general, but the *real* fruit of the spiritual path is actually a new body attainment – a new spiritual body in addition to the body you already possess. The new body is essentially a copy of the old but composed of a more transcendental level of energy, and consciousness is something that simply comes along with it since that body is still you and you are still a conscious sentient being. Your mind in that body is the same as the one you now have, but a higher body will give you extra capabilities. All sentient beings naturally have mental abilities commensurate with the structure of their body's nervous system, and thus any “purification of consciousness” that “lifts it higher” actually refers to “better” thinking where “better” means wiser, more compassionate, more virtuous, more effective and so on.

In practical terms, the desired outcome of the spiritual path is that you develop a sequence of spiritual bodies and start thinking and acting in better ways. What is considered better? When your thoughts and behaviors are impregnated with more virtue and higher values, you discard errant habits and action tendencies and you adopt the mindset and start cultivating more behavior to help others.

There are five body attainments or steps on the spiritual path back to the original nature. You can consider them the stages of transcendence.

In Hinduism the five bodies are the physical body, subtle body, Causal (Mental) body, Supra-Causal body and Para-atman body. These are also called the *annamaya* (food), *pranamaya* (energy, Qi or Prana), *manomaya* (mental), *vijnanamaya* (wisdom or intellect), and *anandamaya* (bliss) *koshas* or sheaths.

In Buddhism these are the form body, deva body, Wisdom body, Dharma body and Buddha body (as mentioned in the *Diamond Sutra*). They

are also referred to by the five skandhas: the form skandha, sensation skandha, conception skandha, volition skandha and consciousness skandha. The higher body attainments (past the physical body) also correspond to the four dhyana, four stages of Arhats, and the Bodhisattva bhumis where every two bhumi levels refer to one body level attainment.

In Vajrayana Buddhism you have the physical body, impure illusory (subtle or deva) body, purified illusory body, wisdom light or clear light body, and perfect *sambhogakaya* (Reward body or Enjoyment body).

In the Nath Yoga tradition there are the physical body or *stuhla deba*, purified subtle body or *suddha deba*, body of vibrations or *mantra deba*, wisdom light body or *jnana deba* and then the body of Immanence.

In Islam these are the gross body, subtle body, Mental body, Universal body and Shiva-atma or Paratma body. These correspond to the realm of the physical body (*Alam-i-Nasut*), realm of intelligence (*Alam-e-Malakut*) that corresponds to the subtle plane, realm of power (*Alam-i-Jabrut*) that corresponds to the Causal plane, the “second manifestation” or realm of Absolute Unity (*Alam-i-LaHoot*) that corresponds to the Supra-Causal plane (also known as the “Soul of Mohammed” or *Rooh-e-Qudsi*), and the realm of first manifestation (*Alam-i-YaHoot*) that is also known as the “Light of Mohammed” (*Noor-e-Mohammed*).

In Taoism the five bodies are said to be composed of Jing, Qi, Shen, Later Heavenly Qi and Primordial Heavenly Qi. Qi means Prana, “wind element” or energy. Each new body attainment corresponds to the rank of being a new type of Immortal, which are equivalent to the Buddhist Arhats.

In Christianity we have the five ranks of the body, soul, spirit, Kingdom of Heaven and God the Father.

In Confucianism the five bodies correspond to the stages of faith, beauty, grandness, sage and then divineness taught by Mencius.⁴⁰

These are the names for the five bodies, or ranks of attainment on the spiritual trail, where each higher body is composed of a more rarified energy (transcendental material) than the body it was birthed from, and therefore resides on a different plane of existence called a heavenly realm or Pure Land which the lower body cannot reach. A higher body attainment remains invisible to all lower bodies.

When as a human being you attain the subtle body this event is considered the “initial fruit” of the spiritual path, and the momentousness of this achievement is called enlightenment. This is enlightenment because you become a first stage Arhat, called a Srotapanna in Buddhism. This is what should be the target for the human potential movement, but its

⁴⁰ See *Color Me Confucius* for a fuller description of these bodies and stages of attainment in Confucianism.

faithful haven't a clue.

The first dhyana of Buddhism is not attaining some trance state but attaining this extra body that abides in the subtle realm of the earth, which means an invisible realm all around us but populated by beings so subtle we cannot see them or measure their energy. This is the realm of "Heaven" where people live after death until reborn in a higher or lower body. When a master seems to be in a trance or samadhi, such as the first dhyana, it is simply because his higher bodies have gone elsewhere to perform certain tasks, thus he or she is preoccupied elsewhere.

When you attain the fifth body of Immanence or complete *sambhogakaya*, it is called Complete and Perfect Enlightenment, the stage of No More Learning, or "*nirvana* without remainder." This is the Great Golden Arhat stage of attainment.

The immediately preceding clear light body attainment stage, which equates to the Arhat's enlightenment of "*nirvana* with remainder" (*nirvana* with remaining dependency), is often called the state of universal oneness or union. This is the stage of enlightenment that most people normally think about, which is the stage of a full Arhat, although properly speaking the feat of first attaining the subtle body, or deva body, is enlightenment. As previously explained, this stage of a Srotapanna is one of the Arhat stages, and thus a stage of enlightenment.

The subtle body attainment, also known as the deva body, should be your target objective for your spiritual practice, for you must first attain this foundational body composed only of Qi in order to develop the others. Each new body is derived out of the energies of the lower body vehicle and each has special powers pertinent to the realm of energy to which it belongs (resides).⁴¹ To attain the subtle body you must do inner energy work such as the practices taught within my book *Nyasa Yoga*.

The very first stage of spiritual attainment above the human body is this subtle body composed of Qi, the deva body, which can leave the physical body at will after its attainment. With this attainment you become a heavenly being or deva while living, but now with two bodies at your disposal (your physical body and this subtle body which are both linked to one another). Because of possessing a deva body, which becomes the new center of your life of two bodies, you attain all the typical spiritual powers of a deva such as being able to develop mastery over the elements, quickly travel far distances (to be able to see and hear things there), enter the bodies of humans causing them to become subject to your will, helping people remember things forgotten (but stored within their brain neurons), and so forth.

⁴¹ See *God Speaks* by Meher Baba.

These standard abilities of devas (spirits or lower heavenly beings) explain why saints who attain this stage can exhibit what we call miraculous abilities. They can “perform miracles” simply because they have another body that can do these things that are the perfectly ordinary capabilities of those bodies. In other words, miraculous abilities exist simply because a saint has attained one or more of the higher spiritual bodies attainable through cultivation and mastered the normal powers that are the common functional abilities of those bodies which, although ordinary abilities to beings at that level, seem miraculous to those with denser bodies who inhabit lower planes of existence and don’t know what is going on. When a saint or sage (prophet, guru, master, swami, etc.) exhibits superpowers it is one of his higher bodies performing the feat, or possibly a higher-bodied friend or group of friends doing so. It is not that the powers come from God or that God performs the miracle. It is somebody performing the special feat with a body that can do those things as a natural ability. This is something people get confused about.

Superpower attainments correlate to how many bodies you cultivate (different planes of being you have access to) and whether you train to actively master the abilities normal to the plane of each body of higher composition. For example, as a human you have all the capabilities necessary for learning how to ski, surf, play the violin or roller skate but if you don’t train then you can’t exhibit these skills. Similarly, devas have subtle bodies made of Qi but can only master certain exceptional abilities in the Qi realm bound to our earth if they train and practice. The same principle applies to spiritual masters.

What are the standard capabilities of a deva, namely their siddhis? Yoga clearly tells us. *Anima*, the ability to reduce their subtle energy body to a small size. *Mahima*, the ability to expand their subtle energy body to a large size. *Garima*, the ability to make their subtle energy body heavy; *laghima*, the ability to make it lighter. *Praṇti*, the ability to travel anywhere at will (since the subtle body can pass through matter). *Vastva*, or control over natural forces (when you train to be able to do so); *Isitva*, supremacy over nature (for similar reasons). *Prakāmya*, the ability to attain whatever one desires.

Unfortunately, most people who enter a monastic life or become an ardent follower of a religious tradition will not attain the deva body during their lifetime. However, because they practiced spiritual cultivation all their life they will have created the chance to easily attain it after death since they will have purified their body’s Qi to a major extent due to their spiritual cultivation practice, which will thus either prevent or delay another subsequent human reincarnation. Without this attainment while living, often they may feel that they have wasted their life on spiritual efforts even though they made great progress towards this attainment that will bear fruit after they pass away.

This book will help you maximize your chances of attaining the initial fruit of the path - the first milestone of the cultivation trail - which is the attainment of that independent subtle body (spirit body, astral body, illusory body or deva body) that can leave and return to your physical shell since it is now the true center of your life. *Nyasa Yoga* gives exact methods for how to speedily cultivate your internal energies to attain it in the quickest manner possible. It involves cultivating/purifying both your Yin Qi and Yang Qi, as well as cultivating emptiness meditation, a pure mind and good conduct. This book goes over methods and schedules that will even help you maintain compliance with the necessities of the cultivation effort. It is hard to sustain the momentum of a cultivation effort, and to sustain your commitment to practice it is best to set up a regular practice schedule that embodies just enough variety to keep you going.

Whether you are a Christian monastic or mendicant, Buddhist monk, Hindu sadhu or swami, Muslim Sufi, Jewish rabbi, yogi or Taoist, this book can help you attain the goal of the deva body achievement, which is the first fruit of the spiritual path for *all* genuine spiritual traditions. All genuine religions want you to attain this accomplishment. If you don't attain the subtle body attainment then you have no spiritual ranking despite any honors or status appointed to you in the world. The world may call you a Pope, Patriarch, Prophet or some other honorific title, but if you don't have the deva body attainment at the minimum then you have no special spiritual standing at all.

If you don't attain the deva body in this life time then this guidance will still prepare you for the higher spiritual body attainments that you can work on achieving *after* you die (before you reincarnate into a new life yet again). As the great Tibetan master Tsongkhapa said, if you don't succeed during this lifetime you can still succeed in the afterlife. Furthermore, it will help you prepare for a Bodhisattva's career as a *deva protector* or *guardian spirit* (or Orisha in the Yoruba religion) who performs various services for the world of humans, doing good and beneficial things helping them succeed, despite a full and busy life in Heaven. This is the first book telling you how to do this.

It sounds funny that you can start training yourself to become a Bodhisattva Protecting Spirit or Guardian Deity of your own choosing *if you so choose* to be that in your heavenly afterlife. However, when people die and the Qi-based subtle body imprisoned within their physical shell is liberated, making them devas or spirits who will then experience an earth-bound heavenly life, they can use their new stage of life to perform all sorts of helpful activities for humans.

You can therefore start to train now along a Bodhisattva path of cultivation so that you can render *big* service to others when you become a

deva. Look at your current record of charitable contributions, or how you currently spend your free time, to get an idea of what you are really interested in. What issues have you been supporting in life or trying to protect? What is the light in the world that you wish others to see? Your life might be hampered now in so many ways that you cannot help as much as you'd like in certain areas, but the afterlife opens up countless possibilities to pursue your personal interests for shepherding functions as does the life of a master who achieves the first dhyana (deva body) and higher.

The helpful efforts of devas who intercede for humans are considered a form of Bodhisattva behavior, compassionate activity, or selfless service and this pathway of unselfish service can be taken as a road of cultivation – Karma Yoga. In fact, no one will help you attain higher bodies on the spiritual path unless you are an ethical, virtuous human who exhibits the tendency of wanting to help others. If you don't have this type of merit then no one will volunteer to spend the extensive time and effort required during the Twelve Years of a kundalini awakening to help you strengthen and then free a subtle body inherent within your human body's structure. If you are not a good person, no one will help you for this length of time as the transformation requires constant daily effort.

Naturally you will have to continue training after death to achieve any particular spiritual powers and abilities necessary to act as a helpful Bodhisattva or guardian for humans when you become a deva, but in terms of intellectual study there is fantastic information available right now that can help prepare you to become an expert in the very areas where you might want to become a helpful force and benefactor. You should start to study these materials now. Always study the best that there is, which is what I have tried to identify for you although the cited sources of what I consider "best" will certainly change over time.

You either become a Bodhisattva or not based upon your own decisions and efforts. There are other things to do in Heaven because children need teachers, people need barbers and doctors and everything else you need on the solid earthly place. It is just that life is more enjoyable in Heaven, but it is still filled with people involved with occupations. So if you think you might want to become a guardian spirit of some sort to help shepherd, protect and lend benefit to certain types of human affairs, it makes sense to start now to master the knowledge and skills required of your area of interest and to start participating in that very role you want to exercise. Craft your character, craft your training and craft your participation in related activities. Furthermore, you can also strive to make merit in that area by contributing to others in some related way.

As a monk or nun or other religious functionary who only studies spiritual texts, you are ill prepared to be involved with anything other than religious matters once you initially attain the deva body. What skills and

knowledge of anything other than religion would you then have? People are all seeking a better life but how can you answer them? Therefore *it is wise to supplement your spiritual efforts to develop other skills and master other topics than just religion.* There are many mundane skills and topics you should consider mastering not just for when you attain the deva body, but so you can do other things in this life too. To solely study religion and spiritual topics while neglecting practical human affairs and mundane realms of expertise makes you rather useless. Try to develop other skills at the same time. For instance, Trappists learn to work while cultivating, and in the Arab world it was taught that Moslem rulers should also train in some practical craft skill (such as carpentry, weaving, medicine, etcetera) other than just rulership. You must learn other skills and how to think in other ways than that required of your predominant role in life now. Ways of thinking and skills are abilities you can take with you into a new life, as well as karmic merit.

Additionally, you should also consider the following. Say you spiritually cultivate very hard during this life but don't succeed in attaining the first spiritual stage of the deva body. Unlike ordinary people who don't meditate, your Qi will already have become somewhat purified and strengthened before your death so that it will be easier to make cultivation progress in Heaven. Because of your cumulative cultivation efforts during earthly life you will be far ahead of other people who pass away without having cultivated since you will have already laid the foundation for success in higher body attainments. The purity and integrity of your subtle body will have already been strengthened. The more pure your body attainment the longer that heavenly body vehicle will live.

This is why you should cultivate meditation during life as it will prolong your stay in Heaven even if you don't succeed in generating the deva body from spiritual practice. You will always be that much further ahead than everyone else who doesn't cultivate - as long as your spiritual practice includes meditation and *nei-gong, nei-dan, anapana*, Naropa's inner heat yoga and other forms of internal Qi energy work rather than just reverent religious devotion to a deity, participation in religious ceremonies or other functions and intellectual study.

Many devas compassionately choose the occupation of a Bodhisattva "protective spirit" or "guardian deity" who uses their powers to protect countries, religions, towns, rivers, families, individuals, organizations, occupations, missions, etcetera in the human world that they can see around them even though we cannot see them. Their main intercession is by affecting human consciousness. They commonly give people thoughts to do good deeds and as explained in *Meditation Case Studies* they train in how to do this. When "miracles" happen in life they are not "due to God" because a changeless original essence is not a being and cannot act. Miracles are due to the intercession of regular spiritual beings simply because they

choose to help you. There is no Ultimate Power over all who orders anybody to do anything, just as you have your own free will to do whatever you like in the world.

In other words, miracles do happen because of higher spiritual beings trying to help humans, but not because of a changeless absolute foundational substratum ordering people around. As the Jewish sage Moses Maimonides said, “There is, in truth, no relation in any respect between God and any of God’s creatures.” In other words, God does not act, but God’s creatures act according to their own wills and inclinations without anyone being in ultimate charge, and those actions never produce an effect on God. The original nature is a changeless essence that cannot change so the only help you receive from Heaven is from devas and spiritual masters who hear your pleas or see your situation and decide to intervene however they can.

To become a Protect god (guardian spirit) you not only have to master all the normal powers of a deva, which are the powers a spiritual master learns to use upon attaining the deva body, but one must become educated on matters relevant to what you want to do. For example, if you want to become a protector of agriculture and farming then you should learn about farming details such as soil, seeds, weather, planting, harvesting and so forth. If you want to help people with healing, you must not just learn how to help them with your Qi energy but actually study the topic of medicine and healing. If you want to become a “Mahakala” or wealth engendering spirit you need to know the roads and methods that normally lead to wealth. Since you would be guiding people by thoughts to help them make money you would need knowledge and skills in business management or investing to know how to influence people properly.

The *Avatamsaka (Flower Garland) Sutra* of Buddhism lists several different types of Protector Deities or guardian spirits, which as stated are devas or spirits that become a guardian, patron, benefactor, shepherd or protector of a particular place, nation, culture, lineage, occupation, craft, activity, or function. Most cultures have special names for the individuals who choose this type of selfless service for the benefit of others. You can train to become one of these patron protective spirits which are in every country and location. Among those mentioned in the *Avatamsaka Sutra* are the following:

- City protect gods and guardian spirits
- Nation-sustaining guardian spirits
- River-ruling guardian spirits
- Ocean-ruling guardian spirits
- Mountain-ruling guardian spirits
- Lake-ruling guardian spirits

ARHAT YOGA

Forest-ruling (Trees and forest) guardian spirits
Weather-ruling (Rain-making) guardian spirits
Religion or Faith protect gods and guardian spirits
Temple or Sanctuary (Bodhimandha) guardian spirits
Wisdom guardian spirits
Treasure guardian spirits
Nature guardian spirits
Happiness and Joy guardian spirits
Medicine-ruling (Healing) guardian spirits
Military guardian spirits
Justice guardian spirits
Wealth and Money protect gods and guardian spirits
Travel guardian spirits
Crop (Agriculture) guardian spirits
Space element guardian spirits
Wind element guardian spirits
Fire element guardian spirits
Water element guardian spirits
Earth element guardian spirits
Light abilities guardian spirits
Music and Singing guardian spirits
Skillful Transformation guardian spirits

Of course Buddhism and Asian culture in general recognize many more categories than this such as fertility protection deities, trade and craft patron deities, wealth (money) generation deities, relationship guardian deities, education (wisdom, intelligence and learning) guardian deities, afterlife protector gods and many more. The words guardian, protector, patron and so on are used interchangeably as are the terms deva, spirit or deity.

In Japan these spirits are called “*kami*.” In Christianity these spiritual helpers are called “tutelaries” or tutelary spirits (deities) that are guardians, patrons or protectors. Christianity also has “patron saints” of locations (villages, towns, cities, landmarks, countries), occupations and trade crafts whom you can call on for various forms of protection, help and assistance including even illnesses and dangers. Those answering such calls are the human beings who cultivated the spiritual path, attained the deva body and then higher bodies, and then decided to devote themselves to these special sorts of benevolent help for human beings, namely you and me.

Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Shintoism, Taoism and Islam all have patron saints and guardian deities who take care of nations, towns or cities as well as spirits handling other “offices” or functions. In ancient Rome, there was also the *genius loci* who was the protective spirit of a place. The *genius loci* was a tutelary deity who was responsible for the health,

happiness and well-being of all the residents of that location, which is what a guardian spirit, protective deity, Bodhisattva or Buddha does. In Islam there is also the tradition of deceased Sufi masters working as the patron saints, protectors and heavenly advocates beneficially interceding for Muslim nations, cities, towns and villages. This description is also quite accurate.

In short, countless religions promote the *patron saints* of shrines, temples, churches, mosques and other holy places because they truly exist. There are also spiritual guardians of industries, hospitals, universities, legislatures, the arts and so on. Basically, spiritual beings who choose to help mankind will intercede in human affairs when they can although karma is sometimes stronger than any intercession they might render.

It is not idolatry or worship to beseech help from those who have attained higher spiritual bodies and want to help us, such as deceased Sufi or Christian saints. Bodhisattvas, Buddhas and guardian spirits want to help us. By virtue of possessing a body composed of the etheric substances of a higher plane they can shrink that body (*anima*), enter into people's brains and project ideas and their will, which is called the power of subjugation. This is how they typically help others. However, you shouldn't expect more success in any of your endeavors other than that suggested by the phrase, "God helps those who help themselves." An Arab phrase similarly runs, "Trust in God but tie your camel."

Once you pass away and become a deva yourself, which is the fate of all human beings who "die and go to Heaven," you will still be earth-bound unless you cultivate the higher spiritual bodies that access even greater transcendental realms called "Pure Lands." Access to Pure Lands becomes available when you attain the Causal body and higher. As a deva with a subtle energy body made of Qi you will happily live in the subtle etheric realm of the earth until you die in that heavenly life and are reborn again. During your heavenly (subtle realm) life, you can choose to intervene in human affairs to protect, prosper or benefit any human endeavors you want. Or, you can just live a happy life until you pass away without accumulating any merit that will make your subsequent life all the better.

Rather than wait for the afterlife or a subsequent incarnation, you can train to become a patron deity or guardian spirit *now!* If you are trying to succeed at spiritual cultivation in this life, it also makes sense to do some preparatory work in training yourself to become the type of Buddha, Bodhisattva, savior, helper, patron, benefactor or protector you would ultimately want to become later when freed of current life restrictions.

What are some of the other types of activities, functions or causes you might choose to protect as a guardian spirit? From examining the many charitable organizations that exist we find that some people devote their

entire lives to humanitarian missions such as eliminating hunger, relieving disaster outcomes with aid, and improving public health (especially in impoverished nations). People often make contributions to charities involved with human rights, animal welfare, wildlife conservation, environmental protection/conservation, medical research, the well-being of children, international development, arts and culture (libraries, museums, performing arts), community and neighborhood development, educational support, social services, commercial research and religious activities.

To emphasize this principle of helping others through compassionate service of a particular avenue, Buddhism has special lessons on this topic which it calls the Mahayana (Great Vehicle) Path of compassionate activity. It makes a special point of identifying various Buddhas and Bodhisattvas who have developed special skillsets and are especially devoted to certain types of calling. They represent *you* if you attain the deva body and then choose a similar type of mission. You can call upon these Buddhas and Bodhisattvas for assistance in times of need, such as:

Medicine King Bodhisattva Bhaisajyaguru
 Great Vow and Savior of Beings in Hell Bodhisattva Ksitigarbha
 Great Wisdom Bodhisattva Manjusri
 Power of Wisdom Bodhisattva Mahasthamaprapta
 Great Compassion Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara
 Great Benevolence and Joy Bodhisattva Maitreya
 Great Meditation and Spiritual Practice Bodhisattva Samantabhadra
 Supernatural Danger Protection Bodhisattva Sitatapatra
 Great Power and Esoteric Secrets Bodhisattva Vajrapani
 Great Success in Work and Achievement Bodhisattva Tara
 Wealth, Prosperity, Abundance and Fertility Bodhisattva Vasudhara
 Great Dharma Protector Bodhisattva Skanda

In Hinduism, for special help in life people are taught to call upon major deities such as Ganesh (good fortune, prosperity, wisdom and success), Saraswati (arts, music, intelligence and learning), Kubera (wealth), Lakshmi (good fortune, wealth and well-being), Durga (combating evil), Shiva (spiritual cultivation), Dhanvantari (healing), Kartikeya or Murugan (martial arts, warfare), and countless other deities, which are basically Buddhas and Bodhisattvas known by a different name. The Vasus assistants of Indra and Vishnu are also often called upon for success in certain types of cultivation exercises because they have mastered the elements – Agni (Fire), Vayu (Wind), Prthivi (Earth), Suray (Sun), Soma (Moon), Dyas (Space), and Varuna (Water). There are also Adityas and all sorts of other Hindu gods just as there were in ancient Greece and Rome. During the classical days in Greece and Rome the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas would

also masquerade as deities so that human beings could call upon them for help and assistance. This is the occupation of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

As explained in Buddhism, these deities, which are Buddhas, are actually human beings within our world who have succeeded at spiritual cultivation, attained the higher spiritual bodies, and decided to stick around helping us rather than go off to live in higher Pure Realms. They are people who succeeded in enlightenment, which means attainment of many higher transcendental bodies, and then with their long lives masquerade as ultimate deities when they are just humans with many bodies due to their cultivation. When you call for help they hear your pleas, and they try to render assistance where they can although they are hampered by the karma of situations. Training to become a guardian spirit, and acting that way in this life through charitable contributions or unselfish personal efforts to help others, prepares you for such an achievement. Such training is a type of Yoga. This type of individual is the one who succeeds on the spiritual path because they will be helped by higher beings on the road of attainment.

Thus Buddhism upholds the ideal of the Bodhisattva savior who devotes themselves to the mission of liberating people and relieving them of suffering. A guardian spirit or protector deity who does this is also a “Bodhisattva,” and the Buddhist sutras record many deities who vowed to protect places, teachings and even individuals who follow the cultivation path, thus becoming Bodhisattva protectors. Hinduism poses the ideal of the Avatar who incarnates in the world to do good and fight evil, who is also a Buddha or Bodhisattva protector. For instance in the *Bhagavad Gita* 4.7-8 the typical role of an Avatar is explained: “Whenever righteousness wanes and unrighteousness increases I send myself forth. For the protection of the good and for the destruction of evil, and for the establishment of righteousness, I come into being age after age.” The ancient Greeks posed the idea of a hero whose wisdom, courage, actions and self-sacrifice saved the country in time of peril.

Christianity poses the ideal of the Christ-Savior who espouses charity, kindness and benevolence, and who comes to save the world by sacrificing himself for others. This is also the ideal of the Bodhisattva savior. Sikhism has the example of Guru Nanak, who taught selfless service on behalf of others and the need to fight injustice. Zoroastrianism espouses the ideal of choosing good over evil, while Confucianism espouses the ideal of perfecting yourself and then making a contribution to your family, state and country. As Confucius’s student Master Zeng said, “The Master’s Way lies in exerting all of one’s effort and relating to the needs of others. That is all.”

These are all examples of the Bodhisattva or Buddha way. It is a path of service to other beings to help relieve their suffering for after all, they are all our brothers and sisters despite different appearances since they too are

the same original nature. We are all the same original nature.

Many people who succeed at spiritually cultivating multiple bodies choose to hang around the earthly sphere and perform various deeds to help the beings on all the realms lower than their highest body. They can now see and interpenetrate all those lower bodies, and thus render beneficial influence to them. As a form of skillful means that is part of a career of assistance, it is also common for all successful spiritual cultivators to masquerade as various gods and deities by responding to the prayers or mantras people use to request their divine aid. This has been going on for thousands of years throughout every country, culture and religion. They perform this masquerade chicanery because most people call upon non-existent beings for assistance, such as deities and gods, and therefore they answer those calls by impersonation.

This is something you will find out about after you die, or upon success in attaining the deva body, and is explained as “skillful means.” The methodology of skillful means, where you deceive someone in order to save them, is explained in the *Lotus Sutra* and is based on the fact that people will not listen to the truth. Naturally the spiritual Bodhisattva men and women who take on these compassionate jobs also take on deva students and help them achieve the Tao (attain higher bodies) because of their devotion to helping others. No one will receive help from spiritual beings in attaining the Tao unless they are kind, virtuous, ethical people. It takes a full Twelve Years of such masters running their own Qi through your body to wash your Qi/Prana using their own in order for you to attain your own independent deva body, the process being called a kundalini awakening, and only the ethical, kind and virtuous can achieve such devoted help and attention. You really need merit to deserve such attention.

Mantras and prayers have therefore been created in many religions that ask for assistance from various gods, deities, local protector spirits, patron spirits and saints, Immortals, guardian spirits, gurus, sadgurus, masters, prophets, swamis, sages, Bodhisattvas and fully enlightened Buddhas who have attained the Immanence body and higher. These are all just human beings who either attained enlightenment while alive, or are reborn in Heaven as devas and then attained the Casual body, Supra-Casual body, Immanence body and yet higher.

In Hinduism various mantras are available for requesting assistance from such beings for the pursuit of spiritual progress, health, wealth, business success, justice (victory in court), intelligence, skills in the arts, peace of mind, protection, the overcoming of enemies, relationships, and more. In Christianity there are patron saints who people pray to for various sorts of help as well. In Sufism people pray to the past saints (Sufi masters who passed away) for help too. In many religions a long list of past masters, rabbis, muftis, sages, saints, hieromonks, elders, etcetera are sometimes

recited in prayers because this attracts their notice and calls attention to your situation. You will find this behavior in nearly every religion because if the individual is enlightened it will provoke a response. However, your karma might be too thick for any real help to be rendered.

To the extent they can help, the needs of human beings crying out for aid are ministered to by the people who succeeded in spiritual cultivation and then specialize in certain types of aid, helping where they can to the extent they can. As explained, people who succeed on the path train to use their higher bodies in various ways that might render assistance, devoting themselves to certain efforts, but usually the most that they can do is give people thoughts, strength, energy or connections to others who might help them. A living spiritual master devotes himself to helping all his students in various ways, unbeknownst to them, but there is always only so much you can do, especially when someone has the fixed karma to suffer. Someone who has reached their time and is fated to die will die despite all their merit and all your prayers. Sometimes karma just has to work itself out.

The primary form of Bodhisattva help provided to people is by altering consciousness, i.e. giving people thoughts and ideas that can help them to solve problems themselves because you usually *do* have to do all the solving work yourself. For instance, the thought to call someone on the phone, a brilliant idea of inspiration, strength and courage that seems to appear out of nowhere when needed, and sometimes even lucky breaks are some of the things that can be given to people without their knowing the source. As another example, there is rarely such thing as “being psychic” such as knowing someone is going to call you by telephone because you have the superpower of foreknowing the future. It is usually just a deva who goes into your brain to give you that thought because he or she is practicing his powers and has advance knowledge of the phone call. Devas, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are practicing little things like this all the time.

You should *never* expect miracles if you call upon higher powers for aid and assistance because you must follow the earthly road of consequences and do most of the work for handling problems yourself. Calling for aid and assistance will not stop a bullet whereas heeding that inner urge to avoid danger will prevent the trouble in the first place. Astrology teaches to remove yourself from the circumstances, or alter the configuration of circumstances, or request help from Heaven, or cultivate non-action and then you can change your fortune. This is why many masters go into retreat when bad fortune is due.

The point is that some things cannot be prevented or helped because the karma is too thick and cannot be changed (fixed), but people who do succeed in enlightenment can and do help people whenever they can to what extent they can. But what can you do when your primary technique is typically giving people thoughts or loaning them energy?

Even so, the act of offering assistance when devas and higher beings do not have to act at all (they have busy lives of their own after all) is why they are called compassionate Bodhisattvas and Buddhas or Guardian Deities.

The important point is this, which is called practicing Buddha Yoga, Bodhisattva Yoga or Guardian Spirit Yoga. You might call this a type of Karma Yoga as well. You can actually start training to become a Buddha or Bodhisattva by doing what they do, and by learning how to give to others good advice (thoughts) and wise judgment, inspiration or motivation, peace of mind or confidence, resources (wealth or connections) and other forms of aid. Learning how to make others healthy, such as raising their Qi by giving them Qi, is also something you can train to do. The three standard forms of charity include giving others wisdom (teachings); wealth/resources (and solving the problems of the poor) and fearlessness, which means providing protection, care, courage, hope and a sense or the actualities of safety and security to the distressed. You can train to offer in all these ways. You can carry out kind actions yourself, support those who do, and assist those who are less fortunate in regaining their dignity and fortune.

If you want to become a big Buddha then as part of Buddha Yoga you must train in virtue, wisdom, discipline, perseverance (grit), concentration and visualization. Furthermore, there are topics you can start to study now rather than waiting for the deva body attainment or afterlife, and skills you can begin to master. Life continues even after death, and you can start to accumulate an expertise now that you can use in the afterlife or in your next incarnation. The goal you should strive for is best articulated by Buddhism which says that you need to become fully accomplished, fully skillful, fully compassionate, fully wise, fully perfected. This requires training *now* in various ways – it requires you to work at self-improvement. This is why I am revealing the pathway of the guardian spirits, which is basically Bodhisattva or Buddha Yoga. Many who pass away tread this path.

Essentially the purpose of life is whatever you choose it to be. Life purpose or purposes for your life are a subjective thing - something you choose and define yourself. Life purposes are something you consciously create yourself. They enable you to live meaningfully, and give you the courage to live large and make a dent in this world. At the very ultimate source of consciousness everything is empty and phenomena are non-existent, but out of this emptiness, void, abyss, chaos, unmanifestness, non-differentiation, formlessness or purity the universe is somehow born, and out of that conscious life is born. Similarly, out of this ultimate infinite freedom of potential you are free to create your own directions for your life. You can define life to be about whatever you want it to be by the choices and actions you make. Stay true to yourself and do that!

What are you here to do? What value do you want to create for society? You define your own purpose and future. You define your own destiny by

your efforts. You can shape your thoughts to be whatever you want to accomplish. Whatever you choose to accomplish you can work to accomplish. Whatever you select to build you can start to build. Whatever tools you need to accomplish a goal you can learn or acquire. Whatever you want to master you can start to master. Talent can be learned, purposes can be served. Wherever you want to apply your efforts you can do so and achieve a result. You can even transform your personality if you determine to do so.

Your own inner directives can guide your purposes within life and your purposes for life. No one can guarantee a perfect result or even a completed result for whatever you wish to accomplish, but you can definitely get started and work towards completion to the extent of your abilities and resources. That is the choice you have with your time. It is simply a matter of deciding to commit to something and then undertaking that engagement.

If you think there is some ultimate meaning or some ultimate reason for life, then you are wrong. Life is something that simply appeared in the universe over time, like everything else. The purpose of life is just life – living protoplasm that exists just like uncountable other types of phenomena that exist. However the purpose of not life, but *your life*, is whatever you ultimately choose it to be. This is where meaning comes into the picture, so what will you choose?

Some types of life have no sentience, like viruses and fungi which live mechanically, and others such as ourselves do, which is a great miracle. Consciousness is the great miracle of the universe, the great treasure of all treasures, the wish-fulfilling gem that makes all things possible. Within life you are constrained by circumstances, including karmic limitations, but within those limitations you have comprehension so can solve problems and surmount challenges to make of life what you want to the best of your abilities. As stated, no one can guarantee you any success but spiritual forces can even help you to some extent if you call upon them for aid.

Just as you can send the electrons of an atom into a higher orbital shell if you inject the atom with energy, so you can elevate your life to a higher heights and break karmic bonds if you cultivate and receive spiritual assistance from the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas for your efforts. In *Move Forward: Powerful Strategies for Creating Better Outcomes in Life* and *Color Me Confucius* I even showed how individuals like Benjamin Franklin, Yuan Liao Fan, Frank Bettger and others did this in their own lives to break karmic destinies, stubborn habits and fashion entirely new fates and fortunes. You can overcome habits, insecurities and emotions that block you or hold you hostage such as fear, blame or guilt and thus free yourself from being stuck in patterns and mindsets that inhibit your life. In *Culture, County, City, Company, Product, Person, Passion, World* I also showed how some people

chose a deep life purpose of creating value for society and gathered together with others for related missions to create great positive change in the world. This is the Buddha and Bodhisattva way. This is Karma Yoga.

In the ultimate sense there is no such thing as an independent being, ego, I, personality or life in the universe. All things have developed from the one fundamental essence through a mechanistic set of transformations linked to everything else in existence. There are just phenomena, or you can say just one phenomenon – Shakti – and whether you refer to Shakti or individual phenomena you differentiate via your mind they are basically, fundamentally, inherently the primordial essence. We just happen to be one of the transformational results or evolutes that is called a “living being” rather than a non-living object or force, and because of having consciousness we can perceive, think, and know. Because of consciousness we can produce Knowledge. We can also craft our own destiny, and choose whether we will practice kindness and compassion in the world or not.

Everyone saying “I” is in deepest truth just referring to the one original nature since that is our Supreme Self – you are that one Self in All. In the ultimate sense, “I” means the original nature announcing itself via the thoughts/words of a sentient being. As the ultimate essence, It is the real unchanging Self from which we all are derived, so our foundational substratum is the only “I,” the only true core, the only True Self. It is the only self-nature, or independent self. And since it is empty of restrictions but perfectly free that it can create endless possibilities, or lives are also ultimately free that we can direct them along any avenues of creation and accomplishment we choose.

So are we “living beings”? We are just phenomena linked to all other others in one large soup of energy and phenomena that is one whole. You need a mind to discriminate parts within it, but the smallest building blocks are separate, individual items that never become non-individual and thus never *really* compose any wholes. To say we are independent egos, souls, entities or living beings is really just a convenient way of speaking. It’s just a relative way of carving out phenomena within a soup where nothing is actually a proper part of anything and no true composite objects exist.

As phenomena that are all inherently equal because of being the original nature, or being Shakti, I say you must put aside fear and define for yourself your own life purpose. Decide what you want to do in the universe and make use of everything to achieve it, for the universe is yourself and nothing bars you. There are always obstacles due to cause and effect relationships but you can try to become or do whatever you want.

Being the Self, choose your own destiny in the universe rather than just going along with karmic fate. Create that fate yourself by making it anew in each instant, changing each situation that comes to you for the better. Make of yourself what you want to make of yourself and do what you want to do

in the world. If you fail, then so what? Life is in the doing, in the attempt. Since no fate or fortune can be guaranteed, it is in the trying that we must find happiness and fulfillment.

I want you to think about “minimizing your regret functions” so that at the end of life you have involved yourself with what you wanted to do and won’t regret not having lived the way you wanted. Don’t leave personal desires unfulfilled so that upon your deathbed you will look back regretting you didn’t do what you wanted. You don’t want to leave with unfinished business. When interviewed, people who are dying of terminal illnesses rarely say they regret having tried things in life that failed, but consistently regret not having delved into what they truly wanted to do. Don’t be that way. Just be true to yourself and try to accomplish what you want! No one actually cares that you fail or succeed so stop worrying about other people’s opinions. They are not carrying a scorecard about your life and their opinions don’t matter, so be authentic, be an original, be true to yourself.

There will always be obstructions, challenges, limitations and karmic bonds hampering human beings in their efforts to accomplish things in life. This includes obstructions to the personal goal of finding joy, peace and fulfilling self-expression. With life there always come unavoidable pains and suffering. There are always problems, obstacles, challenges and setbacks. As a living being it is therefore your job to learn how to use cause and effect to wisely guide changes to produce results you want rather than just complain without lifting a finger and accepting things as they are. As the *Yijing* says, you have to learn how to “master the changes” to mold situations to produce a future you desire. Those purposes you cannot achieve in one life you can always set out to achieve in a subsequent life.

With this in mind, does it not make sense to start training to achieve the deva body now, before passing away, by taking up the road of spiritual cultivation? At the same time, doesn’t it also make sense to prepare to become a guardian benefactor – which all devas, spirits or heavenly beings can do – since that is what enlightened individuals typically end up doing despite all of the other options available in the universe? There must be some very good reasons for that pretty consistent decision.

You should set for yourself a goal of becoming some type of Buddha, Bodhisattva or guardian spirit, which is Buddha Yoga. You should start cultivating meditation, inner energy work and start mastering the bodies of knowledge and skills that would be relevant to the type of helper, guardian, benefactor, Buddha or Bodhisattva you would want to become. You must start training to be a force of light in the world for when you finally get the chance. This training means intellectual study, participation in those activities you wish to master, cultivation work and self-improvement.

CHAPTER 4: THE SEQUENTIAL STAGES AND FIVE BODIES OF SPIRITUAL CULTIVATION

In the previous chapter we reviewed the fact that most of the major world religions, and even the oral legends of gods during more primitive times, hold similar concepts about the primal original essence, God, True Self, fundamental nature, Supreme Reality or absolute essence that is our true being. They also hold similar ideas about the process of Creation or manifestation that generates the universe.

Many individuals claim they have unsuccessfully searched for common themes within the world's major religions but they always seem to skip over the commonalities concerning these simple principles about the Unmanifest original state and the Manifest state of Creation.

One commonality that they usually emphasize is the existence of common ethical rules and virtues championed in world religions. They almost always focus on the common ethical dimensions. For instance, most religions promote some form of the Golden Rule, as seen in the following list:

- Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. This is the meaning of the law of Moses and the teaching of the prophets.
(Christianity, *Matthew* 7:12)
- Treat not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful.
(Buddhism, *Udana-Varga* 5.18)
- Do not do unto others whatever is injurious to yourself.
(Zoroastrianism, *Shayast-na-Shayast* 13.29)
- Do not do to others what you do not want done to yourself.
(Confucianism, *Analects* 15.23)

ARHAT YOGA

- Do not do to others that which angers you when they do it to you. (Greek tradition)
- One who is going to take a pointed stick to pinch a baby bird should first try it on himself to feel how it hurts. (Yoruba)
- What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor. This is the whole Torah. The rest is commentary. (Judaism, *Babylonian Talmud, Shabbath* 31a)
- One should treat all creatures in the world as one would like to be treated. (Jainism, *Sutrakritanga* 1.11.33)
- Do not do to others what you know has hurt yourself. (Tamil Tradition, *Tirukkural Book of Virtue* 316)
- By self-control and by making dharma (right conduct) your main focus, treat others as you treat yourself. (Hinduism, *Mahābhārata Shānti-Parva* 167:9)
- Lay not on any soul a load that you would not wish to be laid upon you, and desire not for anyone the things you would not desire for yourself. (Bahai, *Gleanings*)

Another fact which the religious scholars typically skip over is that most every genuine spiritual tradition refers to five ranks of spiritual achievement that involve attaining spiritual bodies of higher transcendental composition than matter. Yes, five transcendental spiritual body achievements – this descriptive scheme is found in nearly every major religion!

This is why the spiritual path in many traditions is considered a process of “freeing the soul,” which is our subtle body (the astral body or deva body) that escapes from our physical matter for the first stage of spiritual achievement. The soul, or inner subtle body of every individual, is a duplicate of the physical body composed of Qi/Prana, namely our vital energy, that is normally released upon death but which can be freed whilst alive if you devote yourself to sufficient spiritual practice of the right type. For all religions, this liberating achievement is the first fruit of the spiritual path.

The subtle/deva body itself can then proceed through a similar set of transformations to set free from within itself a body composed of a higher etheric substance than Qi, and thus this higher Causal body transcends the lower bodies to be able to reach yet higher heavenly realms. Once you attain the deva body, the road of attaining yet higher transcendental bodies is then called the Stage of True Cultivation Practice. Previously you went through the Stage of Preparation, Stage of Preparatory Practices, or Stage of Intensified Yoga Practices to attain the subtle body achievement and now that you have it, you learn about what you need to do to go forward at this

stage and you pursue it.

As previously explained, this new body is the Causal body, also called the Mental body, Wisdom body, Mantra body, Shen body, purified illusory body or body of vibrations in various traditions. There are a lot of different names for it. While the subtle body has some superpowers, the powers of the Causal body are even greater.

Through the process of spiritual cultivation the Causal body can in turn generate from within itself a yet higher spiritual body composed of an even higher, more transcendent, purer substance. This is the Dharma body, Clear Light body of Buddhism, enlightenment body or Buddha body and like all other bodies is known by yet other names in other traditions.

Lastly, that body can, through spiritual practice, free from within itself a yet higher body composed of a more transcendental, spiritual level of energies, and this is known as the Complete and Perfect Enlightenment body, or Immanence body.

Once you attain any of these higher bodies, which makes you a Buddhist Arhat, Christian saint, Jewish prophet, Hindu master or satguru, Tibetan guru, and so on, you then become qualified to become a leader of mankind as we saw explained in Taoism through the symbol of Taiqing, the Grand Pure One also known as “The Universally Honored One of Tao and Virtues” (Daode Tianzun). In Christianity we say you join the community of saints. In Yoruba you become an Orisha who can help guide humanity on how to live on earth. In Shinto you become an *ikigami* or “living Buddha.” Etcetera.

These individuals, *who are you and me when we cultivate correctly and sufficiently enough to achieve those bodies and then make the vow to help others*, also become the protector gods of towns and countries and various other misisons. They become various types of Bodhisattva helpers as discussed in the presented chapter of *Nyasa Yoga*. They are the *genius loci*, *chenghuangshen*, *landvaettur*, *Tudigong*, *kami*, tutelary deities, city protect gods (guardian spirits), and so forth mentioned in the ancient world.

I often hear that globalists want to create a “one world religion” and wonder what they are trying to create. We already have one. As you can see, the ideas about the changeless origin of the universe and its creation are the same across religions and it is simply that the public doesn’t realize this fact.

Religions usually share similar views on ethics too. They all promote various spiritual cultivation methods – the intensified practices that prepare you for the independent subtle body emergence that then makes you a Srotapanna Arhat. These intensified practices share much commonality as well, and some of them are broadly discussed in the subsequent chapter.

And finally, they have the same ranks of spiritual achievement, though they word these body accomplishments in different ways. Buddhism, for instance, discusses them in terms of “samadhi” and “Bodhisattva bhumi”

attainments rather than bodies although the “skandhas” refer to these achievements in a hidden way.

What religions don’t all have in common are particular dogmas, traditions, and quirks (relevant to their cultural circumstances) that are not of much consequence to the process of salvation, liberation, realization, divinization, spiritualization, *theosis* or however you wish to word spiritual progress.

In this chapter I will reveal the commonality of the body attainment rankings recognized by most every genuine spiritual tradition, which are the definitive, common ranks of attainment along the spiritual path. Even Confucianism is included, which is a fact that usually shocks people who cannot believe that even materialistic Confucianism contains these spiritual ranks of long-lived spiritual bodies! I have left out discussions on the beginning stages of gong-fu relevant to the deva body attainment, such as in *The Little Book of Hercules* and *Tao and Longevity* because they will be found in a later chapter.

From the included chapter of *Nyasa Yoga* you will be able to derive a very good understanding of the basic five bodies achieved through successful spiritual practice. You will also attain a basic understanding of the spiritual realms. From its appendix you will be taught the real meaning the four enlightenment dhyana (samadhi) of Buddhism, which each equate to one of the four transcendental spiritual bodies, and the ten Bodhisattva bhumis which also correspond to these ranks.

From a chapter of *Color Me Confucius* you will also see that even a mundane, physical path like Confucianism had sages who attained spiritual bodies and thus Confucianism was able to describe the same ranks of achievement as everyone else. This is seen as incredible by individuals who think of Confucianism as a different sort of cultivation pathway.

Why is everyone describing the same ranks of spiritual attainment? Because when you first attain the deva body while alive, which people normally experience upon death as their spirit leaves their discarded human frame, the truth of the spiritual path is introduced to you and you find all these teachings. That’s why this stage of spiritual attainment is called “faith” or “belief,” which is because with a deva spirit body attainment you can experience both the human and heavenly world too, and are introduced to heavenly teachings of the true path. Thus you then have true faith or belief in the real cultivation path because you learn what is ultimately true.

In any case, everyone records the same five stages because once you reach the deva body attainment you receive the complete teachings unadulterated by the religious dogmas of the earthly plane, and thus everyone reports of the same thing.

From: NYASA YOGA
CH. 3 – “The Five Purified Bodies”

The reason there is a spiritual emphasis on the different parts of your body is because they must all be transformed on the spiritual path. Every atom and cell of your body must be washed with Qi *for years* to open up all the channels and create an independent deva body.

If you want to succeed on any path of spiritual practice you must cultivate your coarse physical body of bones and flesh through a pathway that purifies its prana and *nadis* (Qi and Qi) channels, and this is normally called kundalini cultivation. This washing of your body via Yang Qi will purify your underlying subtle Qi body, which is like an invisible scaffolding permeating every atom, cell and tissue of your physical body. Once you sufficiently purify or transform your inner Qi body, which takes at least twelve years after an initial Kundalini Awakening, it can then leave your physical shell at will.

Your inner subtle Qi body is basically an etheric energy duplicate of your physical body that leaves during out-of-the-body experiences and upon death. It is a perfect body double composed of Qi/prana, which is an energy more subtle than the material body, and thus it cannot be seen or measured. Because it is made of Qi it has all the powers related to those energies that appear miraculous to humans, whose bodies exist on a lower plane of material condensation.

As of yet, science cannot sense or measure Qi energies at all. Hence, even though we all possess a subtle inner energy body duplicate, since it is not composed of particles modern science does not yet recognize its existence. Qi also has higher energy substance derivatives called Shen, Clear Light and so forth. You can think of them as more subtle forms of matter that are less dense than our own, but still condensed forms of energy. Thus they belong to different spiritual planes of existence.

Through spiritual practice our inner subtle body or etheric double can become an independent deva body, also called an astral body, deity body or *yin-shen*, that can leave your physical shell whenever you want to roam or do things in the world. Attaining this body is the equivalent to becoming a junior-level spiritual master.

Buddhism calls the subtle body the “will-born” body because with its attainment you can, *at will*, put on and take off the external body as if it were a cloak and use your subtle body for experiencing the astral world. This is the Buddhist stage of the Srotapanna, or “stream entrant,” which is the first level of the Arhats. When you can consciously separate the inner subtle body from the physical shell, this makes you feel a greater distinction from being the gross body, but your root nature is not the subtle body either. The root nature of the universe is an ultimate substance/essence or

ground energy level.

As Meher Baba and Shakyamuni Buddha explained, upon attaining the subtle deva body achievement you will consider yourself to be this subtle body, which will then become the center of all your activities. Therefore you will now have two bodies you can occupy – a physical and subtle. A new mode of life will then open up along with new powers and possibilities. You will still live in your physical body but your new life will be centered in this higher subtle body until you cultivate another body yet higher, the Causal or Mental body made of Shen that is derived from cultivating the body of Qi. Then you will simultaneously possess three bodies, each capable of doing different things independently of the others.

Upon attaining this Causal body the same process of purification will repeat itself. You will appear to others as existing in the sheaths of the physical or subtle body while actually living in that Causal body, but you can also use your lower bodies to do independent things like extra appendages. For instance, you can use your Causal body to give someone a series of thoughts while using the Qi of your subtle body to be independently working on an individual's Qi to help open up its Qi channels.

When you achieve the next higher body composed of Clear Light (Later Heavenly Qi/Prana) you will then take that as the new center of your life while still appearing to others in the lower bodies, and onwards it goes. With each new body you identify with it as your life vessel, but you maintain a connection with all your lower bodies and use them independently.

While the physical body of form can be considered a solidification of energy, the subtle body of Qi or prana belongs to the realm of energy. Being composed of energy, the subtle body's capabilities are therefore free of the limitations that apply to the human realm. This body can increase or decrease in size, travel incredible distances at will, and become heavier or lighter with thought. It can exhibit a variety of superpowers, as mentioned in Yoga texts, that are actually ordinary powers to subtle plane inhabitants. When a human being believes he has developed superpowers those powers are actually due to these beings and not himself.

The subtle body can see, hear and smell many things inaccessible to the physical body and perform many actions – all of which are achieved by means of energy – that seem miraculous to beings who only possess physical forms. In this body, consciousness is continuously linked with energy and continuously vibrates with energy. The miracles it can perform, such as with healing, all have to do with Qi or energy.

The next spiritual transition upwards is from the subtle body to the Causal body, Mental body, Mantra body or purified illusory body, which is an advance toward a yet higher or purer state of being. Within this body made of Shen, consciousness is no longer fettered by the domination of

either the physical body or energy. However, even with this body and its concomitant purity of consciousness, the individual mind or ego-shell cannot attain to the higher realm of Clear Light that constitutes initial enlightenment (*nirvana* with remainder). The Causal body attainment, as high as it is, still does not belong to the level of enlightenment. That body is also not to be considered the ultimate self-nature, but many people become fixated at this stage due to the vast number of superpowers that now become possible in this higher sphere.

One of the most difficult tasks on the road of spiritual cultivation is to go from the Causal body to the Supra-Causal Clear Light body of initial enlightenment, which is difficult because the mind has to be annihilated through the mind itself. To do so you must continue doing all the spiritual practices that you used to attain the subtle body. This requires *both mind and body cultivation*.

If you think that spiritual cultivation is just a matter of meditation alone while ignoring inner energy work – which is a mistaken notion taken up by Zen students who don't know better – you will not achieve the states of dhyana or the body attainments necessary as the foundation for the Tao. You cannot attain dhyana unless you transform the body by opening up its Qi channels, which means cultivating the subtle body attainment. For a higher level of dhyana you need to open up the energy channels within the subtle body and from within it attain a Causal body, and so on it goes.

This whole sequence of spiritual progress – the true spiritual path – either starts upon your arrival in Heaven where you become free of religion because you learn the universal truth or upon earth when you start cultivating any of the Yoga roads to these achievements. This path is clearly taught in Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism, Sufism, Yoga, etcetera. Nyasa Yoga practice is one of those practice road vehicles.

Without a deva body the way you normally arrive at Heaven is twofold. As a human you can die and go to Heaven (which is just experiencing our world in the higher subtle state of etheric energy) or be reborn in Heaven to parents who are already devas.

Death happens to humans when the soul or subtle body (made of Qi) *permanently* excretes the lower physical body shell that encases it. The same applies for any higher body. Your inner subtle body of Qi permanently leaves behind its previous encasing and then lives a life in the subtle sphere independent of the lower physical nature. Religions usually say that your soul or spirit leaves and “goes to heaven,” and there are plenty of near-death experiences where people have reported this.

Only an accomplished master can achieve the state where their inner Qi body can leave and then re-enter their body at will. This inner Qi body of a master (their deva or subtle body) is created through the fire of Yoga. Some individuals who achieve this then leave the physical world for good. Others

with compassion stay and teach the spiritual path while simultaneously trying to cultivate yet higher spiritual bodies until they attain Complete and Perfect Enlightenment.

To an ordinary individual a spiritual master looks perfectly normal, but they are actually centered in their higher bodies while living in the world wearing their human body like a cloak and using it to interact with people. All higher bodies have the yoga siddhi powers of *anima* (the ability to shrink in size), *mahima* (the ability to expand in size), *garima* (ability to become heavier), *laghima* (ability to become almost weightless), *prapti* (ability to travel to all places and pass through denser matter), *prakamya* (absolute lordship) and *vastva* (power to subjugate others through possession) whereas the physical body does not have these powers at all.

Everything phenomenal in the universe is impermanent and thus destined to perish, including any higher subtle bodies. All bodies composed of energy, even though these are higher subtle essences, have a limited life span which means that life in Heaven is also temporary even though normally longer than an earthly life span. After death, whether or not you remain long in a Qi body to “enjoy Heaven” and whether or not you quickly reincarnate again upon the death of that Qi body, it all depends upon how well you cultivated your inner Qi body during life and whilst in Heaven. It is also a function of merit.

The rule of longevity is that subtle, purified or refined essences age slower and retain their cohesion longer than less subtle, coarser elements. They last longer, and so your life in a higher realm lasts longer depending on your merit and how well you cultivated. Since the degree of your cultivation and life span are correlated to how purified your subtle body becomes, if you want to live longer you must always cultivate the path of spiritual practice.

This is not a unique lesson but a common teaching from Buddhism, Vajrayana, Hinduism, Chinese Taoism, Western Alchemy, and the Yoga schools. Most spiritual traditions will tell you that longer and longer life spans are enjoyed by those with greater and greater spiritual attainments since they cultivate their Qi and channels (prana and *nadis*) to attain higher bodies, and so now you know why.

THE FIRST FIVE HIGHER BODIES

To understand the nature of a Qi body we need to first review some basics of Jing, Qi, Shen, Later Heavenly Qi (Emptiness or Clear Light) and Original/Primordial Heavenly Qi. These are the known stages of the refinement of matter that masters talk about. They are energetic substances possible to be extruded from one another due to the practices of spiritual cultivation. If you eventually achieve a body composed of one of these

substances then it indicates an advanced degree of physical purification on the road to self-realization.

Once you achieve an independent Qi body, which is the first milestone of physical attainments on the spiritual trail, you can then begin to start cultivating the ultimate Reward body. The final Enjoyment or Reward body is a perfected *sambhogakaya* body used by those having attained Complete Enlightenment. This is a body composed of a very subtle, refined fundamental energy that is called Original (Primordial or Early) Heavenly Qi. In yoga schools this compositional substance is called a fundamental wind or prana.

Despite its high stage, this attainment first starts with this human body of ours and requires a long process of purification, transformation or refinement in order to produce the first step that is the independent subtle body. Our solid material bodies of flesh and blood are composed of Jing, meaning that they arise from the mixture of an egg with semen, but they also have Qi within them. Qi has Shen within it, Shen has Later Heavenly (or Clear Light) Qi within it, and Clear Light energy has Primordial Heavenly Qi within it. They are all simultaneously there even within a body of flesh. You should therefore think of the material body of Jing, or form, as solidified energy because it can be cultivated to produce higher states.

Human beings think in terms of the mundane physical body, but once they attain a Qi (subtle, astral, deva, deity, etheric) body they think in terms of energy. Those whose bodies are composed of Qi (devas, angels, protect gods, dakis and dakinis, spirits, etc.) perform many energy feats for human beings to help them. When you say that “a miracle came from God” it usually came from a deva exercising his or her powers.

The transition from the subtle plane to the Causal, conceptual plane of energy constitutes a further advance in the ranks of cultivation achievements. Therefore beings who achieve what is called the Causal, Mental, Mantra, Wisdom or purified illusory body made of Shen (Spirit) are at a stage higher and have more capabilities than devas who have bodies composed of Qi. With this Causal body attainment your consciousness is no longer fettered by the domination of the body or energy but is imprisoned by thoughts; it is mind-ridden. Nevertheless, this body made of Shen lasts longer than bodies composed of Qi and Jing.

The Buddhist sutras and Hinduism clearly teach that sentient beings who live in successively higher heavenly realms have longer and longer life spans so once again you can surmise that those who attain this body will live longer than devas.

Those who reach initial enlightenment (*nirvana* with remaining dependency), and therefore achieve Dharma bodies composed of Later Heavenly Prana (Qi) or Clear Light Prana (Qi) have much longer life spans longer than those beings who have bodies composed of Jing, Qi or Shen.

They also have more capabilities as well. As you would expect, those who attain the *sambhogakaya* Reward body required for Perfect and Complete Enlightenment have bodies composed of Primordial Heavenly Prana (Original Heavenly Qi) and the longest life spans of all compared to beings having bodies composed of Later Heavenly Qi, Shen, Qi and Jing.

And so on it goes in terms of bodies, for while spiritual teachings usually stop at the stage of Perfect and Complete Enlightenment whose Enjoyment body is composed of Primordial Heavenly Prana, there are probably an infinite number of stages past this. After all, who can ever say with certainty that their body is composed of the most Primordial First Essence, the primordial absolute substratum that is responsible for all subsequent cosmic energy and matter? How would you know that you could not purify it even further and reach a yet higher stage of attainment? Nearly all spiritual teachings for the human realm are for certain reasons limited to discussing just these five levels.

As with Qi, Shen and the higher Pranas, the ultimate, absolute, fundamental or Primal Essence or energy substratum, whatever it is, must be within us but be so subtle in nature that no one can detect what it is. We only need some way to cultivate and refine that foundational essence out from its lower evolutes to enjoy a physical form composed of that purer essence. Then one can live a yet longer life made of that substance.

Many masters work furiously to generate a body at this level as soon as possible. Every body generated through cultivation must rise from within a body of the lower level substance, and the lowest level is the impure human body that can first give rise to the deva body of subtle Qi. Hence you must work very hard to purify your physical body to affect your inner Qi body of subtle energy. The way to do so is through devoted spiritual energy yoga practices such as Nyasa Yoga. It is through the road of spiritual practices that you can attain all five bodies that are commonly mentioned in most spiritual traditions. Are those five bodies really mentioned? Yes!

For instance, the sage **Sri Siddharameshwar Maharaj** (Vedanta) taught that we have the Physical, Subtle, Causal, Supra-Causal and Para-atman bodies. These correspond to bodies made of the five essences previously mentioned. You are encouraged to read his books.

Taoism talks about the five bodies being made of Jing, Qi, Shen, Later Heavenly Qi and Primordial Heavenly Qi. It states that the stages of the spiritual path are that “Jing transforms into Qi, Qi into Shen, Shen into Emptiness, and you have to abandon even Emptiness to return to the Tao.”

This means that when the Jing body transforms you can attain a Qi body, when the Qi body transforms (is purified) you can attain a Shen or Causal body out of it, when the Shen body purifies you can attain Emptiness (which corresponds to the Supra-Causal or Dharma body), and

you have to go past this stage to get the highest body whose corresponding mental continuum is “considered” the Tao, or original nature. The Supra-Causal or Emptiness attainment corresponds to the Clear Light body or Dharma body of Later Heavenly Qi (Prana) while the Tao/Immanence body that is (supposedly) one with the original nature is composed of Primordial Heavenly Qi (Prana), and is akin to the perfect *sambhogakaya* Enjoyment Body of Buddhism.

Taoism, as well as several other ancient spiritual traditions such as the **Greek and Medieval Mystery Schools**, also promotes the concept of five elements transforming into one another to denote the five bodies. Thus you have the earth (Physical body), water (Subtle body), fire (Causal or Mental body), wind (Supra-Causal body) and space (Primordial Heavenly Qi body) elements that transform into one another. In Taoism, with each new body attainment you become a different type of “Taoist Immortal,” which are stages of accomplishment that can be matched with the Buddhist Arhat stages of attainment.

In the *Diamond Sutra*, **Shakyamuni Buddha** clearly pointed to the five bodies by talking about the Human eye, Deva eye, Wisdom eye, Dharma eye and Buddha eye. These eyes belong to the same five bodies we have been discussing – the Human body (corresponding to the form skandha/aggregate), Deva body (Subtle body corresponding to the sensation skandha), Mental body (Causal body corresponding to the conception skandha), Dharma body (initial *nirvana* with remainder enlightenment body of Later Heavenly Prana), and Buddha body (the perfect *sambhogakaya* body composed of Primordial Heavenly Prana).

When Buddhism talks about your physical actions, verbal actions (speech), mental actions, willful resolutions, and then subtle knowledge or sublime wisdom it is also referring to the Physical body, Subtle body, Causal body, Supra-Causal body and perfected *sambhogakaya*. Naturally these are also the form skandha, sensation skandha, conception skandha, volition skandha, and consciousness skandha by other names.

The *alaya* consciousness of Buddhism, which is the immediate (but not final) source of matter and mind, corresponds to the stage of initial enlightenment that an Arhat achieves. This corresponds to the composite volition skandha that encompasses the predispositional forces (elements) of both mind and matter. You attain these stages of realization by cultivating the Supra-Causal body, but it is not yet Complete Enlightenment.

Christianity talks about the stages of the Body, Soul, Spirit, Kingdom of Heaven, and union with the Father or ultimate one. This sequence refers to five bodies composed of the same higher essences previously discussed. In this case you should note that Christianity calls the most primal essence (original nature) the “Father” while Hinduism calls It “Shiva” and Islam calls It “Allah.”

Vajrayana or Tantric Buddhism talks about the Physical body, Impure illusory body (subtle or deva body), Purified illusory body, Wisdom light (Clear light) or Dharma body and then Buddha body, which is the perfect *sambhogakaya* Enjoyment/Reward body made of very subtle fundamental wind. There are many different names used by Vajrayana Buddhism and Dzogchen to signify these attainment stages, so the terminology used here may be different than what you normally encounter. For instance, Buddhism also matches the five bodies and skandhas with the Buddhas Akshobya, Ratnasambhava, Amitabha, Amoghasiddhi and Vairocana.

Sadguru Sadafal Deoji Maharaj of the **Vihangam Yoga** tradition (a **Nath Siddha** tradition) also clearly states that we can cultivate higher bodies. Starting from our Gross body we can also attain a Subtle body, Causal body, Prime Causal body, and Superconsciousness body. In the Nath tradition the technical names are a *Sthula deha*, *Sukshma deha*, *Karana deha*, *Mahakaran deha*, and *Hansa deha*, which are the same five bodies that everyone else mentions.

Ramalinga, of the **Tamil Siddha and Nath Yoga** traditions, talks about the stages of cultivation achievement starting with the unripe Physical body and then proceeding to a purified Qi body, body of Vibrations, Wisdom Light body and then Body of Immanence. These five bodies are the *Stubla deha*, *Suddha deha*, *Mantra deha*, *Jnana deha* (*Divya deha* or body of light, *Kailaya deha*), and Body of Immanence. Even though the *Suddha deha* is just the subtle body of Qi we normally achieve by cultivating spiritual practices, because this body is higher than our physical nature he calls it a “perfected body.”

In **Druze** (which is a Unitarian religion that combines aspects from Islam, Judaism, Christianity, Gnosticism, Neoplatonism, Pythagoreanism, and Hinduism) we have the five limits, which represent the five spheres of existence. We then have the Physical body as well as the Universal Soul sphere representing the Subtle body, the Logos/Word sphere representing the Mental Plane or Causal body, the Cause/Precedent Sphere relating to the *alaya* consciousness of Buddhism (and thus the Supra-Causal body composed of Later Heavenly Prana), and the Immanence sphere representing the Primordial Heavenly Prana body necessary for Complete and Perfect Enlightenment.

In **Sikhism** you have the earthly plane of piety (*Dharma Khand*), which is the physical plane of worldly action. Next is the plane of knowledge (*Gyan Khand*) where you come to know of the existence of subtle forces and spiritual denizens and where you fit into the heavenly framework. Next is the plane of spiritual effort (*Saram Khand*), which is even more subtle and beautiful, and where your passions, vices and ego are purified. Next is the plane of grace (*Karam Khand*) which is the abode of many saints, and finally

the plane of Truth (*Sach Khand*) or eternal spiritual realm.

The **Sufi Meher Baba** talks about us having a Gross body, Subtle body, Mental body, Universal body and Shiva-Atma or Paramatma body. He also talks about the ranks of spiritual attainment being the *rabraw* (or wayfarer) that is the ordinary individual; *wali* (friend of God) or advanced yogi who is someone that attains the first or second dhyana; the *pir*, *sant* or perfect yogi who is someone that attains the third dhyana; and the Sadguru or Mahayogi who gains *Wasla* or divine union, which is the enlightenment of the fourth dhyana. In his terminology the Beyond-Beyond state of *Wara-ul-Wara* or *Ghaib-ul-Ghaib*, which is the state of Complete and Perfect Enlightenment, is the *Paramatm* state. These stages also match with the different body attainments.

The *Taittiriya Upanishad* and **Advaita Vedanta sage Shankara** spoke of the five sheaths covering our True Self being the *annamaya kosha* (foodstuff body), *pranayama kosha* (energy or Qi body made of Prana), *manomaya kosha* (mind-stuff sheath or Causal body), *vijnanamaya kosha* (wisdom sheath) and *anandamaya kosha* (bliss sheath). The five *koshas* also correspond to the five bodies of the spiritual path. If you cultivate the five body attainments you are also cultivating the five *koshas*. Many scholars mistake the *vijnanamaya kosha* (wisdom sheath) and *anandamaya kosha* (bliss sheath) as pre-enlightenment *koshas*, but this is incorrect. Most of the information about this is meant to mislead people on purpose. The *vijnanamaya kosha* corresponds to the enlightenment of the Arhat (a Supra-Causal body attainment) and *anandamaya kosha* refers to the Immanence body attainment of Perfect and Complete Enlightenment, namely a perfect *sambhogakaya*.

The great Indian sage **Govardhan** talks about there being five stages to the self-unfoldment of the Divine Shakti, or five stages of her self-manifestation. This, too, ends up corresponding to five bodies that can traverse or enjoy five different realms of being and all act independently.

Islam also has a Sufi philosophy of emanation or Divine Descent that mentions five realms of being. These correspond to the five bodies. According to this scheme the First, Original or Primordial level of existence is Allah, an incorporeal existence that is the original nature. This is *Alam-i-HaHoot*, the Realm of He-ness (Is-ness). It is the primordial Divine Essence prior to manifestation that exists as Aloneness (*Abdiyat*). According to Sufism, *Abdiyat* is primordially pure and incapable of being conceived; this essence exists and cannot be exemplified with anything. It is at the primordial level of non-Creation and somehow everything emanates from It despite its absolute purity or aloneness. Non-Moslems call this the True Self, True Reality, *Anama* (Nameless Origin), Buddha nature, Parabrahman, Nirguna Brahman (Brahman without attributes), Shiva, Father, original nature or fundamental essence.

From the First (Allah) or Real emanates the existence of a second. This

is an utterly incorporeal substance called *Alam-i-YaHoot* (the Realm of First Manifestation) that is an existence dependent on the first which *appears* different from its own essence (Allah) and yet is not a separate entity. It is *Wahid-ul-wujud*, or Unitary Existence.

In Hinduism this is Saguna Brahman while according to Goraksnath this is Nija-Sakti that is pure, eternal, and imperceptible. Consciousness schools relate this sphere of energy to an undisturbed state of consciousness simply in order to make correspondences that prompt you to cultivate emptiness. In Buddhism this first emanate or manifestation level corresponds to the substance of the *sambhogakaya*. Thus the Immanence body is composed of the refined energy/substance of this sphere/plane of existence.

In Islam *Alam-i-HaHoot* is said to have no attributes and yet the first manifestation of *Alam-i-YaHoot* is by definition an attribute. To explain it one must say that the attributes of God are neither other than God nor identical with Him. They are *appearances* and thus seem different or apart from Him but they cannot be other than Him since they are Him in essence.

Something somehow appears from the original essence without attributes, but no one knows how since the original essence cannot change. Since It cannot change It cannot give birth to anything. Furthermore, that which somehow appears cannot be different from the original essence and yet because there is an appearance (where previously there was none) it must be different in form or quality from that which originally has no attributes, and yet is the same thing.

To explain this, Hinduism says that Saguna Brahman appears from Nirguna Brahman. Even so, Shakti (the Primal Illusion or entire realm of manifestation) and Shiva (the original nature) are essentially the same. Shiva (the original Nature or Parabrahman) and Shakti permeate one another, are the same as one another, or non-different.

Buddhism also explains this saying that that all things related to *nirvana* and *samsara* are interdependent. Furthermore, it says that in the twelve links of interdependent origination karmic formations somehow appear from the original nature, and uses the word “ignorance” to explain that we don’t know how karmic formations first appear. How can something emanate or diffuse out of an ultimate energy state or substance that is perfectly pure, free of impurities and never alters? No one knows, just as no one knows in quantum mechanics how a wave can become a particle and a particle can become a wave. Nevertheless, in time the “karmic formations” somehow form, develop or evolve into the universe including sentient life capable of consciousness because of its structure. You cannot take the Old Testament Bible seriously and consider that this process simply took a matter of days.

Continuing, *Alam-i-YaHoot* is the first step of Divine descent or

emanation called *Noor-e-Mohammed* (the “Light of Mohammed”). Thus it is a “second” in the sense that the First, the *Alam-i-HaHoot*, was always pre-existing. You can also call it the “first emanation” instead of the “second existence.” As stated, to Hinduism this is Saguna Brahman (Brahman with attributes) as opposed to Nirguna Brahman (Brahman without attributes). This is also Shakti, the partner of Parabrahman that never changes.

The whole universe and its creation are latent or hidden in *Noor-e-Mohammed* (Shakti) since it is their foundational substrate in terms of energy with attributes, but at this level of emanation the material universe is not yet in manifestation since that level of condensation has not yet happened. In Taoism this equates to the Earlier (Primordial or Original) Heavenly Prana and in the vernacular of consciousness Buddhism equates this with the realm of neither thought nor no-thought since this transcends the Later Heavenly Prana realm of the Supra-Causal body along with the *alaya* consciousness and it states of movement and non-movement.

In terms of consciousness, the *alaya* consciousness can be broken into two realms – a moving aspect of manifestation (that you can experience by cultivating the samadhi of infinite consciousness) and its unmoving aspect (that you can experience by cultivating the samadhi of infinite nothingness), which you can also consider an unmanifest state. For Goraksnath these two are Para-Sakti (which is unmanifest, indivisible and inscrutable) and Aparasakti (which corresponds to emanation, expansion, and active consciousness) that are the evolutes of Nija-Shakti, which is itself the first evolute of *Anama* (the original nature).

Some Sufis, rather than properly referring to this as an energy plane, colloquially say that the second existence of *Alam-i-YaHoot* “is like awareness” and can know of its own existence, so the descriptive schemes of Ibn Sina and al-Farabi call it the “first intellect.” This is actually the level of energy that Buddhism refers to as the consciousness skandha and Goraksnath says it is akin to an undisturbed state of consciousness. This level of energy being transcends all lower realms of sentient beings having consciousness. When Hinduism says that the whole universe is consciousness this is really referring to the energy substrate at this level *that isn't actually consciousness* but just an energy substrate that needs a body and life to become “consciousness” or “intellect.”

The big problem with most spiritual schools is that they framed everything in terms of levels of consciousness in order to get people to cultivate meditation, namely empty and clear states of mind that don't cling to thoughts. However, the real truth is that you develop a spirit body composed out of a new plane of material more subtle than the last, and your mind/consciousness within that body is just as ordinary as it is in this plane although a little more empty, calm or pure because of all the work done in opening up cranial Qi channels during the generation process. For

instance, if the Qi channels open in your brain then the energy flow within it will be more efficient. Your mind will accordingly be calmer and more quiet. However, you never really find the fundamental essence of the mind/consciousness, but just develop a body composed of the substance that corresponds to finer and finer levels of energy, and you identify one of these ultimately fine energy levels as the fundamental mind simply to motivate people to cultivate.

The Sufi idea is that from the acts of conception of the “first intellect” plane - its own cognitive acts - the other existences arise. In the *Surangama Sutra*, Shakyamuni Buddha also said that all the worlds and existences arise/form due to thoughts that produce karma or consequences. They arise due to the interdependence of cause and effect that links thoughts and actions with results. In other words, other existents arise due to previous existents. Al-Suhrawardi, in his Sufi philosophy of Illuminationism, also explains this by saying that it is through complex interaction that the various realms gives rise to one another and mundane reality. Taoism calls this transformation.

From the second existence of *Alam-i-YaHoot* (which is the first emanation), another non-corporeal emanation comes, which is the third plane of existence. This is called *Alam-i-LaHoot*, the Realm of Absolute Unity. It is also called the soul of Mohammed as well as *Rooh-e-Qudsi* (the Divine Soul). The other religions call this the realm of universal consciousness, cosmic consciousness or the *alaya* consciousness. It is a world of Unity – a purely incorporeal, purely spiritual, purely non-material realm that is transcendent to denser matter. Thus it corresponds to the Clear Light stage of Later Heavenly Prana, which is the Supra-Causal realm that eventually gives birth to all of denser created matter.

This is a composite sphere and in Buddhism this is also called the volition skandha that encompasses the roots of both matter and mind. Few in Buddhism know that the volition skandha, which represents components of both mind and material forces, is at the same level as the *alaya* consciousness that is the root of matter and mind. Properly speaking, despite the mistake in many texts, the consciousness skandha is actually one step higher than the individual’s volition skandha and the “cosmic unity” level of the *alaya* consciousness.

In Islam the *alaya* consciousness attainment is the stage of *wahdīyat* or conscious Oneness (Oneness in Manyness). At this level of unity, an individual can become conscious of Oneness-in-many. Anyone who reaches the initial *nirvanic* stage of enlightenment calls this realm Oneness or Unity since you can know all minds. The substance of your body attainment is a refined stage of energy that transcends all the lower realms, thus permeating everything, and this fact leads to special abilities in terms of knowing about the happenings of lower realms. In short, everything corresponds across

traditions once again. Up to this sphere of emanation, the stages of *HaHoot*, *YaHoot* and *LaHoot* are all above material creation.

The fourth level of emanation is then *Alam-i-Jabrut* (the Realm of Power), which is a bridge to the lower realms and thus the Causal sphere. This is equivalent to the conception skandha in Buddhism. In Islam this is also *Mumtan-ul-wujud* or the Mental sphere.

The fifth level of emanation is the *Alam-e-Malakut* (Realm of Intelligence) that corresponds to the Subtle plane and is responsible for the souls of animals and plants. This Islam also calls this *Mumkin-ul-wujud*, the world of angels and spirits. Obviously this is the realm you enter upon death, or attaining the subtle deva body, which corresponds to the sensation skandha of Buddhism. The emotions of lust, greed, etc. are felt within the subtle body, as are animal passions.

The *Alam-i-Nasut* (Realm of Physical Bodies) corresponds to the realm of matter and material bodies. This is also *Wajib-ul-wujud* (Necessary Existence), which is everything relating to gross corporeal existence. Thus you can see that even in Islam we have the five bodies, realms or spheres just like in other religions.

The Vedanta sage **Sri Nisargadatta** also said, “The person merges into the witness, the witness into awareness, awareness into pure being which becomes the real Self.” This too corresponds to these five stages of spiritual advancement – person (Physical body), witness (Subtle body), awareness (Mental, Mantra or Causal body), Pure Being (Dharma body, Clear Light body or Later Heavenly Prana body), and real Self (Primordial Heavenly Prana body). In Vedanta, Parabrahman is the real Self or original nature.

Explaining the transformations of consciousness at the advanced stages of achievement, Nisargadatta also said, “When the ‘I am myself’ goes, the ‘I am all’ comes. When the ‘I am all’ goes, ‘I am’ comes. When even ‘I am’ goes, reality alone is.” Within this sequence, the “I am all’ stage (which is sometimes called cosmic or universal consciousness) corresponds to initial enlightenment, which is the unity stage of the *alaya* consciousness. It corresponds to *nirvana* with remainder (initial enlightenment), the achievement of the Later Heaven body (the Clear Light body or Dharma body) whose substance transcends the entire physical plane.

People who first attain enlightenment commonly describe it by saying that they are everything (“I am all”) because their body substance is at a higher plane of existence (energy) that now transcends all of lower material creation yet permeates it all. Because the thoughts and consciousness of sentient beings in lower realms is due to energies they now transcend, in terms of consciousness the adept can now readily know all these thoughts through special means. Thus they attain “union with God,” “cosmic consciousness,” “universal consciousness,” “unity consciousness,” “super consciousness,” or the *alaya* consciousness. This is why Mahavira, the

founder of Jainism, said that the Self attaining omniscience had access to infinite knowledge, perfect perception, infinite bliss and infinite energy.

In Buddhist terminology, when you achieve the samadhi of infinite nothingness, this is when you surpass the stage of “I am all” that corresponds to the samadhi of infinite consciousness. All thoughts drop away in the samadhi of infinite nothingness. This samadhi, which is absent of thought, enables you to develop the Original Heaven Prana body whose concomitant realm of unmanifest consciousness (supposedly) corresponds to the realization of True Reality.

This nomenclature is all just skillful means since there are probably higher stages still. Therefore the Primordial Heavenly Qi attainment is not yet the proper correspondent to the foundational, ultimate state of True Reality, but every spiritual tradition speaks only about these initial five stages of attainment.

Buddhism also talks about the ten Bodhisattva bhumis, which are also stages of accomplishment on the cultivation trail. Each set of two bhumis refers to a body-mind attainment level, but the bhumis normally only run to ten stages of the cultivation path. Thus we only have five bodies. However, if we go to a set of thirteen bhumis, as is also possible within Buddhism, we introduce an extra body-mind attainment past the typical tenth bhumi normally taken as complete enlightenment. In some Vajrayana traditions even more bhumis are discussed that correspond to yet higher attainments.

You don't need to talk about anything higher than the first five bodies because it is hard enough to get even this far. Furthermore, most spiritual schools talk about consciousness rather than body attainments although there is a one-to-one correspondence of body composition (plane of energy) and the attendant/concomitant clarity of consciousness for a body of that composition. For instance, without a body there is no such thing as consciousness or knowing so with every stage of attainment there must still be a body in order for there still to be a life or existent being. However, the body must be of a sufficient purity to be able to support a mental continuum of that level of dhyana. Only a new type of body can do this for each of the dhyana attainments.

The point that “your real Self is not a body” simply refers to the fact that everything, absolutely everything originates from a fundamental nature/essence/energy that through some type of development, effusion, production or manifestation process (rather than a Big Bang) eventually produces the universe and all its contents through a long period of evolutionary cause and effect interactions. Therefore that original essence or Energy is the real True Self. That is the fundamental nature of your self, so that is the fundamental self-nature.

The original essence or fundamental nature is your True Self so you are It, you are Brahman. You are just a biochemical machine that somehow

evolved from this long process of emanation and evolutionary transformation and subsequently developed the ability to spin thoughts (consciousness) to “know,” but what you really are is that original primordial energy nature out of which you ultimately evolved. That is your true Self. Life, as an independent sentient being, is something that apparently exists but not permanently, and it is not independent but rather interdependent with everything else. It is part of a whole and thus dependent on everything else for its own existence.

There is no such thing as a bodiless existence state, namely a state where you still exist by having consciousness but without a body. Buddhist teaching on this ability are just fictitious skillful means meant to help you cultivate a higher degree of emptiness and mental attachment so that you can cultivate a yet higher body vessel on the spiritual path. When Buddhist or Hindu teachers talk about having an infinite body in discussing the Formless Realms of existence, this is also a fib to help you make progress in letting go and cultivating an “empty mind” that is detached from the thoughts you have. As to having an infinite body, which is borderless, this is impossible.

The point to take home is that you can talk about the spiritual path in terms of consciousness stages/realms or body attainments. You can also talk about it in terms of skandhas and powers (due to different body/realm attainments). Normally most spiritual schools only talk about consciousness attainments, which are usually denoted as degrees of “mental emptiness” or pristine clarity. Sri Aurobindo talked about the higher body attainments with consciousness names such as Higher Mind, Illumined Mind, Intuitive Mind and Overmind. Discussing spiritual progress in terms of higher mental realms/attainments has been the historical norm because it is the easiest and best way to encourage people to practice meditation, namely by phrasing everything in terms of consciousness states that have correlates with an “empty mind.” However, those attainments are always matched with body attainments because they can only be achieved by higher stage bodies even though this remains unspoken.

You simply cannot attain a higher stage of dhyana unless you cultivate a spiritual body of higher refinement (higher energy). Most schools don't tell this practitioners because they don't want to discourage them, so they hint at this by saying that you need purification/transformation of your Qi and channels to attain dhyana.

The quotes from sages like Sri Nisargadatta talk about the consciousness aspect of cultivation achievements whereas the body enjoyment attainments - stages of *sambhogakaya* achievement - are rarely discussed except in Buddhist texts or in the works of Meher Baba or Ramalinga Swamikal. After you finally attain the subtle Qi or deva body, you will be introduced to such teachings for how to cultivate the higher

bodies necessary for the spiritual path. Essentially those teachings are to repeat the cultivation yoga you did to attain the subtle body in the first place, which include the exercises within this book.

THE FOUR BODIES PERSPECTIVE OF INCOMPLETE NIRVANA WITH REMAINDER

Some spiritual schools only talk about the first four bodies and leave out any references to the fifth body composed of the very subtle fundamental energy (“wind”) called Primordial Heavenly Prana. As stated, this is the stage of the perfect *sambhogakaya* whose mental continuum corresponds to Complete and Perfect Enlightenment. It is hard enough to get to the *nirvana* stage of enlightenment, which would be the Dharma body, Supra-Causal body or fourth body of Later Heavenly Prana (whose mental continuum is the universal *alaya* consciousness). Therefore they only mention the three bodies leading up to this clear light and wisdom achievement rather than the next step of attaining the Perfect and Complete Enlightenment stage of Buddhahood, or No More Learning. After all, attaining the *alaya* consciousness, or initial *nirvana* enlightenment, is equivalent to the stage of unity or “union with God” mentioned in many religions.

To go beyond this and reach Perfect and Complete Enlightenment you must first be able to attain proficiency in a state entirely absent of thoughts, which is called the “samadhi of nothingness” in Buddhism. Other spiritual schools describe this thoughtless nothingness state as an absolute vacuum state of consciousness. This is because without thoughts, including the I-thought, the entire world and all experience disappears during this temporary experience. Hence there is no experience at all, a nothingness or vacuum of experience where the world disappears.

Although there is no thought, this corresponds to Sri Nisargadatta’s stage of Pure Being as well as Sadguru Sadafal Deoji Maharaj’s intermediate state of “being conscious” (*Kaivalya*) prior to superconsciousness (*Hansa deha*), which means Complete and Perfect Enlightenment. Only by achieving the samadhi of infinite nothingness can the higher essence of Primordial Heavenly Prana separate out from the Later Heavenly Prana body to form the purified *sambhogakaya* Enjoyment Body.

As stated, naturally there are probably higher stages (essences) still but no cultivation teachings, except for some rare Vajrayana Tantras, talks about the higher stages past what we provisionally call Perfect and Complete Enlightenment. Only the higher bodhisattva bhumis cataloged by Vajrayana Buddhism approach this topic. Upon reaching the tenth bhumi you attain the first *real* spiritual empowerment, and then yet higher cultivation teachings are given for the beings at that level so that they can

cultivate further.

If we talk about the Taoist nomenclature of Jing, Qi, Shen and Later Heavenly Prana (very subtle fundamental wind/energy) in terms of planes or spheres of existence, we can match this with the **four dhyana heavens** catalogued by Buddhism. The dhyana accomplishments correspond to stages an aspirant goes through in rising from the mundane sphere to the subtle sphere, from the subtle sphere to the mental sphere, and from the mental sphere to the state of freedom.

Each dhyana corresponds to a different stage of **arhatship**, or progress stage towards “*nirvana* with remainder” enlightenment. Only the stage of Complete and Perfect Enlightenment is *nirvana* without remainder, *nirvana* without any remaining dependency. Each of the four dhyana equates with a different type of body composition (Qi, Shen, Clear Light) although the first and second dhyana attainments both correspond to a body of (impure and purer) Qi.

According to Buddhist teachings, the first dhyana (subtle body or deva body attainees) practitioners, called Srotapanna or Stream-enterer Arhats, obtain access to the higher deva realms called the Brahma heavens. The second dhyana practitioners, called Sakradagami Arhats (Once-returners), have a higher level subtle body attainment and can reach the Radiance heavens. The third dhyana (Causal body or Mental body) attainees are called Anagami Arhats (Non-returners) and can reach the third dhyana Glory heavens. One shouldn't pay too much attention to descriptions of these heavens, but simply take them as higher energy realms or planes of existence.

The fourth dhyana attainees are enlightened and therefore called full Arhats. They possess a Clear Light or Dharma body composed of Later Heavenly Qi and have access to even higher heavenly realms called Pure Abodes that the lower Arhats cannot reach. The full Arhats achieve “*nirvana* with remainder” upon enlightenment and do not shed the remainder until they achieve the fifth body. When they achieve it then the attainment is called “*nirvana* without remainder,” No More Learning, or Perfect and Complete Enlightenment. At that stage they are then called Great Golden Arhats.

For **Confucianism**, Mencius explained these stages saying that there are the Faith, Beauty, Grandness, Sage and then Divineness stages of spiritual attainment. These correspond to the first, second, third and fourth dhyana attainments along with Perfect and Complete Enlightenment. Once again, even Confucianism recognizes the five stages of spiritual achievement.

In **Judaism** we also have the *Asiyah* (World of Action), *Yetzirah* (World of Formation), *Beriah* (World of Creation), and *Atilut* (World of Emanation) that also correspond to the realms of Jing, Qi, Shen and Later Heavenly Qi.

We also have the Matter, Soul, Nous (the intelligible), and the One stages of **Platonism** that correspond to the Human body (Jing), Subtle body (Qi), Causal body (Shen) and Supra-Causal (Later Heavenly Qi) bodies as well.

The **Sufi Al-Suhrawardi** (The Master of Illumination) also taught an emanationist cosmology using the analogy of a “Philosophy of Illumination.” According to this schema, all creation is a successive outflow from the Supreme Light of Lights (*Nur al-Anwar*), and it unfolds in a descending order of ever-diminishing intensity. This basically means that various spheres of being or existence somehow emanate from an original nature, and each is different from the next in terms of coarseness/refinement or density although all the energy realms interpenetrate.

In this sequence there are Matter, the Soul, Intellect and a fourth realm named the *‘alam al-khayal* that is continuous with the whole of reality. Thus we have the Human Body, Subtle body (Soul), Causal or Mental body (Shen), and Supra-Causal (or Dharma) body that is a Clear Light (Later Heavenly Qi) body matching with the *alaya* consciousness of cosmic unity.

As previously pointed out, these four essences mentioned across all the various spiritual traditions actually refer to the first, second, third and fourth dhyana attainments of Buddhism. They are followed by the “*nirvana* without remainder” attainment that corresponds to Perfect and Complete Enlightenment - the stage of No More Learning that is Perfect Buddhahood.

In Buddhism the four milestone achievements of the four dhyana, since each corresponds to a different body attainment that then ignores the previously attained lower bodies, are explained as freeing oneself from the form, sensation, conception and volition skandhas. When you break free of the form skandha or physical body it is because you attain a deva body of subtle Qi, which equates to the realm of the sensation skandha. When you break free of the sensation skandha it is because you attain a Causal or Mental body of a higher type of energy churned out of the subtle body, which then equates to the realm of the conception skandha and third dhyana. When you attain a Dharma or Supra-Causal body out of the Mental/Causal body then you have broken free of the conception skandha and have reached the realm of the volition skandha (and the enlightenment of the fourth dhyana), and so on it goes. Zen texts are misleading on these matters because anyone who attains the Supra-Causal body naturally knows they are enlightened, as does their master. You don’t have to be tested on knowing that you have generated this extra body.

The volition skandha is matched with Later Heavenly Qi (initial *nirvana* enlightenment) and the consciousness skandha with Primordial Heavenly Qi, which is the body substance of a Perfect Buddha. Primordial Heavenly

Qi transcends the substance, energy level or manifestation level of the *alaya* consciousness; the *alaya* consciousness is not the primordial consciousness skandha. The volition skandha, which encompasses the deep impulses of consciousness *and* the forces of matter, actually corresponds to the *alaya* consciousness.

For those of us just wishing to go to Heaven without these higher aspirations, please remember that these bodies, substances or essences are the spiritual path that people in Heaven are cultivating. Once there, heavenly denizens do not want to come back down as humans again through reincarnation and so everyone is cultivating spiritual practices to achieve higher spiritual bodies. This results in higher realms of enjoyment or rebirth, longer lives and greater abilities. Buddhism clearly tells us that a significantly higher spiritual body cuts off rebirth in the lower realms forever. Only after achieving enlightenment, which corresponds to a body composed of Later Heavenly Qi (which transcends all the lower realms composed of Jing, Qi and Shen) can you escape the lower realms forever.

The question then arises, what are devas doing as spiritual practice? Many things, including helping humans in their ordinary affairs by influencing their thoughts and activities, but personally they are trying to generate merit and cultivate their Qi to a higher stage of purity so that they can attain the next higher body. In terms of Buddhist explanations, the Desire Realm devas want to reach higher heavenly attainments, which requires a yet higher stage of Qi purification. Devas can use their body made of Qi (prana) to cultivate both the first and second dhyana, but for the third dhyana they need to generate a new body vessel (a Causal body) composed of Shen.

Every time you refine your Qi sufficiently – opening up the channels within a higher body and refining its energy so that a yet higher body can emerge – you can eventually generate a body of yet higher, purer substances that can leave it. This is why you cultivate your prana, *nadis* and chakras on the path. Then you will live, so-to-speak, within that body as your main life vehicle while retaining your lower shells.

No one at the lower levels can see these higher bodies so people are normally unaware of your attainments. They might be able to sense that something is different about you, but have no way to explain it or put their fingers on it. The thing they will most often say is that you don't seem to be attached to anything (of this world because you identify with a higher world where everything is better) and at times you don't seem to totally be here. That's because you reside in a higher body that is doing something elsewhere but still using the human body as an appendage.

As previously explained, the flip side of body cultivation - which refers to consciousness rather than essences - is to say that people are trying to mentally cultivate a higher stage of mental purity or "emptiness." Most all

schools talk about pristine consciousness, pristine awareness, emptiness, no-thought and empty mind but this is the flip side to the body attainments. They don't emphasize the body attainments because they don't want people to get attached to form, but spiritual cultivation is a mind-body affair. Both mind *and body* must be cultivated on the spiritual path; an over-emphasis on mind will cause individuals to neglect inner energy cultivation for years, which is to their disadvantage while an over-emphasis on life-force (Qi or prana) cultivation will not enable anyone to cultivate higher bodies due to the natural clinging involved with nei-gong efforts.

Physical bodies on every plane of existence are composed of essences/substances, and the concomitant (naturally accompanying) consciousness for a body has the same energy nature as that body's substances for that plane. A consciousness or mind needs a physical body vessel to support its existence. If you attain a higher level body vessel then its concomitant purity of consciousness (degree of pristine awareness) will correspond to the greater purity and refinement of that biophysical mechanism. At the level of the perfected *sambhogakaya*, the concomitant empty or unmanifest state of consciousness is considered to be the original nature but this is just a way of speaking rather than the truth.

To achieve a more pristine consciousness you therefore need a body composed of purer essences whose energy channels (especially those within the brain) have far less entanglements, knots or blockages since obstructions produce errant energy flows that give rise to random thoughts rather than empty clarity. In short, *you need to cultivate both mind and body on the spiritual trail* if you want to attain the higher heavenly realms of being, which can be talked about in terms of "Pure Abodes" or the first, second, third and fourth dhyana.

In spiritual cultivation we can say you are trying to cultivate a more subtle or purer state of consciousness that is largely free of random, wandering, meandering thoughts. With each stage your mind/consciousness becomes more clear, calm and quiet until it seems perfectly empty, crystal clear and pristinely aware. Only a purer body of cleansed energy channels can allow this to come about. Therefore instead of saying you are trying to cultivate a higher consciousness we can also say that you are trying to cultivate a purer body whose energy and channels support a higher level of purity of consciousness.

To go up the spiritual ladder, devas themselves (which includes our ancestors who have passed away and not yet reincarnated) need to cultivate higher stages of spiritual attainment. These correspond to more subtle spiritual bodies made of more refined essences. This is the true spiritual path – you can talk about it in terms of bodies (essences or substances or spheres of manifestation or planes of being) or consciousness. This is one of the purposes of religious spiritual practice but few people seem to

understand this.

These facts explain why the Vajrayana school of Buddhism calls the deva body (subtle body) an *impure* illusory body, namely a body of impure Qi. Once the Qi (prana) of this impure deva body becomes purified a deva can then, at will, generate a higher *purified* illusory body out of this lower shell, namely a Causal or Mantra body, just as our subtle body can leave the shell of our physical nature. In other words, the stage of impure Qi is followed by a stage of purer energy, called Shen. A body composed of Shen can eventually generate a Supra-Causal body composed of Clear Light energy or Later Heavenly Qi from within it, and so on it goes ...

According to Vajrayana teachings only the purity of a Shen body can achieve the next stage of enlightenment since it is the precursor stage. In some schools they call the Arhat's enlightenment body the pure illusory body and in other schools the Clear Light body.

To make things clear and avoid the confusion that normally accompanies Vajrayana teachings of Esoteric Buddhism and Dzogchen, we will call the pure illusory body the stage before achieving a Clear Light body of Later Heavenly Qi, which Vedanta calls the Supra-Causal body and Buddhism calls the Dharma body. These various terms from many different traditions make the common teachings much easier to understand. The names of the bodies and their substances do not matter. What matters is that you understand that there is a progression of higher bodies you must cultivate, and with each new body the stage of consciousness is somehow *better*. It is somehow more pure, clean, empty, pristine or pure.

Every time you achieve a new body you break away from, depart from, "extinguish," ignore, or leave behind the old body, which Buddhism calls an aggregate or skandha or sheath. The previous body still exists as long as you live, but you then live centered in the higher body and identify with it while retaining the existence of each lower body (as an appendage) until its karma is exhausted. The body attainment you want to shoot for at a minimum is the one that corresponds to enlightenment, which is composed of a very subtle fundamental wind, energy, Qi or Prana of material creation we call Later Heavenly Qi. Your mental continuum at that point is one of an Arhat.

The higher your spiritual body, the higher the plane of existence or spiritual realms you can reach, which are called "Pure Lands" in Buddhism and "Heavens" in other religions. Advanced spiritual bodies can freely travel the spiritual realms, and have various powers of mastery over the energies of the lower realms they transcend. This is why various masters, gurus, prophets, saints or sages – depending upon how many bodies they have achieved - are known to have miraculous powers that work on various levels. As humans we can manipulate matter, but a deva can manipulate Qi (and matter with training), a higher deva can manipulate a more purified level of energy that we call Shen, and so on. Buddhas can also manipulate

the minds of sentient beings, but “manipulate” means affecting them in a positive fashion.

Because they look normal to us but are actually living centered in the shells of their highest spiritual bodies (while their lower body shells remain alive), masters on earth can perform spiritual feats at subtle energy levels. Devas, spirits or angels are just one step higher than us and so they share in some of these miraculous capabilities that involve Qi or Shen, and thus they can affect our thoughts.

Someone who has attained an independent subtle body of Qi then lives in the subtle plane that is all around us and receives sense impressions through his subtle senses. The person is then subtle-conscious, and while registering the sensations of the physical world can detach from them. This is why masters at times seem uninterested in what is around them or non-present when you try to hold a conversation. They often seem empty because their higher body is not there. They can be talking to you and using their higher body to visit your home to see what is on your desk, or enter your brain to see your memories, and in this way they can know things that they normally could never know.

A human master who attains a body of Shen, which is the next higher level of more purified Qi, is conscious of their mental Causal body composed of that substance. Thus they pay less attention to their Qi body and human body while still using them too. Outwardly such a master appears as an ordinary gross-conscious human having all the same desires, thoughts and emotions as we do but they are actually living vividly in a higher sphere, plane or realm called the Causal or Mental plane, although tethered to their lower bodies that they can use for different tasks.

Basically, the higher your stage of spiritual achievement, the more refined, subtle or purified the substance of the body you live in. You basically discard your lower aggregates – though beings at those levels don’t know it – and live in a higher body and higher plane while keeping alive the lower shells and using them as they see fit. This can be understood through the *Surangama Sutra* of Buddhism (see *Meditation Case Studies*) and many of Meher Baba’s publications. Sri Siddharameshwar Maharaj (see *The Master Key to Self-Realization*) also did a great job in discussing the various bodies of the spiritual path.

As discussed, there are well-defined stages of spiritual attainment commonly recognized by all the major religions because *these are the common, shared attainment stages of the spiritual path*. These stages, bodies and realms are real, they definitively mark different levels of attainment as to the higher and lower, they provide access to different levels of being, and they are common, non-denominational attainments. Each higher stage of this attainment sequence represents a more refined stage of mind and body purification than the lower stages.

All the genuine spiritual traditions match regarding these teachings because anyone who cultivates any genuine state of attainment - starting with the subtle body that gains you access to the heavens - discovers that these substances and realms do indeed exist. That's why the saints and sages of different religions end up speaking of the same things but simply call them by different names.

If we talk about these planes in terms of evolutionary emanations from an original nature, we have the universal religious idea that everything originates from one original essence. No one can say how the purest original essence - which is absent of any type of attribute, form, substance, impulse or movement and exists solely in Itself as Itself - somehow gave birth to the first evolute or effusion, so Buddhism says we just don't know how things have originated from It. Shakyamuni Buddha calls our lack of understanding "Ignorance" since it is impossible for something to be born from something that doesn't change, so we can only speculate about the process of generation that has formed the cosmic realms.

Jainism also says that you cannot create something out of nothing, arguing that all constituents in the universe must therefore have always existed in primordial form (which must be the True Self, true self-nature, original nature or fundamental essence) and they must certainly follow natural laws in how they transform and evolve into subsequently denser evolutes.

Taoism calls this "transformation," Buddhism calls it "cause and effect," while Confucianism calls this "change" and Islam calls this "complex interaction" but no one can talk definitively about the first movement or Primal Cause for all these subsequent transformations. Perhaps in other far older realms the inhabitants have extensively investigated this and come up with the proper science and physics.

"Ignorance" means we don't know something, so that is the proper way to describe how the manifest universe came about out of something so pure that it doesn't change its nature and therefore never alters. With the way things are, all we can therefore do is cultivate to as high as possible in the universe and sequentially find different spheres or planes of existence that are higher and more subtle stages of energy. In each realm we will be given teachings for how to get to the next level and leave the lower spheres forever.

Along the way we must also choose our career in the unending cosmos, and these are represented by the Bodhisattva vows of the Mahayana path in Buddhism. Many beings who have made it to the high stages have vowed not to attain complete extinction of the ego and all cessation of suffering until all beings in the universe are equally liberated by reaching enlightenment. This basically means they will keep enlightening beings forever since the universe lasts forever. That is the career they have chosen,

and it is a path that involves vows of compassion.

In other words, the road of spiritual practice does not just involve cultivating consciousness but bodies composed of very purified substances that are absent of the coarser elements found in lower level bodies. Those bodies, due to less obstructions and impurities in their channels, which affect disturbances in consciousness, have more purified degrees of consciousness. Furthermore, the higher your stage of spiritual attainment, the better your Reward or Enjoyment body, and the more spiritual powers you can have and realms you can visit. This is another meaning of the various stages of the spiritual path.

STAGES OF CULTIVATION

For us, the trick is not to get worried about all these higher bodies that you can attain through the process of spiritual cultivation. You just start cultivating, do your best, and see what happens as explained in my *Meditation Case Studies*. This short explanation only provides the general schema or roadmap of the cultivation trail.

The trick is to just get started at this entire process using the best or most efficient cultivation practices other than just attending religious services. Just get started and see how far you can get because the cumulative results are carried over to your Qi body upon death, and one can continue cultivating in Heaven from there.

If you are lucky to attain the subtle (deva) body of Qi while alive, Buddhism calls this “entering the stream” or “crossing to the other shore,” which is the first stage of an enlightened Arhat called a Srotapanna (stream-entrant or stream-winner). If your spiritual practices are insufficient so that you don’t achieve the stage of entering the stream while alive, when you die your purified inner Qi body will still assure you a place in Heaven and you can continue to cultivate and succeed from there. This whole pathway, however, can be finished entirely while as a human, but the first step always begins with cultivating your mind, merit and your Qi and Qi channels.

To summarize, if you sufficiently cultivate your Qi and energy channels then you will achieve the inner subtle body attainment – an independent body of Qi that can enter and leave your physical body at will. If you don’t achieve this body due to your practices, you will at least transform the Qi and channels (*nadis* and chakras) of your physical nature enough that you can live longer with a healthier constitution, have a much clearer mind, will be able to change your fortune due to a clearer mind and calmer emotions that enable better judgment, and will go to Heaven upon death. Lower realms, due to a predominance of Yin Qi rather than the Yang Qi of spiritual practices, correspond to lower levels of being such as ghosts and hells that are the reward of people who do evil (“Yin”) deeds in life.

In other words, success at the Yoga of spiritual practice means at the minimum going to Heaven; greater success at spiritual practice means arising in a deva body whereas *really succeeding* means achieving the Later Heavenly Qi body and *nirvanic* enlightenment. If you don't achieve the milestone of "entering the stream" but still cultivate, your reward will be to live longer and healthier, to be reborn in Heaven, and to cultivate calmer emotions and a clearer mind that can help you change your fortune for the better.

When we look at a human body we can say it has an equal balance of Yin and Yang energies, but they are not clearly differentiated such that you can always feel these two forms of Qi unless you cultivate. This is because Qi channels are normally obstructed and entangled and your internal energy flows are therefore unbalanced and uneven. For the subtle body to emerge, however, the Qi first must become purified and clearly differentiated into Yin and Yang natures. Sometimes this is described by saying that you cultivate pure Yang Qi, which will enable the subtle body to emerge, but the truth is that you have to cultivate both Yin and Yang Qi. You cannot cultivate just Yang Qi alone just as you cannot just cultivate ascending Qi in the body, for it must also descend. "Cultivating Yang Qi" just means cultivating the next higher stage of purity than the physical body, namely the Qi in general that forms the subtle body. For the higher Causal body the Qi/prana/energy must be purified even more.

The famous master Ramalinga Swamigal (Vallalar) says that the subtle body is the "house of kundalini" (another name for Yang Qi) because you attain it when the physical body is "burned out through the fire of Yoga." He also explained, as everyone else does, that you achieve the subtle body when the aspirant's body of impure elements has been transformed into purer elements. Once again, this is just another synonym for prana/Qi cultivation.

Taoism calls any human who attains this stage an "Earth Immortal," which is equivalent to the first dhyana attainment of Buddhism. As stated, this *yin-shen*, subtle body, deva body, astral body, or impure illusory body attainment is also equivalent to purifying the sensation skandha of Buddhism since your emotions and feelings are felt within your inner Qi vehicle. In some schools this is described as the "plane of souls for animals" since we feel all our emotions in the subtle body.

The next higher spiritual attainment in Taoism is the "Spirit Immortal." This is the Shen stage of Taoism, purified illusory body of Vajrayana, Mantra *deba* of the Tamil Siddhas, or Causal body of Hinduism. It is achieved through purifying that Qi subtle body even more until a new body is generated from within it that is free of all the lower Qi elements that still pollute its nature. Devas, for instance, are also cultivating to rid their own Qi bodies of gross impurities to attain this body.

This Shen body, Causal body, Mantra body, Mental body or purified illusory body - which is more refined, transfigured and transphysical than the lower Qi body of devas or our own physical body of matter - has many more supernatural capabilities than these lower bodies. A master at this level, which is roughly equal to the third dhyana attainment of Buddhism, can raise the dead to life and create new forms in new worlds.

The next higher stage of attainment is the “Celestial Immortal” stage of Taoism that corresponds to the fourth dhyana of Buddhism. This is the Arhat level of achievement that equates with initial *nirvana* enlightenment. The mind at this attainment level is often compared to the transparent, substanceless, clear nature of light, which is why it is termed the “clear light” stage of attainment.

Someone who finally generates the Clear Light or Later Heavenly Qi body that corresponds to this level can freely travel all the celestial realms, and because it is superior to all the subsequent denser (less pure) realms created as evolute consequences of this energy level, it has access to all the minds of humans and lower beings since their bodies and minds are composed of lower essences. Remember, there are higher bodies still!

Buddhism doesn't like to talk about bodies in its explanations but instead uses consciousness. Therefore it says that this is not Perfect and Complete Enlightenment but will explain using reasons like “because at this stage the Arhat will still have residual impressions of a separate self and thus retains remainders.” Such teachings follow the pattern of the *Lotus Sutra*, which teaches masters to use skillful means to entice people out of a burning house, and once out rewards them with great gifts and the truth.

Because consciousness explanations are a better vehicle for encouraging people, they usually take preference over body/form teachings in the world's religions. After all, with body teachings you know perfectly well if you succeed at cultivating a deva body or not, but with consciousness teachings about emptiness you don't really know where you stand in terms of spiritual progress. Hence you keep working hard even though there is no chance of attainment. With consciousness/empty mind teachings you will always be cultivating harder to develop an “empty mind.”

Why all this repetition of the same explanations over and over again? These stages must be repeated because too much ignorance and confusion exists in the world's spiritual schools since most traditions do not emphasize these attainments. Zen books are particularly misleading in regard to body attainments and the necessity of cultivating your Qi and channels. Taoist texts use such murky, metaphoric, circuitous and subtle words that allude to teachings rather than overtly explain them. Even though Taoism emphasizes body cultivation, no one can decipher their meaning. Some schools make the explanations more complex than riddles and some try to intentionally conceal the true teachings on these matters.

Only after hearing these matters many times will you see that the same teachings are found across countless traditions, which should give you confidence and faith in the path, and this emphasis will clear up the spiritual path in its entirety.

In comparing a Qi body to the ordinary human body you already know that the subtle body is more purified or refined (less dense) than a physical body and will last longer, which is why devas live longer than humans. A master who cultivates a subtle deva body will also live longer in Heaven than humans who die and “go to Heaven” because a master’s Qi has undergone a higher stage of purification refinement due to his spiritual efforts of cultivation. Therefore, if you want to live longer in Heaven as a deva, now is the time to get started at cultivating spiritual practices *while living* since that will transform and purify your energies. You can use any path you want to do so – Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Sufism, Shinto, Taoism, Yoga and so on – but you absolutely must cultivate some type of spiritual practice. People have succeeded from nearly every spiritual tradition when they used the correct cultivation methods. The more successful you are at your spiritual efforts, the better will be your Qi and the higher will be your stage of spiritual attainments.

Remember that becoming able to eject your inner Qi body from its physical casing at will (and not due to some weakened physical state or an accident that causes a near death experience) is not the ultimate spiritual attainment, nor is that body your ultimate soul vehicle, but just one of the initial milestones on the spiritual path. It is only a tiny step towards enlightenment. Nevertheless this is called the beginning of the *sambhogakaya* attainment in Buddhism, or ultimate Reward Body you earn from cultivation efforts.

Nyasa Yoga gives you a path for cultivating a subtle Qi body or body of prana, which corresponds to the first dhyana attainment of Buddhism, by cultivating the Qi and channels (*nadis* and chakras) of your present physical body in special ways that concentrate on individual pieces. Next you must link everything together as one whole and try to feel the Qi of your entire body as a single unit. Whenever you concentrate on purifying the Qi and channels in a certain region of the body, that is a derivative form of basic Nyasa practice. For instance, one can consider the famous white skeleton visualization method of Buddhism a Nyasa practice (but without a mantra) since it starts with visualizing pieces of the body and ends in affecting your entire inner body of Qi as one whole.

The way to cultivate your Qi sufficiently enough to produce a subtle body is to start with the normal virtuous ways of most religions such as devotion, performing kind deeds, and practicing ethics and generosity. These practices open up your Qi channels naturally and gently. An extensive amount of Yoga stretching and bodywork (or martial arts) will

also open up your Qi channels especially if used along with visualization and pranayama. You can attain a deva/deity body through this road if you also have a spiritual master and undergo many Nyasa-like nei-gong practices.

The gist of it is that if you want higher spiritual attainments then it requires that you cultivate your energy channels through meditation and various types of yogic exercises. The best results will come from a wide variety of qi-gong and nei-gong exercises that include mantra, meditation, and inner Nyasa practice. You must repeat the same type of work for every new body you want to attain as well. Each new body gets you one step higher on the scale of progress towards a perfect *sambhogakaya* and Complete Enlightenment, or Perfect Buddhahood.

ROADS OF PRACTICE

There are many ways to cultivate your Qi and many other roads of spiritual practice you can employ, but for simplicity's sake we will use Shakyamuni's categories of ten large roads of practice. This includes concentrating on Buddhas (other enlightened beings and their teachings); studying and following cultivation teachings (Dharma); relying on others who have attained enlightenment (Sangha); strictly following certain rules of discipline (*sila*); practicing charity, generosity and virtuous ways; following certain practices that normally lead to Heaven; breathing and breath work practices (including pranayama, qi-gong and nei-gong); mental peace and resting practices (including vipassana meditation); special body cultivation practices (such as Yoga and martial arts); and practices that deal with death and dying. Nyasa practice, since it is a nei-gong exercise, falls into the categories of body and breath work cultivation.

In *Look Younger, Live Longer* I revealed the ten auxiliary roads of practice that can help you with the task of cultivating your Qi and channels so that you attain health and longevity. These supplemental avenues of spiritual cultivation can also help you transform your inner Qi body as well. This includes eating special foods, herbs and minerals; cultivating your Qi and breathing practices; cultivating your saliva and hormones; absorbing the energies of the sun and moon (or planets); practicing mantra and meditation; cultivating certain sexual practices that involve discipline; and matching yourself with earthly and heavenly energies.

In Chinese Taoism, the approach to opening your Qi channels involves meditation along with a combination of Qi supplementation (augmentation) and maintenance (continuance) strategies. The basic principle is to accumulate and retain your Qi so that the increasing quantity of Qi will eventually open up your channels due to the available forces.

Yoga practices (asanas) are also used to help transform and purify your

body, meaning that the physical stretching can untangle knots in your muscle fibers and thus help to open up the Qi channels within them. If you combine this with pranayama, mantra and visualization then the results will be spectacular. A famous Russian stretching method also is to go to a decent stretch of a muscle, flex the muscle being stretched, hold your breath to increase the intensity of the flex, and then release the breath and the flex at the same time.

You essentially need certain types of Yoga and spiritual practices to open your Qi channels, and among the best are stretching exercises along with mantra, visualization and *kumbhaka* pranayama efforts to force Qi through your Qi channels. Unfortunately people who are spreading yoga today are largely missing the *kumbhaka* pranayama, visualization and mantra aspects of practice. Mantra practice not only helps vibrate open Qi channels or calms your mind so that your Qi can rise naturally, but has the added benefit of asking for help from higher powers to lend assistance for the task of spiritual cultivation. *Kumbhaka* breath retention – where you hold your breath inside and then forcefully expel it when you can't hold it any longer - helps force Qi through your channels to open them and clear them of obstructions. Visualization will also help because wherever your mind goes your Qi will follow and visualization indicates your intention, your intended goal. If you focus your mind on a region of your body then your Qi will go there, thus bringing Qi life force energy to the region to open up all the Qi channels in the vicinity.

Once you bring Qi to an area inside your body, two options are then available. You can (1) try to guide it or, (2) just let go of the feelings and watch-observe-know-witness the energy sensations without altering or nudging the process in any way. This is the practice of “anapana,” which lets your Qi energy, once released or stimulated, do whatever it wants to do to open up your channels naturally. All you do is follow your breath, meaning follow your Qi/prana movements by knowing them without getting attached to them. However, sometimes when you feel blockages you should push/nudge your Qi in an attempt to smoothen out the flow in that region. I explained this in *Internal Martial Arts Nei-gong*. Afterwards you then detach from mental entanglements and start witnessing once again without attaching to the sensations arising. You want the surging or coursing of Qi currents in the body, when they arise, to feel unblocked and smooth.

Effective spiritual practices work towards eventually opening up *all* of your body's millions of Qi channels so that you can eventually enjoy an independent spiritual life. You eventually attain the initial deva body composed of subtle Qi by first activating the vital Qi energy of your physical body. It will then purify your Qi channels by pushing through the duplicate underlying Qi structure of your physical body. At the minimum, transforming your Qi and channels will win you a place in Heaven when

your physical body gives out while if very successful you can arise during this life time with a deva body made of Qi.

That is the initial spiritual path in a nutshell – it is just a path of Yoga that has been made complicated by the dharma teachings of every school that tend to mislead you by overly complicating matters. To succeed you must cultivate gong-fu, and if you are not a virtuous, ethical person then the Buddhas will not help you succeed in generating a deva body that lives very long. They'll help you cultivate your Qi but you'll have to put in extra effort yourself to make up for the lack of virtue.

If you don't cultivate, the underlying subtle Qi structure that scaffolds your physical body will simply be your body that “goes to Heaven” upon your death. It will last longer or not in Heaven depending upon whether or not you cultivated in life, so do so. Since it is still unpurified as regards higher (more subtle) forms of energy, as a living vehicle within Heaven it won't last forever and upon death in that Qi realm you will eventually come back down again to be reborn as a human once more, or as a deva again if you cultivated hard and accumulated enough merit.

Cultivating your Yang Qi to make this all possible happens to a greater or lesser extent upon any road of genuine spiritual practice. Even normal religious devotion causes your Yang Qi to arise within you and start to open up your Qi channels. This is yet another reason why saints have always encouraged good deeds, acts of merit, kindness, charity and good behavior. If you are this type of person they will readily help you cultivate a subtle body while alive. Just this path of virtuous behavior by itself is also a form of Qi and channel cultivation. Additionally, if you are not a virtuous person then the Buddhas and devas will not help you as much with your cultivation efforts. They will certainly help you, but you'll have to carry more of the burden yourself due to selfishness of behavior on your part.

Unfortunately, most people don't know about the more efficient yogic practices to cultivate your Qi directly, such as Nyasa Yoga practice, but simply follow the normal course of religion that produces an inferior passage to Heaven. It is now time to introduce many of these techniques to help you achieve the end result of cultivating some stage of a superior deva body.

From: COLOR ME CONFUCIUS

CH. 5 – “The Confucian Ranks of Spiritual Attainment”

The Confucian Shao Yang said, “We know that man is the highest among the objects, and that a sage is the highest among men. The highest of men is he who can observe 10,000 minds by one mind; who can observe 10,000 bodies with one body; who lives in one generation yet can

understand 10,000 generations.”

This is no different than the enlightenment teachings of many other religions concerning the capabilities of a sage. For instance, Buddhism states that an enlightened Buddha (equivalent to a Confucian sage) can know people’s minds by emanating out, from his Supra-Causal enlightenment body composed of Later Heavenly Qi, *nirmanakaya* projection bodies composed of lesser substances that can enter into people. Thus possessing their bodies and minds and being able to see things through their memories, this is how a sage can know your thoughts as well as give you new helpful thoughts from his own mind. This is how a sage helps people, which is by projecting versions of himself (composed of higher energetic substances) into them with the objective of giving them both thoughts and energy. When you call on a Buddha for help, this is primarily what they try to do to assist you - they project versions of themselves into you or others in order to give thoughts to help.

Chinese culture commonly speaks of the ascending essences or matter states of Jing, Qi, Shen, Later Heavenly Qi (energy) and Primordial Heavenly Qi (energy). These are the states that compose the higher body attainments of a sage that together form the Reward Body or Enjoyment Body of enlightenment called the *sambhogakaya* in Buddhism. The Reward body of a sage is actually a chain of duplicate bodies composed of different substances linked together – a physical body made of flesh, subtle body composed of Qi, Causal body composed of Shen, Supra-Causal body composed of Later Heavenly energy, and Immanence body composed of Primordial Heavenly energy. When humans die we are said to be ejected from the human frame with bodies of Qi, which is why we become spirits or devas, but the spiritual bodies of sages are more complicated because they cultivated these higher bodies of more elevated substances when alive, and they come attendant with incredible capabilities.

Most every cultivation school has various ranks to mark out milestones on the path of spiritual attainment. These naturally correspond to mental, behavioral and body achievements. For instance, Buddhism has four levels of progressive spiritual attainment that delineate an Arhat, or enlightened one. There are the *Sotapanna*, *Sakadagami*, *Anagami* and *Arhat* stages of enlightenment attainment followed by the fifth level of a fully enlightened Buddha, who possesses the Immanence body aforementioned. A fully enlightened Buddha cultivates a large “Reward body” composed of the human body made of flesh (Jing), deva body made of Qi, Causal body composed of Shen, Supra-Causal body composed of Later Heavenly Qi and Immanence body composed of Primordial Heavenly Qi (energy) all linked together. All of these bodies attached together, with each one composed of a higher or lower level of essence, comprise the *sambhogakaya* or Reward body of enlightenment. A spiritual master uses these different bodies to do

various things in the universe, helping people wherever they can in whatever ways they can, but mostly by giving them thoughts and energy (such as for healing purposes) when appropriate.

Some of the higher bodies, such as the Supra-Causal, can project off many tethered versions of themselves made of lower energies. Then they can use these *nirmanakaya* or emanation bodies to possess people when necessary in order to help a situation by giving them thoughts or energy. A spiritual master trains to be able to use all of his lower bodies independently so that it seems as if he is present in each realm where a lower body resides, but he/she is usually off elsewhere because he/she will always primarily reside in the realm of his/her highest body. The idea that a master is in an unmovable samadhi trance is therefore just nonsense because it usually means that his spirit bodies are out elsewhere occupied doing something. This is why he/she often seems to have vacant eyes or is non-responsive.

Starting from the level of a human being, Chinese Taoism also has various stages of Immortals that also correspond to these same Buddhist Arhat stages of attainment. These are the Earthly, Spiritual, and Celestial ranks of Immortals.

Representing Hinduism, the Hindu sage Sri Siddharameshwar Maharaj also taught that we have the Physical, Subtle, Causal, Supra-Causal and Para-atman bodies that exactly correspond to same five essence bodies previously mentioned. Each new body attainment corresponds to a higher rank of spiritual achievement, and those ranks exactly match with the ranks taught within Buddhism and Taoism.

Ramalinga, representing the Tamil Siddha and Nath Yoga traditions, taught that the stages of cultivation achievement start with the coarse Physical body and then through Qi cultivation, as mentioned by Mencius, one can attain a purified Qi body, body of Vibrations (made of Shen), Wisdom Light body (made of Later Heavenly energy) and then Body of Immanence. In Ramalinga's tradition these five bodies are the *Stubla deha*, *Suddha deha*, *Mantra deha*, *Jnana deha* (*Divya deha* or body of light, *Kailaya deha*), and Body of Immanence. They are also the same five body attainments.

Vajrayana (Tantric Buddhism) also talks about the Physical body, Impure illusory body (subtle or deva body), Purified illusory body, Wisdom light (Clear Light) or Dharma body, and then the Buddha body composed of very subtle fundamental wind (energies). Together these comprise the exact same *sambhogakaya* Reward body and stages of attainment.

In Confucianism we also have five bodies, and we call an enlightened individual a sage. In any spiritual school, including Confucianism, to reach the status of a fully enlightened sage you must progress through prior stages of spiritual attainment that involve using your internal energy to cultivate higher spiritual bodies as just described. Only step-by-step progress allows you to reach the fully enlightened attainment of a sage.

During this progression, with each new spiritual body attainment your mind becomes more clear and bright, which is why mental clarity is emphasized on the Confucian path and in other cultivation traditions. Cultivation schools typically focus on describing the ultra clear mind-stream corresponding to an Arhat's body attainment. Nearly every spiritual sect will not talk about body attainments, however, because practitioners referencing this yardstick will easily become disheartened knowing they have not achieved the fruit. However, by describing the spiritual path in terms of mental clarity and emptiness (which offers an analogy to the emptiness of the original nature), practitioners will continue cultivating with hope since they aren't clear about their true stage of progress. This is why most schools describe the path in terms of consciousness rather than bodies, which is so that cultivators always keep practicing.

Someone who is enlightened has attained a spiritual body whose mind-stream and body, due to being composed of more subtle energies than the coarse physical nature, is often compared to light because of the analogy with awareness and illumination, but they are not any wiser nor think any better than we do since that body is simply a duplicate of their human body, its habit energies and its regular thought patterns. Nevertheless, this achievement is the spiritual path, which is a progressive attainment of higher and higher spiritual bodies that are limited to five in teachings although how far one can reach is much higher.

You have seen the names for these bodies/stages used by other traditions, but few know that Confucianism has them as well. Mencius provided us a list of these stages of spiritual attainment that is similar to the ranks found in other religions, once again attesting to the non-denominational nature of the spiritual path. The way that you achieve these attainments is the same as elsewhere, namely that you must cultivate both your mind and body along with your behavior. To attain these higher bodies also requires the devoted assistance of sages gone before you who must you lend you their energy to help transform your body, and none will be committed to helping you for such a long process if you are not a virtuous human being working on perfecting your behavior.

Goodness or Kindness

In terms of stages, Mencius said that the foundation of the spiritual path starts with the desire to cultivate. He called this beginner's stage "**goodness**" or "**kindness**" because the spiritual path is founded upon a basis of refraining from evil ways while pursuing virtue and morality instead. This is cultivating kindness, goodness, virtue or compassion as a human being. Thus the first stage of kindness or goodness.

In every religious tradition you must cultivate virtue, morality,

benevolence, compassion, kindness or goodness as the foundation of the spiritual path, so it's no revelation to find this same emphasis by Chinese sages. Once entering the gate of the spiritual road you are immediately set on the pathway of doing good deeds while eschewing evil thoughts and behavior, so Mencius called "goodness" the first stage of cultivation. This is the cultivation stage of a human being with a coarse material body.

All throughout their lives, and especially after they succeed, people must practice virtuous ways and work to elevate their minds as basic spiritual practice, which is the practice of self-perfection. This is the core of the spiritual path as well as its end result so it involves cultivating, perfecting or purifying your mind, words and behavior.

This is why the Confucian way involves learning meditation and mindfulness. Meditation helps you form the habit of watching your mind and behavior so that you can correct your personal faults and flaws, and mindfulness helps you do this in real time. This method of training helps you to become a virtuous person, namely a top level human being.

Faith or Belief

The next stage of spiritual progress in Confucianism is called "faith" or "belief" because belief arises when an individual starts to attain some substantial results from their cultivation efforts. Then they believe in it. An individual who works hard attains the initial fruit of the path, which is the deva body or subtle body attainment made of Qi that is called the first dhyana attainment in Buddhism. Because of attaining the deva body whilst alive, a practitioner starts believing in the entirety of the pathway teachings. Upon gaining access to the heavenly deva realm an aspirant will spend time going back and forth from his physical body to this subtle realm. He will converse with all the devas and discover the truth about the rest of the spiritual path, so of course he will then gain faith in the teachings.

In Buddhism the stage of Faith is attained when someone reaches the first dhyana, which is the *Sotapanna* Arhat stage and the very first rank of higher spiritual body achievements. An individual at this true belief stage of Buddhism has attained the independent subtle body or deva body that can leave the physical body shell at will. This is the astral body of western mysticism, impure illusory body of Vajrayana, *suddha deba* of the Tamil siddhas, or *yin shen* body of Taoism. It is an exact duplicate of your physical body, composed of Qi and free of disease, that can leave the body at will to enter the lowest spiritual realms of the earth that people go to upon death but which they call "heaven."

With this body one can converse with other spiritual beings. Thus with access to untainted spiritual teachings and the ability to know the truth, no one can cheat the new initiate about the spiritual path. They can no longer

be confused by many false religious teachings in the world and so they develop trust and faith in the path. Since they establish trust, confidence, faith and belief in the path of cultivation (from having attained the first fruit of an independent spirit body), Mencius called this the stage of Belief or Faith.

Beauty

The next stage of spiritual progress in Confucianism is called “**beauty**.” In order to keep progressing you must cultivate the Qi of this new subtle body to a higher stage of purity just as devas must do. Buddhism and Hinduism state that this is what heavenly devas occupy themselves with perfecting to reach a yet higher body attainment, which is composed of Shen. Since an ordinary deva and human Faith stage attaineer now have the same type of deva body composed of Qi, this need for further purification necessitates that the deva level of attainment is differentiated into two classification levels. In Buddhism your initial development of the subtle body corresponds to the first dhyana while a higher degree of its Qi purification (corresponding to the devas’ efforts at purification) is termed the second dhyana attainment.

Mencius called the efforts of this stage “extending and fulfilling,” meaning that by further Qi and channel purification of your Qi body you can reach a higher stage of its purification, but it is not yet a new body composed of Shen. In other words, you can cultivate your subtle body attainment, composed of Qi, to reach a more purified level of the Qi-based complex of subtle body and mind but it isn’t an *extra body*.

This attainment is called Beauty and is equivalent to the second dhyana of Buddhism. You first attain the deva body and then you continue cultivating it, “extending and fulfilling it,” which is called beautifying it or perfecting or purifying it. You must do this before you can generate an additional Shen body out of its essence just as you generated a Qi body out of the essence of your physical body. Normally people simply eject a coarse level deva body out of their physical body upon death, but the one a sage generates is far more purified and has higher capabilities.

Greatness or Grandness

Mencius said that from the stage of Beauty as a base, “extending and fulfilling it until it shines forth is called great.” “Greatness” or “grandness” is the name for the next spiritual body attainment composed of Shen. It corresponds to the third dhyana attainment of Buddhism, which is also called the Causal body in Hinduism and Shen body attainment in Taoism. It is a body tethered to the Qi body but composed of a more refined

substance than Qi.

Remember that spiritual schools never explain spiritual attainments in terms of bodies but in terms of consciousness achievements so that people don't become disheartened at their lack of spiritual progress. They want people to always be cultivating virtue and clarity of mind to raise themselves above their animal behavior, so they speak of spiritual attainments in terms of a pure mind and pure (virtuous) behavior. On purpose they exclude the fact that the spiritual path is all about attaining higher and higher bodies. They speak of consciousness or pure mind achievements instead, leading people onwards with phrases such as "cultivate emptiness" and "realize the root source of the mind" which motivate people to meditate and master mental watching. They do this, focusing on "purifying consciousness," so that practitioners always keep cultivating while never losing hope that they will one day "become enlightened."

The truth is that no spiritual beings will make a commitment to spend substantial time to help you attain the higher spiritual bodies unless you are virtuous, ethical and moral. Therefore religions are designed to cultivate virtue, morality and cooperation in populations, with few people altruistic enough to be able to attain the higher bodies.

This not communicating the whole truth is an example of the "skillful means" (i.e. *Lotus Sutra* method) used across the world by enlightened individuals when they teach and why Mencius therefore described the Greatness spiritual stage as the mind "shining forth with its fullness" that transcends the subtle realm of earth-bound devas. This corresponds to a Causal, Shen-based or *Mantra deha* body.

According to Vajrayana Buddhism, on the spiritual path your impure illusory body (subtle or deva body) can generate from within it a purified illusory body, free from all gross matter and impurities, at this stage of attainment that Mencius called Grandness. The Nath Yoga tradition calls it a "body of vibrations" to refer to its composition of a higher form of energy (Shen) than Qi. It is composed of an even more refined (higher) form of energy or substance. Mencius said that to reach the stage of Greatness and then transform it is to reach the stage of the sage, which is the next stage of achievement.

The Sage

When the sensory reach of your mind becomes exceedingly large (called "infinite without boundaries" although this is an exaggeration) because you attain a Supra-Causal body, which is the next attainment level, this is the enlightenment of an Arhat or Buddha. With this body, composed of Later Heavenly Qi, your mind-body vehicle is composed of a substance that transcends all lower energies, including Qi and Shen, which is why it can

sense vibrations or perturbations within all the denser realms.

This is the capability of a Buddha, or we can say the “enlightenment” of a Buddha. Mencius calls this stage of cultivation a “**sage**.” It corresponds to the Buddhist/Hindu enlightenment stage of realizing the clear light, uncreated light, or clear aspect of the mind called pure consciousness. Actually, what this really means is that your newest Supra-Causal body – which is still attached to your previous Causal, subtle and human bodies – is composed of a substance, essence or energy so pure that our only comparison of its purity is to light.

Consciousness at this stage, as with all stages, is still dependent upon the structure and functioning of your body vehicle since it is still an exact replica of your physical body. Are you any wiser than a human at this stage of attainment? You might be able to know more, but you still have the same thinking processes and habits that you did prior to this attainment unless you study more, work hard, undergo many experiences and keep perfecting yourself and your abilities with these new bodies. Every new body is simply a replica of your previous lower body with all of these bodies dependent upon your original human body as the template, and thus your thinking processes stay the same with each new body. The only thing that is different are the new skills you gain with the new body, whose capabilities you must learn to master.

Naturally each new body will have more capabilities and can accumulate more experiences than the lower body it was generated from, but the memories of the new body are not imprinted in the lower ones. Furthermore, when a master is operating in the world while his higher body is busy elsewhere in higher realms he will often seem as if not present, and only when the higher bodies return to rest in his lowest physical shell will he seem to make wiser decisions than when he/she seems absent.

Divineness (*Shen*)

In progressing upwards, when an enlightened person’s cultivation level becomes so high that nobody knows how high it is, Confucianism calls this the stage of being a “*shen*” (divine), which is equivalent to the highest level of the Buddhist enlightenment *bhumis*. This stage of divineness is akin to a fully enlightened Buddha of perfect and complete enlightenment. This is the body of the Immanence attainment composed of Primordial Heavenly Qi/energy.

This is sometimes called the stage of “no mind and no body” where it is said that one has become “oned” with the *Taiji*, or Supreme Ultimate. At this stage it is said that you become unknowable or unfathomable and thus unpredictable, able to liberate beings all over the universe. Of course, this is only a type of expedient teaching since there are higher body attainments

available still.

In terms of the path itself to enlightenment (becoming a sage), Confucius did not describe the spiritual pathway as Mencius did, but simply described the general cultivation path in terms of how you should practice cultivating your mind and behavior, without which you cannot attain these higher attainments, and what one should expect along the way.

In *The Great Learning*, Confucius explained that the whole purpose and highest potential of human life was to engage in this “Great Learning,” whose highest stage of attainment makes us a cosmic being able to help countless other beings in the universe. This is what Confucianism and the other religions are really all about, but few people ever learn about these esoteric details.

From: NYASA YOGA
APPENDIX 2 - THE FOUR DHYANA

The stages of spiritual progress are actually the same across all the *genuine* religions since these are non-denominational stations. Buddhism explains them best through its classification scheme of the four dhyana, or four stages of an Arhat (enlightened being), and all their correspondences.

The first, second, third, and fourth dhyana are the progressive stages of enlightenment, or Arhatship. The fourth dhyana is the stage of initial enlightenment, or “*nirvana* with remainder,” achieved by a full Arhat. The fifth higher stage is “*nirvana* without remainder (remaining dependency),” which corresponds to Perfect and Complete Enlightenment, full Buddhahood or the stage of No More Learning.

The four dhyana attainments exactly correspond to the four stages of Arhatship – the **Srotapanna** (“Stream Entrant”) who attains the first dhyana and subtle body, **Sakrdagamin** (“Once More to Come”) who attains the second dhyana, **Anagamin** (“No Returner”) who attains the third dhyana and Causal body, and **Arhat** who attains enlightenment (the fourth dhyana) and the Supra-Causal body but who is not yet completely enlightened. The **Great Golden Arhat** is the next higher stage of enlightenment - a fully enlightened Buddha who has attained *nirvana* without remainder.

The **first dhyana** is called “The Joyful Stage of Leaving Production” in Buddhism because when you attain the deva body you are extremely joyful. Joy is the main characteristic of the first dhyana. It is the major characteristic used to describe devas since they are always happy and

making jokes with one another.

The **second dhyana** is called the “The Ground of Joy Born of Samadhi.” The stage of joy in this dhyana is more refined than in the first dhyana because it corresponds to the fact that your Qi is still energized, but less jumpy than in the first dhyana. Therefore the feeling of Qi excitation over your body (bliss) is smoother in terms of sensation. Your body’s stage of Qi refinement is higher than in the first dhyana attainment.

The names of these dhyana indicate a secret that the first and second dhyana can be cultivated by exciting your Qi fervently while trying to feel joyful. Many methods can help you do this, including special types of singing, dancing and sexual cultivation, since they excite/stimulate Yang Qi all over your body. The need for joy and excitation is also why you use fire element visualizations (imagining that you are fire) and other methods, such as Nyasa and Mantrayana, to stir up your Qi during nei-gong practice.

The **third dhyana** is called “The Wonderful Blissful Ground of Separating from Joy.” This is because joy is abandoned as a mental stimulant for your cultivation, and instead you cultivate a calmer state of mind and subtle blissful body feeling for this achievement. In other words, to cultivate the next level of Qi purification, which is the attainment of a body made of Shen, the joyful energization and exhilaration methods used as coarse excitation for attaining the first and second dhyanas cannot be used and are abandoned.

The Mental/Causal body to be attained for the third dhyana attainment is of an energetic substance more refined than Qi. To attain this dhyana the excitation stimulant of joy is too rough since you are now cultivating a more refined energy rather than coarse vitality. Therefore much smoother or more peaceful Qi cultivation methods are used to cultivate this dhyana. This is why Vajrayana calls this the “detached joy” state.

You can also think of it in this way. When a master injects his Mental body within your physical/subtle body shell in order to stimulate your Qi channels and energies, because his body is composed of a more refined energy the amplitude of energetic movement he produces within you will be far smoother than the more pronounced energetic ups and downs you will experience when a subtle deva body possesses your own in order to do the same thing.

The **fourth dhyana** is called “The Ground of Clear Purity from Casting Away Thought,” and can be considered a realm of no thought because your mind is pure and clear at this stage. In Taoism this dhyana is called a stage of great emptiness; it is the stage of enlightenment where your mind is perfectly clear (empty) and you can know the minds of sentient beings since their body-mind complexes are composed of substances much denser than the Supra-Causal Clear Light body you now have at this stage. This enlightenment body transcends all lower (physical, subtle and Causal)

body vehicles.

In Vajrayana Buddhism, you are taught to use many nei-gong, pranayama and other methods to cultivate the four stages of **joy, supreme joy, detached joy** and **innate joy** that exactly correspond to the four dhyana. Sometimes these four dhyana, which correspond to the body attainments, are described as progressively subtler levels of “bliss,” which also refer to less coarser ways of exciting your Qi in order to cultivate the higher bodies.

The body attainments are also described as cultivating the four Vajrayana empties: the **empty, very empty, great empty**, and **all-empty**, meaning that your mind becomes progressively clearer as you progress in higher body attainments. While some Vajrayana teachers say these are not the four dhyana they *are indeed* the equivalent descriptions of the four dhyana. Many times teachers will say misleading statements like this so that they don’t lose students or so that you don’t go to another school.

Buddhism also teaches that we can cultivate the four immeasurables (Brahmavihara, divine abodes or sublime attitudes) on the spiritual path. The four immeasurables are infinite **joy, loving kindness, compassion**, and **equanimity**. If you look at these emotions with a critical eye you will see that each is progressively more refined in nature than the previous.

Few know that sitting in meditation and trying to generate an infinite mind of one of these emotions is a way to purify your Qi so that you can attain each of the four dhyana. The level of Qi energization or “smoothness” of Qi corresponding to each immeasurable matches with one of the dhyana. The instruction missing in most four immeasurables cultivation teachings is therefore that you must use a particular infinite emotion to evoke Qi movements within your own body. Thus the practice becomes a means of Qi energization.

Joy, being the most excitation-prone of the four immeasurable emotions, highly stimulates or activates Qi flows in your body. Hence, cultivating or meditating on immeasurable joy helps you to cultivate the Qi of the subtle body so that you can attain the first dhyana. “Immeasurable” means you try to feel the emotion and a corresponding Qi-type all over your body and not just infinitely in the environment. Don’t repress the emotion but try to be bursting with it

The four immeasurables of **joy, loving-kindness, compassion**, and **equanimity** therefore correspond to cultivating the Qi of the first, second, third and fourth dhyana when you try to mix your emotional feelings of these states with the Qi of your body in a vast way. Some of the emotions are more refined than the others (ex. equanimity is more refined than joy,

which is an irritation when compared to the peacefulness of equanimity) and those correspond to the higher dhyana attainments.

In Vajrayana Buddhism the tantric “blisses” and “empties” are progressive degrees of refinement, which are used to represent the four dhyana, but few know the secret that anyone can cultivate the four dhyana via the four immeasurables. Everyone thinks the four empties and blisses have to do with four chakras or four body sections but they really refer to these same four degrees of energy excitation you should cultivate to attain the higher spiritual bodies: (1) the subtle body (impure illusory body, deva body, *yin-shen*, astral body, first dhyana), (2) a higher stage of refinement of that same subtle body (second dhyana) which is designated separately so as to encourage devas themselves to cultivate even if they think they cannot attain the next higher body, (3) the pure illusory body (Causal body or Mental body of the third dhyana) and (4) the Supra-Causal or clear light body (of equanimous Qi pertaining to the fourth dhyana, the Arhat’s body of enlightenment).

For instance, if you sit in meditation and try to feel **infinite joy** all over your body that also permeates the entire world or universe, and simultaneously try to energize your Qi and whip it up into a frenzy of joy in order to move it, this will lead to a type of Qi cultivation that will open up your channels. This coarse cultivation of vibrational joy will help you cultivate the subtle body and first dhyana.

If you try to cultivate a more refined emotion of **immeasurable loving-kindness**, where your mind and Qi are stimulated but to a smoother degree (less coarse) than joy excitation, you will be practicing the Qi excitation which matches with the second dhyana. Hence, you will still be cultivating the Qi of your subtle body but at a higher level of refinement. You must always try to feel the sensation of Qi energization all over every cell of your body in order to purify or transform your Qi and channels when doing these meditations.

The next higher emotion, which corresponds to less excitation but a higher degree of energetic refinement, is infinite compassion. When cultivating **immeasurable compassion**, you try to feel yet smoother Qi all over your body while your mind is absorbed in infinite compassion (that has less excitation powers than loving-kindness). The level of physical bliss (Qi excitation) cultivated in this way is more subtle or smoother than for the previous two infinite emotions. If you try to cultivate being a bodiless consciousness, and still feel a taint of physical bliss (the shape of your body), this will help cultivate the third dhyana. What will also help you attain this stage is cultivating that you are infinite, boundless compassion (without a body).

Some people feel that compassion and loving-kindness (benevolence) should switch places, and actually it is up to you as to which emotion is

more refined (less excitation-prone) than the other. You would use the lesser excitation prone emotion to cultivate the higher dhyana.

The point is that you need to cultivate a body feeling – a sensation of Qi moving felt all throughout your body – that you energize, excite, activate or stimulate by the corresponding emotion when meditating on one of the four immeasurables. It has to be Qi practice, not just mind practice, which is the big secret.

The higher the dhyana you want to reach, the more refined your Qi cultivation must be; the sensation felt within your body must be smoother and more refined. Therefore the fourth dhyana, which is said to correspond to a very refined sense of bliss without much mental excitation (emptiness), is matched with cultivating **infinite equanimity** or **peacefulness**. See how they match?

In Taoism the stages of the first-second, third and fourth dhyana are called the **Earth Immortal**, **Spirit Immortal**, and **Celestial Immortal** attainments respectively. Each of these grades/levels of Immortals has a different level of powers and abilities. The **Great Immortal** of Taoism, which corresponds to the **Great Golden Immortal** of Buddhism, represents the stage of Perfect and Complete Enlightenment.

The Yoga sutras of Hinduism call the first dhyana the **vitarka (coarse grasping mentation) samadhi**, the second dhyana the **vicara (refined grasping mentation) samadhi**, the third dhyana the **ananda (bliss) samadhi** and the fourth dhyana the **asmitta (existence) samadhi**. This refers to the quality of your thought and consciousness (the attendant or concomitant consciousness) corresponding to each of the bodies you cultivate due to the refinement of its Qi. A wise student will realize that these names correspond to the Vajrayana descriptions of the **empty, very empty, great empty**, and **all-empty** minds which are the pointers to the first, second, third and fourth dhyana.

Buddhism describes the first dhyana as breaking free of the sensation skandha, which corresponds to obtaining a deva body. Many spiritual people, especially the heads of religious sects in the Hindu, Buddhist or Sufi traditions, have attained the deva body. The second dhyana represents a higher stage of Qi refinement (purification) for that subtle body. This appropriation of the first and second dhyana to the subtle body made of Qi is due to the fact that devas themselves, whose bodies are already made of Qi, were thus given an encouragement to practice through this designation.

The third dhyana attainment represents an entirely new body attainment - the Causal body or Mental body that arises out of the subtle body (and is composed of Shen, which is a more refined form of energy than Qi). This new body attainment corresponds to the description of “breaking free of the conception skandha” found in Buddhism.

The fourth dhyana attainment corresponds to attaining the Later Heavenly Qi, Clear Light, Supra-Causal or Dharma body, which means breaking free of the volition skandha (that contains both mental and physical factors) and the *alaya* consciousness that is the root source of both body and mind. While attaining the subtle body is considered “enlightenment,” this stage is considered *nirvana* with remainder (remaining dependency), and hence sometimes only the Supra-Causal body is colloquially referred to as enlightenment (or initial enlightenment). This is basically the fourth dhyana attainment.

You can also describe this progression in terms of searching for the root source of your mind, which is how Buddhism phrases the path to the Supra-Causal body attainment of enlightenment. Typically religions that use the consciousness explanation totally ignore body attainments and trick people with words that mislead, but their spiritual instructions (i.e. meditation teachings) embody the intent to cause you to let go of consciousness and thus lead you upwards. Only if you let go of consciousness can your Qi begin to rotate so that you can eventually attain the subtle body.

Thus enlightenment is described on these roads as discovering a very empty, pristine, clear state of mind that is supposedly the bedrock of consciousness, but it is actually just the very clear but normal state of mind of an individual who has attained the Supra-Causal body attainment composed of Later Heavenly Qi that, as an energetic substrate, transcends all the lower essences/substances that comprise the physical universe. However, the attainment of this body is described by the Consciousness-only school as “realizing the *alaya* consciousness” since that is the concomitant mental state.

According to Consciousness-only teachings, within your mind appears your physical body. As a living being you also feel emotions and sensations, which are dependent upon the subtle body of Qi, and these too appear within your mind. Lastly, you also have thoughts that appear in your mind, which are termed the conception skandha in Buddhism. Thus, within your mind (consciousness) appears the phenomena of form, sensations and conceptions (thoughts). When the world around you appears within your mind, that appearance of images is due to your sense organs that link with your brain and produce mental images within consciousness. This is a mechanical thing that automatically happens. That sensory input is then interpreted by your discriminative thinking and memory (the sixth consciousness of Buddhism) that is also dependent upon the workings of your brain, and then images and understanding appear within a clear consciousness that is empty like light or space. But what exactly is consciousness itself within which they appear?

Ultimately, consciousness is what appears in a body vessel whose nervous system structure enables sentience (construction of thoughts), and which is constructed out of a certain type of matter (substance) and energy on that plane of existence. Consciousness isn't a substance but the ability to form thoughts and memories within that structure. A level of substance and its attendant energy composes your body *and* your consciousness, which is mechanically experienced within that vessel because of its structure. Consciousness (thoughts) automatically arises because the body structure permits it to arise and is designed so that this mechanical functioning arises. This is what has evolutionarily developed, that's all, whereas other evolutions of the original energy of the universe ended up producing rocks or trees or viruses or other things. It is all a naturalistic outcome. Luckily for beings with a high enough degree of consciousness, they have discovered a pathway to higher bodies that live longer and better. If you can spin out of this body structure a new body duplicate at a higher or more refined plane/level/sphere of energy-substance then you can live in that body.

That is the path of spiritual cultivation until you generate a body at the level of the Supra-Causal plane, which is called initial enlightenment (*nirvana* with remainder). If, as a human being, you finally generate a subtle body then this, too, is termed enlightenment but it is not the final enlightenment that one should seek. It is not full *nirvana* enlightenment. That is why the Supra-Causal body attainment is called initial enlightenment.

The whole spiritual path is the practice of Yoga to attain a higher spiritual body to arise out of the lower one, which requires the help of higher beings to circulate their own Qi inside yours for each body double to be created. If you are an unethical, immoral or nonvirtuous person they will not help you do this except to make your body healthy.

So what should you know about consciousness? The whole universe came from an original type of substance or energy that was pure, but somehow developed denser and denser evolutes. Your present body is in the lowest sphere of these evolutes. Some of the creations out of that original substance are insentient like chemicals or forces like magnetism. Some have become what we call living beings but without consciousness, like viruses. Some have become higher and lower sentient beings, such as fish and humans. You only know of your existence and beingness because of a highly developed consciousness. For instance, consciousness gives rise to the I-thought and thoughts, and sensory organs create images that replicate with similitude the outside world through images inside a brain. Without the centering I-thought you don't know of your existence.

Our consciousness is special in one fundamental sense over lower beings such as insects, fish, birds and so on. It is at such a highly developed level that we were able to find the path of spiritual cultivation that allows us

to develop higher bodies on purpose out of lower sheaths (created out of denser energies), and we can follow this pathway. With those higher bodies we can then do good deeds in the world, such as acts of merit, by affecting the thoughts of beings with lower bodies, which is the career of a Bodhisattva and Buddha.

In terms of your experience of the world, there is no inside or outside to your consciousness you can ever know because you can only know, experience, or be aware of your own consciousness. Your consciousness *is* your world experience, and your mind is ultimately your consciousness whose functioning is dependent upon its body container. For example, your consciousness is dependent upon memories stored in brain neurons and neural pathways that form regular processing algorithms. It is also dependent upon the energy of life coursing through it and animating that life, which is cultivated to create a higher body of that energy substance. Your inner thoughts are your consciousness and the environment you see is also just your consciousness. Most people mistakenly forget that the world they see is just something appearing as thoughts within their mind (consciousness) even though it looks to be outside of you. They always forget that what they are seeing is just a picture in their brain.

When you see the world around you please remember that you are actually just experiencing thoughts *within your mind* – you are experiencing your consciousness only. It is not a world that you are experiencing but your own mental images of an outside world. You cannot experience that outside world directly because you can only experience your conscious images of that world.

Your consciousness is the only thing you can know and there is no experience possible outside of your consciousness *because you would need your consciousness to know it*. What you essentially are is the ultimate substrate of your consciousness and its body container, which means the ultimate substrate of the universe – its original essence that developed into everything. Everything you see/experience in your mind is really just *you* since it is just a construct of *your* consciousness appearing within your body that is part of your body complex, so it is you because it is a picture in your consciousness. The world outside of your consciousness is not you, however the world you see in your mind is you because that is your own consciousness, and your consciousness is part of you.

This is one of the meanings of the *maha-vakyas* or Great Sayings within the Hindu Upanishads “Thou art That.” Thou art indeed That *which you see*. From another angle, since YOU are essentially the original essence which has become THAT, once again Thou art That.

The fact that the mechanism of consciousness evolutionarily arose in an appropriate body vessel out of an original nature, traditionally termed “Brahman” in Hinduism, also means that “All This is Brahman,” and even

“Brahman is consciousness.” These are quotations given to people to help them let go during meditation so that their Qi/prana can arise and start opening their channels.

“I am Brahman” is another *maha-vakya* that basically says you are the original nature, namely an evolutionary product or development out of the original nature. In other words, every being who says “I” to himself is not actually referring to their body but to the original essence, for that is the true self or true I. When you say “I am Brahman” to yourself in meditation, it also helps you *let go of clinging to consciousness* so that the spiritual path of transformation can be quickened. You can use these sorts of sayings to help cultivate various states of mind such as the samadhi of infinite consciousness or the samadhi of infinite space.

As another example, the realization that you only ever experience your own consciousness (and nothing in the universe other than that) can lead to the realization that the “world you see hear, taste, etc.” is *just your consciousness only* – it is thoughts and images somehow automatically, mechanistically created within your mind. An entire school within Buddhism has developed based on this. To you the world, your worldview, the world experience, existence or “presence” should be viewed as *just my “consciousness only.”* Your experience of yourself is just a consciousness experience, something that happens within your mind. It is just a mental event within your consciousness. Without a brain you don’t know that you exist. Of course there is still an existent world without you or your consciousness, but you need consciousness to know it.

There is no inside or outside to your experiencing of your consciousness. That is all you can ever experience. There is “no inside or outside” because your own experience of existence or beingness can only be just be manipulations (manifestations, images or thoughts) of your consciousness – thoughts and images you form - and not actually a world outside of it. Realizing this - that you and your world images are “consciousness-only” - can help you cultivate the samadhi of infinite consciousness when you realize that everything you see is just your personal mind. This can help you let go during meditation so that you detach from thoughts and let your Qi/prana arise to start opening up Qi channels.

When trying to cultivate the samadhi of infinite consciousness, the problem is that you are always clinging to the body and physical feeling states, which are also formations of consciousness in your mind (namely thoughts) and thinking they are you. You are always clinging to these manifestations of consciousness and by clinging to thoughts you impede the flow of Qi in your body since that flow and thoughts are interlinked. This is a basic rule of spiritual cultivation: thoughts and Qi/prana are linked, so to help your Qi/prana flow freely to generate the subtle body you need to practice detaching from thoughts when they appear.

To help you meditate and let go of thoughts, we colloquially say that consciousness is itself invisible and clear, like light or empty space, and that we miss the existence of the invisible background of empty consciousness that is the true untouched, unmanifest essence of consciousness. In a way this insinuates that consciousness is like a substance, but it isn't. It is a product of operations/functions within the brain.

In truth, when there is no such thing as consciousness (such as a rock) there is no clear light of consciousness at all, so such Consciousness-only descriptions are sometimes not exactly correct but just worded in a way meant to help you make progress in meditation so that you can eventually with practice achieve the first new body, the subtle body. They are meant to help you cultivate a state of presence, witnessing or pristine awareness where you let go of thoughts and body sensations so that your Qi begins to move and can start to solidify your inner subtle body by that Qi flow, which eventually turns into a rotation that brings about transformation. All the forms of meditation practice use different reasons as prompts to provoke you into trying to cultivate an "empty" mental state that detaches from thoughts so that your Qi/prana can begin to stir (it won't stir if you always attach to it, thus holding it in a way that prevents a rotation). You do not want to cling to your thoughts/Qi because then your energy can begin to move and start reinforcing the structural buildup of your inner subtle body.

Avalokitesvara's road of "cultivating hearing" mentioned in the *Surangama Sutra*, where you suddenly hear a sound that appears within your consciousness without warning (a sudden event appearing out of nowhere that you cannot expect whilst mentally clinging), helps you break free of any *at-that-moment attachments* to your thoughts and body feeling states since the knowing of that sound is like a shot that jostles you enough to help you let go. It leads to a state of "open presence" where you are free of holding onto thoughts; you are never strongly attached to thoughts when they arise. The juxtaposition of clinging to a feeling state, even when you think you are not doing so, and then suddenly hearing a sound that unexpectedly appears out of nowhere, jostles consciousness and helps you to immediately drop that physical feeling state and rest in the "emptiness like space" that is the true nature of consciousness. Furthermore, by concentrating on hearing, just as anapana concentrates on physical body sensations, you can use this pathway to better cultivate your Qi development.

Another way of explaining matters entirely is that when there is an object in consciousness it is "objective knowledge"; you are experiencing knowledge of an object such as a sound or body feeling. On the other hand, when there is no object then what you are experiencing is objectless knowledge; you are still experiencing something.

Spiritual schools typically cheat people and say that objectless knowledge is pure consciousness, as if consciousness was a substance. They

talk as if consciousness were a substance itself rather than the mechanical product of a nervous system. Thus they describe “pure consciousness” with various descriptions such as being like emptiness, clear light, no-thought, no-self, empty space, formlessness, a vacuum or void, or an unmanifest state. They use all sorts of linguistic trickery in order to help you let go of thoughts to cultivate a clear and empty state of mind. For instance, they say that we typically become fixated upon the phenomena that flash within consciousness and don’t recognize the clear, empty movie screen of consciousness-substance within which they appear. That empty movie screen is actually still an image of consciousness produced by a movement of energy in the brain.

Consciousness or thoughts, emotions and sensations are formed when energy runs through the matrix of your brain in a certain way that causes certain chemical reactions happen. While clear consciousness is compared to the invisible background light or empty space within which objects appear, that is just a way of talking to help you let go of thoughts. Thoughts themselves are the creation of the chemical reactions in the brain and energy flowing through that nervous system. Whatever appears in the mind is like a picture that is flashing across a movie screen and the whole shebang of thoughts and picture screen is called consciousness. Everything appears within it, but how it is mechanically constructed cannot be seen unless you have a body of more rarified energy that can go inside a typical human brain and watch as thoughts and emotions form, which subtle-bodied devas do in order to learn how to guide the process. All heavenly residents are trying to cultivate ever higher bodies to be able to do this.

Now, to cultivate the fourth dhyana of enlightenment means attaining the Supra-Causal body that is composed of a very fundamental energy sphere - Later Heaven Qi. This substance is a type of energy just as physical matter (form), Qi and Shen are types of energy, each denser or more subtle than the next. To attain this stage of cultivation, you must train to be able to always let go of all the things that appear within your consciousness and let them arise and depart without attachments. Then the energy of that body will become able to rotate (due to the nonclinging) and eventually form a new higher spiritual body. You must therefore practice the freedom of “presence” - being in the moment - where you are not attaching to the Identity but are just being pristine, clearly aware and letting whatever arises arise within your mind.

You always function with thoughts in your mind but you should be fluid with your thoughts because of non-clinging. Non-clinging or non-attachment does not mean that you should never practice concentration by holding onto thoughts for a long time. Cultivating a stable, one-pointed mind that can concentrate by staying on a point is a skill you *must* master. All the skills of using consciousness, such as for concentration, visualization

or proper thinking to reason out cause and effect, are the things you must learn and master for living. Detachment of thoughts does NOT mean that you don't hold onto thoughts when you are concentrating on something such as working on problems.

One reason to practice meditation (or anapana) is so that you learn how to let things arise in the mind without attaching to them, and in time your kundalini (*real* Yang Qi) will finally be aroused if you practice many other cultivation practices as well. Then your Qi will eventually set up a rotational flow within your body that over twelve years will create the subtle body. This internal Qi flow cannot be initiated and sustained solely by your own efforts. You need the helpful intercession of enlightened masters and devas to make this possible. As explained in *Meditation Case Studies*, when they help you internally you are bound to experience all sorts of unusual phenomena such as visions.

Only by practicing witnessing or observation of the contents of the mind (vipassana), without clinging to those thoughts and the I-thought center that allows you to know experience, can you let go of the body being formed by the rotation/flow of Qi within you. The Supra-Causal body develops out of the Causal (Mental or Shen) body, which in turn develops out of the subtle (Qi) body, which you develop out of the physical body of form, and the generation process always follows this same procedure of a higher body of energy distilled/separated out of a lower.

When you attain the Supra-Causal body, or fourth dhyana attainment, the Consciousness-only school denotes this by saying you are at the level of the *alaya* consciousness that transcends lower states of matter and the attendant minds formed by that stage of matter.

To cultivate the Supra-Causal body you must practice meditation that witnesses whatever arises in consciousness without attaching to those manifestations of consciousness. This is the same thing you must do to attain the subtle body, which is the first of all subsequent spiritual bodies. Anapana practice is the witnessing of sensations brought about (stirred up) by arising Qi flows within the body while witnessing meditation (vipassana) is primarily the watching of thoughts. Kuan Yin's method of hearing is listening to sounds in a detached manner as well, which is related to these other practices. Since everything known within consciousness (objects or "others") is known due to an I-thought, you should not cling to the I-thought processes of your mind when practicing such meditation efforts but should let all things arise without attachment, and yet without blocking them. Let them go without attachment too, and in this way avoid suffering.

This is the explanation of spiritual cultivation from the aspect of consciousness, whose "purification" is normally the only path transmitted in most cultivation schools (see *What is Enlightenment?* for more examples). Most of the explanations in this book, however, deal with the body and

Qi/prana aspects of cultivation since this discussion is usually neglected. In order to succeed at enlightenment quickly you must cultivate both emptiness and life force, both empty mind (a mind that does not cling to thoughts) and Qi/ prana. If you don't cultivate your Qi/vitality through various qi-gong and internal nei-gong practices then it will be impossible to produce the subtle deva body that is the basis for higher attainments.

You must cultivate both your Qi (life) and the essential nature of your mind (emptiness) to attain enlightenment. Through cultivating both you will attain the subtle energy deva body and other bodies very quickly, but please know that this also requires empowering blessings of other enlightened beings who must lend you energy to move your Qi. This is why you perform special practices that enlightened beings would know about when you cultivate them such as reciting mantras or holy texts, reciting the names of past enlightened masters, and visiting special places where enlightened beings are always paying attention in order to see people that they might be able to help.

If you follow schools such as Zen or Vedanta without knowing that *you must also cultivate your body (Qi)* then it is rare to become enlightened. Most people think that enlightenment is the result of some mental thought realization such as Archimedes' "Eurkea!", but this is wrong. They don't realize that anyone becoming enlightened through Zen, Vedanta or any other intellectual tradition were developing and using spiritual bodies but weren't telling people. Reading the teachings of these schools without realizing this fact will certainly mislead you, especially since these schools describe the spiritual path only in terms of consciousness attainments rather than the body attainments discussed.

To delineate spiritual progress, Buddhism also has the ten Bodhisattva bhumis, which are stages of enlightenment attainment. Few know the secret that each set of two bhumis represent a dhyana and body achievement, with five achievements in total.

Hence, the first and second bhumi, or **Very Joyous** and **Freedom from Defilement (Stainless or Pure)**, correspond to the Srotapanna Arhat, who has attained the first dhyana and the subtle body attainment. When you finally emerge in a deva (subtle) body you are extremely joyful, and hence the name Very Joyous. Stainless refers to your mind as compared to the mental state of a human. In Vajrayana this stage is simply known as "empty."

As you know by now, joy is also one of the roads you can take in order to cultivate the first dhyana attainment. When you stir up your Qi, you always try to be joyful. Thus joyful sex can be used on the path to help you attain the first dhyana (but not higher) if you learn how to use it to stir up your Qi while cultivating extreme joy at the same time. This is a method

used in Taoism, Vajrayana and the Kaula schools of India.

The third and fourth Bodhisattva bhumis are called **Luminous (Radiant)** and **Brilliant Wisdom (Blazing)** respectively. The names refer to light because the Sakrdagamin Arhat (second dhyana attaine) can now reach the second dhyana heavens of Limited Radiance, Unbounded Radiance and Streaming Radiance. Their Qi refinement of their subtle body is a little bit better than that of the Srotapanna Arhat, but it is still a subtle body of just Qi.

Since the second dhyana is characterized by a more refined stage of joy, bliss and emptiness than the first dhyana, this is symbolized by the infinite loving-kindness meditation taught in Buddhism. If you cultivate a more subtle state of joy and bliss than just exciting joy (by using the route of immeasurable love or kindness meditation), this prepares you to attain the Qi of the second dhyana.

The fifth and sixth Bodhisattva bhumis are named **Difficult to Conquer** and **Manifesting Prajna-Wisdom**. The name Difficult to Conquer indicates that it is very difficult to attain the Causal or Mental body made of Shen from an effusion out of the lower subtle body of Qi that corresponds to the first and second dhyana. The jump to this body is difficult just as it is difficult to jump from the coarse human body to the subtle Qi body.

There is even a Buddha named Sudurijaya (Difficult to Conquer), who represents the fifth of the ten bhumis where an Arhat has overcome the worst difficulties to attain the Mental-Causal-Shen body from the subtle Qi body attainment. In Vajrayana Buddhism this is the “pure illusory body” attainment; only the pure illusory body is pure enough to attain the mind stream purity of the enlightened Arhat represented by the seventh bhumi.

The Mental body is composed of an entirely new substance than Qi, which is a higher energy substance called Shen, and corresponds to the third dhyana attainment. Once again, it is hard to reach this attainment from the second dhyana. Vast superpowers become available upon this attainment because you can then roam about in a higher subtle plane of existence. When you reach the highest stage of the third dhyana, you can attain the **samadhi of infinite space** that corresponds to the stage of Clearly Manifest; your mind is very empty (Vajrayana calls this the great empty, as explained) and quiet yet knows everything within it. When you try to cultivate yourself as bodiless awareness this is like trying to cultivate the samadhi of infinite space.

The seventh and eighth Bodhisattva bhumis match with the fourth dhyana of the Arhat and are named **Far-reaching (Proceeding Afar)** and

Attaining Calm (Immovable). Far-reaching refers to the fact that at this stage of enlightenment your mind is everywhere, which refers to the **samadhi of infinite consciousness**; those who attain enlightenment often speak of universal oneness, which is far-reaching or infinite since the Clear Light Qi energy (Later Heavenly Qi or fundamental wind) permeates everything as a fundamental substrate. The stage Immovable refers to the **samadhi of nothingness**, which is the Yin aspect of the moving *alaya* consciousness. It is a state of inert non-movement of consciousness, namely no-thought. In the samadhi of infinite nothingness the mind seems non-existent, like an absolute vacuum, and since there are no thoughts we call the stage Immovable. It is a stage of thoughtlessness, totally absent of thoughts, where the world seems to disappear.

The ninth and tenth bhūmis are named **Finest Discriminatory Wisdom** and **Dharma Cloud**. For these progressive steps you attain the Earlier Heavenly Qi body that is higher than the Clear Light body, and which corresponds to complete Buddhahood. Ramalinga Swamigal calls this stage Immaculate. The attendant mental attainment that matches with this is said to be the Tao, or original nature – you have reached the most fundamental essence of the mind. At this stage you transcend the *alaya* consciousness but can still know the thoughts of all sentient beings. Your mind is also perfectly clear, so thus you have very Good Discrimination (Finest Discriminatory Wisdom). As a Full Buddha who has completed the path you can now teach everyone by raining down teachings everywhere; you become a Cloud of Dharma offering blessings and teachings.

Since the fundamental nature, Parabrahman, original essence, True Self or Tao is described as a foundational energy state being so pure it is empty of other energies, its opposite is the entire realm of manifestation, or Shakti. Shakti is also another name for the realm of manifestation, or Cloud of Dharma.

In the *Surangama Sutra* there are higher bhūmis still, as well in Vajrayana Buddhism, which means there are higher stages you can cultivate past even this. However, but most religions only take people to the Early Heavenly Qi body and equate it with Perfect and Complete Enlightenment or Full Buddhahood. Actually the spiritual path extends onwards, but this is as far as masters describe until you reach the higher achievements, at which point the relevant teachings are given on how to progress further.

Thus you can see that Buddhism explains the spiritual path or stages of enlightenment in many different ways. For instance, the four dhyana match with the four immeasurables. They match with the four blisses and empties of Vajrayana. They match with the Bodhisattva bhūmis (almost no one knows this). They match with body attainments.

The spiritual path is usually described through the aspect of consciousness so that people cultivate meditation and detachment of thoughts which gives rise to Qi movement, but this book has dealt with the body attainments that are also achieved. I believe the body vehicle explanation is superior and more motivational. In the end, however, attainment is just a matter of spiritual yoga.

You don't have to study lots of dharma to get enlightened, which is why countless individuals from Judaism, Islam, Christianity, Confucianism, Sikhism and other religions without deep cultivation teachings also attain the stage of a saint and gain the Tao. In essence, *the spiritual path is just a path of Yoga* so you don't need all these teachings. They are there only to help, but not absolute guides. What you really need is Yoga practice, and especially inner energy work.

In order to succeed you don't need to know a lot of theory about consciousness. You just need to let go of thoughts (practice detachment or non-clinging while letting thoughts always arise) because that is the primary requirement to progress from the physical body to the subtle body attainment, the subtle body to the Causal body and so on. You have to both meditate by letting go of thoughts while practicing witnessing, and also do lots of Yoga energy work to create a new body out of the previous body.

Only if you let go of all the things arising within consciousness can you cultivate a body that is a higher essence or energy substance than its lower manifestations and emanations. The spiritual path is therefore all just a path of devoted Yoga to change the Qi and Qi channels of your body at each and every level of existence.

If you just use the energy practices in this book alone, you have a greater chance to succeed than using most other pathways. You can also use these exercises along with any tradition since they are non-denominational.

CHAPTER 5: VARIETIES OF FOUNDATIONAL CULTIVATION PRACTICE

The question of which road of spiritual practice to follow in life is extremely important. First and foremost, you need to understand that the ultimate purpose of spirituality is that you want to start working towards the deva body attainment since it is the initial fruit of all further spiritual achievements, and this involves purifying your Qi/Prana. The independent subtle body attainment requires devoted meditation work, inner Qi/Prana exercises, and other spiritual practices.

Second, if you don't succeed at this attainment during life, you still want to have made progress from your efforts and secured advantages from all your cultivation efforts in as many dimensions as possible. You should think of the possible benefits from cultivation practice in terms of improving your basic personality/character by cultivating and instilling within yourself higher virtues and values; ennobling your behavior while working towards consummate conduct; improving your health and well-being, energy and the physical capabilities of your body; perfecting your thinking processes and cognitive skills; increasing your wisdom and enlarging your mental perspectives due to study (learning) and new experiences; developing useful skills that would serve you in many lives; and basically bettering your present living conditions and relationships while performing compassionate acts of kindness and merit for others that thereby improve your future karma too.

If you think of yourself according to the realization of enlightenment – that you are a conscious animal with mental and physical skills that can be perfected, that you can develop four separate higher transcendental bodies with different powers, that you are ultimately a collection of simples in a

special agglomerated pattern which produces a type of imperfect and limited sentience, that you are essentially an intersectional node of infinite interdependent conditions within which there is no intrinsic or inherent self, that you are a drop within Shakti or *are* the entirety of Shakti, that you are part of the aggregate consciousness of the body of Shakti, that you are the original nature – then by taking these views into account it becomes easier to determine what activities will give meaning to your life and what you should devote yourself to pursuing across countless lives of incarnations. Your decisions as to goals, aspirations, vows, pledges, or commitments of activity are something you should start working towards now via the process of cultivation.

At the same time you are spiritually cultivating - even if you are just a humble monk, nun, yogi, sadhu and so forth within a monastic tradition - you should also be working on skills acquisition, knowledge and experience acquisition, and self-perfection. You can truly improve yourself along these several lines during life. You can really attain a degree of mastery and accomplishment in these areas whereas the deva body attainment may still be out of reach. Hence, while working for the deva body attainment whose achievement is questionable during your lifetime since so few attain it, you should also work towards *what you definitely can achieve*, and that is development of yourself and mastery of useful skills.

Hence, while you are working towards the initial fruit of the path you should also be working on mundane worldly accomplishments that require skill development so that your life is not wasted because you end having mastered new skills. At the end of your life you want to be able to look back and see that you have created lots of merit, mastered some very useful skills, and polished your personality and behavior so that you can carry these characteristics forward into a new life.

This is why many people who cultivate also learn yoga, martial arts, natural medicine, the active literacies, music and artistic skills, cooking skills, farming skills, wise merit-making, and so forth while training in spiritual cultivation. They don't want to be useless people who only know how to pray or meditate. They also study special topics such as psychology, human behavior, management, leadership, persuasion, inventiveness and creativity, relationships, economics and history. They work on improving their personalities, which are their "properties" as living objects/processes, such as by eliminating their bad habits, inculcating new virtues, polishing their behavior and so on.

Therefore, during the many years that you will cultivate you want to be developing useful skills that will be valuable even if you don't succeed. You want to be doing good deeds, perfecting your behavior to prevent wrongs, devoting yourself to self-mastery and self-improvement, and changing your personality in a permanently positive way so that you are changing your

fortune for the better in this life and for subsequent lives. You especially want to be developing higher values and better character traits that will let you both enjoy life and contribute.

Spiritual cultivation actually comes down to not one practice, such as prayer or mantra, but a *collection* of practices you should engage in. For excellent cultivation results you should be practicing several different techniques (exercise types) simultaneously according to a schedule. The question is then, “Which techniques should I use and how should I incorporate them into a schedule?”

What cultivation activities or exercises should you practice? There are special foods you can eat and diets you can follow to attain better health, and you can fast at specific times for detoxification purposes or to force yourself to triumph over your physical urges and survive on your inner Qi/Prana. You should engage in pranayama breath retention practices several times per day. You should also pray or mantra *every day* as well, and use different mantras to call for Qi purification assistance from different masters and their students, which is what different prayers do too. You should meditate every day using formless meditations. You should watch your behavior with mindfulness practice. You should do inner Qi work (*anapana, nei-gong, neijiaquan, kriya* or kundalini yoga, etcetera) that involves moving your Qi/Prana through willpower while doing visualization efforts. If you are in a committed relationship you can practice sexual cultivation to help transform your Qi/Prana. You can also visit special places where there are many spiritual masters (who will invisibly work on your Qi), or time your cultivation efforts to take advantage of special astronomical and/or astrological phenomena to make use of an extra boost in power to your efforts at Qi (kundalini) cultivation.

Christian monks on Mount Athos, for instance, would do lots of extra ascetic practices once they got “noetic prayer” to start working, meaning that the kundalini transformation had begun and they were feeling their internal Qi movements, experiencing special mental and emotional states, and sometimes experiencing their Hesychast prayers being automatically recited inside them on their own (because unbeknownst to them the devas were internally working on their Qi and reciting them).

For the best results it is always best to have an enlightened master nearby who will oversee such practice efforts. A very large variety of cultivation practices are possible, and each spiritual school has its own traditional techniques.

It is quite misleading to think that virtuous living and good behavior together with meditation are the only spiritual practices you should do if you want your kundalini transformation to begin and you want quick results. You also need to engage in Qi transformation practices, which means inner energy work. These are practices that will move the Qi within

your body. This is the basis of the transformations that will purify and strengthen the integrity of your body's internal Qi structure.

Nyasa Yoga is all about a variety of such techniques, but there are countless others available in the world. For instance, Hesychasts and bhakti adherents (like Ramakrishna) end up deeply weeping during worship, which therefore moves their Yin Qi in a very significant way. Or, they become elated with joy and rapture (which moves their Yang Qi) like the "Fools for Christ" or Krishna bhakti adherents. These are just two examples of the many techniques available in the world to cultivate your Yin Qi and Yang Qi. It is the Yin Qi cultivation techniques that most people do not understand.

What are some other practices or principles of practice that will help you understand this entire genre of internal energy practice techniques? *Nyasa Yoga* is entirely about this topic. You can use your thoughts and willpower to try to move your Qi/Prana. You can use your emotions to try to stimulate your Qi/Prana, and then you need to either saturate your body with that Qi or move it in various ways to affect even more Qi channels.

You can use the sounds and the rhythms of singing, prayers, hymns, *dhiker (zikr)*, *kirtans* or mantra repetitions to help move your Qi. The songs, mantras, prayers etcetera you choose are each attended to by different families of Buddhas and their students who will come to work on you when you ardently pursue such cultivation methods. You can heighten that type of practice by adding visualization and emotional energy to your efforts in various ways.

You can also move your Qi/Prana during sexual congress with another person, giving rise to the attendant emotions of joy, excitement and bliss that will excite your Qi into movement.

Another practice is to ask heavenly beings to help move your Qi/Prana during reverence practices of worship, which they will do when you practice particular ceremonies, tantric sadhanas, concentrations, visualizations, meditations, mantras, prayers and so on.

As you can see, there are all sorts of methods that past masters have invented to move your Qi so that its stimulated movement can start purifying your inner etheric subtle body. Some practices will give rise to Yang Qi purification, but you also need to purify your Yin Qi. This is why "negative" emotions of fright, anxiety, worry, sadness, depression and so forth will sometimes arise on the cultivation path. Spiritual beings are often provoking them without your knowledge. These "negative experiences" are necessary for you to be able to progress to higher stages of attainment. They must all be managed with propriety; you should not give way to emotional excess in any way and end up hurting yourself, breaking the rules of human relationships, breaking the law and so forth when you suffer through such things. The *Surangama Sutra* clearly warns you against this.

Devas who help you through this process can be assholes who take you to extremes, as *asuras* usually do, so you really need a good master to help you navigate such experiences. Some spiritual traditions have abusive lineages, such as Tibetan Buddhism that I consider power-seeking *tribal lamaism* or arrogant lama tribalism, so be careful which masters you choose to follow. In the last year of the twelve-year kundalini transformation process that produces the subtle body (the independent spirit body that can leave the individual's physical body at will), this tradition is particularly abusive. It is beyond abusive, especially to those *who are not monks within the tradition*. These individuals will not then take up positions within the management hierarchy, hence need not be protected. This tradition during the last year will *torture* participants with internal pings and the feelings of scratches, searing pains, bites on the penis tip, wiggles inside the scrotum, feelings of body parts being locked up (such as the hips) and many other types of unbearable pain, particularly within the genitals, hips, eyelids, ears and other body parts that are most sensitive. Other traditions do this somewhat, but this male-dominated tradition is abusive in the extreme. The masters always has excuses for their deviations from discipline, compassion and all-inclusiveness. Basically, for them it is just plain fun.

One of the problems is that during the years of purifying your Qi/Prana through rotations, where devas must use their own Qi energy to rotate yours, they do the trunk of the body and limbs but not the toes and feet; fingers and hands; fingernails; toenails and hair; scrotum and penis; teeth and gums; nose and nasal cavity; ears and ear canal; eyes. These are left to last, and especially the genital organs. Now in the final year of transformation, when the genitalia have to purified since they were ignored previously and “catch up” is due, the junior devas want to ping you (give you a bit of discomfort or pain) for having to put their genitalia organs within yours to move the Qi within yours to finish the purification process. They will use their Qi to annoyingly play with your asshole (you might sit on a rolled up sock when this happens to lessen the discomfort), wiggle the inside of your testicles, make it feel as if you must scratch the deepest parts of the inside of the scrotum, scratch the lower belly area above the scrotum with their Qi, freeze your hips so that they are painfully locked (because they compress and harden their Qi within them), make you feel the Qi within part of your ear so that you have to scratch its inside, run their Qi like a vein of water through the eyelid, make you feel spots of icy cold Qi at points in the body, and do all sorts of other Qi tricks to your body to arouse negative emotions. No wonder masters don't talk about what they went through during the kundalini process. This is all allowed so that deva students can display their skills and be rated as to their level of talent.

The pinging, scratching, and other pains are “supposed” to cause you to generate Yin Qi in the genitalia (or body) from the feelings of pain,

forlornness, helplessness and so forth thus generated, but unsupervised devas go overboard as they always will. Everyone wants to have fun torturing you, and if you have a lousy master he will let them do it more to you than average. Furthermore, the idea that they are “causing your Yin Qi to arise” is just camouflage for the glee that powerful people sometimes feel when they oppress others by inflicting pain on people who can’t protect themselves because they have fewer bodies. They justify themselves as just “being naughty” rather than harmful since “everyone goes through it and I did too.” If your Yin Qi is really being purified in a region then the area will feel cool or cold.

What’s really happening is that in the first eleven years of the process the deva students would try to generate negative emotions in you via thoughts, but their teacher would suppress those reactions. In this last year they are allowed to give you pain to generate negative emotions, and the master similarly tries to suppress them to assess their skill level. Hence you will suffer terribly in this last year, just as recorded by the many accounts of Christian saints who described some of the stages of going through this entire twelve-year process.

Heaven is filled with people just like you and me, not those who are ethically better or “spiritually mature.” Masters are regular people, including lots of mediocre talents, who are just a little better than others ethically and morally, but who have the same faults, failings and emotions as us. They simply worked hard at Qi/Prana Yoga, which many underwent through religious practices that cultivated their Qi/Prana, to attain the transcendental body achievements. In short, don’t expect heavenly beings to be better than humans when it comes to issues of money, power, abuse and so forth.

In any case, devas and masters have had to work on you constantly for eleven years, and now some want to play with you at a new level while provoking your Yin Qi through despair and frustration, or your Yang Qi through anger and irritation. They don’t care about you. They just care about getting credit for proving they have attained some particular skill where you are used as the testing ground. How we cheat ourselves, as to how ethically clean we are or how our acts are justified, regardless of our level of existence!

All cultivators, especially yogis and monks, should therefore make special cultivation efforts to cultivate the Qi of these body parts *all the time*, especially the genitalia. From thermographic images that show circulatory inefficiencies/problems in the hands and feet, one can surmise that the hands, feet, toes and fingers are the *rate limiting* parts of the body that slow up the cultivation of other body parts. In these appendages the Qi circulation is stagnant or slow, and the restrictions of poor Qi flow in these regions therefore affect the body’s overall Qi flow and circulation.

Therefore you should use yoga, Pilate, activated isolated stretching and various *qi-gong* and other methods to practice increasing blood and Qi circulation to these extremities. If not fully open, they restrict the flow of Qi throughout the entire body system just as a traffic jam on one small part of a road slows up traffic flow elsewhere. Other areas that are commonly neglected include the eyes, ears, and tongue-teeth-palate complex. Even if you don't succeed in spiritual cultivation during life to generate the deva body composed of subtle Qi, after death you will still have to cultivate your spirit body and especially these parts, so it is absolutely essential to add them to your regular *qi-gong* and *nei-gong* exercise routine. It is a pity that the monks in countless traditions are not given this advice.

As to the male genitalia of scrotum and penis, Taoism offers various exercises to cultivate this region's Qi while the yoga school offers various exercises for the hips and genitalia as well. The key is not just to stretch the muscles in these regions, but also to practice circulating more Qi flow through the genitalia throughout their entire shape. To cultivate the Qi of the genitalia, one method Taoism teaches is that a man who is having sex with a woman should lead his Qi through his sexual organs while resting in her vagina (to cultivate it) during coitus, and she is supposed to lead her Qi into her vagina as well. This is called "dual cultivation."

To do this practice both loving partners, holding one another in sexual embrace, should imagine that they are one unity that shares a single Qi flow. While doing the practice, both partners should hold up their anus and perineum slightly during the process. Exhaling, the man leads the Qi from his body into his groin (scrotum and penis). The female partner inhales during his exhalation, and leads/pulls the Qi into her groin/vagina. When the woman exhales while the man is inhaling, she leads the Qi to nourish her groin/vagina while the man can slightly pull the Qi from his sexual organs into his body, but he should not try to forcibly pull the energy of the female into his body. Only high stage practitioners can pull a little of the Qi from their partner if they are sharing it in return. The pulling of Qi away from a region within your body is basically a way to artificially cultivate the Yin Qi in that area due to a Qi deficiency, so in this way the man cultivates his Yin Qi through retraction when surrounded by the Qi of the female. There are several other alternatives and variations to this technique that involve mutual absorption, but we cannot go into them. The key principle is not to try to steal the energy from your partner by forcefully sucking it from them because this can hurt them.

Men following Taoist teachings who wish to cultivate the Qi of the genitalia also often hang weights from their scrotum to practice the "transformation of Jing to Qi," but the only real purpose of this dangerous exercise is to stretch the muscles. By stretching the muscles, as done in yoga practice, one allows for better Qi flow to those tissues. There is no real

transformation of Jing to Qi, just as there is no such thing either when Aghora yogis practice rolling their penis on a stick to stretch it.

A surgeon once told me that he could not count the number of operations he has had to perform on men to fix the ligaments in the scrotum that were torn by men following the dangerous Taoist weight-hanging practice. Since simple massage of the genitalia, as taught in Taoist *Xi Sui Jing Qigong*, will create better Qi and blood flow, this is far superior to potentially harmful and debilitating “hanging weight off the scrotum or penis” exercises, that in my opinion should be avoided.

Two much better exercises are as follows, which are based on the practice of *Wo*, or holding the scrotum in the hand. One technique is to cup the testicle and penis with both hands, use both hands to hold up the testicles and then use the thumbs to lightly press and rub them. You would also roll the penis between the palms, and stretch any ligaments or tissues within the scrotum that you can. This includes massage methods for the penis and scrotum such as *long zhu zhang gong*, *long jin shen qi-gong*, *long jin zhan qi-gong*, *shou dao gong*, *shou pai gong* and *zhuan zhu gong* that you can learn in texts such as Yang Jwing-ming’s *Qigong the Secret of Youth*. Naturally you would rub your hands together to warm them before massaging.

The second *Wo* method is to sit on a chair where your genitals hang loose. You hold the penis with one hand with the palm facing down. Then you inhale, drawing in your abdomen and penis *tighter and tighter*. With the yoga exercise of *navli kriya* you suck in your abdomen against the spine as tightly as possible, and with *mula bandha* you press the pelvic muscles from various angles to stretch them, but with this method you work primarily on the genitalia. While inhaling, you pull in your penis as tight as possible while holding up your anus and perineum slightly since this helps in the retraction (that stretches the internal muscles, tissues and ligaments). In Taoism this is called “withdrawing the turtle” or “withdrawing the sword.” You repeat this at least ten times with one hand and then repeat ten times with the other.

Celibacy helps with opening up the Qi channels within the tissues of the genitalia. Men feel pressure inside when they don’t ejaculate after many days, but that pressure is in part evidence that their Qi is working on opening up (washing or transforming) the tissues of the genitalia. If you work very hard at yoga transformation techniques, the pressure will not build up inside the hips, pelvis and waist because you will be sending your vital energy to open up the Qi channels in other tissues throughout your body. Furthermore, if you make it a habit to hold your energy in your *dantian* (lower abdomen) as taught in martial arts, you will start transforming the flesh above the genitalia. This will significantly cut down on the painful experiences you’ll suffer in this area, above the genitalia, during the last year of the kundalini transformation. It occurs right before you are ready to attain the deva body or “get out” (“like a bird who escapes his cage”) after

experiencing pains and attacks from devas working on this region that amount to what I would call physical torture.

How do you maintain your celibacy *and* cultivate your pelvic region and surrounding tissues? Through lots of regional stretching exercises, pranayama, mantra work, and other Qi-work practices (*nei-gong*). When sexual desires become too strong and cannot be ignored, I remember the advice of Elder Joseph the Hesychast who wrote telling monks to beat their legs or other body parts with a rattan cane bundle, or something similar (bamboo or rattan strips about one and a half feet long that are bound at one end), because the discomfort would distract them until the sexual urges dissipated (or they fell asleep if such urges appeared while they were in bed). Beating increase Qi flow and blood flow to an area. Devoted martial artists beat their body parts strongly via various techniques to strengthen those parts or make their Qi rise to their skin, so the method should not sound so preposterous. For combatting sexual desire, however, the level of force need not be adamant but only needs to be what is required to cause distraction.

Basically, there are no secret cultivation methods held by any tradition, whether Tibetan Buddhism, Buddhism, Nath yoga, Hinduism, Aghora, Taoism, Shintoism and so on. For “enlightenment” you have to meditate and do an awful lot of repetitive exercises to move the Qi everywhere within your body, washing the tissues with your own Qi/Prana just as you would work out in martial arts every day. If you are lucky enough to have the right karma, you will have the Twelve Year kundalini transformation period start happening (because masters think you are ready) and afterwards you will attain the deva body, which is your subtle body that is strengthened and purified enough that it can leave your physical shell and travel the world at will. In that body you have to do similar inner Qi work to attain the Causal body, and then in your Causal body you will have to do similar work to attain the Supra-Causal body. When you attain this “formless” enlightenment body, which is called “formless” since its structure seems devoid of the heavier elements of form that comprised the lower bodies, you then have the “mind of enlightenment” or “*bodhi* mind.” *You are not going to get this attainment by meditation alone*, which is a misconception born by the Zen school that has mislead people. You have to do a lot of inner energy work as well. The enlightenment mind is a body attainment. It is a yoga attainment in that you have to work on attaining a transcendental body and the attendant, concomitant mind comes with it. The resolve to “realize *bodhi* (the enlightenment mind)” is the resolve to attain the Supra-Causal body. How misleading are yoga texts describing supreme bliss that comes from meditation, or Zen texts that have people looking for their original nature in meditation!

Thus, you need to attain the *sambhogakaya* to achieve the enlightenment

mind. It is not that you attain the “*bodhi* mind” from devoted emptiness meditation efforts and then get the *sambhogakaya* (these bodies). Rather, you get these body attainments and then with the Supra-Causal body you finally have *bodhi* mind capabilities that come at that stage of attainment. So, never fall for the story that the Christian, Jewish, Moslem, and other religions don’t produce enlightened adepts, because they do through their training techniques, especially in their monasteries. Two such examples for Christianity include Mount Athos in Greece and the Optina monastery in Russia that have produced countless enlightened saints. Don’t fall for the story that the eastern schools are higher either, because they aren’t. They don’t have any secret methods, just methods that may be more efficient or quicker for Qi transformation at some stages. But during the Twelve Year period, since most of the transformative work on your body is done by spiritual masters and their students, this means that the only real issue is doing an awful lot of preparation work to make the process occur earlier, being associated with an enlightened master from a qualified tradition (since he or she will be supplying the army of devas and masters who will have to work on you), and to work on your body during the process to make it go quicker as well. Some of the traditions are easier or more attractive than others, and this all depends on your preference.

The abusive Tibetan, Bhutanese, Nepalese and Bon traditions will allow devas to give you endless pains that are the equivalent of torture in the last year of the Twelve Years, and of no benefit to you. They simply want to demonstrate that they have these skills to the assembled audience, or try to arouse negative emotions within you through pain, and which the main teacher will try to suppress in a test of skills. You will experience “fairly brushing” on your skin, Qi intrusions into your ear, pings inside your scrotum and balls, and wiggles inside your asshole. Only a few of the pains are designed to redirect Yin and Yang Qi into the penis and pelvic area to actually open up its Qi channels, so it is better to do lots of cultivation work within the hips and genitalia prior to this period via yoga practices, Taoist exercises and the soft martial arts that teach you to guide the Qi throughout your body including this region.

In short, the Tibetan, Bhutanese, Nepalese and Bon traditions are so “upstairs” abusive during the Twelve Years that I cannot highly recommend them. The fact that you can end up hurting yourself or getting into trouble during the Twelve Year kundalini transformation period is why most individuals go into retreat locked away from society. Some go into retreat far away from cities because the inaccessibility limits the ability for trouble-making devas to visit and cause anguish in their upstairs training practices, whereas higher level masters will still come to work on your Qi. In retreat, students going through the process try to keep themselves busy with constant prostrations, prayers, visualization practices, yoga and martial

arts exercises and so forth.

The Turkish master Sheikh Sharafuddin ordered his student Abdullah Fa'izi ad-Daghestani into retreat (*khalwat*) just six months after Abdullah got married, and for five years he did exercises *in seclusion* to “raise his spiritual rank” until the First World War. After breaking retreat to serve and then returning home, the Sheikh ordered him into retreat for another five years to complete his Twelve Years of kundalini transformation, thus becoming Sheikh Abdullah. This is yet another example of how future masters often go into retreat for the transformation period, and can even break their seclusion due to wordly responsibilities, but the process continues whether you are in the world or in retreat.

Because of such work at purifying/transforming their Qi/Prana, spiritual practitioners tend to live longer in “Heaven” than ordinary people who pass away, and it is simply because they engaged in enough spiritual practice during their lifetime that the integrity of their subtle body was strengthened and its compositional substance, Qi or Prana, was purified. Regular people have “weak Qi” upon death whereas a spiritual practitioner has strong Qi and an adept has exceptionally strong Qi/Prana, which is why they can leave their bodies at will. This is one of the reasons religions stress *brahmacarya*, or celibacy, for when men ejaculate they lose their Qi/Prana that is necessary for strengthening the integrity of their subtle body. Your Qi/Prana is constantly rotating inside your body to strengthen your subtle body’s integrity, which insures that you don’t dissipate upon death due to its survival, and celibacy (in men) prevents the loss of this integrity-strengthening Qi. Even ordinary people who simply follow the regular road of religious practices (ordinary Church services, ceremonies, etc.) without engaging in the yogic intensified efforts will tend to have better Qi bodies in Heaven than others if, while so engaged, they participate wisely in spiritual activity so that they purify their Qi/Prana during that short period of time.

Since spiritual practice involves attaining the ability to eject your body double, made of Qi/Prana, out of your body whilst alive, and since this is the long-lived body you will have upon death, it therefore makes sense that spiritual practice should focus more on the body than we are told. You don’t need to, but a really smart practitioner at the stage of intensified practices will consistently undertake muscle stretching exercises such as yoga, Pilates, Natural Gymnastics (*Ginastica Natural*), martial arts or dance. The instructions within Kelly Staret’s *Becoming a Supple Leopard* can also help you learn how to become more flexible and move correctly.

In the best of all worlds you want to establish a base of fitness and general physical preparedness for your body, which is general conditioning that pursues flexibility, agility, speed, strength and endurance. Training yourself physically involves stretching most of all. As a spiritual practitioner you do not have to develop into a world-class athlete, but there are some

useful options to consider such as a basic proficiency in the martial arts, yoga, sports or athletics. If you hurt yourself in these activities there are healing modalities such as nutrition, chiropractic, yoga, and the AMIT method that can help you repair your body.

Another issue is that many individuals, before they become masters, get so physically sick or depleted from extremes of ascetic practice that they must return home from their monastery, ashram, and so forth to get well before they can continue their cultivation work. The tendency to neglect their health on the spiritual path, and to attempt ascetic extremes, usually plays a role in their deterioration.

I'll put it to you plainly, bluntly in fact: do not ignore, overwork or abuse your body on the road of religion and spiritual cultivation. Do not over tax it or hurt it in any way since its spiritual duplicate is the product of the path. You must not ignore it but must take care of its welfare and try to cultivate it to a state of optimal health. Then your practices will produce better fruit, even though people think that extreme fasting, mortification, self-denial and asceticism are the best way. Since the product of the spiritual path is a Qi-copy of your physical body, the basic fact is that you need it to remain in excellent health.

Many hermits, recluses, anchorites, celibates, desert cultivators, monks and nuns fall into the trap of unnecessary asceticism that involves extreme privation and self-mortification. Others physically suffer from privation because no one supports them or takes care of them. It would be great merit for you to do so when you find such individuals, who often do not see clearly through their situation because of their ardor at cultivation. No one should engage in ascetic extremes throughout the process of spiritual cultivation. There is just no benefit in torturing or hurting your body since that is the template of the spirit body you will arise with upon success in the deva body attainment.

There are a variety of cultivation methods within normal religious practices such as the traditional types of ceremonial reverence that are the essence of bhakti or devotional worship. Some people recite prayers to quiet their mind during attendance of a religious ceremony such as a church service. Some people sit quietly and offer their thoughts and worries over to God, which is another type of meditation practice. Some people spend their time studying religious dogma and teachings, but if they don't engage in other spiritual practices they can never attain the fruit of the path regardless of how hard they study.

Some people conduct themselves according to strict codes of conduct as a means of cultivating their mind, but this sort of discipline ignores the necessity of body cultivation. Others simply watch their behavior with mindfulness, as did Yuan Liao Fan and Ben Franklin, in order to cut off errant ways and cultivate more virtuous conduct instead. They condition or

“retrain” their minds to develop new habit energies in place of old ones of lesser value. They practice witnessing meditation (watchfulness or mindfulness) in various forms, sharpening their ability to naturally be aware of their thought-stream so that they can transcend its defilements and make wiser decisions. Others simply practice being a kind, magnanimous, generous human being who provides charity to others, performs volunteer work or provides countless offerings that are a blessing. Offering kindness to others, whether it takes the form of good words, attention, smiles, encouragement, food or other forms of help and assistance, is one of the greatest gifts you can make to another human being.

Remember that one of the keys to happiness lies in the way we make others feel and how they make us feel. Therefore, consistently occupying ourselves with activities of charity and loving-kindness, which evoke feelings of happiness within ourselves, will not only gradually change our neural anatomy but also uplift our emotional set point for our steady-state level of positive moods and happiness. Such activities – and various immeasurable meditations consistently performed – will change our personality traits, which are the factors within us that predispose us to a certain level of well-being.

These are all valid cultivation methods that will win you a place in Heaven since they purify your mind, behavior and Qi, but they work at Qi purification without the explicit efforts at inner energy work. However, the greater practices have to do with straightforward inner energy work practiced together with meditation. Among just meditation practices alone we have a variety of techniques such as witnessing or mindfulness practice, empty mind (formlessness) practice, visualization and concentration practice, immeasurables practice and so forth.

Among Qi/Prana or inner energy work practices we have pranayama for cultivating your vital energy, which some schools call “breath” or “wind” instead of Qi, Prana, or vital energy. Mantrayana practice, which involves rhythmical sound repetitions together with moving your Qi in certain parts of your body, is one step up above simple mantra practice or prayer recitation. We also have all the kundalini Yoga type practices that work on purifying, transforming, cultivating your Qi/Prana such as Nyasa Yoga, *kriya* yoga, *anapana*, *neijiaquan*, *nei-gong*, inner alchemy, Naropa’s inner heat yoga and other inner energy work practices.

Even the martial arts and yoga have internal energy work practices. If you combine stretching, which is a form of body cultivation, with such inner energy practices then the transformations required to generate a deva body will also go much faster. The body you have now is what you will have upon death in terms of shape, so it makes sense to work on it a bit to expand its capabilities through yoga, martial arts, dance and the like.

As to practice schedules, monks and nuns can and should practice 5-6

hours a day if they can, and at the minimum 2 hours per day. Practice is boring, so commitment to practice requires some tricks to manage the human mind in order to keep the process fresh and interesting. Otherwise it will be difficult to maintain compliance with a practice schedule. The main trick is variety.

If in a temple, do what everyone else does according to the temple's practice schedule. However, varying your extra efforts according to the days of the week, and varying certain practices according to months, seasons, or things such as astronomical or astrological phenomena, will help you incorporate variety into your efforts and increase your potential for making quicker progress.

From: LOOK YOUNGER, LIVE LONGER
4 - Shakyamuni Buddha's Ten Methods
For Extraordinary Life Extension

The ancient Chinese Taoists were not the only ones concerned about the principles of health, longevity and life extension. Similar to the Chinese Taoists, nearly 2,500 years ago Shakyamuni Buddha gave a lecture on life extension in ancient India.

In this famous lecture that can be found in the *Surangama Sutra*, Shakyamuni also said that due to special practices, similar to those used by the Taoist Immortals, there were some individuals in the world who could live for hundreds or even thousands of years without dying. You usually wouldn't find them mixing with society but rather living by themselves in the forests or wilderness.

Shakyamuni said that in order to be able to achieve such dramatically long lives these individuals had to succeed at very special meditation practices, and needed also to draw help from one or more of ten major roads of assistance.

When you examine these ten roads of longevity, you will see that they are not just extremely logical but confirm both the Taoist recommendations for anti-aging as well as the findings of modern science. You can also rely upon one or more of these techniques to help you live longer, but for any of these methods to work you always must additionally practice meditation just as Immortal Li Qingyun had recommended.

The emphasis on meditation is due to the fact that only meditation practice has the power to cultivate the life force (Qi) of your body; strong and healthy Qi is the single most important requirement for an extremely long life. It is strange that few people know that. Cultivating your Qi is

actually the prime requirement for successful life extension efforts. Only through meditation and other related spiritual practices can you ignite the potential energy of the life force in your body, remove the obstructions to the Qi pathways throughout your body, and allow your life-extending Qi to flow smoothly everywhere since it will then be unencumbered by pathway blockages.

Successful meditation helps the body to become softer, warmer, more pliant and more flexible because the active life force starts opening up Qi channels in muscle fibers and cellular tissues. When the Qi life force flows unencumbered through your body's tissues everywhere, that freedom from obstruction cuts down on the frictional wear and tear losses that normally accompany aging. The greater flow of life force energy also actually heals you! Meditation does not just help you produce more life energy and restore your inner Qi levels. By transforming the physical body, which is the underlying matrix that supports mental health, it can help you cultivate a more optimistic mental state. With these achievements, any other anti-aging practices you employ can then have an opportunity to produce dramatic effects.

THE SURANGAMA SUTRA

What did Shakyamuni say in the *Surangama Sutra*? He said,

“Some practitioners with unflagging resolution cultivate longevity through **eating special foods** and perfecting the **diet** of what they eat. When they have perfected this method of cultivation, they are known as earth-bound immortals.

“Some of these practitioners with unflagging resolution to cultivate longevity **ingest special grasses and medicinal herbs** to preserve their bodies and live a long life. When they have perfected this method of cultivation, they are known as flying immortals.

“Some of these practitioners with unflagging resolution **ingest special minerals and stones** to preserve their bodies and live long lives. When they have perfected this method of alchemy, they are known as roaming immortals.

“Some of these practitioners with unflagging resolution to cultivate longevity cultivate themselves by **mastering their breathing and Qi**. When they have perfected their Qi and Jing, they are known as space immortals.

“Some of these practitioners with unflagging resolution to cultivate longevity **cultivate their saliva** [the “sweet dew” salivary hormones produced at advanced meditation levels] and perfect the way of internal lubrication. When they have perfected this method, they are known as heavenly immortals.

“Some of these practitioners with unflagging resolution to cultivate longevity make themselves strong by **absorbing the energy essences of the sun and moon**. When they have perfected the inhalation of this purity, they are known as penetrating immortals.

“Some of these practitioners with unflagging resolution to cultivate longevity use **mantras and special nei-gong (internal alchemy) cultivation techniques** to preserve their bodies. When they have perfected this means of cultivation, they are known as immortals of the lesser way.

“Some of these practitioners with unflagging resolution to cultivate longevity **master mental concentration** and perfect the way of **meditation** to preserve their bodies. When they have perfected their method of mental concentration, they are known as illumination immortals.

“Some of these practitioners with unflagging resolution to cultivate longevity **cultivate through sexual union** to help preserve their bodies and live a long life. When they have perfected this method of cultivation to achieve harmonization, they are known as Jing immortals.

“Some of these practitioners with unflagging resolution to cultivate longevity cultivate the understanding of **heavenly and earthly transformations** which they apply to their bodies. When they have perfected their spiritual cultivation, they are known as immortals of the highest order.”

Let’s take an in-depth look at these ten basic methods that Shakyamuni mentioned and see how they match with the recommendations from Taoism and modern science.

1. Special Foods and Perfecting the Diet

The first method of special practice, said Shakyamuni, is that you could follow a diet of ingesting special foods to achieve life extension. This would be following the Taoist life extension road of proper diet and supplementation.

From today’s modern nutritional science we would advise avoiding sugar-laden foods or foods that turn into glucose easily (such as the grains, rice, wheat and potatoes), foods that produce allergic reactions or sensitivities, GMO foods, bad fats rather than good fats, and junk foods which hurt your body rather than supply nutrients.

There are foods you should avoid and foods you should eat that would supply the nutrition most beneficial for health and life extension. If you avoid harmful foods and switch to an organic diet then it’s quite likely you will start to look years younger.

A life extension diet would not necessarily be vegetarian but would indeed be biased toward organic fruits and vegetables where the cornucopia of intake has many different colors (since the many colors indicate many

different phytonutrients). The easiest way to ensure this would be to ingest freshly squeezed juices or consume superfood green or red powders on a daily basis, possibly in conjunction with juicing, as previously explained.

Dr. David Williams also suggested that *nucleotide-rich foods* would be a useful addition to a diet since they readily supply the components necessary for RNA and DNA repair. Since many of the theories of aging have to do with chromosomal or mitochondrial errors and the need to fix both those errors and faulty repair mechanisms, flooding the diet with nucleotide foods that make repair easiest would be a wise course of action.

There are certainly foods that can also help avoid or manage conditions like cancer, heart disease, diabetes and other typical killers, but the general rule would be to eat in such a way as to attain and maintain good health. It is easy to say “eat healthy,” but there are so many competing notions on what type of diet is best (raw food, no sugar, no wheat, no GMOs, etc.) that it is difficult to separate wisdom from radicalism.

Along these lines I prefer the balanced food guidelines espoused by the Price Pottenger Foundation: eat whole, fresh, unprocessed (non-GMO) natural foods; eat only foods that will spoil; eat naturally raised or wild proteins (fish, chicken, beef, etc.); eat whole (full-fat), naturally produced milk products, preferably raw milk and fermented products such as whole yoghurt, kefir, whole cheese and fresh raw sour cream; use only traditional fats and oils (butter, animal fats, extra virgin olive oil, expeller pressed sesame and flax oil, coconut oil, palm kernel oil and palm oil); take cod liver oil regularly to supply your body with vitamin A and D; eat fresh fruits and vegetables, preferably organic; eat whole grains and nuts (that have been prepared by soaking, sprouting or sour leavening to begin to neutralize phytic acid and other anti-nutrients); include enzyme-rich lacto-fermented vegetables, fruits, beverages and condiments in your diet on a regular basis; prepare homemade meat stocks from the bones of naturally raised animals; use herb teas; use spring water or filtered water for cooking (and bathing); use unrefined sea salt; use a variety of organic herbs and spices for cooking; use unrefined and natural sweeteners (in only small amounts); cook in glass, stainless steel, or good quality enamelware.

2. Special Grasses and Medicinal Herbs

Shakyamuni Buddha’s second method of special longevity practice was to eat special herbs, plants and botanical substances for their biochemical benefits that would help with health and longevity.

The list of herbs with known special health and longevity benefits is growing on a daily basis, and science is busy researching their properties to determine how to use them. The trick is not just knowing what to consume, but when, how and in what quantities.

Immortal Li already called our attention to the possible life extension properties of Wolfberry (Goji), He Shou Wu (Chinese Knotweed or Fallopia Multiflora) and Reishi (*Ganoderma lucidum*) mushrooms, which help bolster your immunity. Chinese medicine has identified many other longevity herbs such as Schizandra, Dong Quai (*Angelicae Sinensis*) and Astragalus, which all have special pharmacological properties for health and healing.

Today we might also add “adaptogens” to the growing list of herbs to be investigated such as American Ginseng (*Panax quinquefolius*), Amalaki (*Emblia officinalis*), Ashwagandha (*Withania somnifera*), Asian Ginseng (*Panax ginseng*), Cordyceps (*Cordyceps sinensis*), Dang Shen (*Codonopsis pilosula*), Eleuthero (*Eleutherococcus senticosus*), Guduchi (*Tinospora cordifolia*), Haritaki (*Terminalia chebula*), Holy Basil (*Ocimum sanctum*), Jiaogulan (*Gynostemma pentaphyllum*), Licorice (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*), Long Pepper (*Piper longum*), Reishi (*Ganoderma lucidum*), Rhodiola (*Rhodiola rosea*), Schisandra (*Schisandra chinensis*), Shatavari (*Asparagus racemosus*), Siberian Ginseng (*Eleutherococcus senticosus*) and Tulsi (*Ocimum sanctum*).

From South America come special herbs such as Pau d’Arco, Cat’s Claw, Jergon Sacha, and Suma while North America offers Milk Thistle, Hawthorn berries, and Chaga which “contains the force of actual trees.” Even spices, like cinnamon and turmeric (containing Curcumin), have special longevity properties because they can play a role in the important task of managing your blood sugar level, which is implicated in life extension. There are thousands of other helpful herbs that can help your health in various ways, including life extension.

Indian Rasayana practices, geared towards producing longevity, commonly use Ashwaganda and Amalaki, the fruit of a citrus tree and one of the most powerful rejuvenation herbs in Ayurveda. Chyawanprash (whose main ingredient is Amalaki) is also an elaborate Ayurvedic combination of herbs, fruits and minerals you can buy that is especially designed for rejuvenation.

There are a large number of Indian Ayurvedic and Traditional Chinese Medicine anti-aging formulas that have been developed over the ages (but which lack any of the newer adaptogens or other helpful ingredients recently discovered) to help with our human efforts at producing health and longevity. The combination of compounds in these formulas is often quite effective even though the individual compounds often don’t have much activity on their own. This is why the avenue of mineral-herbal anti-aging efforts needs to have more research done on how to properly identify and combine useful ingredients to make them more effective and more powerful.

As time marches on the list of helpful longevity herbs or plant substances, such as resveratrol and Curcumin, will grow. The point is that

while meditation is essential in seeking longevity (because of its effects on your vital energy) your physical body needs special care and attention as well. For this purpose, special herbal plant substances can help. Special herbal substances can benefit your physical body biochemically so you should certainly use them to stay younger or become younger. You should look into using any anti-aging herbs or plants that have been scientifically discovered to be beneficial for health and longevity. However, while modern science might promote this avenue of assistance it totally ignores the primary emphasis Shakyamuni Buddha and Immortal Li placed on Qi cultivation, so while you should use supplements on the quest for longevity you also need to add meditation to your efforts as well.

3. Special Minerals and Stones

The third practice which Shakyamuni Buddha mentioned was ingesting special metals and minerals to help with life extension, which is a practice that immortality-seeking Taoists also highly recommended. This is not surprising since most people in ancient times were mineral deficient (especially as regards iron and iodine). Mineral deficiency is a great obstacle to life extension since minerals are the necessary building blocks and co-factors in many biochemical reactions. Any deficiencies would therefore be a barrier to life extension efforts.

The easy remedy to mineral deficiencies in the diet is to supplement with some form of easily absorbable minerals. The female Tibetan cultivator Yeshe Tsogyel, who lived well over one hundred years of age, wrote in her autobiography that she imbibed a substance called “chongshi” that she called the “essence of minerals.” She mentioned, “I used it in my continued practice of the alchemical metamorphosis of my body-mind,” meaning that she relied on a mineral substance for its health benefits.

What was this substance? It was the pitch substance shilajit, which is exuded from the rocks of the Himalayas. It contains at least 85 minerals in ionic form as well as fulvic acid and humic acid, to which are attributed many of its beneficial properties. A related substance available for consumption would be colloidal minerals derived from shale deposits whose toxic metal components, such as aluminum, have been removed.

While minerals are readily absorbed from vegetarian sources such as kelp and green/red superfoods, the products shilajit, colloidal mineral liquids and mineral concentrates (from companies such as Purest Colloids, Trace Minerals Research, Marine Minerals, Goldstake Minerals) provide a more easily assimilable alternative.

Even so, you must remember that minerals by and in themselves do not produce life extension. They only counter deficiencies in your diet and supplement your body’s mineral stores so that your biochemical reactions

can operate effectively. Supplementation prevents mineral deficiencies and thus in supplying minerals you aid your body's biochemical processes. This is how they affect life extension.

Once again, the real key to life extension is not minerals but meditation. This is why Taoist Lu Dong Bin once said, "As to the five special minerals and eight precious stones, yes they are good but I know that the Path is to cultivate emptiness. If I want to become an immortal, why should I use external herbs? There are much better ways. I can actually produce the wonderful medicinal life essence - Qi - in my own body."

The Taoist Immortal Lu Dong Bin was simply saying that the supreme medicines of longevity are Jing, Qi and Shen (body, life force and spirit). Jing converts into Qi naturally if it isn't lost and then Qi converts into Spirit, or mental force. Your clarity of thought and mind (Shen) certainly depends on the energy state of your body (Qi). Your Spirit (Shen or mental force) depends on your Qi to function. Your body needs to be filled with Qi to stay healthy and live long; if your Qi levels are insufficient you will get sick and experience decline. If you harmonize your Qi, you will save your Spirit. If you can make your Qi and Spirit work together then you can have longevity.

The true path to longevity therefore always involves meditation because of its beneficial effects on both our Qi and Spirit. Minerals just assist the biophysics of the body, made of Jing, to keep it operating harmoniously for this to happen.

4. Mastering Your Breath and Qi

Shakyamuni Buddha said that the fourth type of practice that can lead to longevity is performing breathing exercises, such as pranayama. Pranayama, and in particular the breath retention practices called kumbhaka, can help you to cultivate your Qi and open up your Qi channels. This is why they are commonly identified in eastern traditions as aids to any efforts at life extension.

The *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* of Indian Yoga contains many pranayama techniques, saying "Pranayama should be practiced daily so that impurities are driven out of the body and purification occurs. ... By proper practice of pranayama all your diseases will be eradicated. ... According to some teachers, pranayama alone removes internal impurities and therefore they hold pranayama in esteem and not any other cultivation techniques."

In other words, pranayama will not just help to make your breathing more efficient, but it will help you activate the vital energy life force (Qi) within your body and therefore help to open up the energy channel pathways in all your tissues. Those results will help you live longer.

Various Taoist breathing methods provide similar benefits as well. For

instance, the Taoist breathing practices of “spitting out the old (breath) to bring in the new” are basically kumbhaka pranayama methods. All these various breath retention techniques are like using a match to ignite the potential energy in your body (known as kundalini or Yang Qi energy). After you raise this energy and open up your Qi channels some people are said to be able to survive by “eating” air alone.

The most powerful pranayama technique I know of comes from Tibet and is called “9-Bottled Wind Pranayama.” Once again it is a kumbhaka or breath retention technique that involves holding your breath nine times.

As you would expect, the purpose is to increase your lung capacity, make your lungs and respiratory processes more efficient (which makes your breathing smoother, deeper and more regular), help open up your Qi channels, and improve the Qi circulation within your body.

The 9-Bottled Wind Pranayama technique involves slowly drawing air into your lungs using an alternate nostril practice technique, fully filling your lungs as much as possible with that air, holding the air deeply inside your lungs for as long as possible while staying relaxed (not tensing any muscles but keeping them as loose as possible), and quickly expelling the air when you can hold it no longer, shooting it out like an arrow.

The 9-Bottled Wind Practice steps are as follows: (1) Sit in an upright position. (2) Visualize your body becoming as clear as crystal. (3) Close your mouth and also close your left nostril completely by pressing your left hand’s index finger against the left nostril to shut it. (4) Slowly inhale air deeply into your lungs through your right nostril. The inhalation should consist of a long breath that goes inside you as deep into your abdomen as possible. During your inhalation, visually imagine that your body becomes filled with a bright light that eliminates any internal poisons or obstructions. Continue inhaling as slowly and deeply as possible until you are full and can inhale no longer. (5) Now relax your body as much as possible while holding your trapped breath within. Hold your breath for as long as possible, but use as few muscles as possible to do so. Don’t tighten any muscles so that your Qi can start opening up all the tiny energy channels in your body without having to fight muscle tension. (6) When you can hold your breath no longer, exhale it as quickly and forcefully as possible through the other open nostril. Forcefully expel the air out of your body quickly to complete one cycle or round of this exercise. (7) Repeat this exercise of slow inhalation, long retention, and forceful exhalation two more times for a total of three times for the right nostril. All the while the left nostril is kept closed while the active nostril is the right nostril.

(8) Now switch hands so that the right hand’s index finger now pinches shut the right nostril while the left remains open. Inhale through your left nostril following the same instructions as before, hold your breath for as long as possible and then forcefully exhale. Repeat this exercise three times

for this side of the body. Thus, six repetitions of this exercise will now have been completed.

(9) When the left and right nostril breathings are both done, extend both your arms out to push on your lap, locking your elbows, and lift up your chest. Inhale slowly through both open nostrils, hold your breath within for as long as possible, and then exhale quickly by shooting the air out from your nostrils when you can't hold the air any longer. Do this for a total of three times.

Altogether nine inhalations and retentions are thereby performed using this simple breath retention technique, which gives rise to the name of 9-step bottled wind practice.

Many people get tired of practicing this technique, so if it is just reduced to inhaling and holding your breath for as long as possible and afterwards exhaling quickly with an expelling force, and doing this as many times as possible during a short pranayama session per day, you will still get most of the benefits. Yogis who practice pranayama to live longer will do many breath retention sessions like this throughout the day, each day trying to beat their best of holding their breath for as long as possible. In this way they gradually open up their Qi channels and lay a strong foundation for longevity.

Another method for “cultivating the breath (Qi)” comes from Japan and is known as the Soma Cream or Duck Egg visualization. It is an inner Qi exercise that Japanese mountain Master Hakuyu taught young Zen master Hakuin when he was passing through the advanced process of Qi channel openings we call the kundalini awakening.

This technique harmonizes all the Qi energy within your body, and Master Hakuyu attributed to this method all his benefits of health and longevity. At age eighty Master Hakuin was still strong and vigorous in both his body and mind, and he also attributed his robust health and vitality to Master Hakuyu's teachings.

The method is very simple and something that you can practice at home on a daily basis if you seek longevity and anti-aging effects.

After asking for instructions, Master Hakuyu told the student Hakuin, “When a student engaged in meditation finds that he is exhausted in body and mind because the four constituent elements of his body are in a state of disharmony, he should gird up his spirit and perform the following visualisation:

“Imagine that a lump of soft butter, pure in colour and fragrance and the size and shape of a duck egg, is suddenly placed on the top of your head. As it begins to slowly melt, it imparts an exquisite sensation, moistening and saturating your head within and without. It continues to ooze down, moistening your shoulders, elbows, and chest; permeating lungs, diaphragm, liver, stomach, and bowels; moving down the spine

through the hips, pelvis, and buttocks.

“At that point, all the congestions that have accumulated within the five organs and six viscera, all the aches and pains in the abdomen and other affected parts, will follow the heart as it sinks downward into the lower body. As it does, you will distinctly hear a sound like that of water trickling from a higher to a lower place. It will move lower down through the lower body, suffusing the legs with beneficial warmth, until it reaches the soles of the feet, where it stops.

“The student should then repeat the contemplation. As his vital energy flows downward, it gradually fills the lower region of the body, suffusing it with penetrating warmth, making him feel as if he were sitting up to his navel in a hot bath filled with a decoction of rare and fragrant medicinal herbs that have been gathered and infused by a skilled physician.

“Inasmuch as all things are created by the mind, when you engage in this contemplation, the nose will actually smell the marvellous scent of pure, soft butter; your body will feel the exquisite sensation of its melting touch. Your body and mind will be in perfect peace and harmony. You will feel better and enjoy greater health than you did as a youth of twenty or thirty. At this time, all the undesirable accumulations in your vital organs and viscera will melt away. Stomach and bowels will function perfectly. Before you know it, your skin will glow with health. If you continue to practise the contemplation with diligence, there is no illness that cannot be cured, no virtue that cannot be acquired, no level of sagehood that cannot be reached, no religious practice that cannot be mastered. Whether such results appear swiftly or slowly depends only upon how scrupulously you apply yourself.

“I was a sickly youth, in much worse shape than you are now. I experienced ten times the suffering you have endured. The doctors finally gave up on me. I explored hundreds of cures on my own, but none of them brought me any relief. I turned to the gods for help. Prayed to the deities of both Heaven and earth, begging them for their subtle, imperceptible assistance. I was marvellously blessed. They extended me their support and protection. I came upon this wonderful method of soft-butter contemplation. My joy knew no bounds. I immediately set about practising it with total and single-minded determination. Before even a month was out, my troubles had almost totally vanished. Since that time, I’ve never been the least bit bothered by any complaint, physical or mental.”⁴²

Master Hakuyu also explained that because of his cultivation, “Even during the months when there are no mountain fruits or nuts for me to gather, and I have no grain to eat, I don’t starve. It is all thanks to this contemplation.”

⁴² *Wild Ivy: The Spiritual Autobiography of Zen Master Hakuin*, trans. Norman Waddell (Shambhala Publications, Boston, 1999).

There are many other types of breathing practices that can help with the effort to live longer, most of which cultivate your Qi or Qi channels. That's the secret. As seen, the first type are what the yoga schools call kumbhaka (breath retention) pranayama techniques. The second type are Qi balancing techniques, such as taught by Immortal Li and mountain master Hakuyu. You can find more on these techniques in my book *Nyasa Yoga*.

5. Cultivate Your Fluids and Saliva

The fifth method of practice was to cultivate one's water element (fluids) and saliva, which actually refers to cultivating your hormones by generating and swallowing a special sweet salivary hormone that is released during advanced stages of meditation when your Qi channels begin to open in your head and brain. Sometimes a little is released during sexual intercourse when the Qi channels in the head start to open because of the vital energies entering into the cranium because of this activity.

The esoteric science behind this is as follows. At a certain advanced stage of meditation practice the salivary glands start secreting a sweet liquid that is often compared to wine. You cannot force it to be secreted because it only appears for a short while due to excellent meditation work.

This sweet salivary hormone greatly assists with health and longevity. Many cultivation schools say it helps expel toxins from the body, softens and strengthens bones and tendons, and helps to rejuvenate your body in general. Therefore, they say, its ingestion (swallowing) leads to longevity.

The *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* poetically refers to it saying, "The Yogi who drinks the pure stream of nectar from the head will become free of disease, attain longevity, and their body will soften and become as beautiful as a lotus stem." You can also find mention of it in Nan Huai-chin's *Tao and Longevity* and Swami Satyananda Saraswati's *A Systematic Course in the Ancient Tantric Techniques of Yoga and Kriya*. It is also recognized in the western alchemy text, the *Atalanta Fugiens* of Michael Maier. Its appearance is the legendary "Fountain of Youth" said to restore the youth of anyone who drinks its waters, or the Pool of Bethesda in the New Testament whose waters produce healing when stirred. Basically this sweet tasting "dew" is the ambrosia, soma, grail wine, or legendary fountain of youth that is said to lead to immortality (long life). Only meditation and other spiritual practices can produce it.

Unfortunately, ordinary people who do not practice meditation enough cannot experience it, and therefore cannot practice this technique unless the sweet saliva hormone appears. However, by using visualization practices that focus on the glands of the body, which will bring Qi to those regions due to mental concentration held at those points, the endocrine system of the body can become activated to help you reach longevity. This method is

to visualize your glands as they are located in your body and to spin your Qi within them and around them. Then you link the energy between all your glands.

Immortal Li also taught that people who wanted to live longer should make use of a regular regimen of stimulating and then swallowing their saliva combined with breathing practices. Why is this helpful?

Swallowing your saliva will help your Qi descend to your lower belly, but before swallowing saliva you must first collect it. The method for collecting and then swallowing saliva is to do the following, which also exercises the muscles in your mouth:

Place your tongue against the inside of your left cheek and then move it, in a rolling motion, to the right cheek by passing over the front of the upper teeth (and gums) and then continue downwards in front of the lower teeth (and gums) until you reach the left cheek again. Do this eighteen times and then repeat the same procedure eighteen times in the other direction starting with the right cheek and moving to the left. This practice of moving the tongue thirty-six times will accumulate saliva in the mouth, and then one should swallow it while visualizing that your Qi descends into your lower abdomen.

In addition to exercising the tongue and preparing the practitioner for the higher yogic practice of ingesting Qi in the air and swallowing it, this practice has many other benefits.

Stimulating, collecting and swallowing your saliva, as a means of cultivation, is commonly taught in Taoism especially in conjunction with the pranayama practices of drawing in good Qi and expelling bad Qi - "spitting out the old (breath) to bring in the new." These pranayama practices are basically the idea of breath retention where you draw in air, hold it until you can no longer, and then expel it quickly and forcefully.

6. Absorb the Essences of the Sun and Moon

The sixth method of longevity practice Shakyamuni Buddha mentioned was to absorb the energies of the sun and moon, which means the pure Yin and Yang energies from celestial bodies and the environment, in order to supplement your own Yin and Yang Qi energies. You basically try to absorb into your body the energy from the sun, moon, earth, stars, or planets.

To do this you can envision the light energies from the sun or planets embracing your entire person, reaching inside you as far as the bottom of the abdomen in the pelvis (visually imagine the energies filling your whole body), giving yourself the feeling of being completely illuminated within and without. After you imagine that your body becomes filled with energy, you must imagine that your whole body become luminous and shines

brightly with these energies.

You particularly want the energies to reach your abdomen and fill your lower belly called the *dantian* or Elixir Field in Chinese medicine, qigong and martial arts. Immortal Li said that you might rub your belly on a daily basis to help bathe it in Qi vital energy (concentrating on that area mentally while doing so in order to bring Qi to the region), but the important point is to draw your energy down into this area and keeping that region warm so that the Qi can open up all the energy channels in the intestinal tissues through a slow permeation process we might call Qi soaking.

Other practices for absorbing energy from the sun and moon and stars or other planets do not involve imaginary visualizations. With these methods you must physically gaze at the sun, moon or stars (such as the Big Dipper or Polestar) in order to try to absorb their essences. To succeed with this method requires special conditions of time and place, but some individuals do succeed at it despite the difficulties. They can then begin to live without food and survive on just these energies alone.

The first method of actual absorption, from Chinese Taoism, is that you inhale as you “breathe” into your body the sun’s energy through the crown point of your skull (the very top of your head). You pull the energy of the sun into the center of your brain, and then into your entire head area including the maxillary glands that produce saliva. Gather the energy into your mouth and mix it with the saliva accumulating there. Visualize the energy condensing into a golden ball and then swallow this ball of Yang Qi down into your lower belly as you exhale. Repeat this process three or four times and then focus your breathing on your lower abdomen to feel the warmth of the sun residing there.

As an alternative, you can also stand in the sunshine and feel the sun pouring into you from the top of your head and filling up the entire body, accumulating inside you just as sand flows into the base of an hour-glass to fill it. When you feel that your whole body is filled with this solar energy then stay in that state lightly holding onto the energy, feeling it everywhere, while letting go of your thoughts.

The second type of solar absorption, from ancient India, is known as sun eating. In this case it is a strict practice of gradually absorbing sunlight into your eyes at the safest (lowest UV-index) times of the day, which are at sunrise and sunset when the sun is low on the horizon. The method can only be practiced within the first hour after sunrise and right before sunset because otherwise you will risk damaging your eyes. You should never stare at or focus on the sun when doing it or you will hurt your eyes.

You must also be *standing barefoot* while performing this practice, standing on the actual earth. Why? Since this method involves absorbing solar Yang Qi energies you must be grounded to the Yin Qi of the earth to complete an energetic circuit.

To practice this sun eating technique you should begin with only 10 seconds the first day and increase by 10 seconds each day. Never practice it for more than a few minutes. Once you start doing this you will start feeling full of energy, which will help to supplement your Qi and open up your Qi channels. Some people who do this earn the ability to be able to live off the energy alone and therefore can radically decrease the amount of food they need to survive. Some can actually survive on just this energy alone.

If you use any technique of trying to absorb Yang Qi you should also match it with the practice of absorbing the Yin Qi energy of the moon. The best results for absorbing Yin energy are achieved around the full moon period of each month when the lunar light is brightest. At that time you can feel you are absorbing/pulling the Yin Qi energy into your body through the top of your head as we did with the first solar Qi method, and then also absorb lunar moonlight through the eyes, pulling it into the brain and sending it to the back of your head. An alternative is to pull the lunar area into your heart-chest area.

There are also techniques for absorbing the energy of the planet Venus when it is visible and other planets as well (especially when they are stationary), but they are all based on the same basic techniques. The idea is to augment your own Qi from the Qi of a greater celestial source, and to use that extra energy to help transform your body by opening up the energy channels in all the atomic bonds within it. This will create an extremely healthy body.

7. Mantra and Special Cultivation Techniques

The seventh special method of longevity practice was the spiritual exercise of reciting mantras.

In most every religion, and especially in eastern spiritual traditions, there are special mantras (and prayers) that request help from higher beings for various matters, including requests for help at curing sickness or life extension. For instance, the mantra for Immortal Li's tradition that requests Heaven's aid for health, longevity and spiritual progress is "Ohm Ah Hung Ah Hung."

The way Heaven helps after higher beings hear mantras, if Heaven helps at all, is through the intercession of spiritual beings supplying thoughts to help you solve problems or extra energy to help open up your Qi channels. This happens to virtuous people engaging in spiritual practice when they have enough merit (such as from doing good deeds or making a great vow to change your behavior, such as becoming vegetarian). The idea of asking for the blessing of someone else's energy is basically a supplementation remedy.

There are also mantra practices that will help you to quiet your mind,

which ultimately leads to the arising of your deep Qi energies and thus once again the opening of your Qi channels that is necessary for super longevity.

For life extension purposes the most effective mantra practices are “Nyasa” practices that help transform and preserve your body. Most people have never heard of Nyasa practices but they combine mantra recitations with visualization efforts on sections of the body while you try to feel and visualize the energy (Qi) within those areas in order to open up the surrounding energy channels that form the substrate of the physical body.

An individual practicing Nyasa selects a part of their body, focuses on it with concentration while visualizing that it is either shining with light or changes color, recites a mantra as if from within that location (thus vibrating it) in order to move his Qi to that area and open up the Qi channels in that immediate region, and tries to physically *feel* that area being focused upon or the sensations within it. He then continues doing so until one by one he has done this for all the parts and sections of the body.

There are many types of Nyasa practice with some being very complex and elaborate. Many Vajrayana practices in Tibet are actually Nyasa practice in disguise, including some deity yoga methods.

Two famous “dharma” techniques related to the Nyasa practices are the white skeleton visualization practice of Shakyamuni Buddha and the fire skeleton visualization method of Mahavira, the founder of Jainism.

The white skeleton visualization practice can be done if you are either sitting on a chair, on meditation cushions or lying flat on your back. There are over thirty different variations of the practice that all energize and raise your Qi levels so that your Qi channels start opening.

To practice, in whatever position you have chosen, first take a couple of deep breaths and release any tension you feel in your body.

Starting from your left big toe, begin to visualize that you no longer have flesh on the foot and that your left big toe bones shine with a dazzling white light. First visualize the bones of your left big toe, then all of the toes on your left foot. Then switch sides to visualize the bones of the right big toe shining with a dazzling white light and then all of the toes of your right foot shining brightly.

Next, do the same for all the remaining bones of your left foot, and then your right foot. Next the bones of your left ankle and then right ankle (while keeping the other bones shining that you already did). Going higher proceed to both left lower-leg bones and then right lower-leg bones (the tibia and fibula in both legs).

Continue like this visualizing all the meat being stripped off your bones and all the exposed bones shining with a bright white light. Try to feel the energy in that body region as you do this because the practice will bring energy to each body section in turn.

Gradually work your way up your body, visualizing that your body is just

a set of bones without flesh, the bones are shining brightly, and you can feel the energy in those regions. Eventually you will reach the head and can end with a visualization of your skull shining with a bright white light.

Once the visualization of your entire skeleton is complete, try to maintain it until you feel that your Qi has become distributed in an evenly balanced manner everywhere. Whenever you feel any sensations that arise just note them but don't grasp onto them or cling to them. In fact, if you feel any energy then try to stir it up to make it bigger because stimulated energy that becomes active will open up more channels in the region. Also, try to maintain a joyful state of mind as you perform this entire visualization because joy gives rise to positive energies, and thus raises Yang Qi instead of Yin Qi.

After you visualize your entire body as a set of brightly shining white bones, visualize that they all become dust that is instantly blown away and the only thing remaining is empty space that you cannot hold onto. In other words, imagine that now you are nothing but empty space. Ignore the energy feelings that arise while in this state because if you interfere with those energy flows you will thwart the efforts of your Qi to open up Qi channels.

As for a similar technique used by the Jains, you imagine that there is a large fiery lotus flower inside you at the level of your navel, bright red in color, that is burning with red flames that extend upwards and protrude out the top of the center of your head. At the level of your heart, you then imagine an inverted lotus flower made of fire that is also bright red in color. The flame that flows between these two lotus flowers is imagined to energize your entire body turning it entirely into red glowing ashes.

After you can visualize your entire body as red and filled with this fiery energy, imagine that a strong wind blows off all the ashes and then a heavy rain falls from above and washes all the ashes away so that a pure soul or transparent body remains seated at your spot. Then let go of all visions and rest your mind by imaging that you are empty space that holds onto nothing.

Yet another visualization technique from tantric yoga is to imagine that your body becomes entirely energized by red fire energy, just as seen in pictures of the Tibetan deity Vajrayogini, and once accomplished you again release the visualization practice and let your mind rest in emptiness without attaching to any of the Qi sensations that arise within.

All these techniques work to open up the Qi channels of your body. Using visualization as the energizing, vitalizing or innervation mechanism since it moves your Qi, you progressively increase the size of your body region affected until you feel your Qi moving all over. You always try to stimulate, energize or stir it up using this method. Once you reach a state of harmonious fullness, you let go of attaching (clinging) to those sensations

and mentally rest in emptiness so that your Qi channels will open naturally (due to the Qi that has just been activated into moving and opening your channels).

The cultivation of your Qi and channels is what leads to super life extension.

8. Meditation

The eighth method of longevity practice, according to Shakyamuni Buddha, was simply the practice of meditation.

You have to meditate nearly every day in order to obtain the benefits of opening up your Qi channels to extend your life span. Many methods of meditation are possible which you can learn about in my books, *The Little Book of Meditation* and *Meditation Case Studies*. Vipassana practice, as taught by many western meditation teachers, is also a good start.

It is said that Immortal Li, when he had time, would sit up straight with eyes closed and his hands in his lap, at times not moving for hours. This of course was the practice of meditation.

9. Sexual Intercourse with Discipline

The ninth method of practice is often misunderstood as Shakyamuni mentioned that individuals could use sexual intercourse (sexual technique) to help with life extension. The explanation is as follows.

Almost everyone who has had sex has at one time or another has felt energy move inside him/her that could not be attributed to nerve stimulation or emotions. This is actually the activation of Qi, or life force, within the body that can be stimulated or activated through sex. The entire idea of sexual intercourse as a longevity practice is that a man and woman should engage in sex without the man ejaculating to experience semen loss (female orgasm is allowed) so as to move their Qi and thereby open up the Qi channels. For sexual cultivation, one learns to master the physical and energetic stimuli and responses of intercourse.

Different positions and tempos during love-making can cause your Qi to arise and initiate particular Qi movements that open up different Qi channels. When enough of the right Qi channels open this will extend your longevity. This route of using sex to open up Qi channels is used in some spiritual schools (Chinese Taoism, Vajrayana Buddhism and the Maithuna practices of Hindu kaula tantra yoga) to help transform the physical body. However, the effectiveness of the efforts decline tremendously if a man ejaculates because he will lose both his Jing and Qi in the process. Those are the essences one must build up and retain in order to open up one's Qi channels and achieve longevity.

The ancient Chinese medical text, *The Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine*, recounts:

“I [the Yellow Emperor] have heard that men in ancient times lived to be over 200 years old, the men of middle antiquity commonly lived to be 120 years old, but the men of our time rarely live to reach even 30 years of age. Too many men nowadays are also suffering illness and disease. Why do you think this is so?” His enlightened female teacher answered him, “It is because they ejaculate too frequently and emit their Jing (semen) indiscriminately when they make love. It is cutting off the root foundation of their lives. How can they then expect to live long?”

She also told the Emperor, “When a couple practices lovemaking correctly the man will remain healthy and youthful rather than become depleted, and because of the benefitting Qi flow the woman will avoid a hundred diseases. Done properly, both the man and woman will enjoy sex thoroughly and at the same time increase their physical strength rather than deplete it through exhaustion. However, if they don't know how to practice lovemaking correctly then sexual intercourse can be harmful to their health. The key is not to lose your Qi during the process. As a good guideline, one should stop when the female is completely satisfied and the male is not yet exhausted.”

Within the Jing of the body resides its generative force, for it can create a new life, and within the Qi of the body resides the life force of the organism. You don't want to lose these through sex. Our vitality is basically adequate in the human body but can dissipate because of too much sexual indulgence or emotional excesses. If Jing and Qi become exhausted due to sexual loss then one should remedy the loss through restraint until their levels are gradually restored. Due to the restraint of refraining from sex, little by little those essences will accumulate and one's energy will return.

In *Think and Grow Rich*, the famous writer Napoleon Hill wrote,

“I discovered, from the analysis of over 25,000 people, that men who succeed in an outstanding way, seldom do so before the age of forty, and more often they do not strike their real pace until they are well beyond the age of fifty. This fact was so astounding that it prompted me to go into the study of its cause most carefully.

“This study disclosed the fact that the major reason why the majority of men who succeed do not begin to do so before the age of forty to fifty, is their tendency to dissipate their energies through over-indulgence in physical expression of the emotion of sex. The majority of men never learn that the urge of sex has other possibilities, which far transcend in importance that of mere physical expression. The majority of those who make this discovery, do so after having wasted many years at a period when the sex energy is at its height, prior to the age of forty-five to fifty. This

usually is followed by noteworthy achievement.”⁴³

Napoleon Hill’s observation speaks to the fact that after men stop squandering their Jing and Qi they finally start making great accomplishments in life, and this also applies to the practice of meditation for spiritual progress and life extension.

10. Matching with Earthly & Heavenly Conditions

The last method of practice that Shakyamuni Buddha mentioned was to match oneself with heavenly and earthly transformations in order to live longer. In terms of earthly conditions this refers to the influences of the four seasons as well as any local geographical Feng Shui energies (the Chinese science of geomancy) and conditions. In terms of heavenly conditions this refers to various astronomical phenomena (which also means astrological phenomena) since their energies affect the Qi flowing within your subtle body.

All of these influences affect the Yin and Yang energies of the environment in which you live, and as the recipient of those energies (since you live within them) they can help you or hurt you depending upon whether they are harmful or helpful and whether you accord with them or against them. The idea of cultivation is to go along with nature rather than fight against or oppose the momentum of greater forces. As in the martial arts, one should use these external energies to help you accomplish your objectives.

The idea of matching yourself with earthly and cosmic conditions is therefore to use these energies to help in the process of Qi channel openings since this ultimately leads to longevity, and thus you want to be swimming with the tide of these energies in a helpful fashion rather than fighting against them.

Astronomical influences, especially the energies of the sun and of the moon as it proceeds through its phases, have a strong effect on your subtle body (Qi). Just as the moon governs the rhythms, cycles and activity of the tides it affects your thoughts and emotions through its influences on the Qi of your body and any liquid elements inside it such as your hormones.

The phases of the moon typically have a strong effect on your energy levels, which is why religious holidays across the world are often timed according to the phases of the moon. This is done to capture the benefit of some of those energies.

The earthly march of the four seasons also affects your body in a regular cycle that you must learn to match up with. The four seasons necessitate different living rules for the different parts of the year, such as Immortal Li

⁴³ *Think and Grow Rich*, Napoleon Hill, (Ballantine Books, New York, 1960).

Qingyun's advice that you should never skip breakfast in winter and never eat too late in summer. There are many rules or principles for warding off disease that have to do with recognizing the influences or energies of the seasons and then acting accordingly. Normally, we just call this "wise living."

This method of achieving life extension also refers back to the original Taoist ideas that the orbits of the planets in Heaven last forever, and a human being could achieve a similar longevity if he matched himself with these immortal (perennially regular) earthly and cosmic transformations. This means matching yourself with the influence of the earthly seasons and the cosmic energies reaching us from the stars that produce worldly influences and effect our fortunes.

Chinese culture identifies these forces using "ten heavenly stems" and "twelve earthly branches" while other cultures use planets or refer to the "five elements" (earth, wind, fire, water, space) to categorize them. However they designate them, most cultures suggest that you don't fight against these forces but adapt yourself to them and the conditions they create to live longer. In our case we just want to use these powerful energies whenever possible to supplement our Qi and open up our Qi channels. This is why spiritual cultivators in China often live in special holy mountains. The strong Qi of those areas can be used to supplement cultivators' own energies and help penetrate and open up the energy channels within their bodies.

An ancient Chinese saying runs, "The sage takes his signs from the movements of Heaven and Earth; who knows the principles? He accords with the principles of Yin and Yang by following their seasonal activity. He follows the fullness and emptiness of Heaven and Earth, taking them as his constant." Those interested in longevity should do likewise. They should observe the weather and the seasons to adjust their clothing, diet and other activities accordingly. If they are proficient in understanding the influences of astronomical phenomena, they can use them as well.

Even the Indian medical school of Ayurveda, the "science of longevity," says that you should live in harmony with the external environment. "Accord with nature and longevity comes" does not just refer to the principles of aging and biochemistry, but to the matching with heavenly and earthly energies.

SIDDHA MEDICINE

In addition to ten methods for life extension taught by Shakyamuni Buddha and the Indian medical system of Ayurveda (which offers rasayana remedies using foods, herbs and minerals), the Siddha medical system from Tamil India also suggest anti-aging and rejuvenation (*kaya-karpam*) methods.

The Siddha road speaks of taking herbs, ingesting calcinated powders made from metals and minerals, and taking muppu (a “universal salt” similar to shilajit) for physical rejuvenation and longevity. Naturally these are roads of assistance that Shakyamuni already covered.

Like Shakyamuni and the Chinese Taoists, the Siddha medicine road to prolonging life also speaks about the need for sexual restraint to avoid the loss of Jing (semen), thus conserving male secretions, while the meaning of such restraint in every tradition is not to indiscriminately lose Jing *and* Qi through emission. And as with Buddhism and Taoism, the Siddha road to prolonging life also involves controlled breathing and yoga practices.

Once again, all these practices work at opening up your Qi channels.

SYNOPSIS

Shakyamuni Buddha recommended ten practices to promote health and extend the human life span, including supplementation of nutrients from plants and minerals; supplementation of energy from extraterrestrial bodies and cosmic processes; supplementation of assistance from higher powers through mantras; stimulation of internal energy through physical and mental exercises as well as controlled sexual intercourse.

The important point to recognize from these methods is that they typically duplicate the recommendations of Taoism *and* modern nutritional science. For instance, when you eat special foods, herbs or minerals the longevity approach you are taking is a supplementation method that assists your body’s biochemical processes. You are basically supplying the body with the right nutrients for growth and repair so that you can live longer. This addresses the Jing or physical structure of the body, and through that its Qi or life force energy.

Throughout the Buddhist methods, supplementation is critical just as we found with Taoism. Here we find supplementation of both Jing and Qi. You might supplement your Qi energy using the borrowed energies of the sun and moon, or make use of the special Qi energies of the earth and various cosmic processes. Mantra practice or prayer requests help from higher powers, which is a request for Qi supplementation energies as well.

When your Qi becomes full due to supplementation, it will start to open up your Qi channels, which is essentially a process of detoxification (easily noticed because it is accompanied by warmth) that will push harmful poisons out of your body. This is why regular herbal methods of detoxification to help cleanse and purify your body can *greatly* help with the goals of health, longevity and even spiritual practice.

Many methods can be used to electrify, excite, invigorate, stimulate, animate, trigger or vitalize your Qi (however you wish to describe it) so that it starts opening up your Qi channels. Pranayama breathing practices,

visualization practices and sexual intercourse accomplish this as does the right types of stretching exercise that also move your energy. Lastly, there is the admonition not to lose your Qi in the first place, but to preserve it so that during meditation practice there is sufficient quantity enough that its accumulated mass can begin to open up your channels.

Television and SciFi movies paint a fantasy picture that super longevity will come about in the future from medical pills or special equipment. Almost no one talks about the road of cultivating our life force essence itself, Qi.

However, that is what you have to do for real longevity. Exercising to stretch your Qi channels open will help longevity efforts and so will biochemical assistance for your body that comes from ingesting special plants, minerals and herbs. Meditation practice that ends up augmenting your Qi can also produce a big impact too. Meditation practice can definitely help you look younger and live longer.

If you want to live a very long life you must open up your Qi channels, cultivate the Qi of your body and create an inner independent life whose own longevity, due to more purified energetic elements, can be used to support the physical body to keep it alive. If you achieve that inner spiritual body of Qi you become an Immortal as the Taoists and Shakyamuni have taught. Immortal Li actually achieved this state in order to be able to live so long, but few people know this since they are unfamiliar with the genuine results of spiritual cultivation.

If you don't achieve this inner Qi body cultivation then no amount of pharmaceuticals, foods, drugs or exercises will help you live incredibly longer. You can achieve life extension through these other methods, but not incredible life extension without Qi cultivation. This is why all your life extension efforts should always be accompanied by meditation and other spiritual practices that affect the Qi of your body.

At the very end of the day the quest for health and longevity will require wisdom (understanding these principles), discipline (to follow methods that offer the best chances of success), merit (blessing) and meditation practice.

From: BUDDHA YOGA
4 -YOGA PRACTICE METHODS

The objective of Yoga is to take a man or woman back to their original source - their root nature. This is supposed to result in eternal bliss and peace as a reward.

Yoga takes interest in explaining the process of emanation/Creation only so that you can understand (1) the reverse process that retraces all things back to their ultimate root origin, the formless source nature, which

involves cultivating spiritual bodies composed of progressively more subtle substances and, (2) to give people a model for meditation practice which mimics the original nature that is empty of all things and yet lets all things (Shakti) develop within it without interference.

Thus, you need to train your consciousness to allow thoughts to arise within it but you shouldn't cling to them unless you are practicing concentration. If they are afflictions you need to learn how to cut them off, which is learning how to manage the mind, and you need to undertake a pathway of practice that purifies your mind so that afflictions don't arise in the first place.

One idea is that the emanation of phenomena can all be traced back through planes of existence, each more subtle than the next, to an original, fundamental, pure source essence. Similarly, thoughts can all be traced back to a pure empty state of consciousness/awareness where thoughts are as yet unborn/unmanifest.

After this understanding is established, Yoga then tells us that the yogic path involves (1) cultivating the physical body (made of Jing or semen) through *asanas*, breathing, inner energy work and meditation to purify your internal subtle body composed of Qi/Prana until it can leave the physical body at will, (2) cultivating your subtle deva body made of Qi/Prana with similar purification techniques to attain the higher Causal body composed of a more transcendental, subtle material (Shen), (3) cultivating the more transcendental Causal body you have attained in order to generate the clear light Supra-Causal body composed of Later Heavenly energy, (4) cultivating the Supra-Causal body to attain the more transcendental Immanence body composed of Primordial Heavenly energy and so on. Each transcendental body substance gets progressively closer to the transcendental first emanate of the original source essence. The higher body attainments free you from birth and death in the lower realms forever.

Taoism poetically describes this process saying that Jing transforms into Qi, Qi transforms into Shen, Shen transforms into Emptiness (which is another term for the Clear Light, Supra-Causal body of Later Heavenly Qi that is also called the Dharma Body), and you have to break through that Emptiness body to get to the Tao. This means that the Immanence body attainment, or supreme stage, arises from within the Supra-Causal Dharma body.

Along this pathway one therefore always (5) mentally dissociates from any body attainment, refusing to identify with it as your final real Self so that you always work to move forwards. Your True Self is a final, primordial, self-so unchanging pure essence that isn't a being and therefore has no consciousness or knowing. It is always described as a oneness of peace/bliss that you are supposed to realize through meditation. But, the great prize is actually a body attainment and your state of mind is actually a

concomitant attainment.

This then is the real pathway of *moksha*, liberation, salvation, spiritualization, self-realization or enlightenment that results in peace, bliss, completeness, and freedom from suffering because each higher realm is better than the last, each new body is more comfortable and has more abilities than the last, and the attendant mental state of each higher body is a more progressive stage of peace, equanimity and bliss.

Therefore while cultivation is commonly described as a mental path it is actually also a body cultivation path because “higher consciousness” comes along with a new body attainment. It is not that a purer consciousness wins you a new body attainment. You have to do a lot of energy work to get a new body, not just meditation work, and better states of consciousness naturally come along with that new body attainment! The only reason that consciousness quiets in the human mind is because the Qi pathways in the brain open up due to better energy flows within it, so even at this level a “higher purity of consciousness” is achieved due to spiritual cultivation that works to physically transform your body. The degree of mental afflictions you experience in your mind as not just due to karma and your environment or actions but to the type of body you possess.

When you attain a higher body you will experience a better mental state as a result of possessing that better body. Life in a higher realm is better too. What you need to understand is that without a body there is no such thing as an individual consciousness. It appears within a body capable of sentience, and that sentient being can either develop its body and thought capabilities to their fullest or not.

The main reason cultivation is described as a mental path is because adherents, ignorant of body attainments, will think they are making spiritual progress if they are always improving their behavior due to watching their minds and striving to cultivate mental peace through meditation. If they focused on body attainments only (Qi cultivation) and constantly saw that they have not achieved the subtle body or made substantial headway along those lines then they would get discouraged from practice and simply stop. Therefore meditation practice is employed. People achieve mental realizations and think “I got it.”

“Skillful means,” as described in the *Lotus Sutra*, is therefore used on an ignorant population to manage its expectations. Spiritual practitioners are steered towards meditation and mental watching practice to purify their minds and behavior. This will improve their lives even though it doesn’t lead to significant Qi cultivation by itself. Furthermore, they are steered away from most Qi energy practices since most people won’t succeed with them anyway.

Cultivation is not solely about body cultivation, but is mind-body cultivation involving purification of your mind, behavioral perfection, and

physical transformations to produce an independent subtle body. Most religions only explain spiritual work from the aspect of mind cultivation and behavior rather than body cultivation. They describe it in terms of mental peace/emptiness, clear thinking and virtuous behavior in accordance with reason, and allowing thoughts to always arise without clinging to them just as the original nature (or space) allows phenomena to arise within It without attachment. Thus the spiritual cultivation path is explained in terms of mastering consciousness, but the goal of inert mental blankness or “having no thoughts” is not the spiritual path. When you don’t exist or are sleeping this is a state of having no thoughts, and how is that proper cultivation practice? Consciousness is the great prize of the universe, so the cultivation path is all about how to develop it, control it, master it and use it properly.

The primary reason for emphasizing your mind and behavior is because masters with higher bodies know that most people will not succeed in attaining the subtle body while alive due to the lack of ethical purity and the required practice consistency necessary for real cultivation progress. Sometimes their karma just isn’t ready either. Hence they emphasize the mental aspects of practice that will still lead to positive results: clear mental awareness so that you can police your thoughts and behavior and subsequently better your life. Better behavior also means forgetting self-centeredness and performing unselfish acts of merit such as by becoming a benefactor or guardian of helpful activities in the world.

Nevertheless, the ultimate purpose of spiritual cultivation is to enable you to return to your most ultimate origin and attain mental bliss by cultivating more transcendental bodies because as *Patanjali’s Yoga Sutras* say, “The highest value a Yogi aspires for lies in re-absorption of primary constituents into their world-ground. Such a state supervenes upon total dissolution of the bodily and psycho-mental life, which is pure consciousness or feeling of void.”

How do you do this? How do you cultivate your body to such a high extent that you can even turn it into its constituent components? You have to be on a cultivation path where you work to attain higher and higher transcendental bodies; creating bodies of higher transcendental energies from denser bodies is the same thing as cultivating to attain the world-ground or fundamental nature.

Each spiritual body is of a higher (more transcendental or purer) type of energy that is actually already inherent in your coarse physical body, which can be considered a condensation of all sorts of higher levels of energy that science does not yet even know exist. Along this pathway of cultivation you can even learn how to dissolve your physical body into Qi and then reassemble it again because your higher bodies still exist in a form that maintains its original structure.

An example from Swami Rama within *Living With the Himalayan Masters* will illustrate one of the many different ways that accomplish this. One time Swami Rama was visiting his grandmaster who provided the following demonstration.

My grandmaster said, "I am going to give you wisdom. I am going to demonstrate for you." He said he could leave his body and enter someone else's body and then come back to his own body again. He said he could change his body at will. The thought flashed in my mind, "He wants to cast off his body and wants me to immerse it or bury it," but suddenly he said, "It's not that." He was replying to my thoughts. He instructed me to go inside the cave and again check if there was any outlet or hidden door, but I had already lived in that small cave for more than a month, and I thought there was no point in checking the cave again. I did as he ordered, and as I had seen before, it was a small rock cave with only one entrance having a wooden portico outside. I came out and sat under the portico with the lama next to me. He told us to come nearer to him and hold a wooden plate which was like a round tea tray. When we held the tray, he said, "Do you see me?"

We said, "Yes."

In my ignorance I said, "Please don't try to hypnotize me. I won't look at your eyes."

He said, "I am not hypnotizing you."

His body started becoming hazy and that haziness was a human form like a cloud. That hazy cloud human form started moving toward us. Soon in a few second's time, the cloud disappeared. We found that the plate which we were holding started becoming heavier. After a few minutes, the wooden plate again became light as it was before. For ten minutes the lama and I remained standing holding that plate and finally sat down waiting in great suspense and awe for something to happen. After ten or fifteen minutes, the voice of my grandmaster told me to get up and to hold that wooden plate again. When we held the plate, it started becoming heavier and again the cloudy form reappeared in front of us. From the cloudy form, he came back to his visible body. This amazing and unbelievable experience was a confirmation. He demonstrated this *kriya* once again in a similar manner. Perhaps that day will never come when I can speak about this to the world. I would like to do so, because I feel that the world should know that such sages exist and that the researchers should start researching such secret signs. Miracles like this show that a human being has such abilities and in the third chapter of the Yoga Sutras, Patanjali, the codifier of yoga science,

explains all the *siddhis*. I do not profess or claim that such *siddhis* are essential for self-enlightenment, but I want to say that human potentials are immense, and as the physical scientists are exploring the external world, the genuine yogis should not stop exploring the inner abilities and potentials.⁴⁴

When the mind and body reach the highest level of transcendence, this is the highest spiritual attainment because that is almost the original nature. A total dissolution of becoming the singular essence that is the original nature (base state of existence) means there is no mind or body anymore, or even existence except being the original nature, and that is not the purpose of self-cultivation. That is extinction, annihilation or non-existence. You shouldn't become annihilated on the spiritual path ... the ideal is simply to cultivate as high a spiritual body as possible that is as close as possible to the base energy of the universe since that would be the composition of the highest body and the commensurate mental state is blissful or peaceful.

Many schools and sages explain this. The Vedanta sage Nisargadatta said, "The primary purpose of meditation is to become conscious of, and familiar with, our inner life. The ultimate purpose is to reach the source of life and consciousness." The source of life and consciousness is the original nature.

Nisargadatta explained that the whole world exists in awareness or consciousness, which projects worlds in our minds because we have thoughts in our brains, and once consciousness turns off then everything vanishes (just as in sleep). Nisargadatta likes to say, "When consciousness turns back to its source then it vanishes. ... The crown jewel of spiritual studies is that one should stabilize in the One without qualities." This explanation is worded to encourage the practice of meditation once again.

Similarly, he said "what is beyond both thought and no-thought, supporting both, is the supreme state, a state of utter stillness and silence. Whoever goes there, disappears. It is unreachable by words, or mind. You may call it God, or Parabrahman, or Supreme Reality, but these are names given by the mind. It is the nameless, contentless, effortless and spontaneous state, beyond being and not being. ... By itself the light [of consciousness] can only be compared to a solid, dense, rocklike, homogenous and changeless mass of pure awareness, free from the mental patterns of name and shape. ... [Attributes] appear and disappear in my light, but cannot describe me. The universe is all names and forms, based

⁴⁴ Swami Rama, *Living with the Himalayan Masters*, (Himalayan International Institute of Yoga Science and Philosophy of the U.S.A., Honesdale: PA, 1986), pp. 424-426.

on qualities and their differences, while I am beyond. ... I know there is a world, which includes this body and this mind, but I do not consider them to be more “mine” than other minds and bodies. They are there, in time and space, but I am timeless and spaceless. ... This state is entirely one and indivisible, a single solid block of reality. The only way of knowing it is to be it. The mind cannot reach it. To perceive it does not need the senses; to know it does not need the mind. ... It is not perceptible, because it makes perception possible. It is beyond being and not being. It is neither the mirror nor the image in the mirror. It is what is—the timeless reality, unbelievably hard and solid. ...”

Of course the sage Nisargadatta had attained the Immanence body that is a higher copy of the physical body but composed of much higher transcendental energies. That body has thoughts within its consciousness stream just as the human body does. Otherwise, without thought you wouldn't exist at all as a knower of anything. He was simply explaining his understanding of matters in a way that encouraged meditation practice.

When particular words in a religious text strike you, that recognition on your part is like a flare or beacon that can cut through the billions of human thoughts being produced in the world to notify higher-bodied beings about your study, and then they can arrive to help you via a *nirmanakaya* emanation. Mantras, holy texts, and even religious sculptures and paintings are monitored by Buddhas in this way, who have vowed to help people who recite such texts or look at “sponsored” religious figures and paintings.

Nisargadatta also explained that the consciousness workings in our brain are like an infinite web that instantly and simultaneously reflects all memories, names and labels so that thoughts can manifest the whole of the material, biological, mental, and spiritual world that presents itself to us. In other words, it references all our memories and thought processes so that it can make sense of what it encounters and form a world of mental recognition for us.

Nothing exists for each of us outside of our consciousness. Without consciousness there is no “I” nor world because without thoughts there is no way to know anything. Consciousness is just a bunch of thoughts in the head that spin a picture of a world for us that works, even if that picture is imperfect or incomplete without all the details, and the primary thought is an I-thought center without which there can be no sense of I and others.

Nisargadatta also said that the substance of the mind itself is fundamentally, originally, and eternally pure and clear. Other than pointing to the formless original essence that is the true nature of everything and thus need not be mentioned, he is basically suggesting that you think of the mind as like a pool of clear awareness that is naturally empty of thoughts but allows them be generated as needed. In other words, the natural state of

consciousness is peaceful and clear, but empty mind has an infinite capacity to form thoughts that reflect phenomena.

This is an explanation that also encourages meditation practice as the spiritual path while bypassing body cultivation altogether. The focus in Vedanta, as in Zen, is on what we would call pure consciousness, empty mind, pristine awareness, mental purity or mind cultivation while neglecting the most important part of the equation, which is the necessity for cultivating the Qi/Prana of your body so that your inner subtle body can be purified and strengthened. Inner energy cultivation requires many different types of exercises to stir your inner vitality, and this is the energy yoga of the path. If you don't engage in this type of inner energy Yoga then you won't "become enlightened" or "attain the Tao" even with millions of years of meditation practice. There is no path to entering the Infinite or experiencing perfect emptiness or bliss as proposed in Vedanta and Zen. Becoming enlightened is attaining the *sambhogakaya* rather than pursuing some mental realization or clear state of mind. The Zen school and Vedanta do a great disservice by not clearly telling this to individuals.

"Tracing things back to their ultimate origin," as taught in Yoga, Vedanta and Buddhism, is also something Confucius instructed us to do. Confucius espoused a path of mental introspection for tracing consequences back to original causes so that individuals could learn the principles of better behavior for handling situations. Tracing things back includes tracing thoughts back to unmanifest consciousness, meaning (like Nisargadatta) empty consciousness that is a state unmanifest of thoughts but aware and ready to give birth to them. Confucian mental witnessing is one such trace-back practice.

Confucianism says we must discover our inherent "bright virtue," which is Nisargadatta's pristine clear awareness of the mind that is absent of thoughts – unmanifest/pure consciousness that is the treasure of sentient beings. Discovering that the natural state of the mind is empty brings peace.

Yoga contains a very large set of practices to help us trace both our consciousness and bodies back to their one source. Thoughts can be traced back to clear consciousness, but consciousness itself, and the physical body, must ultimately be traced back to the original nature. Along these lines, Jesus said that we should become one with the Father, the original nature. Advaitism and Hinduism say that we must become Brahman, which is also a name for the original nature. Jainism says we must regain our pristine glory. Islam says that we must remove the veils that screen us from Allah.

Now Confucianism tells us to find our bright virtue, which we can take as meaning either our original nature or pristine awareness. Tibetan

Buddhism teaches us to search for the root of consciousness (the root of being conscious) - the light beyond the mind, the clear nature of the mind beyond thoughts. Christianity calls this the uncreated light of the mind. Other schools call it the natural illumination of the mind, base illumination or luminous mind. All these terms are various ways to refer to clear awareness as a type of pure, empty consciousness.

The pathway to spiritual achievement is two-fold: one of the paths involves meditation for calming and purifying (emptying) your mind so that you touch upon empty consciousness at times, and the other path involves inner energy work (kundalini yoga, *anapana*, Nyasa yoga, Naropa's Prana/Qi yogas or *nei-dgong* for transforming your physical body to generate the subtle body and beyond. You need both of these to succeed.

The meditation path includes many techniques. There are many ways to "purify consciousness" such as by witnessing your thoughts or concentrating on a topic to quiet your mind by banishing distractions. You cannot block your thoughts or emotions from arising, and in fact need them to survive. The question is whether you should listen to whatever arises in your mind, and so you need to practice a detached witnessing of your thoughts to learn that they don't need to control you. In time they will quiet and you can reach a state of presence, clearance, or mental purity that we colloquially call emptiness or empty mind. But thoughts are still there as long as you have existence, so "emptiness is misunderstood."

In order not to waste your time in buying hundreds of meditation books, I think these are among the best on meditation techniques:

Color Me Confucius (Bodri)

Twenty-five Doors to Meditation: A Handbook for Entering Samadhi (Bodri and Lee)

Meditation and Its Practices: A Definitive Guide to Techniques and Traditions of Meditation in Yoga and Vedanta (Adiswarananda)

Meditation Techniques of the Buddhist and Taoist Masters (Odiar)

Buddhist Meditation (CM Chen)

The Little Book of Meditation (Bodri)

Meditation Case Studies (Bodri)

Vijnana Bhairava

If you want to succeed quickly on cultivating your Qi that once purified becomes the deva body that can leave your physical shell at will, there are only a few excellent books on internal energy work (*neijiaquan* or *nei-gong*) and transforming your body that you need to study. The best books on tantric internal energy exercises to cultivate your body are as follows:

Nyasa Yoga: Kundalini, Prana, Chakra and Nadi Cultivation Techniques

(Bodri)

Yajñavalkya (trans. A.G. Mohan and Ganesh Mohan)

Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines (Walter Evans-Wentz)

A Systematic Course in the Ancient Tantric Techniques of Yoga and Kriya

(Satyananda Saraswati)

The Six Yogas of Naropa (Glenn Mullin)

Readings on The Six Yogas of Naropa (Glenn Mullin)

*Dharana Darshan: Yogic, Tantric and Upanishadic Practices of Concentration
and Visualization* (Niranjanananda Saraswati)

Kriya Secrets Revealed (J.C. Stevens)

Buddhist Meditation (CM Chen)

Visualization Power (Bodri)

Look Younger, Live Longer (Bodri)

Detox: Cleanse Your Body Quickly and Completely (Bodri)

The various Qigong and Taijiquan books of Yang Jwing-Ming

The best books to explain the *gong-fu* of the path, which are the common changes that occur in your physical and subtle bodies (and consciousness) as you start to purify them due to meditation and yogic exercises, are the following:

Tao and Longevity (Nan and Chu)

Meditation Case Studies (Bodri)

The Little Book of Hercules (Bodri)

*Meditation and Its Practices: A Definitive Guide to Techniques and Traditions
of Meditation in Yoga and Vedanta* (Adiswarananda)

A Systematic Course in the Ancient Tantric Techniques of Yoga and Kriya
(Satyananda Saraswati)

I consider these some of the best books for the cultivation trail. Unfortunately many of them are my own, which is not because I want book sales. It is a highly unsatisfactory state of affairs where I had to write them to fill in the gaps where information was unavailable to the public. Some other books that I highly recommend:

The Yoga of Siddha Tirumular (T.N. Ganapathy, K.R. Arumugam, Geetha Anand)

The Yoga of Siddha Boganathar (T.N. Ganapathy)

Master Key to Self-Realization (Shri Siddharameshwar Maharaj)

God Speaks (Meher Baba)

Discourses (Meher Baba)

Hatha Yoga Pradipika

Be As You Are: The Teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi (David Godman)

The various Qigong and Taijiquan books of Yang Jwing-Ming

As to changing your mindset, attitudes and behaviors – “purifying” consciousness and your actions – I wish I had a longer list of books but these will get you started:

Color Me Confucius (William Bodri)

How to Win Friends and Influence People (Dale Carnegie)

Chanakya Neeti (B.K. Caturvedi)

Liao Fan's Four Lessons (Yuan Liao Fan)

The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin (Benjamin Franklin)

How I Raised Myself from Failure to Success in Selling (Frank Bettger)

The American Reader (Bodri)

Here is the gist of it. If you want to start practicing cultivation to generate the subtle body, you are sure to get lost without an enlightened master. You will spend tons of money and waste years not knowing what to do, which involves lots of meditation work and inner energy cultivation. Without a master, who will work on your inner subtle body with their students?

My best advice is to find the head of a tradition or great monastery of many monks (and nuns) since they are usually enlightened, although there are also a number of rabbis, priests, hieromonks, muftis, Sufis and so on have attained the deva body and have students willing to work on transforming your body's Qi and channels. If an enlightened master is in charge of a large group of monks and nuns, however, then it is easy to throw you into the roster schedule of individuals whose Qi has to be worked on; he or she and his enlightened associates are working on many at the same time in a continuous fashion, so by associating with them you will get out earliest and without problems. The responsibility of working on the Qi of all these individuals forces a great master into regularly scheduled Qi work on their bodies, like a factory production process, that a solitary adept will usually not do in an efficient fashion. Also, if he belongs to a large tradition you will know whom to turn to if he dies.

You also must do two things: (1) start meditating and, (2) start working on transforming your body and its Qi by doing inner energy work every day. By reading these books and skipping useless ones you will quickly find the right practices. It is all a matter of Qi Yoga in the end where you try to first ignite and then grab your body's vital energy and move it everywhere, swishing it this way and that way inside you many times per day. At other times you let go of your Qi and thoughts and rest in inner meditation, witnessing the contents of your mind without attachment. That is the quickest way to open your Qi channels.

Spiritual practice is all a matter of Yoga in the end. It is all a matter of Yoga to transform your Qi and channels. In other words, it is all about doing *nei-gong/ nei-dan/ anapana* work hundreds to thousands of times per day in various ways, and also meditating where you let go of thoughts but aim to cultivate a clear mind that knows its own thoughts without getting entangled in them and losing the state of presence.

Furthermore, if you are not a virtuous, ethical person then no spiritual master is going to help you initiate the kundalini purification process despite all this work. They certainly won't make the 24-hour per day commitment to work on your body for twelve years (see *Nyasa Yoga*) to wash your Qi/Prana to help you generate the deva body. This is why being a good person and ethical training is an essential part of the path.

For our benefit, Shakyamuni Buddha surveyed all the different cultivation methods within the India of his time and compiled them into ten large categories he called mindfulness practice or mindfulness training. These include:

- Mindfulness of the Buddha
- Mindfulness of the Dharma
- Mindfulness of the Sangha
- Mindfulness of Practicing Discipline
- Mindfulness of Practicing Generosity
- Mindfulness of Cultivating to Attain to Heaven
- Mindfulness of Cultivating Your Breath, Vital Energy or Qi/Prana
- Mindfulness of Mental Peace
- Mindfulness of Cultivating Your Body
- Mindfulness of Death

Here is a short explanation of some of these techniques which you can also choose as practice vehicles.

(1) Mindfulness of the Buddha practice is like bhakti yoga in that it involves concentrating on a sacred or divine figure such as Jesus, Padmasambhava, Krishna, Shiva, Vishnu, Surya, Kartikeya, Ganesha, Devi, Shakti, Isis, Buddha, Guru Nanak, an Imam or some other great deity or spiritual teacher, and then identifying with or holding those thoughts on a moment-by-moment basis. As a result, that being if enlightened will connect with your body and use their own Qi to help transform yours to help purify and strengthen your subtle body. In actuality, an enlightened individual who assumes responsibility for masquerading as that individual in your vicinity will be responding to your practice if it is ardently sufficient.

When you feel your energy stir inside your body during cultivation practices it is usually due to interventions like this, or due to the self-generated emotions of sincere veneration for a great religious figure, such as Amitofo Buddha. Emotions can move your Qi so many methods have been developed in various religions to arouse your emotions to stimulate the movement of your Qi or Prana, and deep religious veneration (another form of Buddha mindfulness) is one of those techniques. Singing devotional songs gives rise to Yang Qi also.

“Mindfulness of the Buddha” is not a method restricted to Buddhism, but simply uses the word “Buddha” to denote an enlightened individual of spiritual stature who has succeeded on the cultivation trail – someone who has attained an Immanence body or higher. When you think of them they will know it and connect with your Qi. When you recite their mantra or prayers they will usually connect with your Qi also.

In Buddha mindfulness practice an enlightened/ascended spiritual being is to become the object of one-pointed concentration so that you establish a Qi-connection with that person, or a masquerading representative, who will then generate a *nirmanakaya* projection body to go within you and start transforming your Qi and channels via its own energies that will then move yours. This is why some traditions tell you to visualize “becoming one” with a spiritual great or with your own spiritual guru. Or, just by envisioning and feeling you become one with them you create a type of Qi purification effort by yourself.

Let me provide a useful example of cultivation practice related to Buddha mindfulness in some ways. Actually it is more akin to the Buddhist cultivation practice of the four immeasurables, but the method is instructive nonetheless.

One of my friends, Frank, was once a young electronics engineer and Vice President for a large defense contractor. At one time he helped invent integrated circuits necessary for the U.S. Navy to be able to place sonar buoys across the world’s oceans, record the passage of all submarines passing by, and then beam the information to shore for processing. While in a meeting with a large navy staff of senior officers and the chief admiral of the navy, despite his very young age he was able to override the chief admiral’s authority in the meeting – an incredible feat never done before – by projecting his own authority Qi outwards during the meeting. Going against the admiral’s announcement at the table, he told the admiral and all present that his company would be the lead contractor on this project instead of a subsidiary contractor. The admiral had just stated that the main contract would go to someone else, and had never once in his lifetime had his orders rejected. The room was stunned, but Frank had his way.

I asked Frank how he was able to do this in a room full of admirals, captains, and other powerful naval commanders who regularly had their

orders obeyed without question, and who were clearly above him in age and pay grade. He said he trained for it. He explained that he used a special exercise technique to cultivate a character trait he especially wanted, namely authority. Analogously, you can also cultivate the particular character traits of a Buddha you want to become like by also copying Frank's technique.

Frank explained that he used to sit in his room and visualize himself as an authority all would listen to, and would project his Qi energy outwards impregnated with an intense feeling of authority until he could successfully imagine it filling his entire room and he sensed that extension. When he had mastered projecting that feeling of authority filling a room, he then repeated the same practice in a larger room, and next an empty concert hall, and finally an empty sports stadium! He created a character trait he wanted to cultivate, concentrated on feeling it both inside him and projecting it outwards around him, and finally was able to successfully project immense authority into the outside world.

In Kaula Tantra this is the method of *Viramarga*, the Path of Heros. It involves holding the feeling of a hero (not just fierce or wrathful aspects as done in the *yidam* practices of Tibetan Buddhism) in order to transform your Qi. In Frank's case it was done by holding onto the feeling of great authority which raised his Yang Qi, but similar practices are performed in various cultivation schools by holding onto other dominant emotional notes such as the Yang Qi emotions of mirth, love, anger, energy (heroism), compassion and astonishment/wonder and Yin Qi emotions of fear/terror, disgust or sorrow. In fact, many spiritual masters will put students into situations where they must experience such emotions for long periods of time (such as fear and terror) in order to cultivate their Qi, but in this case Frank practiced holding onto an emotion in order to create that energy pattern within his psyche so that he could project into what situations he wanted.

Another friend, hearing this story and understanding the basic principle, now practices projecting the ability to bring prosperity and helpful business deals to other people. By continuously doing this, over time he will slowly change his habit energy, personality, and fortune in a vastly positive way. Who knows what good karma it will bring? The point of this story is that this is how you can develop the virtues or character traits of the Buddha or Bodhisattva you wish to become. Therefore, you can use this method as a form of Buddha mindfulness.

This is also similar to the four immeasurables practice of Buddhism, only in this case you are cultivating unique virtues, qualities or character traits you want to possess/master that are not the standard four immeasurables. You can definitely change your personality over time by adopting new character traits that you also emphasize by using these immeasurable-type meditations and other related techniques. This method is a way of

developing those qualities within yourself, such as by every day meditating that you have a particular personality trait and feeling the Qi of that trait within you. Of course, you have to bring that behavior into the real world as well.

The practice entails projecting your Qi outwards permeated with a large feeling of this virtue or character trait you want to develop, just as Frank practiced cultivating “authority.” Through the force of permeation over a long period of time, by sitting in a strong envelope of the Qi of this personality trait and by then acting in this way during real life situations you will slowly change your personality and character. Even an idle moment of time, such as when standing in some line or watching television, can be used to advantage with such practices.

If you do this consistently, it will imprint your Qi (aura) and even your body cells with the new trait you practice imagining being and having, especially if you start acting that way and put that trait into effect wherever possible. This will change your fortune and destiny including your personality in subsequent incarnations. This technique explains why people who receive organ transplants from others will often start to exhibit some of the personality traits of the organ donor as well as changes in food, art, music, sexual and career preferences. This is because the donor’s organ cells had become impregnated with the Qi of their personality, and thus their organs carried a bit of their personality traits into the new organ recipient.

In Paul Pearsall’s *The Heart’s Code* there is the case of a 52-year old male heart transplant recipient who started to like rock music, instead of the classical music he preferred, after receiving the heart of a 17-year old boy killed in a car accident. Similarly, a female 35-year old heart transplant recipient, who received the heart of a 24-year old call girl and topless dancer, experienced an incredible increase in her libido after surgery and took on some of the call girl’s prior sexual proclivities. There are cases of heart recipients receiving new memories with their transplant, taking up the hobbies of their donors, developing new tastes that the donor had, and even of changing their sexual preference from men to women. So in whatever way you live, think and feel this will be imprinted within your Qi. If you deeply imprint your Qi with a new character trait developed during meditation, then you can slowly reprogram yourself to build a new character. Those traits can even be carried forward to a subsequent incarnation so that you enjoy them.

The more you act or become a certain way in terms of character traits, personality and emotions, the more this will become imprinted on your Qi. This is what changes your fortune and personality since they are not set in stone. If you try to change, transform, purify or override your “basic programming” through immeasurable meditations – such as of infinite joy, courage, confidence, authority, leadership, cheerfulness, love, kindness,

mirth, humbleness, vigor, generosity, adaptability, optimism, serenity, patience, carefulness, goodwill and so on – you can certainly do so. When you practice holding onto a specific pure mood or emotion (*vira bhava* - a prevailing stable emotion) this is *Viramarga* (the Path of Heroes) in Kaula Tantra. It involves holding onto a human emotion as a dominant note (with ancillary cross feelings) in order to cultivate your Qi and the expression of that emotion within your personality and body.

You can use this method to inculcate a virtue that you lack, or try to overcome some of your character defects. This is a way, in addition to mental watching, that helps you change your behavior. It can be considered part of the devotion to consummate conduct, or part of the Benedictine “conversion of manners” or “conversion of life.” On the spiritual trail you should try to cultivate so that you become full of virtues while eliminating bad behaviors. Only firm resolve, by daily using a method such as this, can help someone eliminate their personality flaws and enhance their desired virtues. Benjamin Franklin did this as did Yuan Liao Fan, and their stories and methods are found in *Color Me Confucius*.

When you see Buddhist monks with a naturally joyous temperament, many times it is because they consistently practiced the infinite joy practice of Buddhism (one of the four immeasurables) in a previous life and thereby created for themselves that personality trait in this life, or practiced it in this life. Similarly, women who are especially attractive in this life usually cultivated certain behaviors and emotions in a previous life that bore the fruit of being beautiful in this one.

If you wish to become more beautiful/attractive *now* and in the next life there are certain things you can do. First, you can donate to charities like Operation Smile or Smile Train (that fix cleft palates) to set up karmic causes for beauty. Second, you can also cultivate the emotions of happiness and joy that you express in your face since this is extremely attractive to men regardless of anyone’s physical appearances. Negative attitudes, on the other hand, can ruin your complexion by making lines and creases appear on your face. If you practice the infinite joy meditation while smiling and feeling happy, and project it outwards, this *will* make you more beautiful to others. Practice giving others smiles and the karma will be a more beautiful appearance.

Patti Stranger, the “Millionaire Matchmaker,” wrote that highly eligible, rich men were looking for happy vibrant women without an attitude who smile and have joy in life, so by cultivating those characteristics in this life through this “immeasurable happiness meditation” you will not only improve current circumstance but set up the karmic causes for more beauty in the next.

Deity yoga is similar to Buddha mindfulness practice. In deity yoga you are also supposed to practice imagining that you become a perfect being

with special qualities and energy in order to also cultivate your Qi, which is a similar practice. Here a Buddha is replaced by a deity, and of course if the deity is enlightened that means they are a Buddha. The deity you use for your practice is called a *yidam*.

Various groups of enlightened masters specialize in responding to any Qi practice for a particular deity *yidam*. During deity yoga meditation practice, you are to identify your own form, attributes and mind with those of the deity for the purpose of transformation. Sound familiar? This is Buddha mindfulness. Examples of *yidams* include the meditation deities Chakrasamvara, Kalachakra, Hevajra, Yamantaka, Vajrayogini, Hevajra, Guhyasamaja, Marici, Vajrasattva, Tara, Avalokitesvara, and Kalachakra, all of whom have sadhanas for this type of practice.

In deity yoga, which is a form of Buddha mindfulness as well as Qi cultivation, there is a generation stage and completion stage of practice. During the generation stage of practice, a practitioner establishes a strong familiarity with the *yidam*, deity or Buddha by means of visualization and a high level of concentration. During the completion stage of practice, a practitioner focuses on methods to “actualize the transformation of their mind-stream and body into the meditation Deity by meditation and yogic techniques of energy-control.” Thus you can see how this type of practice ends up basically being Qi, Prana or kundalini cultivation that starts with Buddha mindfulness efforts.

In terms of Buddha mindfulness you are supposed to visualize, concentrate on and then “link” with the Qi of the individual you are focusing on in order that they recognize this fact, generate a *nirmanakaya* to enter into you in response in order to help transform your inner Qi body, or help you change your thoughts and behavior. When an ordinary electromagnetic field enters the body it causes charges to move and currents to flow, whereas if a spiritual being enters your body and moves his or her Qi, it causes your Qi/Prana to move and purify.

This is the basic method that masters use to help students “purify,” transform or spiritualize their Qi so that they can generate the independent subtle body and higher. This is the secret basis behind nearly every spiritual path of cultivation. It is hard to stir or activate your Qi just on your own without engaging in a lot of *tapas*, or cultivation work. Therefore other beings have to enter into your body and use their own Qi/Prana to help you.

If you are trying to become like someone you admire, such as in the sports or business fields, you can employ the similar NLP method of modeling their behavior in order to try to duplicate their excellence. This entails copying their physiology (breathing and posture), beliefs, strategies, behavioral patterns, and how they do things. Actors do this all the time, and you can also change your Qi/aura in this manner if you consistently try to

cultivate what you feel inside your body as the emotion or characteristic you want to develop. You can visualize performing like them, perform mental rehearsals of acting like them, and perform future pacing where you imagine yourself in the future just like them.

Writers who like the style of famous authors can learn to write that way if they continuously read their books and write out entire sections of their literature over and over again until they've copied their style to some extent. Singers also commonly do this as well. With Buddha mindfulness you simply link with a Buddha's behavior and Qi in hopes that this will turn into a significant form of Qi purification/cultivation.

(2) Mindfulness of the Dharma (Teachings) is like jnana yoga and involves studying cultivation teachings deeply enough to follow cultivation ways in almost everything you do. Success in dharma mindfulness uses the road of understanding spiritual teachings and always applies them everywhere to help you learn mental detachment and cultivate a proper mind and behavior. *Color Me Confucius* teaches the proper way to do this.

When you study spiritual teachings and combine your understanding with how to run your life, this is dharma practice or dharma mindfulness. It is to be aware of the dharma at every moment in time, which requires that you must constantly watch your thoughts. Hence it involves a form of constant witnessing meditation practice.

An example of dharma mindfulness is where you always recognize the inherent selflessness of phenomena (because everything is connected), the emptiness of the ego since you are simply Knowledge knowing Knowledge, and the illusive nature of reality (because your own thoughts spin the world you see) so as to always be letting go of holding onto your thoughts and conceptions. Then you are mentally cultivating emptiness naturally.

You also won't take things so seriously when you understand this view perfectly. Thus the ability to laugh at yourself and not take yourself too seriously, the ability to take the ups and downs of life and say "So what?" falls into this category of practice.

By always remembering dharma teachings, you will develop a free and fluid mind that can detach from thoughts, but focus and concentrate when necessary. When you are clear about the contents of your mind but don't cling to them, this is real life meditation practice. Mastery of this method will lead to clarity, which is what various schools call awareness cultivation or the development of a pristine mind.

(3) Mindfulness of the Sangha practice involves relying upon an accomplished living master or saint, or groups of accomplished monks in a living tradition, for your own spiritual progress. To succeed in attaining the subtle body you definitely need to find an enlightened teacher, and many

traditions will serve. It is a big secret that many chief rabbis, Eastern Orthodox Christian monks, Sufis, swamis, sadgurus and so on are enlightened. Even some martial artists attain enlightenment who latch onto good masters to practice meditation, and inner energy work. The misdirection of the Zen school makes everyone think it only has to do with the mind whereas cultivation progress stages have to do with body attainments.

The Zen school literature has promoted so many wrong notions that many people have been led astray and squander years in fruitless Zen practice without cultivating their inner energy, which they'll then have to do after they pass away. All the Zen stories lead you to mistakenly believe that enlightenment is some type of mental realization, whereas it really means that you attain the subtle body. Everyone who has spiritual bodies knows who else has attained those stages and who has not. Thus no one has to be "tested" on their enlightenment as you find in Zen stories because all the masters know who has attained the requisite spiritual bodies. Practitioners don't have to "realize their original nature." They simply attain the subtle body and presto they are enlightened and have entered the stream of higher body attainments.

The point is that you need to find a tradition containing many enlightened monks/masters, or an enlightened master who will help you transform your Qi and channels with inner energy work and sponsor you through the Twelve Years of kundalini transformations. They don't have to be eastern yogis, swamis, gurus or masters. Many western individuals, such as Padre Pio, Seraphim of Sarov, and Hazrat Babajan attained the Tao. Once enlightened masters collect deva students around them who will work with them to help you transform your Qi and Qi channels within your body. The masters of every school and tradition do this, without exception, but regular people don't know this until the afterlife when everyone sees what is really going on and then takes up the proper religious/spiritual practices.

For this effort, in my personal opinion it is better to associate with a large spiritual tradition of known successes rather than a layman spiritual master. The large spiritual traditions will have an available body of *organized labor* to work on transforming your Qi, which is what success ultimately requires, whereas a solitary, independent layman will not be able to do so. Furthermore, it is therefore best to be located near a large temple or spiritual center with many monks or sadhus since spiritual masters will be working on transforming their bodies all the time with their organized labor force of deva participants who are helping them purify their Qi, and it is especially useful to be in a country with a tradition of countless masters - such as India, Thailand, Burma, China, Bhutan or Tibet - where the entire focus of the country is on cultivation. Ramana Maharshi's ashram, located

near the holy hill of Mount Arunachala that hosts the Annamalaiyar Temple, is a perfect example. Maharshi would say that the mountain was holy, but through misdirection he was actually referring to the many devas and masters of the Annamalaiyar Temple who help practitioners. As to the mountain itself it is nothing special at all. If you are located or spend time near such a temple with lots of devas undergoing practice, they will help your practice efforts, which is the secret of places like Arunachala and famous monasteries or other cultivation centers.

Many of the patriarchs of the Eastern Orthodox Christian churches have attained the higher bodies, as have some of the Chief Rabbis of countries, Chief Muftis and the heads of the Buddhist councils for most countries too. They just won't tell you, and it is standard practice to deny it. In mindfulness of the sangha practice you rely on these living enlightened teachers and their associated body of accomplished monks/nuns for instructions, guidance and Qi/Prana cultivation help (rather than Shiva, Buddha, Jesus, Guru Nanak, Padmasambhava etcetera) to attain the subtle body.

One version of sangha mindfulness, similar to Buddha mindfulness, is to intensely visualize a living or deceased spiritual master who had gained enlightenment and identify with them in your mind, which makes them know of your effort and often prompts them to send Qi (generate a *nirmanakaya* that possesses you) to help transform your own Qi/Prana. This is Buddha mindfulness practice, but because the master is an unknown rather than a recognized bigwig it is considered sangha mindfulness practice even though he or she are actually enlightened.

(4) Mindfulness of Discipline and Virtue practice, which is emphasized by Confucianism, Greek Stoicism, Christianity and Vinaya Buddhism, involves a constant witnessing of your mind so that you can immediately cut off mental faults and errant behavior when you see them occurring. Thus you will cultivate a detached, cleaner mental state of purity by always watching/policing and correcting your mind. You basically watch your thoughts all the time and when you notice errant behavior you stop it. You immediately cut it off. When you notice errant thoughts you immediately cut them off or transform them into something else. *Color Me Confucius* lists many of the major ways to do so.

Furthermore, you try to enrich every action with good thoughts and emotions (*samskaras*) whenever appropriate so as to slowly beautify your character. For example, if you eat food you should try to do so with a sense of gratitude that expresses deep emotional thanks for how difficult it is to produce it. Positive emotions added to your actions as a type of consistent, deep impregnation – instead of a fleeting transitory thought – help to make actions more benevolent. This will change your karma, although in some

situations you want to train to act automatically without any extra thoughts or emotions at all. Martial arts are an easily understood example of this.

The mind has two types of functions you should try to master through cultivation – deliberate thoughts you create through intention, and automatic or unintentional thoughts such as the emotional mind. You have to learn how to control both of these although the most difficult to conquer are the habitual or unintentional thought processes, which includes the emotional mind, that automatically arise when you encounter phenomena. In *Color Me Confucius* I show how to master the automatic afflictions that usually arise in an untamed mind. All throughout life you need to learn how to retrain your emotions and regulate the emotional mind in order to bring it to a calm, peaceful, harmonious state. In this state clear thinking can more easily arise.

This spiritual road can also be called Mindfulness of Morality practice, which is a road that can purify a person's Qi just by itself. The meditation practice of cessation and observation (witnessing) is a form of morality mindfulness, and the Confucian practice of self-correction (so as to avoid behavioral mistakes) and Buddhist Vinaya self-policing also fall within this practice technique. This road is described in *Move Forward: Powerful Strategies for Creating Better Outcomes in Life* as well as *Color Me Confucius* and *Meditation Case Studies*.

(5) Mindfulness of Giving or Generosity practice is like the path of Karma Yoga and Action Yoga. It entails forgetting yourself and your own needs while cultivating benevolence, good deeds, and acts of charity and beneficence for others. It involves giving up self-centeredness to cultivate kindness, compassion, and unselfish giving.

Mindfulness of giving/charity also involves cultivating a detached state of mind that always lets go of thoughts. You can attain mental peace by not holding onto thoughts but by giving them away, and through this route you can cultivate mental emptiness. Christianity especially emphasizes this pathway.

Weeding a garden will enable flowers to grow without encumbrance, and this removal of weeds (symbolizing errors in behavior) is equivalent to mindfulness of discipline and virtue practice. If you add fertilizer to the garden, which is akin to mindfulness of giving practice (and efforts such as the authority cultivation method previously described) this will also produce an uncountable number of blossoms.

In other words, mindfulness of giving also means to actively *go out of your way* to perform acts of charity and good deeds wherever you are. John Wesley accordingly said,

“Do all the good you can,

By all the means you can,
 In all the ways you can,
 In all the places you can,
 At all the times you can,
 To all the people you can,
 As long as ever you can.”

This nicely encapsulate the principles of mindfulness of giving practice. When you make contributions to various philanthropic charities, or lend your time and energy to some good cause, or simply help a neighbor or friend in need, this is mindfulness of giving practice. When you help any worthwhile effort, this is mindfulness of giving practice too. All these types of giving will create for you great good karma in the future.

What do you think you do when you become a Bodhisattva or Buddha? With the ability to generate *nirmanakaya* projection bodies you therefore emanate countless bodies to help those in need by giving them thoughts, energy as in healing, or emotional support such as fearlessness, confidence, feelings of security/safety and strength. Or, you can give people mental peace too. These are all mindfulness of giving/offering practice, also known as Karma Yoga. Such giving is the major occupation of a Buddha or Bodhisattva. By practicing to do this now you build up the merit to become a Buddha and practice the results of having become a Buddha. Whenever you practice generosity to others you are indeed a Buddha.

According to Buddhism the three types of offering include giving others Teachings (Dharma), Wealth/Resources, and Fearlessness. Fearlessness means giving people confidence, courage, motivation and emotional support as well as the actualities of protection, safety, security and care. You should start to practice all these forms of charity.

(6) Mindfulness of Heaven (also known as Mindfulness of Deities) practice, as exemplified best in Hinduism and Christianity, is another road where you devote yourself to good conduct, virtuous ways and personal purification so that you will ascend to Heaven upon death, and then be able to make spiritual progress from there.

In mindfulness of Heaven practice you basically work on perfecting your behavior and doing lots of good deeds so that you are definitely reborn in Heaven rather than a lower realm. You devote yourself to purifying and uplifting your mind and behavior. Christianity teaches this road of cultivation, and if you become an enlightened priest, monk/nun, bishop, archbishop, patriarch or pope it is sad that this is practically the only road for leading people upwards other than *theosis* (divinization).

Once an individual becomes an inhabitant of Heaven, which means you

die and become a deva along with everyone else who dies, he or she can then use their more fortuitous circumstances to make upward progress in their spiritual cultivation. Hence, this road of practice means to become a good person and do good deeds so that you are reborn in Heaven, and there you can cultivate the real dharma for further progress.

Since for most of human history the average lifespan was only forty years, to attain the Tao (the deva body) before death would require you to use the proper practices and to start spiritual cultivation at a young age. Since most people start late and since most people (99+%) will never attain the Tao during their life, their target should be a heavenly rebirth after dying due to good behavior where they will have access to better teachings and a chance to make this progress due to better circumstances.

Therefore most masters do not talk about kundalini yoga, *nei-gong*, *anapana*, Vajrayana, etc. teachings (which cause troubles to arise) and instead focus on just teaching people meditation, which by itself achieves inferior results but positive results nonetheless. Another reason not to introduce such teachings is to prevent people from attracting the involvement of devas that is sure to happen when you engage in the road of energy work, as the Twelve Year kundalini transformation period is simply hellish, which is why few describe anything about it.

(7) Mindfulness of Breath, Vital Energy, Qi or Prana practice, such as *anapana*, *qi-gong*, *nei-gong*, *nei-dan*, kundalini yoga, inner heat yoga, *kriya* yoga and pranayama exercises, involves breath control and breathing exercises to help open up your Qi channels, usually by force. It also means using your will to move your Qi/Prana throughout your body, guiding it everywhere to open up sectional areas.

Most individuals do not know that breathing practice also means moving the Qi/Prana within your body by using your will. Nearly all the esoteric techniques for transforming your body have breathing practices as their foundation since they are the basis of inner energy work; you can use your respiration to move your Qi (*qi-gong*) and then eventually train in using your will (thoughts) to move it where you want (*nei-gong*).

The *kumbhaka* pranayama breathing practices, where you hold/retain your breath, are especially recommended for opening up your Qi channels and getting this process started, but you must also practice all sorts of *anapana* practice as well where you try to move your Qi/Prana within you.

With *anapana* you try to feel the Qi in every part/segment of your body when you breath in and out, and then you try to move it to open “blocked” areas. This too is cultivating your Qi and channels, as explained in *Nyasa Yoga*. In *anapana*, “hot” and “cool” breath means Yang Qi and Yin Qi respectively. *Internal Martial Arts Nei-gong* provides some minor *anapana* exercises for smoothing your Qi/Prana when your body feels

uncomfortable.

Any type of exercise where you attempt to become aware of the Qi or energy of your body, and then try to move it in various ways and control it, falls into this category of practice, so it includes *kerija* yoga, kundalini yoga, raja yoga and so forth. Qi/Prana practice is breathing practice, breathwork or vital energy work and inner energy work is breathing practice. In other words, breathwork should be Qi/Prana practice although you should start with respiratory breathing and the feelings it generates within your body. In cultivation one proceeds from *qi-gong*, which is breathwork involved with respiration, to *nei-gong*, which is internal energy work that involves moving your Qi or Prana.

This type of Yoga is actually the basic transformational yoga of the spiritual path in each and every religion! Chanting, prayer recitation, mantra practice and so on, because they move your breath and thus your Qi in a rhythmical fashion, are basically breathing practices, namely the road of mindfulness of breathing/Qi. The entire process of generating a subtle body involves cultivating (purifying or transforming) your Qi so that the inner deva body can finally leave your physical shell whenever you want, but you have to pass from external breathing practices to internal energy work to attain this achievement.

During the Twelve Years of kundalini transformation countless spiritual masters and their students are constantly passing in and out of your body and moving their Qi everywhere in order to purify your own. This requires them to gain control of the Qi movements within their bodies, which devas train at doing all the time, so you can and should start practicing this now as the *nei-gong* Yoga of the path. It is the basic Yoga of spiritual practice. This is the basic Yoga of the path. The spiritual path isn't just about empty mind meditation because the transformations necessary to your body involve Qi/Prana work. Empty mind practice helps those energy current movements to become initialized, but the Yoga work is Qi movement in the end.

(8) Mindfulness of Mental Peacefulness practice, which basically involves meditation practice that rests the mind, namely the aforementioned “empty mind” practice, is the basis of many spiritual schools. As explained in *Meditation Case Studies*, which provides several dozen emptiness or peacefulness practices based on the *Vijnana Bhairava* (see this book's Appendix), you mentally imitate the peaceful nature of *nirvana* enlightenment (the original nature) by letting go of the thoughts that arise in your consciousness. Then they will eventually die down and you will develop a degree of mental peace.

If you imagine that your mind is empty like space, or try to imagine your state of consciousness before you were even in existence, this type of no-

thought meditation also falls into this practice category. It attempts to cultivate a type of empty consciousness and teach that peace is the mind's natural state. Imagining that you are simply space that lets everything arise and depart within it is also a mindfulness of peace practice. It simply means to practice meditations that cultivate a quiet, empty, peaceful state of mind.

What is missing in Vedanta, Buddhism, and other cultivation schools that talk about the non-dual stainless purity, motionlessness, and peacefulness of the original nature is that they neglect to directly link this to meditation practice. They miss this one step so you are supposed to figure this out. Your mind is to naturally be like this (called emptiness) but not inert in the sense that it blocks thoughts from being generated, which is ignorance. In other words, you don't cultivate having no thoughts, but *no clinging* to thoughts since this results in a reduction of wandering thoughts that we normally call "no-thought."

You should mentally let everything arise, just as does the original nature since It gave birth to Shakti that is always moving, but you shouldn't attach to mental going-ons. If negative afflictions arise you use skillfulness to cut them off or change them into something else. The natural state of the mind is clear and unmanifest, empty of thoughts, but it takes effort to realize its natural state of quiet peacefulness. When people mentally experience that state it's called "seeing the Tao" and some take the experience as realization but it is *not* enlightenment.

Mindfulness of mental peace practice does not mean to obstruct or suppress thoughts, but to let them go (don't cling to them) and not be bothered by them.

(9) Mindfulness of the Body practice involves cultivating the body in various ways such as through Yoga, the martial arts, dance, and other exercise modalities that eventually include our old friends, namely various *nei-gong* inner energy practices in order to transform your Qi and Qi channels.

Since the spiritual path is basically Yoga, this route includes all the body-based techniques of exercising your muscles and moving your Qi to open up your channels, ignite your kundalini and generate the subtle body. It involves body excellence and mastery of movement.

Here is the important issue. Since the subtle body is a perfect copy of your physical body, if you want your subtle body to be in great shape then you better work on perfecting the health and form of your physical body through manipulation, exercise and diet. You must also learn how to control the movements of your body, and its internal energy, using your mind.

If you are not in great shape that result won't happen overnight. Transforming your physical body begins with a better diet and an exercise

program. Three books that might help get you started are *Internal Martial Arts Nei-gong, How to Detox: Cleanse Your Body Quickly and Completely* and *Look Younger, Live Longer*.

(10) Mindfulness of Death practice is the final set of cultivation techniques from Shakyamuni Buddha's ten large categories, although by now you might correctly surmise there might be even more practice categories that he didn't mention. Mindfulness of death involves prompting you to let go of all thoughts and situations since they are impermanent, thus destined to leave (die), but also reminds you to take things seriously since you could die at any moment.

Mindfulness of death involves remembering that death takes away everything, you could die at any moment, and therefore you shouldn't tightly cling to things, especially the thoughts within your mind. This turns it into a type of meditation practice. Mindfulness of death leads to abandonment of mental clinging since you realize that you cannot take anything with you upon death. Furthermore, remembrance of death should motivate you to make life count, to do your best and strive to achieve or experience whatever you want to do and experience in life before you die. Your life should be bigger than it is, and mindfulness of death should help you abandon any fear that prevents you from being authentic to yourself and stepping out to do whatever is your true heart's desire. Live life like you're gonna die because one day you're gonna. That is mindfulness of death practice. Make life count!

Many death-based exercises fall into this category of practice. For instance, the Tibetan bardo practices are a related form of this road of practice used by those who are passing away.

Ramana Maharshi practiced a death meditation exercise where he imagined that his life was slowly withdrawing from his limbs, his senses were no longer functioning, and death was approaching. As he imagined that the flow of his thinking was beginning to stop and consciousness was disappearing, he would let go and remain in what simply was. This is a type of emptiness meditation that falls into this category.

Imagining a state of annihilation or extinction where you do not exist anymore (Zen: "What were you before your parents were born?"), thus producing a state of peace due to the release, is also a mindfulness of peacefulness or death cultivation practice.

Perhaps the most important type of mindfulness of death practice is recognizing that death is inevitable and then (1) making a will for your family so that things go smoothly upon your demise (buying sufficient life insurance as well), and (2) making a list of goals you want to achieve in life (so that it counts) or a bucket list of things you want to experience before dying and then working on them. Someone who wants to become a Buddha

also (3) creates a set of vows, aspirations, missions or commitments that they would assume as a Buddha or Bodhisattva and which they start working on while alive.

THE SURANGAMA SUTRA

In the *Surangama Sutra*, Shakyamuni Buddha also revealed ten roads of practice that help individuals cultivate their bodies and Qi/Prana in order to help their spiritual cultivation. He stated:

“Some practitioners with unflagging resolution cultivate longevity through eating special foods and perfecting the diet of what they eat. When they have perfected this method of cultivation, they are known as earth-bound immortals.

“Some of these practitioners with unflagging resolution to cultivate longevity ingest special grasses and medicinal herbs to preserve their bodies and live a long life. When they have perfected this method of cultivation, they are known as flying immortals.

“Some of these practitioners with unflagging resolution ingest special minerals and stones to preserve their bodies and live long lives. When they have perfected this method of alchemy, they are known as roaming immortals.

“Some of these practitioners with unflagging resolution to cultivate longevity cultivate themselves by mastering their breathing and Qi. When they have perfected their Qi and Jing, they are known as space immortals.

“Some of these practitioners with unflagging resolution to cultivate longevity cultivate their saliva [the “sweet dew” salivary hormones produced at advanced meditation levels] and perfect the way of internal lubrication. When they have perfected this method, they are known as heavenly immortals.

“Some of these practitioners with unflagging resolution to cultivate longevity make themselves strong by absorbing the energy essences of the sun and moon. When they have perfected the inhalation of this purity, they are known as penetrating immortals.

“Some of these practitioners with unflagging resolution to cultivate longevity use mantras and special *nei-gong* (internal alchemy Qi exercises) cultivation techniques to preserve their bodies. When they have perfected this means of cultivation, they are known as immortals of the lesser way.

“Some of these practitioners with unflagging resolution to cultivate longevity master mental concentration and perfect the way of meditation to preserve their bodies. When they have perfected their method of mental concentration, they are known as illumination immortals.

“Some of these practitioners with unflagging resolution to cultivate

longevity cultivate through sexual union to help preserve their bodies and live a long life. When they have perfected this method of cultivation to achieve harmonization, they are known as Jing immortals.

“Some of these practitioners with unflagging resolution to cultivate longevity cultivate the understanding of heavenly and earthly transformations which they apply to their bodies. When they have perfected their spiritual cultivation, they are known as immortals of the highest order.”

These ten methods are extensively explained in *Look Younger, Live Longer* along with other anti-aging methods. Let’s take an in-depth look at these ten basic methods Shakyamuni mentioned so that you can understand how to add them into your path of cultivation practice.

(1) Special Foods and Perfecting the Diet

The first method of supplemental practice, said Shakyamuni, is that you should follow a diet of special foods that will help you on the cultivation path. Basically you want to be eating nutrient-dense foods rather than junk foods.

There are foods you should avoid and foods you should eat that will supply the nutrition that is most beneficial for health and cultivation purposes. In particular, men need to avoid foods that stimulate sexual desire (garlic, ginger, onions, leeks, etc.) because if a man loses his semen and Qi through ejaculation then it won’t be available to open up the Qi channels within his body.

From today’s modern nutritional science we would also advise avoiding sugar-laden foods or foods that turn into glucose easily (such as the grains, rice, wheat and potatoes), foods that produce allergic reactions or sensitivities, GMO foods, bad fats rather than good fats, and junk foods which hurt your body rather than supply nutrients.

A cultivation diet would not necessarily be vegetarian but should indeed be biased toward organic fruits and vegetables that have many different colors (since the many colors indicate many different phytonutrients). The easiest way to ensure this would be to ingest superfood green or red powders either with freshly squeezed juices or liquids like rice milk, almond milk, etc. Because fruits and vegetables are in powder form, they are easy to digest and can be almost fully used to build our biological substrate.

Nucleotide-rich foods will also readily supply the food components necessary for RNA and DNA repair. Flooding the diet with nucleotide foods that make such repair easier would be a wise course of action. Please see *Look Younger, Live Longer* for more details. One update ... the best supplement for natural vitamin D is probably Blue Ice Fermented Cod

Liver Oil (GreenPasture.org), which should be used for long-term darkness retreats.

The general rule to “eat healthy” is compounded by the fact there are many competing notions on what type of diet is best (raw food, vegan, vegetarian, no sugar, no wheat, no GMOs, etc.) that it is difficult to separate wisdom from radicalism. Along these lines I prefer the balanced food guidelines espoused by the Price Pottenger Foundation: eat whole, fresh, unprocessed (non-GMO) natural foods; eat only foods that will spoil; eat naturally raised or wild proteins (fish, chicken, beef, etc.); eat whole (full-fat), naturally produced milk products, preferably raw milk and fermented products such as whole yoghurt, kefir, whole cheese and fresh raw sour cream; use only traditional fats and oils (butter, animal fats, extra virgin olive oil, expeller pressed sesame and flax oil, coconut oil, palm kernel oil and palm oil); take cod liver oil regularly to supply your body with vitamin A and D; eat fresh fruits and vegetables, preferably organic; eat whole grains and nuts (that have been prepared by soaking, sprouting or sour leavening to begin to neutralize phytic acid and other anti-nutrients); include enzyme-rich lacto-fermented vegetables, fruits, beverages and condiments in your diet on a regular basis; prepare homemade meat stocks from the bones of naturally raised animals; use herb teas; use spring water or filtered water for cooking (and bathing); use unrefined sea salt; use a variety of organic herbs and spices for cooking; use unrefined and natural sweeteners (in only small amounts); cook in glass, stainless steel, or good quality enamelware.

(2) Special Grasses and Medicinal Herbs

Shakyamuni Buddha’s second method of supplemental practices was to eat special herbs, plants and botanical substances for their biochemical health, longevity and cultivation benefits, as well as for their ability to stimulate your Yang Qi into arising. This includes many types of herbs, such as adaptogens, that help make you healthier by balancing your internal body chemistry. You can find a list in *Look Younger, Live Younger*. Modern nutritional science, Indian Rasayana practices, Indian Ayurveda and Traditional Chinese Medicine have also identified many herbs that can be helpful to the body for cultivation purposes.

(3) Special Minerals and Stones

The third supplemental practice which Shakyamuni Buddha mentioned was ingesting special metals and minerals. Here one can supplement the diet with some form of easily absorbable minerals such as Shilajit (which contains at least 85 minerals in ionic form as well as fulvic acid and humic

acid), kelp tablets, colloidal mineral liquids and mineral concentrates. Some companies that at present produce superior mineral products include Purest Colloids, Trace Minerals Research, Marine Minerals, and Goldstake Minerals.

While pregnant, a mother-to-be should consume bone broth soups so that their baby will have healthy joints, and Shilajit or other easily absorbable mineral products like kelp powder or green powders. By supplying a fetus with trace minerals and vitamins during gestation you maximize the chances for a perfect body to be formed without birth defects. However, a woman who wants to get pregnant should start any type of vitamin and mineral supplementation well before pregnancy.

(4) Mastering Your Breath and Qi (Prana or Vital Energy)

Shakyamuni Buddha said that the fourth type of supplemental practice for cultivation are breathing exercises. This includes breath retention techniques, inner Qi movement exercises, and Qi balancing techniques. These techniques should usually be practiced together with visualization efforts.

There are many types of breathing practices you can use in spiritual cultivation, most of which cultivate your Qi and Qi channels. The most important type are *kumbhaka* pranayama practices of breath retention since they use force to help you open up your Qi channels quickly, and don't require energy supplied by an etheric master. Using breath retention techniques is like using a match to ignite fire, in this case the potential energy in your body (known as kundalini or Yang Qi energy).

The second type of breathing exercises are Qi balancing techniques, such as taught in Taoism, and the alternate nostril breathing techniques of Yoga. You can find more on these techniques in the books *Nyasa Yoga* and *Internal Martial Arts Nei-gong*.

If you feel uncomfortable inside your body, you can use visualization practice together with your mind and will to move your Qi into those areas to smooth out the uncomfortable feelings. This is Qi balancing, namely *anapana* practice. The Six Healing Sounds of Taoism (see *Look Younger, Live Longer*) fall into this category, but most people do not practice them correctly because they do not move the Qi of their organs during practice. You must know how to move your Qi/Prana internally.

The *Geranda-Sambita* also contains eight *kumbhaka* pranayama techniques, called pots, which spiritual adherents are strongly advised to master to help along these lines. If you combine these *kumbhaka* methods with the nine-bottled wind pranayama technique from Tibet (as featured in *Visualization Power*), it can help you transform your Qi channels so that you attain a subtle body more quickly. A trick to being able to hold your breath

much longer is to watch Youtube videos on freediving breathing exercises, and to use those techniques right before breath retention. This usually doubles the amount of time you can hold your breath. A good master who had many students would have them time their best retention periods each year, and give an award for the best performers as a sort of contest.

The famous *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* of Indian Yoga also contains many pranayama techniques stating, “Pranayama should be practiced daily so that impurities are driven out of the body and purification occurs. ... By proper practice of pranayama all your diseases will be eradicated. ... According to some teachers, pranayama alone removes internal impurities and therefore they hold pranayama in esteem and not any other cultivation techniques.” This basically means that breath retention techniques will help you open up your Qi channels. Yoga is really the pursuit of being able to control your muscles and Prana/Qi within your *nadis* (Qi channels).

Basically, pranayama will not just help to make your breathing more efficient, but will help you activate the vital energy life force (Qi/Prana) within your body, which is what is important, and therefore help to open up the energy pathways in all your tissues. This will help you activate your kundalini and thus generate a subtle body more quickly.

But pranayama isn't the only type of practice to employ. *Anapana*, and other *nei-gong* internal Qi movement techniques where you swish your Qi hundreds to thousands of times per day in selected areas of your body, moving it this way and that, constitute the basic Yoga practice of opening up Qi channels and strengthening your inner subtle body so that it can leave and return to your physical body as you wish. Sometimes you should move all the Qi in the entire right side of your body, and then the left, and then the top half followed by the bottom, or in your left arm or right arm or trunk or legs or head and so on. Devas practice Qi movement techniques like this all the time. If you want to develop the deva body then so should you.

You can concentrate on visualizing a flame or body of light in your body to ignite internal Qi movements, or strive to move your Qi this way and that, and sometimes you should just rest in emptiness while your Qi moves all on its own. There are many types of cultivation exercises for activating your Qi so that it can start the practice of subtle body purification.

(5) Cultivate Your Fluids and Saliva

The fifth method of supplemental practice is to cultivate your body's water element (fluids) such as saliva. This refers to cultivating your hormones by generating and swallowing a special sweet salivary hormone that is released during advanced stages of meditation practice. The *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* poetically refers to it saying, “The Yogi who drinks the pure

stream of nectar from the head will become free of disease, attain longevity, and their body will soften and become as beautiful as a lotus stem.”

You can also find mention of the meditation phenomenon of sweet saliva in Nan Huai-chin’s *Tao and Longevity*, the medieval *Atalanta Fugiens*, and Swami Satyananda Saraswati’s *A Systematic Course in the Ancient Tantric Techniques of Yoga and Kriya*.

Stimulating, collecting and swallowing your saliva, as commonly taught in Taoism, is another technique along these lines. However, the real meaning of this method is to cultivate the hormones of your body, which are a messaging system responsible for all sorts of chemical reactions that keep you physically functioning. By doing visualization and Qi movement exercises over your glands you will help to keep your glandular system healthy. To do so, you basically perform visualization practice on the glands within your body to send Qi to those areas, while spinning the Qi around them and within them. This will help to keep them healthy.

It is dangerous to try to manage your body’s hormone levels through hormone supplements like testosterone or estrogen, but a number of adaptogen herbs can help you attain hormonal balance. Bodybuilders use steroids to change their bodies, and these are to be avoided as well except, of course, for medical purposes.

(6) Absorb the Essences of the Sun and Moon

The sixth method of supplemental practice Shakyamuni Buddha mentioned was to absorb the energies of the sun and moon, which means imagining that you absorb the pure Yin and Yang energies from celestial bodies, or the environment, in order to supplement your own Yin and Yang Qi energies. You basically try to absorb into your body the energy from the sun, moon, earth, stars, or planets.

This is typically just imagination, but an imagination effort that cultivates your Yin Qi or Yang Qi. Why is this an imagination? Because you are absorbing these energies all the time since they surround you and bathe your body constantly. How can thinking about absorbing them bathe you more or draw their energies into you? This is just another imagination-based practice to help you move your Qi/Prana.

To do this type of practice you can envision the light energies from the sun, moon or planets embracing your entire person (usually pouring in through the top of your head), reaching inside you as far as the bottom of your abdomen and pelvis (visually imagine energy filling your whole body), and giving you the feeling of being completely illuminated within and without. After you imagine that your body becomes filled with energy, you must imagine that your whole body become luminous and shines brightly with these energies whether they be Yang Qi (sun), Yin Qi (moon), Fire Qi

(Mars), etcetera.

Other practices for absorbing energy from the sun, moon, stars or other planets involve actually, truly feeling those energies such as sunlight or moonlight. With these methods you must physically gaze at the sun, moon or stars (such as the Big Dipper or Polestar) in order to feel their energy and try to absorb their essences. To succeed with this method requires special conditions of time (such as the full moon for lunar energies) and place (high locations with clear skies), but some individuals work at it despite the difficulties.

Once again, this is a type of Qi cultivation practice, so it is important to use your mind and will to move the Qi within your body everywhere while (imagining) that you absorb these energies. Just trying to mentally absorb them, without inner Qi movement efforts, will do nothing for you. After all, your body is exposed to these lights and energies all the time without moving your Qi at all.

If you use any technique of trying to absorb Yang Qi you should also balance it with a practice of absorbing Yin Qi, such as the energy of the moon. *Nyasa Yoga* explains techniques for cultivating your Yin Qi. Tantras from India say, “Every male aspirant has to realize the latent Female Principle within himself, and only by becoming female is he entitled to worship the Supreme Being (*vaamaa bhuvitvaa yajet paraam*).” The meaning is to cultivate one’s Yin Qi, such as by imagining that you absorb the energy of the moon, imagining that you turn into a woman as a sexual fantasy or Qi cultivation technique, and so on which are all methods explained by tantric and Vajrayana masters.

The best results for absorbing lunar Yin energy are achieved around the full moon of each month when the lunar light is brightest. At that time you can best imagine you are absorbing/pulling the cool Yin Qi energy into your body through the top of your head and then also absorb lunar moonlight through the eyes, pulling it into the brain and sending it to the back of your head. An alternative is to pull the lunar energy into your heart-chest area or whole body, which is best.

When yogis in India sit under the hot sun while surrounded by cow dung fires, unbeknownst to you they are cultivating their Yin Qi at the same time otherwise they would not be able to stand the heat. When yogis in Tibet go out into the cold snow and try to raise their kundalini energy to melt it and keep warm, which Yoga schools call radiating inner fire, they are cultivating their Yang Qi at the same time, otherwise they would not be able to stand the cold. These are not absorption methods, but simply indicate Yin and Yang Qi types of cultivation.

There are both Sunlight and Moonlight Buddhas, which are enlightened people who help with all these techniques, and probably mantras for all these practices that call on them for help and assistance. Shingon Buddhism

from Japan, incidentally, also has a cultivation method based on the planet Venus.

The basic idea of this technique is to augment your own Qi from the Qi of a greater celestial source, whether truly or just imagination, and to use that extra energy to help strengthen all the Qi atomic bonds within your body. This will create an extremely healthy body. There are two schools that especially have these absorption techniques – Chinese Taoism and Indian Yoga.

(7) Mantra and Special Cultivation Techniques

The seventh special cultivation method is to recite mantras. There are mantra practices that will help you to quiet your mind because reciting sounds while listening to them will definitely quiet your thoughts. There are also mantras that call on spiritual beings to help you activate and purify your Qi energies, which transforms your Qi.

The most effective mantra practices are Mantrayana and Nyasa exercises that help transform your body. Most people have never heard of Nyasa practices that combine mantra recitations with visualization efforts on body sections while you also try to visualize, feel and move the energy (Qi) within those regions. You try to move your energy in order to transform/purify the Qi channels in some vicinity. In Taoist practice you try to grab the Qi of a body region and move it hundreds to thousands of times in revolutions of various shapes thus performing all sorts of different types of Qi movements within your body.

An individual practicing Nyasa selects a part of their body, focuses on it with concentration while visualizing that it is either shining with light or changes color. They also recite a mantra (sometimes as if from within that location thus vibrating it) in order to move Qi to that area and open up the Qi channels in that immediate vicinity. When so doing you must try to physically *feel* that area being focused upon and the energy sensations within it.

Remember, you are trying to do Qi/Prana cultivation, not mantra recitation. You must continue working on each body part until one by one you have done this for all the sections of your body, and then you do your entire body as a single unity. Sometimes you also try to generate special emotions during the practice such as courage, excitement, liveliness and so on since they will help you generate Yang Qi during the practice.

All these techniques work to open up the Qi channels of your body, your *nadis*. By using visualization as the energizing, vitalizing, activation or innervation mechanism to move your Qi, you try to progressively increase the size of the body region affected until you can feel your Qi stimulated everywhere and can sense the feeling of your entire body. You want to

eventually cultivate the Qi of your entire body as a single unit, but to get to that point you have to start on smaller, more manageable sections as done in weightlifting. This type of work takes years.

You always try to stimulate, energize, stir up or move your Qi using this method, but you do so for smaller/fractional body sections until you can do the entire body completely as one whole. Once you reach a state of harmonious fullness of Qi because it feels balanced, you should let go of attaching (clinging) to those sensations and mentally rest in a blissful state so that your Qi channels will naturally open without any effort. The Qi that has just been activated/stimulated into moving will be what subsequently opens your channels.

As another example, when people are told to visualize that their body is a roaring pillar of fire (or on fire, etcetera) they should try to whip up all the energy within their body like a roaring or flickering fire, simultaneously give rise to a state of joy, and then keep that sensation of warm moving energy alive for as long as possible while visualizing that you are a fire. The ideal result is to have your Yang Qi warm energy start energetically moving everywhere like the blazing flames of a fire. In Tibetan Buddhism the monks and nuns practice generating heat as well through their own varieties of kundalini cultivation.

You can also imagine that a blazing fire is burning away your flesh and bones and eventually reveals a transparent, crystal clear perfect body beneath the final ashes, which is done in Jainism. While doing so, you should recite any special mantras connected with that technique because that will tell Buddhas and Bodhisattvas to send *nirmanakaya* and/or students to help you with your practice.

(8) Meditation

The eighth method of practice is simply the practice of meditation. You must meditate nearly every day in order to obtain the benefits of opening up your Qi channels to help create your deva body. Moslems, for instance, pray five times per day which is why many Sufis attain enlightenment due to spiritual practice of such frequency. Olympic athletes typically practice 5-6 hours per day, as do professional musicians. Only members within spiritual traditions usually have the time to devote themselves to such extensive efforts.

As previously stated, the best how-to meditation guides with a variety of techniques are within:

Color Me Confucius (Bodri)

Twenty-five Doors to Meditation: A Handbook for Entering Samadhi (Bodri and Lee)

Meditation and Its Practices: A Definitive Guide to Techniques and Traditions of Meditation in Yoga and Vedanta (Adiswarananda)
Meditation Techniques of the Buddhist and Taoist Masters (Odiar)
Buddhist Meditation (CM Chen)
The Little Book of Meditation (Bodri)
Meditation Case Studies (Bodri)
Vijnana Bhairava

(9) Sexual Intercourse with Discipline

The ninth method of practice is sexual intercourse to help with cultivation practice, which is known as *karmamudra* in Vajrayana Buddhism. The Qi, Prana, life force or vital energy within your body can be stimulated or activated through sex to help open up your Qi channels and transform your physical and subtle bodies. This is one of the fastest ways to do so, and is practiced, along with kundalini yoga, by heavenly beings. The practical basis is to use the internal energies aroused by sex to flood all the sections of your body with energy, and you utilize sex to do so since it is already a basic biological function that normally gives rise to joy and internal energy movements. The *asanas* of lovemaking, in conjunction with the accompanying joy, bliss and passion, are to be used to produce a passionate flow of energy in the bodies of the partners.

The idea of using sexual intercourse as a cultivation practice is that a man and woman should have sex (without the man ejaculating to experience semen loss, although female orgasm is allowed) while experiencing sexual excitement so as to move their Qi and thereby open up their Qi channels due to its internal movements. Even sexual thoughts, which normally excite men and women, will cause someone's internal Qi to move. Physical sexual cultivation is far superior to imaginary sexual fantasies (*jnanamudra*), although fraught with appropriate dangers such as sickness, pregnancy, an abusive tendency to use others, and so forth. Despite Tibetan Buddhist teachings on *jnanamudra* you should not do it at all. If you start playing with imaginary sexual consorts then masters and their devas will ruin your life because they found a vehicle whereby they can teach all sorts of fantasies that will ultimately harm your vital energy and body.

Different positions and tempos during love-making naturally cause your inner Qi energy to move. Good sex causes your Qi to arise and different sexual positions allow you to move that energy to different parts of your body. Your emotions are important in this process as different emotions cause different Qi flows to arise, so it isn't just the physical excitation/activity that matters.

For instance, practicing the four immeasurables of Buddhism (infinite

joy, compassion, loving-kindness and equanimity) will cause your Yang Qi to arise within your body and will make an imprint on your long-term personality and behavior. Organ transplant stories prove that the character traits of the donor are sometimes transferred to the recipient due to being permeated with the Qi of the donor. Those emotional likes and dislikes sometimes get transferred to the recipient. That being the case, this means you can permeate your own Qi with emotions or traits you desire, and thus you can transform your personality and behavior in this life, and sculpt yourself for a better future life, by engaging in this type of cultivation practice.

To do so you are not supposed to just think about selected traits you wish to have but must *actually become them*. It is like an actor who has to play a certain movie role that imitates an individual, and who then starts walking, talking and thinking like the person they are to play so that their character traits become second-nature. Such activity will give rise to a certain type of Qi within your body, and your cells and subtle body will be imprinted with such traits as a permanent feature. In a similar vein, during sexual intercourse the passion, bliss and joy of sex should largely envelop you along with the emotion of love, and you can then use sexual intercourse as an activity for Qi cultivation.

This route of using sex to transform Qi channels is used in some spiritual traditions (Chinese Taoism, Vajrayana Buddhism and the Maithuna practices of Hindu kaula tantra yoga) to help transform the physical body. However, the effectiveness of the efforts decline tremendously if a man ejaculates because he will lose both his Jing and Qi in the process. Those are the essences one must retain in order to transform your Qi and open up your Qi channels. The pressure men feel from not having sex is pressure of the Qi channels being opened, so when men lose this energy they lose their chances for great cultivation progress. Hence, Yoga schools always emphasize that men should not lose or waste their semen.

(10) Matching with Earthly & Heavenly Conditions

The last method of practice mentioned by Shakyamuni Buddha was to match oneself with heavenly and earthly transformations because they involve Qi energies, and by matching with stronger Qi forces you can use them to open up your Qi channels.

Heavenly and earthly transformations refers to the influences of the four seasons as well as any local geographical *feng-shui* energies. It also refers to various astronomical phenomena since those energies definitely affect the Qi flowing within your subtle body. Furthermore, it refers to personal astrological influences too.

For this, astrological squares, oppositions and quincunxes represent

forces fighting one another in a negative fashion while trines and conjunctions represent forces adding to one another in a beneficial, coherent fashion. Sextiles are not necessarily positive but typically represent a heavy mixing of planetary energies that produce a strong interaction. In any case, this method applied to astronomical or astrological phenomena is to swim with the tide, not against the current, and to use the strong energies of the tide to help transform the energies within your body.

Planetary and environmental influences can affect the Yin and Yang energies of your body, and therefore can help you open up your Qi channels or hurt you depending upon whether they are harmful or helpful and whether you accord with them or try to go against them. The idea of cultivation is to go along with nature and *use any natural beneficial energies to help open your Qi channels and transform your inner subtle body composed of Qi*. You should piggyback on free energy to your benefit.

The idea of matching yourself with earthly and cosmic conditions is therefore to use these energies (or any other you can identify) to help transform your Qi for the development of the inner subtle body, and thus you want to be swimming with the flow of these energies in a helpful fashion rather than fighting against them. Also, if you know you have an astrologically auspicious time to make progress cultivating your Qi by using some special type of practice technique then use it.

Chinese culture identifies earthly and heavenly forces using “ten heavenly stems” and “twelve earthly branches” while other cultures use planets or refer to the “five elements” (earth, wind, fire, water, space) to categorize them. There are also the different forces available during the different seasons. You want to use these powerful energies whenever possible to greatly supplement your Qi so that it helps open up your Qi channels. You must adjust your practices appropriately.

Success in spiritual cultivation is not about the number of books you read. *It is all a path of Yoga practices in the end, especially internal energy work practices!* Because of this, you need to set up a daily practice schedule of inner Qi work, along with meditation work, and stick to it through thick and thin. Consistency of complying with a practice schedule that involves you in a large variety of cultivation techniques *simultaneously* is what will bring the quickest results. Repeat: If you want quick practice results you should “simultaneously practice a large number of different cultivation techniques, each based on different principles for moving your Qi/Prana, on a consistent, regular basis.”

Every day you need to recite mantras, practice meditation and pranayama, move your Qi by practicing inner energy exercises, maintain sexual discipline so you don't lose your internal energy, and try to become a better person. The inner energy work is most important because it takes

years to build up the foundation of Qi channel cleansings before your real kundalini (Yang Qi) can awaken, but when it finally does then the deva body is assured in twelve years' time. To succeed at cultivating the subtle body, however, you must spend countless hours in meditation and doing energy work ahead of time, and you have to become a better person. The result comes from long meditation sessions after your Qi is somewhat purified, and from cumulative practice hours. The more work you do, especially when based upon different practice techniques, the better.

Spiritual cultivation is basically a process of devoted Yoga practice (such as these exercises) that essentially involves cultivating your mind and Qi. We can say this is mind-body practice, but all the talk about emptiness, consciousness, original nature and so on all comes down to doing special forms of Yoga in order to first generate the subtle body, or deva body that is the first dhyana attainment, while not clinging to your Qi and thoughts.

Once you can pop out of your physical body with a subtle body composed of Qi then the rest of any spiritual teachings can be easily obtained. Therefore you don't really need extensive religious teachings. You just have to be an ethical, virtuous, moral person or no one will help you attain the deva body. A Sufi, for instance, just needs to do the cultivation work that will ignite his kundalini and then after he pops out twelve years later he can get any teachings that aren't available in Islam. He will then be introduced to the *real teachings* that correct any mistaken notions he adopted because of Islam. The same goes for Christians, Jews, Buddhist, Hindus, Jains, Sikhs and so forth. Everyone discovers that their religion has false beliefs and errors ... big ones!

This is the same for anyone, so spiritual study is, in a sense, overrated other than teachings on ethics, morality, character training, values and virtuous behavior in accordance with wisdom. Remember that the virtue-driven life purifies your Qi as well. What is important is meditation, internal energy work and behavior – moral training. It's all about proper behavior. Virtuous behavior is important because as you will find when going through the difficult Twelve Year kundalini transformation period, and especially its final year of torture, many who already achieved the Tao have powers but are abusive assholes with little restraint.

As an instance, master Nan Huai-chin often said to me that Tibetan Buddhism, in particular, produces many cultivation catastrophes. This is in part due to the fierce aggressive culture that developed in Tibet in response to survival needs in such a harsh environment. This fierceness, then, is the underlying genetic pattern that exists because it allowed for survival. It is even said that Padmasambhava had to "battle" and "conquer" the local "angry" protector spirits to make them submit to his teachings, thus highlighting the aggressive nature of the regional genetics. Tales of hunters, thieves, and barbarian living in earlier days, and dharma fights between the

Bonpo adepts and Tibetan Buddhists, along with various frequent competitions among the Buddhist monks themselves, help to solidify such observations. Buddhism's peaceful nature was therefore actually a remedy for the region's genetic and cultural tendencies rather than adopted because it matched the underlying culture. It was a *taming mechanism*.

In *Who We Are and How We Got Here*, David Reich also identified the Tibetan Plateau, which is at a higher altitude than the European Alps, as one of the three genetic clusters that define East Asians. Because of their special high altitude evolutionary genetics, Tibetans have broader/more capillaries than others and twice the rate of blood flow through them. This is good for cultivating Yang Qi, which perhaps explains the often-reported highly aggressive and abusive nature of the male lamas who often develop extremes of these personality traits to in order to exercise authoritative power over thousands of unruly monks. When during their many years of consistent cultivation they concentrate on developing "divine pride" or on becoming "wrathful deities" such as Yamantaka, this emphasis on ego, anger, arrogance and power in the cultivation stream itself (to raise the Yang Qi) just adds to the underlying cultural milieu of aggressive, egotistical power-seeking and positioning. In the etheric realms the enlightened monks are always testing the skills on one another in contests of power and dominance, and during the Twelve Years you are the battleground. The merciful Buddha Kuan-Yin was adopted as the main patron deity of the nation only because Kuan-Yin symbolized compassion and helpfulness to others, which is the remedy for these and other inherent cultural problems.

If you go through the twelve-year kundalini transformation process within the Tibetan-Nepalese-Bhutanese traditions (including Bonpo), it will be more abusive, painful and full of agony than most others, and hence I advise avoiding these mystical and (also) expensive traditions. As a foreigner and thus an outsider to the tribe, you will not be treated with the same respect as local Tibetans etc. during the kundalini process despite the appearance of friendly, compassionate monks around you in daily life. They won't be the ones guiding the abusive kundalini process where many people consider or attempt suicide due to the severity of the onslaught, so are irrelevant. During the last year of the Twelve Years you will be subjected to much pain, which easily turns to harm, and this demonstration of dominance is characteristic of this tradition in the etheric realms as well as the fact that people with power become abusive and oppressive. You will not be treated with true friendship as in other traditions when going through the process, especially if you know of all the information within this book (because knowing of the process the masters and their deva students will take more leeway in abusing you since you know what is going on). Individuals with higher body attainments from this tradition will simply use you to demonstrate their powers without regards to your welfare, and

this will destroy the life of a layperson. Thus this tradition does not just sport a number of what Nan Huai-chin called “catastrophes” but also “parasitic savages” who must use *you* to display their abilities of power and control. I would not wish the abuses of this tradition on anyone.

The big benefit with these traditions is that tens of thousands of Tibetans, Bhutanese and Nepalese have been monks over the ages. They have grown up in an isolated culture where the predominant activity was only cultivation, and hence when they die there are lots of devas available to work on circulating the Qi within your inner subtle body because in helping you they gain the merit for someone to work on them. This is why many Tibetans succeed, in addition to the favorable genetics; it is not because the tradition is superior, but because they can organize countless ready devas willing to circulate the Qi within you. The Tibetan Plateau often produces better bodies for Yang Qi cultivation work, and there are certainly more people available to work on the bodies of the monks they want to succeed in this life (which is also the case in Thailand, Sri Lanka, etc.), and they can organize the process well because of having many, many helpers available and having done so throughout hundreds of years. But, based on the male hierarchical thinking necessary to lead and control such a hoard, the process is more abusive and punishing than most. The lack of discipline and self-restraint, as well as excesses in abusiveness, aggressiveness and sexual desire due to strong Yang Qi is what characterizes these little-educated tribal traditions. Remember that it took a *Communist* country, China, to rid Tibet of serfdom and slavery! If you are not a monk or nun in these traditions you should think twice about joining them because of how you will be treated during the kundalini process. It is so abusive that masters never describe it, and some people even commit suicide during the process. A famous Chinese saying runs, “Heaven treats men like straw dogs (which are thrown into a fire and burned for ceremonial purposes)” and it aptly applies to these people.

The higher-bodied adepts in these traditions veer toward arrogance, hubris and power battles due to the necessity within their culture of having to demonstrate to lesser-bodied adepts that they are more powerful and can control them. “I’m more powerful than you so you must obey me” is the message transmitted. Furthermore, those in power due to having more bodies have trouble admitting errors or the fact they did some thing wrong, and hence having a problem to self-correct themselves. In short, they have psychological problems centered around power issues such as “I am more powerful than you,” or “I have power and you do not therefore I am higher.” Unfortunately, during the twelve-year kundalini transformation process where they work on your Qi they engage in constant power battles with peers and underlings and *you are the battleground* tossed this way and that while they abusively try to top one another in skill demonstrations. They

take delight in the anguish they may cause to you and the devas in the brain audience (Vimalakirti's room), a joy that should not accompany the process even though it may "raise your Yin Qi" to some minor degree for a moment or so.

The root cause of their issues is actually psychological problems and hubris on their part that are masqueraded by the refrain, "it's part of the process, it has always been done this way, this is tradition." Little benefit to your Qi transformation is gained by many such activities during this twelve-year period, but entertainment and enjoyment is gained on their part. The devas have so much fun in their sport, and their masters so mediocre in talent and lacking in true compassion, you are battered by their antics. This is why you need an excellent master and tradition. I know one non-Tibetan, non-monastic individual who achieved the deva body attainment from their kundalini transformation process overseen by Tibetan, Nepalese and Bhutanese monks. He developed fifteen permanent types of damage to his body and his life due to their having fun and taking advantage of him during the process.

Since you now have more dharma and knowledge than any tradition provides, you need not pursue the Tibetan Plateau Vajrayana route but can adopt other traditions that include the ever-so helpful activities as Yoga and martial arts that teach you to lead your Qi within you through every muscle, bone and major Qi channel, thus speeding the process tremendously. This is quicker than having others do all the work for you, which happens during the kundalini transformation process. The stage of "no mind no body" is achieved, which is also the state of "mind and body are one (unified)," because you cultivate the Qi of your physical body throughout every muscle and organ and experience it as one single whole without partitions. This state is always compared to the original nature, the primordial substance of the universe that is without partitions or differentiation but is just one single whole. Thus it is called the stage of "no extremities" or bliss. At one stage you are able to sense the feeling in every part of your body (it is linked as one whole and is comfortable or blissful), or achieve internal Qi flow that is so natural, smooth and superior that the feeling of your body disappears entirely because that Qi is properly balanced by itself and thereby circulates effortlessly without any friction. All the parts of the body feel light, agile, comfortable and threaded together as one single Qi.

Hence, by daily practicing stretching, yoga and the soft martial arts that teach you to do this (such as *Taijiquan*, *Baguazhang*, *Tongbeiquan*, *Yiquan (Da Cheng Quan)*, *Liu He Ba Fa* and *Xingyiquan*) along with breathwork and *neigong*, you will accomplish the deva body attainment quite quickly versus just meditating on emptiness and having devas and their masters possess you and move your Qi with their own. There are specific inner Qi work methods that help accomplish this like *Xiao Zhou Tian* (Small Circulation

cultivation practice), *Da Zhou Tian* (Great Circulation cultivation practice), *Xi Sui Gong* (marrow and brain washing cultivation practice). Exercises such as *Yi Jin Jing* (Damo's muscle/tendon changing method), *Shi Er Quang* (Twelve Postures), *Ba Duan Jin* (Eight Pieces of Brocade) and *Wu Qin Xi* (Five Animal Sport) are also helpful.

This is the normal process of spiritual cultivation which requires inner Qi work and meditation practice to quiet or calm the mind. There are many reasons people are taught to empty their minds. For instance, a calm and quiet mind is a mind that can more easily control negative emotions through wisdom, an empty mind gives rise to proper internal Qi flow, a mind of quiescence is free of afflictions and suffering, etcetera. By not holding onto your Qi or thoughts, it is also easier for junior devas to move your Qi by using theirs whereas if you cling to your thoughts and Qi they can hardly move it.

If over the years you cultivate your Qi during Yoga and martial arts training and practice (such as through the guidance supplied by Yang Jwing-Ming's books), you will cultivate your Qi quite well and make up for the deficiencies in not having Tibetan Plateau genetics, which lend themselves to a certain style of cultivation activities that are most efficient and effective for those genetic body-types, but which aren't best suited for other genetic profiles. For instance, the southern style cultivation practices across Taiwan, Hainan, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Burma and the Pacific islands correspond to a different class of genetics, and thus non-Tibetan style practices are more effective for those genetic streams. The European Christian cultivation schools, such as the Orthodox school of Mount Athos in Greece, use entirely different techniques that work well for those traditions and body types. The many Hindu and yogic traditions within India, and Mahayana schools within China, use other practices as well.

People never look at cultivation practices in terms of genetics, but there are differences in the ease or ability to generate Yin Qi and Yang Qi within you based on genetic differences (as well as based on climate, culture and other factors), and thus unique practices are favored in different traditions to take advantage of these variant tendencies.

Power corrupts everyone, including people who attain spiritual bodies. They sometimes become arrogant, self-centered, egotistical, self-assured and abusive in behavior (which is normal for the elites in most societies) when they should become more interested in self-improvement and self-correction. The lesson of history is that those who gain power tend to use it to oppress others with less power than their own. A Buddha is someone who is devoted to helping others, and is always cultivating virtue and helpfulness rather than power, fame, status and so on. This is something we find constantly taught in the Christian tradition. Just because someone is a Buddhist monk or nun doesn't mean they are pure or proper.

If you don't transform/open up your Qi channels you won't transform your physical body to be able to generate the deva (subtle) body of Qi, which is the same as attaining any of the samadhi or dhyana mentioned in spiritual texts (when someone is in samadhi or trance it just means they are using their higher bodies to travel the spiritual realms, which is why they are non-responsive). You won't sufficiently purify the physical body that is the template for higher body vehicles of a more transcendental composition.

Enlightenment is actually a body attainment, and the concomitant "enlightened" mental attainment comes with that body attainment as the natural accompaniment. However, various spiritual texts are worded so that people think it's the other way around and work primarily on meditation to "purify consciousness." As a result of this "skillful means that deceives," most people who cannot succeed in this lifetime will still work at meditation and by watching their minds improve their behavior, which is needed for the path.

There are an incredible variety of spiritual practices you might use in your own cultivation. While professional musicians and athletes typically train several hours per day for six days a week, no one wants to spend that amount of time meditating each day. Compliance to a regular practice schedule, and boredom are issues. To simplify the decision process of what to practice, I always tell people what I wrote in *Move Forward*, which is that there are four or five basic methods (foundational cultivation exercises) that they should turn into a daily practice schedule if they possibly can. Those methods will get you 90% of the results. You have just been introduced to those basic techniques, although the book *Nyasa Yoga* contains even more information.

Each of these basic methods works to transform the body *based on entirely different principles*. You never know which cultivation principle or practice will work best for you, since everyone is different, so by using several methods together (each based on different principles of Qi purification) you will maximize your chances for success in attaining the subtle body quickly. Therefore, try to combine several methods together for the quickest results in igniting your kundalini, transforming your Qi and opening up your Qi channels. At the minimum you should be practicing meditation, mantra, pranayama and *nei-gong* (inner energy work) practices every day.

In Buddhism these are the "intensified yoga practices" that prepare you for the kundalini awakening, which then results in the Twelve Years period of advanced Qi transformations/purification, supervised by many masters with higher bodies, that finally produce the deva body of the first dhyana. If you engage in ardent cultivation work, your efforts are called "preparatory practices" before you attain the deva body.

COMBINE YOUR PRACTICES

We have already gone over many cultivation methods but here is a reminder of the most important.

The first of these methods is mantra practice, *japa* or prayer recitation, which doesn't require you to set up a special time period for practice. However, you should practice it in such a way that it becomes Mantrayana, or Mantra Yoga. You do this by trying to move the Qi in your body at the same time you recite the sounds, such as by feeling or moving it in different sections of your body according to the sounds.

Another derivative is to identify with a divine form, imaginatively feeling their energy within your body, while reciting a mantra or prayer to them, which is then Buddha mindfulness along with Qi cultivation. You can also just recite mantras to quiet your mind.

You can practice reciting mantras at any time and anywhere, but should try to practice a certain minimum number per day or for a certain time period per day. It is actually best to set up a regular practice schedule to recite at the same time each day and then the enlightened beings overseeing those mantras will more easily fit you into their schedule. Never forget to focus on your Qi during mantra practice instead of just mindlessly mouthing sounds over and over again, unless you just want to quiet your mind.

People always say reciting mantras calms your mind, but mantras also actually call on a particular Buddha family for assistance in flooding your body with Qi (enlightened beings move the Qi within your body by projecting *nirmanakaya* into you, and moving the Qi of that *nirmanakaya* to affect your own) to help purify it via transformation. If you think of your teacher while reciting then he/she will do so if enlightened.

You should pick several main mantras you consistently recite, although you should test new ones every now and then. Usually people feel warmth or energy moving inside them due to a mantra's usage, and that's the sign of a good mantra where the spiritual beings "behind it" are doing an active job. Of course their proficiency can change after a while, so periodically test new mantras too.

Many masters responsible for helping people who recite mantras don't really do a good job, which is why you should test mantras to see if they move your Qi. For quickest results, mantra practice should always be turned into Mantrayana practice, as explained within *Nyasa Yoga*, because this is the quickest way to use sound, visualization and the power of divinization to transform your inner subtle body of Qi using your own efforts rather than somebody else's energies. If you take this road you will get a good result even if spiritual beings do not help because your progress will come from your own athletic efforts in using your will to move your Qi

around inside you and thereby purify your subtle body.

The second practice I recommend for everyone is some type of daily emptiness or witnessing meditation practice. If you want to succeed in attaining the subtle body, you *must* practice meditation. Specifically you must always be watching your mind in order to (a) calm your thoughts to reach a higher degree of inner mental quiet, (b) learn detachment from your thoughts, and (c) upgrade your behavior because of self-policing your thoughts and behavior.

Vipassana or mental witnessing practice is the practice people typically think of when they hear the word “meditation.” You basically sit down and start watching your thoughts without adding any extra energy to the process, and in time they will die down. You stay mindful of the witnessing, so it is also called mindfulness, watching or observation. Sometimes the word “contemplation” is used, but it more properly means thinking about things in order to understand them or become wiser about them.

You must set up a schedule that forces you to do meditation every day if you want to succeed in spiritual cultivation. Several books have already been mentioned that teach this and other forms of practice.

To help transform your physical body, you should also do some form of *kumbhaka* (breath retention) pranayama breathing practices. Holding your breath forces Qi channels to open internally within your body. Every time you do *kumbhaka* pranayama practices you should record the amount of time you can hold your breath and you should keep a record of your progress in chart form. In that way you can challenge yourself to surpass previous retention records, and also visually see how you are progressing. Don't strain yourself so much that you hurt yourself, which can happen for pranayama retention exercises that require exertion. Visualizations that you are purifying your physical body can be added to breath retention exercises, and they should be ultimately followed by thought-free (emptiness) meditation work.

Next, you must also do some form of stretching exercise. This is absolutely essential because you want to stretch every muscle fiber to remove knots so that you smoothen the flow of energy within your body as much as possible. The body you have is the body shape you will get as a deva, only it will be composed of Qi energy. Therefore, work at exercise to improve its form and appearance if you want a better body.

To this end people normally practice yoga, Pilates, Foundation training, weightlifting, Ginastica Natural, dance and the martial arts. I like to combine muscle exercises with Mantrayana and focused visualization on each of the muscles being worked on during a workout session. You can, of course, also easily do this with Yoga and Pilates or martial arts.

The point is to stretch every muscle so it can be seen with definition while doing visualization and Mantrayana practice on each one. You should

do this work without stretching your muscles too. This will help you not only become healthier but prepare a base for the successful generation of the subtle body in the shortest time. When you are practicing, it helps to look at color-coded pictures of the muscles being stretched to help guide any visualization practices. *Visualization Power* teaches you how to do this.

During the stretching of your muscles you should try to move your Qi through them. Rotate your Qi, swish it, move it here and there, but try to energize it. As previously explained, the soft martial arts stretch muscles with movements but you should take these skills to the next level by matching their movements with Qi and breathwork. By adding visualization, energy work and Mantrayana onto a muscle as it is being moved/stretched you can open up all its Qi channels fastest and create the subtle body in less time than average.

You should practice pranayama, mantra and internal energy work *together* with stretching exercises to quickly transform your Qi and channels. This is what makes Yoga the effective spiritual practice vehicle it is intended to be. Pranayama, by itself alone, will force your Qi/Prana through your muscles.

All exercise routines should always include women learning kegel exercises and *mula bhandha* in order to open up Qi channels in the pelvic region. Men should practice *mula bandha* as well, even if monks.

For the fastest results in opening your Qi channels you must practice *nei-gong* and *neijiaquan* exercises, which are internal energy movement routines of kundalini yoga involved with moving your Qi internally. Inner *nei-gong*, *nei-dan* or *anapana* exercises are practiced in order to move your Qi within your body parts, and thus purify your Qi/Prana and your body. Yogis practice hundreds to thousands of repetitious inner energy movements per day when undergoing certain training regimens such as *kriya* yoga and kundalini yoga. You can *move* your Qi/Prana along your muscles, or try to *excite* the Qi/Prana in every cell of a body section, or *feel* the Qi in entire sections, move it around like water or wind leading it everywhere, suffuse an area with the feeling of saturation and so on. There are all sorts of methods you can try in order to bath all your cells with Qi, in a sense washing them over and over again.

Warning: the first few times you do this your body muscles may lock up the very next day where it feels impossible to move, but this is normal and quickly passes. It proves that Qi exists, otherwise you wouldn't get this response. *Meditation Cases Studies* goes over all sorts of physical results from this process. It also proves that you are working somewhat correctly. The techniques within *Nyasa Yoga* fall into these Qi movement practices.

You need to cultivate every individual part of your body – through mantra practices, breath retention pranayama exercises, stretching and so on to activate-stir-energize and then move your Prana/Qi to open up the

nadis or Qi channels within all sections of your body. You can focus on large body sections (such as head, chest and lower body) or specific body appendages/parts (such as arms, legs, trunk, head, etc.). There are lots of ways to do this, and countless practices available.

The more you move your Qi along body parts as pathways, flooding your body sections with Qi as done in Nyasa yoga, kundalini yoga, *kriya* yoga or *nei-gong* the quicker you will open up your Qi channels and transform your physical nature. This is what prepares your body for the Twelve Year kundalini awakening. Remember that you must flood entire body sections, limbs and organs with Qi (using visualization, mantras or imagined energy movements powered by your thoughts and will) to activate your Qi and open up the pathways instead of visualizing single lines or points. There are countless techniques for doing this, and the books mentioned on tantric yoga reveal many methods.

Usually these techniques are kept secret because once you start doing them the devas will come to help, and they have absolutely no discipline in their behavior. They will f*ck you over in order to prove their stage of powers to their teacher. The devas are always eager for enjoyment, so they love to play with your thoughts and emotions to do so. Your health or other conditions are not their concern, so if you begin such work you need a master to protect you whom you can go to for help. The devas will practice giving you thoughts, emotions, visions, and making you do things under their control. They'll play all sorts of tricks on you for their training games such as making you believe certain people are enlightened. There is nothing you can do to prevent this living hell.

If you undergo the twelve-year kundalini transformation process to attain the subtle body, the suffering is even worse. The first one hundred days are usually terrible with lots of visions, hearing of voices, violent internal Qi movements, the arising of sexual desire, etcetera. You will usually be assigned a deva who is to go through the same process as you to attain his Causal body at the same time they are working on your subtle body, and who will therefore be your companion. If you are unlucky you will get one who is below average, and if lucky someone who is above average. He has someone within him too so that they can go through this process efficiently.

Typically the Causal-bodied devas are talking through him, and he and others lower with just subtle bodies will be practicing using you, and Supra-Causal devas will be practicing using multiple bodies to handle everybody. At the early stages they will all pretend they are demons or ghosts to stimulate your Yin Qi from the fright. This system is wrong if you must go through this suffering to attain *moksha* or liberation, but this is it. The masters working on your body won't do so twenty-four hours per day for twelve years unless they are also having fun teaching their students, whom

they treat as the primaries, so you are basically screwed if you go through the process and your teacher is incompetent at controlling them. Usually it's just monks or nuns who can make it through this process because the monastery system supports and protects them as they go through it.

For twelve years you can never trust anything devas say because they are always practicing mental control techniques and don't want you to know what is going on. They will make you think you are dealing with angels and higher beings, ascended masters, past saints, etcetera and will mislead you into thinking that all sorts of people in the world are enlightened who are not which will cause you to make all sorts of claims and conclusions that land you in trouble if you are not careful. If someone has superpowers and can know your thoughts or secret inner mind, as in the stories of various Christian saints such as Padre Pio, this is a clear sign however that they do have some stage of attainment.

They will often try to make your Yin Qi rise, which is why they put you through all sorts of worries, anxieties and frights such as disguising themselves as evil demons, devils and ghosts to provoke a Yin Qi response within you. At later stages you will seem to be mumbling, talking nonsensically or talking to yourself as they practice talking through you. They will make negative reactions arise within you all the time, so you really need to be a strong person to go through this. It is even tradition for them to warp your thoughts over time so that you hate your master and criticize other teachers by the end of the Twelve Year period, or think other people are enlightened who aren't.

Whatever you do, never start using pornography during this Twelve Year period and get caught up in the world of sexual fantasy. The devas will use all you have seen/watched against you to raise your sexual desire and thereby destroy your body and vitality by stroking the impulse for sex such as masturbation. They themselves cannot rise above their own animal nature and they will end up destroying you as they use you for sexual cultivation purposes. The "Fifty Mara States" chapter of the *Surangama Sutra* even warns about this, so never get involved with pornography or imaginary sexual partners (*jnanamudra* teachings) as taught in Tibetan Buddhism, for all the visions of naked women and imaginary sexual partners that masters such as St. Anthony, Padre Pio, John Vianney, Swami Muktananda, Yeshe Tsogyel, etc. go through are fake. They are illusions put into your head during this process so that your Yang Qi arises due to sexual desire being stoked, but when masters do this to teach their students they also become abusive of you. In several schools the masters will give you visions of beautiful women and make you think they are your heavenly girlfriend, consort and so forth in order to stoke your sexual desire. This is a hideous practice, but they are abusive of people.

If you engage in any type of practice that involves pornography and

visualizing a consort, devas will grab hold of you for their own practice efforts and make your life a living hell. In nature it is the alpha animals who have sex while the beta animals watch, so abandon the desire to watch pornography to eliminate lots of problems. Fifty percent of divorces even state that pornography was an issue. As stated previously, Elder Joseph the Hesychast advised people to beat their legs or other body parts with a light rattan cane bundle (bamboo or rattan strips about one and a half feet long that are bound at one end) to distract themselves until the desire for masturbation or sex passed. Devas cannot distract you this way forever and eventually leave.

Everything you have ever done in life – an accumulation of impressions – is stored in your brain neurons as memory, and Heaven (subtle-bodied devas, Causal-bodied devas, Supra-Causal-bodies devas, etcetera) makes a habit of reading what everyone has done in life by reviewing their memories, including what you cannot remember. This is why living masters know what you did in life, or know your thoughts. You can never hide anything from Heaven no matter how hard you try. Therefore, even if you are not a cultivator you should never engage in evil, bad, unwholesome deeds in life. All will be known because the spiritual beings around us (“in Heaven”) are watching. They just laugh at people, which is why they have a tendency for abusing you during the Twelve Year kundalini period.

During the twelve-year period of kundalini changes your past deeds will all be brought up again and again especially those involving wrongs, guilt, shame, fright, inappropriateness, character flaws, past mistakes and so on. The memories will come up as well as feelings of guilt, shame and regret at the same time when devas use them for practice. The twelve-year period is so uncomfortable that masters never discuss it, and it’s best to hitch yourself to a tradition early, that involves lots of *living* enlightened masters, if you want to go through it. Now you know why masters typically only teach self-awareness, yoga and meditation practice.

You must Protect and Prosper yourself during this time because devas will not protect you from anything but land you in trouble, just as the *Surangama Sutra* warns. If they gain control they will cause you to damage your health, body, wealth, relationships and nearly everything, and then laugh and leave. This is why spiritual masters have created the fictitious story that kundalini energy is too powerful for most people, would burn out their body, or create insanity. Rubbish and nonsense! It is devas that are the problem due to their lack of self-control, and their teachers who allow too much leeway because of the fun. If one of them causes you to do something stupid, or they do something new, it will probably be repeated 10,000 times with you as the sufferer, so you need a master nearby to protect you from such behavior. Such excesses are explained in the “Fifty Demon Mara States” section within the *Surangama Sutra*, included within

Meditation Case Studies.

The problem becomes complicated as devas practice giving you thoughts, especially thoughts that cause your Yin Qi to arise (such as fear, guilt, shame, sadness, embarrassment, anxiety, despair, powerlessness, depression, sadness, discouragement, worry, etcetera) or thoughts that cause your Yang Qi to arise (such as pride, anger, reverence, joy, happiness, love, hope, sexual desire, etc.) as part of their training and in order to help purify your Qi/Prana. As Meher Baba explained, they will try to affect your thoughts and your emotions, which are harder to affect. Making you wear a suit of certain emotional tones is something that only Causal, Supra-Causal and higher Buddhas can do. During the kundalini transformation period the majority of emotional tones they will cause you to wear will be negative in order to affect your Yin Qi, which also need to be cultivated during the process. Yin emotional states will also predominate because higher masters will always try to suppress the efforts of the lower masters as a kind of test, and the easiest way to pass the tests are to provoke negative emotions within you regardless as to your feelings or consequences.

You can understand part of the process this way. You have both an emotional mind and a thinking mind (the intellect). It is easy for devas to affect your thinking mind and override its thoughts simply by possessing you, which devas will do all the time during this period as a type of training practice in battles with their master and others, but it is difficult to gain control over your emotional mind. When a master tests his students the devas will often try to provoke your emotional mind while their teacher suppresses your reactions, and so the best chances of success are if they try to provoke instances of guilt, shame, and other negative emotions within you. Thus it is a living hell.

Lacking restraint and self-control, they are like a hoard of wild animals or locusts without any concern of your circumstances, including your health, safety and job or relationships. In the last year of the Twelve Year kundalini transformation process, they start giving you pains and “pings” in the genital region and other random areas of the body to agonize you while they start working on your sexual organs and asshole. During the previous eleven years their rotations of Qi/Prana throughout your body did your trunk, torso, head and appendages but not this region. Your eyes, ears, teeth, tongue and nose are left to last. This is so that you cannot develop the spiritual senses (from transformed sensory organs) to see or hear them as they play at inflicting agony upon you to spike your Yin Qi while “washing” your body with their Qi/Prana rotations. The twelfth year is so brutally painful with mental agony and physical pains that you will certainly wish to commit suicide or die. So many problems during this time could be avoided, and the entire process expedited, if you daily practiced yoga (or martial arts) to stretch every muscle of your body, and *spun your Qi through*

countless revolutions on the muscles being stretched while performing Nyasa Yoga-type energizing methods on those muscles. See *Nyasa Yoga* for details.

Both your Yin Qi and Yang Qi have to be transformed on the spiritual path in order that you attain a subtle body, and spiritual masters will work on cultivating your Yin Qi directly by stimulating their own Qi inside you while giving you Yin thoughts, and work on transforming your Yang Qi directly while giving you Yang-type thoughts. Or, they may work on your Yang Qi while giving you some Yin thoughts, or work on your Yin Qi while giving you some thoughts that raise your Yang Qi. They will mix thoughts and types of Qi but never let you know what is going on. You need a living master to protect you through this process, which is why usually only monks, nuns and sadhus or swamis, protected by their tradition, can stand it. Some go into retreat for years to pass through it. If your master is too old he may die while you go through it, so make sure you are involved in a tradition with lots of *friendly* enlightened masters whom you know so that you have many helpers.

Masters will sometimes use one of their spiritual bodies to violently vibrate your Yang Qi while using another body to give you thoughts of worry or anxiety so that you generate some Yin Qi, and blend the two in various proportions to help you purify your subtle body. They themselves practice using multiple *nirmanakaya* to control your Qi and thoughts and emotions on different levels, disguising it as if coming from different individuals. This is the training to become a Buddha and use your multiple bodies. However, the methods used for training, by using you, are in my opinion unethical because they abusively go too far. People get hurt and many try to kill themselves. Devas justify all sorts of abuse because they have the power, you cannot do anything, and it's fun. The best way I can describe their behavior is by using the words abusive, arrogant, stupid, excessive and hubris.

Once you start doing kundalini cultivation types of inner energy work, masters will rush in with their students to teach, and will create all sorts of problems because their students take priority over you and they "have no skin in the game" (personal consequences or factors at risk) if they cause you harm, or cause you to do harmful things. They will just walk away. Who will protect you?

If you do something stupid because you succumb to their pressures then you will get hurt and they will just walk away laughing, so edit any of the strange impulses you feel compelled to do during the road of spiritual cultivation (such as yell during a church service, take drugs to see what it is like, write a strange letter, give *all* your money to the poor, hire a prostitute, etcetera). If you ever do something stupid or errant because of these influences, especially when you know it is wrong, they will endlessly try to cause you to repeat the same errant behavior during contests to see whose

powers are stronger than your will, so don't ever do a single thing wrong, errant, stupid or of vice when under these influences. They will try to make you repeat unfortunate behaviors endless times. Damage, in most cases will be irreversible.

Most masters, knowing that you will not succeed on the spiritual path, therefore want you to stay away from the kundalini (Qi) cultivation techniques, which are the only things that get you the Tao (subtle body). They want you to stay away because you will have to deal with devas playing with your thoughts and energy and you won't be able to handle it. The honest truth is that you can move your Qi on your own, but your Qi usually moves *significantly* only because someone enters into you and uses their body of energy (moves his or her own Qi) to move your Qi.

Devas (what the West calls "angels" or "spirits") are around you every moment. They include people who have passed away such as your parents or ancestors and individuals born in Heaven. They know everything people think and do, so are used to looking down on (disrespecting) human beings when they see all the stupid, wrong and evil things being done everyday and all the crazy justifications people use for their behavior. The behavior of devas is not like we see in movies where angels are angelic. They are regular people who can see everything we do and eventually adopt the habit of looking down on and laughing at human stupidity in order to deal with seeing all the crap, crime and evil they see. Because of laughing at us all the time, and knowing that we don't know better at many of the cons going on, many develop an abusive condescending attitude of disrespect towards humans. They will attack you in hoards again and again under their own teacher's tutelage in order to practice reading your memories and giving you thoughts.

Devas under a master's training will practice giving human beings thoughts and emotions, or blocking them, or giving visions or dreams, or getting you to do things. Surprisingly they will ~~screw~~ f*ck you over for their own training purposes, without restraint, because they think that everything they do to you, including harm, is permissible since they can always walk away without personal consequences. There is nothing you can do or say to stop it unless you have a powerful group of enlightened masters as your protectors, so don't ever do anything foolish or you'll suffer the consequences. This topic is briefly explained in *Meditation Case Studies* and I wish to emphasize it again and again like Shakyamuni Buddha did in the *Surangama Sutra*.

This bothersome trouble is why no one ever discusses what goes on during the Twelve Year period of kundalini transformation during which hundreds of masters and their students will run their Qi throughout your body continuously 24 hours per day to purify its atoms, and put you through mental hell at the same time. Jesus went through it, Shakyamuni

Buddha went through it, Naropa went through it, Abraham went through it, Yeshe Tsogyel went through it, Padre Pio went through it, Saint John Vianney went through it, Swami Muktananda went through it, everyone goes through it to attain the deva body – everyone without exception!

No master will ever tell you what he or she went through because they don't want anyone to think they are schizophrenic or be scared away from the spiritual path, so they refer to it simply as a period of trial and tribulation. Shakyamuni Buddha revealed a little by giving a lecture on “Fifty Demon Mara States of Delusion” that appears within the *Surangama Sutra*. I translated this lesson in *Meditation Case Studies* while also providing many case studies of deva-caused illusions and mental problems such as voices in the head. *Meditation Case Studies* is non-denominational and because of its valuable contents should be given to ardent practitioners of every religion.

Once again, a kundalini awakening is not dangerous due to “awakened energies.” What is dangerous is devas making you do things that harm your life. Heavenly beings intervene in human affairs all the time by giving people thoughts, and during this period you are the mega-training ground where they exercise and practice all sorts of control over your thoughts, emotions, memories, impulses and behaviors. They will put you through wave after wave of mental anguish to test their powers during this period of time and to determine their skill level.

The poor Christian priests, monks and nuns going through the process always think they are being tested by the devil or demons, but the onslaught within their minds is just wave after wave of masters with their students. Afterwards they'll describe the period as one of constant struggle and trials or temptations where they also sometimes had the intercession of guardian angels or even spoke to the Lord. Of course it was always the same people working on them masquerading as both ends of the equation – as your ego (as well as your thinking process) and as another person. If the situation became advanced they might even become “fools for Christ” where they would begin mumbling or talking to themselves when the devas were practicing control of their mental processes and imitation of their ego, or they might then behave stupidly, or make jokes and do all sorts of stupid nonsense. This is why they always need a spiritual elder to protect them.

Even after you attain the deva body the devas will still use your old body for practice. For instance when Ramana Maharshi would leave his physical body to go elsewhere with all his higher bodies, at which time he would seem to be sitting motionless in samadhi, he would often come back and find his body had moved to an entirely new location in the temple he had been sitting in, and would have to exert a lot of struggle and effort to climb down from whatever ledge or crevice he now found it in. Obviously his deva friends were using it while he was away and wanted to play a prank

on him upon his return.

The troubles you'll go through during the kundalini transformation period, which happens to people of *all traditions*, are not fun. This is why few masters tell you how to do internal energy practices but teach mantra, meditation or yoga instead. Otherwise you might become a candidate for abuse by devas who will then want to practice on you. Therefore it is best to do this only if you have an enlightened master who can subject them to some level of restraint. Note: most swamis, gurus, and masters are *not* enlightened.

As stated, Shakyamuni Buddha described what typically goes on during the Twelve Year period in the *Surangama Sutra* section of Demon Mara States, translated in *Meditation Case Studies*. As an example of the abuse you pass through, when Abraham of the Bible was going to sacrifice his son on an altar this event clearly indicates that he was going through the introductory phase of this Twelve Year period and was caught in a miasma of deva manipulation and delusion. No God would ask you to sacrifice your son. He was in a state of delusion controlled by devas and masters, for why else would you listen to someone and attempt such a crazy thing thinking it is the command of God?

Many such cases are described in *Meditation Case Studies* to help you stay away from harm. The case of Jesus being tempted by Satan and Shakyamuni Buddha being tested by Mara are just watered down descriptions of this Twelve Year process. Those stories just hint at what went on during a multi-year process, but by no means explain it clearly. You must protect yourself during this period from doing something wrong or harmful to yourself because the devas will try to force you to do so, and get you in trouble and walk away. Always protect yourself during this period.

When the control exerted over you feels coarse, akin to the “coarse thought” of the first dhyana, it is a deva making the effort. When the control is a little smoother, it is a product of third dhyana thought, namely a Causal body attaineer who is exerting influence. When the control or thoughts that exert control over you are very smooth or fine, this is classed as the thought type of the fourth dhyana (or higher) and refers to a Supra-Causal or Immanence attaineer demonstrating how to do it to his or her students. Those individuals have absolute control over others by using their *nirmanakaya*.

That was a long discussion of the dangers of the kundalini awakening period, but it had to be transmitted even if repetitive because Shakyamuni Buddha's warnings were not enough.

Moving on, next we have visualization, inner focus or concentration exercises to help develop mental stability and a “one-pointed mind.” Many concentration methods teach you to practice keeping your mind on a topic for an extended period of time, and this helps to banish other wandering

thoughts that might distract you. *Visualization Power, Sport Visualization for the Elite Athlete*, Tibetan sadhanas and Hindu deity sadhanas (of Kali, Heruka, Lakshmi, etc.) can help you practice this technique although they are also training vehicles for your emotions and Qi movement. The Vajrayogini sadhana, white skeleton visualization method, and concentrating on marma points and acupuncture meridians on your body are all good forms of visualization practice.

Some people are qualified for sexual cultivation (*karmamudra*) on the spiritual path, which means sexual activity with a partner to move your internal energy in tune with sexual activity. To be more efficient at this technique women should practice kegel exercises, and both genders should practice *mula bhandha* in order to open up Qi channels in the pelvic region. No one is qualified for this technique unless they also practice meditation and inner energy work, such as through using pranayama, *anapana*, kundalini yoga and the white skeleton visualization method. In the white skeleton visualization you visualize that your body and bones are burned by fire, turned into ashes, the ashes turn into dust and then drift off into emptiness until nothing is left. In some versions you move the Qi/Prana of your body around all your bone and body tissues to generate the feeling of fire within.

With yogic determination, men should learn to be successful at karezza (coitus reservatus), which is lovemaking without ejaculation so that your energy is still available for opening up your Qi channels. Despite the attention to non-ejaculation, they should still fully experience the joy, excitement, physical bliss, passion and happiness of sex along with internal energy movements throughout the body that happen during intercourse.

Please see internet pictures related to “mapping emotions on the body” which show where we most feel emotions like love, happiness, anger, etcetera inside our bodies. According to these diagrams, love and happiness can be felt throughout our *entire* body, which is why sex - since it gives rise to such feelings/emotions - can be used as a powerful method to move your Qi/Prana and open up your Qi channels everywhere. In other words, it is a way to transform your body. Sex can indeed be used in cultivation to help open up your Qi channels if you “stay with the fire at the beginning and avoid the smoke at the end.”

Male assists female and female assists male in this practice; both are trying to help the other move their Qi and feel physical bliss and sexual excitement during acts of sexual passion. Men must learn energy control and yogic control for this technique. During sex the couple are to saturate their body with the wondrous (blissful) feelings of Qi movement connected with sex, and are to absorb themselves in the bliss of sexual excitement and happiness that moves their Qi. The mantra “Ohm Ah Hung Lah Rah Tah Soh” is often used by those practicing sexual cultivation to help open their

Qi channels through that technique.

Buddhism says that Shakyamuni, before he left his palace to become a monk, was married and surrounded by dancing girls but was celibate and never slept with them. Before leaving the palace he is said to have used his superpowers to give his wife a child by pointing his finger at her. Of course this symbolized his penis, which means that he engaged in sexual intercourse. He gave his wife a son through sexual congress and ejaculation that caused pregnancy, not through superpowers, but you cannot say this out of respect. He was a normal guy.

Vajrayana Buddhism, Chinese Taoism and Indian Kaula Yoga paths allow/teach sexual practices so that people can use sex to internally move their Qi to help transform their Qi and channels, but to be qualified you need to do a tremendous amount of prerequisite work with the white skeleton visualization technique, *kumbhaka* pranayama and many *nei-gong* and kundalini yoga practices to start purifying your Qi. Without that foundation your efforts will be useless.

Lastly there are two practices that go hand-in-hand with any other techniques you may use. The first is study of cultivation dharma, as you are doing now, and the second is working on transforming your behavior using the methods within *Move Forward*, *Color Me Confucius* and *Culture, Country, City, Company, Person, Purpose, Passion, World*. For instance, a wonderful method to emulate is the practice of King Kulashkekharā, a famous saintly king of ancient India who would carefully watch his own behavior during the day and then submit a report of what he did at the end of each working day to his deity. This was similar to Benjamin Franklin's and Yuan Liao Fan's method of character development. I suggest King Kulashkekharā's technique for every household.

Those who make character observation a daily practice, starting from a young age, will be able to better transform themselves into noble human beings. A ledger of merits and demerits, and using methods similar to the four immeasurables (ex. authority Qi projection), are ways to ennoble your character and life through constant witnessing, self-assessment, contemplation and self-exertion. In particular, if you work on perfecting your behavior in conjunction with practicing generosity you can become a person of consummate conduct, and thus qualified for help in attaining the deva body.

In short, your short set of daily cultivation practices, each which works to transform your Qi and/or consciousness according to different principles, best includes:

- Mantrayana or simple Mantra/Prayer recitation
- “Emptiness” and Witnessing Meditation

- *Kumbhaka* Pranayama
- Stretching exercises with attendant inner energy work (Yoga, Pilates, Ginastica Natural, Martial Arts, etc.)
- Kundalini Yoga (Nyasa Yoga, Naropa's inner heat yoga, inner alchemy, *kriya* yoga, *anapana*, *neijiaquan* or *nei-gong* inner energy work to move your Qi)
- Visualization – Concentration exercises
- Liao Fan's Method for self-policing your behavior

In the field of investing, Benjamin Graham said he started selecting stocks by concentrating on thirteen important financial factors he had worked very hard to identify. After many years of experience he reduced his selection process down to seven or eight factors, and at the end of his career he had reduced it down to just two factors of significance that determined whether a stock was a good or bad buy.

In baseball Bill James reduced all the various player statistics primarily down to OBP, the percentage of time a player got on base (On Base Percentage) because concentrating on this one figure alone produced game wins. Through his simplification of principles down to the very basics he absolutely revolutionized baseball, and teams who followed his statistical guidance started producing winning streaks.

As another instance, in the field of horse race betting, Beyer's Speed Figure was developed to compare thoroughbred horses. Thoroughbreds run in all sorts of races of different lengths and different conditions so it is hard to compare their speeds, but past information from all the races of varying distances has been reduced down to a single speed figure.

The point from these examples is that there are thousands of things to study or practice in the field of spiritual cultivation but it primarily comes down to a simple three: inner energy work, meditation, and good behavior. Practice wise you have to do a lot of inner energy work to ignite the kundalini transformative process, but most schools emphasize meditation instead and ignore the inner energy work for transforming your body so that the subtle body can independently form. This deflection of interest is a giant mistake, and haunts schools such as Zen, Vedanta, Christianity, and so forth. People waste years of effort because they are not told to make efforts to cultivate their Qi/Prana.

Zen and Advaita Vedanta are particularly misleading in this regard, and most Zen/Advaita practitioners waste their lives meditating without ever doing the inner energy work that will bring them the first dhyana enlightenment, namely the subtle body attainment. In the heavenly realms the devas are all concentrating on energy work since they can make their bodies larger, smaller, lighter, heavier, etc. at will. Because they can move

their energy in various ways they are always practicing energy work, and are the ones who will move the energy inside you and ignite your kundalini energies.

Remember that spiritual cultivation is a matter of generating bodies of higher transcendental substances that are, as a linked collection, called the *sambhogakaya* in Buddhism. The way Hatha Yoga explains this is that you have to resolve the constituents of the body back to their original essence, which actually means to spin out of the physical body a subtle body, to spin a Causal body composed of higher transcendental substance out of the subtle body, a Supra-Causal body of higher nature out of the Causal, an Immanence body out of the Supra-Causal, and so on. You “spin” a new body out of a lower one, like the Hindu legend of the gods stirring soma, because you have to revolve your Qi/Prana throughout your body over and over and over again for years to create an independent new body of higher transcendental substance.

The process is not limited to five bodies, but teachings will not go beyond these first five for a variety of reasons. Each body substance gets closer to the constituent primal energies of the universe since each is more refined or transcendental. Therefore you are resolving the constituents of the body back closer to their primordial energies every time you generate a new higher body vehicle. You can only see bodies at your level of existence and none of those at a higher energy level. With each new body your mind becomes clearer, and you attain extra body/energy capabilities pertinent to a body composed of the energy of a higher plane.

The *Mahabharata* of India says *pavitranam pavitram yo mangalanam ca mangalam* – “The closer we go to Him, the purer we become. And the farther we go from Him, the more we become vulnerable to impurities.” You can interpret this in terms of body substances for there are entire realms where the beings are composed of transcendental substances far higher than our own, and therefore their body compositions are “closer to the original nature.” The dense earthly plane is lowest of all, hence extremely impure.

Islam also reveals the five bodies of attainment, and talks about five planes of emanation that veil Allah, and which must be removed for us to see His face.

Confucianism says to trace all things back to their Source, the Supreme Ultimate. Confucianism also says we are to master the changes of phenomena, which Taoism also emphasizes. In particular, Taoism says we must investigate the transformations of nature and learn to manage them. We must understand how people normally behave and use our understanding (wisdom) to help guide them.

In Taoism, a main principle is that man can by observation and study learn the principles and energies that rule nature and then use them to

transform his body, uplift his life, and even guide humanity to higher states of peace and prosperity. Those body transformations include not just better health but even such things as generating a subtle body.

As with Taoism, the school of Shaktism has both the goal of liberation and the goal of gaining ascendancy over the forces of nature. Therefore various masters of the Shakti path would investigate nature by carrying on experiments to gain a detailed knowledge of the workings of the cosmos. To them, personal salvation is too small a goal as they desire mastery over phenomena too. This is similar to the Taoist view.

The Kaula school of Hinduism has also adopted this viewpoint because it affirms a positive approach to spiritual cultivation, embracing all virtuous avenues as a means for spiritual evolution. In the Kaula school you don't need to be a sadhu or ascetic to succeed in spiritual cultivation. Laymen and laywomen can do so too. Sex, music, love, business dealings, art, social life, athletic pursuits, even food, are all possible helpmates for cultivation, spiritual evolution and the uplifting of mankind.

The Kaula school maintains that whatever is pleasant and positive can be integrated into the spiritual path, which does not have to be entirely ascetic or restrictive like Hinayana Buddhism. In the Kaula school the physical body is not an obstacle to be tortured through ascetic practices. It is considered a condensation of the energies of totality, and therefore a contracted form of the universe. In other words, it is a condensation of higher etheric forces that are therefore concealed within it, and this is what makes the spiritual path possible. The spiritual path, by letting you attain higher transcendental bodies through the hard work of personal effort, releases the higher energies from their mixture with the lower. This is basically the cultivation process in total.

The Aghori path of India reminds us, "Your body is not even a speck of dust when compared to the universe. When you have not yet understood the energies working within your body born out of human intercourse, then how can you possibly know anything about the workings of the universe born out of divine pulsation, and the energies that govern it? ...

"Aghor is beyond Tantra. Right now you do not understand even the energies working within your body. These energies, on an infinite level, hold all of universe in all the ten directions and govern its function. He, who after understanding these energies on an infinite level attains command over them, is an Aghori or Aghoreshvar. But what would you know of this when you do not even understand the energies that reside within you and hold your entire existence together. Then to attain oneness with that ultimate reality, the source of these energies and the mother of all creation, Goddess Jagdamba, who resides beyond even these energies, is simply out

of the question and several births away from you.”⁴⁵ This is reminiscent of the demonstration given to Swami Rama.

In other words, even on the Aghori path, which most Hindus shun out of fear or disgust, you eventually master the various energies of the cosmos by also generating the transcendental bodies that progressively move you closer to the original nature, which in this school is called the Goddess Jagdamba.

In Mahayana Buddhism universal salvation for everyone is the goal. The vows of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are emphasized because engaging in compassionate activity to help people is the entire goal of the cultivation path. Altruistic activity to help others is the practice of the path, the purpose of the path, and the result of the path. Such service exhibits success on the path. The Mahayana focuses on compassionate activity that makes helpful efforts for others. You try to succeed in cultivation in order to save others.

The Hinayana path focuses on strict disciplinary rules for managing your mind and behavior. The goal is to create merit to succeed in the path for yourself.

In Vajrayana Buddhism you are specifically taught how to tap into your Qi energies to ignite the kundalini within your body and quickly transform your Qi to attain the subtle body and higher. It focuses on Qi cultivation using inner energy work while the Mahayana focuses on meditation and altruistic behavior.

The idea in spiritual cultivation is not just to ignite spiritual energies within yourself, but guide them in a beneficial fashion to go through all your bones, joints, organs, body sections and tissues to help strengthen your inner Qi body so that it can eventually attain independence and leave your physical shell at will. This is how you attain the first of many higher bodies, namely the deva body. Once you generate that body, then you have to repeat the process with that new body to gain yet higher body attainments composed of even higher transcendental energies.

Spiritual practitioners devote their entire lives to this pursuit under the guidance of teachings to “clarify their mind” and “discover the source of consciousness, or “realize their original nature,” but what it actually entails is body and energy Yoga. At the same time practitioners are working at meditation, their master and many others are using their own Qi to move the student’s Qi in order to get the Qi transformation process started and keep it going.

Once attained, the question arises as to your life purpose with a nearly

⁴⁵ Manoj Thakkar, Jayesh Rajpal & Nupur Agrawalp, *Aghori: A Biographical Novel* (Trident Book, India, 2017), p. 254.

immortal body that gives you powers over lesser creatures who don't have your body attainments. Therefore the spiritual path also comes down to vows or commitments, ethics, morals, values, virtue and proper behavior. While the spiritual path is essentially the practice of Yoga, the end result should essentially be consummate conduct.

With successful spiritual cultivation you will attain a set of spiritual bodies that will live a very long time, so what do you want to do with those lives? Each body can do different things in different realms simultaneously, acting quite independently of each other. Think of the vows of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas ... what is it you would want to accomplish?

In an infinite eternal universe with endless lives of reincarnation one after another, or one single life that lasts a very long time, this then becomes the crux of the issue. How will you spend your energies? What purposes or causes are worthy of you? What would be your vows or areas of interest? What do you want to do or achieve?

Why not start acting that way now and start accumulating the skills and merit to make it happen? Such is Buddha Yoga.

FROM: BUDDHA YOGA

CH. 5 – “Optimal Practice Schedules”

What is the best training or practice schedule for spiritual cultivation? What should you be doing on a daily or seasonal basis throughout the year to get the best results since the weather, especially mugginess or humidity, can hamper the internal movements of your Qi/Prana?

In spiritual cultivation we want to obtain the maximum results for the most minimal efforts. We want the highest results in minimal time. We want to maximize the Qi/Prana results we can possibly get for the minimum amount of practice effort, especially since no one has the time (or interest) to practice. Therefore there is an optimal and non-optimal way to do things.

Since we want to find the optimal way that gets the best results with the smallest effort in the quickest time we should turn to the field of sports training for some insights. Sports research teaches how to train for maximum results in the safest, quickest and most advantageous ways.

Training should take into account fundamental principles just as when Benjamin Graham found he could reduce investing down to just two stock characteristics, and Billy Beane found that he could reduce hundreds of baseball considerations primarily down to OBP (on bas percentage), a sabermetric statistic invented by Bill James, to win baseball games. As previously explained, Andy Beyer, who was a horse racing columnist for the

Washington Daily News, did a similar service for horse racing by coming up with a formula called the “Beyer Speed Figure” that basically incorporated all past racing information for a horse into a single speed estimate. All these men reduced hundreds of complicated factors down into just a few relevant principles for their decision making.

Why repeat this information? You have to understand that you should look at cultivation practice scientifically. Take all the information you’ve ever read and simplify it into *just a few basic principles of practice*, and rely primarily on those principles to guide yourself rather than many meaningless concerns or superstition. “What is this practice doing for my Qi, how can I improve that result, and how can I get a quicker and deeper result?” Remember, simplify everything down to a few fundamental principles to guide yourself and your practice. If you look at the matter in terms of fundamental principles instead of thousands of principles, and stay focused on applying those principles, then you can make progress.

What is our target in spiritual practice? Purification of your mental processes, a general quieting of your mind from the reduction of wandering thoughts, and transformation of the physical body (its Qi and channels) enough to prepare for the kundalini awakening that then initiates a Twelve Year period of Qi transformation before your subtle body can emerge. All the intensified yoga preparatory practices have the purpose of getting you ready to go through this Twelve Year period. They all involve cultivating your Qi/Prana and also involve various types of emptiness meditation.

What is the main preparatory pathway? Once again - inner energy work on the Qi throughout your body, and meditation (empty mind) practice. Don’t forget making vows and engaging in better behavior.

What is the challenge to practice? Basically, no one wants to practice. Most of us practice infrequently, and we tend to practice incorrectly or just use one method when many would be better. Most importantly, meditation and Qi/Prana energy practice have a very low compliance rate. No one has a lot of time to practice and few people practice with consistency (or even correctly) because most of us just don’t want to practice. Moslems are lucky in that they are forced to practice (pray) five times per day, which is why many succeed, and many Christian monks follow a monastery’s schedule that causes them to regularly practice on a daily basis as well, but most of us rarely practice and don’t want to practice.

Why? Because practice is tedious, boring, monotonous, tiresome, routine, repetitive, uneventful, and uninteresting. Therefore, continued compliance with a practice schedule is an issue. We need to either be forced into practice, or create variety that beckons us to become more interested in regular practice so that we voluntarily comply with a regular practice schedule.

Few people want to sit in meditation every day and try to empty their

mind or watch their thoughts. It's boring, and they don't want to spare the time or make such an effort. To say it "produces bliss" is in most cases a lie as well because most people are uncomfortable sitting there. No one wants to do endless, repetitive energy work either especially if it seems that the practitioner isn't getting any results and the effort will require years. Hence people seek a master to supervise them and keep them on track, who should tell them what is going on and what they should do, but most masters won't tell you what it is all really about, which is generating the subtle body as the foundation of higher spiritual attainments.

The only people who can thus easily commit to a long-term schedule tend to be monks and nuns or other religious professionals who are supported (so they need not worry about an income) and *scheduled to practice on a daily basis* (typically under supervision) because they have to follow the rhythms of their monastery, nunnery or tradition. As explained, Islam is an exception because every Moslem prays (can practice cultivation) five times daily due to a schedule that *all* Moslems must follow.

Most people stop practicing because of boredom, monotony and the seeming lack of progress from just meditating. To motivate yourself to practice, you therefore need to inject some variety into your practice schedule. Along these lines, it therefore helps if you set up a number of multi-day special sadhanas (practices) to be performed one after the other, and start telling yourself "I must finish this special practice" when you are in the midst of one. This will help you to continue practicing until you are due to start a new sadhana. One after the other, the novelty will help pull you along to the progress you desire.

Sticking to cultivation practice over a long period of time is a fundamental problem, so how can we structure our practice effort in such a way that we maximize our staying power, and keep up the motivation to stick with meditation/cultivation training?

One method ensuring a higher compliance rate with practice is to join together with others to cultivate in a group that has a regular practice schedule. When Christians go to Church on Sunday this is the one hour per week that they will be "practicing," but are they really accomplishing anything significant in terms of Qi/Prana purification and mental quieting when they attend such infrequent, brief services? One hour per week can hardly be considered adequate spiritual practice if you have the objective of significantly changing your Qi and Qi channels. As explained, Moslems have it better because they adhere to the tradition of praying five times a day.

Another excellent method is when a master privately instructs a student to practice a particular method for a certain period of time, and then supervises their progress. Masters can train students through a progressive series of preparatory Qi work to prepare their bodies for a kundalini

awakening in this way. This is done for monks, swamis, gurus, etc. in a variety of spiritual traditions and is akin to the process of a coach training professional athletes. This is a superior method for great spiritual masters to adopt, namely telling students, “I want you to do this particular practice so many times/hours per day for this amount of time. Then come back to me. Use this mantra when doing it.”

A third way is for individuals to practice on their own quite regularly due to self-motivation. They must keep to a strict cultivation schedule via willpower just as athletes do when self-training. One great way to do this is to link specific forms of practice to the different days of the week, which adds variety to the overall routine. Variety breaks up monotony and will help you to continue practicing.

For instance, in weight-training people usually vary their workout according to the day of the week. Since inner Qi work to move your Qi everywhere (*anapana*, *nei-gong* or *keriya* yoga etcetera) is also time consuming because you must try to move/circulate/revolve and even wiggle your Qi/Prana hundreds to thousands of times per practice session, one way to do a really good job is to concentrate on smaller limited sections of the body on different days of the week as in weight-training. Then you will be sure to do the entire body one or more times per week instead of just partially doing it, with a very bad job, and then crapping out.

While one should always do full-body Qi/Prana cultivation at the end of such practices to link all your Qi together into one whole, and also end all Qi-based movement methods with emptiness meditation that lets go of thoughts and body sensations while resting in the comfortable body feelings generated, this type of routine is focused but incorporates variety. As a result of a limited focus on different body segments each day, you will have a higher chance of actually intensely concentrating on each different body section and transforming its Qi with whatever *anapana*, *nei-gong*, kundalini yoga, *keriya* yoga or Nyasa yoga practice you use. That’s because this takes less time than doing the whole body, and hence you’ll be more likely to complete the work. For some people, “Today I work on the lower section of my body,” or “Today I work on my arms,” “Today I work on my lower trunk,” etc. is far more motivating and subject to continued effort than doing the same thing every day, getting tired at it and then stopping Qi-based work because of monotony and boredom.

At the end of such practice, always do full-body Qi practice, and then cap it off with emptiness meditation during which time you don’t cling to the Qi movements or sensations within your body, but let them reach a state of harmony and balance on their own. Remember that devas can make their bodies of Qi larger, smaller, lighter or heavier. They are always practicing to attain control over every part of their energetic body. Therefore while practicing Qi control over parts of your body, don’t forget

to try to feel the Qi of your entire body during part of your practice session, which I am calling full-body Qi. *Nyasa Yoga* introduces a variety of single body unit Qi practices but you can surely make up your own.

Weight-training experts typically concentrate on exercising different muscle groups either once per week, twice per week, or three times per week. This gives their muscles a chance to sufficiently rest and recover between sessions. Now because *nei-gong anapana*, *keriya* yoga, kundalini yoga, inner alchemy, Nyasa Yoga, etc. work on moving your Qi energy in a region and you need to repeat countless repetitions of Qi movement per day (as in martial arts training), most people will not finish a session that works on their entire body. They will get tired and then drop the entire practice. Therefore you can split up inner energy work into work on different sections of your body on different days of the week. But always end a session by trying to cultivate the Qi/Prana of your entire body as a single unit, as that is what devas train to do, and then engage in empty mind meditation practice at the end.

Remember the 80/20 rule that you want maximum gain for minimum effort - you want the lowest training frequencies that get the job done and you want to use 20% of the efforts or exercises that produce 80% of the results.

For your consideration, here are a few of the standard weight-training schedules that you can review to obtain ideas on how to segment the Qi/Prana cultivation work required on various parts of your body. Of course this is not directly applicable to cultivation work but is simply meant to give you some ideas of how you can break up the task of cultivating parts of your body on different days of the week:

The 3 Day Full Body Split:

Monday: Full Body Workout
Tuesday: off
Wednesday: Full Body Workout
Thursday: off
Friday: Full Body Workout
Saturday: off
Sunday: off

The 4 Day Upper/Lower Split:

Monday: Upper Body Workout
Tuesday: Lower Body Workout
Wednesday: off
Thursday: Upper Body Workout

Friday: Lower Body Workout
Saturday: off
Sunday: off

The 3 Day Upper/Lower Split:

Week 1

Monday: Upper Body Workout
Tuesday: off
Wednesday: Lower Body Workout
Thursday: off
Friday: Upper Body Workout
Saturday: off
Sunday: off

Week 2

Monday: Lower Body Workout
Tuesday: off
Wednesday: Upper Body Workout
Thursday: off
Friday: Lower Body Workout
Saturday: off
Sunday: off

The Rotating Push/Pull/Legs Split:

Week 1

Monday: Chest, Shoulders & Triceps
Tuesday: Back & Biceps
Wednesday: off
Thursday: Legs & Abs
Friday: off
Saturday: Chest, Shoulders & Triceps
Sunday: Back & Biceps

Week 2

Monday: off
Tuesday: Legs & Abs
Wednesday: off
Thursday: Chest, Shoulders & Triceps
Friday: Back & Biceps
Saturday: off
Sunday: Legs & Abs

The Push/Pull Split:

Week 1

Monday: Chest, Shoulders & Triceps + Quads & Calves

Tuesday: off

Wednesday: Back & Biceps + Hamstrings & Abs

Thursday: off

Friday: Chest, Shoulders & Triceps + Quads & Calves

Saturday: off

Sunday: off

Week 2

Monday: Back & Biceps + Hamstrings & Abs

Tuesday: off

Wednesday: Chest, Shoulders & Triceps + Quads & Calves

Thursday: off

Friday: Back & Biceps + Hamstrings & Abs

Saturday: off

Sunday: off

When doing Qi/Prana work within your body the point is that you can work on your body in sections. You can work on the right side of your body and then the left. You can work on the upper half and then the lower. You can work on just your arms, or just your hands in one day. You might work on just your pelvis, or spin, or head, or toes. You can work on seven different sections according to the nerves of your spine. There are all sorts of ways to partition practice schedules where you try to gain control of the Qi/Prana within your body and move it in a way that it washes through all the tissues within body regions. During the twelve years of a kundalini awakening, masters and their students will be doing this for you continuously, so during the stage of preparation, or intensified preparatory practices you should also be doing this type of work.

It is hard to keep up the motivation for this type of tiresome energy work, and for straight meditation too. Therefore, each type of cultivation method can benefit from a different type of motivational, inspirational impetus to help you continue doing the practice.

For mantra practice, the way to achieve this is by setting a minimum number of mantra recitations to do per day which you can count via prayer beads, a rosary or mechanical/electronic clicker. You can recite mantras anytime but if you make an effort to recite mantras *at the same time every day* this will help the enlightened beings overseeing that mantra to work you into their schedule more easily for Qi assistance. Any time you recite mantras long enough you will eventually attract the attention of enlightened

masters who have undertaken a vow to respond to *that* mantra, and who will send you an etheric *nirmanakaya* copy of their body to enter inside you and help transform your Qi. This is why masters tell you to always “mantra Buddha’s name” or recite a specific mantra of some type that someone will respond to.

For pranayama, it should be performed on a daily basis several times per day. However, some people like to rest 1-2 days per week to give their body a chance to adapt to the stress. To increase adherence to maintaining *kumbhaka* pranayama breath retention practice – which no one likes to do – you must always challenge yourself by recording your average breath retention time, or best time for each practice session, and plot this on a graph. Every time you practice anew you should look at the graph and try to increase your breath retention holding period to surpass your previous best record. That’s a form of motivation too.

For meditation practice, you need to commit to a daily practice effort and you can help maintain compliance by meditating at the same time every day, or by marking “practice done” on a calendar with an X, check mark or other mechanism. Some people like to increase the time they meditate more on weekends and less during the week.

These are all just various ideas as the best schedule is one you arrive at because you can follow it.

THE 24 SEASON CALENDAR

Chinese have a seasonal calendar, based on the dates of solstices and equinoxes, which segments the year into twenty-four two-week periods. Each period of two weeks corresponds to specific earth energies that regularly arise at that time of year to dominate the local environment. Each two-week period has its own specific characteristics including a typical weather pattern and periodic natural events that usually occur at that time in nature such as plant germinations, animal migrations and so on.

These periods are important because different types of cultivation work can benefit or be hampered by the local earth energies and the weather. For instance, the Indian monsoon season made it impossible to travel from one location to another, so Shakyamuni Buddha set up that period as a time during which monks should undergo a meditation retreat. This has become the annual three-month Vassa retreat practiced by Theravada Buddhists, which is based on the lunar calendar, and during which time monks typically devote themselves to intensive meditation practice in one location.

The principle is that a person should adjust their cultivation schedule at certain times of the year based on heavenly (astronomical or astrological) phenomena, earthly phenomena such as the weather, and also based on local circumstances. Adjustments should take into account the predominant

energies of special periods and the weather within your location. Universal or local *feng-shui* energies are bigger than you, and can either help you or thwart your cultivation efforts. Try to use them in your practice. The big problem is fighting against humidity, which tends to hamper any efforts to move the Qi within you. This is why cultivators prefer arid, dry locations.

The idea of *feng-shui* is that the wind and water elements battle in nature and also within your body. Since the wind element represents your Qi and your body is composed of 70% water, finding harmonious conditions for cultivation always involves avoiding severe dampness and humidity. Under those adverse conditions your Qi/Prana has to struggle to move within your body to open up Qi channels (*nadis*), which is another reason Buddha designated the rainy season as a time to push especially hard for meditation progress. Sexual desire tends to arise at such times too.

Timing and locale are both important for progress in spiritual cultivation. Some times and locations are better for cultivation efforts than others. For instance, due to the weather your cultivation progress may be hampered at certain times of the year, but some locations are always blanketed with Qi that can help push open a practitioner's Qi channels, and some simply have more enlightened masters in the vicinity. Having more masters who reside in the vicinity is the most important factor for spiritual progress, which is why India is a particularly good place to cultivate.

In general, it makes sense to have a different cultivation emphasis during the four seasons of the year, which can be marked off in segments as short as one week or two weeks. One of the ways to do this is by using astronomical phenomena. One can also time their practice using personal astrological indications as well.

MOON

In astrology the moon represents the mind, females or femininity, Yin Qi, emotions, memory, receptivity, moodiness, sensitivity, mother, breasts, body fluids, uterus, water, beauty and Monday.

Since the moon has both waxing and waning periods that influence your internal energy in different ways, these two lunar periods can be used for specific cultivation sadhanas. In fact, since the moon affects the mind and emotions, specific sadhanas for special Qi cultivation techniques can be scheduled for practice according to the various phases of the moon. Typically they involve Yin Qi sadhanas (*Nyasa Yoga* has collected several of them), which means various ways to cultivate your Yin Qi.

Most of the lunar calendars across various traditions are based on the celestial motions and positions of the moon which stays about 2 ½ days in each astrological sign. Both Chinese and Indian almanacs, for instance, consider the various phases of the moon or its position in signs, lunar

mansions and nakshatras as “celestially auspicious (favorable) occasions” for certain activities. This includes certain types of cultivation.

There are several astronomical events that are perfect for special types of cultivation effort because at those times the lunar energies that might stimulate your Qi are strongest or weakest. Those events include the new moon, full moon and to a lesser extent eclipses. These are special times to cultivate various aspects of Yin Qi as specified by an enlightened master. A perfect example is that some people try to feel the lunar energy inside them around the full moon, which is a great period for cultivating your Yin Qi.

SUN

In astrology the sun stands for your soul, males or masculinity, leadership, and Yang Qi. It also represents the heart, back, spine, vitality, body heat, courage, enthusiasm, generosity, optimism, entertainment, ovens, stadiums and Sunday. Therefore some people practice specific cultivation sadhanas focused on the heart, courage, generosity, etc. based on the sun’s position, or whether the day of the week is Sunday. There is also both an Indian and Chinese sadhana for absorbing the energies of the sun through the eyes. In Chinese Taoism and Hindu Yoga there are various methods to absorb the energies of other planets and constellations including the Moon, Venus, Big Dipper or Pleiades.

The sun changes astrological signs every thirty days, and astrological principles tell us it throws off different energies during those twelve periods of the year. Some of those periods may be particularly useful for cultivation practices of a particular type. If you want to make use of the energies of the sun to augment your cultivation progress, the only big question is whether to use the Vedic calendar of Jyotish (Indian astrology) or the western sun signs astrological calendar to determine when the sun changes sign. Since these two calendar systems differ, the overlap of the two is only true way to know when the sun is *really* in Leo, Cancer, Capricorn, etcetera. The overlap is a very short window.

The next question is what type of practice to transform your Qi and channels would be best augmented at that time since the natural energies of the sun during that period can affect your astrological fortune, your mental state and internal subtle body/energy of Qi. In other words, what cultivation technique is best to practice during a particular time of the year in order to benefit from the special energy given off by the sun at that time?

When the sun first enters a sign there is a burst of new energies that can be taken advantage of for cultivation purposes. The middle of a period is when the energies are considered strongest, which would be around the 15th day into a new sun sign. However, in astrology the energies of a transit or progression are most strongly experienced three or four degrees prior to

ARHAT YOGA

becoming exact, at which time the aspect has spent most of its power. This leads to a different conclusion as to when energies are truly strongest, i.e. when they will affect you (help you or hurt you) the most. In any case, extra spiritual effort undertaken at these times can help you break the monotony of regular practice if you exert yourself for that brief 3-5 day stint.

For instance, in the field of money management the first three days of a new month (and last two days of a previous month) are when we consistently see new money entering stock markets (since people receive paychecks or reinvest month-end funds), which tends to push the markets upwards. If the sun provides new types of positive energies when it changes sign, and *if* they can be helpful for cultivation, doesn't it make sense to try to make use of them for cultivation purposes too? You might want to try to capture energies when they are increasing the most, rather than at a static high, if that is when you can most feel them or benefit from them.

The sun moves approximately one degree per day in the sky for approximately 30 degrees per month. Indians typically break a solar month into three sections of 10 degrees each to encompass the entire 30 degree range of the sun's travel with the central 10 degree sector supposedly exhibiting the strongest powers of the period's energies. Chinese culture also states that the central section of any time period represents the strongest energies of that designated period. Since it takes the sun approximately 30 days to travel a sign, we can also use those ten-day sections as special periods to also vary our cultivation schedule/practice. Doing so will help break up the monotony of regular practice.

Since a regular calendar month also contains natural sections of days and weeks, we can use the ordinary calendar month - which is constructed without any relationship to astrological phenomena - to mark off periods of particular cultivation emphasis.

MERCURY

Mercury represents the mind, thinking, nervous system, breathing, movement, memory, messages, communications, reason, contracts, publishing and Wednesday. Mercury can stay in each sign for approximately 14 to 30 days depending upon its motion.

You can use the signs of Mercury as a marker for reading and study, pranayama, water-related visualization practices, or reciting a new mantra on top of your standard mantras. By periodically practicing new mantras you can establish a connection with new Buddha family every two to four weeks, and test out different practices during that period.

VENUS

The transit of Venus in an astrological sign lasts between 23 days and two months. That time period can also be used for different types of cultivation sadhana that might make use of any energy influences from Venus, however large or small, that might help you transform your Qi/Prana and channels. Just the fact that you decide to devote yourself to practicing a particular cultivation technique for the limited time that Venus is in a sign will add impetus, urgency and motivation to your efforts, thus helping with adherence to cultivation work – “I’ll keep doing this for as long as Venus is in this sign.”

The basic idea behind all these suggestions is that you might try practicing especially hard (at a certain type of cultivation effort) as long as an astrological or astronomical event lasts. You might use its presence as a motivation to work hard at cultivation for a certain period, namely as long as the event lasts. A commitment to practice does not seem as artificial when linked to the movements of a celestial phenomenon, thus this approach will boost practice effort.

When two planets make aspects in the heavens - such as a conjunction, trine, opposition, square, etc. - one might use that event to engage in cultivation practices that symbolize the energies of the event as well. When there are astrological aspects to your own astrological natal chart, this might give indications for certain types of practice to perform too.

PLANETS

According to astrological teachings, the energies from planets can be categorized as strong or weak, exalted, beneficial, detrimental, and so on. When they are closest to the earth their energies will have more influence affecting the Qi energies that comprise your subtle body, so will be more strongly felt. These can be harnessed or tapped into for cultivation purposes.

For instance, during a particular Mars transit or astronomical phenomenon you might devote yourself to a special type of Agni practice, fire visualization effort, or kundalini cultivation exercises to make use of every bit of positive influence. Hinduism offers many types of Agni mantra for fire element cultivation. If many people perform the same sadhana at the same time, especially if they form a group, Buddhas will know that and make arrangements to put a special emphasis on helping all those people doing the same sadhana together. Their work becomes more efficient, easier to handle and you get a better result when a group of people do it together.

Thus, planets entering new signs or other astrological phenomena also represent an opportunity (or one could say “excuse”) to vary your cultivation practice. Variety helps you maintain your motivation to continue

practicing. Just as people get tired of eating the same food every day, they look forward to variety to break up the monotony of their daily cultivation work. What then helps is timing particular types of cultivation effort according to specific type of astronomical or astrological phenomena.

The monotony of the regular work year is broken up by holidays and special celebrations, which in India leads to different types of cultivation effort, and a similar thing should be done for your cultivation efforts so that you don't stop cultivating because of boredom. Chinese culture, for instance, breaks the year into five seasons and one can engage in a different type of practice per season.

DAYS OF THE WEEK

Another of the best ways to institute variety in your practice schedule, and become more well-rounded in your cultivation results, is to practice a different type of cultivation effort for each day of the week. As each day of the week is named for a different planet, one can use this symbolism to designate different cultivation practices for each day to keep your cultivation varied and interesting. Let's see how to put this into action. The planetary correspondences to the days of the week are as follows:

Monday – Moon
Tuesday – Mars
Wednesday – Mercury
Thursday – Jupiter
Friday – Venus
Saturday – Saturn
Sunday – Sun

Since Sunday is matched with the sun, which represents Yang Qi or masculine energies, in addition to your normal cultivation schedule you might practice specific Yang Qi activities, do Agni fire visualization practices, recite Vairocana Buddha's mantra, imagine that you are sunshine, perform Buddha mindfulness of a heroic, courageous enlightened deity, and so forth on Sundays. These are all sun, fire or Yang type cultivation practices. Imagining that you are just light (sunshine) is another Sun practice. Many others are possible.

Since Monday is matched with the moon, which represents Yin Qi, feminine energies, youth, water, thoughts and emotions, ... you might on Mondays cultivate your Yin Qi by reciting lunar mantras, worshiping a feminine deity through Buddha mindfulness, performing water visualization sadhanas, and so on.

Since Tuesday corresponds to Mars, which stands for the fire element,

energy, courage, bravery, confidence, aggression, wrath (anger), and war, you might consider the following practices on a Tuesday: Agni fire visualization practices, Vajrapani practices, Mahavira's Jain fire-visualization practice, Kartikeya mantras, imagining that your body burns into dust and becomes emptiness, etcetera. The Tibetan *tummo* practice of imagining your body as a fully blown up hollow balloon with a little glowing object inside that is giving off heat and light is also a fire visualization practice commonly used to generate kundalini energy (Yang Qi). A common and very powerful pranayama practice is to inflate your entire body with breath, as in blowing up a balloon, and holding that state while doing visualizations and/or Qi/Prana swishing inside it to open up tissues.

Various types of fire visualization practices include visualizing that (1) your body burns with a fire that entirely burns away all impurities inside it, (2) you become a pillar of surging flames that exists as happy joy, (3) you become the internal body of the shining sun – bodiless without any torso – always generously offering light and warmth to the entire universe, (4) your body becomes immaterial sunlight that universally shines everywhere with transparent clarity and (5) your bones start burning away all your flesh and your body becomes a mass of roaring flames that you feel vibrating until what is finally left after the burning away is a transparent crystalline body that replaces your old. These are just sample practices; many others are possible.

Since Wednesday is matched with Mercury, which stands for the water element and thoughts, you might consider the following practices on Wednesdays: (1) imagining that you are an infinite ocean of consciousness without a body, (2) imagining that you have no body at all but are instead an immeasurably large emotion of bliss that is so great that it fills the entire universe, (3) performing *nei-gong* work by spinning the Qi around your seven glands, afterwards using your will to connect them together with Qi, (4) swishing your Qi hundreds of times everywhere in your body to wash your muscles, tissues, bones and organs, and so on.

Since Thursday is matched with Jupiter, which stands for the wind element, devotion (prayer), religion, ... you might consider that this might be a good day to spend extra time on *kumbhaka* pranayama practice (or do something special like measure your breath retention time if you don't normally do so on a daily basis), chanting, mantra recitation, religious study or worship, and swishing your Qi/Prana around your body like wind. Swishing your Qi around inside you is *anapana* practice or *nei-gong*. The wind element stands for energy, so imagining that your entire body is just energy and stirring it around is another way of cultivating the wind element.

Since Friday is matched with Venus, which stands for the space element and love, it might be a day to practice the Buddhist exercise of imagining you are universal loving kindness, practice empty space

meditation or empty body practice.

Since Saturday represents the planet Saturn, which stands for the earth element, solidity, bones, patience or hardship, you might consider putting extra effort at this time into doing (1) the white skeleton visualization practice, (2) imagining that all your bones or your entire body shines with a brilliant bright white light, (3) yoga or other exercise routines that stretch your muscles, and so on. These exercises all cultivate the solid physical body since Saturn symbolizes bones and solidity.

As you can see, there are all sorts of practices you can use or develop on your own based on the symbolism of the day of the week. For best results you would do your Qi/Prana practice first and when finished you would end your practice session with some type of emptiness meditation, such as the several dozen emptiness meditation methods revealed in the appendix.

NUMBERS OF BODY SECTIONS

Another type of practice related to the week that introduces variety into your practice schedule is to number each day of the week from one to seven. Then one can perform inner energy work, *anapana*, *nei-dan*, *neijiaquan*, *nei-gong* and other forms of Qi practice on the body in one, two, three, four, five, etc. sections to match with the numerical signifier of the day, thus keeping up the variety for meditation practices. The partitioning of the body into one, two, three, four and more segments, and appropriate Qi practices, is explained in *Nyasa Yoga*. “One section” is full-body practice.

For instance, on day one you could practice Mahavira’s whole body fire visualization, Hakuin’s duck egg meditation that involves feeling the Qi within your entire body as a unit, Vajrapani visualization that activates the Qi of your entire body, the Buddhist white skeleton visualization, or just trying to feel/move/mobilize/link all the Qi of your body as one unit. All these methods treat the body *as one single unit* and try to affect the Qi of it as one whole. The number of that day is “one,” as you would expect.

For day “two” you would practice any technique that cultivates the body’s Qi/Prana in two sections, such as the Ram-Vam method within the *Mahavairocana Sutra* and *Yajnavalkya* (Neem Karoli Baba recites Ram-Nam instead that often sounds like Rahlam), Taoist practices that cause you to run your Qi up and down your spine or up your spine and then down the front of your body (or center of it) hundreds of times per day, and so on.

For day “three” you could practice reciting “Ohm Ah Hun,” “Hreem Shreem Kleem” or other three syllable mantras following the rules of Mantrayana where you also try to simultaneously feel the Qi/Prana in three separate sections of your body, each connected to a different mantra sound-syllable. The most common three sectional partitioning includes the head

together with the arms; chest and arms; and waist to legs. Don't worry about overlapping the cultivation sections for different sounds.

For day "four" you might teach the four part (four chakra) internal *nei-gong* method taught by Chinese Grandmaster Lu Zijian and also found in *Tsongkhapa's Six Yogas of Naropa* (Glenn Mullin translation). You can also practice reciting four syllable mantras such as Kartikeya's "Om Ah Sou Aim." The practice of cultivating the body in four sections is a staple of many traditions, and is found in the *Atalanta Fugiens* from Medieval Europe.

For day "five" (which might be a Friday) you might cultivate the Qi of the body in five sections as is done with the "Ohm Ah Vah Lah Hung" Vairocana mantra, or other five syllable mantras. The five sections would be the head together with the arms, heart region of the chest, mid section of the body, lower belly, waist and legs ... or some equivalent that feels more comfortable to you in terms of getting results.

For day "six" you might practice the six Taoist healing sounds on six organ sections of your body, making sure that this is used as a method to move your Qi rather than simply reciting sounds.

For day "seven" you might focus on doing *anapana*, *nei-gong*, *nei-dan* etc. work on the seven chakras. In *Nyasa Yoga* you will find the only correct description in print of the seven chakras within the body with their actual location and meaning. They are just sections of the body and spine that you concentrate on during inner energy work, and not spinning vortices or some other crazy nonsense.

5 ELEMENTS

Another type of relevant practice is to practice a sadhana for each of the five elements according to the weekday. One example would be to generally follow the supposed pattern of the birth of the universe starting with empty space and progressing to the wind element, fire element, water element, earth element, and turning that sequence into Qi cultivation exercises as follows:

1. SPACE – Imagine that you are empty space in all directions simultaneously without any thought-constructs, experiencing emptiness all around you. Concentrate on yourself in the form of a vast firmament, unlimited in any direction whatsoever. Imagine being the spatial vacuity in all directions around you and rest your mind in that state. Stay aware but let your thoughts dissolve (don't attach to them) as you become the empty space everywhere without a body or mind. Cast aside the body and ignore the fluctuations of your mind as you become the empty space you see. If anything

arises as your thoughts, let them arise within you without attachment because you are just infinite empty, bodiless space that cannot hold to them but lets everything arise within it. Rest your mind in that visage of infinite empty space without holding onto any thoughts that arise. Such is the nature of the original nature that is the purest of the pure, yet gives birth to all things without any attachments or clinging, letting each phenomenon follow its own course. Now you are emptiness that just witnesses without attachment.

2. WIND – Start moving your Qi all over your body everywhere, whipping it up like a torrent of wind, stirring it everywhere using your mind and will (with attendant emotions such as joy or excitement if appropriate). After you stimulate it everywhere, harmonize the feeling of Qi within you as one calm, peaceful whole and rest in that more comfortable feeling that then encompasses your entire body. Alternatively, slowly recite a mantra in tune with your breath and observe the void of emptiness that occurs at the end of the protracted pronunciation. Doing this each time you recite a mantra such as Om-Ah-Hung, Hreem-Shreem-Kleem, Om-Ah-Sou-Aim, etcetera, you will eventually attain an experience that is mentally quiet, free of wandering thoughts. Stay in that emptiness when you reach it without giving rise to more recitations.
3. FIRE – Imagine that a bright energy enters into the top of your head from the universe, or is being projected into you from the universe, a spiritual deity or your own spiritual master. It enters in through the top of your head and settles into your heart and belly where it becomes a pillar of flames. Fill your belly and body with this fiery energy and imagine that your entire body, including your limbs, becomes ignited into a blazing fire that slowly burns everything away. *Feel* that energy moving and its warmth as it burns away your flesh, bones and every part of your body. After feeling the moving Qi inside you everywhere for some time, burning away everything of dross matter, visualize that the only thing left of you is a crystal pure, transparent, immaterial body form of pure energy.
4. WATER – Contemplate that your body and the entire universe simultaneously become filled with a giant ocean of surging great bliss. After being fully saturated and permeated by this bliss, which flows inside your body and mind, let go of all human thinking and let the mind rest in this blissful feeling without thought. Let it gradually subside into calmness while your body feels comfortable,

ARHAT YOGA

yet do not cling to it. Let your awareness still function in this state so that you know any thoughts that arise within your mind and their meaning, but do not encourage their arrival or discourage their departure. Simply remain in a state of clear, pure, pristine awareness while your Qi energy flows like water everywhere within you. Imagine you are an ocean of this energy.

5. EARTH – Try to feel the substance of your entire body as a single unit. Try to feel its heaviness or material substance by trying to simultaneously feel all the energy of your body as one unit. Try to feel your muscles everywhere simultaneously. Penetrate all the various parts of your body by consciousness, feeling all the parts of your body as a unified wholeness of soft energy. Next, once accomplished then contemplate that the skin of your body becomes like an outer wall and that there is nothing inside it but empty space. You might also imagine that there is nothing inside your body's components because they are empty inside - contemplate that the constituents of your body such as your organs, bones, and flesh become pervaded with mere vacuity (emptiness). Imagine that your body progressively becomes like an empty sack but that your mind becomes limitless, infinite in all spatial directions and that you then have no body at all. You are just the empty space that cannot attach to anything. Rest your mind in empty space just like this. Imagine you are bodiless without a container or vessel of any sort and rest your mind in the empty space you become. In that empty space continue watching/knowing the thoughts that rise in your mind but do not follow them. Simply know them with awareness.
6. DISSOLUTION – Imagine that the whole universe is successively dissolved from a gross state into a subtle state, from a subtle state into space, and then from space into a formless transcendental state that lacks any attributes or distinctions. Rest your mind in that final formlessness. In the same manner, allow your mind to be dissolved away into unmanifest consciousness and then the emptiness of great quiet, peace and bliss that is a nothingness.
7. LIGHT – Imagine that you are a single point of light within an ocean of infinite light. Try to feel that you become that entire ocean of light, which has no form. You are light, only light, without a body or form. Let that point of light that you are merge in the infinite ocean of light and then rest in that state of bodiless infinite light and bliss.

These are just samples of how you might take the five elements and turn them into cultivation methods, and how you might use a different one for each of the seven days of the week. It is not by any means fixed in stone or all-inclusive because you can change the sequence or develop many other methods from these basic ideas. For instance, during an earth element emphasis you might practice the white skeleton visualization technique where you visualize the bones within your body shining with a bright white light, and upon completion your body turns into dust and then empty space. The point is to equate each day of the week with one of the five elements and then perform a different type of related practice on each day. Consciousness and perception are considered elements in some cultivation schools, but in the example provided are replaced by light and dissolution.

On any appropriate day you also might mentally excite and then violently swish/shake your Qi hundreds of times everywhere as if it were moving like wind, like fire, or like water. Cultivation Yoga is basically moving the Qi in your body in a repetitious fashion hundreds to thousands of times for each organ, limb, segment, section, etc. until you cultivate your entire body and get it ready for the kundalini awakening. In *qi-gong*, *nei-gong*, *nei-dan*, *anapana*, Vajrayana, tantric, *krjya* or kundalini Yoga practice you do this every day by spinning or revolving your Qi countless repetitions all over your body. For the earth element, you could practice a different type of inner energy work that concentrates on the solid elements of the body.

The basic point is to do many different types of energy work on your body because cultivation is all a matter of Yoga in the end. If you just think it is about sitting meditation practice you will get nowhere. You will never develop a foundation for the subtle body. This is the big mistake you make from reading Zen texts and Advaita Vedanta. You must meditate *and do inner energy work* to prepare for the Twelve Year kundalini transformation period that gives rise to a deva body and makes you a spiritual master.

Another point is that people stop cultivating because they become bored and then they don't want to maintain a practice schedule. They want variety in their cultivation schedule, and want to develop new skills instead of just sitting there with an empty mind meditating, or watching their thoughts, or repetitiously moving their Qi/Prana. By turning the days of the week, or months, or astronomical phenomena into special practices that last only for only a short while, you can keep yourself motivated to perform a wider variety of Qi cultivation techniques and other cultivation methods to help you purify and strengthen your inner subtle body. This will definitely speed your progress on the path. Your spiritual study should be varied too and encompass practical matters that help humans, which we will discuss next.

CHAPTER 6: MEDITATION & CULTIVATION PRACTICE

Now that we have surveyed the general methods of cultivation practice, it would be useful to provide you with just a few instructions on how to practice some cultivation techniques. There isn't really too much to introduce for this chapter other than a short synopsis of the topics we will cover.

From *Easy Meditation Lessons* you will learn how to do basic emptiness meditation practice. The idea is to let go of thoughts and taste the formless mind, which is what consciousness is like when it is clean, aware, absent of most wandering thoughts and not clinging to the thought-stream. Most religions tell you, as training practice, that you have to cultivate a mental state that is largely free of thoughts. When you don't cling to your thoughts it is easier for junior devas to enter your body to move your Qi/Prana with their own, and this is how you make physical progress.

The key technique I want you to learn, which will increase spiritual practice effectiveness immensely, is how to breathe right before engaging in meditation practice in such a way that your mind will be immediately stilled and quieted. The relevant quote from *Easy Meditation Lessons* is as follows:

You must first inhale air through your nose into your lungs, and then exhale slowly from your mouth to empty your lungs as if you are letting go of everything. Your exhalation should be about twice as long as the length of your inhalation, and you should let go of all your mental pressures and tensions upon those exhalations. Since

you usually cannot do this with just one cycle of in and out respirations, it may take several repetitions to initially adjust yourself.

If you need more than 3-5 inhalations-exhalations to initially calm yourself down to adjust yourself, try inhaling for a count of four and then exhaling for a count of eight, and continue doing this several more times in a row following the same instructions. When exhaling, always remember to let go as if you are finally releasing a big burden off your shoulders, and it is as if “now life is perfect.” Eventually you will reach a point where you feel like you have let go of everything, your body feels comfortable inside, and you can now begin practice.

After those adjustments, each time exhaling with a silent sound of “Ahhh” as if you are so happy to let go of everything in the world and release all your problems and pressures, close your mouth slightly with your tongue touching your upper teeth (or rolled backwards and touching the roof of your mouth for advanced practitioners). The point is to now adjust your mouth so that your face and head are relaxed.

From *The Little Book of Meditation*, which is all about various cultivation practices in general, you will be introduced to the practice of vipassana, or watching your mind. This is the basis of cultivating your mind and behavior to a state of purity, and it is found in Judaism, Islam, Christianity and all the eastern religions. You can find many such instructions in *Color Me Confucius*. Mindfulness practice is the basis of policing your behavior so that you ultimately exhibit consummate conduct.

From *Visualization Power* you will be introduced to a short reading on various concentration exercises such as kasina meditation practice, candle visualization practice, the white skeleton visualization method of Buddhism, Mahavira’s fire samadhi visualization from Jainism, and other methods. Many, many cultivation practices in the world are based on the principle of developing one-pointed concentration. You create an image in your mind and try to hold onto it without wavering your attention. This helps you to learn how to concentrate and develop mental stability.

Concentration means that you focus your mind on a concept or image, and try to hold it stable on that topic. It means you hold your mind on a topic without distraction, and don’t let your mind drift onto something else but bring it back to the topic at hand.

In *Visualization Power* you will learn how the concentration required by visualization efforts can be applied to many areas of life from invention to sports training, self-healing, meditation practice, mental rehearsal and personal development. Visualization is a type of mental concentration,

using mental imagery, which focuses your intention.

From *Nyasa Yoga*, which is the one book I recommend you obtain to speed your internal energy practice since its entire contents concern Qi/Prana body cultivation techniques, you will learn about the best ways to do mantrayana. In *Nyasa Yoga* you will learn the secret basis behind Vajrayana practices, Hindu deity sadhanas, and tantric yoga techniques. All of these schools of techniques involve working with your internal energy, which other schools call breath or wind, vital energy, life force, vril, soul energy or Qi/Prana. Half of the cultivation path is about cultivating your Qi/Prana through inner energy work, and those techniques are revealed in *Nyasa Yoga*. From *Nyasa Yoga* you will learn a variety of cultivation methods that approach inner energy work by concentrating on your Qi channels, glands, internal organs and other parts of your body. The methods involve using your willpower, visualizations (mental images), emotions and mantras to move your Qi in specific body parts.

Giving rise to strong emotions is one way to move certain types of Qi/Prana within your body, and this method is used in many spiritual schools and religions. Let's go into this a little more deeply and connect the practice to our knowledge of glands and hormones since they are involved with the generation of feelings and emotions within your body.

Your hormones represent the water element of your body, which can easily be seen by the fact that the mammary glands produce breast milk while the gonads produce semen. Neurobiochemistry is the body of scientific knowledge that believes our emotions are primarily due to hormones. Our bodies are patterned bags of chemicals that have evolutionarily developed particular structures and chemical secretions within them so that we can feel physical body sensations as well as emotions. We feel pleasant or unpleasant sensations inside our bodies due to nerves and hormones or endocrine secretions. Hormones, for instance, are so powerful that their influence can override the intellect, and we create the rules of society so that we can live peacefully among ourselves despite their impacts.

Our internal biochemistry can provide us with wonderful feelings of bliss, tranquility or even transcendence. It can provide us with thrilling sensations of joy, rapture, elation, excitement, happiness, delight, and gloriousness. We can feel courage, warmth and safety or nervousness, tenseness and anxiety. We can even *simultaneously experience particular emotional feelings when we exhibit various virtues and values we want to cultivate* such as generosity, magnanimity, friendliness, kindness, helpfulness, caring, acceptance, loyalty, honesty, trustworthiness, diligence, perseverance, righteousness, sincerity, straightforwardness (non-hypocrisy), temperance, openness and so on.

Every time we cultivate a virtue it usually evokes a variety of positive

emotions since its expression makes us feel a certain way and its effect on others makes us feel a certain way as well. We want to impress our Qi with positive emotions connected with virtues we are cultivating as character traits. We want to leave an indelible mark upon our Qi by cultivating positive values/virtues and their emotional attendants so that they become a stronger part of our personality and imbed themselves within our Qi. From the enlightenment viewpoint one can say that we are living objects with consciousness, and we want to change our object properties in this fashion. When cultivating virtues, ethics and values we want to transform our Qi so that it readily accepts, generates, and is synchronized with positive emotions.

The algorithms controlling human minds are mental processes that work through thoughts, perceptions, emotions and sensations. Every moment your consciousness is involved with an orchestra of mental activity, and within this storm you are reacting to an onslaught of internal sensations, especially the physical sensations of your body. Buddhism calls our physical sensations our “body-consciousness,” and they help us create for ourselves a sense of self. Your mind recognizes your physical sensations and always reacts accordingly. When you feel uncomfortable because of these sensations you try to move your body to adjust them. Or, perhaps you start seeking food, drink, sex and so forth to move into a different state.

You even have an extensive “second brain” of neurons lining the length of your gut or “digestive tube” and it communicates with the brain by hormones and impulses. This second brain contains some 200 million neurons, more than in either the spinal cord or the peripheral nervous system, and the gut neurons in this lower brain also give rise to moods and emotions. Technically known as the enteric nervous system or ENS, the second brain in your gut primarily controls digestion and the other functions of your gastrointestinal tract. Nerve cells therefore populate the gut so that your brain doesn’t have to do these tasks and doesn’t have to build even more nerve cells in the head. Nerve cells in our guts are constantly feeding our brain signals enabling us to “feel” the inner world of our gut and its contents, but their function goes beyond digestion.

The ENS consists of sheaths of neurons embedded in the walls of our alimentary canal, the long tube of our gut starting from the esophagus to the anus that measures about nine meters long. This is your “gut brain” which influences your moods and emotions, thus helping to determine your mental state. It is actually our *first brain* since ancient organisms were basically a digestive tube that developed these neuronal cells, and only later did a separate upper brain develop in order to help organisms feed themselves. The existence of the enteric nervous system as a contributor to consciousness is why people sometimes say they “go with their gut” to make decisions or feel “butterflies in the stomach” during stressful

situations. You have to cultivate the Qi/Prana along his route just as you have to cultivate it everywhere else to produce the deva body.

While we constantly feel emotions and sensations all the time, in truth pleasant sensations and emotions are relatively rare within the mix of what we usually experience unless we learn to generate them for ourselves. We are rarely experiencing peak emotional states of joy and happiness or bliss. Our bodies evolved for survival, not pleasantries, which is why such states are only occasional occurrences. Furthermore, pleasant emotions and sensations don't last long but subside quickly and then turn into neutral or unpleasant mental scenarios. This is the result of evolution that has built us for survival, not happiness.

Your body is the product of hundreds of thousands to millions of years of evolution that have certainly allowed it to experience pleasure, and it even needs pleasure as a stimulant or enticement so that sexual procreation continues in the human species. But your body was not built for constant pleasure. Whatever the nature of our bodies that we now enjoy because of the long process of human evolution, they only exist because our bodies have developed in a way that could both survive harsh environments and also effectively reproduce. We have developed the right types of emotions to ensure both these requirements.

In us, positive emotions and pleasant sensations certainly occur, such as when we become satiated by food or have sex, yet shortly afterwards they disappear and we must go out looking for more if we want to feel them again. Our brain circuits developed in such a way that they never last for long, and this has maximized our chances for survival because if we walked around in a constant state of bliss we would have ended up being food for hungry predators. Thus, pleasant sensations seldom last long or satisfy us for long. Hence, it is a strategy destined to fail if we conduct ourselves in life pursuing delightful emotions all the time, like someone chasing after drug trips. Yes, we need to pursue *Kama* or pleasure, but what we really should be pursuing is meaning because significance helps us deal with the sufferings of life.

When you get excited seeing a pretty woman, frightened at seeing a scary movie, elated when your sports team wins a game, or anxious before an exam then you are reacting to a storm of sensations within you. At those times a flood of hormones and neurotransmitters are being released and your brain circuits are being triggered in certain ways. These biochemical messaging systems are an important part of life. All your feelings and emotions are the result of chemical and energy reactions taking place in your body that involve neurotransmitters and hormones that produce pleasure and pain. When you experience likes and dislikes your emotions and internal sensations are similarly involved.

One of the cultivation methods I therefore espouse is to do a quick

visualization on the glands (hormonal systems) of your body everyday, spinning the Qi around them, in order to help rejuvenate them and connect their Qi/Prana circuits. When you focus on a gland you can also focus on the positive emotions that it is associated with. These glands include parts of the brain, the salivary glands, thyroid and parathyroid glands, thymus, pancreas, adrenals, and gonads. Some of the hormones that glands produce in the body include:

- Endorphins – the “mood elevator hormone” responsible for feelings of being pain free, making suffering/pain disappear, and reducing anxiety
- Dopamine – the “pleasure hormone” produced in the brain (especially by the hypothalamus) which drives your brain’s reward system and controls the pleasure felt upon achievement, thus being responsible for feelings of reward, vigor, and pleasure from accomplishing goals; it tends to create an “explorer” personality, a curious energetic who takes risks
- Serotonin – the “happiness (mood boosting) hormone” associated with well-being, sociability and serenity, and feelings of leadership, confidence, fearlessness, a sense of belonging, allegiance and loyalty (95% of it is secreted by the gut but it is absorbed into the bloodstream and taken to the hypothalamus which regulates emotions); the higher your serotonin the more regulated your emotions so it creates a “builder” personality who has low levels of anxiety and a high regard for tradition, and who values security and commitment because they tend to be cautious and social norm compliant
- Estrogen – the “female sex hormone” secreted by the ovaries which tends to characterize personalities with feminine traits such as agreeableness, empathy, receptivity (acceptance), introspection, and emotionality; it tends to create a “negotiator” personality
- Testosterone – the “male sex hormone” secreted by the gonads which tends to characterize personalities with masculine traits such as instigation, assertiveness, competitiveness, independence, inventiveness, rationality (logical clarity); it tends to create a “director” personality
- Oxytocin – the “love hormone” produced in the brain responsible for feelings of bonding, emotional attachment, belonging, kindness, safety, intimacy, the desire to cuddle, the feeling someone will protect you
- GABA – the “calming or anti-stress hormone” responsible for

ARHAT YOGA

slowing down brain firing and creating feelings of calmness, anti-anxiety and anti-panic

- Adrenaline – the “fight, flight or fuck” hormone from the adrenal glands atop the kidneys responsible for fighting, fleeing and feelings of energy or excitement
- Phenylethylamine – the “infatuation hormone” responsible for feelings of bliss
- Endocannabinoids – the “bliss hormone” responsible for feelings of bliss akin to the runner’s high or feeling like being sunshine

This is just a short list of the many hormones or neurotransmitters that can affect your moods and emotions. Many of these emotions are associated with the fundamental life goals of human beings. Previously we reviewed the list of major desires within life, many of which we you can see can be associated with hormones:

- An independent livelihood (vocational/career success or financial freedom, independence)
- Prosperity, abundance, personal accomplishment and associated feelings of self-fulfillment, excellence in human living (regarding *Artha* attainments of wealth, power, status, prestige, experience, education, appearance and also skill accumulation, mastery or competency and the climbing of dominance hierarchies so that we have high status within them and the social chain)
- Feelings of self-esteem due to acknowledgement and getting noticed by others and receiving praise, respect, recognition, and appreciation in turn as well as general social approval and acceptance (Note: John Dewey said that the deepest urge in human nature is the desire to be important, Freud believed that the chief human desire apart from sex was to be great, and Lincoln said that the greatest human desire was the craving to be appreciated)
- Loving relationships (close, intimate and affectionate relationships with a spouse, family and friends)
- Good social interactions and loyal deep friendships and companionships (acceptance by others, fulfillment of the need to belong)
- A high level of health and energy
- Peace of mind
- Frequent positive states of mental delight, pleasure and sensory or emotional gratification such as experiences of novelty, variety,

- creativity and imagination and other aspects of *Kama* or pleasure
- Self-improvement in personal conduct, character perfection, correcting habits and progress in self-actualization
- Worthy ideals, goals, aims, aspirations, engagements and a sense of life purpose, significance and satisfaction or fulfillment (life meaning, purposes for life)

For instance, if you want a loving spouse and close intimate relationships then think oxytocin. If you are seeking personal accomplishments that bring up self-esteem and feelings of fulfillment then think dopamine. If you are seeking happy activities, thrills and creative or novel experiences then think adrenaline. If you seek peace of mind, tranquility or to be free of suffering then think endorphins and GABA. If you are seeking a spiritual flow state of bliss then think endocannabinoids. If you are engaging in Yin Qi or Yang Qi cultivation efforts then know there is probably an estrogen or testosterone connection going on. And so on it goes ...

People often try to bring about some of these feelings through eating certain foods (such as chocolate) or inhaling certain aromas during meditation such as essential oils or incense. Aromas are interesting because certain odors or aromas released during a religious ritual or service, such as an orthodox mass or Hindu *yajna*, can sometimes evoke certain emotions or feelings that can move your Qi, thus helping to transform it. The aromas during many ceremonies are usually intended to lift people up and transport them out of their normal mental state to one that transcends the busyness of thinking and ordinary worldly cares.

This is one of the hidden factors involved in the design of age-old religious ceremonies, but the general public does not know about this secret principle of construction. From one angle such services, ceremonies, and rituals are simply a chance to show reverence for God. Some are designed to give you emotional energy. At the highest end they can be used to transform your mindset and psyche, and thus your Qi/Prana, if all the proper elements are in place. Only a few traditions know how to perform these and more functions elegantly but powerfully, and one knows they are effective if years later people look back upon those experiences with a positive sense of longing or nostalgia.

The entire purpose of religious ceremonies is to transport your mind and emotions outside of normal worries, anxieties and self-centered thoughts in order to move your Qi. “Moving your Qi” means your Yang Qi arises and through internal movement purifies your dirty physical body and the impure subtle body within you. Religious ceremonies are usually designed to provoke feelings of peace, internal harmony or transcendence that are related to Yang Qi, and to purify your Yin Qi you usually need to

go through difficult emotional states such as fear, worry, anxiety, embarrassment, or even sickness.

We usually go to rock concerts to hear music that provokes feelings of energy or joy, but rock music can also be discordant to our emotions. Studies certainly have shown that certain types of music can be calming and can help with cognitive performance, such as classical music, and others can be disquieting to the extent that they even hurt plant life. In short, music can have an effect on our Qi and emotions too, and it is this linkage between our emotions and Qi that is used during the long process of spiritual cultivation, especially in religious practice. Now you know why hymns and singing are used in many spiritual ceremonies. They not only raise your emotions but the sounds themselves can also help move your Qi/Prana internally.

This discussion involves both the Stage of Virtue Training and Wisdom and the Stage of Intensified Practices but at the level of public ceremonies rather than the intensified yoga, Qi and mental cultivation practices required of an individual who wants to attain the freedom of the independent subtle body. I have lumped aspects from both these stages together because you need to see how mantra or prayer recitation of particular sounds, while holding onto emotions and even images (that provoke similar emotions, whether of an actor or spiritual being), can become intensified yoga practices.

Some people do practices like this for years, while employing “imaginary cognition,” to achieve transformation of the Qi within their bodies. An example is the noetic prayer of the Hesychasts, mantra recitation of the Hindu yogis, prayer recitations of the Hasidic Jews, *kirtans* of the Sikhs, *dhikr* of the Sufis and so on. Since you now know the theory and objective for moving your Qi, you can now perform such practices more intelligently on the road of spiritual training within religion. The objective is to move your emotions to move your Qi, or just move your Qi directly via your willpower, to the point where you finally ignite the kundalini transformation process within you.

According to Chinese medicine, the organs of your body also correspond to specific emotions and specific parts of your body. Let's put aside the body parts aspect, such as your liver corresponding to your eyes and tendons, kidneys corresponding to your ears and bones, and so forth. What we are interested in are the emotional associations. The liver is usually associated with the emotion of anger, the heart with joy, the lungs with sadness/grief, kidneys with fear and stomach with worry and over-thinking.

Over the years, westerners have expanded upon these associations and developed additional correspondences, or keywords, for organ systems. Nutripuncture, the skill of using micro-mineral dosages like acupuncture, is one of the schools that has done this. In this case the keywords cited are

when the organ is healthy and optimal, such as the kidneys being associated with bravery and courage rather than fear; the stomach being associated with your physicality (muscles) and stability or modesty rather than overthinking; the liver being associated with a pioneering spirit and dynamism and being slow to take offense rather than anger, and so on:

- Kidneys & Bladder – bravery, courage, calmness, self-confidence, not being shy, not anxious, personal magnetism, a steady voice throughout one’s body, suppleness and flexibility, actively move forward; builds bones and helps you manage work and study
- Stomach & Spleen – stable, reliable, responsible, trustworthy, duty, pace oneself, straight forward, prudent, practical, diligent, will, modest, physicality, temperance in the face of pleasure, nourish others, friendship, respectful, overthinking; builds good concentration and clear thinking
- Lungs & Large Intestine – speech fluency, truthfulness in self-expression, inspiration, openness, accepting change gracefully, affect your surroundings without thinking about it, righteousness, justice, integrity, firmness, focus, intensity, tolerance; manages dreaming and memory
- Liver & Gall Bladder – dynamism, bold actions, pioneering spirit, ability to create change, benevolence to anger, slow to take offense, competitive, perseverance, will, positive attitude, peace, serenity, anti-anger; affects blood detoxification, cellular repair, sleep, rest and recovery
- Heart and Small Intestine – joy, happiness, generosity, magnanimity, high spirits, giving joy and laughter without reward, liberality of possessions, enthusiasm, outgoing spirit; affects energy

Why this list? Because of the following fact. No spiritual schools offer specific cultivation methods for your internal organs other than the “six healing sounds” of Chinese Taoism (Haaa for the heart, Szzz for the lungs, Hoo for the stomach, Shoo [Xu] for the liver, Foo [or Tway] for the kidneys, and Shee for the triple warmer). You can recite these sounds in sequence, like a mantra, while focusing on the Qi within each organ system associated with each sound. Furthermore, when voicing the sound and feeling the energy of an organ, you can try to emotionally heal or stimulate it. This is called the “Inner smile” technique of Taoism, where traditionally you smile at each organ with the blessing of the positive emotions associated with it.

Here is the basic technique. While reciting the healing sound of a vital organ, or an alternative *bija* syllable that works, you concentrate on the

positive emotional valences of an organ (joy, fearlessness, kindness, etc.). Thus you combine positive emotions with energy and sound. It is important that you so bless the organ with its positive emotional correspondences instead of its negative valences (anger, fear, over-thinking, etc.). In other words, you concentrate on feeling a particular organ-related emotion when you recite the sound of that organ and feel its Qi (for example, heart = joy and generosity and offering, stomach = balance and reliability and prudence, liver = dynamism and kindness and being good-natured, kidneys = courage and confidence, lungs = inspiration and righteousness and truthfulness, etcetera).

This creates a new type of cultivation technique that can help heal you, balance you, transform your Qi and transform your personality. Just like the Buddhist four immeasurable meditations of joy, kindness, compassion and equanimity where you sit and try to hold onto those emotions, becoming them infinitely and universally, you can do the same with these *positive organ emotional traits* while focusing on the associated organs. Thus you can reprogram your Qi for cultivation purposes and *transform your personality while laying new and better character seeds for a subsequent life*. Wow, talk about killing multiple birds with one stone ... heal your internal organs, transform your Qi, establish your kundalini preparation basis, cultivate excellent character traits, and lay positive seeds for subsequent lives.

Imitating the four immeasurable meditations of Buddhism, one might focus on an organ of the body, such as the liver, and cultivate in a way similar to the following to heal it or change your fortune or personality related to the disposition of the liver. You might recite a mantra of being kinder, more benevolent, slow to take offense and being non-violent while simultaneously *feeling* that you are kinder, more benevolent and forgiving, and slow to take offense, and also extend this feeling to your entire body. You try to feel that you are that way throughout your entire body while reciting the mantra. You should not focus feeling such emotions solely within the organ of interest (related to those emotional traits) but in your entire body. You want to concentrate on healing the organ that way, but also want to feel your entire flesh permeated by such emotions in order to transform the Qi of your entire body.

None of this stuff comes easy. As with deep deliberate practice to attain sports excellence (See *Move Forward*) you have to practice until this becomes part of you. Get it right by going slowly and stay with the slowness until the pattern is perfect. Then repeat, repeat, repeat. Don't learn mistakes and keep repeating them until you later correct them. Learn how to do it right the first time, and only repeat correctness even if it takes longer to master a practice.

I have even seen some studies where westerners have done lots of research and established correspondences between emotions and particular

regions of the body. For instance, the legs and feet are associated in our minds with feelings of responsibility, being grounded and self-support as illustrated by the phrases “standing on one’s two feet,” or an “upstanding citizen.” The outstretched arms together with the heart are associated with expressions and feelings of giving, generosity, magnanimity and outgoingness. The hips are naturally associated with feelings of power and sex but to be more specific, the hips and thighs are associated with self-control and “permission to have sex.” We are constantly told to restrain ourselves or hold ourselves back in this region of the body because it is concerned with “pissing, shitting, farting and fucking.” However, we must also surrender our control over this region under the proper circumstances, but that surrendering also requires the use of power to channel our release.

Therefore, in addition to the pelvic region being a problem area in cultivation because upper body Qi has problems passing through the hips and pelvis to connect with lower body Qi due to the complicated muscular structures in the area, we also have emotional blockages and the habit energies of constraint added to the mix. All of these influences impede the smooth flow of Qi passing through this region from above to below.

Because of our anatomical structure, your upper body Qi has problems connecting with your lower body Qi. The lower part of our body therefore has a lower temperature than the upper body because of this problem. A healing modality so that the Qi can more easily pass through this region would require you to exercise as many muscles as possible in the hips and pelvis, possibly through yoga or the martial arts. You want to stretch and loosen the muscles in this region, and when having sex give rise to the consenting thoughts “*I have permission to have sex*” that permit you to fully and freely express your sexuality. If there are mental blockages within you whispering that your sexual activity should not be occurring, you will be holding back your energy. You will be blocking positive emotions and inhibiting/restricting the flow of your Qi energy during coitus. Therefore you not only have to exercise the muscles in this region, but make sure that any sex you engage in that moves energy in this region is fully okay in your deep mind. You want to be fully free of mental blocks so that your Qi can flow freely.

In Buddhism the pelvic area is associated with Samantabhadra Bodhisattva. He appears on a white six-tusked elephant to anyone undertaking spiritual cultivation or difficult, large projects that require lots of power, commitment, perseverance and energy. That is why he rides on an elephant. The elephant not only represents force, power and wisdom (like Ganesh of India) but the power of your sex organs – sexual vitality that is strong indeed. However, Samantabhadra’s elephant is white in color, meaning that he has purified his sexual desires.

We know that Samantabhadra’s elephant represents his hips and waist

area because the elephant's head represents his sex organs while its six tusks represent the six nerves that extend from each side of the coccyx in the spine, and the four legs of the elephant represent the four muscles around the perineum that form the shape of a square. Whenever Samantabhadra visits you on his elephant it simply means he is standing there; he is there riding on his purified pelvis that is free of sexual desire because it is white.

In the *Mahavairocana Sutra* and *Yajnavalkya*, which assign mantra sounds to different parts of the body, we find that the hips, thighs and waist are associated with mantrayana sounds like "tha" and "dha" which you can recite when concentrating on those regions. For instance, in that system we have the following:

The letter Ka is placed below the throat;
 The letter Kha is placed on the palate;
 The letter Ga is identified with the neck;
 The letter Gha is placed inside the throat;
 The letter Ca is placed at the root of the tongue;
 The letter Cha is identified with the entire tongue;
 The letter Ja is identified with the tip of the tongue;
 The letter Jha is placed where the tongue arises;
 The letter Ta is identified with the legs;
 The letter Tha is identified with the thighs;
 The letter Da is identified with the hips and waist;
 The letter Dha is identified with the buttocks;
 The letter Ta is the anus;
 The letter Tha should be known as the abdomen;
 The letter Da is identified with the two hands;
 The letter Dha is called the armpits;
 The letter Pa is identified with the back;
 The letter Pha should be known as the chest;
 The letter Ba is identified with both upper arms;
 The letter Bha is identified with the lower arms;
 The letter Ma resides in the heart;
 The letter Ya is the genitals;
 The letter Ra is called the eyes;
 The letter La is identified with the forehead;
 I and Ī are the two corners of the eye;
 U and Ū are identified with both lips;
 E and Ai are identified with both ears;
 O and Au are identified with both cheeks;
 The letter Am is the letter of bodhi;
 and the letter Ah is parinirvana.

Far more research needs to be done on which sounds will best vibrate the energy in specific body parts or segments. This is a particular set of sounds that one master developed, but there is absolutely no doubt that others would work better.

Let me present to you a big picture behind several techniques for cultivating the body's Qi/Prana. This picture links together the body's different types of Qi, Qi channels, chakras, body segments, glands and hormones, internal organs, emotions, as well as bindus, marma points, acupuncture points and acupressure points. You first need to understand the overall lay of the land before you can understand how various cultivation schools developed certain particular Qi cultivation techniques, and this will help you understand the principles behind various techniques.

The most rudimentary cultivation methods used the principles of mantrayana and simply required recitation of a single syllable, such as Ram or Om, which is to be felt throughout the entire body during recitation in order to stimulate its Qi/Prana. However, by breaking the body into logical sections one could use syllable sounds, or *bijas*, that better resonated the Qi/Prana within each section, thus affording a quicker way of transforming the Qi/Prana within those regions and hence the entire body in total.

Now if you find thermographic imaging pictures of the human body on the internet, you'll notice that there is big heat difference between the upper part of the body and lower section, meaning it is difficult for the Qi to pass from the upper body through the waist to reach the lower body and the feet as just explained. Various cultivation schools, such as Taoism, tell us that you want to be able to breath through your feet, thus indicating that you want your Qi to reach that far. Additionally, several breathing methods such as the Wim Hof breathing technique, encourage you to fill your body with breath all the way to the bottom of your feet so that you can stay warm even in the icy cold. Some cultivation schools, including the martial arts, tell you that you should always fill your waist and belly with "warm Qi" because in pulling Qi to that region they want to speed up the Qi purification process for the intestines. By concentrating on Qi flow through the belly and waist they also hope to enable better Qi connection between the upper and lower halves of the body.

Because of the upper-lower body split we then have two-syllable mantra cultivation techniques such as Ram-Vam or Ram-Lam where Ram is recited while feeling the Qi of the upper part of the body and Lam/Vam while feeling the energy within the lower section. Or, the sounds can be felt on the left and right sides of the body alternatively. The Ram sound is usually associated with warm or hot fiery Yang energy, while Lam/Vam is associated with cool, watery energy. Thus when reciting the sounds in a body region you can imagine it being fiery red in color or white/blue for water, and at the same time you should try to feel hot or cool energy in

those body regions respectively. In olden days, upon their death Arhats would show their superpowers by rising into the air and issuing water or fire from different parts of their body, thus demonstrating that they had used variations of this technique. All sorts of variations can be created out of this basic technique.

In thermographic images you will also see that the hands and fingers, and feet and toes, are very cold, meaning that they require extra Qi cultivation effort too.

Next, you should find on the internet pictures of the five types of Prana in the human body (*Vyana Vayu, Udana Vayu, Prana Vayu, Samana Vayu, Apana Vayu*) and the five body sections they correspond to (head and arms, chest, mid-section of the body, waist and hips, thighs to feet). This gives rise to five-syllable cultivation mantras such as Om-Ah-Vah-Lah-Hung where each syllable should be recited and a consequential vibratory Qi sensation felt in each appropriate section of your body. There are mantras corresponding to three sections of the body such as Om-Ah-Hung. There are four section mantras too such as Om-Ah-Vah-Lah where Om = head & arms, Ah = chest & arms, Vah = belly and lower abdomen, Hung (or Hum) = pelvis & legs. When pronouncing the sounds you should try to feel the energy in the appropriate section of the body, and you can add emotions and visualized colors to this practice as was explained in *Nyasa Yoga*. This type of inner energy work transforms your body quickly.

Next, there are pictures available on the internet showing where we feel emotions within our bodies, and this is basic information you need to learn in order to understand cultivation and how to affect your Qi/Prana. Love and happiness are felt everywhere within you (throughout your body completely), which is a fact that gives rise to the infinite joy meditation technique, sexual cultivation, and other full-body cultivation methods. Anger and pride are felt in the upper part of the body, and give rise to rising Yang Qi.

When going through the Twelve Year kundalini period, future masters are therefore often manipulated into situations where their anger, pride, and over-confidence are stimulated in order to provoke their Yang Qi to arise within the body. Tibetan Buddhism even has *jidam* methods for cultivating divine pride so that your Yang Qi comes up, but this produces a side-effect of arrogance. Masters in training are also put into situations where their Yin Qi is aroused for weeks on end, which involves stimulating feelings of anxiety, worry, guilt, shame, depression, fear and so forth in their lives. This is particularly brutal for sometimes you will be given pain in order to provoke feelings of hate, despair and anguish that are used to demonstrate rising Yin Qi to deva students rather than to actually help you. Hence, these “emotions felt in the body” charts are useful knowledge to match with the previous information and helps you understand some of the tribulations

you go through during the kundalini transformation process.

Next, you need to know the location of various glands within your body and any emotions, virtues or character traits associated with their hormonal secretions, if any. Your glands are responsible for secreting hormones that are a type of messaging system within the body. Thinking is another communication system. Your cells have surface receptors that change shape in response to energy vibrations and substances in the blood, such as hormones, which is yet another internal messaging system.

Hormones are related to emotional states, and they trigger all sorts of chemical pathways within your body and emotional reactions. The adrenals atop the kidneys secrete adrenaline that is associated with fear, fright or even excitement. The pancreas secretes insulin that stabilizes blood sugar while the stomach-pancreas axis within the body is associated with emotional stability just as the liver is associated with both anger and kindness. If you give rise to certain emotions for a long period of time this will even affect your organs and change your physiology. We are not just talking about the fact that prolonged tension or stress can weaken your heart, kidneys and adrenal glands, and long-term sadness or depression can wreak havoc on your body as well. There is also the possibility that emotional states experienced for long periods of time can change the structure of your brain, and thus your personality.

Remember that London taxi drivers change the structure of their brains, as do musicians and athletes, from consistent mental practice of a particular type. Emotions held for a long time can certainly cause physical changes within our bodies as well, such as stress or anxiety, and they will also change your Qi that will then change your character. What we want to be permeating ourselves with are therefore the good emotions and character traits that help our health and well-being such as honesty, kindness, generosity, love and compassion.

Your Qi and personality are linked, which is why you can pass on some of your character traits to others due to organ transplants. Only living organs can be transferred into another human being, not dead organs, and living tissue from you will still possess your Qi. That Qi will have become embedded with energetic aspects of your character traits, which is why donor recipients often start exhibiting some of the traits of their donors.

Even your surrounding environment can cause you to “turn on” or “turn off” the expression of genes that will then alter your physiology. As stated, the surface receptors of cells, by coming into contact with certain vibrations or chemicals within the bloodstream, already cause this to happen. By consistently enveloping your cells with emotional Qi energy of a certain type, which is the purpose of immeasurable meditations and similar techniques, you will influence their genetics as well.

Epigenetics is the study of how genes express without there being any

alterations in your DNA sequence, whereas the study of genetics involves changes within your DNA sequence. My opinion is that not only the environment but also your emotions, behavior, personality, ways of thinking and even your steady devotion to a specific life purpose will influence your Qi, which is absolutely true, and that energy will also affect how your genes express.

These changes, if deep enough, will certainly determine your fate. Why? Because they will influence your body, which will influence your personality, which will influence your ways of thinking, feeling and behaving, which will influence your actions, and thus will influence your fortune. If you change your personality and behavior you will certainly change your fortune. Therefore, by cultivating your Qi and emotions in certain ways for prolonged periods of time, you will influence your character and personality, ways of thinking and decision-making, and hence your behavior, activities and fortune. Here is the key point for the topic of cultivation. If you work at transforming your personality and behavior by uplifting them to the realm of consummate conduct, impeccability or purity, you will also transform your Qi. Your Qi, which is the essence of your soul or deva body, will become part of your genetic inheritance of traits in subsequent lives.

Shakyamuni Buddha, in the *Cetana Sutta* (SN 12.38) or “Intention Discourse” said, “Monks, what one intends, and what one plans, and whatever one has a tendency towards, this becomes a basis for the maintenance of consciousness. When there is a basis there is support for the establishing of consciousness. When consciousness is established and has come to growth, there is the production of future renewed existence.” This has similarities to the saying, “Sow a thought, reap an action; sow an action, reap a habit; sow a habit, reap a character/personality; sow a character, and reap a destiny.” It is what we do consistently that shapes our lives.

In other words, what one consistently thinks about, does or deeply feels influences your present being, personality, life, and Qi. Those influences become a basis for your consciousness and Qi, and thus become the basis of your functioning existence. Your thinking, feeling and doing are all manifestations of your personality or character. Your future life, and your future span of lives (incarnations), will be influenced by your personality because of the transmission carried forward through your Qi. Therefore, you must work in life on purifying your Qi by purifying your thoughts and emotions and behaviors (which give rise to emotions and thus Qi reactions).

You are an object within Shakti that has consciousness as one of its properties, and thus through consciousness you can learn how to change your own properties. Incredible! You can learn to become kinder, more

honest, more athletic, wiser and so on through self-training. What other objects or properties in the universe can change their very character or nature by choice?

The continuity of the human life is carried over into subsequent incarnations via its vital energy, subtle body, Qi or soul. Its shape, characteristics, qualities or properties are determined by what you continually impress upon it, and these influences, trainings, regularities, skills, traits, etcetera are then carried over into subsequent incarnations (its transformations) such as musical skills, athletic skills, emotional temperaments, likes and dislikes and so forth. The whole point of spiritual cultivation is to change these for the future ... the future of this life and subsequent lives. Thus, the impulses you repeatedly establish in this life become karmic impulses that will manifest in future lives. They will influence your body structure (genes), your character, skills, traits and proclivities, your family connections, and fortune.

Your genes/genetics are structural factors that by design participate in producing or expressing certain personality traits. Thus, through selective breeding certain personality traits can be developed in populations just as you can breed animal breeds for certain emotional and physical traits. For instance, most people don't realize that 30% of marriages occur between spouses who met in college, and since the best colleges only accept individuals of a certain intellectual level or superior athletic skills (due to athletic scholarships), colleges and universities therefore serve as a eugenics means to match high IQ and athletic individuals with each other. Thus, societies can over time will produce smarter individuals with better physical bodies by creating colleges with high admission standards in the athletic or IQ areas. I am not recommending that this happen. I am simply saying that this *is* happening. Also, one should think about ways of encouraging this this too as a passive means of bettering the population.

Here is the kicker. Certain types of spiritual cultivation, because they focus on transforming your personality (character traits) and Qi, have the ability to alter your fortune. If they become better, more purified, or uplifted in the positive sense then your fortune becomes better, and if your personality and behavior becomes worse then your fortune becomes worse. Certain practices can even change the your properties or characteristics – such as certain skills and personality characteristics – that are past life legacies that would normally carryover into your next life. In other words, by altering your properties (remember that you are an object in the universe and thus have properties, including consciousness) such as your normal responses internally and externally and your steady-state way of being (your personality and perspectives), you can change your fortune and destiny.

What then do you want to develop in yourself as better properties, characteristics, character traits or skills for your next life? Start with how

you wish to change yourself in *this* life! The work starts now with the decision to commence upon that type of cultivation.

Cultivation is all about living life better and helping you achieve a better future.

As an object/process within the universe with the properties of life and consciousness, it is about improving your “properties” or characteristics, including your natural responses, in order to experience a better existence.

As a sentient animal (being) that can deliberately choose its own behavior, it is about wisely selecting activities and responses that achieve the results you want. It is about perfecting wise and skillful behavior so that you can become master of the possible changes of phenomena.

As a member of a community rather than a sole individual, it is about perfecting, wise, skillful and *compassionate* behavior that lets you live within the group in harmony, and which benefits the group as well.

As a human being rather than just an animal, it is about ennobling your behavior in life through a code of conduct of noble, consummate behavior rather than just following rapacious instincts and animal-like behavior. It entails finding meaning and significance in life by establishing a purpose higher than just the pursuit of pleasures and survival.

As Knowledge that is simply generating more Knowledge, it is about generating and experiencing better mental states (Knowledge) free of affliction such as blissfulness, peacefulness, clear equanimity, comfort, joy, delight, pleasure, harmony, and non-suffering. From this aspect, cultivation entails mastering/perfecting all factors involved in the naturally automatic and deliberate generation of Knowledge. Thus, it entails mastering consciousness, its various aspects and functions, along with all its supports. Thus, cultivation by necessity entails the perfection of the body including its sensory organs (since they produce perceptions), its living conditions and circumstances (since they produce mental responses), and the perfection of the mental factors that generate consciousness (since they produce the operation of consciousness) and behavior. In consequence, one’s inner and outer behavior, the responses within and outside of the mind, will also become perfected.

As the consciousness of Shakti, it is about altering the body of Shakti, its conditions, so that once again consciousness can experience better states of experience. This, once again, is learning to master the changes of phenomena. It is also called “controlling nature and regulating the cosmos.” This also includes mastering the possibilities of the human mind and body.

In recognition that we are but a fractional part of the aggregate consciousness of Shakti, cultivation is then about altering Shakti’s body (characteristics) so that more and more of its conscious members (its aggregate consciousness) can become free of suffering and afflictions and experience peace, harmony, joy. It is also about enabling them to find a

purpose and meaning for their existence. As a member of the sentient community that is the unified consciousness of Shakti, it is about performing meritorious acts that alter your body (the body of Shakti) to help the aggregate community.

As an ever-changing sentient appearance, function or process, a (dependently produced) fluctuating process that lacks an inherent or intrinsic nature of its own because it manifests out of the intersection of infinite causes, through those interconnections you form a unity with all other phenomena in the universe. Because you are all things, you are essentially nothing at all yourself, and the solitary, independent ego-concept is an illusion. Though lacking a self-so nature by virtue of being a component of Shakti, having consciousness you can learn to master the possible changes of the interconnections (i.e. the laws of nature, patterns and regularities) to produce yet more experiential splendor.

As an ultimately transient collection of simples in a temporary pattern always transforming into a new form, it is about controlling the flow of your pattern's transformations and beneficially improving the characteristics and functioning of your pattern of simples. Thus, cultivation is about improving your conditions, such as the health and longevity of your body, and mastering beneficial skills, talents (functions), habits, behaviors and characteristics that are better aspects for your agglomeration. They are better aspects for the health, longevity, capabilities, and happiness of your agglomeration.

As a human being, cultivation is simply about living better with a more meaningful purpose other than just survival. It is about living with a higher purpose, aspiration, vow or objective that offers significance across many lives and makes living worthwhile.

As a human being with a fated fortune because of your past karma along with your properties and functioning, and as a human being with many lives ahead, it is about changing your current as well as future fortune for the better. To do so you can cultivate your properties, namely your personality, character and traits as well as your body's health, energy and capabilities. You can develop more skills or talents, and learn more Knowledge. You can ennoble your deliberate actions, activities and behavior, and transform your unconscious habits. You can cultivate your mindset or perspective to broaden your wisdom, and change your normal ways of thinking. You can perform more altruistic acts of merit and kindness for others to accumulate more merit, and pursue your own life goals as well as Bodhisattva vows. All of these activities will change your destiny, fate and fortune. One day you may be too old to feel well or perform acts of merit, however your personality, skills and accumulated merit will remain and be practically the only things carried along with you to your next life. Thus, these are what you must work on in life, and this is

something to think about.

The transcendental spiritual body attainments *are* a better future. They constitute a better future since by obtaining them you will then live with a better body in a higher state and realm of existence. An improved character/personality, which means you have “beautified” your properties, is a better future because it equates with a better life and life outcomes. Consummate conduct, or the perfection of your behavior, helps you live better and change your future for the better. Mastering your consciousness enables you to reduce mental afflictions, improve concentration, learn more mental functions and thus experience better states of mind, i.e. higher Knowledge. Having more skills and talents means a richer, better life and future. Performing acts of charity and merit for the community and others produces a better world, and thus a better future for all including yourself. Devoting your life to a higher purpose enables you to find meaning and significance so that it is easier to ignore the suffering inherent with existence.

As human beings we want to be free of pain and suffering, and want comfort and pleasure instead. We want a mind that frequently experiences pleasant mental states such as tranquility, peace and bliss along with clear awareness – blissful existence – without afflictions, confusion or distraction. What positive emotional and mental states do we want to experience? Well, let’s bring in a list of the emotional states that musicologists say we can arouse through music. There is wonder (feeling happy, amazed, dazzled, allured, moved), transcendence (feeling inspired, transcendent, spiritual, thrilled), tenderness (feeling in love, affectionate, sensual, tender, softened-up), nostalgia (feeling sentimental, dreamy, melancholic), peacefulness (feeling calm, relaxed, serene, soothed, meditative), energeticness (feeling triumphant, courageous, fiery, strong, heroic), and joy (stimulated, animated, dancing, amazed, bounding).

Wow, some of these are states we try to bring about during religious services, and others through meditation practice! Some of these states are related to our glands and organs too. As you can see, I am trying to give you valuable information that you can connect together to create your own self-cultivation development program. When you cultivate on a certain vital organ, for instance, you can also try to generate the relevant positive emotions connected with that organ throughout your body, and imagine yourself possessing that trait in fullness. Thus, you can try to generate/feel joyousness, generosity, gregariousness or magnanimity when you concentrate on the heart, such as by reciting the mantra “Ah” on the heart region or visualizing the sacred heart of Jesus in the area while bringing Qi to that vicinity.

Glands are internally located within your body, like internal organs, and you should do *anapana*, *nei-dan*, *nei-gong*, or *qi-gong* work on moving the Qi

around them and between them to link them. This means performing inner energy work on the water elements of your body, for they secrete hormones that are chemical messengers that control your physical biochemistry just as thoughts control your actions. In other words, a type of “water element cultivation” is cultivating *nei-gong* of your glands and hormones. Thus, by cultivating your glands through inner energy work practices you will be cultivating the internal center or core of your body, which few practices do, and improving the health of tissues that control the growth and maintenance and well-being of your body.

The six Taoist healing sounds should cross your mind as a similar cultivation technique. They also involve your internal body, namely your vital organs, which are rarely the subject of various cultivation methods. If you mantra on an internal organ, while feeling the optimal Qi energy and positive emotions associated with that organ (such as joy, generosity, love, happiness, enthusiasm, sociability and extroversion for the heart and small intestine; courage, calmness, gentleness, silence, steadiness and confidence for the kidneys and bladder; kindness, benevolence, will, pioneering boldness and dynamism for the liver; openness, truthfulness, integrity and righteousness for the lungs and large intestines; stability, prudence, diligence, loyalty, respect, trustworthiness, fairness, and dependability for the stomach, pancreas and spleen), then you have another related cultivation method. If you use this technique then make sure *you always work on your lower abdomen* containing your large and small intestine when working on your upper organs. Most people neglect this region, called the *hara* in Japanese or *dantian* in Chinese, and it is very important to soak it in the warm feelings of Yang Qi during the long road of cultivation. Otherwise people will neglect it. Some people imagine that it is filled with a fireball or golden-red sun as a form of cultivation practice for this purpose. It is also important to do exercises that will prevent hernias, as many masters attain hernias because they leave their physical body too often, thus taking away with them the energy from the lower abdomen and weakening its protective tissue during those times.

The need for concentrating on the lower abdomen is why Japanese mountain master Hakuyu taught the following meditation technique to future Zen master Hakuin, “Imagine that a lump of soft butter, pure in colour and fragrance and the size and shape of a duck egg, is suddenly placed on the top of your head. As it begins to slowly melt, it imparts an exquisite sensation, moistening and saturating your head within and without. It continues to ooze down, moistening your shoulders, elbows, and chest; permeating lungs, diaphragm, liver, stomach, and bowels; moving down the spine through the hips, pelvis, and buttocks.

“At that point, all the congestions that have accumulated within the five organs and six viscera, all the aches and pains in the abdomen and other

affected parts, will follow the heart as it sinks downward into the lower body. As it does, you will distinctly hear a sound like that of water trickling from a higher to a lower place. It will move lower down through the lower body, suffusing the legs with beneficial warmth, until it reaches the soles of the feet, where it stops.

“The student should then repeat the contemplation. As his vital energy flows downward, it gradually fills the lower region of the body, suffusing it with penetrating warmth, making him feel as if he were sitting up to his navel in a hot bath filled with a decoction of rare and fragrant medicinal herbs that have been gathered and infused by a skilled physician.”⁴⁶

If you look at the chakras of your body, which correspond to body sections segmented out according to the nerves of your spine (see *Nyasa Yoga* for the only correct explanation in print of this, namely what chakras actually are), or by logical connective tissue delineated regions of your body (see *Anatomy Trains* by Thomas Myers, p. 276), you can release that there are certain sounds that can be used to vibrate those individual regions. Emotions can also be applied while doing so in order to transform their Qi/Prana as explained previously. The more you permeate yourself with a particular emotion by generating it within you and holding onto it as it penetrates your consciousness, and then also trying to continually exhibit it in the real world, the more you become that way as a personality characteristic. This is one way to help change your personality, and thus your behavior and fortune.

Next, if you consider acupuncture points, marma points, acupressure points and so forth, you also have small *bindu* (point) regions where you can concentrate on vibrating mantra sounds. You basically locate a marma, acupuncture or acupressure point in your body and mantra as if from that point or on that point, and do this for several in a sequence in order to transform an acupuncture line *and* the entire body sections that it is connected with. This is how you can work on Qi channel routes such as the meridians of Chinese acupuncture, or you can visualize and feel the line as your work on pushing Qi through it. *Nyasa Yoga* teaches various ways to do all these techniques. You can also link together various segments of the body, such as an imaginary Qi circuit connecting the glands, in order to provide a pathway for *qi-gong*, *nei-gong*, *anapana*, etcetera practice.

The sage Yajnavalkya revealed instructions for an eighteen part *pratyahara*, which is a Qi route pathway as described extending from the big toes through to the ankles, mid-shanks, calves, knees, thighs, anus, the center of the body (*dehamadhya*), generative organ, navel, heart, neck pit, palate, nose, circular orb of the eyes, center of the eyebrows, forehead, and

⁴⁶ “Zen Sickness, by Zen Master Hakuin,” accessed December 26, 2019, <https://buddhismnow.com/2015/09/12/zen-sickness-by-zen-master-hakuin/>.

crown of the head:

The following pratyahara is the greatest yogic practice and is praised and followed by yogis always. Having drawn the prana from one point to another, holding it in the eighteen vital points (*marmasthanas*) is spoken of as pratyahara. The Asvini Kumaras who are the best among the physicians of the celestials (devas) have spoken thus of the vital points in the body, for the attainment of liberation from yoga.

I shall explain all of them in an orderly manner. Listen, disciplined [Gargi]!

The big toes, the ankles, in the mid-shanks, the root of the calves, the knees, middle of the thighs, the root of the anus, the center of the body (dehamadhya), generative organ, the navel, the heart, and neck pit, Gargi. Then, the root of the palate, the root of the nose, circular orb of the eyes, the center of the eyebrows, the forehead, and crown of the head. These are the vital points. ...

Some skilled yogis speak of [another] pratyahara. Listen beautiful [Gargi], I will tell you [about] it. During the practice of pranayama, the prana must be held by the mind from the big toe to the crown of the head, like a totally filled pot. Drawing [the prana] from the crown of the head, one must focus it in the forehead. Again, drawing the prana from the forehead, one must focus it between the eyebrows. Drawing [the prana] from the center of the eyebrows one must focus it in the center of the eyes. Drawing the prana from the eyes, one must focus it in the root of the nose. From the root of the nose, one must focus the prana in the root of the tongue. Drawing [the prana] from the root of the tongue, one must focus it in the base of the throat (neck-pit). Drawing the prana from the neck-pit, one must focus it in the center of the heart, from the center of the heart one must focus it in the center of the navel, again from the center of the navel one must focus it in the generative organ and then from the generative organ one must focus it in the abode of fire (dehamadhya), from the dehamadhya (center of the body), Gargi, one must focus it in the root of the anus and from the root of the anus in the [mid-] thighs, then from the mid-thigh in the center of the knees. Then, [from the knee] one must focus the prana in the root of the calf, from there in the middle of the shank, and drawing [the prana] from the middle of the shank in the ankle. From the ankle, Gargi, one must focus it (the prana) in the big toes of the feet.

The wise one who, drawing the prana from point to point, focuses it in the above said manner, will be freed from all bondage

and will live as long as the moon and the stars exist (will attain liberation). This [pratyahara] is praised as the means for the fruition of yoga even by Agastya (one of the great sages). Among the pratyaharas, this one is considered as the best by yogis.⁴⁷

When you do Nyasa yoga – and there are many Nyasa routines available – you also lead your Qi from region to region inside your body. You lead the Qi from place to place via your willpower until you energize and link it all together. Thus with the Ganesh Nyasa you start with the Qi in your head. After grabbing it and spinning it around you move to the Qi in your forehead, then right eye, left eye, right ear, left ear, right nostril, left nostril, right cheek, left cheek, upper lip, lower lip, upper teeth, lower teeth, tongue, throat, right shoulder, right elbow, right wrist, base of right fingers, right finger tips, left shoulder, left elbow, left wrist, left root of fingers, left finger tips, right thigh, right knee, right ankle, right foot, right toes, left thigh, left knee, left ankle, left foot, left toes, right side of the body, left side of the body, back, navel, belly, heart, right collar bone, shoulder hump, left collar bone, heart to right palm, heart to left palm, heart to right foot, heart to left foot, heart to genitals, and finally to your heart once again.

In other words, you can concentrate on certain regions, sections, areas, *nadis* (Qi channels) or points (*bindus*) within your body – using mantra sounds, visualizations and emotions applied on them or within them – and then try to lead the Qi/Prana from one section to another as a cultivation method until you “wash” your entire inner Qi body with Qi. This is essentially *kriya* yoga, *kundalini* yoga, tantric yoga, *anapana*, *nei-gong*, *nei-dan*, inner energy work, Qi work, or Vajrayana practice although they usually start by having you concentrate on certain sections.

There is nothing secret about this process. It’s just very tiresome to do, but no one tells you all of these correspondences, nor the theory or instructions for how to do it. However, now you know the how and why. When you go through the Twelve Year kundalini period this tends to happen automatically because then Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and their devas students will be doing this inside you for you, but only, of course, if you are deserving. Without merit, without being a good human being no one will help you attain the deva body. Furthermore, you have to do lots of Qi work as a preparation before they can even begin this type of transformational effort. This is why monks and nuns sit for years in meditation practice and also practice yoga, mantra and *nei-gong* work.

You are trying to use willpower, sound and emotions to move your Qi in certain sections of your body, and to eventually link sections together, to

⁴⁷ *Yoga Yajnavalkya*, trans. by A.G. Mohan with Ganesh Mohan, (Svastha Yoga Pte Ltd, 2013), pp. 75-79.

feel the entire Qi of your whole body. This involves not only transforming or purifying your Qi, but transforming your character and behavior to a more noble state of higher purity, namely consummate conduct. For instance, in Christian Hesychast practice one becomes more humble due to the prayers.

The emotions you hold onto during inner Qi practice – such as pride or arrogance if you are concentrating on certain wrathful Tibetan *yidams* – will transform your personality for life, so choose carefully. Jain and Aghori ascetics go naked, which changes their personality and mindset, while some monks undergo extreme asceticism and poverty, which changes their personality and mindset too. Christian monks, as previously mentioned, are taught humility as the basis of their cultivation path so they come out more humble at the end as well as more willing to sacrifice themselves and service others because of the example of Christ. I gave you a great deal of separate information on these various interconnections, and you have to think these things through to make them clearer.

Nyasa Yoga is highly recommended because it contains the gist of the Esoteric school, Yoga tradition, and Taoist practice in just one thin volume. In fact, a cultivator should try to read these few books – *Buddha Yoga* for a synopsis of the path, *Nyasa Yoga* for the Qi/Prana practice techniques, *Meditation Case Studies* to understand the gong-fu they will encounter, *Culture, Country, City, Company, Person, Purpose, Passion, World* to help you determine your place in the world, your life purpose and how to set your mind on where your life should be going, and *Quick, Fast, Done* to help you arrange your life and get things done.

From *Detox Cleanse Your Body Quickly and Completely* you will learn how to do basic pranayama practice although better books for pranayama are available in the market. There are many traditional pranayama exercises you can learn, such as from the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* or Iyengar's *Light on Pranayama*, but from this included chapter you will learn the nine-bottled wind practice that is one of the most powerful single methods available.

Spiritual practice, as boring as it may seem, not only leads to better health (because you improve your Qi), better fortune (because you practice watchfulness), longevity and spiritual progress, but is one of the practices that make human beings happiest. Therefore all these introductions on the secrets of inner Qi practice are important from the aspect that practicing spiritual activities is challenging, but you can be happy doing so. Meditation, for instance, actually makes people happy. The other activities that make people happiest in life include social activities, exercising, relaxing, making food, doing something you are good at, being engaged in sexual intimacy, and volunteer work where you perform kind, altruistic acts of service.

FROM: *EASY MEDITATION LESSONS*

Ch. 4 – “Your First Basic Meditation”

We are now ready to learn a very simple meditation method. Since this is a very simple method, to learn it you can sit in any posture that helps your mind become quiet. Just sit in a position where your body isn't tense but feels relaxed with your head erect. That's step one.

To practice this meditation technique and get the very best results, you will have to next adjust your breathing. That is the big secret to getting the quickest results of mental calming through meditation: adjust your breathing at the start of your practice session.

If you first adjust your breathing to calm down, then your mind can quickly enter a deep state of quiet because of the connection between your breathing and your thoughts. Calming your breath calms your mind, so to touch mental peace you first want to harmonize your breathing. Therefore before you start to meditate, you are first going to perform some deep inhalations and exhalations of your breath to let go of any tensions inside your body and mind. You will initially adjust your chi, breathing, body and mind in this way.

Here's how to do it ...

You are going to breath in through your nose and then exhale slowly through your mouth, and do this 3-5 times in a row. You don't want to use any excessive force in doing this because you want to be natural about it, but you do want each of your exhalations to last longer than each inhalation.

There is one special principle to this initial phase of adjustment, which is that with every out-breath of exhalation it should be as if you are letting go of everything that might possibly be bothering you in the world, and you want to silently say “Ahhh” when you do this. Using these exhalations, you want to relax yourself by throwing away all your mental burdens.

For instance, imagine this scenario. Pretend you have been busy all day and you finally get a chance to sit down and relax. In front of you is a hot cup of tea, so you lean forward to take a sip. When it meets your lips you find out it's the perfect temperature and tastes absolutely delicious, so you lean back and breathe out saying “Ahhh.” At that moment you breathe out and let go of everything in your mind, and feel absolutely perfect—even if it is for just a moment—because it is as if you have just shed a great burden off your shoulders. You have let go of everything and are finally enjoying yourself at the same time.

That's it. That's the initial preparatory adjustment for meditation. It sounds so simple, but most people do not first adjust their mind and body before when they sit in meditation, and then they wonder why they don't

get any calming results.

Adjusting your breathing is one of the keys to being able to calm your mind quickly and then feel good during your practice session. If you do this first, then you won't have to spend the first portion of your sitting practice waiting for your internal energies to calm down so that your mind settles. You will be able to achieve some of those results just by going through this initial phase of adjustment.

You must first inhale air through your nose into your lungs, and then exhale slowly from your mouth to empty your lungs as if you are letting go of everything. Your exhalation should be about twice as long as the length of your inhalation, and you should let go of all your mental pressures and tensions upon those exhalations. Since you usually cannot do this with just one cycle of in and out respirations, it may take several repetitions to initially adjust yourself.

If you need more than 3-5 inhalations-exhalations to initially calm yourself down to adjust yourself, try inhaling for a count of four and then exhaling for a count of eight, and continue doing this several more times in a row following the same instructions. When exhaling, always remember to let go as if you are finally releasing a big burden off your shoulders, and it is as if "now life is perfect." Eventually you will reach a point where you feel like you have let go of everything, your body feels comfortable inside, and you can now begin practice.

After those adjustments, each time exhaling with a silent sound of "Ahhh" as if you are so happy to let go of everything in the world and release all your problems and pressures, close your mouth slightly with your tongue touching your upper teeth (or rolled backwards and touching the roof of your mouth for advanced practitioners). The point is to now adjust your mouth so that your face and head are relaxed.

Your mind should be quiet and a bit peaceful now. You should have entered a silent space just by virtue of the fact that you first adjusted your breathing to calm down, thus serving to harmonize the chi or internal energy of your body. This alone will produce a state that is somewhat mentally quiet. Now to deepen that state, you should just continue watching your breathing without getting involved with it. Then your breathing will further soften without becoming ruffled or perturbed, which would destroy any serenity you have achieved.

What do you do now? Just sit there pleasantly and start watching your breathing. You should follow what your breathing is doing with mental observation so that you know what's happening with your inhalations and exhalations, but you shouldn't interfere with your breathing process. You sit there comfortably and just know what is happening with your breathing without becoming involved with it. You let it operate automatically, and simply know what is happening as it moves in or out.

This is practicing awareness. You just follow your breathing with knowing, awareness, witnessing, observation or however you wish to word it. You don't try to guide it or quicken it or push it in any way, but just stay in that state of independent, detached observation and then your breathing will calm down and your mind will quiet down even more. That zone of quiet will eventually grow larger and become something you really enjoy.

Once you start to feel the calm in your mind, you will have then mastered the introductory basics of one type of meditation practice. If you cannot stay quiet inside ... if your mind becomes busy again ... then take another deep inhalation through your nose and then breathe out from your mouth very slowly, making a silent "Ahhh" sound while allowing the energy to rise into your head when you do so.

That's it. That's all you have to do. You have started to master one form of meditation practice. If you can only sit there quietly for 15-20 minutes, that's fine. If you can remain quiet for longer, that's even better. All you have to do is rest in the mental silence and when thoughts start to become busy again, take a deep inhalation and then exhale slowly. Let go of all your cares, let go of your body, and let your chi (internal energy) rise into your head with every deep exhalation.

Some teachers will tell you after you have adjusted your body and breathing that you should count your breaths or watch your thoughts as a type of meditation practice. Those are different meditation methods for cultivating concentration or awareness, and there are countless others are based on this first introductory practice of calming your mind and breathing. If you just start by learning this first basic technique, then you can slowly expand to try many other types of meditation practice. Go ahead and try it!

From: *LITTLE BOOK OF MEDITATION*

CH. 3 – "Witnessing Practice, Or Watching The Mind"

The basic practice of meditation is often called "watching the mind." There are also meditation practices where you watch your breathing or the sensations within your body, but all these various types of meditation practice are basically watching practices. You sit and become aware of the contents of your mind, and don't attach to them or become entangled with them but just observe them as they come and go. This is also called "observation" or "witnessing" practice as well because that's all you do – you stay aware and witness what goes on within your mind without becoming enmeshed, merged or fused with the stream of consciousness. You become mindful of the contents of your mind, and continually watch those contents without clinging to them. Try it!

Of all the spiritual teachers, it is probably Confucius who described this type of meditation practice most clearly. He basically said, "No matter where you are or what you're doing, you should always watch the thoughts that arise in your mind. You should always inspect yourself, watching your behavior in this way, too. Because of always mindfully watching, which is cultivating awareness, you can also then correct your thoughts and behavior when you see them going astray. By constantly observing your thoughts and motivations as to whether they are good or bad, right or wrong, you will also eventually arrive at the stage where there are no thoughts of good or bad and right or wrong anymore because thoughts have died down and the mind has become very empty and pure."

This is perfectly true, and matches the practice of meditation with the objective of how to improve our behavior and become better people in the world. In life you should always strive to be aware of your thoughts and behavior – you should be “mindful” of them — and that is basically true meditation practice integrated with the real world. When you see an errant thought in your mind, you should learn how to cut it off or just ignore it by letting it go rather than holding on to it, following its call and feeding it more energy. In not acting on it and not clinging to it, it will simply go away. In not following it, you will refrain from feeding it energy and subsequently that impulse or thought stream will eventually die down.

If a particular thought is bothersome or troubling, you can use various expedients to try to cut it off, which is what the sword in the hand of the Buddha Manjushri stands for. He just swings his sword and, “swoosh!” he cuts off that particular thought stream right at that moment so that it no longer causes trouble. The actual practice principle of watching thoughts, however, is that just by shining awareness on thoughts, without attaching or clinging to them, they will eventually depart even if they try to stubbornly remain to bother you. In time, just from watching or witnessing your thoughts without getting involved in the mental continuum – just by acting as a third party observer who is attentive to what’s going on because he is witnessing it while remaining independent – the mind will naturally quiet down because thoughts will leave when you stay detached and pay them no heed.

Therefore when you sit in meditation practice, you should relax your body, close your eyes and just start watching your thoughts. You just sit there and start witnessing your mental scenario without becoming attached to anything or expecting anything. You do nothing but witness. You do nothing but observe the arrival and departure of thoughts in your mind. You don’t try to change anything or hold any expectations. If you don’t attach to thoughts, then in time they will die down and dissipate, and your breathing will calm down as well.

This simultaneous calming of your respiration as your thoughts die down is an

important meditation principle to recognize. It occurs because your mind (consciousness or thoughts) and your breathing are linked. As your mind calms down your breathing will also calm down, and if your mind gets excited, your breathing will also quicken. For instance, if you become mentally frightened then your breathing will speed up; if you are relaxed (after making love, for instance) then your breathing will calm down. There is always an interrelationship between your mental states and your breathing, a mind-body connection. *The chi within your body is also linked to your breathing, so as your breathing calms or quickens then your chi will also calm or quicken.* This essentially explains why people can use breathing exercises as a form of meditation to affect their mental state. They can use breathing practices to effect their chi, and their chi will affect their mental states.

This idea of mental and physical calming is known by another common name – relaxation. Relaxation is something that accompanies all meditation methods you might practice when you practice properly. If you are accumulating tension while meditating – whether in the body, in your emotions, or mentally – then you are practicing meditation in the wrong way. Your relaxation should deepen the more you practice meditation, and in time your body should warm and soften as your internal chi starts to circulate due to that relaxation.

A portion of these results should come from the fact that you are mentally letting go of your body and your mental concerns. Another portion of your progress should come from the fact that meditation is opening the chi channels of your body, and when that happens, your body always tends to get warmer and soften because its internal energies flow much better. This, of course, makes it easier to relax because your body becomes warmer, softer and more flexible.

The same principle of improvement is expected for your mental clarity when you meditate. To meditate is not to create a muddled, sleepy or drunken mind where thoughts are hazy or unclear because that is not the meaning of an empty mind. You are not trying to repress or suppress thoughts to create an inner silence either. It is not a psychedelic or trance state you are after but a vivid mind that is fully awake and knows all the thoughts that arise. That's *clarity*. As you properly meditate, the volume of your wandering thoughts will decline over time, and you should start to experience tranquility and peace from their absence while simultaneously enjoying incredible mental clarity. That empty state of mind you reach, wherein your awareness is still active and able to know thoughts, becomes a mental clarity as crystal clear and large as space itself.

A third point is that you should become happier, more peaceful and content because of these advances. If this isn't happening you are either suppressing the energy streams which start to arise within the body, or still tightly holding on to thoughts and negative emotions, including negative

self-talk and self-criticism, which suppresses that buoyant energy. Most of what runs through our minds all the time is negative self-talk, but this tends to eventually drop away due to meditation. We tend to mentally rehash things in our head, and engage in elaborate orchestras of self-talk that give us no peace. Meditation practice is the solution.

Clinging to thoughts and running mental scenarios over and over again is therefore incorrect meditation practice because it means you are following thoughts. If you want to progress, you must learn how to stop the useless practice of feeding and holding on to negative feelings, which gains you nothing. Letting go means just that—letting go. There is no way to do it; you just do it. Just act as you should in any situation, and then don't hold on to the situation any longer after it is over. Forget about it and stop rehearsing it in your head. That's letting go.

These three – relaxation, clarity and happiness – should slowly increase in your life because of your meditation practice. If they do not, you must reevaluate if you are practicing properly. The primary obstacle is that most people continue to hold on to thoughts when practicing meditation so they aren't following the basic instructions of just watching your mental scenario without getting attached to the thought streams of consciousness which arise. If they cling to states or streams of consciousness, this prevents their chi from flowing freely within them, and that state of inertia inhibits happiness, physical bliss and relaxation.

When you are going to sit down for a meditation practice session, it helps tremendously to first cultivate a feeling of satisfaction and contentment without any worries or concerns. You don't want to start meditating with worries on your mind. You might first say to yourself, "I have nothing I need to do right now, so I'll just take this free time to experience some peace. I don't have any expectations, there's no need to rush or hurry, and there is nothing to fear. Let me give away all my worries and concerns at this moment. I can pick them up later, but right now the world is alright and so am I. I am free to just sit down and relax, throw all my concerns away, and just experience perfect freedom and peace."

With no concerns to push you here or there, and no worries or anxieties to consider, you can then sit down to meditate and relax. It's like the Christian practice of sitting down for a moment and saying to oneself, "I'm going to give all my worries and concerns over to God," and then letting go to find mental peace for a short while. Thoughts will always arise, so you can just sit in a relaxed state and begin to watch those thoughts without involvement. The more you can cultivate the ability to enjoy doing nothing without any stresses or worries, and just watch with detachment, the easier it will be for you to practice meditation.

Essentially, watching your thoughts without getting involved with them so that your mind-stream calms down is basic meditation practice, or

“**Meditation 101.**” You don’t have to pay money for any special course to learn this because you just learned how to do it. You sit down, close your eyes, witness the thoughts in your mind without becoming attached to them, and relax while observing the contents of your mind. Basically you are doing nothing at all except observing the contents of your mind.

There are two major principles involved with this practice – witnessing or observing the mind, called *vipassana*, and the quiet mental state that is eventually produced from doing this, called *shamatha*. You can call this practice of mental watching and calming by many names usually by citing one or both of these factors. We therefore have various descriptions found in many spiritual traditions such as:

- “*Vipassana*” or “witnessing” practice because you simply watch your mind, like a third person observer, when practicing
- “*Shamatha*” or “calm abiding” because you eventually arrive at a mental experience of silence, peace or calm and abide there
- “Cessation,” “stopping,” “halting” practice because thoughts die down due to the practice and therefore cease, halt, stop or disappear
- “Emptiness” meditation because thoughts depart and the mind becomes empty of thoughts
- “Observation” or “watching” practice because you observe the mind’s contents just by watching or witnessing them without involvement or entanglement of any sort
- “Mindfulness” practice because you are continually mindful of watching your thoughts and never cease doing this even for a moment
- “Remembrance” practice because you’re always trying to remember to watch your thoughts without getting lost/entangled in those thoughts
- “Cultivation of silence” or “cultivation of inner peace” because after thoughts die down your mental state becomes relatively quiet, absent of most wandering thoughts

ARHAT YOGA

- “Detachment” because you're not attaching or clinging to your thoughts but letting go of them, hence detaching from them
- “Surrendering” because you give up the activity of mental clinging and let everything go
- “Calm abiding” because you let the mind rest until it calms, and then you look at it with precision, meaning with analysis or discrimination
- “Naturalness” or “effortlessness” practice because no effort is involved with watching thoughts and no effort or clinging is entangled with mental realms, you just naturally abide without effort
- “Introspection” because you are looking within, inwards, paying attention to the contents of your mind rather than focusing on the external world
- “Knowing your mind” because in watching or observing your thoughts you are simply knowing the thoughts of your mind
- “Letting go” because you are just freely watching thoughts while abandoning all clinging attachments to them
- “Renunciation” because you are renouncing attachment to your thoughts by just letting them come and go without clinging, and when they die down it's called a state of “mental poverty” since thoughts are absent (the mind is *poor* because it has few thoughts). Renunciation is not grasping or holding onto anything including thoughts or one's life
- “Awareness” practice because you are watching your thoughts by practicing pure awareness
- “Presence” practice because in not attaching to anything and by not getting enmeshed, you are simply practicing the presence of awareness.

There are lots of ways to describe this basic meditation practice, but you're essentially just watching your mind without becoming excessively involved in your thoughts. That involvement typically gives thoughts more energy, and then you get lost in your thoughts, they start proliferating and you never find mental peace. As a result of training to become independent

of your mind stream so that you just watch/know your thoughts without adding any extra energy or clinging attention to the knowing, what happens is that your wandering thoughts will always eventually calm down and disappear. This just happens. In fact, it is like a principle of science in that it *always happens*.

Now of course you must always be aware of your mind, rather than suppress it, and act as necessary when thoughts arise concerning something you must act upon. But when those thoughts depart, you don't have to hold on to them any longer. If the doorbell rings, you answer the door, but you don't keep thinking about answering the door an hour later. When you get hungry, you eat, and then you forget about it and move on.

You cannot hold your thoughts and prevent them from leaving anyway, and so the reality is that the mind you experience is always ever fresh and vibrant because thoughts never stay in your mind. They cannot stay. The actual nature of your mind is always clear and lucid but you don't know this right now because your mind is busied by thoughts. However, thoughts cannot last but must depart, and if a lot of them depart you will end up experiencing natural mental quiet and become able to see the empty quiet nature of your mind that is always there.

In truth, the real you is the root of the mind, and is basically just a functioning of bodiless awareness that sees those thoughts always going by. In this meditation practice of watching or observing thoughts, you try to be just that functioning awareness that doesn't attach to these thought streams. You try to become the pure awareness that knows thoughts by viewing your consciousness, as you always do, but without clinging to your mental mind stream (which is a bad habit you've picked up). Clinging to thoughts disturbs your mental peace, and is a wrong habit you have developed over time. You cannot hold your thoughts anyway even though you try, but you've picked up this invisible habit and it has muddied all your mental states.

HOW TO PRACTICE

The correct meditation practice of watching thoughts, called witnessing or mental observation, is like a hotel manager who just stands there watching all the guests come and go through the hotel lobby. He simply stands and watches without moving or lifting a finger. It's like a mom who sits there motionless while observing all her children run around on the playground until they become tired and come back to fall asleep on her lap. It's like standing in front of a two-lane highway, watching all the cars go by without paying particular attention to any one vehicle. For most people, however, when a car comes by with your friends inside, you will start following that particular car down the road because of interest. That's

attachment or entanglement! That type of following is the wrong way to practice meditation because it represents distraction, and in becoming distracted you lose your independent sense of presence that is simply a witness. Your attention becomes fragmented because you lose sight of everything else. You go the way of your thoughts and get carried away by them, and then find yourself in a maze of more wandering thoughts. However, there is one who knows the coming and going of your thoughts and does not run off along with them, and in spiritual practice you try to recognize this unmoving one. So when you are engaged in any sort of meditation practice and find that you have become distracted and have lost your attention, you simply accept that it happened, and then return to remaining mindful with your practice once again, returning to a state of clarity.

When thoughts pop up, you should never get lost in any story line that arises. You do what you have to do, but without attachment, seeing what each moment calls for. “Without attachment” means detachment, but when people hear this word they think it means that you lack normal human emotions. You always let emotions arise, such as joy or sorrow, but you just experience all things without holding. The holding cannot make them stay anyway, but people always get confused on this point.

The right way to practice vipassana meditation is just by watching your thoughts without getting involved with them. Nothing is to be done other than witness consciousness. You just observe your consciousness as if you are standing apart, like an independent third party observer. During meditation practice things will appear within your consciousness, but you remain unconcerned about them and just know them without doing anything. You refrain from grasping at them and do nothing but just watch. You just know the thoughts that appear as they appear, and of course they always depart to be replaced by new ones that you also know, witness, watch or observe without doing anything other than see them. Because you can see them, you can realize that you transcend them. You must stand or exist beyond them in order to know them. Think about this. Is this not true?

You are in a position to watch consciousness, so you cannot be consciousness. *You must be outside of consciousness to be able to know consciousness.* What is outside of consciousness, able to know thoughts, must be the real you, and you practice being just that real you during your meditation practice. The rest of the day you are always merged with your thoughts, and lose that sense of independence, but during meditation time you practice just being that independent awareness. Later you’ll learn how to bring this capability into the real world. So like a third-person observer, you should just sit there during meditation practice and watch your thoughts or mental phenomena as they come and go, which is vipassana practice.

Thoughts will appear and depart, but you should not pay them any excessive attention as they are born and then die away in an endless stream. You are outside them, so just watch them. Stay in the stationary aloof awareness that knows them. You are separate from them so stay detached from them. The knowing of thoughts is enough. That's the correct meditation practice. Just remain in the independent awareness that transcends thoughts. You don't have to self-identify with them and somehow get entangled with mental states through a fusion of unification. Stand beyond them by just witnessing them. Be detached so that you can manipulate them with ease and self-correct with elegant flexibility.

What needs to arise as a thought will always arise, which is "birth," and it will depart when necessary, which is "death," so there's no reason to try to hold on to anything. For instance, you might hear a sound from outside your window and immediately know it's a bird. That thought then immediately departs, and you don't need to hold on to the concept of "bird" anymore. You know it is a bird – done! If you need to think of what you just knew, the concept of bird will arise again from your memory, so once again there is no reason to cling to anything. The right thought will arise when you need it. You just observe what you know as it arises because knowingness or recognition just naturally functions without extra work on your part, and you don't cling to any of this knowing. If you need a new thought or something from your memory, it will arise, too, and hence there is no reason to cling or attach to consciousness. You just practice being aware without any stain of mental clinging to your knowing.

You don't need energy for this type of awareness practice because awareness always is. Awareness always independently shines. Awareness is effortless, natural and inherent. It is always perfectly clear and pure and never becomes clearer or purer; purity is its nature. You don't need to do anything for awareness to exist either because you are always aware, but thoughts may or may not be present for awareness. In short, awareness is always there functioning. Primordially, fundamentally, you are essentially pure awareness that is always there, but that discussion is something we'll have to enter into later. The existence of awareness is not the issue—what you must do is stop clinging to the thoughts seen through awareness. Abide in the awareness that observes; stand apart and don't get caught up in the thoughts but preserve your independence and just know them. You always get mixed up with them and then lose the state of clear presence, which is the shining of awareness without entanglements. You want to cultivate the overriding awareness that knows all states without clinging.

During meditation you get a chance to practice this non-clinging. You want to cultivate being the ongoing clear awareness which doesn't cling to thoughts rather than spacing out and slipping into a trance, or getting lost in thoughts. People have all sorts of strange notions that they should be

cultivating unusual mental states during meditation, but you are only *cultivating your ordinary mind*. Your ordinary mind of awareness is always there, but we are always engaged in clinging to thoughts, and that tends to obscure the abiding awareness which is always clear. As we let go of clinging to thoughts, our mental realm will become less sticky and more vivid, empty, lucid, and clear. The empty clarity of awareness never changes due to meditation, but the size of the mental realm seems as if it gets larger.

The cultivation path of meditation practice is therefore very ordinary, practical, natural and humanistic. You just remain in your clear awareness and witness the workings of your mind without becoming attached or entangled with those streams of consciousness and mental functions. It is really simple to do, and so simple that you will wonder why there can be courses on meditation if the instructions are so simple.

There is no religion or theology to this. There is just the fact that in witnessing without attachment, attachments to thoughts will melt away, thoughts will slowly clear out, and your mind will gradually empty out its busyness to become clear. You are not creating a new mind, but just uncovering the ordinary mind which is already there, perfectly pure and clear underneath all the wandering mental noise. Hence, you are not creating anything new in the process of meditation but just observing your mind, and by so doing you will eventually discover what's already there as your underlying base of consciousness when enough thought volume departs. That base of consciousness, beneath thoughts, is always peaceful, empty and pure, and free of sorrows and concerns.

Let me describe this process of meditation in another way. There is nothing strange going on during meditation except you are learning to relax your habitual tendency to cling to mental states, and from doing this your mental realm will gradually empty out of all sorts of random thoughts running about. You don't even know that you are always clinging to (getting lost in or following) mental states because the habit has become so ingrained that's its nearly unnoticeable, but you discover it is there after you do a lot of meditation. Once you truly practice letting go of thoughts because you just witness them without interfering with them, then you can slowly dissolve this incorrect habit of clinging. That's what brings all the positive changes reported of meditation. Our tendency to hold on to thoughts binds up the chi flow throughout our body, and this also affects our mental business and mental purity.

You may not realize it, but you are always becoming lost in mental engagements and trapped within your own thought streams. When you learn how to free yourself from this entanglement of your own creation, not only will your chi change and body transform, but you can eventually realize a substrate of clear awareness that is beneath all that activity.

What underlies the mind of mentation as a final substrate is pure

awareness, witnessing, or pure consciousness. There is an underlying (or we could say “transcendental” since it transcends or is beyond thoughts) capability of knowing that is absent of thought appearances. This capacity for knowing doesn’t have any phenomenal substance for its body, essence or nature. It is not energy, because that is something phenomenal, but is more akin to an unborn potential that transcends the entire realm of the phenomenal which can appear within it. It is just an insubstantial clear functioning – that is essentially what pure consciousness or pure awareness is – that within its nature reflects things that themselves lack any true substantial existence. Awareness is the purest consciousness that is empty of all content, but pure consciousness can know thought-consciousness as a transient reflection, manifestation, or appearance within itself. The appearances of consciousness arise within it, and this is what it can know. That knowing is happening to consciousness itself, which is the subject, object and perceiving, so the ultimate underlying substrate is, in a way, just talking to itself. In another sense we can say that nothing is really happening at all. Nothing true is really arising or vanishing.

Awareness always remains pure and clean, and can never be made more pure. It is pure by nature, and this purity can never be changed. Upon its empty screen, or empty nature, thought appearances come and go. That empty pure awareness never changes, however, but always remains unmoving, pure and clear. Nothing ever truly happens to the absolute nature of knowing, which remains pure and free and undisturbed throughout all this. The best simile is that it’s like a mirror in that it always remains clean and unaffected by the images which appear within it. Just as a mirror reflects images, pure awareness allows thoughts to arise within it and generate knowing. When the moon becomes reflected in water the moon does not get wet and the water doesn’t break or get disturbed in any way. This is how pristine awareness functions as regards its ability to host mental appearances.

It is hard to explain this, but the inherent emptiness of awareness and its non-difference from the realm of interdependent origination is a fact that you discover through advanced spiritual practice. To get to the stage where you can realize this you must practice witnessing meditation, which means watching your mind during meditation practice as if you were an aloof independent observer. You rest or abide in the awareness that transcends thoughts and just watch them pass by. In other words, you abide in your (empty) knowingness nature itself, which is not any type of substance, and observe the thoughts arising in your mind. You don’t try to be a separate entity that watches, but just let go of thoughts as they arise while still knowing them.

This underlying knowingness capability of life is sometimes described as natural, fundamental, original or primordial clarity, vividness, awareness

or illumination and this is what allows you to actually experience all the appearances in your mind. This is why there is this thing called life rather than an inert existence or primal nothingness. We have sentient life in the universe because there is this illuminating power of the original nature that produces consciousness, and within the realm of consciousness appears personal consciousness. This natural illumination or pristine fundamental awareness underlying consciousness is what life, in the ultimate sense, is. The original nature of ours is pure consciousness – what we call pristine awareness—and all of Creation, manifestation or reality is also only That. The universe of matter is also nothing else other than what it is made of – this pure consciousness that is not a substance or anything phenomenal. The essence of the universe is insubstantial, empty pure awareness. The appearances that arise within your consciousness are also, in essence, that awareness. This fundamental awareness, in turn, is a function or characteristic of the absolute nature or fundamental essence of the universe.

The appearances within your mind are actually of the same substance as the mind itself — consciousness-stuff — and you can actually realize this underlying empty substrate nature of the mind when mental clinging becomes absolutely and perfectly zero so that random wandering thoughts die down. Thoughts still arise, but the volume of wandering random thoughts decreases. If you learn how to just observe thoughts with the always independent awareness, and without having your attention getting sucked into and then entangled with the thought stream, that is proper meditation practice. That is what you try to practice with vipassana. Eventually, by practicing awareness on this present moment only through the initial vehicle of watching thoughts without getting lost in them, the rushing stream of thoughts eventually stops and you find true peace by always being in the moment.

Hence, like a dispassionate hotel manager who is constantly watching the scenery of his hotel lobby, meditation trains you to attain a proficiency in maintaining clear ordinary awareness. The proficiency is that you don't become attached to the things appearing in your mind. They appear, and you act on them as when required, but you sever a long ingrained habitual attachment of clinging to the thought streams of consciousness (by getting entangled with them) and losing your state of clear presence. You do not dwell on anything because all thoughts are gone forever. You are always mindful of the present moment. There is nothing to control because thoughts and feelings leave anyway. Hence, in not dwelling you become more vibrant and alive. Nothing actually changes from meditation practice except that a tendency for sticky mental holding departs, and your mind becomes more open, empty and free. Your mental realm becomes more vivid, clear and seemingly larger. You learn how to be *in this moment only, which is the only moment that exists*. These are the benefits of practice.

You can always, of course, hold a thought in your mind when you want to, such as holding an image of your mother if you want to think of her picture in your mind. This is called concentration, or cultivating dhyana. The act of concentration, or holding the mind on one point/topic, is exercising a function of the mind and you never try to destroy the mind's functioning capabilities. You just try to destroy the tendency of getting blindly sucked into wandering thought streams and mental states through clinging attachments, but that doesn't mean to give up the functioning capabilities of the mind such as being able to abide in some topic when you need to concentrate. You are basically, with meditation practice, learning how to properly use this functional equipment called consciousness, or mind, and in this case you fix your concentration on an object with the purpose of keeping away diverse thoughts so you can gain a stability of quiet. You've grown up with a mind, but no one has ever bothered to teach you how to properly use its functions, and now you are starting to learn how to fully, effectively, skillfully and properly use this thing called consciousness that you have. This is what you learn through meditation practice. You can start clearing out some cobwebs so that you use the mind properly.

Therefore, you always let thoughts arise, you always let the mind give birth to thoughts, but you should rest in the transcending awareness that knows the thoughts rather than get tied up, fused, merged and enmeshed with the thoughts themselves. In that way, by staying detached as the witness, you will never lose your independent bearing.

As previously explained, to "be detached" doesn't mean you won't ever get angry, sad, elated or delighted in response to situations. It doesn't mean you won't ever yell at people or feel sorry or regret. It doesn't mean emotions disappear or should be suppressed. All the natural emotions that arise will and should arise, for that's natural. Bad emotional reactions might not arise if those habits become purified, but the purification of emotions is a different issue entirely. This is an issue of not mentally clinging to the contents of consciousness or trying to suppress them, which you must not do. That clinging does not add anything positive to the situation, but actually produces suffering.

Sometimes it's the feelings generated by the body that you become attached to during meditation such as internal energies and the pressures and sensations involved with them. You get focused on them, and then start playing with them and push them here or there, forgetting the fact that you should just know they are there and leave them alone. That's watching them instead of following them or getting entangled with them. We especially feel the borders of the physical body all the time, and tend to feel the energies inside the skull when we are thinking. Because we feel those energies when thinking, and because they move with our thoughts, we start

to identify with the body as our self. You will eventually stop feeling these kinds of inner tensions as your chi channels all open, but the initial enemy is the habit of “dropping into the body” and clinging to its various states of transformation, playing with them and taking them as your self.

Usually the body is feeding your mind with so much sensory input, such as physical sensations, that this input simply monopolizes consciousness. With so much of this input always there, you tend to lose your bearings and mistakenly take the body as your self. You overly identify with the body and take it as “you.” The body becomes the “I” and the “I” is then only the size of the body. You become blinded to the fact that your true self is awareness which is actually non-local, everywhere, formless and boundless. Awareness is actually possible for everywhere and everything, but that capability has become screened by the habit of attaching to the body and clinging to its small related consciousness as the self.

Everything you see, feel, smell, hear, and taste appear as experiences within your personal consciousness. They are appearances within consciousness, or consciousness appearances. Call them thoughts, call them appearances, call them consciousness or states – it’s all the same thing. They are the objects, thoughts, marks, signs, appearances or phenomena of consciousness. They are consciousness-stuff.

Now to know consciousness, you must already be beyond it. Since the world you see is just your consciousness – which means it is mind-only – the real you must be transcending the world and your limited mind. Since your consciousness can encompass the whole world, so the real you must also transcend this world. This is what the sages tell us, but it is something we must prove through the results of meditation practice rather than just accept because of the logic or because of blind faith.

For us, however, the conventional world is here right in front of us. How do we handle the daily challenges of the mind and body? You basically maintain detachment from thoughts and sensations and just let them come and go, and then because of that non-clinging, they will eventually die down. Your random wandering thoughts that busy your mind will go away and your body sensations will decline as the chi in your body changes, *if you let this all happen*. You can put an instant stop to this process of purification if you simply start attaching to thoughts again. Attachment, or mental clinging, is the enemy.

When you start to let go of thoughts, at first internal body sensations may increase as various energies start to arise within your body and try to open your energy channels. After they open, the sensations will die down again and the body, which will now be in better shape since its internal energy channels will have opened, won’t be as much of a distracting obstacle to your mental objective of becoming clear and peaceful. So don’t thwart the process because you think those internal energy sensations are a

disturbance. You need those processes to continue to open your chi channels, and transform your physical body, so that it no longer represents an obstacle or burden on the path.

When you meditate, the chi of your body will start to transform as your channels open and your consciousness purifies (empties out). In short, your chi will purify as your mind becomes quieter. Your internal chi flow, which is linked to your consciousness, will eventually stop being jumpy and irregular. Meditation will help you achieve a smoother circulation of chi that leads to deep relaxation, physical softness and health, mental calmness and quiet. As mentioned, due to meditation your chi channels will start to open because when you stop holding on to thoughts, the chi that runs through your energy channels can then start to reassert its natural circulation, and the lack of circulatory diversion due to thoughts will allow many shunted channels to finally open.

This explains part of the process and why it happens, although the full explanation of the process is much more complicated. Actually, all you need to know is that when you let go of thoughts, your mind will calm. When your mind calms, or quiets, the real chi of your body will arise. That rising chi will then open up your internal energy channels. When your channels open, your chi flow will then become smoother. As your chi flow becomes smoother, your mind will become more peaceful, empty or even and you will find mental peace. Why this all happens because you start to let go of thoughts is something science may one day discover, but for now you only need to know the result and try to attain it through meditation practice.

It takes a certain devotion to practice effort to get good at meditation and start achieving these results, but the better that you learn how to just watch your mind with detachment, the quicker you can learn how to relax and reach a new level of clarity and mental freedom that is 100% perfectly natural, effortless and uncontrived. Why does it become effortless and natural? Because your chi channels eventually open so your chi flow becomes more natural and harmonious. The scattered mind of wandering thoughts will also die down through meditation practice so in time you will also attain a peaceful empty mind that is free of stress, anxieties and worries. All you need to do is simply start watching your mental processes – consciousness or thoughts – without becoming entangled with them. View them as if you are a detached, third person observer. That is the meditation practice of watching your mind, or Meditation 101.

When people ask how they should meditate, that's the basic practice you need to teach them. People think meditation is some mysterious process, but you can teach anybody how to meditate in just one or two minutes by telling them how to watch thoughts without holding onto them. You're just watching your thoughts instead of playing with them, getting caught up with them, or deliberately using them to create something or

arrive at a decision.

All those things are the activities, functions or capabilities of the mind, but during meditation practice you just watch your thoughts and remain in the clear awareness that lets you know them. You just know them or witness them without holding. Period. In time, meditation brings internal peace if you learn how to do this correctly. Meditation doesn't cost any money, and it doesn't take a lot of time to learn. It just takes the time of practicing inner witnessing once you've gotten the instructions. However, few people want to practice meditation. That's the problem! They want the results, but they want them instantly and so they don't want to practice. The problem is, meditation involves breaking a habit, and that takes time and the effort of practice. Meditation can bring countless benefits to your life, but like anything else beneficial that you want in life, the hurdle is to make its practice into a daily habit so you can eventually gain those results.

THE BENEFITS OF MEDITATION

Because of your habit of mentally clinging to thoughts and getting overly entangled with them, it's very hard to reach a mental state of peace and tranquility where your thought flow has diminished. This tendency to cling has developed over time and is nothing more than the wrong use of the mind. The true origins of the problem, it is said, come from the accumulated bad habits of countless past lives. Dissolving this long term habit brings peace, physical comfort and other countless benefits, but you cannot reach a state of internal peace, quiet, tranquility, calmness, emptiness, halting, cessation, or quiescence until you actually start letting go of thoughts.

Meditation allows you to break the habit of mentally clinging because you observe your thoughts without attaching to them, and you thereby always just live in the genuine present moment. A thought is there – it's gone. Another thought is there – it's gone. If you never cling to a single thought in this flow, or the flow itself, you are always in the present moment living fully and freely. You are always in the state of present mind rather than getting lost in thought. And because you know the thoughts that appear and depart, you are always in a state of clarity. This is pure meditation practice, and also the right way to live. That's why we practice meditation, and why it is a spiritual practice, too.

The added benefit of doing this (watching without attachments) is that wandering thoughts which busy the mind eventually stop appearing over time, and your mind becomes continually clear and stable without random clutter. Your true mind is always clear but you don't know this yet because the volume of wandering thoughts screens this realization, and you get confused by that volume or by the type of thoughts that arise. You always

are entangled with following thoughts, so you never become able to recognize the true clarity nature of your mind even though it is this underlying pure clarity of the mind that always lets you know thoughts in the first place. That clarity never disappears, but we say it becomes “dimmed,” polluted or obscured by thought attachments, which is just a colloquial way of speaking.

Once you start learning how to let go of your thoughts that arise in your mind (and thoughts includes emotions, passions and desires, etc.), then your consciousness will start to pacify and become calm. We say it empties out, which just means it calms down because the volume of wandering thoughts decreases. When your consciousness quiets down because the volume of these thoughts dies down, your chi will start to arise within your body. It’s just a natural process that always happens, and we need not know why. We only need to know that it always happens and recognize when it does because that event proves our progress.

When your chi arises, it will start clearing out your chi channels, and this often produces various physical phenomena and sensations that I have summarized in many other books. Because of this chi and channel purification, your mind will in turn get clearer. This is because your consciousness is connected with your chi flow, and that chi flow is now more smooth and clear. Accordingly, your consciousness will become more equanimous, or quieter, since (for the non-enlightened or ordinary person) your mental state is always connected with the state of your chi. This process of progressive purification, of both your chi and mind, will always improve in gradual stages as you make further progress with your meditation practice.

The more you let go, the more you will feel the energy arise in your body and start to open up your inner chi channels, and the more progress you will make. Everyone gets startled when they first start feeling this energy, which is the real chi of your body. Specifically, it is the yang chi of your body which the Hindus call *prana* or *kundalini* energy. Other religions call it by different names, but these are the most well-known terms. The arousal of this inner energy, which is your life force, is a natural process that will only commence when you stop holding on to thoughts and reach a state of mental quiet. Mental busyness and mental clinging interferes with the body’s natural chi flows and prevents the real energies of health and transformation from arising.

This chi of yours which arises due to meditation is your *true life force*. This is the real spiritual force of transformation which is inside all sentient beings. When you let the body’s natural chi flow start to reassert itself once again due to the practice of non-clinging, that natural chi flow will not only end up quieting your mind, but open up your chi channels and transform your physical body. That’s why you get healthier and begin to feel states of

mental and physical bliss. It all comes from this life force flowing through your chi channel circulations.

Confucius explained that if you shine awareness on your mind, your thoughts will eventually stop. Hence his method of spiritual practice, or meditation, is sometimes called introspection practice (since you are always inspecting or watching the mind) and is just like Buddhist mindfulness practice or cessation-witnessing practice. Confucius taught that you should always remain mindful of your thoughts, meaning that you should always keep awareness on your thinking process. By watching your thinking process as a third person observer who can dispassionately evaluate it, you will know what is good or bad to do, and wandering thoughts will calm down.

Because of that calming, stillness or quiet, Confucius also said that you will eventually experience physical bliss and mental tranquility, and your wisdom and clear knowing will eventually arise if you continue to cultivate and maintain these states. This is the same sequence of meditation progress as described by everyone else and occurs because your chi starts to arise.

Basically, if you just purify mental afflictions and negative tendencies of the mind, the resultant purity you achieve by watching your mind and behavior will eventually produce profound meditation experiences. First thoughts will calm down. After they sufficiently calm down, you will eventually be able to realize the transcending clear awareness that is always there behind your mind – which is not a thought itself – that knows thoughts. If one can “stop at” or center oneself in that clear purity, and abide in that clear purity of awareness without falling into thoughts, then after a while thoughts will calm down and you can reach a very high meditation state called “*samadhi*.”

When you try to remain as the pure witnessing which stands behind the mind, allowing you to know thoughts/consciousness, you will eventually attain calmness and detachment. If you “abide” as the transcending awareness rather than get entangled in the thought streams of consciousness, you will eventually become totally free of thoughts and will then never be tempted by them. In other words, you will become able to see everything that appears in your mind but never fall into those thoughts, and thus you will always remain independent, calm, serene, peaceful and content. This is how one finds the truest, highest, purest peace and contentment promised by meditation.

Confucius, of course, is not the only one who taught people how to meditate by watching their mind. Watching your thoughts is a standard practice in Buddhism called mindfulness practice, and the Tientai school specializes in emphasizing cessation-observation practice, which is similar to this technique. The “cessation” means that thoughts will stop simply from watching them (without getting involved with them). “Observation”

refers to the act of witnessing your mind/thoughts, which is maintaining an independent awareness of them without getting sucked in. The calming or quieting of thoughts that results from mindfully watching consciousness is due to the basic principles we have just gone over.

SEVERAL WESTERN APPROACHES

This basic practice of watching your thoughts was also something that many Jesuits would practice as part of their religious efforts, and it is the basis of much of Eastern Orthodox Christian spiritual practice as well. All the world's various religions want to teach people how to calm their minds and reduce their errant behaviors, so they typically teach this type of cessation-observation practice in one form or another. You simply watch, witness or observe your thoughts and then they eventually die down, or cease. When the mind becomes quiet then your chi energies will arise, and then your spiritual progress is on its way! This type of meditation practice is available everywhere, but whether or not people use these practices is another issue entirely.

Religions also commonly offer other ways for people to cultivate peaceful minds, wherein there is a reduction in wandering thoughts, using various means such as reciting prayers when done in the right way. Yet, most people don't understand the proper principles of practice, or the fact that the final objective is that of mental calming, and thus they rarely achieve the benefits that are intended. Only the saints, who were cultivating all the time, seemed to secure the benefits but most of them were never instructed in these basic principles of practice. If many saints had these instructions available, they could have achieved the same results, and in far less time, even if they were lay practitioners like you and me.

Christian Eastern Orthodox teachings along these lines are especially instructive because they maintain that it is common for negative thought forms to assault the human mind, and if you enter into an interaction with them (for example, an inner dialogue such as "nothing will happen if I do this just once to try it"), they can take hold of you. When you give in to such temptations, this is called a *stage of consent* which leads to an addiction to certain types of troublesome thought forms. If you cannot free yourself from such urges, they can become a habit and then you can become the captive of the habit, repeating it over and over again. This is how addictions start, and how you become captive of certain types of wrong thinking that can control you. If you are not careful, as Confucius warned us to be with mindfulness, a thought form can become a passion or obsession that is destructive to you and others.

This warning not only applies to such habits as drinking, gambling, watching internet pornography, smoking, overeating, drugs, shoplifting and

so forth, but to personality characteristics and errant misbehaviors such as anger, envy, pride, laziness and so on. Meditation is one of the absolute best ways, but not the only way, to therefore help decrease these bad behaviors because we are always policing our mind through watchfulness, and can therefore cut some of these errors off before they go too far.

The Eastern Orthodox Church also teaches us how to cut off *logismos* (negative thought forms) once they've taken hold of an individual, and calls this the *spiritual practice of purification*. In other spiritual schools or traditions, it is also explained that you are purifying your consciousness, thoughts, or mind. Hence, everywhere we find teachings for the common objective of mental pacification/purification so that we can be free of bothersome thoughts, wandering thoughts, the busy mind, monkey mentation or however you wish to word it. You want to cut off bothersome or troublesome thoughts to be able to find peace, and so as Confucius explained, you start by practicing internal witnessing which will eventually loosen their hold on you.

In the Eastern Orthodox Church, spiritual elders explain that you should always protect yourself from negative thought forms, or *logismos*, that want to enter your mind and take root, just as Confucius explained. You watch your mind, or monitor your mind, so that they don't take root. This, then, is not just meditation but a type of spiritual practice. You must police your mind with awareness to prevent this danger, and those instructions overlap with the methodology of Confucian meditation practice as well as the mindfulness and cessation-observation methods espoused within Buddhism for cutting off negative thoughts, desires and emotions. Once again, people are basically employing the same practices the world over with tiny differences here and there.

These Western methods for mental purification, or *catharsis*, therefore mirror those used in the East, and they start with the process of awareness. The basic method of practice is to watch your mind and ignore a *logismos* that might arise, such as a desire to do something foolish or errant, by treating it with indifference. You simply disregard it when it enters the mind, and then it will quickly depart because that's what happens with all thoughts that you ignore. Colloquially speaking, we say you "pay it no mind" or "pay it no special attention" and thus it departs. That's basically what you do during witnessing meditation by refusing to become attached; by just watching, in time the stream of thoughts within the mind transforms to leave an empty scenario that's peaceful and pure.

Another method is to use logic or wisdom analysis to defeat an arising *logismos*. With this technique you apply reasoning to the thought form so that you can dissociate from its attractive pull. Buddhism suggests this method, too, such as by remembering the consequences that will happen if you give in to what seems an attractive idea. You look at the *logismos*,

consider it with wisdom, and in that way you can free yourself of its influence so that it departs.

You can use other methods to cut off bothersome thoughts, too, when these other methods don't work. You already know of one technique, which is to redirect or occupy the mind by reciting mantras. With witnessing meditation practice you simply watch them and observe them carefully without attaching to them, and in time even the most troublesome will depart. You don't have to act on a thought, but just know a thought is there because of your awareness, cognizance or attention. That's enough, and it will eventually leave unless you hold on to it or start following it.

Another method of *catharsis* is to switch the focus of your attention to something more interesting, challenging, compelling, or distracting when a thought bothers you. You try to busy your mind with something else other than that thought. You counter the attraction of the thought by shifting the focus of attention to something different, substituting it as the new object of attention. That new focus might be something that requires one-pointed absorption such as prayer, or even physical work, or sport. It doesn't matter what you shift the focus of attention to as long as you move your mind's attention from being centered on the bothersome thought. In essence, you cut off the process of clinging to that thought by shifting the focus of attention to something different.

Some Western psychologists have even come up with a psychological model of behavioral change, called the "transtheoretical model of behavior change," which can also help us understand how to detach from addictive thoughts and habits via a "scientific process." You can find it in the popular book, *Changing for Good*.

According to this model, if you finally want to change behavior that comes from errant thought habits that continually arise, that desire initiates a stage called "Contemplation" where you finally recognize the problematic nature of your behavior, as well as its pros and cons. Prior to this you don't even know there is a need for change, so the recognition of the need for change requires awareness. Everything starts with awareness, and without cultivating awareness it is impossible to change your mind and behavior. You must always be cultivating awareness in some form or another.

After acknowledging your problem and the desire to change, next the process of "Preparation" can begin where you start to take small steps toward transforming your behavior. The following stage, called "Action," is where you start working on actually transforming your behavior in a substantial way, and change starts to be noticed. You must then work on "Maintenance" to prevent relapse, and in the stage of "Termination" the problem does not arise anymore. If you succeed in cutting off the errant thought habits that create improper behaviors, success means there is eventually zero temptation to indulge in the old thought habits. The

thoughts are gone, never arise, or present no attractiveness, and that is the stage of Termination.

The whole idea of this process, as well as its policing and maintenance, revolves around the idea that *you need to become aware of your problem and monitor/watch your mind to effect change in your life*. In coming up with this procedural scheme the modern scientists didn't use the same terms employed by Confucius, Buddhism, or the Eastern Orthodox Church, but the entire solution they discovered revolves around awareness and mindfulness practice once again. Basically, even Western science has discovered that focused awareness inhibits automatic thoughts through subcortical circuits underlying attention, and hence mindfulness practice helps you change your behavior.

Whether we are talking about Eastern or Western methods, awareness, which comes from watching your mind and its contents, is the key to changing your behavior and transforming your life. The process of behavioral change requires the mindful introspection, policing or watching of your mind. Whether you talk of Buddhist cessation-witnessing practice, Eastern Orthodox practice for freeing yourself from *logismos*, Confucian introspection or mindfulness practice, Christian contemplation practice, or any other technique, they all involve monitoring your thoughts with what you and I are now calling meditative awareness. As the extremely influential Neoplatonist Plotinus said, the core practice is that you "Withdraw into yourself and look."

Sages have even taught us that this very basic practice of always introspectively watching our minds can actually help us change our karmic fortune. For instance, this teaching is found in the famous Chinese story of Liao Fan which has spawned dozens of copycat versions throughout the centuries because of its uplifting message. Liao Fan was a Chinese man who lamented his poor fortune in life, but admitted that part of his problem was due to the fact that he had a quick temper, talked too much, stayed out too late, and drank too heavily. However, by using mantra practice to calm his mind in conjunction with mental mindfulness practice of the sort just mentioned, he was able to change his fortune for the better.

Meditation practice can definitely produce the ability to change our lives and fortunes, but we normally do not notice this since we do not know what would have happened had our thoughts and behaviors not changed. We usually have no way to directly connect the results of our meditation practice to our karma, life or fortune (however you want to word it), but meditation does have a positive effect in these arenas if it helps us change our behavior. It is just that this effect is hard to measure since we have no comparison stick. However, just as we know that "character is destiny," we can definitely know that meditation and other cultivation efforts that allow us to become healthier, police our thoughts, and abide in peaceful mental

states will have a positive effect on our life. Those results would not happen otherwise and those benefits would work their way into our behavior thus certainly affecting the results we reap.

The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin also relates how this great American, perhaps the greatest of Americans, would watch his thoughts and behavior every day in order to try to cut off behavioral errors and become a better human being. Franklin's set of incredible life achievements are partially due to his mindfulness approach to self-perfection which was based on these very same principles of meditation.

As a businessman, Franklin set up the first media conglomerate of printing and newspaper franchises across the United States; as a scientist he discovered electricity, charted the Gulf stream and conceived of Daylight savings time; as an inventor he developed bifocals and the Franklin stove; as an author he wrote the bestselling *Poor Richard's Almanac* which is still selling today; as a citizen he participated in many acts of merit such as founding the first American public library, the first fire department, and the first nonsectarian university; as a civil servant serving as Postmaster General, he revolutionized the delivery of US mail; as a diplomat he secured the American treaty with France which helped secure the success of the American Revolutionary War; and as a politician he became the only Founding Father to sign all four major documents of America's founding (the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, the alliance with France and the peace treaty with Britain). All these accomplishments, and more, were due in part to his famous mindfulness or awareness practice of watching his thoughts and behavior that he wrote about in his autobiography. He used a special version of mindfulness practice to transform his behavior from bad to good, just as Confucius had recommended, and reaped countless rewards in the process. He left us this motivational story in his autobiography, and encouraged us to duplicate his technique.

The mindfulness practice he employed of monitoring his mind and behavior – as Confucius and Liao Fan and others have all recommended – can help you become a great man or woman in life because the technique is the basis of all self-improvement, self-perfection, self-actualization, and self-achievement techniques. Benjamin Franklin's example clearly shows that a life of great accomplishment results from the incorporation of mindfulness (mental watching or awareness) practice into your daily habits. It is something you need to schedule into your life every day, like bathing, and then slowly make into a constant habitual behavior as your mind becomes progressively more pure. You simply constantly watch your mind (known as “shining attention” on your mind) and know clearly what you are doing rather than become lost in thought and lose yourself. Then you can correct yourself.

The Greek sage Plotinus said this about self-improvement: “Withdraw into yourself and look. If you do not find yourself beautiful yet, do what the creator of a statue does to make it beautiful: he cuts away here, he smoothens there, ... until a lovely face grows in his work. So you should also cut away all that is excessive, straighten all that is crooked, labor to make oneself beautiful and never cease chiseling your statue until there shines out from you the godlike splendor of virtue, until you see the perfect goodness surely established.” This is no different than the inner witnessing meditation methods of Confucius, Franklin or Liao Fan.

As a third person observer who always watches what he is doing, you will prevent great errors if you take up this habit. Franklin did this while going about his daily activities, but in meditation practice you first learn how to do this by sitting down in a cross-legged posture to watch your mind, and later you learn how to bring that clear witnessing awareness into the regular world and integrate it with your daily activities.

THE NECESSITY OF PRACTICAL WISDOM AND KNOWING WHEN TO STOP

Because most people are familiar with the religions of the East, they usually correctly assume that the ultimate or highest possible goal of meditation practice is to become spiritually enlightened, which is to become a Buddha, sage, *jnani*, master, or self-realized one. However, they have strange notions as to what to expect as the characteristics of a Buddha, or enlightened one. They always imagine a person along the lines of a marbled Greek statue of perfect form, without flaws, who does not fart or shit, enjoy a dirty joke, forget names, eat meat, smoke cigarettes, drink alcohol, get angry, enjoy sex or need money to survive.

People usually hold strange, idealistic religious notions of what it means to be awakened, as if the laws of physics and the necessities of human living suddenly ceased functioning for such people. As my teacher explained, these are mistaken notions held by people of little wisdom and experience. The ignorant commonly hold naïve and impractical notions that do not reflect the real nature of things in many areas of life. If you pursue the path of meditation, you must learn to ground your thinking in solid realities. You don't want to champion fantastic flights of the imagination, but simply need to learn how to quiet your mind and function more effectively in the everyday world that will always exist around you. In mastering meditation you can indeed develop more mental powers, but in effect you are learning how to purify and then better use that consciousness we call your mind.

To be clear, an enlightened individual is just like you or me in everyday behavior, but is usually more wise and compassionate in what they do and how they respond. Most of all, they have penetrated through to the root

source of body and mind, and know that he/she is actually the original nature rather than the false self veneer of the personality or body. They may have more mental capabilities than you or I because of that, but this is no reason to expect miraculous interventions from their presence. How would you ever know anyway? All you can say is that their words, thoughts and deeds then flow out of that unity (or “recognition”) that they are the original Self of us all, and their actions and teachings try to help us also attain enlightenment and alleviate us of our sufferings.

An enlightened individual can be poor or rich. He or she can be a king or queen, general, politician, merchant, artist, athlete, banker, scholar, plumber, policeman, singer or even a prostitute. Anything is possible because no occupation conflicts with reality; occupations just have different consequences or outcomes, that’s all. My teacher often said that a Buddha is most definitely like a prostitute because he or she has to hear things they don’t want to hear, say things they don’t want to say, and do things they don’t want to do. They are like a medical doctor who takes on all the problems of others, so he or she gets sick all the time while in the activity of exercising boundless wisdom and compassion to help others. Just because someone attains enlightenment doesn’t mean they don’t get sick or don’t have feelings because “they are empty.”

Those individuals with immature ideas who expect the spiritually accomplished to behaviorally conform to their own limited notions cannot possibly understand all of this, or what the enlightened want to accomplish in the world, or the techniques they use to do so. What an enlightened person is, and the way they act, will almost certainly go against the expectations of the crowd. They do what they must to get things done even when that behavior goes against the expectations of the overly religious.

My teacher often explained that a Buddha should actually be compared to a unified combination of a hero, saint, mafioso and robber. Yes, the characteristics of a real enlightened individual in the world can be compared to a mafia don and thief because of what they must sometimes do to help cut off evil and encourage the good to prosper!

Selfless in their mind they are, but that does not mean that their actions on the surface might not seem absent of self-interest, calculation or contradictions. They are what they are and do what they must do as required by the situation, and have a compassionate vision they wish to accomplish which they achieve through endless varieties of skillful means. They have boundless wisdom and compassion in their mind, and always act with virtue as their intent because they know that there are karmic consequences to all actions. Nevertheless, with great vision they act as they must to do whatever needs to be accomplished for the greater good. At times, that may even mean that hurt and harm comes to some individuals, such as when the government raises taxes, for there is rarely such a thing as

an action that does not harm someone or something in some way. Every action has consequences, and there is no such thing in worldly affairs as purely good behavior. Even the sun has sunspots, so it is almost impossible to find a perfectly pure action, circumstance or situation that does not hurt someone.

The key is that they skillfully and compassionately play the part of the role they assume, and know all of their own thoughts and intentions clearly so as to act on those which are best for the situation. If a Buddha becomes a king, his responsibilities to his country might result in a declaration of war, or all sorts of other things that people would not expect because they are ruled by religious notions rather than a correct appraisal of reality. In fact, if most people were to peek behind the screens as to what goes on at the very top of orthodox religious structures, they would be shocked at the inordinate concerns over politics, power and money flows they would discover. It's never as pure as people imagine it to be.

Even if you do not achieve the ultimate goal of spiritual enlightenment from the mindfulness meditation practice of watching your thoughts — which you can also call the practice of awareness, witnessing or presence — you can certainly use it to positively change your behavior and become a better human being. This is what everyone wants to do, isn't it?

As Aristotle might argue, you can use this type of practice to become more virtuous. As Benjamin Franklin said when he wrote about this practice, he had the satisfaction of seeing small errors in his behavior disappear, big ones reduced, and seeing virtuous ways become second nature from this technique. He said that he was a happier and better man than he otherwise would have been for having used it to improve his life.

This type of inner watching is the basis of Meditation 101, which is to sit quietly and watch your thoughts during meditation practice, and then to eventually bring the practice of introspection or mindfulness in daily life. This is something we need to teach to our children and society as a whole to prevent large mistakes in individual behavior all the way up to errors in grand policy and grand strategy. Yes, we must teach this because when we are planning for posterity, we must remember that virtue is not hereditary. By practicing introspection and awareness, we help avoid the tragedy of self-deception that in aggregate can topple nations. A society that is centered on the idea of self-improvement, advancement and avoiding errors is a society that will blossom within a generation, but it needs the individuals within it to know how to inspect their minds and fathom the results of their actions and behavior.

The way to generate merit for the meditation path is the following. If you see that some good actions should be performed that are not being done, then do them. Always do what is undone that you know should be done, and always support the ongoing efforts of virtuous deeds that are

currently being carried out. Rather than thwart them or ignore them, give them aid rather than throw up obstructions or indifference. Most people are passive rather than vigorous in the support of goodness and virtue, but this is what you should be if you want goodness and virtue to grow within society.

On the other hand, if you see evil or error being done by yourself or by those under your influence, you must immediately try to cut it off. If you see it being done by an overarching power over which you have some authority, act to cut it off before it becomes a problem too big to handle. The problem of going too far, of extending oneself past what is reasonable, is the problem of greediness, arrogance, over-extension, inappropriateness or hubris that commonly topples both individuals and nations. To prevent the tendency of going too far we must certainly practice mental introspection. It is like learning meditation to cut off thoughts. We must learn to watch our thoughts to know when to stop and then stop afflictive activities from continuing and growing stronger.

Our typical failing is that we never try to prevent evil or error from arising in the first place. We must try to arrange circumstances so that errant ways are never born, for the best solution is always prevention rather than cure. That is why governments create systems of checks and balances. One must institute safeguards to prevent extremes, checks and balances to prevent flights of fancy, and we must always fight for what is right by immediately opposing injustice before it takes hold, grows and becomes too strong. Otherwise, having done nothing to object to what is wrong, you will live in shame for not having opposed the errant that will eventually grow to become a situation usurping all.

To oppose evil, one must act with wisdom and adjust oneself to the time and circumstances. One must discover what is wrong, and correct or change it. If change is possible, you must act in the face of potential failure while ignoring the possibility of failure. This is the necessary discipline of right living. You must never think the opposing force is too big (“so why bother?”), but act to cut something off as soon as you see what is errant, and act to curb what you can after it has already arisen. If you do not, the circumstances in which you live will never be conducive to justice and good living. Just as evil starts small before it grows larger, opposition that is truly just starts small and collects adherents as it grows, and when righteous it often blazes. The failure to act to cut off evil or errors you see being done around you actually means acceptance and complicity.

The world has seen so much evil because good men failed to act. Good men that were clean themselves wished to remain clean, and therefore stayed away from the actions and efforts necessary to stop the advancement of the wrongs they saw growing. They did not generate the resolve and energy to do what was right, which was to correct the wrong and prevent

evil from growing. It is a general principle that “evil prevails when good men fail to act,” and this is because virtuous men, desiring to maintain their personal purity and peace, stay removed and failed to forgo their selfishness for the common good. They wished to be left alone, and evil thereby grew to encompass all because of inaction. As Plato said, “The punishment which the wise suffer who refuse to take part in the government, is to live under the government of worse men.” To be hopeful in bad times, you must take a forward step to oppose what is wrong.

It is a human responsibility to sacrifice one’s peace, purity and complacency to prevent evil from gaining sway in societies, otherwise evil will indeed grow and sacrifice you after its ascendancy. When good men fail to prevent evil from arising in the first place, especially within government systems, it is usually not because they were blind to the danger, but because they did not raise their voices in unison to object to it during its infancy. They did not immediately nip it in the bud and stop it from growing further, and that complacency allowed evil powers to expand until they detrimentally dominated the lives of men.

Most people are good but passive, meaning they are not willing to put in the effort to be what they think is a hero. However, silent heroes must band together to prevent the escalation of evil in society, for those with the strength and desire to move things usually do so because of greed or power seeking motivations that go against the common good. The failure to oppose evil is actually due to selfishness, namely the idea that “I don’t want to be bothered to exercise my civic duty. Please give this problem to someone else to handle.” In the short and long run, that doesn’t work. Many people actually have the potential to be really important heroes for their family, neighborhood, community and nation just by standing up and saying, “This is wrong” and doing something about it. If they don’t start it or join the movement of correction, evil continues to gain sway and proliferates, imperiling all. This is why societies form laws in the first place, so it is our responsibility to do something about it when we notice the errant such as the start of the slippery path that chips away at freedom.

In this light, within our modern age of democratic republics it is our duty and obligation to keep bad government from growing and gaining control. We must employ independent thinking away from groupthink to consider what is right, and then remain vigilant to prevent actions from overreaching and going too far. Those actions, if left unchecked, tend to accumulate and in time topple the entire system. Governments always seek unnecessary control over their citizens, and are easily corrupted by moneyed interests who try to bend them to their will against the general welfare of the people. This type of corrupting influence usually gives rise to incredibly bad policies, and then those policies end up corrupting the entire system, sometimes bringing it to its end.

When a citizen sees this and raises his or her voice, this is an example of the Confucian principle of *knowing when to stop* to prevent things from going too far, and acting to stop them. It is the principle of cessation within cessation-observation practice so that a society is left with peace rather than disturbance. Do not make the mistake of thinking that meditation teaches you to stay apart and observe, but not to act. When you see something wrong That is the wrong meaning of meditative dispassion or detachment. One must act to cut off errant, mistaken, incorrect or evil ways once found. A clear mind, achieved by cultivating introspection, helps you see the errant. What is especially important is to cut off evil as soon as it is spotted, just as one tries to cut off a *logismos* before it takes hold. Remember, one does not do bad actions and sincerely tries to do what is good. This is the right way to live and as Confucianism, Christianity and Buddhism teach, it also naturally clarifies the mind as well.

Societies often fall by allowing the evil of hubris to grow supreme, and so to prevent error for the benefit of all, we must stress the ideals of self-improvement and introspection to correct our personal faults just as we must also police larger societal and political actions and strive to change them when they are found to be errant. We must work to prevent or restrain errors that might grow to affect us all in detrimental ways. The failure of good men to act within democracies, until it is too late, has been the general history of doomed societies and nations. A saying runs that virtuous men are very good, but in their goodness they lack the nerve to do great things. You now have a larger picture of this, which is how it connects with meditation practice.

Along the same lines of discussion, we could also make an argument that we should actively and energetically step up and assume the responsibility of doing good works in society and supporting virtuous actions that are not being sufficiently supported, such as founding or funding philanthropic efforts. Some of the greatest individuals have chosen to devote their lives to such noble efforts, and we all should applaud and emulate their behavior to the best of our abilities. They have chosen the path of performing evermore good, and their karmic returns will be tremendous. One should not just oppose evil things that have appeared in the world, or strive to prevent them from arising in the first place, but we should also support good things that we see being done, or help them arise in the first place when they are non-existent. This is so obvious, however, that I must emphasize the cutting off of errant ways because this ties in most clearly with meditation practice. If you weed a garden, what is left will grow unencumbered even without the fertilizer, and that is the lesson to remember.

People often wonder how the principles of meditation connect with the world at large, and this short discussion on opposing what is wrong

illustrates just one example that can even be expanded to the business or economic sphere as well. As Socrates hinted in his discussion of his inner *daimonion*, we should know what not to do, and thereby be deterred from doing wrong. The Confucian ideal is that in all your behavior you must always know what you are doing, and must know what is right or wrong so that you know how to properly act with an emphasis, once again, on cutting off errors. You must know your present actions, your motivation, and the consequences of those actions. *You must know when to stop*, and when to avoid going too far.

You must look at things realistically, and this clarity of consideration, or rational analysis, is something you should never abandon. As we'll later see, we can and should even apply a discriminating analysis to investigate the nature of our minds, too. You should never try to destroy the various capabilities of your mind by blunting them out, or try to get rid of reason, logic, and analysis. You should always use discriminating analysis to try to create better policies for yourself and the world, and use them to help awaken.

Everyone is responsible for their own behavior in life, and the aggregate of that behavior, in total, determines the fates of individuals, cultures, nations, states and societies. The striving to become a better person is good for us both individually and collectively. No one can be truly happy as an individual if they are surrounded by large-scale societal suffering, surrounded by other individuals in pain with whom they have a relationship. We all depend upon the entire community to live, and all beings are our brothers and sisters within Shakti so how can we feel at ease when our relatives are suffering? Enlightened individuals can feel the pain and suffering of humanity and thus choose to work for everyone's benefit.

By cultivating your own body, mind and behavior – by watching them with mindfulness—you can prevent great errors and can start cultivating a path of self-improvement. With your own improvement, you can then help your family attain peace and order. If a family cultivates in this way, then a family, as a unit, can learn to conduct itself properly. If all families cultivate in this way, then the state will eventually find itself in harmonious order. If a nation of states cultivates introspective analysis, and everyone is policing their behavior and considering what they are doing in aggregate, then the state can cultivate peace and prosperity, and avoid the large errors that might result in its downfall. However, without a firm stand on moral conduct and proper wholesome behavior, morality and virtue and society decline.

The peace and prosperity of a nation always starts with the wholesome actions of the individuals within it, and when an individual improves their actions and behaviors through mindfulness, the ripple effects can extend to the state and nation as a whole. Such was the example of Benjamin

Franklin, or of Liao Fan whose model life story still provides inspiration for many people today. Their stories show us how to become better people through the simple practical practice of watching our thoughts to improve our behavior and change our own lives. *When we each are better people, we all are better people. All being better people enables us to live in a society, state and then country that allows greater happiness.*

On the personal level, you simply cannot change your behavior *unless you first see it* because of mindful awareness. In life, for life, you must therefore learn how to watch your mind. You must learn how to watch your thoughts and become ever mindful of this practice. Hence, this particular idea of watching your thoughts is the basis of not just changing your behavior for the better, but of changing your life for the better in total. It allows you to eliminate bad habits and make better decisions in life with far better consequences than simply acting without knowing your mind. It allows you to purify consciousness. That is what changes your karma, or fortune, for the better. Such grand objectives, such powerful results can all start to occur through the simple vehicle of daily meditation practice.

Watching your thoughts, without attaching to them, is taught as a way to attain a state of internal peace and mental calming, but now you know that this practice can offer so much more. Nevertheless, the main task for meditation is how to quiet the mind. All of us experience too many wild, crazy, random and troubling thoughts that we want to get rid of, and that's why we are seeking peace. Because of these disturbances, our minds cannot rest. They cannot relax and we cannot find tranquility or freedom from stress and anxieties.

All day long in this busy world we are buffeted by new cares and concerns, stresses, worries and anxieties. Meditation, rather than a drug prescribed by a doctor or psychiatrist, offers a solution. The solution is not instant, but it is a definite solution with far better results than a pill. If you learn to meditate, in time your thoughts will calm down and eventually, you will become able to carry that state of inner peace into the everyday world always and everywhere. It is through meditation that you can untie both psychological and physical knots, including some of the physical knots supporting psychological aberrations. The internal peace you cultivate through meditation will not be something you just experience during meditation practice, but because meditation has transformed the currents of your body and mind, peace and contentment will become a permanent feature of your personality that allows you to laugh more, relax more, and enjoy more of life.

When you start to reach that mental state of peace, quiet or calm produced by meditation, the next higher stage of progress is to try to fathom who is actually experiencing this mental state. You do not have to do this at first, but this is an avenue of exploration that many choose to

take. This is the pathway of inquiry or discriminative wisdom analysis that inspects the mind in order to lead to much higher spiritual attainments. With a quiet and clear mind, you can start to analyze your consciousness. You can inspect the workings of consciousness and the actual substance of consciousness itself which I like to call “consciousness-stuff” or “mind-stuff.” With a clear mind along with logic and reasoning, you can eventually probe the very nature of the substance of consciousness, and that is an extremely profound level of meditation practice. However, you need pure concentration, wherein the mind is not cluttered with thoughts or sunk in oblivion, to be able to recognize the pure mind.

This all starts with the simple meditation practice of mental watching or inner witnessing. From mental watching you can develop a calm mind, which means you reach a state of cessation or mental quiet. Because of mental watching, you can also start to become a better person, and at its ultimate, you can even turn this ethical, moral, virtuous practice into a practice of spiritual development.

My recommendation is that every day you should do mantra practice, and every day you should practice sitting meditation to watch your thoughts like a third person observer would, which is the standard description of “meditation” you usually find everywhere. You just watch your thoughts come and go without attaching to them. There are several other meditation techniques you can also work into a daily practice schedule, but the basic technique of nearly all meditation practices is reaching a quiet mind by dispassionately observing your mental state without attachment. This is a state of quiet emptiness or cessation.

As you sit in meditation and your mind slowly quiets, miscellaneous wandering thoughts will slowly start to leave just as dirty water eventually drains out of a bathtub. Then you can take that clean mental state into the world wherever you go, and with everyday mindfulness you can learn to maintain it and use it to transform your behavior for the better.

Confucius therefore recommended this technique, Saint Augustine and the Jesuits recommended it, Benjamin Franklin and Liao Fan used it, and the practitioners of many other religions have also heavily relied on this technique as a basic cultivation practice. So many people have used this basic technique of effortless mental witnessing because the cultivation practices employed in the world are truly shared, non-denominational practices. This basic inner-witnessing method not only calms your mind of random thoughts but helps you monitor and police your behavior in order that you can transform your behavior to become better. If people recommended and relied upon this meditation method in olden days, when life was simpler and much slower, imagine how much more so we need to be applying to our lives today!

In short, the two principles of cessation and observation – that your

mind will quiet (cessation) when you watch it with dispassion (observation) — are inherent in all meditation techniques, and this becomes particularly obvious in this mindfulness practice of mental observation. Once again, *the principles of cessation and observation are inherent in all meditation techniques*. If you sit in meditation practice and just watch your thoughts like a detached independent observer, your random wandering thoughts will definitely eventually calm down, and you will start to experience mental quiet. You can thereby establish a basis for more advanced meditation practices after you learn what “quiet” means in terms of some experience of mental emptiness, but all these practices depend on the principle that your wandering thoughts will start subsiding when you practice witnessing them without involvement. You just know them without attachment.

If you can spend forty-five or fifty minutes per day meditating, that’s fantastic. If you cannot do it all at once, then try putting in that much time by breaking up your sitting throughout the day, perhaps right before bedtime, or right when you wake up.

Some people find it’s best to meditate at night, and some in the morning. You have to determine what’s best for you, but it’s a general rule not to meditate on a full stomach or you are likely to stop watching your mind and just fall asleep. Some people, however, meditate quite well on a full stomach, so you have to adjust your practice time to your capabilities, opportunities and potential.

If you space out constantly in your meditation, lingering in drowsiness and muddiness or dreaminess, this is also incorrect. Your mind should get clear rather than busier or confused. If you always become sleepy during meditation practice, you should also consider taking a nap before you meditate otherwise you won’t be able to practice correctly but will always be falling asleep. You’re the one who has to arrange mundane scheduling factors such as this.

The more you meditate, the easier it will eventually become to relax and enter into a calm mental zone after awhile. Initially, it’s not that easy to experience these fruits of practice, but just as with all other things, with practice these results start to come naturally, and therefore you will improve with time and start to experience all the benefits people talk about that are attributed to meditation.

Meditation is easy to do because you just sit there and watch your thoughts, and this really doesn’t require any effort at all. However, to claim the benefits you must practice this regularly until your mental realm starts to empty out and you begin to integrate this clarity with your daily life. Other than mantra practice, which you can do any time or any place, the simplicity of witnessing practice, or mental mindfulness, is the reason I most often recommend this meditation technique for people who want to learn meditation and start reaping its benefits.

Hence, you don't really need to spend money to learn meditation. I have just taught you the key instructions for most meditation techniques. You sit comfortably, let go of thoughts, and just watch your mental state without gluing yourself to the thought stream. You remain aware of the coming and goings of thoughts and let them flow without clinging to them or trying to hold them, feed them energy, or transform them. You just know them without clinging. In time your mental realm will quiet from applying this type of practice and you will eventually experience a minor taste of "empty mind."

That's it. That's all you need to know. The hard part is not the instructions on how to meditate. The hard part is setting up a practice schedule to actually do it, and then consistently following that practice schedule. Since you know all the possible benefits, if you don't practice meditation then you must search your mind to find out why you are not sufficiently motivated. Your progress will not come from reading more books to gain more understanding, but simply from doing the actual sitting practice without holding onto expectations. Holding onto expectations is a type of mental clinging, so you "sit just to sit" and watch your mind.

FROM: VISUALIZATION POWER

CH. 8 – "Spiritual Visualizations"

Across the world, visualization practice is used in Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism and many other eastern religions. It is taught to spiritual aspirants because it is a way to develop a steady mind that is free (empty) of meandering thoughts. You typically call this mental state "concentration," which means that your mind is free of scattered thoughts, focused and settled on one particular topic.

We have already covered the solid scientific findings which tell us that visualization efforts, mental rehearsal or mental imagery practice can create new neural pathways in the brain and even change its structure. However, while this is incredibly important, eastern religions focus on an entirely different physical aspect of the practice other than this.

The eastern spiritual schools – such as Yoga, Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism - explain that our body has Qi channels or energy pathways that pass through every muscle fiber and cell. These are like the energetic scaffolding of atomic bonds between all the atoms in the body. These are the energy routes through which our life force (Qi) flows. If you clear these pathways of blockages then your body will get warmer, your muscles will soften, you will become more flexible, joyful and healthier and establish the foundation for a longer life. If you are an athlete and open up these

channels, your energy will flow much better, you will become able to achieve higher states of mind-body coordination and it will become easier to achieve states of peak performance. You can only achieve the state of “flow” in sports if you have cultivated your Qi and opened your Qi channels, and visualization practice is one of the methods that helps you do so.

When you practice concentration exercises, such as visualization, the act of mental focusing quiets your mind. When your mind quiets, then your true vitality (life force, kundalini, or Yang Qi) begins to stir and progress through all your body’s Qi channels. This result is only helpful and never harmful even though it often produces unusual symptoms.

If your Qi channels start opening due to the result of concentration practices like visualization, the normal sequence of progress is that your mind starts to become clearer. With greater clarity and focus you can then more accurately observe your thoughts. Because you are now more self-aware of your activities and what is going on within your mind, you make better decisions that will change your life in a positive way.

Through visualization practice, whose proficiency you can build by practicing previous exercises, you can learn how to steadily hold a complicated image in your mind while ignoring all the other meandering thoughts that randomly arise and then flicker away. By concentrating on trying to create a stable mental visual image, you will learn how to ignore random thoughts other than that image.

After you can finally form a stable image in your mind and hold it for some time you should then let go of the imagery that you built through focused concentration. Since it takes concentration effort to hold an image, when you finally let go of it your mind will feel free and at ease, like an ox who feels happy when the heavy collar around his neck is finally dropped off after a day of hard plowing.

At that time, the fact that your mind is now relaxed and empty of effort will allow your Qi to arise within your body. Free of any attachments to thought since you have just abandoned them, it will then be free to begin working its way through your Qi channels to open them. This is the purpose of all preliminary stage spiritual practices. You practice some form of concentration – in this case holding visual images steady in your mind – in order to tie up your thoughts (thus abandoning any focus on body sensations you might try to guide through thoughts) so that once free of attachments your Qi will become activated and arise.

Aside from the fact that visualization exercises to form steady mental images without becoming distracted teaches you how to concentrate (ignore wandering thoughts), are there any other benefits besides developing concentration skills?

BENEFITS OF VISUALIZATION PRACTICE

The first benefit, of course, is the progressive development of visual thinking skills, which we saw has helped countless scientists, mathematicians and inventors. Visualization practice can train you to be able to think visually. It enables you to develop visual thinking skills if you pursue this route of training.

Business people can also use visualization practice to help them change their habits and behaviors, achieve goals, rehearse performances and become the people they want to be.

Athletes can and do regularly use it to perfect their skills, summon confidence during games, and to help win athletic competitions. They use it in the pursuit of peak sports performance.

Sick people can use visualization skills to stimulate their life force and help heal themselves. Basically, visualization practice can help us cure our body of disease by igniting its vital energy.

A biological fact is that your Qi and consciousness are linked. With just a little bit of effort you can easily prove that the vital energy within your body can be moved by your thoughts – your Qi will go to wherever you place your concentration - so eastern religions state that your Qi rides on (follows) your thoughts.

When your Qi arrives in any body region due to focusing on that area with visualization (or some other form of concentration), the Qi will begin to open up the channels in that vicinity. In opening Qi channels, you can banish latent illness and lay the foundations for increased health and longevity.

All spiritual practice depends upon building a foundation of health. Spiritual practice also depends upon the fact that your Qi and consciousness are linked; your energy within your body can be moved by your thoughts. Wherever your concentration goes in your body, your Qi will also go there. Those energies will then mass at that point to open up the Qi channels in the vicinity, which will make your body healthier (and improve sports skills) since your energy flow will be much more efficient.

KASINA CONCENTRATION PRACTICE

We previously encountered kasina visualization practice, which is a special type of concentration practice that uses colored shapes. Kasina meditation has been used in India for thousands of years. The 5th-century Indian Buddhist monk Buddhaghosa describes kasina visualization practice in the *Visuddhimagga* (“Path of Purification”) and it can also be found in the Buddhist monk Asanga’s *Yogacarabbumi sastra* (in the *Samāhitabhūmi* section).

Kasina visualization practice is actually a form of visual concentration

practice that has no religious affiliation with any school or tradition. It is just a technique of mental exercise you can use to build up your concentration skills, visualization skills and visual thinking skills.

There are traditionally forty different types of kasina concentration objects, which is a large enough selection that one or more will appeal to the different temperaments of people seeking to use it. The number and types of concentration objects listed are just indicative of what you can try once you understand the technique. If you apply the principles of logic and common sense, you can use many different types of objects for visualization practice. You can even invent new ones that might be especially useful for sports or health purposes.

The basic kasina practice involves concentrating on certain colors, elements, shapes or meditations, holding them in your mind, and thereby learn how to develop a stable mind. You can also do this with an emotion, but for our purposes we will only discuss the kasina objects that can be used in visualization practice.

Whenever you can hold an image in your mind without distraction the resulting mental stability is called a concentration or stable mind. With kasina visualization practice you can gradually gain proficiency at generating a stable mind by holding onto a visual image for as long as possible. When you can hold onto the image without losing concentration you will then have achieved one of the objectives of the practice.

The most common type of kasina visualization is to visualize a disk of a specific color that you place against a wall several feet in front of you. When you sit on the floor in a meditation posture and face the wall the disk should be in front of you at eye level.

The traditional kasina instructions suggest that you practice visualizing the colors blue, green, yellow, red and white. However, you should also add orange, purple, black, copper (brown), silver and gold to this basic list. Actually, you can and should practice visualizing *all the different colors of the rainbow* one by one, but let's pretend you just want to practice by visualizing the color yellow, which tends to lighten one's mood.

To do so you would buy yellow construction paper, cut out a large yellow circle, and then tape it to the wall at eye level height in front of you, several feet away. When you sit in a meditation posture you want to be able to open your eyes and see the disk clearly so that you can practice the yellow color visualization. Sitting several feet from the wall, you should look at the colored disk for a while, close your eyes and then try to visualize it within your mind.

The traditional instructions in the *Visuddhimagga* are to use a circle made of colored earth, but you don't have to restrict yourself to a circle of earth as it suggests. You can and *should* try visualizing different shapes in different colors such as squares, triangles, stars, crescents, half circles,

rectangles and so on. You will find that the most important colors to use are auspicious colors that raise your energy such as yellow, red, gold and silver.

For someone just starting out, practice visualizing (1) a yellow square, (2) blue circle and, (3) red triangle and then progress onwards from there. You can also turn these into 3D shapes.

Once again, you want to become able to *visualize all the different colors of the rainbow* – red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet as well as white, black, copper (brown), silver and gold. Gold, silver, white, yellow, orange and red are very important for raising your energy. Green, blue and black are useful for lowering excessive energy.

These colors can also be useful in other visualization practices, especially the advanced visualization practices used in the spiritual schools. Vajrayana Buddhists, for instance, practice visualizing complicated mandalas and elaborate pictures of Buddhas that contain many different colors and shapes. Navajo Indians create colorful sand paintings that are similar to Buddhist mandalas and can be used for mental practice. Hindus practice visualizing Yantras as well as colorful images of various deities who represent cosmic forces. Kashmir Shaivists (and members of various Yoga schools) visualize images of “chakras” within their body.

The Jewish school of Merkabah mysticism also uses visualization practices as does Christianity. *Spiritual Exercises*, written by the 16th century Spaniard St. Ignatius of Loyola, had a tremendous impact teaching Jesuit priests and Christian monks to practice visualizing certain scenes of Christ’s life (such as the Nativity, Passion, Crucifixion, Resurrection and Ascension). It is said to have brought about profound inner changes in individuals, and its influence over 400 years has been described as “incalculable.”

These are just a few examples proving that visualization exercises are a spiritual practice used in many religions! The reason is because visualization helps you calm your mind, learn concentration skills, and can open up your energy pathways. When your Qi channels open and your vitality flows, this is what prepares people for advanced spiritual experiences. Hence, this is why people concentrate on internally visualizing pictures of chakras and deities. When you project such images inside your body, it can also serve as a technique to bring Qi to internal body regions so that the Qi channels open and one becomes more fit for the spiritual path.

Visualization practice itself does not open chakras at all, nor does it turn you into a deity. It simply gets rid of wandering thoughts so that your Qi can freely arise without too many thought attachments; your Qi cannot flow freely if your mind is always following meandering thoughts that are connected to your Qi. After your Qi arises and clears open your Qi channels then you can begin to cultivate more advanced states of mental refinement and clarity. These advanced mental states, or states of higher

concentration, are always clear states of mind absent of meandering thoughts. Your Qi follows your thoughts because of the mind-body connection of vital energy and consciousness, so only when thought is silenced via concentration can your real Qi be released from its normal connection to thoughts and start opening up the Qi channels within you.

The *Visuddhimagga* does not just recommend visualization practice on colors but visualization of the earth, water, fire, air and space elements too. You can practice visualizing that your entire body becomes one of these elements, or that you see the image of your element in your mind while feeling its texture within your body. There are many other ways you can practice these visualizations.

Different colors and sensory feelings can be associated with these elements when they are being visualized. When visualizing that your body becomes fire, for instance, you typically imagine that it becomes flaming luminescent red in color and that you feel the energy pulsing all over inside you. However, you can also imagine a feeling of heat or surging energy everywhere within you in conjunction with a feeling of joy, elation or exhilaration. Whenever you perform spiritual practices and wish to open up Qi channels, you can try to simultaneously evoke the feelings of elation, joy, exhilaration or ecstasy at the same time since this will help stir up your vital energy and raise your Yang Qi. Perform visualizations both with and without this extra emotional content.

When you feel your energy moving as a result of this type of practice, then you are succeeding. People sometimes get scared when their internal energy starts to move due to kasina practice, but that movement is a major purpose of the practice.

When imaging that your body becomes the water element you can imagine that it becomes blue (or white like milk) all over and the energetic feeling inside is sloshy and *cooling* like water. You can also add an emotional component to the experience that you would normally associate with soothing water. If you were to imagine that your body became pure moonlight, you would also imagine that it was pure, cool and peaceful like the moon.

The basic geometric shapes to master in visualization practice are the circle, square and triangle followed by the oval, ellipse, crescent, rectangle, trapezoid, pentagon, and hexagon. If you are motivated and have learned how to visualize these basic flat shapes, you can try to visualize a heptagon, octagon, nonagon, and decagon.

After gaining proficiency at visualizing these geometric figures and then being able to hold them steady in your mind, you can next try to mentally move the images about, twisting and rotating them, making them larger or smaller, changing their colors or putting them inside one another. An even higher skill level is learning how to project them onto the

environment by superimposing their image on whatever you are looking at. You can train your mind to do this just as it can be trained to handle many different types of simultaneously independent activity, but most people never choose to undertake such difficult training.

Another skill is to turn the flat images into 3D shapes such as spheres, half-spheres, cylinders, discs or doughnuts made from a circle; eggs made from ellipses; cubes or rectangular solids (boxes) made from a square; or pyramids, wedges, prisms and cones made from a triangle. Basically, you can practice visualizing the Platonic solids and how they are formed. Afterwards you should practice gaining proficiency in manipulating them.

To test your skills at manipulating images, try unfolding the solids to discover their shape as a flat surface cutout, such as unfolding a square to make a cross. Once you can mentally unfold a geometrical shape, practice marking one side a certain color, refolding the pattern into the shape, and rotating the solid to see where the image will land. This exercise develops your “**spatial reasoning**” skills (the ability to manipulate, rotate, or change the position of an object in your mind) and you can practice these skills with tests readily available on the internet. Spatial reasoning or spatial intelligence, which can be increased by developing your visualization skills, is useful in many technical fields such as engineering, architecture, mathematics, astronomy and chemistry. Developing these skills – because they also require you to build concentration skills - is also a type of spiritual practice!

One of the reasons I personally began visualization practice is because I wanted to increase my spatial reasoning and spatial visualization skills. With time and practice these skills definitely get better, but it takes hard, consistent effort.

Studies have shown that men and women initially differ in their spatial reasoning skills but after 21 days of daily practice the differences can start to disappear. Using Google SketchUp, which is a free 3D dynamic sketching software, people can easily work on building these skills.

You can next practice visualizing real objects such as a pair of dice (based on cubes), Christmas ornaments (made from a sphere), a candle (made from a cylinder), ice cream cone (made from a triangle turned into a cone), or soccer ball (a truncated icosahedron, which is one of the Archimedean solids). All sorts of real world images can be imagined and manipulated once you develop the basic visualization powers and learn how to manipulate mental forms.

Once you have mastered basic geometrical shapes, spiritual aspirants can visualize shapes within their body to activate their Qi since a focus of attention would bring Qi to that area and thus open up Qi channels in the surrounding vicinity. For instance, Christians reciting the Prayer of Jesus often visualize a flame at their heart while Buddhists who recite the Zhunti

mantra visualize the image of a Buddha or circle of Buddhas in their heart. Some practitioners visualize a shining Sanskrit or Hebrew letter at the heart. Yogis cultivating kundalini often visualize a red triangle in their lower abdomen or at the base of their spine. In Gnostic spiritual practice the adherents visualize a sun over their heads, which tends to open up the ascending nerve channels in the brain. Those visualizing chakras or any shining shape in the center of their body tend to open up the Qi channels in that vicinity too. These are just a few examples of how and why visualization exercises are used for spiritual practice.

CANDLE VISUALIZATION

Another basic visualization, since once mastered it can also be used as an activation mechanism inside your body for Qi arousal, is to look at a burning candle, next close your eyes, and then visualize the candle. Being able to visualize the bright flame is the most important part of this practice. After you can visualize the candle, you can place the image of the flame inside your body, which is useful in the pelvis, abdomen (solar plexus), heart, throat and brain.

This particular visualization practice is especially important because visualizing a candle flame is extremely useful in other spiritual practices involving the stimulation of Qi at points on your body. Many traditions that use visualization exercises stress flames and fires for this reason since those images can be used to stimulate your Qi.

As explained in *Twenty-five Doors to Meditation*, there are many concentration practices based on focusing your vision on an object. If you master the basic technique of concentrating upon and observing an object then you open the door to hundreds of possible practices. To achieve this mastery, it is once again best to start with a candle. To practice, you place it about three to five feet in front of you, and simply become mentally absorbed in focusing on it while ignoring any other meandering thoughts that pop into your mind. Besides a candle, the best objects to use are those joyful or auspicious in tone like a crystal, bright light, or inspiring/happy religious statue or picture.

To train your powers of concentration you focus on an object while ignoring all other wandering thoughts that arise in your mind, and eventually they will drop away. With practice you can train to close your eyes and become so focused on your mentally created object that you can make it smaller and smaller in your mind. You can only do this if the intensity of your concentration increases, and this requires training. In some Yoga schools they ask aspirants to mentally visualize the counting of thousands of drops, or tiny spheres rotating inside other spheres, and all sorts of other concentration challenges.

In doing this you don't try to describe the object in your mind or give rise to any type of internal dialogue. You just become absorbed in the object as the sole center of your attention. As with a mathematician trying to solve a problem, you become totally involved in a problem and focused on just that one thing. In the Zen school, the focus on an indecipherable koan serves the same function of tying up your attention.

THE WHITE SKELETON VISUALIZATION

As we have previously stated, all spiritual progress depends upon having a foundation of good health. It requires cultivating your Qi and Qi channels - the acupuncture meridians within which the Qi (vital force) in your body runs. Many practices are used throughout the world's religions to help aspirants cultivate and purify their Qi and Qi channels, in effect purifying them, and since you now know this you might be able to decipher which ones do this in your own particular spiritual tradition.

Visualizing the muscles and organs of your body, focusing on feeling them while visualizing them inside you at their proper anatomical positions, is also a type of Qi and Qi channel practice. It is a higher form of visualization exercise than concentrating on an object since it directly touches your Qi life force. This type of practice always leads to greater health, longevity and spiritual progress.

One of the most powerful of these visualization practices (which produces even greater benefits) is to visualize the bones of your body, and then later your muscles after the Qi and Qi channels within and along the bones have been "awakened" due to your practice. This visualization exercise is called the "white skeleton visualization" method. It comes from ancient India, and it is useful for health, sports training and spiritual progress.

The white skeleton visualization, which is particularly used in Buddhism, involves individually visualizing all the bones of your body as shining with a bright white light – as bright as you can possibly imagine. This energizes your Qi that flows parallel to your skeletal structure. Since your skeleton stretches throughout your entire body the invigorated energy flow due to visualization (Qi follows your thoughts) will start to open up all the Qi channels in your muscles.

Once again the principle behind this type of visualization practice is as follows. Through focused concentration and attention you can bring your vital energy to a bone – or stimulate the energy of that bone - by visualizing that it is white in color and shining with a bright light. Wherever you place your mind within your body, your Qi will move there due to the mental focus. It will mass at that point or simply become stimulated at that point. Therefore this visualization will bring Qi to the bone and its surrounding

tissues (or stimulate it) and this is what opens up the Qi channels in the areas along the length of the bone that you visualize.

The white skeleton visualization can be practiced when you are sitting or lying flat on your back, though sitting in a meditation posture is best. There are many variations of the basic energizing practice so we will just discuss the basic principles. The principle is to use visualization power to energize your Qi so that it starts opening your Qi channels. Many more related details can be found in my book, *Nyasa Yoga*.

If you understand the basic principles and what you are trying to accomplish with this visualization practice then you can create all sorts of variations. It just depends upon understanding that the target is to (1) activate/stimulate your Qi in order to (2) open your Qi channels, (3) which is done by using visualizations to stimulate your Qi into moving, (4) which works since your Qi and consciousness are linked. Thus, while in sports training we use visualization to forge new neural pathways, and while inventors and scientists use it to develop skills at visual thinking, here you can use visualization images – which are thoughts - to move the energy of your body.

To practice the white skeleton visualization, you should first make yourself comfortable and take a couple of deep breaths to release any tension you feel in your body.

The White Skeleton Visualization Practice

Starting at your left big toe, begin to visualize that you no longer have flesh on the left foot and that your two left big toe bones shine with a dazzling white light. Try to imagine that the naked bones shine with as bright a light as possible.

First visualize that the two bones of your left big toe are shining as a bright white light, and then move leftwards to simultaneously visualize that all of the other toe bones on your left foot (there are three bones per toe) are shining with a bright white light.

Try to feel the bones when you do this, or the energy in the area, or heat in the area because you want to send Qi to this region. Try to *feel the energy* in the bones or surrounding them by grabbing it if you can. The more “real” or vivid you can make this visualization the better.

When you can finally visualize your toes shining with bright white light, maintain that vision of the left toe bones and switch sides to start visualizing that the bones of your right big toe are also shining with a dazzling white light. Then visualize that all of the toes of your right foot are shining brightly.

Next, visualize all of the other bones within your left foot are shining with bright white light, then all of the bones in your right foot. Now the

bones of both feet should be seen in your mind as shining with a bright white light. You actually try to feel the energy within the feet as you do this because you are trying to activate the Qi in the feet to open up its many Qi channels.

Continuing, visualize your left ankle bones and then right ankle bones shining with a dazzling bright light. All the bones in your feet should now be simultaneously seen in inner vision as shining with a bright white light. Try to feel the energy in the feet and along the bones; if the feet get warm it means that your Qi is starting to open up your Qi channels in this area.

Proceeding higher, start visualizing that your left tibia and fibula (lower-leg bones) are shining with a bright white light, and then do the same for your right lower-leg bones. Remember to visualize that all the flesh is stripped off your bones and all the exposed bones are shining with a bright white light. (An alternative is to visualize that your bones are brightly shining while within your skin and flesh.)

Gradually working your way up your body, continue visualizing that your body is just a set of shining white bones. Visualize your leg and feet bones all the way through to the bones of your pelvic girdle, and then start visualizing the bones of your spine. In time you will certainly feel warm at those areas because of the activation of your Qi due to this method.

Since this method helps you open up your Qi channels, it is great for both athletes and those wishing to cure illness to become healthier.

Once you go up through your hips and spine to reach your neck, make sure you progressively visualize the bones of both arms as well as your hands and fingers.

After visualizing the bones in your hands and fingers so that your whole lower body is done up to your neck, afterwards you end with a visualization of your skull bones also shining, together with the rest of your body, with a bright white light.

At the initial stages of this practice it is not important that you correctly visualize each individual bone of your body with extreme accuracy, though that is an excellent exercise in concentration. This is where people always go wrong. They forget that *the purpose of the practice is to activate your Qi along the extent of your entire body, using your bones as the general structural guideline for the shape of the body. Therefore, as long as you are activating your Qi along its entire structure, whether or not you can visualize your bones correctly, or be anatomically perfect, is irrelevant. You just want to activate your Qi everywhere in the body. Only at advanced stages of cultivation need you be anatomically correct.*

Activating your Qi, since it is the point of the exercise, is more important than learning how to perfectly visualize your anatomical skeleton. However, there is also a benefit to being able to actually visualize a perfect skeleton. The result of visualizing your skeleton with accuracy is good

concentration skills.

“Good to great” concentration skills are one of the benefits from trying to visualize mandalas, as practiced in Vajrayana Buddhism, and Yantras as practiced in Hinduism. Visualizing a complicated Yantra or mandala has no other benefit than helping you learn concentration because the sustained focus banishes scattered thoughts from your mind.

Visualization practice requires so much concentration that your mind eventually tires, like a computer that slows down due to excessive computational demands. When you can finally hold a picture in your mind with stability then when you can no longer hold it you should release your visualization to rest in an empty mental state of peace. In that state your Qi will come up, since it always arises when the mind becomes quiet, and in that way visualization practice becomes a meditation method.

Finally, while this is primarily a mental visualization practice, it is helpful to be happy and joyful when doing this visualization (and to feel like you are offering your flesh away as a type of giving or offering) simply because these emotions will raise the Yang Qi in your body. This is why you cultivate the fervor of emotional joy and offerings on the path of religion.

When one imagines that the energy of a spiritual master unifies with their body in order to open up its Qi channels, which is a spiritual practice done in many schools that has similarities with the skeleton visualization technique, one should also think of positive thoughts during the unification practice. The purpose of this type of practice – such as visualizing you become one with the spirit of a beautified enlightened being or deity (such as Shiva, Krishna, Lakshmi, Vajrayogini, Buddha, Jesus, Thor, Zeus, Padmasambhava, Majursi, etc.) is to call upon the spiritual powers of great enlightened ones to help open up your Qi channels.

MAHAVIRA’S FIRE VISUALIZATION

Another visualization technique for cultivating the Qi of your body was introduced by Mahavira, the founder of the Jains. It is excellent for giving your body a feeling of energy inside.

For this visualization method, you imagine that there is a large lotus flower inside your body at the level of your navel. Imagine that is bright red in color, pointing upwards, and burning with red flames that shoot upwards and protrude out from the center of your head.

The reason you must visualize the flames reaching out from the top of your head is because concentrating on a point outside of your body will help draw your Qi to that point. Therefore, this visualization will help draw your Qi energies through the left and right branches of your spinal nerves that separate in the brain and reach to its top. These left and right ascending nerve bundles, although inside the brain, are symbolized as external horns

in most cultural traditions since that is what they internally look like. They can only be opened by the ascending Qi in your body, which is why you visualize fire, Qi, shining light or other images to guide Qi up these nerve bundles to open them.

For the rest of this visualization exercise, you should also imagine at the level of your heart another bright red lotus flower, but this one is inverted. Visualize that the flames originating from your belly flower blaze upwards and reach the inverted heart flower, which is turned upside down, and that the flames grow intense between these two lotus flowers.

You should imagine that the flames eventually fill the trunk of your body filled with Qi, which turns flaming bright red and feels excited all over. Eventually this fiery red luminescence extends to your entire body and you should soak in that luminescence trying to feel any full-body sensations you can evoke. Try to feel the surging energy everywhere as your entire body turns into glowing red embers. Try to stimulate your energy into surging (moving) using the imagination of fire as the catalyst.

Try to also feel exhilarated, elated, happy, enthusiastic when doing this visualization because these emotions also raise your Yang Qi. This exercise is a type of cleansing of your body that uses fire instead of water.

After you visualize your entire body glowing red with energy or fire, and after you feel corresponding energy sensations within you (due to your efforts to arouse them), imagine that a strong wind blows off all the embers and then a heavy, clear rain falls from above washing all the ashes away. Imagine that the body you now have left is crystal clear, transparent and pure.

When you finally visualize this, then let go of all the imaging and rest your mind in empty space (just as you did for the white skeleton visualization). While resting with an empty mind, mentally observe (just witness) the sensations that arise within your body of internal energy from the moving energy. This feeling of energy moving inside you is *supposed to happen* and heals you by opening up your energy channels.

ENERGIZED RED BODY PRACTICE

Yet another visualization technique is to vividly imagine (once again with elated happy feelings since this activates your Yang Qi) that your body becomes luminescent red with energy, impregnated with fire, or entirely flames. Some schools suggest imagining that you become surging lava, a blazing sun, or emanating sunshine. Use whatever visualization method works to enable you to imagine that your body is the fire element and to feel stirred up energy sensations inside you. The sole purpose of this visualization effort is to stimulate and move, activate or energize your Qi.

Red fire energy is traditionally used across nearly every spiritual

tradition to represent Yang Qi, or positive energy. The deep subconscious image of fire within our minds is also energizing as well.

To raise the Yang Qi energy within you, some schools teach you to visualize a fiery red triangle in your pelvis or heart region or at the base of the spine, and to hold onto that image. The concentration on a point within your body will bring more energy/Qi to the area and open up your Qi channels leading to more health and vitality.

FIRE CEREMONIES

Many religions, such as Zoroastrianism, Shingon, and Hinduism have fire ceremonies, but people don't know the real reason for this. In most fire ceremonies, participants are supposed to sit around a blazing fire, stare at the flames and try to feel the energy arising inside them. They are supposed to imagine that their entire body becomes fire or becomes energized like fire since this stimulates the Qi within it. Unfortunately, most people who attend these ceremonies don't know these instructions. When you feel the heat of the fire penetrate you and see the flames you should match these stimuli with efforts to arouse your internal energy and start it moving.

When your Qi is activated in this way it will start coursing through your body and all its energy meridians, especially the Qi channels in your spine. When you finally feel like there is energy all over your body due to your stimulation efforts, you should next try to diffuse it throughout your body in an evenly balanced manner and then let go of clinging to any of the sensations that arise. You should observe the sensations that arise, but you should not try to block them or cling to them. In Buddhism this is called anapana practice. You can now try to smooth out any sensations of internal energy blockage or obstruction in order to help open up other energy pathways within your body. In the long run this will bring you more health and vitality.

OPENING THE SPINE

There are many Yogic, Tantric and Upanishadic practices that use visualizations to open up the Qi channels in your body, particularly in your spine. The instructions for many of these practices can be found in Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati's excellent book, *Dharana Darhan*, which is highly recommended.

Kriya Yoga, which is special type of kundalini yoga for cultivating your Qi and channels, also uses visualizations to cultivate the Qi of your body. It focuses on removing any blockages in your spine so that your Qi can ascend upwards into the brain, which produces all the normal Qi benefits as well as helping with memory, concentration, awareness and relaxation.

Since it is non-denominational, Kriya Yoga is very helpful for individuals of any religious denomination who are ardently working on a spiritual path of practice.

I recommend several excellent books on Kriya Yoga that provide descriptions of visualization exercises:

- Paramahansa Yogananda's *Kriya Yoga*
- *A Systematic Course in Ancient Tantric Techniques of Yoga and Kriya* by Swami Satyananda Saraswati
- *Kriya Yoga* by Paramahansa Hariharananda
- *Kriya Yoga The Science of Life Force* by Swami Nityananda Giri
- *Kriya Secrets Revealed* by J.C. Stevens. This is one of the best books available on Kriya Yoga. It contains many useful exercises for opening up the spinal Qi channels along its length.

Chinese Taoism also has a number of visualization practices you can try for opening up the spinal Qi routes, which is called the microcosmic circulation.

It is impossible to duplicate all of the visualization exercises from these various books since they contain many materials; the point is to use visualization efforts, in conjunction with willpower, to move your Qi along Qi routes to help open them. My book, *Nyasa Yoga*, provides a short synopsis of the best internal Qi exercises along these lines drawn from a variety of the world's spiritual traditions.

Adapted From: NYASA YOGA

CH. 7 – “Mantrayana”

Now we turn to the typical spiritual practice of mantra recitation, or Japa practice, which can become thousands or even hundreds of thousands of times more effective if you use it in a special way. How? By combining it with the principles of Nyasa Yoga where you recite the sound while simultaneously focusing on different parts of your body in consecutive sequence. This combination becomes a form of Mantrayana practice.

Previously we saw in the *Vairocanabhishambodhi Sutra* that the two sounds Rah and Vah (or Ram and Vam) could be used to cultivate the body in a dualistic fashion of top and bottom, left side and right side, or front and back. This is cultivating the body in two parts whereas Master Hakuyu's soma egg cream method is cultivating the body as one single part or whole.

This idea can also be expanded to work on three sections of the body using a simple three syllable mantra, as well as four or five syllable mantras

to be used on four or five segments of the body. You can cultivate the body in a different number of sections like this, such as the seven sections of the body normally identified by the seven chakras. Here are some examples of how this works.

OM AH HUNG

A common mantra used throughout the world is “Om Ah Hung” attributed to the Buddha Samantabhadra who has vowed to accomplish great deeds that help people succeed in their spiritual cultivation.

Typically a practitioner might mindlessly recite Om Ah Hung (or Hum) millions of times hoping to acquire some spiritual result. The typical result is to attract the attention of enlightened individuals and their assistance to help you open up and purify your Qi channels as well change your fortune for the better by giving you thoughts that help you solve problems in your life. When your Qi channels open people often feel warm in the body area where that happens, such as after extended mantra practice.

Now let’s take a moment to investigate the sounds of this mantra. Please stop a moment and recite the sound “Om” several times. When doing so, try to feel the sound and vibration it causes within your body. Where do you feel it most – in your head, chest or abdomen?

Most people will feel it in their head, and secondarily in their chest but mostly in the head. Om is a sound that can be appended to any part of the body, but when you pronounce the syllable you will usually feel the vibrations most strongly in your head.

Now recite the “Ah” sound several dozen times and try to feel where the sound resonates most in your body. Where do you feel the most energy – in your head, chest or abdomen?

Most people will say in their chest. The Ah sound – which appears in numerous mantras such as “Alleluia,” “Om Shivaya Namaha,” “Allah” and so forth – is the major sound used to open up the Qi channels in the heart (chest) region of your body. “Rah,” “Ha,” and so on are all forms of the Ah sound.

Now recite the forceful “Hum” or “Hung” sound (which is spoken with force as you exhale) several dozen times. Where do you feel it most within your body – in the head, chest or abdomen?

Most people will say in their abdomen or belly. This is a sound frequently used to move (cultivate) Qi within the abdomen and belly of the body along with the legs. Only people who have done a lot of stretching and other leg cultivation techniques will be able to feel it in the legs.

You have now established that by reciting the sounds Om, Ah and Hung you tend to feel the energy in your head (and arms), chest and then abdomen (and legs) respectively.

If you take this understanding, and now forevermore try to feel the energy in your head (and arms), chest and then abdomen (and legs) when you recite the Om Ah Hung mantra, you will be using the sounds and resultant vibrations to open up the Qi channels in three sections of the body! This is the purpose of Nyasa practice, only in this case you do not have to touch the body sections or think of anything such as a Buddha or deity while reciting the sounds. This secret method just taught is 10,000 times more effective than simple mantra practice alone.

Reciting the mantra Om Ah Hung while feeling the vibrations in these three different body segments - the head and arms, the chest, and the abdominal cavity and legs - is called Mantrayana practice.

If, when feeling the sound in an area (which helps to open up the Qi channels in that region) you also visualize that area becoming a different color, as is done in Vajrayana and some other tantric schools, this is “adding light to the sound” to help activate your Qi and channels.

For instance, during Vajrayana Nyasa practice for your fingers you recite mantras on their joints while visualizing that your thumb, first, second, third, fourth and pinky fingers are the colors red, blue, yellow, green and white, respectively. This not only helps you “seize” the Qi of each finger, but also builds your powers of visualization which are useful for manipulating Qi when you finally attain the deva body.

In India women paint their finger tips the color red, which is supposed to remind people to concentrate on moving their Qi to their finger tips in order to complete the Qi purification in the fingers since thermography pictures prove they are the most difficult part of the hands to transform. Some Tibetan masters achieve the “rainbow body” by transforming their physical body into energy before death. They often leave their fingernails behind as their body shrinks during the multi-day process. However, this is not due to the fact they compassionately left them behind as “relics” for students but because they weren’t able to cultivate their fingertip nails completely because that section of the body is difficult to cultivate unless you pay it special attention.

In any case, Om Ah Hung can be used to cultivate the body in three large sections, which is an alternative to whole body cultivation or seven-section chakra cultivation. If you now search for an internet picture of nerve zones in the body (“dermatone map”), you will find that there are roughly three segments to the body – the head together with the arms; chest; and waist, abdomen or belly together with the legs. Using such pictures as a guide, you should logically conjecture that for the most help in opening your energy channels that the Om should be felt in the head and arms, the Ah sound in the chest, and Hung sound down from the waist to the feet.

If you recite the mantra Om Ah Hung while focusing on feeling the Qi

in these different areas, reciting the sounds as if from within those areas (perhaps also adding visualization to your effort so as to stir up the Qi) and matching the sensations in each area to the sounds then you will have increased the effectiveness of your mantra practice manifold.

Other tripartite mantras that can be used this way include “Hring Shring Kling,” “Hreem Shreem Kleem,” “Hreem Kleem Shreem” and other variations.

OM AH VAH LAH HUM TWAY

Indian culture also partitions the body into five cavities according to the workings of the five Prana (Qi) or Vayu (winds) – Udana, Prana, Apana, Samana and Vyana. According to Yoga theory, Udana resides in the head and arms and legs, Prana in the chest, Apana in the pelvic girdle of the waist (excluding legs and upper spine), Samana in the belly or upper abdomen, and Vyana encompasses the whole body.

The Vairocana mantra “Om Ah Vah Lah Hum Tway” can therefore be recited by feeling the Qi in each of these body sections respectively – Om (head, arms and legs), Ah (chest – heart area), Vah (navel), Lah (pelvic girdle and legs), Hum (legs) and Tway (entire body and then space). The Vairocana mantra recitation recipe is therefore Om (head and throat), Ah (chest and head), Vah (navel), Lah (pelvis), Hum (legs) and Tway (entire body and then space).

Some schools replace the Tway with Kai, and the rule is that if you have an enlightened master who teaches a different mantra sound then you just go along with that. Each mantra connects with a different enlightened teacher, Buddha or tradition whose devas will work on helping you transform your Qi and channels, so by changing the sound you are connecting with a different Buddha family of volunteers to work on your channels. If you don’t have a teacher, you can just try several mantras and see which ones “work best” for you. That’s the general rule when trying to choose between mantras and wondering which ones to practice/use.

The more complicated mantras rarely correspond to using the best *bija* or root sounds (as with Om Ah Hung for the head, chest and abdomen) to open up the Qi in a particular body region. They are usually sounds or sentences telling a Buddha family to work on helping you open up your Qi channels.

If you truly want to move the Qi within your body to open up your Qi channels, you can create many different appropriations of mantra seed sounds, or *bijas*, to areas of the body and then use them to stimulate the Qi in that area. The important thing when mixing them up is to feel the sound in a new area so as to ignite, stir or activate the Qi in that region. If you don’t move your Qi then you are getting little benefit from the mantra.

Some spiritual schools try to stir your Qi through emotional fervor and extreme emotional states (such as exhilaration, joy, unbounded happiness, etc.), but the Mantrayana practices try to stir your Qi through the use of mantra sounds. Adding emotions to this effort will also help to move your Qi. Obviously, the more types of stimulation you add to your effort (sound, light, vibration, stretching, Buddha help, etc.) the more powerful the possibilities for opening your channels if you learn how to do this correctly. That usually requires an expert Tantric teacher as your master.

OM MANI BEI ME HUNG

The popular manta for Avalokitesvara (Kuan Yin), “Om Mani Bei Me Hung,” has many possible Mantrayana routines for cultivating the Qi of your body. As with using other mantras, you can create your own sequence of placements of these sounds as you feel necessary to help open up different body areas.

As you already know, sometimes the vibration of a sound within an area will stir up Qi in a region and help open up the blocked channels in that area. This is the general principle of Nyasa practice and Mantrayana, which is “appending syllables” to any part of the body to move the Qi. Therefore you should try to feel mantra sounds, or recite the mantra sound as if from within a particular body area if you want to affect its Qi channels very quickly.

Unfortunately, no one has ever created a Nyasa where the sounds used are the perfect, best ones to resonate the body cavity of that section of the body. Mantra sounds (*bijas*) can help open up Qi channels in the body, but they are rarely specifically useful to a particular body part. Only a very few sounds like Om, Ah and Hung can be highly appropriated to certain body locations, and this is why they are commonly found in many mantras and prayers (since all spiritual schools want to open up the channels in those locations).

It takes a while to develop the habit of associating a sound with a particular body region you are trying to vibrate/affect when you recite a mantra, which is why this technique needs practice. It requires deep, deliberate practice. You have to do it *slowly and deliberately many, many times* until you establish the habit energy of doing this correctly. Two books, *The Talent Code* and *Talent is Overrated*, talk about how to perform deep and deliberate practice to get better results in whatever skill or outcome you want, and you can apply their lessons to Mantrayana practices.

After you finally create this habit and continue forward with your mantra practice, it is inevitable that you will get sloppy over time. Therefore you must periodically use the principles of deliberate practice to refresh your practice by carefully relearning how to feel and visualize each body

part in turn when reciting the appropriate sounds.

The rules of deep, deliberate practice teach that you should always practice a skill correctly, even if that learning process is incredibly slow, so that you don't end up repeating errors that become ingrained habits that you cannot change later. After you have it down perfectly then you can practice with increased speed.

GAYATRI, ZHUNTI AND VAJRA ARMORING

Longer mantras - such as the Buddhist Zhunti mantra, Hindu Gayatri mantra and "Vajra Armor" mantra of Padmasambhava - contain many sounds (syllables) that can be appended (used) all over the body as you are trying to cultivate your Qi and channels.

The Zhunti mantra runs:

Namah saptanam samyaksambuddha
kotinam tadyatha
om cale cule cundi svaha.

The Gayatri mantra runs:

Om bhur bhuvah swaha
Om tat savitur varenyam
Bhargo devasya dhimahi
Dhiyo yo nah pracodayat.

Padmasambhava's "Vajra Armoring" mantra, which is recited prior to many Vajrayana practices meant to cultivate your Qi, can also be recited so that each sound is felt in a different section of your body. The mantra runs:

Humvajra Phat
Om Pema Shawa Re Phat
Nen Par Shig
Naga Nan
Tad Yatha
Sarva
Bere Ta
Hana Hana
Vajra Na
Raja Raja
Soha.

While past masters have worked out some very effective mappings of

sounds to body parts for these and other mantras, the mantra sounds can be appended to different parts of your body as you feel appropriate. The important point is to try to feel the sensation of the sound within a body part when the sound is spoken, or the Qi of the body part itself. In other words, you want to use the mantra to move your Qi in different body sections.

Also, you can add visualization of that body part to the recitation routine and/or touching of the body part to help you focus and concentrate on that section. When working on any body part in this manner it also helps if you actually look at it, rather than just visualize it in your had with your eyes closed, and try to feel the Qi within it. You can also stay n a section for as long as you want until you open it.

When someone is stretching a particular muscle in yoga, for instance, they can amplify the usefulness of their asana through these techniques. How so? They can simultaneously visualize the muscles being stretched with the attempt to grab the Qi within them, recite a mantra as if from within the muscles to activate the Qi within them, flex the muscles to also help move the Qi and so on.

The principle is to perform any activities that will help you open up the Qi channels within a muscle. The purpose of all spiritual exercises is exactly this, which is to open up the Qi channels everywhere so that your entire body's Qi channels are eventually opened and you can then consequently generate a will-born deva body from these efforts.

You can use these principles when practicing all sorts of other mantras too, such as "Om Hreem Shreem Kleem Sou Aim," when you want to open up your Qi channels and change your fortune.

BAHA'I

In the Baha'i faith the invocation "Ya! Baha'u'l-Abha" (O Thou Glorious of the Most Glorious) is actually a mantra, and can be used according to the previous principles.

The "Ah"-rich phrase "Allah'u'Abha," which Baha'i practitioners are supposed to recite ninety-five times a day, is also actually a mantra that, because of the Ah sound, helps open up the Qi channels (*nadis*) in the chest and heart region of the body. In this way the Baha'i religion has skillfully incorporated useful mantras in its framework.

The *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* supplied the original instructions to repeat this phrase (mantra): "It hath been ordained that every believer in God, the Lord of Judgment, shall, each day, having washed his hands and then face, seat himself and, turning unto God, repeat 'Allah'u'-Abha' ninety-five times. Such was the decree of the Maker of the Heavens when with Majesty and power, He established Himself upon the thrones of His Names."

Most practitioners do not realize that the effectiveness of “Allah’u’Abha” is due to the predominance of the Ah-sound within the invocation. Actually, these instructions constitute the transmission of a mantra that will slowly, when performed on a daily basis, help to open up your Qi channels over time.

ISLAM

In Islam the Shahada, “La ilaha ill Allah,” is also a mantra based on the Ah sound whose syllables can also be appended to (recited as if from within) most any region of the body, in no particular order, in order to move the Qi and open up the body’s channel pathways too.

As with these other mantra practices, after your Qi is stirred up (activated or moved) by reciting this “mantra” you should then try to smoothen it out so that your body’s energy feels harmonious overall, which people refer to as the sensation of “bliss.” “Bliss” just means that your body feels more comfortable or pleasant. Unfortunately, meditation alone rarely makes the body feel blissful. What ancient spiritual texts fail to tell you is that you have to push, move, excite, enliven, stir up, vitalize, animate, energize, arouse, or exhilarate your Qi through practices like visualization and nei-gong, and then afterwards smoothen it out to feel physical bliss.

When your Qi is first stirred up and starts working through your Qi channels, it does not feel blissful at all, and yet the sensations you will feel of internal energy movement are exactly what some schools refer to as the bliss you are supposed to cultivate. However, the real bliss is after you next harmonize all of your awakened internal energy so that it feels comfortable and balanced. Unfortunately, the danger in arousing your vital energy is that you will give into sexual desires because of that energy, and then sexual dissipation that loses the very energy you need to keep opening up your Qi channels.

As stated, the call to prayer of Islam (“La ilaha ill Allah”) is actually constructed like a mantra because of the sounds. Thus it is not only one of the pillars of the faith but can be used to help transform the Qi of your body and open its channels if you recite it on a continuous basis like a mantra. Islam has many other key phrases used in daily life that can be used like a Qi-mantra practice.

For instance, when praising something in Islam it is typical to say, “Subhanullah” (Glory to Allah). This phrase can also be used like a mantra. When appreciating something in Islam it is typical to say, “Masha-Allah” (As Allah willed). When saying this you can try to feel the Qi in your chest and heart region to open up the channels in that vicinity. Reciting “Masha-Allah” in this fashion is like reciting the Jesus prayer in the region of the heart to open up the Qi channels in that vicinity. When thanking someone

it is typical to say, “Jazakullah” (Allah reward you). When so saying you can try to feel the different sounds of this response in different parts of your body such as your spine, chest and head.

When meeting someone it is typical for a Moslem to say, “Assalamu ‘alaykum” (Peace be upon you). When so saying, a superior form of spiritual practice is not only to welcome the individual but to feel the Qi energy moved by each syllable in different parts of your body as well. As usual, this form of Qi cultivation from a welcoming phrase will slowly but surely lead to the opening of Qi channels, which is a superior form of Moslem practice. Replying to the above greeting, the syllables and sensations engendered by saying, “Wa ‘alaykum assalam” (And upon you be peace) in response can also be felt within your body. Doing so is again a type of spiritual practice.

When hearing about a death or tragedy, the sounds of “Inna lillahi wa inna ilayhi rajiun” (To Allah we belong and to Him we return) can be felt in different parts of the body, too. As with all these sayings, a single time only provides the most minor of channel vibrations, which is why *dikbr* (Moslem mantra practice in conjunction with breathing) requires you to continually recite the same phrase over and over again as is done for mantra recitation in all religions.

When giving in charity, “Fee eemanullah” (In Allah's faith) can be felt in the heart/chest region, for offerings of charity tend to open up the heart area. This is one of the ways in which ordinary people, without any special spiritual practice, help to purify their inner etheric Qi body and thereby win the reward of Heaven upon their death.

Whenever you practice some spiritual virtue (such as performing a selfless act of mercy, charity or kindness) and resultantly feel a warm sensation in your body, you should understand that the deed and your emotional response are opening Qi channels within your physical body. This is why you actually feel a warmth in your body after doing a good deed, such as practicing charity. The Qi is going through blocked channels, opening them, and the warmth you feel is the friction of that passage as the channels open.

SUMMARY

The smartest individuals within the organized religions recognize that many of their traditional religious prayers (ex. Alleluia or Hallelujah) constitute mantras whose sounds can help open up their Qi channels, and understand that they request help from higher beings for accomplishing the same task. This is another way in which praying can help you on the spiritual path.

Enlightened Buddhas devote themselves to helping people who recite

certain prayers, mantras and religious texts from each and every tradition. Therefore continuous prayer recitation, such as reciting the rosary in Christianity, can *and is* a means to generate Qi energy sensations in your body and through that Qi activation can help you open up blockages in your Qi channels.

This form of Qi cultivation over time is like the practice of collecting pennies that can accumulate into a very large fortune, and is indicative of how Qi cultivation practice works. The big results only accrue over time after lots of consistent effort.

You must continually recite mantras over/within specific body locations for a very long time (while trying to move the Qi) to produce a definite result in channel purification, which is why the religious masters of the past turned this Nyasa Yoga practice into a type of daily prayer recitation. In that way people would undertake the necessary Mantrayana cultivation techniques without knowing what they were actually doing.

You can try to cultivate the body as a single unit, which is done via Master Hakuyu's soma duck egg technique. You can cultivate it via two sections, as taught in the *Mahavairocana Sutra* and *Yoga Yajnavalkya*. You can cultivate it via three sections, such as practiced in Taoism or Buddhism with Om Ah Hum. You can cultivate it in four or even five sections by various mantra, visualization, and nei-gong practices. If you use chakras as points of focus, you can cultivate the body in seven sections. If you use the white skeleton visualization method of Buddhism you can cultivate it according to bones, body appendages or sections and then as a single body unit.

Books like *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines* (Walter Evans-Wentz), *The Six Yogas of Naropa* (Glenn Mullin), and *Readings on The Six Yogas of Naropa* (Glenn Mullin) also teach various ways to cultivate the body. Helpful tantric techniques can also be found in *A Systematic Course in the Ancient Tantric Techniques of Yoga and Kriya* (Satyananda Saraswati), *Dharana Darshan: Yogic, Tantric and Upanishadic Practices of Concentration and Visualization* (Niranjanananda Saraswati), *Kriya Secrets Revealed* (J.C. Stevens).

You can also cultivate your body according to channel lines, marma/acupuncture points and in many other ways as well until the real kundalini arises. The possibilities are endless for how to cultivate all the Qi/Prana of your body so as to open up all the bonds in every cell, tissue, muscle, bone and organ. This is how you eventually produce a deva body. Many traditions have worked out cultivation sadhana to do this quickly, such as in the Asian religions, but it can be done in the western religions as well. It just takes wisdom and devoted practice.

Adapted From: NYASA YOGA
CH. 8 – “Bindus, Channels, Glands,

Limbs And Internal Organs”

Again, the basic principle of advanced Mantrayana practice is not just to continually recite a mantra mindlessly but to focus your concentration on a particular location of the body when reciting and to mantra as if from within that area in order that the vibration shakes up the Qi energy within it. You should do this while seizing that area (trying to feel the energy) or while visualizing a color change or brightness change encompassing that region, or while stretching that area in order to bring Qi to the region. You basically try to grab an area with your consciousness so as to affect the Qi in that region. The next step is that you want your Qi to push through the local Qi channels.

Many methods can be used in your “grabbing” and “pushing” of Qi/prana to open up the energy channels within a region. You can simultaneously layer many methods upon one another for cultivating your Qi channels (*nadis*), and thus can vary the practice in different ways. The whole point is that you can use a variety of different cultivation efforts to purify your body’s Qi and channels.

When the energy within you due to these efforts reaches a state of fullness all over, that state is called bliss though the feeling is by no means blissful. Initially it is just chaotic energy that is not peaceful. Within that state of fullness you can feel where the energy is blocked or restricted, and can try to move your Qi in those regions to open up the channels and smooth out imbalances. Due to the internal sensations, you will know where you need to do more qi-gong or nei-gong work to produce an internal state of equilibrium. After you harmonize the Qi everywhere in your body, you can thereby reach a *state of comfort* that is a higher stage of bliss than the excitement or excitation phase used for stirring up your Qi in the first place.

During the Twelve-year Period after the genuine Kundalini Awakening, during which time future masters are devotedly working on transforming their body’s Qi channels to be able to generate the deva body (subtle body, impure illusory body, astral body, *yin-shen*, mind-born body, etc.) and yet higher stages of purified attainment, they are using many forms of Nyasa and Mantrayana practice as well as many other techniques to help quickly transform their physical body.

The more methodologies you *simultaneously* add to your efforts, the better will be your results if you do the practices correctly. It takes wisdom to determine which ones to do and with what strength and frequency. Here are several of the possibilities one might consider.

Qi Channels

To get things started, a wise practitioner can do Mantrayana or Nyasa while focusing on the *major* Qi channels of their body by using acupuncture meridian charts as a reference guide. There are twelve principal meridian Qi channels) in Chinese medicine that are associated with internal organs, and eight extraordinary channels. These have their own set of acupuncture points along their length that can also be used for mantra and concentration practice, too.

According to the tantric Yoga schools, there are 72,000 *nadis* and among them the ten most important are the *ida*, *pingala*, *sushumna*, *gandhari*, *bastijihva*, *pasa*, *yasavini*, *alambusa*, *kubru*, and *sankhini*. These are considered the primary support for all other *nadis*, or Qi channels. These *nadi* are also often taken as a basis for various Nyasa or visualization practices. The most important of these ten are the *ida* (left), *pingala* (right) and *sushumna* (central) *nadi* that are located in the spine, so most every cultivation school pays a lot of qi-gong and nei-gong attention on working to open up the channels in the spine. People think that the central channel, called the *zhong mai* in Chinese, runs up the center of the body but it is actually within the spine too.

The *ida nadi* of the spine is also considered to run along the left side of the nose, the *pingala* along the right side of the nose, the *gandhari nadi* is in the left eye, the *basti jihva* is located in the right eye, the *poosha* is situated in the right ear, the *yasavini nadi* is situated in the right ear, the *alampusa nadi* is located in the face, the *gubru nadi* is situated in the base of the genitals, and the *sankhini nadi* is located in the muladhara.⁴⁸ Actually, this only focuses on termination points of the *nadi* because the *ida*, *pingala* and *sushumna* are in the spine and collectively called the back channel or *tu-mai* by the Chinese. In order to cultivate a quiet mind you must open up the Qi channels in the spine that lead to the brain as well as the Qi channels in the brain within the nerves. If one does visualization, qi-gong and nei-gong practices guided by DTI pictures of the brain, this will quickly speed your cultivation attainments.

For cultivation beginners the most important channels are those within the spine and down the front of the body (the digestive organs) as well as the two leg channels that proceed from the perineum down the inside of the legs to the big toes. When you have excess energy you should lightly move the Qi down the channels of the leg to your big toes, and when your energy is waning you can draw it upwards from the toes along the same channels.

Martial artists who are practicing the horse stance position, as explained in my book *Internal Martial Arts Nei-gong*, can make their practice many times

⁴⁸ *Yoga Makaranda or Yoga Saram (The Essence of Yoga)*, Sri Tirumalai Krishnamacharya (India, Madurai C.M.V. Press, 1938), pp. 44-45.

more effective by visualizing the two channels running down the insides of their legs to their big toes when standing. The usefulness of this posture can be further amplified by visualizing the lines and by lightly reciting a mantra as if from along the channels. When extending the arms and holding them out in front of yourself for many minutes in Taiji practice, you can visualize the arm channels in the same fashion to help open them.

Obviously, many martial arts training postures and yoga asanas can be augmented by combining visualization efforts with the mantra techniques of Nyasa and Mantrayana.

***Bindus* or Acupuncture Points**

As mentioned, a practitioner can also mantra on the acupuncture and acupressure points of the body, too, or they can focus on a simplified set of acupuncture points called the *marma* points as taught in India.

The *marma* points are the “*bindus*” or “points” mentioned in Buddhist Vajrayana yoga texts. These texts also mention “drops” that are supposedly substances that melt within the body when the Qi channels become warm, but this is just nonsense. This was a false explanation invented ages ago to guide aspirants in visualization efforts, and the incorrect information has proceeded forwards until now. If you ever see drops or bodhicitta in visions, it’s just a visualization trick being played on you by devas.

The whole idea of substances melting within your Qi channels is nonsense. Basically, as your Qi energy goes through your channels to widen them there is friction, and with friction there is heat and warming. You can also say that you need warmth to open up your Qi channels or the process of opening them produces warmth. All stages of Qi purification will therefore involve heat or warmth in your physical and subtle bodies as your channels open although there are times when you will experience coolness or shivering cold when channels open too. There are indeed Yin Qi blessings that are accompanied by coolness rather than warmth, but there are no “drops” of special substances inside the channels which are being melted.

In any case, the early stages of spiritual practice constitute a process of purification or transformation of your Qi and Qi channels whereas Shakyamuni Buddha called it the balancing of the four (five) elements of your body.

Logical Body Segments

By now you should realize that a practitioner who wants to change his body can also take any mantra and recite it upon, or as if from within or along, any areas or logical segments/sections of his body such as the limbs

separated by joints.

As an example, you might focus on your entire upper arm (thus feeling it), and recite a mantra from within the arm while trying to feel the length and internal flesh of the arm (which means *trying to feel the energy* of the arm). You might also try to change its color, or visualize the humerus bone of the arm shining inside it with a bright white light while you also try to feel the arm. There are many variations along these lines that you can try to master. All of them take lots of work.

All these extra activities simply help to bring Qi to that segment of your body, which thus assists in opening and purifying your channels in the vicinity of your concentration. This is why you try to feel the limb you are concentrating on, and why stretching exercises of that limb will help to open up the channels as well. This is especially important for the legs.

The best and highest practice is to stretch the individual muscles, such as through Pilates or Yoga, so that you can feel them. While stretching the muscles, try to feel the entire length or outline of the muscle and simultaneously use visualization and mantra to try to push, excite, or activate the Qi of that muscle. The same can be done for your bones and internal organs.

Internal Organs

For instance, another Nyasa method is to focus on the various organs of the body and to recite mantras as if from those locations. The famous “Six Healing Sounds” from Chinese Taoism is an example of how to use this technique for cultivating your body organs, and is a good example of a six section method.

The effectiveness of the Six Healing Sounds of Taoism can be exponentially increased if practitioners try to “feel” their organs when making the sounds, which are supposed to connect with the Qi of the organs. They can even visualize their organs changing color when making the sounds by using the classic colors of the Chinese medical schools – red (heart), green or blue (liver), white (lung), black or blue (kidneys), yellow (stomach and spleen). Another method is to try to feel a Qi pathway between a selected organ and other logical regions of your body such as the portions of the hand or foot that correspond to the organs via the theories of reflexology.

The idea of simultaneously using your breath, sensations, and visualization when using the Six Healing Sounds can be used for other non-traditional parts within the body, too, such as the small and large intestines or the brain. The best way to open up the brain, however, is by spinning or moving your Qi along the structure of the brain and major nerve pathways as revealed by DTI diagrams. This is very important for quick progress in

meditation and spiritual cultivation. Please do this if you want to succeed quickly.

When focusing on a particular organ, you might even link the appropriate reflexology zones in the feet and hands to that organ, feeling a connection between all these regions (to help open up the meridians along these lines) while also focusing on any related processing centers in the brain, too.

THE SIX HEALING SOUNDS

As to the actual Six Healing Sounds practice itself for cultivating the Qi of your internal organs, it can readily be found in many Taoist books and on the internet. This is a method of cultivating six internal organs of your body, and thus six body regions that are normally ignored by other internal energy cultivation methods. One of the shortest but best explanations comes from Immortal Li Qingyun, who explained:

“The Six Qi are 1) Blowing [Chui]. 2) Exhaling [Hu]. 3) Giggling [Xi]. 4) Expelling [He]. 5) Hushing [Xu]. 6) Resting [Xi]. These are the Buddhist way of curing internal diseases. There is a chant that reads, ‘Expelling breath controls the heart, blowing controls the kidneys, exhaling controls the spleen; resting controls the lungs; hushing controls the liver; and giggling controls the Triple Warmer.’ Everyone who wants to know about the secrets for treating visceral diseases and longevity can listen to me to explain. Human viscera are the easiest to get sick. If not treating them right away, one would die. The Six Words of ‘Chui,’ ‘Hu,’ ‘Xi,’ ‘He,’ ‘Xu,’ and ‘Xi’ can treat all kinds of internal organ disease and cure them. If there is no disease, also use these six words to extinguish irrational thoughts and keep demons away. The method for self treatment is: every day between 11:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m., close the eyes, sit quietly, knock teeth, swallow saliva, and read these six words softly.

“Heart disease patients should cross their hands and place them on the head, then intone *He* [pronounced ‘ho,’ the Expelling Breath] thirty-six times softly.

“Kidney disease patients should place their hands to surround the knees and intone *Chui* [pronounced ‘chway,’ Blowing Breath] thirty-six times softly.

“Liver disease patients should cross their hands and put them over the Jade Pillow [occiput], close the eyes, and intone *Xu* [pronounced ‘shue,’ Hushing Breath] thirty-six times softly.

“Lung disease patients should overturn their hands, place them on the back, and intone *Xi* [pronounced ‘shee,’ Resting breath] thirty-six times softly.

“Spleen problem patients should put their hands over the abdomen,

bite their lips, and intone *Hu* [pronounced ‘who,’ Exhaling Breath] thirty-six times softly.

“For Triple Warmer problems [in the thoracic and abdomino-pelvic cavities], lay down, close the eyes, and intone *Xi* [pronounced ‘she-hee,’ Giggling Breath] thirty-six times softly.

“These are the best ways to treat visceral diseases. Only people who have done them can understand thoroughly and know the effects.”⁴⁹

There are other variants of the Six Healing Sounds too. For instance, the traditional sounds are Shoo or Xuu for the liver, Haww or Huhh for the heart, Hooo for the stomach, Ssss or Shhh or Xi for the lungs, Chuu or Chway for the kidneys, and Shee for the triple warmer. As you can see, the sound variants are many.

The important point is to find a sound *that works for you* rather than trying to be perfect in phonetically duplicating the teachings from some particular school. “Works” means that when you use a particular sound for an organ that you can actually feel the Qi of that organ or a connection with that organ. You can move that Qi to help transform the Qi channels within the organ.

You want to use a sound that works such that in the attachment to or gripping of an organ you can cultivate its channels. You need to find a sound for each organ that helps you connect with the Qi of that organ, which can then be used to help cultivate it. The Six Healing Sounds give you a basis from which to start testing different sounds to determine what works best for you.

ENDOCRINE GLAND VISUALIZATION

It is a basic fact that when you focus or concentrate on an area of your body and try to feel the region, you bring Qi to that area. This is because your Qi (vital energy) and mind (thought or consciousness) are linked. Your thoughts and Qi are linked such that the two “ride together” and your thoughts can move your Qi throughout your body. This is one of the basic principles behind Nyasa Yoga.

If you bring a sound (mantra) to an area in order to move its Qi, you can also nudge the Qi in that area after a long amount of practice and training. If you try to grab an area and change it in your mind through visualization efforts of some sort that affects its Qi, this will also bring Qi to the area and activate the Qi channels in the region.

While we have been discussing organs and body sections, your glands and endocrine system can all be rejuvenated through this technique too. By

⁴⁹ Yang Sen, Stuart Alve Olson translator, *The Immortal: True Accounts of the 250-Year-Old Man, Li Qingyun*, (Arizona: Valley Spirit Arts, 2014), pp. 368-370.

visualizing the glands of your body and sending Qi to those areas you can help activate them, which is a positive step towards *physical rejuvenation* that is highly encouraged.

On the road of cultivation you want to reach a state of hormonal balance, and this type of cultivation practice (visualizing your glands and sending Qi to them) will help you to do so.

First let's familiarize ourselves with the location of the major glandular organs within your body:

- The area of the brain stem that encompasses the pineal, hypothalamus and pituitary glands
- Salivary glands on the sides of the mouth
- Thyroid and parathyroid glands of the throat
- Thymus gland of the windpipe near the heart behind the breastbone
- Pancreas
- Adrenal glands atop the kidneys (just envision the kidneys)
- Ovaries and uterus (and breasts), or testes

To meditate on or cultivate your glands you mentally locate them within your body and then shine light on them or visualize them as if shining with light. You can also try to rotate your Qi within and around the glands.

You proceed by starting with the glands in your brain and then work downwards, visualizing the throat region, then thymus, and so on until you can visualize all the glandular regions simultaneously, feeling the Qi in these areas, and then you are finished. When starting with the brain, it is also very important to take the extra step of focusing on the brain stem and cerebellum.

This is a practice that will not only help you open up the Qi routes to your glands, which are some of the most important organs of your body, but help your hormonal system (once glands are reactivated) achieve a better and more proper state of balance. It can also produce some degree of physical rejuvenation.

**From: *DETOX CLEANSE YOUR BODY*
*QUICKLY AND COMPLETELY***

CH. 8 – “Lung Detoxification”

In ancient Indian, one of the commonly taught methods for helping to detox the body was to practice daily pranayama techniques, which are breath retention exercises. The theory is that by deeply inhaling clean air

into your lungs and lower abdomen, holding it until you can retain it no longer, and next forcibly expelling it, you will push poisons out of your body and thus dramatically improve your health and longevity.

The ancient Indian and Chinese medical schools both felt that holding your breath forces your body to open up the energy meridians within it that lays beneath your body's physical structure as an invisible scaffolding like atomic bonds. Once that energy scaffolding is freed of obstructions because of this forceful technique, the energy within your body will flow more freely.

This improved energy flow, along with the forceful consequences of holding your breath, will help to push out toxins and other obstructions imbedded within your skin and connective tissues. This is why pranayama breath retention techniques often produce skin rashes, itching and other temporary but unpleasant signs of detoxification. They are a form of detoxification therapy.

The technique of holding your breath not only aids in eliminating circulatory obstructions throughout your body, but over time also increases your lung capacity. It balances your breathing which in turn helps improve your health and longevity as well.

Which pranayama method is best to practice for such results? The *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* lists several but as with exercise, there is no best one method. Because it is so difficult to motivate yourself to practice pranayama (since no one wants to hold his/her breath for a long period of time and then do this several times in a row), the best one ends up being the one you will bother to practice.

Most people hate pranayama breath retention practices because they can be quite uncomfortable. After all, you have to hold your breath while doing nothing, and in this era of constant mental busyness people don't like trying to sit still doing nothing while remaining uncomfortable. Nevertheless if you learn to do this every day I can promise you remarkable benefits.

The one pranayama technique I most often recommend comes from ancient Tibet and is known as nine-bottled wind practice. It is a technique I practiced myself for many years. The reason I prefer this technique is because it seems to produce better mental clarity and health results than the techniques espoused within most Yoga texts. Three people who regularly practiced this technique had their lung capacity measured, and each told me it had increased that capacity by 20%! I also had a pranayama expert tell me this was the single most powerful method he ever found of the dozens of pranayama exercises he had practiced.

As explained, the purpose of pranayama retention practice is to help open up your energy meridians and expel poisons from your body, increase your lung capacity, make your lungs and respiratory processes more

efficient, and improve the energy circulation within your body. Frequent pranayama practice often produces rosy cheeks, brightens the complexion, and seems to also “brighten” or “open” the mind if you learn how to hold your breath long enough.

As to the instructional specifics, the nine-bottled wind practice involves slowly drawing air into your lungs using alternating nostrils. Closing one nostril you fully fill your lungs with as much air as possible by inhaling deeply through the other opened nostril. You then hold the air deeply inside your lungs for as long as possible while staying relaxed (not tensing your muscles but keeping them as relaxed as possible), and quickly expel the air when you can retain it no longer, shooting it out like an arrow. You do this three times for one nostril, three times for the other nostril, and then three times inhaling through both nostrils.

The 9-bottled wind practice steps are as follows:

- (1) Sit in an upright position.
- (2) Visualize your body becoming as clear as crystal.
- (3) Close your mouth and also close your left nostril completely by pressing your left hand’s index finger against the left nostril to shut it. Your left arm should be held perpendicular to your body while holding the nostril shut.

(4) Slowly inhale air deeply into your lungs through your right nostril. The inhalation should consist of a long breath that goes inside you as deep as possible. During the inhalation stage, visually imagine that your body becomes filled with a bright light that eliminates any internal obstructions. Continue inhaling as slowly and deeply as possible until you are full and can inhale no longer.

(5) Now relax your body as much as possible while holding your trapped breath within. Hold your breath for as long as possible, but do so using as few muscles as possible. Don’t tighten any muscles while holding your breath so that your energy can start opening up all the tiny energy channels in your tissues without having to fight muscular tension.

(6) When you can hold your breath no longer, exhale it as quickly and forcefully as possible through the other open nostril. Forcefully expel the air out of your body using a quick blow out to complete one cycle or round of this exercise.

(7) Repeat this exercise of slow inhalation, long retention, and forceful exhalation two more times. In other words, you perform this retention-exhalation routine a total of three times for the right nostril. All the while the left nostril is kept closed while the active nostril for inhaling and exhaling is the right nostril.

(8) Switch hands, so that the right hand’s index finger now pinches shut the right nostril while the left nostril remains open. Your right arm should

be held perpendicular to your body while holding the nostril shut.

Inhale through your left nostril following the same instructions as before, hold your breath for as long as possible and then forcefully exhale. Repeat this exercise three times for this side of the body. Thus, six repetitions of this exercise will now have been completed.

(9) When the left and right nostril breathings are both done, extend both your arms as straight as possible while pushing down on your lap, locking your elbows, and lift up your chest. Inhale slowly through both open nostrils, hold your breath within for as long as possible, and then exhale quickly by shooting the air out from your nostrils when you cannot hold the air inside you any longer. Do this for a total of three times.

Altogether nine inhalations and retentions are performed in this exercise, which gives rise to the name of nine-step bottled wind practice. When practicing this pranayama I always watch a clock with a second hand in order to try to increase the number of seconds I can hold my breath. I mark my progress on a graph that I post on the wall to motivate me to increase my holding time. Most everyone can initially hold their breath for 40 seconds, but after a few weeks it is common for this to become 3-4 minutes.

Lung Support

If your lung capacity increases this may help with conditions like asthma, emphysema and COPD. Many individuals try to help support their lungs through nutritional supplementation, but it isn't easy. For instance, herbal and vitamin formulations simply cannot get rid of any tar from cigarette smoke that becomes lodged within the lungs.

Traditional Chinese Medicine and Ayurveda offer a variety of herbal lung support formulas, but you must see experienced practitioners of these medical schools to find the one that is right for you. I like Systemic Formulas "L-Lung" for lung support and have seen nattokinase and Vitalzym greatly improve lung conditions when there were blood clots or scarring inside the lung tissues, but in searching over the years for other lung products I haven't found many I can heartily recommend.

Asthma is a breathing problem that seems to be affecting more and more people each year. A famous naturopath once told me that he used alcoholic tincture drops of the little-known herb quebracho – which was once called the "digitalis of the lungs" in America - for all his asthma sufferers. This remedy is so unknown that I simply had to document it for those individuals that might benefit.

Asthma sufferers can also detoxify a home of offending gases or particles using an air purifier. Activated carbon, activated charcoal or ozone generators chemically break down toxic gasses, vapors, and odors in the air

within a room. Of these options I prefer the Aranizer brand of ozone generators because of their superior quality and some extra work they do that isn't done by ordinary ozone generators. To use an ozone generator to clear a room of fumes (such as after you painted a room or want to clear it of furniture varnish outgassing) you place it as high as possible in the room (on the top of a shelf for instance) and then turn it on to let the ozone fall down and flood the area.

HEPA filters, on the other hand, remove particles in the air and trap them with filters. There are many reliable quality manufacturers of HEPA filters, which are the most popular type purchased for homes and offices, and because there are many ratings available on the web you don't need any guidance from me on what brands you might buy.

However, I always recommend that asthma sufferers and others with respiratory illness try a Wein brand of ion generator for their home, which can make a great difference in cutting down their suffering. Another potentially useful helpmate you should not overlook is the Wein Minimate AS150MM, which is a personal wearable ion generator for asthma sufferers that uses ionized streams of electrons to destroy pollutant molecules under the nose. You normally would not think that these smaller units work but they have been a godsend to many asthma sufferers.

Several people with lung problems have also told me that they used a Frolov device to help their bronchial asthma and get off steroid inhalers or other medications. Few people know about the Frolov device, which was invented based on the work of Dr. Buteyko of Russia who taught people a way to breath less.

You practice breathing through a Frolov device, which is made of inexpensive plastic, to train your breathing. The Frolov device creates CO2 reuptake, resending part of your exhaled CO2 back into your body when you inhale. This feedback of CO2 causes you to develop more efficient breathing in each and every breathing cycle. The result of training with the device is that with each breath you end up delivering more oxygen more deeply into your body.

The last lung issue we can address in a detoxification fashion concerns sinus problems. For recurrent sinus problems there are two procedures you might try.

The first is an Indian neti pot, which is a yogic method that traditionally uses salt water to clean your upper nostrils. You pour water into the pot, add salt water, and then its shape helps you pour water through one nostril and out the other, thus washing the sinus cavity. The Navage Nose Cleaner nasal care equipment tries to do this for you automatically.

If you use the PurestColloids.com brand of colloidal silver instead of salt water, and wash the sinus cavity with this germ killing silver (you only need a medicine dropper rather than the neti pot), this tends to clear up

sinus infections because the silver kills bacteria. Due to a unique manufacturing process the PurestColloids.com brand of colloidal silver (MesoSilver) is the one I prefer since it has the smallest particle size and largest surface area of all such products in the world.

The second modality one might try is a little-known therapy - Dr. Dean Howell's NeuroCranial Restructuring which uses a tiny balloon, inflated within the nostrils, to lift the sphenoid bone of the skull to improve sinus function and breathing. You would have to find a practicing physician for this therapy through the internet and then consult with him or her to see if it might be useful for your personal condition.

CHAPTER 7: GONG-FU EXPERIENCES ON THE CULTIVATION PATH

Most people who engage in spiritual cultivation will start to experience various types of cultivation gong-fu, which are unusual internal energy or “spiritual” experiences that you do not normally encounter during mundane life. These experiences often include strong emotional feelings that raise your Yin Qi or Yang Qi at times.

Sometimes strong thoughts or emotions of fear, fright, anxiety, worry, sadness, helplessness, depression, submission, guilt, disgust, suicide, and chills will appear during the course of your cultivation that bring up the Yin Qi/Prana within your body. These are all different types of Yin thoughts or emotions that stimulate your Yin Qi. In fact, at times spiritual beings will stimulate such feelings/thoughts within you in order to help purify your Yin Qi. The stage of *ching-an* mentioned in *Tao and Longevity*, where you feel like a cool vapor is enveloping or issuing from your body, and times where you feel deep chills within you due to cultivation and start shaking so that your teeth are chattering, are examples of such Yin Qi blessings.

The Yang Qi within you usually arises when thoughts/emotions concerning anger, pride, courage, triumph, confidence, euphoria, sexual excitement, exhilaration, enthusiasm, joy, cheerfulness, awe, optimism, love, strength, mirth, aliveness, and excitement arise within you. Therefore masculinity practices, strong sexual desire, sunlight visualization techniques, ordinary meditation practice, pranayama, attending weddings and other celebrations (such as happy holidays), active exercise, sex, dancing, fighting, singing and so forth are all circumstances that can stimulate the Yang Qi/Prana within your body.

Both anger and pride give rise to Yang Qi. Therefore, you should note

that some deity protectors in Buddhism and other religions are represented as Wrathful Deities and therefore sculpted or painted with angry frightening faces. This is meant to scare people away from doing evil deeds. As the saying goes, people who feel their behavior is watched by spiritual powers are nicer people than otherwise – “watched people are nice people.” If you remove the moral or religious obstacles to certain behaviors then there is nothing to stop anyone, so you must remind people they are being watched in order to help pacify society to prevent people from committing wrongs. That’s another reason such statues are used at the entranceway to temples.

Anger is also a way of making your Yang Qi arise. During the Twelve Year kundalini period, it is common to stoke students into raising their anger or pride in order to stimulate their Yang Qi, and they are often caused to shout continuously in anger at imaginary devils and so forth and even sweat due to the exertion.

In Tibetan Buddhism, tantric students undertake sadhanas involving “divine pride” that involve imagining that they are powerful deities in order to give rise to their Yang Qi. The students imagine cultivating the Qi of that deity, and therefore imagine that they are wrathful, courageous, proud, strong, omniscient and so forth in order to raise their Yang Qi accordingly. As another instance, the future chimpanzee expert, Jane Goodall, was given dreams when young that she was a male adventurer cutting his way through the African jungle in order to raise her Yang Qi at that time. This type of dream, such as that a woman is a male superhero like Thor, or simply a man with Yang Qi type qualities, or remains a female but grows a penis and so forth, is often given to young girls in order to raise their Yang Qi to help their subtle body develop properly. Various cultivation *yidam* practices are designed to raise your Yin or Yang Qi as explained. Enlightened masters who succeeded with your particular *yidam*, and their students, work in teams on transforming your Qi based on that selection.

For instance, in the Tibetan Gelug tradition there are the Guhyasamaja, Chakrasamvara, and Kalachakra *yidams*. The Sakyha Red Hat tradition uses Hevajra. In India there are those who practice Kali, Devi, Lakshmi and other tantras or who worship Ganesh, Krishna, Vishnu, Shiva and so forth. Many individuals have succeeded by following a particular lineage and then come to help you based on what you pursue.

Entire families of Tibetan masters have succeeded with many types of *yidam*, and of other Tibetan masters and teachers from other traditions with their students also come to help. In the Jewish tradition, the masters of a particular lineage (“dynasty”) come to help a new individual attain the deva body, and in the Sufi schools it is the same just as it is with the various Taoist, Christian, Buddhist, Jain, Sikh and other lineages. Some of the people in these lineages are abusive and others are not. It all depends upon the culture and character of those lineages and how much leeway they allow

their deva students.

Buddhas and their students are working on raising and purifying the Qi of human beings all the time. Great masters will use their various *sambhogakaya* bodies (composed of different etheric substances since they reside in different heavenly planes) or project *nirmanakaya* “emanation bodies” to enter into people to give them thoughts, intuitions, promptings/urges, emotions, courage, strength, energy, healing, comfort, dreams, motivation, inspiration, aspirations and so forth in order to help people in all sorts of hidden ways. Thus, they will often project a *nirmanakaya* to go into someone to give them vital energy so that they can help transform that person’s Qi, or obtain strength, or block pain, or help recover from illness. At times they do this to give dreams as well. When practitioners feel sensations of warmth or cold during cultivation efforts, such as a warm feeling in the belly after prolonged mantra practice or prayer recitation, this is one of their involvements. Sometimes during meditation people have feelings of bliss in their body that are similar to the fullness of energy that is felt through sexual relations, and this is usually due to spiritual beings inside them too.

Thus you will often experience actual physical shaking, feel hotness or coldness throughout your body without there being any illness, feel your limbs as being heavy or light or empty inside, and feel traveling movements of internal energy traverse inside your body due to their efforts at helping you purify and transform your Qi/Prana and Qi channels (*nadis*). All these sorts of physical sensations, and more, are attributed to your vital energy but have spiritual beings associated with them as helpers initiating and guiding the movements.

Most everyone feels various energies inside themselves as a direct result of spiritual practice. Even ordinary Christian, Moslem and Jewish practitioners who fervently pray will end up feeling such things at times. However, what people don’t know is that the causation mechanism behind these inner energy currents and their associated sensations actually includes the interventions of spiritual beings trying to help them.

During sex it is also common that higher spiritual beings sometimes help move your internal energy too. This is one of the easiest times to get your vitality to flow while you are also experiencing an excitement and happiness that can energize/stimulate the Qi/Prana in most of your body. During sex it is easy to help you *move your Qi* to strengthen the integrity of your subtle body that you will have after death. Kundalini yoga and *nei-gong* exercises train you to do this on your own, using your mind and will, rather than relying on the help of a partner. Because they are extremely effective in helping transform your inner Qi body, this is why Master Nan Huai-chin says that (1) sexual cultivation and (2) kundalini yoga are the two cultivation schools particularly practiced by Desire Realm devas whose bodies are

composed of Qi energy.

The primary form of Bodhisattva aid provided to people is by altering their consciousness, i.e. giving people understanding of topics, granting them broader perspectives, helping them remember things, and giving them helpful thoughts such as “ideas from nowhere” that can help them solve problems, get done what needs to be done, change their opinions and so forth. As examples, a thought to call someone on the phone, a brilliant moment of inspiration, inner strength and courage when you need it that seem to appear out of nowhere, intuitions, and sometimes even lucky breaks are some of the things that can be given to people without their knowing the heavenly source of aid and assistance. It is usually just a deva or heavenly Bodhisattva who goes into your brain to give you such thoughts. They also intervene to help people develop virtuous roots, and work to quench hatred, malice, and free people from habits such as stinginess.

This type of intervention happens to everyone regardless of their beliefs or their spiritual tradition. Everyone! This is happening to people everywhere across the world all the time even if they don’t believe in it. Devas, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are intervening in human affairs like this and in other ways constantly for everyone. Yes, Heaven tries to help people constantly, but there is always a limit as to what can be done. As previously stated, the *Avatamsaka Sutra* records the vows of various Bodhisattvas to help people along lines like this.

Another common type of gong-fu along the spiritual path is to see visions such as deities or saints in the air above you, or visions of beautiful buildings, heavens and palaces. This is called “manifesting an apparitional body” or “producing displays for sentient beings,” and it is just a projection within your brain. Some people will see visions of dragons, ghosts, angels, demons, dakinis, giants, heavens, spiritual animals or (fictions of) past lives ... the list of helpful or even mischievous, misleading visions is endless. Naturally these are all fictitious illusions. Those things don’t actually exist but are just projections created by a spiritual being that you see within your brain, which is why no one else can see them. If two people can see them and others cannot it’s because they are cheating two at the same time.

As explained within the *Vimalakirti Sutra*, and as appears with Yoga’s list of eight siddhis, Bodhisattvas and devas have the power of *anima*, which is the ability to shrink their subtle bodies, and do so to conduct lessons inside your brain on how to give you thoughts, emotions and various images like this. Devas can also make their bodies larger too, which is the power of *mahima*.

Even Christianity affirms that spirits can expand or shrink their bodies to occupy your own, with Elder Thaddeus of Vitovnica commenting, “A spirit can occupy a space much larger than the volume of the human body,

but it can also occupy a much smaller space, even as small as one cubic centimeter. Therefore it is possible that an entire legion of ...spirits may enter a person.” When devas shrink themselves and enter your brain for lessons, or simply enter you to give thoughts, this is how “God” helps human beings whereas it is Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and devas actually doing so.

Think about it - you cannot actually see deities in the air above you or in front of you because you have no “psychic” organs to do so even if those things were real, so they must be pictures projected inside your head, *especially when others cannot see them and when you cannot see them at will*. This is why a single person in a room can have a vision while no one else does. Also, if you did have psychic organs then you should be able to see such things all the time, at will, but you cannot. Therefore they are illusory projections - illusions. Sometimes a master will give everyone the same vision, but once again they are just illusions. The Japanese Zen school calls such things *mara* and tells practitioners to ignore them.

What happens is this. A deva (angel) or higher spiritual being enters into your brain (after shrinking themselves down to size through *anima* or simply possessing it in entirety through a full body-sized *nirmanakaya*) and produces the projection in your visual center. There is a big difference in skill between various sorts of images projected. If it is an indistinct or hazy black and white “shadow and light” sort of image, the projection is usually performed by beginners learning the technique under the supervision of their teacher. If it is a color image or moving vision, or an image that seems to appear in space then it is done by more advanced practitioners.

You are just seeing a vision they created, that’s all. It is not real, just a delusion rather than reality, but people don’t know this. You are definitely seeing something, yes, but it is an image that others are projecting inside you and thus an illusion or delusion rather than something real. When someone during a psilocybin psychedelic trip or ayahuasca ceremony feels that they are talking to spirits, receiving divine guidance or experiencing communication with some sort of alien entity, it is usually these individuals at work masquerading as well.

The Demon Mara States chapter of the *Surangama Sutra* explains many of the various types of visions, visualizations, images, or delusions that devas and others practice projecting into the heads of spiritual practitioners. People see all sorts of fantasies and take them as spiritual realities when they are just spiritual beings fooling around. There are far more types of interventions than the few representative categories listed within this sutra. The *Surangama Sutra* calls the devas practicing this “demons,” but a more accurate term is “*asura*.” I just default to using “devas” throughout this text whereas when devas do harmful things to you then you should refer to them as *asuras*.

The mental image projections performed by spiritual beings also extend to giving us dreams, but normally cultivators experience waking state visions where you actually see something unusual such as things within another person's body, deities and sages, events far away and so on. You might even look at a master's body and it might seem to change, such as the face or its shape, because someone is projecting something in your consciousness on top of the normal vision you are seeing. When ordinary people say they saw someone's face change into that of a reptile, it could be one of these deva-wrung illusions too but usually it is just an ordinary delusion. It is delusional nonsense to maintain that humans are reptilians in disguise, such as individuals sometimes claim of the British royal family. Practitioners might also hear voices, music, prayers or mantras in their head or from other areas of their body. For instance, practitioners might hear within themselves the Christian prayers they often recite or mantras of Hinduism.

Of course you are not psychic nor have you "opened up your chakras" when such things happen. As explained in *Nyasa Yoga*, the idea of psychic organs called chakras is nonsense. *Nyasa Yoga* is the only book in existence that definitively reveals what chakras really are. They are just sections of your body as delineated by segments of your spine and other natural partitionings of your body, but especially the nerves of the nervous system. The reason that the nervous system was used for segmentation is because we are beings with consciousness, and it is through the nervous system that we have consciousness. Therefore the nerves of the spine are used to delineate body segments.

We also have an endocrine system of hormonal communication, ruled by our glands. Therefore our glands are another aspect of our physiology that you can concentrate upon through inner energy work routines. This is equivalent to the water element cultivation of the human body. Our cells have cellular receptors on their surface that are affected by vibrations, hormones and other substances in the blood, so there is a type of cellular communication system too that involves all the cells of your body en masse.

Lastly, our stomach, large and small intestines – our gut and abdominal area – have countless neurons so the gut is also a system that should be concentrated upon in spiritual cultivation.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CULTIVATING YOUR GUT

Too few individuals give attention to cultivating the route of the gut and abdominal organs, but that is what we evolutionarily are – a worm. This is why you should focus some *qi-gong* and *nei-gong* efforts on tracing out the feeling of the shape of your alimentary canal, esophagus, stomach and intestines. Don't forget the six inches of the large intestine that penetrates

into the body starting from the asshole, which some people try to open through sexual cultivation. You are trying to feel the shape of the organs because that opens up the Qi channels along those routes, just as direct massage does. Stretching opens up Qi channels for those muscles. Hence, pressing your tongue up against your palate on the roof of your mouth will cause the muscles within your thyroid to move, and thus is a way of exercising that area and hence opening it.

During evolution the worm, which is mostly muscle and digestive organs, developed an exoskeleton. Hence we have separate cultivation methods for just the muscles or bones of our body, or just the internal organs. For instance, with the white skeleton visualization technique you first envision that your flesh rots like a corpse, which is supposed to generate feelings/thoughts of disgust that stimulate your Yin Qi. Then your bones, which are exceedingly Yin since they are made of the cold mineral calcium, are imagined shining with a bright white light that floods them and the rest of your body. Thus, you first cultivate your Yin Qi and then stimulate the Yang Qi of your body within its Yin-most anatomical structure through this cultivation technique, which also strengthens your concentration and visualization practice. Afterwards you should rest your mind in emptiness by letting go of all thoughts and images and letting your Qi flow freely without obstruction or interference on your part. That's when spiritual masters can best work on you and get the most done.

For cultivating the center of our body, which is the core of our body from a developmental standpoint, we must remember that this is where our heart, lungs, stomach, kidneys and liver also reside. Cultivating our internal organs calls for a different type of cultivation method. The food comes in our mouth, then goes to the stomach/pancreas and finally traverses the intestines before being pooped out. From mouth to anus, the body is essentially a tube. It is a long alimentary canal, and the vital organs surround this tube.

In most systems where our internal organs are matched with various correspondences, the stomach is matched with the muscles (which is the entire body of the worm) as well as the virtues of stability, prudence, reliability, and dependability. Since the pancreas located next to the stomach secretes insulin that stabilizes the blood sugar, which regulates our moods and emotions, this is a good match. The stomach is also matched with trustworthiness, respect, loyalty and stable intention.

All of these emotions or virtues deal with stability and predictability. We usually eat our meals on a regular, predictable schedule. One can imagine having these traits in fullness, as with an immeasurable emotion cultivation technique, when working on cultivating the Qi of the body's core – the digestive organs, alimentary canal and surrounding muscles and tissues that become the rest of the body.

From another aspect the gut processes energy, so the lower belly (*dantian*) is considered the source of energy in the martial arts. This fact, that your energy resides in your gut, offers many options for visualization practice and inner energy work. The stomach also stands for nourishment and friendship, so one can cultivate the feeling of generating energy to nourish others who are friends, and use that sort of projection (and variants) to transform your personality over time.

Our digestive organs and alimentary canal, namely the ENS system, have over 100 million neurons that enable us to feel the inner world of our guts. However, they can also generate emotions, so one can imagine awakening this system with more consciousness (that has more neurons than the spinal cord or peripheral nervous system) by flooding it with Qi/energy all the time. You want the area healthy and you want to wake up its vital energy. Similar instructions are found in the martial arts, which tell you to focus on the *hara*, lower belly or abdomen to flood it with Qi, as also emphasized by Master Hakuyu, the Japanese mountain master of Zen master Hakuin.

In Jain cultivation, a meditator imagines a 16-petalled lotus at the level of the navel, and an inverted 8-petalled lotus at the location of the heart. One is told to imagine that golden flames from the bottom lotus flare up and rise to the inverted lotus, spread throughout your body and burn it in total, turning the body into charred ashes. Thus you try to give rise to warm Yang Qi throughout your body starting with these two areas. Next, a strong wind blows away the ashes, which are then subsequently washed away with celestial water to reveal a crystalline pure body.

This is yet another method to cultivate the entire body starting with the belly, and is similar to the white skeleton meditation of Buddhism. As you can see, countless methods have been developed over the ages to get you to move your internal vital energy in various ways to transform, purify, open up, etcetera various regions of the body in preparation for the emergence of the subtle body. It takes many years of intense preparatory practice before you can initiate the real kundalini energy. This is why Milarepa said farewell to his teacher and went into retreat praying that the real kundalini energy would finally arise within him. One would think that he had already attained it because it seemed like he had superpowers, but perhaps those powers were coming from other beings, and he was cheated into believing that he possessed them. This is typically done for Aghori students in India. In any case, it is all a matter of countless Buddhas and their students picking the time to start the Twelve Year continuous process of Qi/Prana transformations within you that brings you the real kundalini transformation.

In the *Yoga Yajnavalkya*, which is one of the few cultivation books I highly recommend (containing many techniques you should practice), the reader is introduced to several cultivation techniques for the abdomen, such

as imagining a triangular flame of fire glowing like melted gold in the center of the body behind the navel. This is said to be the center of all *nadis* (Qi channels of the body) in order to also encourage you to cultivate this region. The focus is made because the lower abdomen is neglected in most cultivation techniques, and the curves of the intestines makes feeling it impossible and visualization practice of its shape is impossible as well. The Six Yogas of Naropa method has you visualize different images in this region to stimulate the Yang Qi. So does Hatha Yoga

You can also recite the mantra Ram or Vam in this area, and the *Yoga Yajnavalkya* says to imagine the deity Rudra in this region while doing abdominal cultivation practices. This, of course, attracts Qi into the area, thus purifying the nadis in the entire vicinity, and also attracts spiritual masters who have an affinity (are associated with) with Rudra cultivation methods (because of their vows). By specifying Rudra, rather than a more commonly worshipped deity, an enlightened master is able to cut through the clutter of human thoughts and find people actually using this technique. If you were using Shiva, Vishnu, Krishna or some other commonly used deity then your efforts would end up getting lost in the mental chatter that they inspect every day.

Thus you will cultivate the innards of your body if you invent various *nei-gong* methods for this region. It is a region that few people focus upon in their cultivation routines. In *Detox Your Body Quickly and Completely* I revealed techniques for healing the stomach, detoxifying the intestines and curing constipation. You should also always do abdominal exercises in this region to prevent hernias and massage the internal organs, such as the *navli kriya* practice of Hatha yoga. Many exercises such as this are far, far superior to prostrations as practiced in Christianity, Buddhism, Vajrayana and other schools.

Thus you have the brain and spinal nerves, glandular system, and digestive system as entirely different blueprints of focus for cultivation. Attached to the guts are the heart, lungs, liver and kidneys, so they can be combined with internal gut cultivation to speed the transformation of your physical body. The key is to use techniques that stimulate your vital energy into flooding these regions in order to strengthen the integrity of your inner Qi body.

Nyasa Yoga explains the principles behind these sorts of practices because countless techniques are available. All these techniques prepare you for the generation of the subtle body, which is enlightenment. You have to wash your inner Qi body over and over again first with your own Qi/Prana through intensified practices, and during the Twelve Year kundalini awakening it is other spiritual beings who use their own energy to wash your structure. As stated by many masters, don't worry whether your efforts will go to waste or not because they results tend to be cumulative such as

the skills you develop in learning how to move your internal energy this way or that. Several Zen masters have said that every human being who sincerely cultivates can achieve enlightenment in three lives or less, so you should start now.

The heart has countless nerves within it too, which opens the possibility for immeasurable emotions meditation practices on your heart chakra region where you are more joyous, generous, gregarious, compassionate-kind and so forth. You concentrate on the heart/chest cavity, recite mantras that vibrate the Qi in that region (such as “Ah” or “Ha”), and arouse the heart related emotions at the same time. Such practice should always include your chest and two arms. The arms represent reaching out and making contact with people, as well as giving, so the feeling of gregariousness, or compassionate offering/charity and giving, can be used in appropriate heart immeasurable emotions practice.

The arms are used for asserting yourself. They are also used in acts of aggression and expressions of anger, so “wrathful” deity practices should always include the arms in their energy work techniques rather than exclusively focusing on the trunk of the body.

Few yoga or Vajrayana schools explain what I have just told you, or tell you how to invent techniques to cultivate your body. They simply have you focus on cultivating the Qi/Prana in areas or sections of your body without explanations. They rarely add sounds, visualizations or emotions to the effort that would help you to stimulate your Qi into moving to wash the region of concentration. The more things you stack onto a technique in order to move the Qi in a region, the quicker you can purify the Qi of your etheric body.

STRANGE EXPERIENCES

Returning to the topic of visions, many strange occurrences during the road of cultivation do not represent any extraordinary cosmic event or supersensible meaning. As explained in *Buddha Yoga* and *Meditation Case Studies*, a master will often take his/her deva students and practice in the brains of practitioners to project thoughts, sounds and images within them, but there is rarely ever any important message being transmitted during that practice session.

Buddhas and Bodhisattvas always try to help people by giving them thoughts and images, and this sort of training is how they teach the devas of the earthly heavenly plane (which is who we are when we die) to help us. That being the case, you should never take any visions seriously since they are not real events, but just delusions projected into your brain. Ignore them and consider them *mara*, or fakery. There is no such thing in the outside world when you see visions. Yes, *you are seeing things* but the

projections are images inserted directly into your brain from devas practicing their abilities.

What are some other things spiritual masters do when using your body to train deva students? Often a master who is testing students for various skills will have them make you suddenly sneeze two or more times in a row, which seems to happen spontaneously without any reason whatsoever. They do this when they test to see whether deva students have mastered control over a human's physical functions, but this only occurs during the kundalini transformation process because regular sneezing or coughing is just regular sneezing or coughing. During the Twelve Years of the kundalini transformation process they will constantly test students' *control over your unthinking habit energies* (such as scratching your head or picking your nose) and autonomic functions over and over again. The devas will also try to arouse your negative thoughts and irritations while their master uses his many bodies to try and block emotional reactions from occurring within you, thus testing their powers to go against him.

Through a type of possession the students will prove to their teacher that they can take over your body and cause you to say things, which appears to others like you are mumbling or saying nonsense. They will try to read books through you to show whether their etheric Qi body is refined enough for you not to notice it is someone else doing so because if you have problems concentrating or can feel the energy shift then it shows their practice is insufficient. Most of all they will practice reading your memories in various tests put forth by their teacher, for this is the basis of the "penetrating knowledge" of Buddhas that understands all minds.

Devas will also sometimes produce a spontaneous rap in a room, such as a knock on the wall or window, to show their teacher that they have the skill to affect denser physical matter. People sometimes think these types of occurrences are ghosts or spirits, but it is usually just devas messing around with their ordinary training practices. However, at the same time the teacher may practice making you frightened by causing you to feel scared or sense negative energy, which raises your Yin Qi, so people normally get cheated by this sort of thing by thinking that evil is lurking about.

If you sometimes seem suddenly confused like someone is blocking your thinking processes, and it feels like a mild pressure inside the head or an "almost" headache when thinking about an issue, this is sometimes due to deva influences where a master is testing whether his students can block a human's thoughts. However, a general warning for all these examples is not to assume that all these things are the intercession of devas.

Reading this you'll no doubt say, "This guy is crazy," but I'm simply telling you what goes on during the Twelve Year kundalini transformational period. Ordinary people don't go through this. For ordinary people a headache is usually just a headache, and confusion is usually just confusion.

Unstable people will normally attribute everything up to spiritual influences and superstition when it's usually just regular life. Only students with high-level masters usually have such things happening, so avoid immediately jumping into superstitious conclusions when unfortunate or unusual things happen during your life.

Confucius, when asked about the affairs of Heaven, told his students that they hadn't even mastered human affairs so they shouldn't ask what heavenly beings are up to. I'm simply offering some explanations of the training practices of masters and deva students, who many know by the usual name of "asuras." During the Twelve Year kundalini transformation period, things like this are happening all the time. There is an advanced stage called "roaring thunder" where the masters slowly raise a voluminous sound within your head and stimulate terror Qi while doing so for the devas as well. Another stage, "bite and scratch," involves the masters lightly touching your body with irritating Qi while stimulating thoughts of irritation, anger, despair and hopelessness at the same time, a type of unnecessary torture they apply to your eyelids, ears, lips, genitals and even ass. Then they may even stab you in places to stimulate outbursts of pain. These are specialties of the Tibetan Vajrayana tradition, which is very abusive of practitioners.

Ordinary people may sometimes hear a song played over and over again in their head. As previously stated, when you hear a song (or mantra) being played over and over again inside you it's not you repeating it but definitely a master testing his students on this skill. Otherwise, how else could it happen unless you really and truly had a brain disorder, and then it would happen all the time, no?

Yet another thing that sometimes happens is that you develop a strong impulse or urge to perform some type of action and you cannot shake it off. Until you perform that action, the pressure just won't disappear. Let me give you an example originating from a story told by an enlightened monk of Mount Athos, which is a Christian monastic center that has produced countless enlightened adepts such as Saint Porphyrios (Bairaktaris) the Kapsokalyvite, Saint Paisios and Father Tychon.

As I have tried to point out, Orthodox Christianity is just as capable of producing enlightened adepts as the eastern religions. This is clearly demonstrated by the examples of Saint Tikhon of Moscow and Arsenios the Cappadocian who both attained the higher spiritual bodies of complete enlightenment, as have many others from Mount Athos, Saint Catherine's Monastery in Egypt, the Solovetsky Monastery and Optina Monastery in Russia, and many, many others. In this case the story of "The Two Cryptonuns," which demonstrates the type of ideas and impulses that Buddhas and Bodhisattvas often give people, is from Saint Paisios of Mount Athos.

The story, illustrating a type of inner urge that prompts people into

obeying, and which originates from Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, runs as follows:

“Once I found myself in a convent of Epirus, and I felt an inner strength forcing me to go to a city without having a specific job to do. Since I reflected on other occasions of similar situations (where I felt such an impulse) I thought that there was something good behind this. I set off early and arrived in the city at 10:30 in the morning. Since I did not have a specific job to do, I bought three or four oil lamp mugs and I was waiting. After I got the mugs, I thought not to pass through the market but to go through a side street to a church and stay there for a while. So proceeding along the side street for about ten minutes, I felt again that strength inside me pushing me to go to an unknown house so I made the sign of the cross and I proceeded from the outer courtyard up to the inner door and knocked. A woman in black opened the door. She fell kneeling with tears of joy and kept saying, ‘Thank you Jesus, thank you my Jesus’ for about fifteen minutes. I didn’t know what to think. I was startled. Then she got up, led me in a small room resembling a chapel with icons, lecterns and so on and hanging oil lamps. She knelt again and said the solicitation of Jesus and Virgin Mary by heart and went to a room with a small table. She set the table. She served two beetroot, some bread and a few olives. The time was about 12:00. With our spiritual discussion we lost track of time and by 5:00 we hadn’t eaten yet. So that blessed soul wanted to be a nun but her parents forced her to get married young and introduced for her a husband, a rich man with good social status. But God did not bless that unjust marriage. After two years her husband got seriously ill, he was bedridden a few years and then he passed away. Before dying, when he was at his last, he asked her if she would get remarried and she said no. She didn’t want to get married at all and he knew it. Hearing this he was delighted and he left all his great fortune to his wife. After having the memorial service she left for a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. She became a nun there, remained for two months and returned home in black saying that she was wearing black because she was a widow, not a nun. She lived quietly without anyone knowing that she was a nun, nor the ascetic life she lived. She waited for a few years to settle some orphan girls with her fortune intending to go into a monastery. When I met her she still had a house, and she had found a widow with a daughter to give to. Then freed from all, she would go to a monastery. For years she was praying to Christ to send her a monk to teach her about monasticism. This is why she fell down kneeling as soon as she saw me and thanked Christ out of gratitude. After we discussed many rewarding things, I was about to leave when she told me that in a certain city at a kiosk there was a nun, a very spiritual person so I went to that town and I met her. Her face was shining, the divine grace was evident. I asked her if she knew the previous nun and she said no to me, but the grace of Christ made us known

to each other. Then she told me to go to a church and she would meet me there after some time. The church was on a little hill about ten minutes away. After a while came the blessed soul and she opened her heart to me. She wanted to be a nun too, but she couldn't be so because of the death of her brother who was killed in the Italian war and left two orphans, 2-3 years old, and after ten years they lost their mother too and she had to protect them until they came of age. Since she entitled a license for a kiosk she opened one and she was trying to live as more spiritually as she could. She had repaired a chapel and went there, lit the candles and read Vespers and prayers. At home she was reading the prayers of the services. She had become a nun secretly and with her brother's death she justified her black clothes. She had reached an absolute spiritual status. She said, 'Sometimes my mind gets grabbed in Heaven and when I come to my senses I find my customers concerned but they justify me thinking that I look lost because of the death of my brother.' I glorified God for this blessed soul and went back to the monastery with many spiritual benefits."⁵⁰

People receive thoughts, intuitions or promptings from spiritual beings all the time, just like this monk who had this urge to visit these women. There are all sorts of intercessions like this going on for everyone. If you get the urge to help someone it is often due to such intercessions, and my advice is to always obey the prompting to help someone, unless wisdom rules otherwise, since the individual will usually be greatly in need. You will usually gain more merit from helping them than from donating to some famous charity where no one knows how the money will be used. A prompting to be generous is usually something to heed because by so doing someone can receive your help who desperately needs it.

Masters are not just working on teaching their students how to change human thoughts so that they can help you, but are working on purifying your Qi/Prana so that your physical body functions better while you are alive and you live longer in the deva stage after death because the integrity of your inner Qi body has been somewhat purified and strengthened. The purity and integrity of your Qi/Prana extends your lifetime in Heaven before you pass away to experience your next incarnation, which is why people should always engage in religious/spiritual practices since they purify your Qi. It is never a waste to go to church, the synagogue, temple or mosque if you practice correctly at those times.

For the fastest results in purifying your Qi/Prana and Qi channels you must practice inner *nei-gong* or *anapana* exercises, which are internal energy movement routines involved with moving your Qi all over your body and throughout your body. Inner *nei-gong* practices or "energy work" are also

⁵⁰ "Saint Paisios From Mount Athos – Useful Stories," accessed June 11, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bx2Q9K0iKDs>.

classified as *kriya* yoga, kundalini yoga, *nei-dan*, *nei-gong*, *anapana*, and other types of spiritual exercises. They are practiced in order to move your Qi within your body parts, and thus purify your Qi/Prana and strengthen its integrity by removing coarse pollutants.

Some yogis practice hundreds to thousands of repetitions of inner energy movements per day when undergoing certain training regimens such as *nei-gong*, *kriya* yoga and kundalini yoga. Great monks and nuns in deep retreat can practice with intensity up to five or six hours a day and sometimes longer like professional musicians or athletes who practice. For instance, many Christian Hesychasts recite prayers while doing prostrations for twelve hours a day, and do this on very little food in humble conditions. But such ascetic extremes are uncalled for and unnecessary. They not only lead to their own type of pride but to an excess in exertion that can hurt your physical body and the eventual subtle body you wish to attain since its template is based on the structure and health of the physical body.

If I could start all over again I would practice emptiness meditation plus kundalini-type exercises around two hours per day minimum while living a normal life. This is the advice I wish to pass onto you now that you know the path. You have to learn a *nei-gong* method perfectly, which requires you to go slow in grabbing and then moving your Qi here and there while matched with some emotional state. By learning to do things slowly but correctly you won't repeat errors when you get to the stage of doing thousands and thousands of repetitions of moving your internal energy this way or that way. If you are a full-time practitioner, such as a monk or nun, you can extend the amount of time you engage in devoted practice after learning how to move your energy correctly, and you must also add pranayama to the mix of practices to perform.

I would also be daily practicing yoga and Yoga Ginastica to stretch the body, which will make the purification process go quicker, make my body healthier, and also give me skills I can teach to others. If I could add martial arts to the schedule I would do that too. At certain times I would increase the amount of time I spent at cultivation work. Anyone undergoing the kundalini transformation is most certainly in retreat practicing meditation and *nei-gong* for hours every day.

Meditation practice *plus* inner energy work *and* mantra/prayer recitation *and* yoga or martial arts *and* pranayama would greatly speed up your cultivation results, but you must participate in the correct way in order to make these "intensified practices" most effective. They prepare you for the kundalini awakening, so they are classified as the Stage of Preparatory Work. Most people waste their time at these types of effort because they use the wrong practices, or practice incorrectly, or not enough and thus their work is sometimes ineffective.

As the *Transmission of Light* stated, Shakyamuni attained enlightenment

because he did inner energy work whereas his cousin Ananda simply engaged in study, which is why he didn't achieve anything until he practiced the requisite *anapana* and *nei-gong*. Study is great, but you have to engage in various types of inner energy work to attain the subtle body that constitutes enlightenment.

For instance, here are some principles of practice for transforming (purifying) your body's vital energy and your Qi channels (*nadis*). You can try to *move* your Qi/Prana along your muscles by pushing it or guiding it via your thought and will. You can move it along acupuncture meridians, while reciting mantra *bija* sounds at key acupuncture points. You can try to *excite* the Qi/Prana within every cell of your body (or just a smaller body section) through visualization, concentration, mantra sounds, willpower and by giving rise to energizing emotions. You can concentrate on *feeling* the Qi in entire sections of your body so that you learn to grab it and move it. You can learn to mentally move it around like water or wind to guide it everywhere inside you, suffusing an area with the feeling of blissful/energized saturation, and so on. You can combine several of these techniques together.

There are all sorts of methods you can cultivate in order to bathe all your cells, atoms and atomic connections with Qi, in a sense washing them over and over again. Taoism calls this "purification through revolutions" because you spin (move) your Qi everywhere inside you back and forth over and over again, while other schools use terms like Prana/Qi movement, stimulation, transformation, spiritualization, purification and so on. Of course you also have to practice emptiness meditations too such as the twenty or more methods found in Chapter Four ("Empty Mind" Meditation Practice) of *Meditation Case Studies*. These are methods derived from the Kashmir Shaivite work *Vijnana Bharirava*.

The first few times you do this for a long time your body muscles may lock up the very next day and it may feel impossible to move, but this is normal and quickly passes. That stiffening and tightening usually frightens people, but the consequence is normal. It *proves* that Qi exists, otherwise you wouldn't get this response from moving your internal vital energy for a few hours. It also proves that you are working correctly in the sense that you can grab and move your Qi.

This will only happen just a few instances in your life rather than every time, so don't ever fear it if it happens once or twice. It means a lot of work was being done on transforming your body due to your efforts. *Meditation Case Studies* and *The Little Book of Hercules* go over all sorts of physical results that occur from applying your will/mind to move your Qi within your body.

The techniques contained within *Nyasa Yoga* also fall into the Qi movement practices you can try. If I wanted just one book to teach me the

Esoteric school (Vajrayana or Tibetan Buddhism) or Yoga exercises for doing this I would start with *Nyasa Yoga* because it also contains the proper practice principles that you need to understand. You need to do internal energy work to gain enlightenment (the subtle body) just as Shakyamuni did, and *Nyasa Yoga* explains the techniques.

You need to cultivate every individual part of your body through stretching (yoga, Pilates, martial arts, sports, etcetera), mantra practices, breath retention pranayama exercises, and so on to activate, stir, energize, stimulate and then move your Prana/Qi to flood the *nadis* (Qi channels) throughout your body. This means that you want to flood all your tissues or entire sections of your body with moving Qi, and if you add an emotional content to that Qi when you are moving it through your willpower then all the better. That extra emotional content will help impress your Qi/Prana with a certain character.

The body you now have is what you will get as a deva body, although it will be able to increase or shrink in size just as all deva bodies can do because of the power of *anima*, so pay attention to exercise and diet if you are not satisfied with the shape of your body at present. Work at your diet, yoga and the martial arts, or dancing and sport, if you are not satisfied with its flexibility. In Heaven many things that are currently wrong with the body can be healed/corrected but the general shape you have now is what you have immediately upon death.

Some schools say you are untying knots in your channels, and others say that you are unblocking or purifying blockages when you try to flood your tissues with Qi/Prana energy through internal energy exercises. You can go about doing this by focusing on large body sections (such as the tripartite sectioning of the body into head, chest and lower body) or specific body appendages/parts (such as arms, legs, hands, feet, sexual organs, trunk, chest, head, etc.). There are lots of ways to do this, and countless practices available. Once again see *Nyasa Yoga* for detailed instructions for a large variety of methods. In *Buddha Yoga* I list other books you might use for guidance too.

The more you move your Qi along body parts as pathways, flooding your body sections with Qi as done in Nyasa yoga, kundalini yoga, *kritya* yoga or *nei-gong*, the quicker you will open up your Qi channels and transform your physical nature. This is all preparatory work of intensified yoga practice, and is what prepares your body for the Twelve Year kundalini awakening. Remember that using your willpower you must flood entire body sections, limbs and organs with Qi (using visualization, mantras or imagined energy movements powered by your thoughts and will) and then move it around to loosen, cleanse and open up everything instead of just visualizing single Qi-lines or points, although as cultivation methods you can concentrate on them as well.

There are countless techniques for doing this, and the books previously mentioned on tantric yoga reveal many methods. Once again, *Nyasa Yoga* can help you understand this and together with *Buddha Yoga* will explain the entire path. If you want to talk about behavior, however, you should turn to *Color Me Confucius*, *Move Forward* and *Quick, Fast, Done*. If the topic is behavior and life purpose then *Culture, Country, City, Company, Product, Person, Passion, World* is relevant and highly recommended. I actually consider this my best book due to its contents.

Usually the many inner energy movement techniques of spiritual cultivation are kept secret, restricted or private because once you start doing them then devas will come to participate, and they have absolutely no behavioral discipline. They'll end up bothering you because they are like a plague of locusts trying to prove to their teacher that they have skills at affecting your thoughts and emotions, so there is a problem with self-control.

Many people are assholes in regular life, which is why we have laws and traditions as well as standards of behavior to restrain people. Most people who become enlightened are just average like everyone else, so they will exhibit the same errant tendencies as you can expect for a normal population. This is a rule of nature. No one passes a purity test; everyone is flawed. Even if they are a monk or nun, priest, rabbi and so forth, most people have personality flaws, errant habit energies and issues. When you therefore give such people power and control over other people they tend to lose themselves and become abusive of others because of what they can make you do, as was seen in the Milgram Stanford prison experiment. This is the natural expectation, and some cultivation groups are worse than others in terms of the abuse you will suffer during the kundalini purification.

Power corrupts people because the higher you go the fewer people there are to offer honest feedback and restrain your unpleasant traits or whims. Hence, people with power who commit wrongs will always justify themselves and their abuse of power through creative explanations. For instance, the elites with power and position in the government tend to be abusive to the commons.

I have been surprised in life that on separate occasions three individual nurses each told me that they felt that psychiatrists, who had the highest control over patients versus other types of doctors, were actually "evil" because of what they did with that power. You also have the Milgram Stanford experiment showing that regular people assuming power definitely became abusive. So psychiatrists who have control over others may become abusive, and power definitely corrupts ordinary people who attain it. Putting these facts together, what can you expect of a large population of people who have transcendental powers over humans because of their

spiritual bodies? The same abuses of power over people will sometimes occur. Hence, masters don't want to willy-nilly open up an opportunity for devas to take advantage of you. Devas love making people think they see ghosts, give them strange idea, and do all sorts of silly things in order to prove their powers to their teachers who often cannot stop them.

Once again, this is why most masters never introduce inner energy work techniques to students without empowerments or permissions, but just teach them meditation. When your mind is quiet during meditation, and you stop holding onto thoughts so tightly, this gives a junior deva student the chance to use their body to move your Qi. Hence, formless meditation, where you let go of your thoughts and thus your hold on your Qi/Prana, enables higher beings to help you transform your Qi and body in a safe way.

If there is someone moving their internal energy on their own rather than simply practicing empty mind meditation, a deva is likely to come along and think, "Great, I finally have a chance to practice *and* show my teacher what I can do by getting inside this person and helping them move their energy with my own. My body is only energy (Qi/Prana) and this is how to both practice *and* earn the merit to get to the next higher body of attainments, which is the Causal body." Thus, they will sometimes fool around with your thoughts at the same time they move your energy in proving their control of their powers to their teacher who has a higher body attainment than they do. The teacher will always take them as a priority over you.

This is happening to everyone, everywhere, and all the time regardless of their religion or tradition. If you are a human being then devas, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are giving you thoughts or moving your energy every now and then for various reasons. They are taking care of the level of existence called human beings. This is the blessing of "Heaven." In any case, this is why masters say you need to be authorized, empowered or go through an initiation before you perform a technique, and why masters, gurus or elders require you to "submit" to their instructions with obedience. Otherwise, things can go wrong when unsupervised devas start working on you. With empowerments, things *theoretically* won't get too far out of hand because a master will be watching you and your progress and policing what happens. Theoretically.

Now this is what you have to understand. Devas, which are your parents and ancestors and all other human beings who have passed away until they die are become reborn, have bodies of Qi/Prana and inhabit the Qi/Prana plane of the earth. This is called earthly Heaven, the earthly heavenly plane. They are all bound here because they don't have a higher spiritual body that can travel to the higher realms. If they attain a Causal body that is composed of a higher transcendental energy/substance than Qi/Prana then

they can travel to Pure Lands, which are other spheres, planes or realms that are not earth-bound.

Being devas who can see everything humans do, and who can go into people's minds and observe their thinking or read their neurons to see their past and present, devas see that we are all fuck-ups. Yes, practically everything you do is seen and known by Heaven because it is all stored within your neurons as memories and your memories are examined frequently during your life and when you die. This is the "penetrating knowledge" of the Buddhas spoken of within the Buddhist sutras. When people "see their lives pass before them" in a near death experience it is because someone is showing them what has been stored in their neurons rather than images from some etheric "akashic chronicle." The whole field of spiritual teachings hides many truths like this because spiritual masters don't want people to know that spiritual beings are intervening in their lives all the time, for many people could not handle the truth. They don't have enough merit and wisdom to accept the truth. They would interpret things incorrectly and stop taking responsibility for their own actions.

Devas can see everything we do at the human level, and what is the behavioral end result? They are laughing all the time at all the stupid things people do around them (openly and privately or secretly), and they end up looking down on people because they see all this crap. What would you become like if you could know people's thoughts and see all the secret, stupid, errant, ridiculous, ignorant, hypocritical, criminal, malevolent, or vice-laden things people do? It is said that a policeman is first abhorred at seeing so much crime, eventually accepts it, and then either finally builds up insulation to dull the pain from seeing it, or embraces it and becomes a criminal themselves.

We are animals that do stupid and sometimes evil things, which is why civilization has been a blessing in leading us towards consummate conduct. Seeing all the secretive or stupid things we do, devas pick up the behavioral tendency of laughing at us, arrogance that they are higher than us, and contempt for us *even though we are them* prior to them becoming devas themselves. If you could see all the crazy, criminal, stupid, greedy, malicious stuff which people normally do and hide all the time, one remedy is to simply become amused. Alternatively, you might just adopt the insulating habit of ignoring it all, which happens to people who grow up in high poverty areas and just get used to it by ignoring it.

The point is, don't think that all heavenly beings are paragons of virtue with good judgment and always-helpful intercessions. They are not angels running around with robes and harps but have ordinary lives of their own and just like you and I. They need haircuts, have children to raise, disputes that require courts, money to earn and so forth. Some devas are good and some are bad just as in the human world. They are simply ordinary people

who die, or who are born in the heavenly plane, and now have energy bodies with powers. Once their heavenly life is used up then human they become again themselves.

If a spiritual master is conducting training then they finally get a chance to try out all sorts of things they would normally not be allowed to do with human beings because the session is theoretically “supervised” by someone enlightened, and the assumption behind that fact is that they therefore have good judgment, high ethics and excellent self-control. That’s because no one is going to achieve the Causal body attainment or higher if they weren’t already a compassionate, virtuous, ethical person. But such attainments don’t mean you are competent or disciplined, and everyone, absolutely everyone has faults and failings.

As another related example, when a human spiritual master (guru, yogi, saint, etc.) is too busy in the higher planes or wants someone else to teach a lesson because his knowledge is better than his own, he’ll ask someone else to possess his body to teach. There are countless stories in spiritual traditions, such as Shankara leaving his body to possess the corpse of king Amaru who had just died in order to learn about sensory pleasures and conjugal skills, that reveal this sort of thing. When a master sits motionless in samadhi for days it is also because he left his body to travel around, and not because he is absorbed in some special trance-like mental state. That’s another one of the many big fibs in cultivation so that people don’t know what is really going on.

Sufi Sheikh Muhammed Hisham Kabbani even admitted to this fact in *The Hierarchy of Saints* by saying, “The highest level of *‘abdal* travel from their places, leaving behind their bodies, taking out from their bodies another copy, and they travel *dunya* looking for people that need help and they help them. That is why when you see a *wali* who looks like they are sleeping, their soul left their body. In that state, don’t wake them up, otherwise you will make a mistake unless they instruct you, ‘Wake us up at that moment.’ That means you are calling them back; when they tell you, ‘Wake us up,’ it means, ‘Call us back;’ then you are like an alarm for them, but if they don’t say anything to you, don’t wake them up. ...

“So when you see *awliyadullah* on the bed or floor or chair as if they are laying down sleeping, don’t touch them or wake up as they are not present there. For seven days Grandshaykh in seclusion left his body and went when Sayyidina Shah Nasqshband appeared to him in a vision in *kwahwah*. He left for his body for seven days, no movement.”⁵¹ In the Buddhist tradition you are taught to never touch a body when the master is in samadhi, and instead you should bring them back to consciousness by

⁵¹ Shaykh Muhammed Hisham Kabbani, *The Hierarchy of Saints*, (Institute for Spiritual and Cultural Advancement, Fenton: Michigan, 2013), pp. 14-15.

striking a chime next to the their ear. This simply calls their deva body back to their human physiology. At other times a very high-level master leaves their body but has a student possess his body during that time to give answers or lessons from their master's memory, which is why some masters seem to repeat the same answers or lessons over and over again or give answers that might even seem nonsensical. This happens all the time but regular people don't know it.

Spiritual masters are *not* perfect but just regular people like you and me, with a strong tilt to the virtuous ethical side. However, being a "master" doesn't mean that people with enlightenment, who are just like you or I, are always entirely ethical or of high judgment. The devas born in Heaven, who thus have a tendency of looking down upon humans, carry traits of arrogance with them into their enlightenment bodies, and when going through the Twelve Year kundalini transformation period a spiritual adherent will be abused by their violent, malicious excesses. The poor spiritual adherent will be inundated by devas gayly trying to provoke negative reactions within them to prove to their own teacher that they can provoke emotional responses while their master is trying to suppress them. Negative emotions and responses are the easiest to provoke against the powers of suppression, which is why you are inundated with such attacks. They will destroy an unprotected adherent, and have fun doing so. This is a wrong process, but is the way it works because their system of proving skills is based upon creating new thoughts in your neurons, provoking reactions, and controlling your thoughts and behaviors despite anything it does to you. Everyone has such a good time, and is used to looking down upon humans, that you are forgotten in the fun. This is the danger of kundalini yoga ... it is not that your body cannot handle the energy!

There is also the old rule that people with power tend to oppress those who don't have it, or look down upon those with less power or money, and it applies to them as well. As everyone else which is why arrogance sometimes creeps into the equation after someone attains all the higher bodies. Until the highest levels of cultivation, devas and spiritual masters are still subject to arrogance, conceit, pride, ill-will, malice and malevolence, authoritarianism, resentment, aggressive tendencies and the desire for pleasure, status and power over others along with the tendency to use it.

In the *Mahabharata* of India where many of the characters were enlightened, Arjuna demonstrated the fault of conceit or excessive pride, Nakula hankered after pleasure, Sahadeva was arrogant, and Bhima was a glutton. The *Surangama Sutra* says that some masters like to surround themselves with students, treasure, pleasures and status. Many will seek joy at the expense of others suffering. Life is the same in every realm.

You really begin to know what a person is truly like when they are given power over others, and since power tends to corrupt people this is why

only the virtuous are helped to gain the deva body while living. It is usually monks and nuns, yogis, rabbis and so forth who gave up the material world in pursuit of spirituality and virtue, so they are prime candidates. Then again, just because someone is a monk or nun, rabbi, yogi and so forth who is interested in self-perfection and has not showed any infractions during life you shouldn't assume they really are virtuous, for such professions simply *deny people the opportunity to act out and express their true personalities*. When there are no avenues available for straying or misbehaving, how can you know what a person is really like?

Religious pathways suppress or limit your behavior but do not necessarily transform your tendencies. Thus, it is said that when some Japanese and Moslem men leave their countries, which are characterized by severe cultural and religious strictures, they sometimes go on bouts of drinking, sexual and other excesses that violate all sorts of taboos within their home nations.

This simply illustrates the point that a person's true character can be inhibited by religion, law or culture, but once freed of those strictures their character often reveals itself. In warfare, for instance, we see countless brutal cases of the raping, killing, robbing and torture of civilians who are innocent of the disagreements between nations. We see this in the wars that drug cartels wage against one another. The human being is a nasty animal if it were not for the civilizing influence of religion, tradition, laws and codes of conduct.

As the *Surangama Sutra* explains (see *Meditation Case Studies*) for individuals passing through the Twelve Year kundalini transformation period, devas can and will simply walk away from any catastrophe they cause for you after things go wrong from their "interventions." Therefore you must always make sure you police your own behavior and don't end up doing stupid or dangerous things to self-inflict harm upon yourself when being influenced by Heaven during this period. Many masters already "out" did stupid things in history such as get involved with politics and become imprisoned or killed, so it's quite possible to do stupid things before your deva body emerges. If you do do stupid things in life – because most of us run around in life often doing crazy things that are bad for us *and we know this* but still don't control ourselves – then don't attribute them to Heaven.

Everyone smokes, drinks, gambles, takes drugs, fights and pursues sex because they want to, not because of some outside influence. Your own stupid decisions evidence that you probably weren't at the wisdom level appropriate and necessary in order that devas would work on helping you develop the independent deva body. It wasn't any spiritual influence that caused you to do something stupid or wrong. It was you. So get any notions out of your head that everything that happens in your life are due to heavenly influences. Such influences happens but is rare. You are almost

always “on your own.”

Humans are notorious for shunting responsibilities onto other people rather than assuming accountability ourselves. “An angel made me do it” is not an excuse in court. All I am saying is that during the Twelve Year kundalini transformation period, where devas and masters *are* definitely working on your body and mind nearly twenty-four hours of every day, thinks go wrong because of their vehemence in testing themselves through you. Just read the “Fifty Demon Mara States” of the *Surangama Sutra* to discover for yourself what goes on. With every new master who takes over the shift you will have a whole new type of experience. It is really a dangerous time period especially as the devas are always trying to make you do something wrong and the master is using his powers to prevent them, which is a test of powers to see their skill level and prove at the same time who is superior.

The take-away is that you must always protect yourself, using wisdom and commonsense, on the cultivation path and during regular life too. Don’t do illegal, dangerous, risky, harmful, unwholesome, stupid or errant things. Don’t get involved with crazy stuff. Don’t fall into superstition such as expecting that God, the Buddhas or some deity will save you or protect you from harm. Put those notions out of your head and just be ordinary in your thinking rather than superstitious. As Ronald Reagan said, “Trust, but verify,” which illustrates the proper cautious pragmatism of prudence in regular affairs. Cause and effect always holds sway rather than heavenly intervention to subvert the laws of nature. Always use your wisdom and common sense to make decisions. Be responsible for yourself, and don’t attribute anything that happens to you to anything other than your own bad luck or efforts.

You should try to master the “science of action” for life so that you can pretty much know what will happen if you act a certain way. That is wisdom. The science of action, which is the result of insight and understanding, is using clear thinking to guide your actions to get what you want in life and stay out of trouble. In Buddhism this is called employing the “Wisdom that Accomplishes Actions,” which is the name for the sixth consciousness (discriminatory consciousness) after enlightenment.

Now a fact - devas are always eager for enjoyment so they love to play with your thoughts and emotions during training. Your health or other conditions are not their concern so if you begin kundalini yoga, *nei-gong*, *kriya* yoga work, Vajrayana practice, or other demanding religious exercises/practices (and so on) you need a master to protect you whom you can go to for help. This is why masters bestow empowerments. You don’t actually need one, but it simply tags you as belonging under the protection of this or that individual so that you don’t get screwed.

Many, many individuals are enlightened in the world, with at least the

deva body attainment, but you don't know it. They are in all the religions, including Islam, Judaism, Christianity, Druze, Bahai, Sikhism, Shintoism and so on. Many exist in the Christian monastic traditions rather than just the Buddhist, Taoist, Jain and Hindu traditions. However, if you identify a truly accomplished spiritual master they will surely deny their attainments because it leads to troubles in life since it produces all sorts of expectations.

Most spiritual masters don't want people to know what they can do in terms of capabilities, nor do they want to entertain all sorts of requests from people. Masters don't want students to know they have these bodies and how things work for other reasons as well. Hence many unassuming masters have spiritual attainments but never show them and avoid lots of problems that way.

However, during the Twelve Year kundalini transformation period, if you happen to identify a genuine master (from meeting them or reading about them on the internet or in a book) then they will arrive to do work on your Qi. If "discovered" they have to arrive and do work on transforming that person's Qi/Prana using their own body. It's a little game they set up to get enough people to work on transforming someone's Qi/Prana, and of course they better be moral people in the first place who also did a lot of merit.

No one wants to volunteer for the tiresome twelve-year energy work of spinning Qi/Prana inside you. You need lots and lots of masters to work on someone around the clock to complete the task, and so you need incentives to force people into helping. Hence the rule that if a master is discovered he/she has to come and work on that student's Qi with one of their bodies. This is troublesome, tiresome, and dirty work going into someone's putrid body to spin your energy to move theirs and help transform all their tissues, molecules, atomic bonds and so forth.

Devas will practice giving you thoughts, emotions, visions, and making you do things under their control when they are training inside you. They'll play all sorts of tricks on you during their training games such as making you believe certain people are enlightened when they are not, so be careful. They'll try to make you overly criticize certain people and will ramp up your sexual desire. You can read countless stories of Christian monks "fighting with the devil" to get a taste for these interactions. The devas and masters will make you feel proud, defiant, afraid, embarrassed, depressed, scared, and stimulate all sorts of other emotions to stimulate your Yin Qi and Yang Qi. They'll even give you physical pain. There is nothing you can do to prevent this living hell when going through the Twelve Year period. The Tibetan tradition is particularly abusive.

If you undergo the twelve-year kundalini transformation process to attain the subtle body, the mental suffering is just terrible. That's why you won't find anyone describing it or you would fear it and wouldn't practice.

The first one hundred days are usually marked by tremendous internal Qi movements, hotness of your body, the stimulation of sexual desire by masters to raise your Yang Qi, lots of visions including frightening ones to raise your Yin Qi, the hearing of voices, etcetera. In *Meditation Cases Studies I* collected more accounts of what goes on during this time than anyone else in history.

You will usually be accompanied through the process by a deva who is going through the same process as you to attain his Causal body while they are working on your subtle body, and who will therefore be your companion. The process then entails knocking off two birds with one stone where the Big Buddhas work on two people at the same time, but you won't recognize that they're speaking through him as they will through you, and are giving him trouble just like you. If you are unlucky you will get one who is below average, and if lucky someone who is above average.

When this companion talks they usually masquerade as a guardian angel, enlightened master, ancient sage, and so forth. Ignore all that bullshit. It's just a deva going through the same process as you. He or she is not causing all the troubles although it seems like they are in charge. It's always countless others putting words in their mouth to hide the true state of affairs. Most of Heaven's moves are based on trickery that cheats the human realm, and this little charade is no different. Masters masquerade as gods, divinities, God and so forth all the time for human beings, as taught within the *Lotus Sutra*, but the masses are too spiritually immature to be let in on the secret. As Master Nan Huai-Chin would say, they lack the wisdom and merit to understand what is really happening.

Typically the Causal-bodied (and higher) devas will talk through your deva companion, so the smart aleck comments are not all his own but others using him doing their own practice while he and other subtle-bodied devas at his level will be practicing giving you thoughts and emotions. Actually, everybody is practicing using everyone else during this time, with big masters transforming the Qi and of the inner audience of students and giving them thoughts, impulses, energy and so forth. This is how heavenly beings train on developing their skills to help people.

Supra-Causal devas, for instance, will be practicing using their multiple bodies (and *nirmanakaya* projections) to handle everybody in your cranial audience. Higher masters will be training to control them and the masses too. It's one big zoo. With one set of bodies a master will be giving you thoughts, another will be changing your energy, another will be making your deva guide talk, and others will be used to affect the audience of devas assembled to learn some lesson. Everyone is demonstrating their skills.

This is all symbolized in the *Vimalakirti Sutra* where many Buddhas and Bodhisattvas shrink themselves down and enter a small room, which symbolizes your brain. Sariputra, who represents a student going through

the Twelve Year process, has his sex changed and experiences all sorts of other mental testings which hint of many experiences you will pass through during this period.

During this twelve-year period, bigger boys upstairs will be testing and training the new Supra-Causal enlightened guys (who are learning their powers) to see how well they can handle many independent *nirmanakaya* emanations and what their limits are. What a suffering you will experience during the Twelve Year kundalini process, which is more brutal and horrific than a college fraternity hazing! Hence, my advice is to hook up only with a competent master who is related to a well-established, non-abusive spiritual tradition. Yes, the Christian monastic system, Judaism, and Sufism have accomplished masters, especially the Orthodox Christian monastic system that has many “elders” who are enlightened. Therefore you don’t have to gravitate towards only eastern traditions. If a spiritual individual shows consistent superpowers of being able to read your mind, know the future, and so forth then he is probably enlightened regardless of his tradition.

At the earliest stages of the process, until you catch on, the entire group of devas helping you will all pretend they are demons, devils, ghosts or *jinn* etcetera to scare you and stimulate your Yin Qi from the fright. Even if you know this fact, the highest-bodied masters will still control your thoughts to make you afraid so you won’t be able to escape getting frightened. They want your Yin Qi to arise, just as they want your Yang Qi to arise at times. Hence, at times they will make you so angry to raise Yang Qi that you are shouting outbursts and even sweating. As to Yin Qi, there is always some angle to make you afraid such as Zen Master Bankei’s fear of hell, the Tibetan trick of making you afraid of fictitious “rolling ghosts,” the Christian favorite trick of making you believe you are dealing with a devil or demon, the anxiety of being pursued by the government for some reason or another, and so forth. There are also the angles of making you embarrassed, anxious and so forth too.

Saint Seraphim of Sarov reports that he went through all these sorts of things, as did Elder Paisios of Mount Athos and Padre Pio. Saint Paisios recounted that he was at war with the devil for years, saying that it was “an intense war.” During one two-week period the struggle (with devas and masters masquerading as the devil) was so severe that he recalled, “What I went through with the temptation for fifteen days cannot be told. You cannot imagine it. These fifteen days I was feeling like I was nailed on the cross.” You truly need a tradition that will protect you, rather than has a history of abusing people, if you go through this.

On the other hand, sometimes you experience moments of grace during the process. Sometimes spiritual adherents will think they are talking to God, angels, archangels or past saints - as often happens in the Christian tradition - when going through the Twelve Year kundalini transformation

period. This may or may not be accompanied by feeling energy of various sorts, or states of mental bliss arising within you, which is simply a master moving his Qi inside your body to produce that outcome.

The Indians (Hindus, yogis, Jains, Sikhs, Aghoris) have a favorite trick to severely scare you by making you believe in *yakshinis* and so forth when you recite special mantras or engage in tantric sadhanas. This is one of the standard tricks, including others such as giving you frightening dreams, imaginary fears and visions and so forth to provoke your Yin Qi. Making you frightened, embarrassed, anxious, upset, nervous, feel guilty and so forth are all alternative ways to stimulate your Yin Qi, such as when a master scolds you.

I remember a story about a young monk on Mount Athos whose master told him not to read one particular book, and of course he read it (because the master gave him the impelling thought to do so). Then for two weeks he felt guilty as sin for his fraction of disobeying his teacher, which all that time stimulated his Yin Qi into moving until he finally confessed his deed. At that point, the feeling immediately lifted because the master had finished working on his Yin Qi to the extent of what they wanted to accomplish at that time, so it was the master who caused him to confess as well. This type of deliberate trickery is done all the time in the monastic traditions in order to work on the Qi/Prana of the monks and nuns. The enlightened teachers perform all these shenanigans because they wish to transform your Qi, but people never realize what's really going on.

Let me explain another example. The entire tradition of Hindu Krishna or Kali bhakti devotees, or the Christian Fools for Christ, are devoted to deep worship and reverence. Their emotional involvement is so strong that they experience peak states of extreme joy, sorrow or fright that are deep enough to affect their inner etheric (subtle) body in a major way. That's the purpose of these traditions because they are just cultivation schools that approach Qi cultivation in a different way. Some masters put you through intense emotional experiences directly that don't require worship, reverence or meditation practice, as per the techniques of Meher Baba and Gurdjieff from the Sufi tradition. There are all sorts of traditions and all sorts of techniques to transform your Qi, and we cannot possibly go into all of them.

The important thing to understand is that masters are trying to arouse/excite your Yang Qi and Yin Qi, and the methods of provoking Yin Qi are typically emotionally painful. You might assign a Christian monk to work in the monastery's hospital or the ossuary (bone graveyard) of deceased monks in order to surround him with Yin Qi and provoke feelings of fright, worry and concern connected with death and other Yin topics. Or, you might tell an unknowing Aghori student to perform a ceremony, while naked, at pitch black midnight, in a graveyard, with dead bodies all

around, in order to really provoke fright. All these frightening factors will significantly raise his Yin Qi to the extent required for purifying his inner etheric subtle body. As you can see, the number of Qi/Prana purification methods cannot be fully described and so you will go through all sorts of shitty experiences during the Twelve Year period in order to produce these transformations, especially those within men's genital region. There is no way around it.

Both your Yin Qi and Yang Qi have to be purified on the cultivation path, so don't expect the road of spirituality to be filled only with positive blissful experiences. That's a big mistake that people commonly make when they read all these wonderful descriptions about bliss, equanimity, the end of suffering, *moksha*, liberation, Bodhisattvas filled with compassion and so forth. No one tells you the truth. At certain times you will *definitely* be subjected to all sorts of negative Yin thoughts that will stimulate your Yin energies into arising, which is done on purpose, and this is regardless of your master or tradition. Each school has a different set of methods for doing this. The problem is the tendency for extreme abuse of the individual because the masters usually have fun when they are doing this since they went through the same thing. It's abusive.

In one sense you can say that this system is wrong if this is what you must suffer through to attain *moksha* or liberation and gain a higher body attainment, but the system is what it is. Complaining during the process won't help you. Having protective masters and selecting the best tradition is what counts to minimize the abuse. Every genuine religion has developed its own system many centuries ago when most attainees were monks and nuns in protected environments where all their daily needs, because of the monastic system, were taken care of.

No one had money in those days, so devas couldn't give you thoughts to spend it. People weren't married, so the devas couldn't cause problems with your spouse or children. People worked in the monastery, so you couldn't lose your job if they caused you to do stupid things, and poor or not your retirement and health care were taken care of within that system. The schedule of the monastic system also kept people occupied and out of trouble when in the real world devas might want to monopolize your hours for training purposes. People were monastics, so your strange behaviors caused by devas needed not to be explained to outsiders. You were expected to carry forth the tradition, so you were protected as a brother or sister despite all the problems hoisted upon you. No one had the internet, so devas couldn't make you do something that had an instant response and caused instant troubles.

Centuries ago there was always time between impulses put on someone and their opportunity to express them, which gave time for a higher-bodied master to intervene in the deva antics and prevent catastrophe or calamity.

Medicine is readily available today also, whereas in ancient times it was not, so devas are flippant in causing you health problems and concerns. Sexual relations were unavailable in a monastery, so using you for sexual cultivation practices was cut-off as a teaching avenue. All sorts of problems were not possible in past ages, but are readily available today.

Hence, when those same techniques *for olden times* are carried forward to today's modern fast-paced world where they no longer apply because the protections are not there, we have a problem. Devas will take advantage of non-monastics during the Twelve Year transformational period and absolutely destroy them through harm, laughing all the while. Even monastics really take a beating when going through the process. Some traditions are worse than others in how they treat people going through this process. Many people must go into retreat for twelve years to pass through it when it commences, and when they later report to the world that they studied with their master or went into retreat "for twelve years" (and they also demonstrate superpowers) then you know they became enlightened. In India this twelve-year period of internal practices and ascetic discipline is often referred to as *tapas*.

The Tibetan Buddhist tradition is especially abusive. In my eyes, it is safest only for those belonging to a Tibetan monastery where the monks are somewhat protected during the twelve-year kundalini hazing process. The attitude of its masters and devas when working on your mind and body is particularly of the form, "we're superior, you are not," and there is a predominance of tribal thinking that abounds. The senior monks refrain from torturing their own too much because you are "one of ours expected to carry forward the tradition," but beware if you are outside of the tradition and located in a country where the local devas don't have many chances to work on real spiritual cultivators practicing real *nei-gong*. Given the right opportunity they will go hog-wild when they finally get a chance to work on someone.

Zen Master Nan Huai-chin, who was pronounced a Tibetan Esoteric master of Vajrayana, once told me that the Tibetan Buddhist tradition produces quite a few catastrophes. There is a power-seeking (superpower-seeking) tendency among aggressive monks, who are born from a fierce Tibetan-Mongolian gene stock, and live within a hierarchical male power structure that was developed to control both monks and society.

Luckily you've got all the basics of Vajrayana *nei-gong* in my books such as *Nyasa Yoga*, *Buddha Yoga* and this one. What is missing is a master and sets of traditions that send devas and adepts to work on your subtle energy body when you start cultivation practice, so you should check out various masters and their traditions. The Yoga traditions, Hinduism, Jainism, Sikhism, Aghori tradition, Taoism, Shintoism, Japanese Yamabushi and Shugendō, Hinayana and Mahayana Buddhism, Esoteric Buddhism as well

as Judaism, Islam, Christianity and especially Orthodox Christianity all have willing masters.

Some enlightened devas with the extra bodies like to demonstrate power over others in order to feed their ego and feel superior. As a general tendency, many people tend to become arrogant and abusive when they have more power, money or status over others. This is a function of personality, and also culture. Cultural thinking gives rise to particular mindsets, and tribal thinking, aggressiveness and abuse characterize certain groups. Therefore devas and their masters often lose self-control and go overboard with gleeful fun tormenting practitioners to show their audience how to do things and demonstrate their power over others. What a power trip! The process often turns into a type of entertainment for the onlookers as two masters compete to see who is more powerful in being able to control everyone or do certain things within their brain using their multiple *nirmanakaya* emanations.

Yes, spiritual masters have different levels of wisdom, compassion and ability, and frankly some are just assholes even though enlightened with extra bodies. Gurus are not perfect, nor should they be treated as such. Many institute feudal, quasi-Stalinist environments like cults where they are considered supreme and you cannot criticize them. Nonsense. Everyone has personality flaws just as everyone has stains on their underwear. “Spiritual” only means you have higher bodies, but it doesn’t mean you don’t have your own peculiar faults and failings, and that you don’t become a bit corrupt or abusive if you attain power. To say “my perfect master” is just propaganda.

Heaven is no different than the earthly plane; some masters are people you would not want to associate with in regular life, and others are. Some you would want to admire, and others not. Some you might want to emulate and others no. The masters working on your body won’t do so for twenty-four hours per day for twelve years unless they are also having fun teaching their students, whom they treat as the primaries, so you are basically screwed if you go through the process and your teacher is incompetent at controlling them or you have a visiting teacher who is an asshole. This will definitely happen because so many have to participate to get the job done. It’s just a matter of time before something bad happens such as getting a lousy master, especially during a bad fortune period. When his/her session is over then that negative period will be gone, but maybe they cause you to self-inflict some type of damage on yourself or your life that is permanent. It happens! Usually it’s just monks or nuns who are selected to go through the Twelve Year process because the monastery system protects them whereas for ordinary individuals it is just hell.

For twelve years you can never trust anything devas say because they are always practicing scrambling your thoughts with deceptions and don’t want

you to know what is going on. There are other reasons as well.

SEXUAL WARNINGS

What you are reading, and what is contained in *Meditation Case Studies*, is probably the most you will ever find about the process and it applies to each and every religion and spiritual tradition. Masters must make your Yin Qi rise through the process, which is why they will put you through all sorts of worries, anxieties and frights such as disguising themselves as evil demons, devils and ghosts to provoke a Yin Qi response within you. They will give you visions of beautiful naked women/men so that your Yang Qi arises due to sexual desire. Women are given sexual images and fantasies of men as well as the story of Yeshe Tsogyel reveals. They will make you angry so that your Yang Qi arises. All sorts of trials and tribulations will go on for that period.

At advanced stages of the process, after you've figured things out, you will seem to be mumbling or talking to yourself as they practice talking through you. They will make negative mental reactions arise within you all the time, which is nearly 90+% of the process, so you really need to be a strong and ethical person to go through this. It is even traditional to warp your thoughts over time so that you hate your master and criticize other teachers/people by the end of the Twelve Year period. You'll end up believing other people are enlightened who aren't so that if you approach them about what is going on you will embarrass yourself greatly.

Whatever you do, never start using pornography during this Twelve Year period because devas and their masters will use all you have seen/watched against you to raise your sexual desire and basically destroy your vitality and body by stroking the impulse for sexual excess, such as masturbation. Later we will see Elder Ephraim's comment on this. Devas (asuras) are considered Desire Realm inhabitants who cannot yet rise above their own animal nature, and thus they will end up destroying you as they use you for sexual cultivation teachings, which is a popular cultivation school in the Desire Realm heavens.

There is even the tale in India of how the great yogic master Matsyendra, Lord of the Fishes, got entangled with or transfixed in practicing sexual cultivation, and his student Gorakshanath had to intervene to liberate his guru from the snares of those enticements. The lesson is that masters practice sexual cultivation too much, regardless of their justifications, and have troubles freeing themselves from the practice so don't get involved with imaginary partners and all the other sexual nonsense that spiritual beings will throw at you. Padre Pio, Yeshe Tsogyel, Swami Muktananda and countless others had to go through this nonsense meant to raise their Yang Qi and have them get involved with masturbation so that the devas could

practice internal energy movement during that time.

During this period, don't get involved with pornography or fall for the visions of naked dakinis, angels, demons and so forth that devas and masters love to give people in order to raise their sexual desire and stimulate Yang Qi. It's all fakery. If you lose your semen you lose your Qi/Prana, and if you lose that energy then it won't be available for opening your Qi/Prana channels. Devas will constantly try to make you repeat a behavior valuable to them once you do it once, and they will therefore deplete your vitality and health as the *Surangama Sutra* warns if you get involved in anything other than normal sexual relations. Forget all the crap such as the Tibetan tradition about imaginary sexual partners, or the Aghori and Hindus tantric methods for imaginary wives and so forth. Follow the example of the Christian monks who stay away from that mode of practice.

One section of the "Fifty Mara States" chapter of the *Surangama Sutra* warns about this topic, saying "This Deva Mara may be a jealous female *chamunda* spirit from the Ishvara heaven, or a male 'consumer of vitality' spirit from the Four Deva Kings Heaven who has come to take advantage of the practitioner's meditative state when his mind is not steadfast in order to consume his vitality." Of course that explanation is all nonsense, as are many of the other explanations within this *Surangama Sutra* chapter. The rule is: never tell them what is going on, but use a different explanation to get the principles across. The principle is that if you involve yourself with sex during the Twelve Year practice, the devas will start using you for their own internal energy practices at that time.

See, even Shakyamuni Buddha was not above using skillful means because he didn't tell you 100% of the truth in his explanations because he also didn't want you to understand the process. The assumption is that the masters supervising it won't go astray but they're just human, and humans with 100% power over others will become abusive. This chapter catalogs many of the different types of experience you will go through, but you have to ignore the explanations of what's going on because they are supposed to calm your fears a bit but still not let you know what is truly happening so you can continue deceiving the practitioner throughout the method for the benefit of the process. I've taken the step of letting you know what is really going on, and like Shakyamuni Buddha you should make this information available to practitioners of every religion to help them because it is truly non-denominational.

The big lesson is never to get involved with pornography, imaginary sexual partners (Tibetan *jnanamudra* teachings), masturbation or sex during this process. All the visions of naked women and imaginary sexual partners that masters such as St. Anthony, Padre Pio, John Vianney, Swami Muktananda, Yogi Chien-ming Chen, Yeshe Tsogyel, etc. experienced were fake. They were illusions put into their heads so that their Yang Qi arose,

and when masters do this they also become abusive of you. If you constantly looking at pornography and visualize a consort, devas will make your life a living hell during this Twelve Year period. Fifty percent of divorces state that pornography was an issue. In nature it is also the alpha animals who have sex while the beta animals watch, so abandon the desire to watch pornography to eliminate lots of problems on the road of spiritual cultivation.

You should place a primary emphasis on pranayama exercise and yoga stretching (or prostrations) in cultivation. You can have actual sex with a genuine consort/partner, but avoid pornography and sexual fantasies. Yes, you can use sex to move your Qi/Prana to help transform your body quickly, but no one will tell you this. Taoism, Vajrayana and the Kaula Yoga schools do this. If you have sex with a partner it will excite your Qi into moving so that it passes through and thus opens/transforms your Qi channels, but only individuals who have done a lot of internal Qi work and are compatible with each other can experience this. The only people qualified for “sexual cultivation” have to be ethically clean and have done lots of inner energy work.

The *Surangama Sutra* of Buddhism warns that the basic purpose of cultivating is to transcend the mental defilements, and says that if you don't renounce lustful thoughts you'll never get out of the dust. You have to cut off lust if you really want to cultivate. This is especially the case during the kundalini transformation period when many masters will arrive with their students and increase your sexual desire tremendously, and you have to fight this. Otherwise, if you succumb then you will exhaust your vitality, lose your Qi/Prana necessary for cultivation, and because you lose your vitality you will lose the integrity of your physical structure due to energy loss, which makes men in particular prone to knee problems, hearing problems and hernias.

This is when the *Surangama Sutra* calls spiritual masters demons, and says, “These demons have their groups of disciples. Each says of himself that he has accomplished the Unsurpassed Way. When you teach people in the world to cultivate samadhi, they must first of all sever the mind of lust. This is the first clear and unalterable instruction on purity given by the Thus Come Ones and the Buddhas of the past, World Honored Ones. Therefore, Ananda, if cultivators of samadhi do not cut off lust, they will be like someone who cooks sand in the hope of getting rice. After hundreds of thousands of aeons, it will still be just hot sand. Why? It wasn't rice to begin with; it was only sand. If you seek the Buddha's wonderful fruition and still have physical lust, then even if you attain a wonderful awakening, it will be based in lust. With lust at the source, you will revolve in the three paths and not be able to get out. Which road will you take to cultivate and be certified to the Thus Come One's nirvana? You must cut off the lust that is intrinsic

in both body and mind. Then get rid of even the aspect of cutting it off. At that point you have some hope of attaining the Buddha's enlightenment mind. What I have said here is the Buddha's teaching. Any explanation counter to it is the teaching of a Demon King.”

In *My Elder Joseph the Hesychast*, Elder Ephraim explained that Elder Joseph advised the following expedient means to battle carnal desires when a monk started suffering from strong lust:

“What should you do? Strike the fantasy. And when the devil's attacks intensify, take a cane and hit yourself. Sacrifice your body so that your soul can live. Carnal thoughts and warfare are confronted with the cane, which you should keep under your pillow. If you don't face this beast in this manner tooth and nail, the flesh will not submit to the spirit. In this way does a person gradually acquire the flower and fragrance of chastity and purity – things that have great boldness before God. ...

“This is how we learned from Elder Joseph that temptations required forcefulness and resistance in order for the passion to abate. ... When I was suffering great temptations [which was during his kundalini transformation period], Geronda said to me: ‘You are undergoing the warfare that only older, spiritually mature people have. For you to have such temptations means either that this experience and toil will be useful for you in the future or that a significant amount of God's grace will visit you.’ ...

“Even if a monk has not had any carnal fall in the world, the demon of fornication will still wage a real war against him, and even more so, naturally, if he has had a sinful past.

“The demons start the warfare in the *imagination*; they cultivate it with thoughts; they defile the nous; they take it down into the heart; and they make both the soul and the body filthy. What decides a person's entire progress or failure is whether he gives in to or resists the attacks of the imagination. If he makes the mistake of beginning a dialogue with the sinful assault and accepting the devil's garbage by his own *consent*, what will follow are falls of the soul, mind, heart, and body. As a result, the passion will take him captive.

“Our holy elder emphasized to us that when a monk falls into a carnal sin, it takes a great struggle afterwards to escape from it. If he does not win that bloody fight, God will give him other labors for the rest of his life. This is why young people must make an effort to struggle, resist, and repulse this demon. In this way will the victory of chastity arise, which will play an important role in both the present and future life – for no one unclean will dwell in God's resplendent paradise.”

“He also explained to us that chastity is assisted by working at noetic prayer, toiling to keep vigil, punctually keeping one's prayer rule, being watchful over one's imagination and rational mind, and always using caution. Genuine and sincere obedience, frank confession, tears,

repentance, maintaining the correct attitude of a disciple toward his elder, and abstinence in general are all aids, medicines, and means that help monks – but also every Christian – to acquire chastity as well as power in prayer.”⁵²

In cultivation there is usually a range within which something works and outside of which another method should be used, and for certain situations or personalities it can easily be that one method is far better than another. No one method suits all best. I won't even go into the details of how spiritual students of certain schools (Yoga, Kaula tantra, Taoism and Vajrayana) use sexual relations on the cultivation path so that they can much easier move their Qi for the transformation process to continue. This is a valid path, but fraught with all sorts of dangers such as pregnancy, sickness, emotional problems between the sexual partners, abuse as well as societal disturbance.

The easiest time to actually move your internal energy is during sex (sexual relations) because of the physical exertion and emotional excitation, so sex can and is used in several spiritual paths as a cultivation technique. Kundalini yoga and sexual cultivation are the two techniques employed in the earthly deva heavens, but they are not explained to ordinary people because the end result would be massive abuse everywhere. Sometimes sexual escapades by monks/masters when discovered are truly sex scandals and sometimes something else at the level of real cultivation is going on but who can say?

ZEN NONSENSE

Everything you have ever done in life along with your true intentions – the total accumulation of impressions – is stored in your brain neurons as memory, and Heaven (subtle-bodied devas, Causal-bodied devas, Supra-Causal-bodies devas, etcetera) makes a habit of reading what everyone has done in life by reviewing their memories, including things you cannot even remember. This is why living masters know what you did in life, and often use this to show they have powers in order to gain your attention and trust.

This explains the famous Zen stories where students visit one Zen master and then travel thousands of miles to visit another master who immediately uses the same words as the previous master, thus befuddling the student. It is simply that the words are stored in the student's memories, his brain neurons, and so the new master reads them and uses them to befuddle the student. Don't get too taken in by Zen stories since they totally neglect the need to cultivate your body's vital energy during practice.

⁵² Elder Ephraim, *My Elder Joseph the Hesychast*, (Saint Anthony's Greek Orthodox Monastery, Arizona, 2013), pp. 339-341.

The big problem with the Zen school is that it focuses on “seeing your original nature” to encourage meditation, but this leads to an emphasis on stillness cultivation and an absence of inner energy work, which is what accomplishment actually requires. Emptiness meditation simply gives higher beings a chance to work on your Qi/Prana without any thought interference by *you*. As to “seeing” or “realizing” your original nature, no such thing is possible. Just read chapter one of this book and by understanding that chapter you’ll know what the Zen school wants you to understand.

The entire schema of the Zen school “to realize/see your original nature” as a mental attainment achieved through meditation is simply bullshit. You have to be cultivating your inner Qi body for attainment. The only thing you can do mentally is know your own thoughts, which always mechanically arise in response to internal or external stimuli. There, that’s your mind. It’s always spinning thoughts. How can you realize your original nature? The only times when you don’t have thoughts are when you are deep asleep, in a coma or don’t exist.

“Enlightenment” means gaining the deva body, which is the initial fruit of the path that makes you a Srotapanna Arhat. It is a body attainment. The *Surangama Sutra* tells you this clearly. Gaining the deva body is the first dhyana attainment. When you attain the Buddha body or clear light body then we say you “attain the mind of bodhi.” However, this is a body attainment talked about as a mental attainment so that people meditate.

In the *Diamond Sutra* Shakyamuni asks Subhuti if the Buddha has the human eye, deva eye, and so forth. Subhuti answers yes. The check list of five types of eyes simply means that Shakyamuni has attained all these higher bodies. He attained the deva body so he has deva eyes. He attained the Causal body so he has wisdom eyes. He attained the Buddha body so he has dharma eyes. Dharma eyes are not a special mental way of understanding or looking at things. They are a portion of the aggregate body attainments that together comprise a *sambhogakaya*, which you cannot see.

The abilities to understand different realms and the minds of beings so that you can tap into their knowledge and wisdom are the attendant mind capabilities for each new body attainment. In short, enlightenment is a body attainment; you must cultivate both emptiness and life (Qi) to attain a higher body, and most of all it requires the work of thousands of masters and devas *over years* to purify your body’s energy so that a new body can pop out of the old one and stay connected. Hence, you have to be a decent, ethical, moral person devoted to helping others to receive such long-term help. Therefore, if you are not a virtuous person you will never attain “enlightenment” because you will never receive this aid. You will only be able to attain “mental realizations,” namely thoughts on certain topics.

Masters hide this fact from you because they want you to think the path is about cultivating mental perspectives so that you meditate, for most people won't gain attainment in this life. The actual path involves lots of energy work to cultivate bodies in addition to meditation practice *and* being a good person. With these bodies, and *nirmanakaya* projections from the Supra-Causal body, a Buddha becomes active doing things everywhere all the time to help people.

A transcendental body attainment – the deva body, subtle body, illusory body, *yin shen*, astral body and so on – is the real product of the spiritual path. Even Christianity says you are to rejoin the communion of saints by becoming gods, which means to become one of the twice born who attains the subtle body while alive, so Christian masters are talking of the same first deva body attainment. This is becoming *Homo Deus*.

The sought after target on the road of spirituality and religion is a spiritual body rather than some “realization insight.” Thousands of people are reading Zen and Advaita Vedanta texts and being misled into thinking that some special set of thoughts that appear in their mind, or some experiential state of not having thoughts, or just some mystical experience is enlightenment, *moksha* or liberation. Nonsense. If you want insight realization then just go back to reading chapter one of this book and you'll get plenty of them. That's understanding and not enlightenment.

Once again, “enlightenment” is not some type of thought realization or attainment of a higher perspective or way of thinking. It is attaining an additional independent spiritual body that becomes the center of your life. Specifically, it is about attaining the subtle body and from that the even higher bodies. Eventually you can attain the Supra-Causal body, which is the full Arhat realization stage, namely the enlightenment stage of a Buddha. Even higher is the Stage of No More Learning, the Golden Arhat stage of the Immanence body that is higher and represents the final liberation of Perfect, Complete Enlightenment. The subtle body attainment constitutes enlightenment because it is the first stage Arhat attainment, the Srotapanna, and becoming an Arhat whilst alive constitutes enlightenment, but this attainment is only the lowest level of enlightenment.

What Zen and many other traditions supposedly leading you to enlightenment or *moksha* actually lead you to developing is a higher mindset, virtuous thinking, good behavior, compassionate activities and spiritual practices. They train you at the Stage of Virtue Training and Wisdom Accumulation, which is the foundational stage of all religions. It is also a stage of replenishing your physical nature by diet, exercise, pranayama and other practices to bring it to a state of flourishing health, which is called “laying the foundation.” This involves replenishing, augmenting and furthering both your body and Qi. You must train your physical body through exercise and keep it healthy. The physical body needs to be healthy

because it is used to cultivate the inner immortal spirit, and once you have achieved this attainment the physical body is no longer necessary. Only a few people work hard enough to get to the stage of Intensified Practices and then achieve the deva body attainment, which occurs after the Twelve Year transitional period of Qi/Prana purification.

The spiritual cultivation process involves emptying your mind through practices such as meditation, prayer, reverence for a deity and so forth. But for enlightenment you need to also practice *nei-gong* bodywork too, which is inner energy work to transform the Qi/Prana of your entire body. Thus the triumvirate is good conduct/virtuous thinking, emptiness meditation (no-thought practice) and Qi/Prana work. If you are sufficiently excellent at all these then you can attain the initial fruit of the path in this life, otherwise you have to work at it during a heavenly life.

DIETS FOR EXPECTANT MOTHERS

The spiritual deva body is an exact duplicate of your physical body, which means that you need to take care of your body during this life since you'll have some version of it afterwards. Don't risk it in crazy ways or self-inflict any excess or damage upon it. Please also work to strengthen it in the areas where it is physiologically weakest such as the spine, knees and abdomen. Heal it when it gets damaged and don't subject it to ascetic extremes.

As Yval Noah Harari points out in *Sapiens*, human spines, knees, necks and arches have paid the price of the human animal transitioning from being a hunter-gatherer to agricultural production. Humans commonly suffer from slipped discs, arthritis and hernias as well as knee problems because our bodies are built for an active animal lifestyle, but we have adopted a different lifestyle.

To prevent slipped discs, back problems and neck problems you should regularly go to a chiropractor and also use AMIT therapy. Yoga stretches and Z-Health exercises that stretch the spine also certainly help. For hernias, since they are becoming so frequent, everyone should definitely undertake preventive exercises that strengthen the abdominal wall such as yoga exercises and crunches, etcetera. *Nauli yoga exercises* would be worthwhile. To repair damage there are many methodologies available such as Egoscue, stem cell injections and other modern healing modalities.

In *Your Inner Fish*, Neil Shubin pointed out that our bodies have evolutionarily descended from fish. The fish fins have become our legs, which possess a complicated structure called knees that commonly become damaged. We are far too young, in terms of evolution, for its architecture to have been eliminated of various weaknesses. If you hurt your knee you usually injure one or more of three structures called the “Unhappy Triad” –

the medial meniscus, medial collateral ligament or the anterior cruciate ligament. I always tell people to drink bone broth soups and eat collagen 1&3 or collagen 2 as well as glucosamine sulfate in order to keep the knee joint in good shape.

Our propensity for hernias is also the result of taking a fish body and morphing it into the body of a mammal. The descent of the gonads during the development of a male human body creates a weak spot in a man's abdominal wall that easily gives rise to inguinal hernias. Hernias are becoming regular occurrences in our exercise passive societies. Therefore to avoid hernias, which are becoming more common because of our inactive sit-down lives, men should regularly practice relevant abdominal exercises and yoga/Pilates to strengthen the abdominal wall. If you get a hernia consider surgery rather than mesh insertions since they are uncomfortable and will always bother you forever with internal irritation.

Enlarged prostate problems are becoming more common too because of our diets. Men are eating too much meat from animals that ingested hormone growth supplements, and a doctor told me that the hormone remnants in meat and other influences are causing prostates to swell in size.

Women ingesting xenoestrogens from pesticides and absorbing them from cosmetics tend to get breast cancers because these toxic hormone mimickers find a home in breast tissue too. Women therefore especially need to detox their bodies every year to reduce the buildup of these harmful chemicals. For instance, Israeli studies showed that pesticides become lodged in women's breasts, and therefore harmful xenoestrogen pesticides were banned from being used in the country. As a result, breast cancer cases in the country plummeted dramatically.

Incidentally, an incredibly large proportion of women who get cancer, especially breast cancers, are found to have root canals on the teeth whose acupuncture meridians correspond to the cancer locations. To cure cancer a complementary physician will almost certainly ask you to remove the root canal because the infection is still active. Hence, to avoid breast cancer avoid root canals. You can see my book *Super Cancer Fighters* for some insights and details.

For repairing the knees and eliminating knee pain when they are damaged *we can, as explained, ingest very inexpensive but extremely effective nutritional substances like Collagen 2 or Collagen 1&3 as well as glucosamine sulfate*. Even better is for a mother to feed you bone broth soups (or bone broth protein powder supplements) when you are young so that you develop excellent knee joint cartilage and thereby avoid knee problems in the first place.

If a pregnant mother ingests plenty of gelatin, bone broth protein/powder and bone broth soups then that plentitude of glycosaminoglycans will be available for building excellent joints that a baby will have for the rest of his or her life. This is perhaps the most important time to ingest them because they'll be

used to form a perfect baby's body, and you don't want to skimp on providing nutrients when laying the foundation for the rest of growth and development. We need to work on building our knees and protecting them throughout life, especially if you meditate, so we also need to eat such foods and supplements when we are young as well as throughout life too. The architecture of the knees is so complicated that they are commonly referred to as the territory of the "Divine Architect" in Hindu cultivation schools.

During pregnancy I also tell women to eat plenty of green and red superfood powders from which their bodies can most readily absorb the nutrients necessary for their baby's body. The powdered form of vegetable and fruit juices is the easiest form to digest and absorb because it is already in tiny particulate form that is easy to process. They should also take ample vitamin C to help grow the baby's connective tissues, B-vitamins to prevent birth defects, and ample absorbable minerals (such as through kelp tablets, Shilajit, or liquid plant-derived minerals). There should also be a preference for nutrient-dense foods that are nucleotide-rich such as *liver, sardines, oysters, spirulina, chlorella, mackerel, brewer's yeast and most beans*. Dr. David Williams came up with this list - these foods will greatly help build the RNA and DNA of new cells or supply the necessary ingredients for RNA/DNA repair.

During pregnancy an expectant mother should also *avoid sugar and vegetable oils*. She should consume fresh olive oil, cod liver oil, coconut oil, flaxseed oil, butter, lard, and so on but avoid vegetable oils. These are especially important for brain development and formation since it is mostly fat. Later when of school age, mushroom products such as Lion's Mane or Bacopa extracts (*bacopa monnieri*) might help a child grow more neural connections during specific stages of their learning life. DHA and non-oxidized micronized lecithin (a product derived from organic Russian micro-milled soybeans) can also supply the purest nutrients that help build a great brain.

We all should want a perfect body for spiritual cultivation, and should try to improve our body's shape and capabilities through diet and exercise, because our current body becomes the framework or template for higher spiritual bodies. Therefore we want it to develop perfectly and we want to develop it correctly.

Think about it this way, especially if you are planning on having a child. The development needs for a perfect human body include sufficient vitamins, minerals, trace elements proteins, carbohydrates and oils. For instance, if a mother with fetus does not consume enough B-vitamins then the baby might be born with spinal defects. Sufficient vitamin C is necessary to grow strong connective tissues. The proper proteins, fats and carbs are needed too for body tissue development as well. In the regular world we commonly suffer from mineral and vitamin deficiencies that cause

disease, such as anemia caused by insufficient iron or vitamins. When a fetus is growing it also needs sufficient vitamins and minerals to develop the perfect body inherent in its genes. If minerals and vitamins are missing, the perfect body cannot form.

There are all sorts of interactions involved with human growth. For instance, if you take massive amounts of vitamin C it depletes your stores of selenium and copper, which are hard to obtain through the diet, so you would have to supplement such minerals if you were to take high doses of vitamin C. Copper is easy to obtain through copper-zinc supplements, and selenium is best absorbed through Phytosel, which is a supplement derived from mustard greens that are grown in selenium-rich water. Copper deficiency causes your skin to become very thin and lose its elasticity, and causes your hair to turn bone white.

For certain minerals we only need trace amounts in our diet, and yet the absence of very insignificant amounts can produce enormous deleterious effects. If you don't ingest enough iodine when young you will develop goiter. Selenium deficiency produces Keshan disease, a heart ailment. Zinc and magnesium are used in countless biochemical reactions within the body, and yet our diets are notoriously deficient in these minerals. Their deficiency contributes to disease as well. Calcium deficiency will cause bone problems.

As to vitamins, if we don't ingest enough vitamin A when young then it is possible to go blind, and vitamin C deficiency will make us prone to infections or cause scurvy. Vitamin D deficiency will cause bone problems such as rickets. Vitamin B1 deficiency causes beriberi where you have weak muscles and little energy to work.

Needless to say, a growing fetus requires a surplus of vitamins and minerals during gestation, and this means that an expectant mom has to be eating a nutrient-rich diet. Not ingesting enough minerals and vitamins, even though only tiny amounts are required in some instances, can produce enormous health problems. If the fetus is a woman's second or third child then she has already suffered a loss in her nutrient stores due to a drawdown from previous pregnancies, which is why a great diet and supplementation are necessary for healthy babies and mothers.

What is the right diet for an expectant mom? Avoid sugar and vegetable oils (and wheat). Ingest a (1) vitamin supplement and mineral supplement and. This might include kelp powder or Shilajit and colloidal minerals, and should include ample vitamin C, D and B-vitamins. To make sure nutrients are there an expectant mother should (2) eat DNA/RNA-rich foods, nutrient-dense foods, green and red superfood powders, bone broth powders/soup, and good oils. (3) Always choose organic and non-GMO whenever possible for meat and vegetables; (4) follow the Price-Pottenger guidelines for foods, which I have detailed elsewhere.

EMOTIONAL, INTELLECTUAL AND SPIRITUAL NOURISHMENT

Vitamins, minerals, oils and good protein are not the only things we need. As studies with monkeys have shown, if we are raised without a supportive emotional environment - which includes love, kindness, caring, compassion and concern - we will develop incorrectly as well. If we develop without exposure to certain types of thoughts and mental exercises, we will also grow up incorrectly. If we develop without socialization influences we will also develop wrongly.

Moral education is impossible without a habitual vision of greatness, so children also need to be exposed to ideal exemplars of good behavior. Great individuals are not born but made through training, so if children are not emotionally nourished, intellectually taught, and provided with ideal exemplars they might model via aspiration then they will not grow properly.

For instance, studies of humans growing up in the wild with animals (feral children) show that they often become intellectually impaired. After being rescued they usually have trouble learning a human language, perhaps because they missed a critical period for language development. Lacking an early stage of socialization, feral children lack the basic social skills that are normally learned in the process of societal enculturation. Thus, many experience difficulty learning to use a toilet, have trouble learning to walk upright after walking on fours for a long time, and many display a complete lack of interest in human activity around them.

As also previously mentioned, during Ceausescu's reign in Romania the children who grew up within its orphanages, if they didn't pass away, were living in veritable slaughterhouses of souls. They suffered great psychological harm because they were treated like animals in a warehouse, and weren't exposed to human love, caring and support. In order to develop properly, children need to be shown love and care and exposed to all the nourishing human emotions.

The point is that humans don't just need certain vitamins and minerals or nutrient-rich foods to grow. They also need certain thoughts and emotions and aspirations to develop properly. They need to be trained in particular ways we have developed over the centuries to bring out the most in their minds and bodies. They need a proper environment containing several beneficial factors – the right food, caring family influences, positive emotions, ethical teachings, heroic models of success and so on. Otherwise they will not develop towards noble, consummate conduct and will only remain animals as the many cases of feral children show.

Looking back upon history, we can thus appreciate the great role that religion has played in taming the human animal. Laws, social traditions, codes of conduct and religion have all worked together to civilize man, but

we still have far to go. These influences have raised the general level of behavior from animalistic instincts to a level of social propriety where we can now live in large group without killing, harming or just antagonizing each other.

Socialization is the core of human training mechanisms, and within the broad scope of socialization we receive training on values and virtuous behavior that helps us shape our characters in certain ways. Through education we learn ways of thinking such as logic, planning and imagination, and special mental and physical skills. We basically learn how to use our minds correctly, and in optimal ways. Through spiritual training we learn concentration (*dharani*), how to rest our minds from thoughts (excessive mental activity), how to eliminate mental afflictions or get them under control, how to become aware of our mind-stream in a detached manner that gives us a higher perspective, how to set great aims or aspirations for our lives, how to wisely help other people in need, how to move the internal energy within our bodies, and all sorts of other topics.

You can even look at all this in terms of the requirements we need fulfilled for the proper development of our physical body, subtle body (emotions), Causal body (intellect), and Supra-Causal (will power).

For the physical body we need sufficient exercise and food that includes sufficient vitamins and minerals, proteins, carbohydrates and fats. If we are missing even trace amounts of certain nutrients then the body will not grow correctly. For physical development we need diet and exercise, which is a topic I have previously dealt with in discussing possibilities such as yoga, athletics, martial arts, stretching, mind-body coordination and so on.

For the subtle body to develop properly, we need to grow up in environments that surround us with noble virtues, values and character traits such as honesty, kindness, love, fairness, respect for others and so forth. We need to provide ourselves (and our children) with role models of good behavior as well as role models of excellent livelihoods, social cooperation and contribution, individual accomplishment and leadership. There are character traits necessary for helping us survive (such as self-reliance), traits that help us live in social harmony with others (such as honesty, kindness, fairness, self-control, courtesy and hospitality), traits necessary for climbing dominance hierarchies (such as ambition, determination, perseverance and hard work), traits necessary for leaders, and traits necessary to bear the inevitable suffering in life while we work on spiritual cultivation. We need to be encouraged to pick up and master such virtues or characteristics.

Our subtle body is definitely a storage depot affected by our personality, character traits, mental perspectives, thinking patterns, habit energies and urges. It stores our values, virtues and vices. As children *and* adults we need to be taught the highest virtues and values that ennoble us so that we

transcend our animal tendencies, and the tendencies for consummate conduct impress themselves into our vital energy (Qi). Therefore we need to learn techniques that help us eliminate mental afflictions and gain control of our inner life so that we become its master and can control our emotions and appetites. We must be taught the highest aspects of mental-behavioral purity. We must be taught the most admirable, irreproachable, consummate conduct found within the ethics of religion. We need to be taught the proper way to live and act and encouraged or channeled such that our best behavior becomes our everyday self.

What we like and dislike are also factors that emotionally arise within us naturally due to our mental patterns and prior conditioning. We need to learn to like what is good for us so that pursuing what is good becomes a personality trait. We need to be taught the proper perspectives when encountering all sorts of circumstances in order to form the best possible templates (patterns) for our mindset because our perspective determines our behavior. This type of conditioning also requires that we need to be taught emotional and behavioral self-control because the examples of drunkards, drug users, gamblers, sex addicts and so forth show that mental perspective and willpower are often not enough to keep us from harmful ways.

For the Causal body to blossom we need proper intellectual development such as training in concentration, problem solving, logic and higher reasoning, imagination skills, and other basic intellectual skills. From the conscious ability of understanding (wisdom), the accumulation of Knowledge, and from the process of learning we can develop skillfulness and expertise that allows us to take control of ourselves, our environment and master the changes of phenomena. Proper intellectual development does not just mean expertise in the active literacies such as language communication and persuasion, but requires us to learn how to learn and to do the actual learning to develop wisdom and knowledge. It involves learning how to master the possibilities of the human mind. The goal is to develop cognitive/mental skills, master cause and effect relationships (such as scientific principles) and various bodies of knowledge or expertise. I've detailed some of the topics to be mastered in *Buddha Yoga*.

For the Supra-Causal body, which lives an incredibly long time, we need to develop aims, vows or goals for our future best self. Most individuals find meaning, significance and fulfillment in life when they are devoted to a higher calling that involves commitments, aspirations or vows to help humankind. Such challenges can give people's lives great meaning, and justify their existence as having significance. Thus the Supra-Causal body needs training in "I and We" affairs. We all need to learn how to create goals and plans, whether for ourselves or others, and how to keep on tracking working towards their fulfillment. This is the task of aiming the I-

self to an objective (for the I or We) through a plan of action that involves committed fortitude, patience and perseverance.

The Immanence-bodied individual needs to learn about the great evolutionary, political, social, economic and psychological trends of humankind on a grand time scale – its fate line of birth, death and development – and understand similar issues for the environment and other forms of life. The goal for Immanence-bodied individuals is to guide mankind throughout the inevitable rises and falls in world karma, which involves all sorts of fated troubles and catastrophes, to better states of being. The goal is to train people to be able to attain higher bodies, higher virtues and ethics (behavior), higher capabilities and enable them to link with partners in our galaxy and the universe at large.

We just went from (1) the necessity of engaging in frequent preventative measures to prevent hernias, prostate problems, breast cancer, knee problems, back problems, neck troubles, nutrient deficiencies and so on; to (2) what pregnant mothers should eat to produce perfect baby bodies, and a reminder to afterwards feed children according to the Price-Pottenger Foundation dietary guidelines; to (3) how children and adults should train themselves to develop their personalities, values, conduct, wisdom, *skandhas*, *koshas* or higher bodies etcetera.

Basically, humans must be taught how to develop their bodies and minds, the connection between the two, and how to create an elegant expression in behavior. My synopsis was in no sense complete, but just meant to help you think in a new and larger way, especially if you are designing an educational plan for yourself or others, especially children. Hopefully others will later fill out these indications for development.

The point of this short aside is that our bodies have some accident-prone areas because of evolution and they are the weakest parts of our body. Therefore you should pay attention to these areas. Since the spirit body double is a duplicate of our physical nature, you should try to keep it in shape through exercise, diet and nutritional/herbal supplements that will particularly address these areas. I have put some relevant information along these lines in *Look Younger Live Longer, Detox Cleanse Your Body Quickly and Completely*, and *Prevent and Reverse Atherosclerosis* (Stanton Reed). Because your body starts in the womb, I gave you indications as to what your mother should be doing to maximize your chances of inheriting the most perfect body possible that expresses your genes because when it was developing it had a surplus of nutrients available for construction. Then I gave you some suggested areas of development that assume your body is okay enough to tread the spiritual path. Needless to say, more could be given – a book in itself is warranted.

Your deva body is a duplicate of your physical body even though it is

made of Qi/Prana. It can shrink and expand like flexible energy, and become lighter or heavier (which is why masters test their deva students if they can produce raps on your wall by hardening/solidifying their hand more). The eight *siddhis* of yoga explain what the subtle body can do, and the Causal body has even more skills and abilities. The Supra-Causal body, lacking the solidity of etheric atoms, has even more capabilities. Because these bodies are a structural duplicate of your physical body, you should work on developing and keeping your physical body in great shape for regular life and as spiritual practice. Yoga, Pilates, weight training, athletics/sport or soft martial arts (*Taijiquan*, *Baguazhang*, *Tongbeiquan*, *Yiquan* (*Da Cheng Quan*), *Liu He Ba Fa* and *Xingyiquan*) are therefore highly recommended as is dancing, gymnastics and so on.

The general idea is to keep your body in good shape, don't hurt it or damage it, and stretch the muscles. As Edgar Cayce advised, make sure its channels of elimination, circulation, and assimilation all work properly because they nourish and cleanse the body. Also remember that the basic factors of physical fitness include flexibility, agility, strength, endurance and speed. Hence, the chief goals we should pursue include greater health, higher energy, being pain free, mind-body coordination and controlling our internal energy. The athletic abilities to pursue, other than those involved with teamwork, should pursue the physical grace of form and movement agility.

As to your behavior, once again you must realize that you can never hide anything you think or do from Heaven no matter how hard you try. Everything is stored in your neurons, and that entire tableau is reviewed upon your death by Supra-Causal and Immanence-bodied beings, which is why you are often shown a tableau of life events in near-death experiences. No one is watching you all the time, although anything you secretly do is likely to be noticed since devas are around us everywhere because the earthly heavenly plane coincides with the earthly material plane. It is only upon the Causal body attainment that you can leave it.

The fact is that there is nothing that a spiritual being cannot find out about you by checking your memories stored in your neurons. As stated, you are even shown a tableau of your life events when you die because the Buddhas overseeing the process play them back for you, so the idea presented in religion that your soul is judged is certainly true. Even the ancient Egyptian religion taught people that their soul was weighed and judged upon death. Everyone at a higher stage knows what you were up to, and what you were thinking at the time. There is no such thing as cheating them as to your motivations and true intentions. Knowing this information, Buddhas oversee the process of reincarnation, pulling you into a new life where you can discharge karma, until you reach the Buddha stage where you can control the process yourself and select your own lives.

In Chinese culture it is even taught that the Kitchen God sees everything done in the household and reports those events to Heaven. A principle of religion is that “watched people are nicer people,” so this Chinese teaching not only helped pacify society by making people nicer to one another, but also touched upon a bit of the truth in terms of devas seeing whatever you do in your home. It is also taught in some religions that your good deeds and bad deeds are tallied in a book. Your “secret” deeds that you want to hide from everyone, such as crimes, will usually be seen in real time and if not, definitely reviewed upon your death since you cannot hide them.

As previously stated, this ability to read your memories is what accounts for all the Zen stories of masters repeating the words of another master whom a student had just visited in some faraway location. Also, a master might pretend he can read faces and say that at age so-and-so you did such-and-such, but at age something or other you experienced this or that. I’ve seen such demonstrations, but all the information came from reading the memories in the individual’s neurons rather than the fact that the master can read faces, or palms or a fortune.

A master may know your name without being told, answer your questions before being asked, or even answer your questions without need of a translator when they speak a different language. Christian elders like to do this sort of thing with visitors, and everyone thinks it is a “power from God” when they are just using their extra bodies. All sorts of tricks like this go on all the time in order to genuinely try to solve people’s problems, catch people’s attention, acquire people as devoted students, or just lead people to better behavior.

I remember the story of a Hindu master who let a blind girl see her mother for a moment, which was done by inserting one of his spiritual bodies into the blind girl, using it to see, projecting that information into her brain, and then leaving when it was done. All sorts of miracles are done in ways like this, which involve masters and higher beings using their spiritual bodies to go into people to give them energy, thoughts, emotions, intuitions, inspiration, understanding, spiritual experiences and so on. This happens all the time because *this is the occupational career of a Buddha or Bodhisattva* – the “activities of Heaven” – but people don’t know it. When people ingesting mushrooms, ayahuasca, psilocybin, DMT or other drugs experience an “awakening” or “entities” communicating with them, who do you think this is? It’s just masters and their students pretending to be this or that and giving people thoughts to help them change their lives.

The point is that you should never engage in evil, bad, unwholesome deeds in life. Those deeds determine your consequences in this life, and karma is subsequent lives. If you keep acting a certain way, it changes your personality or “properties” and that’s what determines your fortune.

Spiritual beings around us (“in Heaven”) are always watching us. They

just laugh at people because of all the human pretense and nonsense they constantly see going on, such as politicians lying or stealing. This mindset of looking down upon us is one of the reasons they have a slight tendency for abusing you during the Twelve Year kundalini period. The other reason is that they're going through training to prove their skills, and the cultivation practitioners have always gone through abuse during this process. In regular life devas provide people with positive thoughts and influences as a general tendency but during the Twelve Year period they are attacking you like swarms of locusts to prove their skills to the attendant master who is working on your Qi during that session. Every set of devas learns how to give thoughts to humans, under the training of their master, using you as the guinea pig, and a new group comes along every one or two hours.

I remember Elder Ephraim writing about his own Twelve Year period where he would get strange thoughts that his teacher, Elder Joseph the Hesychast, was possessed by demons or other strange thoughts. He would go to battle with the voices for days of spiritual warfare. His teacher would tell him to just ignore the thoughts and they'd leave on their own, but he decided to fight back with his thoughts and the hammering, which Elder Joseph called the thoughts of a devil, would go on for days. This is always the type of thing you will suffer during the Twelve Year kundalini transformation period, which is why you need a good master nearby. The constant hammering to affect you, as devas fight against one another to see who is more powerful using you as the playing board, is just terrible.

Why don't heavenly beings stop some bad/evil things from happening to us in regular life if they see what's going on? Sometimes they do and sometimes they don't. Sometimes they fail in their attempts, and sometimes they just cannot because of the momentum of the situation, the strength of the forces producing the manifesting results. An example is the karma of death where it is time for someone to die, and so this event cannot be changed. Why blame a master that he cannot save someone whose time has come to die since the karma is used up? Yet people do, and lose faith in saints for the wrong reason. When the karma is too strong there is nothing you can do.

There are many types of cases where you simply cannot intervene despite human entreaties. Then again, sometimes the devas surrounding us are just plain indifferent, just as people usually become indifferent to the poor if you live surrounded by squalid poverty such as in Calcutta. After awhile you will tend to ignore your surroundings, including all the suffering around you, because you become accustomed to it, cannot do anything about it, and have to handle your own problems that are just as large. Compassion fatigue would destroy you if you did not put a check on it.

Devas and Buddhas have busy lives of their own and are busy just living life. No one is going to go about spending 100% of their time helping

humans in this world or in another world. How can they? Why should they? Once a Chinese official visited a famous Zen master who in a conversation rebuked him by saying, “Be careful minister. No one from the higher heavens wants to step down into the human world.” Who wants to get involved when it is so pleasurable upstairs?

During the twelve-year period of kundalini changes your past deeds will all be brought up again and again in your mind especially those involving negative emotions such as guilt, shame, humiliation, fright, crime, inappropriateness, and so on. Your character flaws, past mistakes and goofs will be rehashed time and again because nothing will be secret to everyone panning through your neurons for new materials. In their training devas prove they have a certain degree of skill to their master if they can provoke an emotional response in you while the master blocks your emotional response at the same time. They might even give you physical pain to provoke a response when the teacher is unethical and lets them do it. If you read the accounts of the saints and their fights with devils you see that it is bloody hell to go through this period. In a later stage when you're almost out, the very last year, you will even be given physical irritations and pain to provoke emotions responses. It's not done for you but for their training purposes.

As Meher Baba explained in *God Speaks*, giving people emotions is harder to do than giving people thoughts, and the easiest way to do so is to dredge up negative stuff rather than positive material. Therefore you will be bombarded with negative rehashings during the Twelve Year kundalini transformation as devas try to prove to their teacher that they can provoke your emotions even though they are being blocked by their master. Most of the mental crap you go through during this time (due to devas training within your brain as symbolized in the *Vimalakirti Nirdeśa Sutra*) will be all the stupid or shitty stuff you did in life that you would be embarrassed about other people knowing. Those memories will be rehashed over and over again as well as feelings of guilt, shame and regret. The master giving teachings to the students will try to block the devas's efforts at raising your negative emotions during the rehash, thus demonstrating his or her powers, but all in all it's hell for twelve years. It just changes from one type of training to another in a sequence. When higher level masters come, they too are being tested by their teachers, so they will change your underlying emotional tone for days as a test of their achievement level. When the Buddhist sutras explain that we have finer and finer shades of thoughts, it is referring to the various influences they will practice giving you from coarse thoughts to strong impulses to emotional tones to strong emotional experiences to outright direct control of your actions and so forth.

Remember, no one is going to bother working on purifying your Qi for twelve consecutive years if they aren't getting something in return, and so

during that time they will be using you for teaching purposes. Hence, a master ends up teaching his/her deva and Causal-bodied and Supra-Causal students during their time slot for circulating their Qi/Prana to purify yours. Hundreds of masters are involved because it is a long, boring process so they do all sorts of tricks to make it interesting. They are looking for new material all the time, otherwise without fun and variety no one would stay with it to the end. Then the world wouldn't have any living saints or masters, just spiritual influences from above. When someone has the duty of purifying your Qi/Prana (by rotating their energy within you), this is when they teach the students how to go into people's brains and give them thoughts and control this or that.

The twelve-year period is so uncomfortable with so many things like this that masters never discuss it, and it's best to hitch yourself to a tradition early, that involves lots of *living* enlightened masters whom you can talk to if you want to go through it. Also, if your master is too old he/she may die while you go through the Twelve Year period, so make sure you become involved with lots of enlightened masters so that you have a replacement in case of his or her demise.

Now you know why masters typically only teach self-awareness, good behavior, yoga and meditation practice. They don't want students to get involved with inner energy work too much because of all the problems that can occur. No one ever talks about what went on during the Twelve Year kundalini transformation period – all the masters just keep quiet. They want people to purify their behavior and get healthy, and they don't want them playing with kundalini cultivation unless they're really ready for all of this.

You must protect yourself during this time from self-inflicted injury because devas will not protect you from anything. Their antics will land you in trouble if you are not careful just as the "Fifty Demon Mara States" of the *Surangama Sutra* warns (see a translation in *Meditation Case Studies*). If you are not careful they will cause you to damage your body, wealth, health, relationships - nearly everything, especially the weakest links in your life - and then laugh about it after the destruction and leave. They'll destroy what's weakest about your money, health, relationships, living situation and so on. This is why most of the people who end up going through the process are monks/nuns and other mendicants, anchorites and monastics including yogis and swamis and sadhus. For them the problems of family, money and so on have been eliminated and the regularity of spiritual practice in the regularity of the monastery etc. keeps the harmful abusive at a manageable level.

Naturally, muftis, rabbis and other religious people go through this as well (everyone who becomes a saint goes through it regardless of your tradition) and then end up with prominent positions within their religion. For instance, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson is a Jewish rabbi who

attained the Tao as evidenced by his miraculous powers. The Cypriot Sheikh Muhammad Nazim al-Haqqani at-Rabbani (Sheikh Nazim) also attained the Tao. St. John (Maximovtch) of Shanghai and San Francisco, Schema-archimandrite Ambrose (Kurganov) and Metropolitan Anthony (Khapovitsky) are some of the more recent Christian monks who also attained enlightenment. One could list many attainees from different traditions.

KUNDALINI ENERGY IS NOT TOO POWERFUL

Spiritual masters have created the fictitious story that kundalini energy is too powerful for most people, would burn out their body, create insanity, and all sorts of other nonsense. Therefore one should avoid kundalini yoga, kriya yoga, tantric sadhanas or Vajrayana techniques and so forth when you lack a spiritual master. The truth is that kundalini is just your internal energy, but people in ordinary life could not handle all these *interferences by devas* if they got started with inner energy work, meaning kundalini-type practices. That's the problem! You need a master to look out for you and protect you. If you start moving your Qi, devas will become involved because it gives them a chance to practice. This is why masters keep mum and few teach energy work practices.

Even the Jewish tradition has a Talmudic story warning people not to study the Kabbalah until they are mature because Kabbalah practice involves the same types of inner energy work. The famous story involves four rabbis – Ben Azzai, Ben Zoma, Elisha ben Avuya and Rabbi Akiva – each of whom succumbed to a different fate after starting to practice it. Ben Azzai died, Ben Zoma went mad, Elisha ben Avuya lost his faith, and only Rabbi Akiva was said to internalize and process the mystical experience. This is nonsense once again to dissuade people from cultivating inner energy work so that they avoid the attraction of devas who will come to bother them as they both move their internal Qi energy and train at the same time.

It is devas that are the problem due to their lack of self-control and tendency to cause you to inflict harm upon yourself. Their teachers are the problem when they allow them too much leeway because of all the fun because it is easy for them to lose self-control, or because they consider them more important than you since they are in the spiritual world and know what's going on. If one of them causes you to do something stupid, or they cause you to do something new, it will probably be repeated hundreds of times with you as the sufferer, so you will need a master nearby to protect you from such unethical behavior. Such excesses are explained in the "Fifty Demon Mara States" section within the *Surangama Sutra* that is included within *Meditation Case Studies*. You can also read books by the

Anthonite Christian fathers to see all the nonsense they had to go through, which they attributed to devils and demons, when it was just devas doing their training as explained. The process and suffering is universal.

In any case, once you read these accounts or Shakyamuni's *Surangama Sutra* Demon Mara States chapter and ignore the contrived explanations for the experiences (also skillful means to mislead you), you'll understand what is going on. This is information that should be provided to anyone going through the experience regardless of their tradition. The attached chapters following, within this book, can help get people started at understanding all the various sorts of gong-fu experiences they'll encounter on the spiritual path. No matter what your religion or path, you will go through similar experiences when you start to make genuine progress.

The real problem of "kundalini awakenings" is that devas practice giving you thoughts and emotions at this time and are merciless in trying to prove to their teacher that they can do this while he tries to block them. They are taught how to give you thoughts that cause your Yin Qi to arise (such as fear, guilt, shame, sadness, embarrassment, anxiety, despair, powerlessness, depression, sadness, discouragement, worry, etcetera) or thoughts that cause your Yang Qi to arise (such as pride, anger, reverence, joy, happiness, love, defiance, sexual desire, etc.) as part of their training and in order to help transform your Qi/Prana. Of course, sometimes a master will also suddenly yell at you or scold you so that your Yin Qi arises, or compliment you so that your Yang Qi arises.

As Meher Baba explained in *God Speaks* (pages 48-49), devas will try to affect your thoughts and your emotions, but emotions are the hardest to influence of the two. In terms of training, it is much harder to gain a degree of skillful control over someone's feelings and emotions than their thoughts. Thus, when masters test their students and challenge them to give rise to certain emotions in human beings (while they block the human response), the devas choose the easiest way and go for bringing up negative junk in your mind that would normally give rise to shame, guilt and embarrassment if others knew what you did, which they do. This causes your Yin Qi to arise. They'll even give you pain in order to arouse irritation just to show they can do it, picking an unethical route to get their "pass."

Incidentally, this accounts for why moralists have proposed a "broadcasting test" as a method for evaluating behavior before you do it. Before performing an act you should ask yourself, "Would I do this act if everyone knew that I did so?" If you avoid activities when the answer is no then life is usually better. At the same time when devas are trying to make your Yin Qi arise by bringing up past negative influences in your life, a teacher will also normally block you from feeling such emotions (guilt, embarrassment, shame, etc.) as a type of protection, but this sort of effort goes on all the time. Devas have a Qi body but masters have much higher

transcendental bodies so they can use them to override whatever devas do to some extent, but not if there are too many.

As a commentary in general, during training periods where they demonstrate their skills the devas are like a hoard of animals or locusts without any concern of your circumstances. They lack self-restraint, self-control and any concern for your well-being or welfare. They will risk your health, safety, money, job or relationships just to prove they have powers. They are just interested in proving they have powers that can override their teacher's powers, so during the Twelve Year kundalini period you will suffer as they use you as the demonstration board.

Both your Yin Qi and Yang Qi have to be purified on the spiritual path in order that you attain a subtle body, and spiritual masters will work on transforming your Yin Qi directly by moving their own Qi inside you while giving you Yin thoughts or making your own Yin thoughts arise. They will work on transforming your Yang Qi directly while giving you Yang-type thoughts or cause yours to arise. Or, they may work on your Yang Qi while giving you some Yin thoughts, or work on your Yin Qi while giving you some thoughts that raise your Yang Qi. They will mix thoughts and types of Qi but never let you know what is going on.

In terms of the gong-fu you might experience on the path, masters will sometimes use one of their higher spiritual bodies to violently vibrate your Yang Qi while using another body to give you thoughts of worry or anxiety that arouse your Yin Qi, and blend the two to help you purify your subtle body. They will practice using their multiple bodies of different composition (the subtle, Causal, Supra-Causal and Immanence), or multiple *nirmanakaya* of the same energy composition, to control your Qi and thoughts and emotions on different levels, disguising it as if it is coming from different individuals.

This is the training involved in becoming a Buddha and being able to use your multiple bodies. Sometimes you can think certain thoughts, which are really those of a Buddha possessing you, and not even know they aren't yours (as in the *Journey to the West* story of Sun Wu-kong being imitated by another monkey) whereas at other times you can tell when subtle body devas are trying to do this. The coarser the body the easier it is to tell of an outside influence.

The methods used for training often, in my own opinion, stray too far into the realms of excessive abuse, mental torture and physical torture because they impose agony on you for the benefit of others simply to test their skill levels. This is incorrect. Many people get hurt during the long process and most try to kill themselves, so suicide is always a concern. Devas have power over your consciousness and actions, you cannot do anything about it, and it's fun entertainment for them to get you to do something you wouldn't normally do that surpasses their teacher's efforts to

block them. About 95% of the time you are mentally suffering in some form or another.

During the entire Twelve Year process the masters don't ever want you to know what is going on because the uncertainty raises your Yin Qi. Therefore you need a living master to protect you through this process, which is why usually only full-time monks, nuns, sadhus or swamis, etc. who have the regularity of a monastery or other facility to protect them and keep them on track, can stand it. Some go into retreat for years to pass through it, which is why they might spend the Twelve Years kundalini transformational period in a cave or in a locked retreat room. As Shakyamuni Buddha's story demonstrates, it takes about three years to achieve a higher body attainment after you have the deva body, so some masters go into retreat for three years to attain a subsequently higher body attainment. During that period they are out of their body most of the time, so they look like they are in samadhi when their spirit body is simply absent and somewhere else. Both Ramakrishna and Ramana Maharshi, Indian saints, were known to be in samadhi for weeks on end, and the truth is that they left their physical body and were practicing elsewhere during that time.

Both men and women go through this process of purification and preparation to attain the deva body attainment, which is the status of being "twice born." It is just nonsense that a woman's body is inferior to a man's body for the spiritual path. Its Qi/Prana becomes purified in exactly the same way as a man's to produce the subtle body, Causal body, Supra-Causal and Immanence body or higher. You get an immortal *sambhogakaya* after the Twelve Year process of purifying your physical structure so that it can generate all the higher bodies and hence some masters justify the abusiveness of training through all sorts of reasonings like this. But that's wrong.

Don't ever fall for the line that you are using up or purifying your karma when you go through these difficulties because karma is endless, and no one can cause you to expend your bad karma. The overseers are simply abusive, arrogant, excessive, harmful, power tripping, ill-willed, malicious, malevolent, and stupid, and try to excuse themselves with such nonsense. Devas love lording their powers over others, and in using them they often reveal their somewhat malevolent personality although they think their fun and laughter means the activities are harmless. They camouflage their own moral faults and dysfunctions with all sorts of excuses.

Remember, these individuals "have no skin in the game" (personal factors at risk or consequences) if they cause you harm, or cause you to do harmful things. The devas will just walk away if something happens as the *Surangama Sutra* explains about heavenly demon *mara* behavior. Heavenly demons means *asuras*, although I usually just use the word "devas."

Who will protect you through this process? This is why it is best to live in a monastery or ashram with your master when going through this period, or in seclusion. You have to police your actions during this period so that you don't cause yourself harm as the devas try to prove that they have control over your thoughts and behaviors. If you ever do something stupid during the Twelve Year kundalini transformation period then the devas will endlessly try to cause you to repeat the same mistake over and over again, so don't ever do a single thing morally wrong, errant, stupid or in the category of vice when under these influences. Just let those influences pass by letting go of them, which is one of the purposes of emptiness training. The thoughts aren't yours, so let them pass away without acting on them.

Devas in training will try to make you repeat unfortunate behaviors endless times. This is why many people go into retreat for the twelve years, absolutely removed from society, or stick close to an effective and compassionate enlightened master who can manage situations and administer discipline. If you do something stupid because you succumb to deva pressures then you will get hurt and they will just walk away laughing, so once again edit any of the strange impulses you feel compelled to do during the road of spiritual cultivation or even life such as the urge to yell during a church service, jump off a cliff, write a strange letter, give *all* your money to the poor, hire a prostitute, take drugs to see what it is like, perform extreme feats of asceticism, etcetera.

This all sounds like a horror movie, but many people are going through this process every year. It's been honed over the centuries, and yet it is still excessively abusive in the extreme. Countless people are already enlightened in this mundane world by virtue of having gone through the process and then possessing the subtle and higher bodies without you knowing it. Most of them are in religious roles because a full-time spiritual life enabled them to become devoted to cultivation practice. It also kept them ethically clean since it removed them from the stream of ordinary human interactions where vice, wrongs and so forth would normally be committed.

Most monks, nuns, priests, rabbis, muftis, yogis, gurus, etc. aren't better than you or I in any way, including within the realm of ethics. Everyone has failings. It is just that because of their calling, and the restrictive strictures it places on their life, they haven't been given an opportunity/outlet to be able to do all the stupid, errant, incorrect things we all normally do in the real world.

All suns have sunspots, so there truly is no such thing as a perfect/sinless Jesus, Buddha, Shiva, Krishna, guru, yogi, master or other religious functionary. It just isn't so. As to perfection, we all fail the test with moral and other failings. Yes, spiritual masters tend to be better than most of us, but the road of spiritual perfection involves always working on

perfecting your behavior at each and every stage. The task is never completed.

Because of all these troubles most masters, knowing that you will not succeed on the spiritual path, therefore want you to stay away from the kundalini (Qi) cultivation techniques, which are the only things that get you the Tao (subtle body). Remember, you must cultivate your mind, body and behavior on the path so you can always focus on that instead. That effort will win you a better life, better future and better subsequent incarnation.

For the mind we have meditation practice (emptiness cultivation and detachment) and mental watching. For behavior we have the rules of discipline, codes of conduct, mental watching and the road of consummate conduct. For the body we have diet, physical exercise/stretching and inner energy work that you can accomplish through *anapana*, visualization, Mantrayana, sexual cultivation, pranayama, prostrations and so forth. There are so many avenues of self-development you can and should pursue other than just sitting in meditative stillness, performing ceremonies or attending rituals. There is knowledge to learn, skills to master, personality characteristics to make your own.

The honest truth is that you can move your Qi on your own through training in willpower, emotional arousal, *qi-gong* and visualization, but your Qi usually moves *significantly* only because someone with a higher spiritual body enters into you and uses their body of energy to move your Qi. He or she moves his or her own Qi to move your own, and the process is overseen by spiritual masters. However, if you practice doing this on your own then your skills become very powerful.

Devas (what the West calls “angels” or “spirits”) are around you every moment. They are the ones giving you most of the strange experiences you have during cultivation, or they are due to masters/teachers with higher bodies than the subtle body. Devas include people who have passed away such as your parents or ancestors, which is why most religions teach us to remember the deceased, and individuals born in Heaven. They surround everyone on the subtle earthly plane, which we call (Desire Realm) Heaven. They know everything people think and do, and so are used to looking down on (disrespecting) human beings when they see all the stupid, crazy, errant and evil things being done everyday and all the crazy justifications people use for their behavior.

The behavior of devas is not like we see in movies where angels (devas) and spiritual beings are absolutely angelic. They are regular people who can see everything humans do and, as a protective mechanism eventually they adopt the habit of constantly laughing at human stupidity in order to deal with seeing all the crime, greed, harm, and evil they always see. As with humans, they love gossiping about all sorts of secretive things and funny things we do wrong, and always seek entertainment. A heavenly life is far

more fun than a human life for sure.

Because of laughing at us all the time, and knowing that we don't see many of the cons going on everywhere, many devas develop an abusive or condescending attitude of disrespect towards humans. That's why they will attack you in hoards under their own teacher's tutelage in order to practice reading your memories and giving you thoughts. They cannot justify any of their behavior that destroys your body or life just so that they can demonstrate, test or measure their skills or learn some new technique, but they will imbibe. They don't care what happens to you because they are *used to ignoring human beings* and it is *their teacher's job* to protect you. But the story that comes to mind is that a rookie policeman is at first abhorred by crime, eventually tolerates and finally embraces it. There is a slow decline in ethics and morality due to familiarity.

In any case, this explanation accounts for what is going on when some ordinary Buddhist monks report that they were attacked by "hungry ghosts" because they performed a hungry ghost ceremony incorrectly, and why Orthodox Jews say they were "attacked" or "experienced bad luck" because they performed certain religious obligations incorrectly during Orthodox Jewish observances. In some cases it's devas messing around.

In India many people play with tantric sadhanas and strange esoteric mantras, and masters with their deva students love responding by pretending they are the beings that the mantras supposedly contact such as *yakshinis*, ghosts, female devas, female yogini slaves, or etheric wives and so on. They will give those practitioners all sorts of strange thoughts, emotions, visions and inner Qi movements. The absolutely love taking the opportunity to scare practitioners with fright so that they can help to purify their Yin Qi if they deserve it.

In Moslem countries ardent practitioners are sometimes scared by the visitations of *jinn*, which are just devas masquerading as evil spirits in order to scare people and raise their Yin Qi. When a Christian writes a book on demons and devils, sometimes the devas will take the opportunity to scare the living daylights out of them too, which will help stimulate and then purify/transform their Yin Qi. Sometimes when ordinary people are very ill a master has to send them into a terribly frightful state to help raise their Yin Qi as part of the process of healing.

If you are going through the Twelve Year kundalini period the masters will put you through all sorts of hell to raise your Yin Qi such as striking your face, or denying you a visa after you've entered some area so that you become afraid the police will arrest you, or giving you an (obedience) order not to talk and put you into a situation where everyone wants to ask you questions. When the time is appropriate to purify your Yin Qi, they'll put you into all sorts of situations where your Yin Qi is provoked into arising.

If there is an opportunity to make your Yin Qi arise then some spiritual

masters may make use of it to demonstrate various things to deva students that put you in a negative position. Sometimes they will ~~screw~~ f*ck you over during their training purposes like this, often without restraint. There is a tendency for higher-bodied beings to be contemptuously permissive (arrogant) at doing whatever they want, without consideration of protections for you, since they can always walk away from inflicted damage without personal consequences for causing that harm. Arrogance and hubris are the hallmarks of failed humanity.

So what's the big takeaway? Forget about devas and masters. Regardless of religion, karma, the existence of spiritual beings or not, you have to work on mastering the *science of action* to prevent bad, unfortunate states from arising in your life, and to create better states of welfare for yourself and others in the future. You have to work on developing self-control, which is also behavioral control, so you do not want to let external circumstances or influences control you. You always want to do the right thing, the ethical thing, the moral or virtuous thing. You need to work on developing the proper mindset and attitude for life, especially for handling difficulties.

The science of action and behavior is called "wisdom." The understanding is called "insight." You must guide your conduct, behavior and direction in life according to wisdom, understanding, insight and above all a code of conduct, morality and virtue. You must avoid error, vice and unethical behavior in life and then you won't have any regrets. Heaven can always see what you do, and if you do not commit bad deeds then you won't ever feel guilty and bad results won't come back to bite you.

You are a resident of this world, this galaxy, and the universe, and whether or not you cultivate an immortal spiritual body or not you still have to master living in the world. This requires the mastery of your mind and behavior. If you want good states to arise rather than negative states, you have to master your action and behavior. If you want good mental states to predominate in your mind, and to naturally arise when negative reactions normally would, then you have to train your consciousness for this to happen, which is cultivating a higher view, mindset or perspective.

The problem is that your consciousness is already preconditioned with other patterns. Thus, you have to transform your mind/consciousness, meaning that you have to transform your habit energies already installed within your neurons as your default behavioral patterns. We are all subject to the inertia of habit, which cannot be eliminated in one stroke. To cut off habitual ideas, perspectives, and views is a process of purification that we call spiritual cultivation. That is what it is all about – transforming ourselves into something better. It is a road of self-development and self-perfection. Cultivation is about mastering your mind or thought processes, your capabilities and ultimately your behavior. It is about transforming your operative *karmas*, *gunas* or *samskaras*.

In any case, you need to know for the Twelve Year path of purification yoga that devas under a master's training will practice giving human beings thoughts and emotions, or practice blocking them (at the low stages of attainment you might feel confused or feel you have a headache), or practice giving visions or dreams, or practice getting you to do things. This happens during normal life for some people at times, but most especially during the Twelve Years of kundalini transformation. It is hellish.

The variety of such events are briefly explained in *Meditation Case Studies* and I wish to emphasize them again and again, like Shakyamuni Buddha did in the *Surangama Sutra*, so that practitioners going through this difficult stage of purification yoga do not get into trouble. Shakyamuni Buddha revealed a little of the process so I have provided many more case studies of deva-caused illusions that can occur, such as voices in the head, in order to help cultivation practitioners avoid going astray. *Meditation Case Studies* is non-denominational and because of its valuable contents should be given to ardent practitioners of every religion. Or, you can just give them this book because it contains the most useful chapters from *Meditation Case Studies* and other books to give a rounded picture of the true process of spiritual cultivation.

The bothersome agony you will undergo is why no one ever discusses what goes on during the Twelve Year period of kundalini transformation during which time hundreds of masters and their students will run their Qi throughout your body continuously twenty-four hours per day to purify its atoms, and put you through mental hell at the same time. Jesus went through it, and Shakyamuni Buddha went through it. The story of Jesus being tempted by Satan and Shakyamuni Buddha being tested by Mara are just watered down descriptions of this entire Twelve Year process. The case of Abraham wanting to sacrifice his son is also another example of the type of mind control – a mir of deva manipulation and delusion – that usually happens during this process.

Those stories just hint at what went on during a multi-year process, and they misrepresented the truth in saying that the conflict only lasted a few days. Remember that everyone goes through this *for years* to get the initial fruit of the spiritual path *when you are ready for it*. It only happens after a lot of devoted preparatory cultivation practice that is usually supervised by a spiritual teacher who already has a stage of attainment. Ordinary people will not experience any of this at all (you certainly don't hear about people in regular life experiencing such things, do you?) so they have no need to fear participation in meditation, religious services and the like. You have to work really hard to finally be able to transform the Qi of your body to attain the deva body, and the effort required goes far beyond what is required in ordinary religious services.

No master will ever tell you what he or she went through during the

Twelve Year period because they don't want anyone to think they are crazy or be scared away from the spiritual path, so they simply refer to the Twelve Year purification period of preparation as a period of testing, trial and tribulation. They may mention that there were times within it that were particularly difficult, but won't tell you about the visitation of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and their students who often pretended to be devils, demons and ghosts as well as spiritual greats, angels, archangels and so on. They were engaged in all sorts of masquerades while working on transforming the body of that master, and needed to put them through Yin Qi states of fear, disgust, guilt, temptation, etc. as well as Yang Qi states that you might call experiences of divine grace.

At times those with multiple bodies actually "control both sides of the process" – they're giving you an emotional, physical or conceptual experience using one body as well as controlling your reaction through another body as they masquerade as your "I." In this way they show to everyone present, including their own teachers, that they have independent control of their various bodies including *nirmanakaya* emanations. Yes, even accomplished Buddhas have higher teachers and demonstrate their skills to them throughout the process. Thus, by possessing you through one body they masquerade as your ego and cognitive processes, and by another body they might give you an energy experience or something else. This then proves they can use two or more bodies independently as if they were entirely different persons, and thus could undertake entirely different activities in the world independently and separately.

During the Twelve Year period all sorts of tricks like this are going on all the time. Only the Buddhists are given an explanation of the process via the *Surangama Sutra* whereas the practitioners of other religions are simply told they're being tested or attacked by demons, devils, *jinn*, *pretas*, *yakshinis* and so forth.

Bodhisattvas themselves are always tested by their own masters as to how well they can handle their various transcendental bodies independently (where the subtle, Causal, Supra-Causal etc. bodies each acts on its own to perform an entirely different function), and how well they can handle a number of *nirmanakaya* emanations (projections) at the same time. What are your limits, how many people can you handle simultaneously, what do you need to improve on, what skill should you learn?

A typical test for devas on the low end, however, is whether they can make your brain neurons create a new memory as if the thinking was "yours," and then they pass the test of capability. You are bombarded with this sort of thing endless times during the Twelve Year transformation period, and some people have it worst than others. I particularly like reading stories about the Anthonite masters and Christian Hesychasts who pass through these painful trials without knowing the details just revealed.

This was a long discussion of the events within the Twelve Year kundalini awakening period that most everyone reading this will probably never encounter. Only the few destined to become enlightened, i.e. gain the deva body, will go through this. Most practitioners will never encounter this advanced material at all. Typically they will only encounter the ordinary phenomena listed within the attached chapter excerpted from *Meditation Case Studies*. Even so, the reason that the phenomena within the Twelve Year kundalini transformational period were emphasized was to help the few practitioners who will go through it because this is a book about Arhat Yoga, and when you go through it you become a true Arhat on the way to becoming a fully enlightened Buddha. This is a guidebook to the real Vajrayana.

The whole purpose of cultivation is to attain the deva body, and to do so you have to go through this process that turns you into a real master by giving you the deva body attainment, thus making you a Srotapanna-stage Arhat. Just as Shakyamuni Buddha revealed this material to help sentient beings go through it, I felt it my responsibility to also do so for future practitioners since the information is so rare and precious. It is non-denominational information.

Buddha warned, “Do not let the delusions of devas take advantage of you, but be on guard and strive to cultivate through to enlightenment. ... Do not misinterpret these phenomena when you experience them. ... Do not succumb to self-inflicted calamities, and so be on guard to eliminate your wrong thinking about such things. You must discipline your mind and body so that you do not stray from the correct path.”

Many, many spiritual masters in the world have the deva body attainment without regular people even knowing it exists, so they’ve already gone through all that I have mentioned. The number of successful Jewish rabbis, Christian priests or monks and nuns, Moslems, Buddhist monks and practitioners, Hindu yogis and priests, Tibetan monks and nuns and so forth is not insignificant, but they won’t tell you they have attained it. However, if they can know your thoughts or tell you your future or demonstrate superpowers or other miracles then that’s usually the proof they have the attainment. Demonstrating such things, or admitting to the attainment, usually just leads to troubles and expectations so nearly everyone keeps silent.

The gist of it is that you will experience many strange phenomena due to spiritual cultivation, regardless of your religion, and a kundalini awakening in particular is not dangerous due to “awakened energies” or other such nonsense. Most people feel their internal Qi energy move all the time, and this is not a kundalini awakening but just normal Qi/Prana movement they feel within their body.

The real Twelve Year transformation period starts off with 100 days

(around three months worth) of *around the clock tremendous energy waves in every cell of your body!* Next, devas will start putting you through wave after wave of mental anguish to test their powers and to determine their skill level. This is why few masters teach internal energy practices but teach mantra, meditation or yoga instead. It is best to engage in tantric practices only if you have an enlightened master who can guide and protect you. Note: most swamis, gurus, and masters are *not* enlightened.

FROM: MEDITATION CASE STUDIES

CH. 4 – “Unusual Phenomena That Might Appear Due To Your Meditation Practice”

It is now perfectly clear that the most fundamental spiritual practice is meditation and the two basic types of meditative practice either use discrimination (analysis of the contents of the mind) or do not use discrimination (witnessing meditation).

In previous chapters we have gone over these two meditative techniques. They cannot be emphasized enough in order that you clearly know how to cultivate your mind. For instance, there is the meditation practice of eliminating *kleshas* using contemplation (wisdom or discriminative reasoning) in order to bring about a clean mental state, and the alternative practice of cultivating mental emptiness directly that corresponds to various types of “emptiness practice,” including mental witnessing so that thoughts slowly die down.

The two basic meditation techniques are explained in the Analyzing Yoga chapter of the *Sandhinirmocana Sutra*, which explains that meditation can have (1) content available for contemplation or (2) content not accompanied by reflection/analysis. This is basically (1) using the discriminative ability of consciousness (contemplation practice) and (2) not using the discriminative abilities of consciousness during meditation practice (emptiness meditation). You are either using discrimination or not using discrimination (analysis). If one succeeds at these meditation practices they can reach the stage of an enlightened Bodhisattva or Buddha. A Bodhisattva is enlightened with a bit of remainder, but a Buddha is fully enlightened and has reached the full stage of non-duality.

The teachings within the *Sandhinirmocana Sutra* became the basis of Asanga’s *Yogacarabhumi Sastra*, which in turn became the basis of Atisha’s *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*, which in turn became the basis for Tsong Khapa’s *Lam Rim (Great Stages of the Exposition of the Path)*. All of these books greatly influenced Asian culture. We absolutely must say that meditation was a core element in fashioning Asian civilization.

Similarly, the idea of mental witnessing used in Confucian introspection practice (Confucians cultivate their mind by watching it carefully) was taken up by Wang Yang-Ming, who greatly influenced pan-Asian culture with his teachings. Christian contemplation teachings strongly affected European culture as well, so do not underestimate the importance of mental watching and mental analysis. Cessation-observation (witnessing) practice is the foundational bedrock of moral and spiritual development in countless religions and cultures, but today people hardly teach it.

This is why I recommend that everyone emulate the practice of Yuan Lao Fan and Benjamin Franklin in keeping a daily record of their thoughts through mindfulness observation, and at night ceremonially making a formal report of their daily efforts to heaven. This will do more towards improving your personality and fortune than 10,000 meditation sessions, reading 10,000 meditation books or attending 10,000 meditation retreats. It employs a feedback mechanism of self-correction. *If a cultural group adopted this daily practice of mental witnessing and contemplation it would soon have outstanding citizens and accumulate enough merit to become predominant in a nation.*

By practicing meditation you begin to lay a strong foundation for a better life. At the lowest level of achievement your mind will start to become clear of wandering thought clutter so that you can concentrate with clarity. With a clear mind you will begin to see your own thoughts and behavior rather than simply get caught up in them, and through that heightened awareness you can then start making better decisions in life. Through concentration you can develop the grit and perseverance to work through problems.

All this will improve your personality and behavior and change your fortune for the better. Through this avenue of progress you will actually change your astrological fate and fortune. In this way the road of meditation practice becomes a method of self-improvement that transforms your life for the better.

At a higher level of achievement, meditation will start to significantly purify your Qi, which is the vital energy of your physical body. This is the life force energy of a body also known as prana. As this happens all the Qi channels (*nadis*) will start to open within your body, which can actually cure many disease states and illnesses. Therefore many devas train on how to do this to help people. Opening your Qi channels will subsequently produce greater health and longevity. Meditation is thus a way to improve your health and longevity as detailed in *Look Younger, Live Longer*. Health and longevity are the next two of its many benefits.

In addition to the physical and mental benefits or the ability for meditation to change your life, there are also the possibilities of higher spiritual attainments due to meditation. As explained, the first milestone of the spiritual path is the attainment of an independent deva body, which is a

subtle body made of Qi that can leave your physical body at will.

As Meher Baba explained, this subtle body composed of purified Qi, achieved through the path of meditation, can leave the physical body during sleep or wakefulness. Conscious separation of the subtle body from the outer vehicle, the physical body, is achieved when you can take off the external body as if it were a cloak and use this astral body for undertaking journeys. This achievement brings the opportunity to cultivate one's spiritual advancement even further.

Those who have a near death experience from surgery or suffer accidents where they find themselves thrown out of their physical shell essentially experience a weaker form of this subtle body, namely the body one uses after death. The first major milestone on the spiritual trail is to cultivate this independent body so that it can leave and re-enter your physical shell at will, so Buddhism also calls it the will-born body. This is the "initial fruit" of true spiritual cultivation practice although no one tells you. This achievement is why saints develop superpowers and can perform miracles.

To achieve this subtle body you need merit because its attainment requires help from higher spiritual powers. No one will help you if you are an evil human being. You need to be a virtuous person who is following the spiritual path. If you lack sufficient merit then the attainment of the subtle body, or deva body, will be impossible despite your spiritual efforts. You have to practice merit *and* cultivate spiritual practice, including the practice of Qi energy work of some type (*nei-gong* practices), in order to reach this attainment easily.

Remember that when we say that meditation opens up your Qi channels we are not just talking about acupuncture meridians. Qi channels include all the atomic bonds within the atoms and molecules that make up your physical structure. When they all are transformed through meditation practice (due to the stirring of inner vitality and inner energy work) you have strengthened a pre-existing inner etheric body double that duplicates your physical body, only this vehicle can leave your physical shell at will; you don't have to wait until you die. This is not anything supernatural or unscientific. Consider that a lower grade version of the subtle body attainment is ejected from the physical shell upon death and in near-death out-of-the-body experiences, which is why people report about it. However, a subtle body strengthened through meditation work and other spiritual practices that move the Qi, being will-born, has higher powers and abilities.

The key to the highest spiritual attainments is not just to cultivate your mind through meditation, but to also cultivate your body's Qi or vital energy through special practices such as detailed in *Nyasa Yoga* and the soft martial arts such as *Taijiquan*, *Baguazhang*, *Tongbeiquan*, *Yiquan* (*Da Cheng Quan*), *Liu He Ba Fa* and *Xingyiquan*; inner exercises like *Xiao Zhou Tian*

(Small Circulation cultivation practice), *Da Zhou Tian* (Great Circulation cultivation practice), *Xi Sui Gong* (brain washing and bone marrow cultivation practice); and helpful *qi-gong* practices like *Yi Jin Jing* (Damo's muscle/tendon changing method), *Si Er Quang* (Twelve Postures), *Ba Duan Jin* (Eight Pieces of Brocade) and *Wu Qin Xi* (Five Animal Sport). You must learn how to cultivate, protect and nourish your Qi.

You should not just practice meditation, but also various forms of inner energy work called *nei-gong*. This is more direct than trying to move your Qi through *dhikr* (Islam), Gregorian chanting (Christian monks), mantras (Hinduism and Buddhism) and so forth. To do so and achieve the subtle body quickly the cardinal principle is to *simultaneously* practice, on a fixed schedule, *several entirely different* types of spiritual cultivation because they work at producing the final result via different principles, and since you cannot predict which principle will work best for you then you should wed yourself to several. Such practices that cultivate your Qi based upon different principles include:

- Mantra recitation
- Visualization and concentration practice
- Pranayama
- Asanas (yoga, martial arts, stretching)
- *Nei-gong* inner Qi movement work
- Cosmic energy absorption (from the sun, moon, etc.)
- Qi supplementation methods (from the diet, herbs, minerals, remedial measures, environment)
- Matching yourself with earthly and cosmic transformations
- Mental unification with a guru's higher bodies
- *Bhakti* yoga (and other forms of reverence)
- Disciplined sexual practice

Using different cultivation practice techniques, which work on entirely different principles to transform your Qi and mind, you can finally start to move the superficial Qi currents within your body. From an initial trickle of Qi energy can eventually appear a flood of Qi channel transformations just as it is said that the flapping of butterfly's wings can eventually produce a hurricane. When your Qi starts to move this will eventually open up all your body's Qi channels if you keep going so that the etheric subtle body double, which is normally referred to as an astral body or spirit body, can readily strengthen.

Typically you will see the astral body double referred to as a subtle body, deva body, deity body, impure illusory body, *suddha deha*, *yin shen* and so on. As stated, the people who attain this achievement will never tell you

they have it for obvious reasons. These are the “masters” of the spiritual path available in each and every spiritual tradition. They receive titles like saint, sage, master, guru or sadguru, but the common denominator is that they have all achieved one or more extra bodies composed of higher substances than matter. With those bodies they can do special things to help others.

After this subtle body attainment, further spiritual cultivation of *that astral Qi body* will produce an even higher spirit body produced from within it, composed of a yet higher etheric substrate, through a more advanced cultivation process. That next body is the Causal body said to be composed of Shen (spirit energy), and repeating the process there are higher bodies still as explained in *Move Forward* and *Nyasa Yoga*. This process is commonly discussed by Taoism, Vajrayana Buddhism, Hinduism, Yoga and works by spiritual masters such as Meher Baba, Nan Huai-Chin and traditions like Kriya Yoga, Bihar Yoga, Bahai and Sufism.

Vajrayana Buddhism describes the road to this initial subtle body achievement by dividing the entire spiritual path into a “generation stage” and then a “completion stage.” There are many alternative interpretations of these stages. For instance, the generation stage entails all the spiritual cultivation practices you undertake (such as using deity yoga) prior to generating an independent subtle body, and the completion stage pertains to the cultivation path necessary after it is achieved to manipulate your winds (Qi or energy) to attain yet higher bodies and enlightenment. Alternatively, the generation stage refers to the practices necessary to get to a kundalini awakening, and the completion stage refers to all the *nei-gong* practices of inner Qi manipulation in order to complete one’s deity body or deva body.

Many stages of yoga can be partitioned into generation and completion stages just as every yogic achievement can also be partitioned into the four stages of *prayoga* (warming, summit, forbearance and highest attainment). The meaning will depend upon your teacher, but the point is that there are practices you must perform prior to attaining the deva body as well as afterwards because the deva body attainment is the first milestone on the cultivation path of the *sambhogakaya* Reward body (also called an Immanence body) that masters of all paths must attain.

Prior to the attainment of the spiritual body you need to devote yourself to many cultivation practices and you will consequentially experience many physical symptoms arising due to your practices. Therefore on the one side you have mental cultivation involving emptiness or witnessing meditation, the elimination of negative thoughts tendencies (*kleshas*) and errant, non-virtuous behaviors. On the other side you have the cultivation of the inherent subtle energy of the physical body, known as your original Qi, prana or *real* kundalini energy. Pursing both mind and

energy is mind-body cultivation, or the Yogacara-Madhyamika (energy-emptiness) split of the esoteric schools.

If you cultivate your Qi energy well enough you will not only experience many physical symptoms related to inner Qi movements but will eventually achieve what the Yoga schools call a “kundalini awakening.” This is when your original Qi, Yang Qi or real Qi finally arises in your body. This is the real prana of the physical body.

Vajrayana refers to some related milestones along this way with references to opening up the body’s central *sushumna* channel whereas Yoga schools refer to opening up the *ida*, *pingala* and *sushumna* (left, right and central channels) within the spine. The Chinese cultivation schools, such as Taoism, talk about kundalini in terms of Yang Qi and Qi rotations within the body that open up the front and back Qi channels, called *jen mai* and *tu mai* respectively. It also uses terms such as the microcosmic circulation, macrocosmic circulation, rotation of the river chariot, and greater (or smaller) circulation of the front and back channels. These names refer to the movements of Qi (prana or kundalini) within the body once it becomes initiated.

In regards to this Nan Huai-Chin wrote:

By following the usual principles of meditation, the *Great Circulation of Heaven* and *Small Circulation of Heaven* described in Taoism will regularly occur if one can open up the back and front Qi channels of the body. What about the three Qi channels [*ida*, *pingala* and *sushumna*] and seven chakras of esoteric Buddhism? What happens when they are all open and one is within the scope of the cultivation of the Tao? This is a very important question. The opening of the front and back Qi channels and the rotation of the river chariot [Qi flows in circular orbits] are believed, by the Taoists who practice to become sages, to be the highest secret.

People often believe that the rotation of the river chariot is all-important and fail to ask the main question, which is how long should the Qi be rotated. One should be aware be aware that the rotation of the river chariot and the opening of the eight extra meridians are not the ultimate achievements in the cultivation of Tao. Strictly speaking, the rotation of the river chariot and circulation of Qi in the eight extra meridians are good for health and rejuvenation, but they are merely the groundwork for the cultivation and achievement of Tao.

After the Qi within the body begins to rotate and the Qi circulates in the eight extra meridians for a certain time, at an optimum stage Qi will automatically cease to rotate. The Qi does not rotate because of its fullness.

The body will gradually feel light, clear, warm and soft and one will reach the state of “forgetting the body and emptiness of self.” Only at this time will one suddenly introspect and recognize the roundness and illumination of the origin of nature and life. One can actually separate from and unite with the later Heaven body, which has shape and form, and then combine this original nature once again with this later Heaven body (or furnace), and mind (cauldron) to continue cultivation. In his way one can either separate or unite with this body and mind and build a solid foundation for the cultivation of Tao. At this stage one can genuinely claim to have the *initial fruit*.

... Very few can achieve genuine rotation of the river chariot and circulate Qi among the eight extra meridians. Even fewer really understand the stage of separation and unification of body, mind and the origin of Nature. Therefore, even if one sincerely wants to teach this, a student with the ability to receive this supreme instruction is rare. After this stage, a person goes beyond earthly things and enters into the metaphysical realm. Even if a teacher wished to describe this in detail, a student with the wisdom and experience to receive these instructions beyond the realm of the human world would be exceptional.⁵³

Prior to the achievement of the deva body, along the trail of meditation many people will experience a wide variety of physical sensations or mental phenomena but won't be able to comprehend them correctly. People typically interpret these experiences in a way that attaches to them greater significance than they deserve, and assume that they are high stages of attainment when they are really just minor phenomena corresponding to superficial Qi flows within the body.

If you do not achieve a continuous macrocosmic circulation of Qi within your body then any Qi flows you feel are not yet the *real* kundalini, but just Qi winds moving within the body that produce unusual temporary sensations. Once the real kundalini is initiated the process goes on *continuously, without stop, for years* and is eventually felt in every cell of the body. The full body Qi rotations for prolonged periods of time culminate, after many years, in the attainment of the deva body attainment. If you are not experiencing this, the experience of Qi sensations within your body must be considered as manifestations of temporary Qi winds. This is called Fan Qi or wind Qi so that it is not mistaken for real kundalini energy, or original Qi.

⁵³ *Tao and Longevity: Mind-Body Transformation*, Huai-Chin Nan, trans. by Wen Kuan Chu, (Samuel Weiser, Maine, 1991), pp. 78-79.

Indian culture calls the arising of your Qi the kundalini or Shakti phenomena. As does Chinese culture, Yoga states that only spiritual exercises will activate your kundalini and once arisen it will begin to go through and purify your Qi channels (*nadis*), which is what will make a spiritual body attainment possible. What is rarely discussed in spiritual texts is that Qi channel blockages within the subtle body contribute to the predominance of *kleshas* in the mind-stream. Since meditation opens up any Qi meridian blockages, you don't just use it to destroy the *kleshas* and become a better human being but to finally attain the macrocosmic Qi circulation within.

Predominant among the spiritual exercises that you can perform to wash your Qi channels – as detailed in *Look Younger, Live Longer* and *Nyasa Yoga* – are pranayama techniques. As Swami Muktananda once wrote:

Often, when Kundalini first becomes active, you feel heavy-headed and sleepy. This is a result of the movement of prana, and it is a sure sign that the Kundalini has been awakened. As Kundalini moves up through the sushumna, She transforms the body and makes it fit for spiritual sadhana; it is only after the body has been purified that the Shakti can work with full force. The basis of all disease and pain is the impurities which block the flow of prana in the nadis. These blockages are caused by imbalances and disorders in the three bodily humors – wind, bile, and phlegm – due to undisciplined habits of eating and immoderate living. In order to purify the nadis, Kundalini inspires the various hatha yogic movements or kriyas, which take place in the physical body. In the form of prana, She penetrates all 720 million nadis, consumes all the old decaying fluids, then releases vital energy into them all. As the nadis become filled with prana, the body becomes rejuvenated from within. It becomes strong and firm, with all the suppleness of a child.

Sometimes during this process, latent germs of diseases may be brought to the surface, and as a result, the person may start to suffer from that disease. However, this is happening to expel this disease from the system permanently, and there is nothing to be afraid of. ...

The purification of the nadis is purification of the entire system. The same blockages which cause diseases also give rise to such feelings as aversion, hatred, lethargy, dullness, and greed, and these qualities also disappear when the nadis are washed by Kundalini. When the nadis are cleansed, the mind is purified. The mind is intimately connected to prana. When the prana becomes uneven, the sense of duality arises, and the mind keeps weaving

new webs of thoughts and fantasies. To control the mind, to make it still and even, yogis try to control the breath. This is why they practice so many different kinds of pranayama, or breath control. During the process of Siddha Yoga purification, natural pranayama begins to take place. The prana and apana (the outgoing and incoming breaths) become even, and eventually the breath begins to be retained within. This is called kumbhaka. Shaivism says that to keep controlling your breath is not true kumbhaka. In true kumbhaka, the prana and apana become one. At that point, prana does not go out, nor does apana come in. When prana stops, the mind becomes still, and you experience supreme tranquility. Great beings are in this state of inner stillness. If you look at the picture of my Guru, Nityananda, you will see that he has a big belly. This is not because he ate too much but because of the inner kumbhaka.⁵⁴

Many physical phenomena commonly happen to meditators who begin to practice, pranayama, visualization, mantra, yoga, asanas and of course meditation. Unfortunately, they always become confused about these phenomena and often confuse the lesser for the greater because of a resemblance. In order to help meditators become more knowledgeable and avoid interpreting these phenomena as higher than they are, here is a list of some of the things you will commonly encounter due to spiritual practices:

Physical Sensations

The *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* states that those who practice pranayama and meditation will experience three successive symptoms or signs. This includes the physical signs of perspiration, quivering or shaking. The *bhakti* tradition of devotion states that practitioners may go through spiritual emotions and physical signs of stupor, perspiration, horripilation, choking of voice, trembling, paleness of complexion, tears, and loss of consciousness. There are far more possibilities than this.

Buddhism provides an extensive list of the different types of physical sensations you might start to experience due to meditation practice. They are all the result of Qi starting to move within your body. The short list of possible sensations this might cause includes pain, itching, coldness, warmth, weightlessness, heaviness, roughness and smoothness.

The longer list of possible sensations includes feelings of cold or coolness, heat or warmth, lightness, heaviness, roughness or coarseness, dryness, slipperiness, granular feelings, hardness, softness, tenderness,

⁵⁴ *Kundalini: The Secret of Life*, Swami Muktananda (SYDA Foundation, New York, 1994), pp. 28-29.

weakness, hurriedness or urgency, a feeling of being internally stuck, internal movements, itchiness, energeticness, slowness, soreness, aching or pain, swollenness, numbness, fullness, feelings of floating or sinking or being solid, feelings of being tired or rested, feelings of being sick or lost or drained, and the feeling of being courageous, scattered, dreamy, peaceful or quiet, old or dead, and hungry or thirsty.

If you experience any sensations like this due to meditation, this is normal. Don't be alarmed. The feelings arise due to transformations of your Qi and Qi channels. There are many physiological reactions like this that correspond to the opening of Qi channels, most of which can be found in Nan Huai-chin's *Tao and Longevity: Mind-Body Transformation* and *The Little Book of Hercules*. The most important sensations usually involve the feelings of warmth and coolness that correspond to transformations of the Yang Qi and Yin Qi within your body whose discussion follows.

Feelings of Heat & Warmth or Coolness & Cold

Most of the Qi transformations that happen to you due to meditation and other spiritual exercises are eventually accompanied by feelings of warmth and heat, although sometimes you will feel coolness and cold. The difference is as follows.

When your Qi starts working through your subtle body to open its Qi channels due to spiritual practice, it will encounter obstructions that cause friction. This friction will give rise to the feelings of blockage, being stuck inside, irritation, warmth and heat. Thus, people who mantra for hours will commonly feel warmth in their body as the Qi encounters friction as it starts opening up their energy channels due to this practice.

Those who perform visualization practice on any section of the body, which brings Qi to that region, will also feel a corresponding warmth and heat as the Qi channels in the vicinity start to open. For instance, if you imagine that a particular bone inside you shines with a bright light, this visualization practice will produce warmth and heat around the bone. The concentration on the bone will bring Qi to the area, the Qi will open up the channels in the vicinity, and heat will be the net result of this process.

Any type of method that brings Qi into a body, such as Qi help projected from a deva or spiritual master, is also usually accompanied by warmth. This is because Yang Qi is generally warm by nature. If it is being projected in order to help open Qi channels, that opening will usually be accompanied by warmth.

If one has a lot of heat rising in the body from meditation, such as due to a minor kundalini arousal, it is possible to experience dry skin and chapped lips. If one does a lot of pranayama practice, this is often followed by feelings of warmth in the belly and extremities as well as by shaking,

perspiration or skin rashes due to poisons being eliminated from the body.

Your body has both Yang Qi and Yin Qi, which are basically warm Qi and cool Qi represented by the sun and moon, or fire and water. Most spiritual texts talk about Yang Qi but rarely about Yin Qi, which corresponds to the sensation of cold or coolness in the body during some stages of cultivation.

For instance, one stage of cultivation called “coolness and lightness” (*“ching an”* – for details see *Tao and Longevity: Mind-Body Transformation*) is often accompanied by feelings of coolness all over the body that you might compare to a light breeze, air conditioning, the melting of dry ice or the feeling of cool vapor rising from the body. This coolness experience often appears as the energy channels of your body are being purified and is considered a Yin Qi blessing.

A more serious stage of Yin Qi transformation will produce sudden chills and shaking, similar to malaria or fever, where you might even find your teeth chattering from the cold you feel all over your body. When this occurs you might need to climb into bed for a half hour or so until the Yin Qi from the body is released from your obstructed channels. Since this type of shaking rarely lasts more than a half hour, something more serious than this reaction is probably the sign of a medical condition.

Whenever anyone does feminine, lunar or water-related sadhana practices, one should expect to feel coolness in the body as the Yin Qi is being purified and Yin Qi channels start opening. You can also feel cool Yin Qi when you deal with sickness, ghost sadhanas, funerals and other ceremonies or practices related to Yin Qi. Some people feel chills or sharp pains in the legs whenever people talk about sickness or unfortunate things, and this is also an indication of the Yin Qi channels opening.

During certain stages of cultivation, devas often expose practitioners to illusory situations (such as being attacked by ghosts or demons) that arouse extreme fear and anxiety. Normally people feel a bit cold under such circumstances. The purpose of making them afraid is so that these emotions stir/activate their Yin Qi so that the appropriate Yin Qi channels can be opened.

While people can have Yang Qi blessings from spiritual beings that feel like bliss, there are Yin Qi blessings as well that involve cultivating your Qi channels. Chinese herbal medicine has various formulas, as does Ayurveda, for dealing with Yin Qi excesses and deficiencies in the body but only a wise master can tell whether you need these for cultivation purposes.

Vibrations – Internal Qi Movements

As the Qi begins to stir within your body due to meditation practice, you will often feel all sorts of strange movements and vibrations within

your body. Ramakrishna presented a poetic description of these vibrations saying that the kundalini motion inside you might feel like the movement of an ant, a fish, monkey, a bird or serpent. Of course, there are thousands of different sensations possible when kundalini arises, so this sentence is misleading if you confine yourself to just these five types of sensations. Basically, you will start to feel all sorts of energetic movements inside you when your Qi starts to move, which can and must happen on the spiritual path. When it first starts to stir, however, this is just wind Qi rather than the real Qi or real kundalini of the physical body.

For instance, it is common to feel the Qi moving or even rotating inside you after Qi channels open. You might feel the front-back microcosmic Qi circulation up the spine and down the front of the body as described in Taoism, Yoga and the Vajrayana traditions. You might feel the individual major Qi channels (acupuncture meridians) described by Taoism, Yoga and Chinese medicine. There are so many ways to describe the fact that you might feel energy not just moving but rotating in specific patterns inside you. Sometimes this will produce headaches or heart palpitations. *Tao and Longevity: Mind-Body Transformation* has many descriptions of such phenomena as does *The Little Book of Hercules*.

You might also feel pumping at the back of your heels (as represented by the feathered wings on the heels of the Greek god Mercury), Qi wiggling at the base of your spine, or energy pumping through it. You might feel various pumping sensations in your sacrum (the “sacral chakra”) or lower abdomen and at other body locations. Even if a location is not specifically mentioned in any books, you must remember that the sensation of energy pushing inside you is due to Qi movements trying to force open obstructed Qi channels. Your situation, however unusual, is not any different from this.

In general, you will feel movements inside your head, chest, abdomen, appendages, bones ... simply anywhere and everywhere inside your body when your Qi begins to move. Until you have the real kundalini awakening, which is followed by many months (and then years) of full body Qi movements without interruption, the sensations are all to be considered *wind* Qi rather than the *real* Yang Qi of the body.

The sensations you feel of wind Qi correspond to the opening of the tissues in your subtle body, which we call Qi channels in the physical body, and prepare you for the real kundalini awakening. Often you will feel your entire body being shaken when your Qi first starts to stir, and you might even feel as if there is an entire inner scaffolding within the flesh that can be grabbed and shaken. All sorts of strange sensations are possible.

One of the worst feelings is a type of vibration or motion of Qi within your head that is so severe that moving your head in any direction brings pain, and you must lie down for a day or so until it passes. When this

happens I have no good advice other than to find a position that is comfortable until this goes away. This stage, which is meant to open the channels in your brain, is very painful.

When the real Qi passes through your brain stem – at the stage of a kundalini awakening – this also produces severe pain for a few seconds until the channels in the brain stem are finally opened. The biographical story of Zen Patriarch Huike says he heard celestial voices to “bear the pain in your head as your skull bones are being opened” when this happened. The actual truth was that he heard voices telling him to bear the pain as the brain stem was being opened. The voices were due to devas who were working on opening his Qi channels.

Changes in Respiration

There have been many scientific studies proving that meditation can slow your heart rate, reduce your blood pressure, and stimulate hormonal changes in the body. Many physiological changes caused by meditation have already been recorded by modern science. Of course during meditation it is common for your respiration to slow down, but during the course of meditation practice it is also possible for a practitioner’s breathing to slow to a seeming halt. This is not anything to worry about when it happens because the body is doing this naturally. If this wasn’t something that was supposed to happen due to meditative relaxation then the body wouldn’t let it happen! Therefore there is no reason to police it or worry about it. In fact, you want this to occur for longer and longer periods of time if possible.

Just as it is possible due to meditation to feel internal pumping in the abdomen, as a type of embryo breathing, your breathing can at times speed up or slow down due to cultivation progress. Overall, however, it should become slower, smoother and deeper over time. In other words, it should become more smoother and more regular. To help attain this type of progress, all meditation practitioners are advised to practice pranayama exercises, namely *kumbhaka* breath retention exercises. This is one of the fastest ways to make progress at spiritual cultivation, yet few masters stress it.

The best way to open Qi channels quickly is actually through pranayama practice. I particularly recommend the nine-bottled wind practice, detailed in *Nyasa Yoga* and *Visualization Practice*, as well as the eight *kumbhaka* pranayama techniques, called pots, from the *Geranda-Sambhita*. The longer you can hold your breath, by combining the methods of freediving with standard *kumbhaka*, the better will eventually be your progress in meditation.

When people have done so much energy work that their Qi has

become imbalanced, a sure remedy is to practice the nine-bottled wind pranayama technique as well as the bellows breathing and shining skull pranayama methods of Hatha Yoga. However, many masters have favorite pranayama techniques other than the ones I have listed.

In his *Raja-Yoga*, Swami Vivekananda stated:

After one has learnt to have a firm, erect seat, one has to perform, according to certain schools, a practice called the purification of the nerves [Qi channels]. This part has been rejected by some as not belonging to Raja-Yoga; but since so great an authority as the commentator Shankaracharya advises it, I think it fitting that it should be mentioned, and I will quote his own directions from his commentary on the Svetasvatara Upanishad: “The mind whose dross has been cleared away by pranayama becomes fixed in Brahman; therefore pranayama is taught. First the nerves [Qi channels] are to be purified; then comes the power to practice pranayama. Stopping the right nostril with the thumb, draw in air through the left nostril according to capacity; then without any interval, eject the air through the right nostril, closing the left one. Again inhaling through the right nostril according to capacity, eject through the left. Practicing this three or five times at four periods of the day – before dawn, during midday, in the evening, and at midnight – one attains purity of the nerves [helps open the Qi channels] in fifteen days or a month. Then begins pranayama.” Practice is absolutely necessary. You may sit down and listen to me by the hour every day, but if you do not practice, you will not get one step farther. It all depends on practice. We never understand these things until we experience them. We have to see and feel them for ourselves. Simply listening to explanations and theories will not do.⁵⁵

The venerable Shankaracharya quoted the sage Yajnavalkya on some alternative pranayama techniques one might try:

Thinking of [the seed-word] Hum, at the junction of the pingala and the ida (the right and the left nostrils), the ida should be filled with external air in twelve seconds; then the yogi meditates on fire in the same place, with the word Rung, and while meditating thus, slowly ejects the air through the pingala. Again filling in, through the pingala, the air should be slowly ejected through the ida in the

⁵⁵ *Vivekananda: The Yogas and Other Works*, Swami Vivekananda, (Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, New York, 1971), p. 587.

same way. This should be practiced for three or four years, or three or four months, according to the directions of a guru, in secret (alone in a room), in the early morning, at midday, in the evening, and at midnight [until] the nerves become purified. Lightness of body, clear complexion, good appetite, and hearing of the Nada are the signs of the purification of the nerves [Qi channels]. Then should be practiced pranayama, composed of rechaka (exhalation), kumbhaka (retention), and puraka (inhalation). Joining the prana with the apana is pranayama.

After filing the body from the head to the feet in sixteen seconds, the prana is to be expelled in thirty-two seconds, and for sixty-four, kumbhaka should be practiced [16:64:32].

There is another pranayama, in which kumbhaka should first be made for sixty-four seconds, then the prana should be expelled in sixteen, and the body next filled in sixteen seconds [16:64:16].

By pranayama the impurities of the body are expelled.⁵⁶

The sage Yajnavalkya also provided an entirely different set of directions, similar to Nyasa Yoga, which you can also use to purify your Qi channels:

The following pratyahara is the greatest yogic practice and is praised and followed by yogis always. Having drawn the prana from one point to another, holding it in the eighteen vital points (marmasthanas) is spoken of as pratyahara. The Asvini Kumaras who are the best among the physicians of the celestials (devas) have spoken thus of the vital points in the body, for the attainment of liberation from yoga.

I shall explain all of them in an orderly manner. Listen, disciplined [Gargi]! The big toes, the ankles, in the mid-shanks, the root of the calves, the knees, middle of the thighs, the root of the anus, the center of the body (dehamadhya), generative organ, the navel, the heart, and neck pit, Gargi. Then, the root of the palate, the root of the nose, circular orb of the eyes, the center of the eyebrows, the forehead, and crown of the head. These are the vital points. ...

Some skilled yogis speak of [another] pratyahara. Listen beautiful [Gargi], I will tell you [about] it. During the practice of pranayama, the prana must be held by the mind from the big toe to the crown of the head, like a totally filled pot. Drawing [the prana] from the crown of the head, one must focus it in the forehead.

⁵⁶ Vivekananda: *The Yogas and Other Works*, p. 690.

Drawing [the prana] from the crown of the head, one must focus it in the forehead. Again, drawing the prana from the forehead, one must focus it between the eyebrows. Drawing [the prana] from the center of the eyebrows one must focus it in the center of the eyes. Drawing the prana from the eyes, one must focus it in the root of the nose. From the root of the nose, one must focus the prana in the root of the tongue. Drawing [the prana] from the root of the tongue, one must focus it in the base of the throat (neck-pit). Drawing the prana from the neck-pit, one must focus it in the center of the heart, from the center of the heart one must focus it in the center of the navel, again from the center of the navel one must focus it in the generative organ and then from the generative organ one must focus it in the abode of fire (dehamadhya), from the dehamadhya (center of the body), Gargi, one must focus it in the root of the anus and from the root of the anus in the [mid-] thighs, then from the mid-thigh in the center of the knees. Then, [from the knee] one must focus the prana in the root of the calf, from there in the middle of the shank, and drawing [the prana] from the middle of the shank in the ankle. From the ankle, Gargi, one must focus it (the prana) in the big toes of the feet.

The wise one who, drawing the prana from point to point, focuses it in the above said manner, will be freed from all bondage and will live as long as the moon and the stars exist (will attain liberation). This [pratyahara] is praised as the means for the fruition of yoga even by Agastya (one of the great sages). Among the pratyaharas, this one is considered as the best by yogis.⁵⁷

Sensations Inside Your Appendages

As stated, due to meditation it is possible at times to feel Qi energy moving inside your various appendages, specifically the arms and legs or even the nose, ears and sexual organs. If you are a male who is young and healthy, while meditating you might also feel your scrotum tightening. You can sometimes feel your Qi move in various repeating patterns within you such as orbits too.

Practicing the exercises laid out in *Nyasa Yoga* and other tantric yoga texts will help smooth out any aberrations within these energy patterns. Some of the best books to guide you include *Yoga Yajnavalkya, A Systematic Course in the Ancient Tantric Techniques of Yoga and Kriya* (Satyananda Saraswati), *Dharana Darshan: Yogic, Tantric and Upanishadic Practices of*

⁵⁷ *Yoga Yajnavalkya*, trans. by A.G. Mohan with Ganesh Mohan, (Svastha Yoga Pte Ltd, 2013), pp. 75-79.

Concentration and Visualization (Niranjanananda Saraswati), *Kriya Secrets Revealed* (J.C. Stevens), *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines* (Walter Evans-Wentz), *The Six Yogas of Naropa* (Glenn Mullin), *Readings on The Six Yogas of Naropa* (Glenn Mullin) and finally *Roots of Yoga* (Mallinson and Singleton).

To develop the deva body you need to eventually reach a point where you feel the entire body of Qi within your limbs and your body as a single whole. Within this whole body feeling your Qi must begin circulating for years, twelve to be exact. To reach this attainment you must go through various stages of preparatory progression, which you can actually practice to attain.

The initial stage is to feel random internal Qi movements, which tends to happen to most meditation practitioners after awhile. This is the phenomenon of wind Qi starting to move within you. Next you will feel your Qi moving in particular patterns, and will eventually reach the stage where you feel the entire Qi of your body's trunk and limbs. You have to work hard using many exercises to reach this attainment for the objective is to open all the channels in every cell and atomic bond. This is why it is figuratively said that the body is a meshwork composed of 72,000 Qi channels. The *Prapanchasara Tantra* also says there are 300,000 channels networking the body while the *Shiva Sambhita* ramps this up to 350,000 channels. All these numbers are just figurative ways of saying that you must transform the Qi within every cell and tissue of your body.

All you have to know is that you are trying to purify an exact etheric duplicate of your body by activating your Yang Qi to pass through every one of its components, and this is the meaning of "72,000 Qi channels." By doing this you can attain the subtle deva body. Actually, you already have this subtle body within you because it is ejected upon death. However, that body is not purified. What you are trying to do is activate your real kundalini so that it passes through all of its tissues to open up obstructions, thus purifying it. In this way it will attain an even higher stage of purity. Through spiritual exercises you can attain mastery of this body while alive and then use it at will, which is the first genuine success stage of the spiritual path.

There are many sensations common to practitioners who begin to purify the inner subtle body. A common sensation due to meditation is to feel as if the entire body is like an empty sack. It is also common that an appendage, such as an arm, temporarily feels entirely vacuous or empty inside. Some body parts might feel like they are becoming larger. You might even feel body parts disappearing or simply getting lighter or heavier. You might feel sinking or rising feelings of the body's energy, or sideways movements of your Qi too.

The Little Book of Hercules describes several milestone *gong-fu* stages along

these lines. One unusual phenomenon occurs when the front Qi channels (*jen mai*) in the body start to open and the chest temporarily feels as if it is enclosed by an impenetrable barrier like armor. In Chinese culture this is symbolized by the story of Sun Wukong (the Monkey King) getting his armor when retrieving his staff from the bottom of the ocean (symbolizing the Yang Qi or real kundalini rising from a person's perineum). In Greek culture it is symbolized by the story of Hercules strangling the Nemean lion and then wearing its impenetrable hide.

Another particular milestone on the cultivation path is when the Qi channel meridians running down the inside of the legs to the big toes start to open. When this happens you might feel the actual channel lines tracing out their existence. To some practitioners it feels like a line of dry hot Qi along the meridians when those channel lines open.

Afterwards you might immediately start having sinus problems, where your nose drips mucus for no reason whatsoever, because the nasal cavity then begins clearing out. This phenomenon, which is not due to sickness or allergies, will probably happen several times during the cultivation path and is explained in *Tao and Longevity*. During many stages of transformation you will often find the nasal cavity acting up because Qi channels in this vicinity are being cleansed, thus pushing out sinus fluid.

Something similar happens when the prostate and scrotum channels are being opened. As Nan Huai-chin mentioned about the sinus problems, the only thing you can do is swallow the mucus until the cleansing disappears, although neti pot washing of the cavities (with water salt and baking soda) may help. Acupuncture might help as well. Along these lines, be careful not to confuse actual sinus problems with Qi channel cleansings caused by advances in your Qi purification efforts.

A similar phenomenon may happen to men as the channels within their prostate and generative organs start to become cleansed by Qi. Men will often find clear prostate fluid in their urine for a short while when the generative organ channels are being opened, or suffer dreamless wet dreams during their sleep. Unusual things can also happen to a man's penis during the various stages of Qi channel purification, such as it being temporarily pulled into the body (called becoming retractable) for a short period of time. As these things are temporary most male cultivators usually pay them no special heed.

Women will experience unusual phenomena related to their vagina as well. It is common for some women to lose their menses due to substantial cultivation progress, and then to regain it again after they pass through the requisite higher stages of attainment.

Skin Problems

As the Qi pushes through your Qi channels to cleanse them most people will develop some sort of detoxification reaction, namely various types of skin problems. These skin problems may last for years or be temporary, and may or may not be accompanied by itching.

It is common to develop skin rashes due to the purification efforts of Qi pushing the obstructions and poisons out of your Qi channels. Irregularly shaped or even circular rashes might form on body parts that you are working on through yogic practices. The problems may seem similar to eczema or psoriasis and respond to a better diet, but the real cure usually centers around herbal detoxification regimes to help quickly clean the body. Sometimes there is nothing you can do to speed the progress of poisons being ejected from your body due to the strong Qi purification being undergone within you. Even the finest forms of nature-based healthcare will often fail you until all the poisons are ejected from your body.

Sometimes a meditator will even find a residue line building up underneath the fingernails, which indicates that poisons are being pushed out of the heart channels. Taoism practitioners usually cut the skin right under the fingernails when this happens so that the released blood can then push out the accumulated poisons. In Chinese medicine people also sometimes cut the top of the ears and squeeze out congealed blood in order to improve stagnant blood circulation.

There are other various remedies to dissolve internal blood clots and improve blood circulation you might try to help speed the processes of detoxification and body purification. These would involve ingredients such as fish oil, nattokinase, red ginseng, raw tienchi powder and other substances.

At very advanced stages of cultivation there are stories of poisons and pus being pushed out of the body due to the force of strong Qi currents, as was the case with Yeshe Tsogyel, or even one's blood being pushed through the skin as was the case of Ramakrishna due to so much excellent cultivation work. The Yoga schools commonly tell you that the physical body will be *purified* through the "fire of yoga," and the meaning is that there will be all sorts of exudations due to the frictional pushing of kundalini trying to force its way through obstructed Qi channels.

Sweet Saliva

Another unusual and unique phenomenon caused by meditation is a sweet taste that appears in the mouth, namely sweet saliva, which appears at a certain stage of meditation progress. The practitioner's saliva becomes very sweet, and this sweet taste seems to vary over time in terms of its thickness and sweetness. This phenomenon of sweet saliva can turn on and

off for years, and is temporary rather than permanent in nature.

This sweet saliva goes by many different names such as ambrosia (Greeks), soma or amrita (Hindus), Grail wine (Christian mystics), and sweet wine (Sufis). Some cultivation books say it is due to the pituitary gland of the brain secreting hormones while others say it is due to reactions at the front of the head. Others suggest transformations in the salivary glands. In any case, this signifies a good stage of cultivation progress.

For more information, the sweet saliva phenomenon is clearly mentioned in the medieval *Atalanta Fugiens* from Europe, *Tao and Longevity* (Nan), *The Little Book of Hercules* (Bodri), various yoga books, and *A Systematic Course in the Ancient Tantric Techniques of Yoga and Kriya* (Satananda Saraswati), which contains the largest collection of information on this phenomenon.

Whole Body Sensations

One of the common reactions after someone does a lot of meditation or *nei-gong* inner energy work is that they feel “shitty” the next day after waking up from sleep. It is hard to describe this feeling other than that they feel blocked up or stuck inside all over their body. Sometimes a practitioner’s muscles will be locked the next day after strenuous cultivation practice and they cannot move, but this always wears off. Often people will just feel terrible, such as incredibly tired the next day, after the initiated Qi has been opening Qi channels due to all the great meditative work they did during the day.

These feelings are all proper signs of progress.

While over the long run meditation will cause people’s bodies to become softer and warmer because the Qi channels open, you have to go through lots of other different transformative processes, sometimes including uncomfortable feelings like this, to make progress. You shouldn’t get frightened about them but just consider the uncomfortable feelings of blockage as a normal affair just as it is normal to feel sore after a lot of sports activity or exercise. The book, *Tao and Longevity* by Nan Huai-chin, explains some of the major physical reactions you will feel in your body along these lines. Even going through puberty we suffer uncomfortable feelings, but this is normal as the body grows and matures. The case of meditation purification is no different.

Strange Emotional Outbursts

During the preparatory process of preparing for kundalini’s arousal, any Qi initiated due to meditation will eventually pass through your internal organs. This is likely to cause emotional eruptions for a short period of time

until the organ channels become sufficiently unblocked.

Many people know about the emotional-physical correspondences discovered by the Chinese that the health of the liver is related to anger, violence, hatred, brutality, impulsiveness and bad moods of irritation; joy, kindness and love are related to the heart; grief, shame, and pessimism are related to the lungs; and fear, anxiety and dread are related to the kidneys. Western energy and bodywork researchers have actually gone past the Chinese indications and discovered many more correspondences than this, including emotions attached to different body parts other than organs. Nutripuncture also catalogs different types of emotional imbalances when your organs are too strong or weak.

As your Qi (activated by meditation) passes through your internal organs, which cleanses the etheric double of the organs within your subtle body, emotional outbursts and eruptions along these lines will commonly happen due to the energy encountering blockages. It is said that spiritual cultivation will not only awaken the angel in us but also the devil when nonspiritual tendencies are forced to the conscious level, producing emotional eruptions. When your Qi runs through an organ this often produces emotional eruptions. These unfortunate reactions are to be expected unless the organs are very healthy.

Meditators will sometimes find themselves crying for no reason at all when their kidney Qi is being cleared. Shakyamuni Buddha said, "they might find themselves spontaneously bursting into tears (under all sorts of random circumstances)." They might find themselves becoming overly fearful at certain situations when the kidney or Yin Qi of their body is also being purified. In fact, in some cultivation schools it is common for an enlightened master to throw students into situations that cause them to become extremely afraid in order that the Yin Qi of their body can be purified and appropriate channels opened. They might suddenly be shown some fake supernatural sights that will frighten them (the visions caused by their master) and a master will use this opportunity to work on their now activated Yin Qi circulations.

The point is that many unfavorable reactions occur when the Qi provokes emotional reactions as it starts poking through obstructions that involve our internal organs. We can become emotionally vulnerable in particular ways until those organ channels open. This is why in some cases various emotional reactions are desired by enlightened masters to help you purify your Qi channels. During those instances you might sometimes have a very clear mind that seems entirely separate and detached from the emotions you are experiencing.

This is particularly the case with anger, as anger issues usually arise on the spiritual path when Yang Qi passes through the liver and gall bladder organs or meridians. At that time, irritation that turns into violent anger or

rage must be guarded against, as explained in *The Little Book of Hercules*. Martial artists who start to open their liver meridians commonly experience this type of problem too because it is due to better Qi circulations being established when blockages are being cleared from the liver.

Whenever Yang Qi arises within your body it is possible to feel overconfident, tremendously bold and courageous, angry and wrathful, or excessively proud. Representative emotional reactions, and many others that occur as your Yin Qi and Yang Qi are being provoked, are explained in the second set of ten delusional meditation states mentioned in the *Surangama Sutra*, which you can find in chapter six.

Visions

It is common to at times see strange visions, both internal and external, on the cultivation path of meditation. However, always remember that the visions are not due to you having attained superpowers or supernatural vision. If that were so then you would be able to readily see supernatural visions at will. Since you cannot, therefore you do not have such powers. They are visions being given to you. Whatever strange notions people strongly believe are typically revealed within their dreams or visions, and so what you might see is often just the product of wild imagination. Unfortunately, people become infatuated with and misguided by this irrelevant stuff.

Many mystical experiences are also just the results of spiritual hopes and fervent imaginations caused by Qi impinging upon certain centers of the brain. Swami Vivekananda once wrote, “When the meditation is deep, one sees many wonderful things.” Nan Huai-chin wrote this is usually due to deep-seated psychological tendencies being stirred by Qi within the brain and then interacting with consciousness.

Please remember the rule that a genuine spiritual realization must:

- Never contradict critical human reasoning and analysis
- Always be conducive to the happiness and welfare of all beings

If one does not hold to these rules there is the danger, as has been repeated throughout history, that some one-time strange dream, vision, hallucination or imagination (such as of God speaking to you or commanding you) will lead to great harm and wrongdoing such as wars, murderous blood sacrifices, self-immolation, individuals giving away all their riches, and other forms of great harm.

People have often lost their family fortune, their career, their health or even their life due to self-delusion and self-deception connected with dreams, visions and other non-repeatable mental experiences. Believing in

them and then acting upon them often leads to ruin or humiliation. One must always look at any “spiritual” dreams or visions with critical examination, typically ignoring them entirely. You must use common sense and wisdom to guide yourself in the world. Wise spiritual practitioners must always warn other spiritual adherents about this rule and not take dreams or visions seriously.

That being said, sometimes the visions people see (despite their wide variety) are actually given to practitioners by devas and enlightened teachers on the cultivation path for a purpose. However, this is rare and not to be expected, and still the rule of wisdom is to be followed because usually those interventions are misleading. Furthermore, they usually contain no useful information because no higher guide wants you to become dependent upon them.

On the road of cultivation you must become dependent only on wisdom and clear consciousness. Spiritual individuals should not develop a mystical mind that eschews rational logic, and so visions are not to be expected or used for guidance. For guidance and proper decision-making use your own clear reasoning and analysis instead.

As your mind is to be developed on the spiritual path, always look to wisdom, logic and rational analysis for guidance rather than turn to superstitious mysticism wherein you can easily be cheated or fall prey to self-deception. Spiritual practitioners too often become overly mystical or superstitious and then lose their mental balance. In attributing visions to gods, goddesses or other spiritual beings, there is a great danger that this will open the door to self-delusion, exaggeration, wrong thinking and harmful acts. This is yet another reason why such things are rarely given.

Sometimes someone is truly given a spiritual vision to help them, such as for motivation or inspiration, but when it is truly due to a spiritual being it is typically just the devas practicing their powers without any regards to your well-being and how you will react. It is miserable to go through such experiences when you and the people around you don't understand what is going on.

“Devas” means heavenly beings, which includes people who have passed away (such as your parents and ancestors) and not yet reincarnated. It also means angels or *dakinis*, and spiritual cultivators who have already attained a subtle body and therefore are now considered spiritual masters. Who is a deva? Someone just like you who has passed away and not yet reincarnated or a person like who has become a spiritual master; “Heaven” is the subtle plane around us on this earth, though if you cultivate to a higher stage of spiritual attainment you can then travel to other planes (realms) and planets. When one attributes phenomenon to a “deity,” that deity is usually just a human being who has some stage of spiritual attainment and/or powers (enlightenment) and then masquerades as some

spiritual great in order to help others.

You can read about some representative types of visions people typically see due to delusion-inspiring devas in the “50 Delusive Mara States of Practitioners” found in the *Surangama Sutra*. They are caused by devas and spiritual masters when helping to open the Qi channels of advancing practitioners. The visions they put into your head when doing this usually have no meaning whatsoever, but people mistakenly think they are enlightened or special when they occur.

For instance, Christian practitioners might see visions of internal flames within their heart after reciting Christian prayers centered in their chest, such as the Prayer of Jesus. No such flames, even in etheric form, actually exist as this is just a typical false illusion commonly given to ardent practitioners of that method. Due to Biblical influences, Christians might also see visions or have dreams of spiritual beings with the head of an ox, horse, lion, eagle or whatever because of what they read of such beings in the Old Testament or Book of Revelations. No such strange looking beings actually exist, including angels being people with feathered wings. Wouldn't it be terribly uncomfortable to have such a body at a higher stage of excellence?

Such visions are common in Christianity because centuries ago, in a largely agrarian and uneducated society, someone saw that type of fictitious vision created by some playful master and his disciples, the tale of the vision got turned into a religious text, and then the same images were repeated over and over again because of cultural expectations that this represented true spirituality. This happens in every culture, and thus common visions differ by religion, nation or community.

Let's again consider the event of seeing fictitious images of angels with wings. Wouldn't those wings be uncomfortable to sleep with given that an angel is considered to be at a higher stage of spiritual excellence? The subtle body that you attain as a spiritual practitioner (or upon death) lacks wings, and yet you can quickly get from one place to another because it is a Qi body. Unfortunately, people see visions of many strange things like this, which may or may not have a religious connotation, and mistakenly think they are real and represent true reality. They are just deceptions, illusions or delusions given by devas practicing how to project their powers of visualization into specific parts of your brain, or simply just imaginations. The top two levels of Desire Realm devas, as explained by Buddhism, are particularly adept at playing with giving visionary experiences to ardent spiritual practitioners. Critical thinking is your weapon against being taken in by such deceptions.

In the cases where you hear the story of a master talking with deceased spiritual greats (such as when Jesus' disciples saw him speaking with Moses and Elijah, or Sufis saw their master speaking with various Muslim

forefathers), these were also fictitious projections into the minds of the believers that made their way into print. This is clearly explained within the last chapter of the *Surangama Sutra*, which explains the typical types of *mara* delusional meditation experiences. Once you attain a deva body and you can enter the minds of others, you learn to do all sorts of mental tricks like this.

If a vision occurs to you where you see a spiritual great, such as in a dream, ask how you could possibly know who that person was if you had never seen them before and you are not given their name? Such information is also projected into your mind during visions so that you can interpret them according to the master's wishes. In the *Surangama Sutra* you can read about all sorts of fake visions projected into people like this, some for play and some for sport. Ignore them.

A famous Taoist story along these lines occurred in the life of Lu Yan (later known as Lu Dong Bin), who was once studying to become a Chinese official. At an inn he drank some wine and then fell asleep at the table, dreaming that he took the imperial exam, passed with excellent marks and was awarded a prestigious office. In the dream he also became married, had a son and eventually became prime minister. Attracting the jealousy of others, he was accused of crimes and then through various events lost his office, wife, children and money. He woke up from his dream when he was dying in the street. The entire dream, which covered eighteen years of his life, had taken place during the short space of time that it took to cook a meal of yellow millet, and so it has become known as the Yellow Millet Dream.

Unbeknownst to him, this dream was being given to him by the Taoist master Zhongli Quan at the inn in order to make Lu Dong Bin realize the uselessness of a life that pursues power, position and profit. It was meant to encourage him, because of his past life efforts, to once again start cultivating the Tao. After Lu Yan awoke, he abandoned his pursuit to become a government official and entered the cultivation road of Taoism to become an immortal sage. He eventually became enlightened.

The images (visions) one often sees during cultivation are normally reflective of the country, race, culture and religion of the practitioner. For instance, Chinese practitioners might see visions of dragons, Chinese protect gods and deities, Kuan Yin, Lao Tzu, and other Chinese personages during the course of their meditation progress. They might see flames on their shoulders or proceeding out of the top of their head (since in Chinese culture this denotes a virtuous person), all of which are also fake visions. A practitioner might even see visions of unusual things within their own or another person's body as this is a type of meditation practice used within Buddhism and Taoism.

Shangqing Taoism teaches by using descriptions of deities residing

within your body so that cultivation practitioners do not become frightened when they discover that devas are the ones who must enter into them to help open up Qi channels. This school has teaching equivalents with the tantric schools of India and Tibet along these lines. These schools all use colorful pictures of meditators with Buddhas and their consorts living within their bodies in order to open up the Qi channels. No one lives inside you but devas will enter into you or project their energy into you to help open up your Qi channels.

Incidentally, it is through sutras that Buddhism prepares its practitioners for the fact that devas must enter into their bodies to open Qi channels. Various sutras state that Bodhisattvas, such as Kuan Yin (Avalokitesvara), have pores within their body that are entire worlds with many beings inside them. A slow indoctrination along these lines helps prepare practitioners to accept the fact that Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, saints, sages, masters, gurus, devas and deities are the ones who must enter practitioners' bodies to help open up their Qi channels, and are the ones who sometimes give them inspirations or thoughts that solve problems. The Tantric yoga schools and Buddhist Vajrayana also shows pictures of deities within your body to help prepare you for this truth.

Buddhist practitioners who meditate will sometimes see visions of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas (Amitofo, Shakyamuni, Vairocana, Kuan Yin, Manjusri, Samantabhadra, etc.), protect gods, *asuras* and heavens (or hells) given by their master or devas. In certain cases they might see Buddhas above their head or chakras projected into the sky above the skull. Once again, these are all illusions given to them by devas entering their brains and projecting visions into the nerves.

A special category of this type of activity includes visions or dreams of hell, given to people with the appropriate karma, which usually involve fanciful images along with feelings of emotional despair, rage and agony. The tales of such visions – which are found in countless cultures even though the representations are always different – are often made into stories passed down through generations that have provided a tremendous beneficial force in society for the eschewing of non-virtuous ways.

Hindu practitioners who ardently meditate might see visions of Shiva, Vishnu, Brahma, Krishna, Lakshmi, Kali and other spiritual greats. They will also be commonly given visions of strange beings mentioned in Hindu legends. As with every other religion, it is also common for expectant Hindu women (as well as pregnant Christian, Buddhist, Moslem, etc. women) to receive dreams of light-filled rooms and other auspicious events when they become impregnated or are just about to give birth to a future master.

In certain cultivation traditions, special visions become a specialty taught to all the lineage's devas so that they can give them to practitioners

to help guide them. For instance, in the Nityananada-Muktananda tradition, the devas are taught to project the image of a blue sparkly point into practitioners to let them know they are on the right cultivation path. In the Aghora and Kali traditions, practitioners often see specialized visions too that they have come to expect due to teachings. Traditional lineage-dependent visions are to be contrasted with cases where no specific vision content is expected, but just a general framework of a visionary expectation, as is normal with American Indians on vision quests.

The Tibetan esoteric Yoga traditions, such as the Six Yogas of Naropa, also have specific vision expectations that are given to ardent practitioners. If a meditator is training in the Tibetan Vajrayana tradition then they are taught to expect to see visions (like stock images used again and again) of one type of Qi dissolving into another type, such as water element Qi dissolving into fire element Qi or “fire element dissolving into the wind element” and so on. They are taught to expect “signs of elemental dissolutions” that will arise because of good meditation work, and which will produce visions like that of a butter-lamp, firefly-like sparks, smoke and mirage. Actually, there are no such things as the elemental dissolutions described in these texts, which is why they are not found in other cultivation traditions.

These are all fictitious visions (illusions) commonly given to Vajrayana practitioners at a certain stage of their yogic practice. They were designed ages ago as milestones to encourage people in specific practice vehicles. Because practitioners all know about these visions they are used over and over again when they don't really correspond to any stages of Qi dissolution at all (or any such biophysical or etheric process). There is no such thing as one type of elemental Qi types dissolving into one another due to cultivation practice. Someone made that false explanation up ages ago as a mechanism for guiding concentration practice, it became part of the tradition, and both devas and masters since that time commonly practice by generating derivatives of these standard visions in order to motivate people during their course of meditation practice. Of course, no such dissolutions really exist.

As the *Lotus Sutra* of skillful means explains, most practitioners do not know that much of cultivation practice and progress is actually based on deceptions like this. Even a master will not tell you what is truthfully going on. Unfortunately, masters and their deva students are just human beings with etheric bodies, and get carried away when they develop these powers and want to practice them. This typically results in all sorts of problems for practitioners.

Another vision common to Tibetan meditation traditions is to see snakes, scorpions, centipedes and forms of smoke or dirty Qi passing out through the toes as one cultivates the feet with Qi energy. This is to

encourage people to work harder at cultivating the feet and leg Qi channels, which are very hard to open. It is extremely hard to open the foot Qi channels on the cultivation trail, and you are advised to use yoga, Pilates, stretching and any other methods to stretch all the muscles and tendons in the feet and lower legs to help this effort.

The idea of seeing red and white bodhicitta, or “drops,” also gives rise to fake visions. Any visions of seeing networks of Qi channels (*nadis*) within your body are fake as well. There actually is no such thing as drops melting due to the warmth of cultivation practice as found in ancient Vajrayana yoga texts, but since this helps practitioners develop concentration no modern masters ever explain this to students since everyone is in on the gag. The Taoist tales of seeing internal organs are also fictitious illusions created and projected by practicing devas and masters. This doesn't mean you don't have internal organs or that Qi channels don't exist. It just means that what you are seeing is not your internal organs or Qi channels.

When practitioners attempt to master the visualization sadhanas of Buddhist deities such as Green Tara, Vajrayogini, White Mahakala, Guhyasamaja, Chakrasamvara, Yamantaka, and so forth they will commonly have imaginary pictures projected into their mind by various masters (and devas) during those practices. This is then taken by the practitioner as a blessing, empowerment or sign of approval for their progress. The same thing happens for Hindus undertaking Shiva, Krishna, Narayana, Ganesha, Kubera, Surya, Kali, Durga, Lakshmi, Devi, Dhumavati, Matangi and other deity sadhanas. No such beings exist, but a master and his deva students will commonly masquerade as those beings because people call on them for help. Other people looking at the practitioner might also see them overlaid with the visualized deity because those observers are given visions as well that provide this type of illusion. No one, however, ever turns into these fancifully imagined deities.

Such tantric visualization sadhanas are just used as *nei-gong* instruction vehicles to help students cultivate their Qi and channels. Hundreds of years ago this was the method that inspired practice as well as keep the practice vehicles alive through the generations, and this type of skillful means (deceiving practitioners in order to keep them meditating and making progress so that they can finally attain the deva body) has continued until today. This is skillful means.

During meditation practice it is common for practitioners to also see Buddhas, chakras, stars, galaxies, or other images above their head. When this happens, the idea is that the practitioner should concentrate on pushing their Qi far above their head so that it is pulled upwards out of the two spinal nerve channels within the brain. These two nerve channels, which you can see in DTI diagrams, are symbolized by the horns of Isis holding a sun above her head.

Yoga practitioners are commonly given visions of bright lights within the body or head just as described within many yogic texts. They are also commonly given various visions of gods, deities and past masters all of which are fake. Reminiscent of the Tibetan Vajrayana tradition of elemental dissolution visions, the *Svetasvatara Upanishad* says that when practicing meditation an aspirant might see visions of a snowfall, radiant smoke and the brilliant sun.

Because of expectations like this (of sequentially seeing visions of snowflakes, smoke, the sun, a sky or ball or fireflies, a flash of lightning, the luster of a crystal or the moon) an expectant individual will often see them because devas will project them into their brains. All devas love having the chance to practice doing this so just ignore any visions you ever see. Once again these are all just mental projections that devas practice putting into people's minds when they are working on those individuals to transform their Qi channels. Always ignore such things. If you have a vision of Jesus or Krishna, for instance, it is exactly the same thing. It is never real.

In ancient times many Buddhists would practice the kasina meditations in the *Visuddhimagga* (*The Path of Purification*) of Buddhaghosa. The *Visuddhimagga* says that at a certain stage of trying to visualize the earth, water, fire, wind or space elements they would "apprehend a sign" arising within them, but the text never specifies what the "sign" is supposed to be. Just as in the Vajrayana schools, the signs were always visions, given by whomever was overseeing the process of helping to open the practitioner's Qi channels, and when given there was usually a sub-carrier thought also projected that this vision was the sign or mark referred to. Usually you are not just given a mental picture as a vision but a particular thought on how to interpret it just as when seeing a spiritual great in a dream you also know who they are without words being spoken.

Most spiritual practitioners struggle for years cultivating meditation and ardently seek signs of their progress, so the various traditions have all developed visions to reassure practitioners that their efforts are not in vain but bearing progress. In Taoism these are called "signs of proof" (*zhengyan*), "signs of response" (*yingyan*) or "news" (*xiaoxi*). These are regarded as proof of an individual's excellent work at spiritual progress. In many traditions, for instance, the aspirant is taught to expect certain visions after reciting a certain number of prayers or mantras, which then shows that their cultivation is on track. This is not just the case with eastern religions but also the case in Judaism, Islam and Christianity. "Signs" help resolve practitioners' doubts about the path and their personal practice.

Some cultivation individuals will work hard at meditation and then see images of colorful round chakras, which again are entirely fictitious visions because, as explained in *Nyasa Yoga*, the chakras just refer to sections of the body. Many people have been misled by the pictures in Leadbeater's book,

The Chakras, and by various Hindu pictures of fanciful geometric shapes. They then mistakenly believe chakras are spinning plates with a certain number of channel branches, but consider this - how can an etheric body be powered by such things? How can they even exist?

The subtle body has organs just like your physical body *because it is an exact duplicate of your physical body*. All the higher bodies are this way. A higher body is simply a copy of a lower body at a higher stage of energy or substance. Therefore, the fanciful descriptions you read of chakras, and strange visions of chakras and Qi networks you might see, are all entirely fake. They are *maras*, delusions, falsities, illusions. Guess who is responsible for them? It is not you who is projecting them into your mind. You actually see these things, but they are images projected by devas and masters who have been training in visualization practice and now want to use their powers.

It is therefore very common to see such visions after a lot of mantra practice, especially visions of your bones that are becoming clean along with the attendant thought that your cultivation is working. The common vision, within dreams or during the waking state, is that your bones are somehow dirty and being cleansed through the process of mantra and/or meditation, or have already become brightened because of your cultivation efforts. The visions along these lines vary widely and are usually accompanied by unspoken thoughts such as that your body is dirty and being purified, you need to work harder at cultivation because your bones are still dirty, the color of your bones reveal the stage of your cultivation, your cultivation has reached a high stage because you can see how clean your bones have become, and so on.

Many practitioners who practice the famous white skeleton visualization technique of Buddhism may start to see images of bones within themselves or within other people and don't realize that these are also not the result of budding superpowers. They are illusory visions given by devas and masters that don't correspond to reality at all. As previously explained, many Taoists and Yoga enthusiasts often have visions of their internal organs. These visions are always due to devas projecting images into their minds.

The only reason people sometimes seem to have a ability to peer into another person's body at will is because a set of devas is constantly working on changing their Qi channels and are providing the practitioner with false visions while they are working on opening his Qi channels. If lucky, after a certain number of years (depending upon how hard they work at cultivation) the job will be done and the practitioner will attain the deva body that can leave their human frame at will. This is when they become a first stage master. Sometimes the visions provided, such as in the case of Ramakrishna, have nothing to do with other people's bodies but simply

match traditional religious texts and deities.

It is also common for some spiritual practitioners to develop small superpowers – such as knowing the meaning of dreams, knowing the future, knowing what other people are thinking and so on - because that mental input is also supplied by devas. The individual does not actually have the superpower of mind reading or clairvoyance, but many fall into the misconception that they do and become proud. Some are smarter and say that they are simply “channels for God’s work,” but also don’t know that the origins of their abilities is not “God” but some deva(s). Despite such humble words people don’t know that the abilities are coming from the devas around them for a reason and not some ultimate power.

Another common vision given to people across the world concerns the existence of trolls, *dakinis*, devas, angels, elves, giants and other etheric beings. Once again, practitioners do not have spiritual powers to be able to see such things otherwise they would be able to see them constantly at will. They are fanciful visions created by the local devas who practice projecting visions into people’s minds. Devas are always playful and love deceptions, so what they project is almost always misleading. The word “trickster” applies to heavenly beings.

Countless types of fictitious visions are possible. If they occur to you, do not consider them as anything of importance but simply ignore them. Just as fire is the direct cause of cooking, knowledge and analysis are the direct causes of spiritual progress and illumination rather than dreams and visions.

Dreams and Sexual Daydreams

Many of the same visions just recounted (and of course this partial list is by far non-conclusive) can appear in practitioner’s dreams. You might see masters, Buddhas and saints in dreams as well as strange celestial palaces and beings such as dragons, fox spirits, protection deities and so on. All of these visionary experiences are total illusory nonsense. No one is ever given divine messages in dreams because it is an impractical way to impart information and fraught with the possibility of misinterpretation. It is true that dreams can indeed be given to you by devas and spiritual masters, but the content is normally fictitious even if what is seen seems to be perfectly real.

While in *Visualization Power* I revealed many cases where intense concentration on a problem produces a visual dream solution (such as Elias Howe’s invention of the sewing machine or Kukule’s discovery of the structure of the benzene ring). Typically the spiritual content of your dreams are self-induced imaginations or compensatory self-fulfillments that do not indicate any spiritual teachings at all. People who don’t use

discrimination (clear thinking and logic) usually fall for these things as being real or revel in them to gain self-satisfaction. Speaking frankly, the content of dreams and daydreams is usually due to subtle impressions stored in our minds that serve as the basis for our imagination.

As a related point, when young most every boy and girl has sexual fantasies that they are afraid to tell others, such as becoming younger and transforming into a member of the opposite sex. Just as fear or courage affect your Qi, these types of daydreams affect an individual's Yin Qi or Yang Qi and help open their relevant Qi channels. Along these lines men affect their Yin Qi when they imagine they are women while women cultivate their Yang Qi by imagining they are men. Sometimes young girls will dream that they become men, grow a penis, or must fight a war/demon and at that time their Yang Qi rises and starts opening the appropriate channels.

Such cases are normal and not to be taken as a calling for lesbianism just as young boys' dreams of becoming girls are not to be interpreted as a psychological call to homosexuality or transgender leanings. In no cases either are any of these things to be taken as an encouragement for transgender leanings. The role models in India of female deities also being war goddesses able to defeat demons, show that females must also cultivate Yang Qi just as men, such as Krishna or Shiva or Hercules, must also cultivate Yin Qi.

The *Vimalakirti Sutra* recounts the story of Shariputra having a vision that he was changed into a female, which refers to a type of cultivation during the twelve-year kundalini arousal where one often undergoes such illusions in order to affect their Yin Qi. Vimalakirti's ten foot square room in that sutra actually represents a practitioner's brain, and the reason all the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and devas could fit into this small room is because astral-bodied individuals can all shrink their subtle bodies to small sizes. Thus many devas can enter the brain at the same time (where lessons are conducted) since the ability to increase or decrease the size of the subtle body is a well-recognized yogic ability mentioned in most Yoga texts.

As with the *Vimalakirti Sutra*, you can read of many cultivation tales where men became women and women became men in *Shikhandi*, by Devdutt Pattanaik, which only an enlightened master can interpret correctly for you. Of particular note is the story of the Greek Tiresias who underwent a spontaneous sex change (done by the goddess Hera) after striking two copulating snakes (symbolizing the Yin and Yang Qi of the body). Later he regained his masculinity and was given the gift of prophecy, the ability to understand bird song, and a lifespan of seven lives. Tiresias could mediate between the gods and humans, and his story with all the superpowers is essentially a Greek tale hinting at the subtle body attainment.

Along the lines of this form of cultivation, two great Hindu masters, Papaji and Ramakrishna, both wore women's clothes for a short while in order to cultivate their Yin Qi. Legends say so did Hercules, Arjuna, Thor and many other cultural heroes. This method is rarely understood but is improperly taken as homoeroticism or some other type of sexual deviancy.

Meher Baba actually explained this in his *Discourses*,

If one is transcending sexual duality and trying to understand the experience associated with the opposite sex, sometimes one actually exhibits the traits usually associated with the opposite sex. Thus, for example, some aspirants in the male body at one phase or another actually put on the clothes of women, talk like them, feel like them, and take on their habits. But this is only a passing phase. When inner understanding of the relevant experiences is complete, they neither experience themselves as male nor as female alone but as being *beyond* the distinction of sex. The experiences connected with the male and female forms are both accessible and intelligible to the aspirants who have transcended sexual distinctions. They remain unaffected by the limitations of either, because through understanding they have freed themselves from the limiting obsessions characteristic of sex-ridden imagination.⁵⁸

Throughout these explanations the one principle never to abandon is sexual restraint, or *brahmacharya*. For men it is the major key to spiritual progress and the most important practice of Yoga. Yoga and Vedanta consider it the foundation of life, and it is equally stressed in Buddhism, Taoism and other religions.

Lust, or sexual desire, will pursue a spiritual seeker throughout their life wearing various disguises, and you must strive to assert your independence over its pull. If a woman orgasms through sex there is little problem of Qi loss because her body will reabsorb the energy, but if a man carelessly loses his Jing and Qi time and time again, that energy will no longer be available for opening up Qi channels.

As the *Jnana Sankalini Tantra* wisely says, warning men how to act throughout these mentioned experiences, "A person of unbroken continence is no man but a god." This is because the restraint will accumulate Qi internally, which will then open up Qi channels and develop your deva body. One need not undergo severe sexual restraint, which is counterproductive, but one must also not be self-indulgent. Along these lines, *The Little Book of Meditation* (Bodri) offers advice and instructions.

⁵⁸ *Discourses*, Meher Baba (Sherira Press, South Carolina, 2000), pp. 325-326.

Internal Sounds

As people make progress in meditation practice it sometimes becomes possible to hear sounds that seem to be coming from within the body. Among other possibilities, these might include the sounds of mantras, voices or even music playing over and over again. On the other hand, these can also be personal imaginations due to neurosis or too much thinking.

Some people may hear mantras while they are falling asleep or within their dreams, especially mantras that they recited while awake. Some will hear mantras inside their minds being recited automatically without their efforts. These are actually mantras being recited by devas in a playful manner and letting you hear them.

Some might hear sounds that they believe originate from the chakras. Yoga texts, such as the *Gheranda Samhita* (in the Fifth chapter) state that sounds especially arise due to the practice of pranayama. They might be similar to the sounds of crickets, thunder, cymbals, bees, the melody of bells ringing in the distance, gongs, trumpets, drums or even a flute. The school of Laya Yoga has various teachings on this.

Some people will hear voices after they start upon the road of spiritual practices and mistakenly believe they are trustworthy spirit guides. Sometimes these are devas, who are not to be trusted, and sometimes just imaginations brought forth by Qi impinging upon brain centers. The explanation is as follows.

If your Qi ascends to the back of the head, one may start to experience results related to the nerves at the back of the head, which means the optic nerves and auditory nerves on the side of the head.

When your Qi reaches the back of the head, you might hear different types of wonderful sounds or experience a ringing or pressure in your ears. This phenomenon is produced by the Qi working to open Qi routes in the brain, especially those around the auditory nerves. The vibration or trembling of Qi will also sometimes cause some brain wave activity that will activate stored optical or auditory memories. If your intelligence is not clear and bright enough, then illusions deep inside the subconscious will result when this happens.

Someone who has deep religious beliefs may then have illusions of hearing the voice of God, Buddhas, angels, deities or other characters. Whatever is heard is actually just a big assembly; it is a mixing of previous experience - whatever has been seen, heard, thought and known before. If someone clings to the idea that these voices are real then he will fall into a state of *mara* or delusion and go the wrong way in their cultivation.

A person should not be puzzled or moved by this sort of reaction. Instead, he should sometimes swallow the saliva and release the feelings in his head. This requires a strong mind and persistent will to ignore the

sounds and/or voices. By reciting mantras to change the sounds, and guiding the Qi downward one will pass this stage and enter the next.

On the supernatural aide, we have to honestly say that inner voices, if they are not signs of schizophrenic or psychotic delusions, may sometimes be devas misleading people (although rare), you should ignore whatever is said even if it appears incredibly accurate. Because they possess a shrinkable spirit body that can enter your brain, devas have access to all the memories stored in your neurons of everything you ever saw, heard or did in life. They practice being able to read this, which is why there is a saying in China that the Kitchen God (the protect god for a household) reports everything that happens in the family to heaven.

In short, no human secrets can be kept from higher sentient beings, especially the devas. Everything you do can be known by Heaven. No one reads an etheric “akashic chronicle” to know what has happened. Devas simply learn how to access people’s memories stored in their neurons.

It is therefore easy to weave complex tales of deception by incorporating your past memories into some nonsensical dialogue they may engage in. Devas like to masquerade as famous spiritual greats or strange individuals out of play while they work on your Qi channels. In many cases they will even masquerade as demons, devils or ghosts so as to frighten a practitioner so that his Yin Qi channels can be purified.

This is one of the unfortunate horrors of the twelve years of transformation that masters must go through, and why they rarely mention the content of those years. All the devas want to practice many things, such as how to manipulate your thoughts and emotions, as they are working on cleaning out your Qi channels. Since it takes twelve years of hard work to open up all your Qi channels *after* a genuine full body kundalini awakening is initiated, why would the devas and masters bother to do so if they were not also having fun and learning through the process? The learning involves competitive games against each other seeing who has more skill in manipulating your thoughts, feelings and visions. A deva of a higher stage of attainment can win at these contests or block the skills of others. A common contest is to see who can read your memories quickest and then make connections between unconnected items within it.

Future masters (ex. Saint Anthony, Padre Pio, Upasni Maharaj, Yeshe Tsogyel, Ramakrishna, Saint Paisios, etc. before they attained enlightenment) have to suffer during the twelve years necessary to develop the *sambhogakaya* and no one, except for this book, ever tells you what went on during those years. Search the records and you will find that masters typically remain silent about their personal practices and the events that transpired during the twelve years of transformation to develop the subtle body, then Causal body and then Supra-Causal body of enlightenment.

Sometimes a practitioner might hear a singular sentence in their head,

like the famous story of a Buddhist monk suffering from knee pain. At a riverbank bandaging his knee, he once heard a voice which claimed it was a ghost in his knee. The ghost said that the monk owed him from a past life, but because of his holy life he couldn't attack him to exact revenge. But now that he had become proud, he finally had his chance because the fault of that pride had given him an opening to afflict him with trouble. This was a deva, for sure, trying to help the monk become more humble and not a ghost in the slightest!

Chinese Zen master Huike is said to have heard a voice in his head when the Qi was painfully passing through his brainstem, and Socrates said he would always hear the voice of an inner *daimonion* (deva). As explained, these cases are the voices of devas or a spiritual master.

All these sounds are usually caused by devas for some reason or another. Practitioners should just forget these instances and pay them no mind. By no means should a practitioner ever believe the stories devas tell that they are some spiritual great or spirit guide with fantastical information and that the individual has a destiny or is particularly great. One has these experiences due to deva training practices that have no regard for your well-being, as the *Surangama Sutra* explains, and therefore you should just ignore them.

Odors

Some spiritual practitioners become either very sensitive to odors, or can smell supernatural odors like sandalwood incense when they are meditating. Sometimes this spontaneously occurs, and sometimes this occurs because practitioners were concentrating on the tip of their nose, thus opening up the Qi channels in the nose and making it more sensitive.

Superpowers and Psychic Abilities

On the meditation trail it is common for some people to develop what they believe are personal superpowers or psychic abilities, and then get sidetracked because of these experiences. This includes the ability to know people's fortunes or feel feng shui energies without being taught. Individuals sometimes develop exceptional intuitive skills that they can't possibly have, and commonly attribute their skills to intuition, spirits, God or their own spiritual efforts.

Sometimes people seem to know the future. Some seem to develop the ability to feel inanimate objects or see/feel inside other people's bodies, sometimes psychically sensing their energy states or emotions. Sometimes they have the experience of seeing visions inside of other people's bodies, including their organs or bones. As stated, the visions of seeing other

people's bones, which supposedly arises from the white skeleton meditation technique of Buddhism, are all fictitious. Sometimes people even receive visions where they temporarily seem to see spiritual beings, or celestial mansions and heavens.

Some people develop medical superpowers, such as the ability to project energy into others, know the state of someone's health, feel their Qi or know their internal health conditions. Some develop incredible healing powers but know that the powers don't come from them.

All these types of different experiences, and many more not described, make people believe they have become psychic and possess a superpower they do not actually possess. Don't ever be confused and think this. Use your powers of discriminatory thinking to consider these attainments.

Actually, these "powers" or experiences (even the power of "intuition") usually come from devas who are practicing various techniques, and the superpowers actually belong to the devas who are working through the aspirant. If the medical superpowers were yours then you could use them at will, and if knowing the future were always possible you would certainly become rich. Powers are given and taken away by devas and higher spiritual beings who use you as their conduit due to past karma.

The best way to make progress when you have these experiences is to ignore them and continue cultivating, without becoming dependent on them, by setting up a daily practice schedule of pranayama, meditation, mantra, *nei-gong* and visualization. The quicker you transform your Qi channels the easier it will be to attain the subtle body and lose your fascination with these things that really don't amount to much at all.

SUMMARY

The spiritual trail involves two aspects: (1) cultivating your mind and (2) your body. Cultivating your body involves *nei-gong* inner energy work to transform your Qi and channels because your internal subtle body is essentially energy (composed of Qi), and your physical body is actually a more solid form of condensed energy.

Cultivating your mind, on the other hand, means making it pure and free of *kleshas*. To do this you must practice meditation. Your meditation can be of either two types – with or without mental discrimination of the mind's contents.

If you only cultivate to cleanse your thought stream and neglect the cultivation of internal Qi energy, you won't attain the subtle body (astral body, ether body, *yin shen*, impure illusory body, etc.). Therefore you have to cultivate your vital life force, or Qi, on the spiritual trail. You might check out *Nyasa Yoga* for instructions.

If you only cultivate your Qi on the spiritual trail without cultivating

your mind (thought and behavior), then even if you achieve the subtle body you will still be beset with problems. Perhaps you will even become an even bigger jerk than previously because now you will be able to cause trouble with your etheric spirit body. Cultivating virtue is important on the spiritual trail. You don't want to become an asshole with powers, and you also need virtue to merit the assistance from higher powers.

Only by meditating on both mind and body will you gain enlightenment; you must cultivate both your Qi and mental emptiness to become enlightened quickly. This book concentrates on emptiness meditation, or mental practice, in order to teach you how to cultivate your mind. Along this path, physical reactions corresponding to your Qi and channels are sure to definitely arise. How to cultivate those directly through inner energy work is explained in *Nyasa Yoga* and the other works that have been cited.

Vajrayana practitioners know that the first stage of the spiritual path is cultivating your mind and Qi to attain the subtle body, which happens after your kundalini arises. Because this is the sure pathway that leads to enlightenment they always pray for four things on the path of cultivation:

- (1) Help in opening their Qi channels
- (2) Help for making their Qi begin to circulate and for success in abandoning their violent tendencies
- (3) Help so that their body becomes as soft and healthy as a baby's body so that it is not an obstacle on the cultivation path, and
- (4) Help in mastering the kundalini energy so that they can reach a state of calmness, bliss and warmth.

These are all transformation achievements necessary along the way to attaining an etheric subtle body, which is the first major milestone of the spiritual path.

In *Tao and Longevity: Mind-Body Transformation*, Nan Huai-chin wrote,

A person who says that he has an invisible and immaterial body, with or without form, that leaves and enters his physical body at will is speaking of the *yin shen* [the subtle body]. *Yin shen* is similar to those bodies appearing in dreams, but it is much clearer and more distinct than ordinary "dream" bodies. Taoists maintain that the projection of *yang shen* is the ultimate achievement of meditation and the cultivation of Tao. But if one imagines that the projection of *yin shen* is the ultimate goal of Tao, then he is either an ordinary person or in the *yin* state of a spirit or a ghost. [You must proceed higher than this attainment.]

Those who meditate and cultivate the Tao will not have any

difficulty projecting *yin shen* out of the body. Some may have an experience of this sort long before reaching the stage of transforming *ch'i* [Qi] into *shen* [the stage of attaining the Causal or mental body]. For example, when the connection between spirit and the body has deteriorated and grown weak, the projection of *yin shen* can occur spontaneously. This can happen to quite ordinary people who are not meditating, for it happens when one is ill, nearing death, or bordering on schizophrenia. If this can happen by itself under stressful circumstances, the student should understand that, with training, the experience will come much more easily and without the need for stress.⁵⁹

You now know about some of the delusions that commonly appear to practitioners along this line of attainment. You can explain these things in reference to heavenly interference, such as the existence of devas, or purely go by the road of science or silence so as not to unsettle practitioners who lack wisdom or have supernatural leanings. In the next chapter we will interpret various meditation case studies solely along the lines of science, for this is what is appropriate for society and most individuals. Only top individuals can understand the Vajrayana-style teachings on the necessity of spiritual beings to enter into your body, and lend you their energies to help you open up your Qi channels.

FROM: MEDITATION CASE STUDIES

CH. 6 – “States Of Delusion That Commonly Afflict Spiritual Practitioners”

On the spiritual trail you are bound to experience various delusional states, many of which have been explained in the *Surangama Sutra*. Due to these states of delusion you may think you are becoming more psychic, more spiritual or even going crazy. Most of these states are delusions caused by the devas and masters working on transforming your Qi channels for the attainment of the subtle body, which takes years of cultivation efforts on your part. These delusive experiences can be understood a little if we pull together several seemingly unrelated stories.

For instance, in *Kundalini: The Secret of Life*, Swami Muktananda wrote:

There is a state called tandra, which you spontaneously slip into under the inspiration of Kundalini. In tandra you have visions

⁵⁹ *Tao and Longevity*, p. 108.

of mountains, river, deities, saints and even other worlds. Tandra resembles the state of sleep, but it is quite different from the dream state. The visions you have in tandra are not like hallucinations or dreams but are as real as the sights you see with your physical eyes. Often you have visions of events in the outer world, which turn out to be true. In fact, you are able to see the entire universe in the state of tandra while sitting in one place with closed eyes. At times, you may see the whole system of nerves, veins, and arteries, and the digestive and eliminative tracts in the body in a multicolored light, which spreads through all the nadis. You can even see the prana flowing through them with increasing intensity as the purification of the body continues. ...

There are more subtle experiences which can come to a meditator as the Kundalini rises through the sushumna. Not every meditator will have all these experiences, for experience varies according to one's temperament and the intensity of one's faith and devotion.⁶⁰

It is well-known that the Hindu sage Ramakrishna experienced many types of visions during his years of cultivation prior to enlightenment. In *The Visions of Ramakrishna*, it is explained that:

Most of his visions, especially of the Mother, were of great beauty. Swami Saradananda tells us that Sri Ramakrishna saw at this time limitless forms of the Devi, from the two-armed to the ten-armed. The Master himself speaks of meditating under the tree when 'Sin' appeared before him and tempted him in various ways. It came in the form of an English soldier (pointed symbolism!) wanting to give wealth, honour, sex pleasure, occult powers, etc. 'I began to pray to the Divine Mother!' I still remember that form of the Mother, Her world-bewitching beauty. She came to me taking the form of Krishnamayi, but it was as if Her glance moved the world.' The most beautiful of all these visions, he said, was that of Raja-rajesvari, 'Queen of queens,' one of the traditional ten forms of the Divine Mother, who is also known as Sodasi. 'It looked,' he said, trying to put this into language, 'as if the beauty of the person of Sodasi had got melted, spread all around, and was illumining the universe in all directions.' ...

In this period, the close of Tantric sadhana, the Master had visions also of various male figures such Bhairava, companion of

⁶⁰ *Kundalini: The Secret of Life*, Swami Muktananda, (SYDA Foundation, New York, 1994), pp. 32-34.

Siva; under the vilva-tree where most of these practices were undertaken, he had many ‘flaming visions’ and other mystical experiences the contents of which he was not able to reveal.

‘There were then so many extraordinary visions and experiences in the Master’s life day after day,’ says Swami Saradananda, ‘that it is beyond the power of man to mention all of them.’⁶¹

One of the best selling business books of all times is *Think and Grow Rich*, by Napoleon Hill. As a result of his mental mind training practices, Hill reported the following experience:

Long before I had ever written a line for publication, or endeavored to deliver a speech in public, I followed the habit of reshaping my character by trying to imitate the nine men whose lives and life-works had been most impressive to me. These nine men were Emerson, Paine, Edison, Darwin, Lincoln, Burbank, Napoleon, Ford, and Carnegie. Every night over a long period of years, I held an imaginary council meeting with this group whom I called my “Invisible Counselors.

The procedure was this. Just before going to sleep at night, I would shut my eyes, and see, in my imagination, this group of men seated with me around my council table. Here I had not only an opportunity to sit among those whom I considered to be great, but I actually dominated the group, by serving as the chairman.

I had a very definite purpose in indulging my imagination through these nightly meetings. My purpose was to rebuild my own character so it would represent a composite of the characters of my imaginary counselors. Realizing, as I did, early in life, that I had to overcome the handicap of birth in an environment of ignorance and superstition, I deliberately assigned myself the task of voluntary rebirth through the method I have described above.

I knew, of course, that all men have become what they are because of their dominating thoughts and desires. I knew that every deeply seated desire has the effect of causing one to seek outward expression through which that desire may be transmuted into reality. I knew that self-suggestion is a powerful factor in building character, that it is, in fact, the sole principle through which character is built. ...

My method of addressing the members of the imaginary cabinet

⁶¹ *The Visions of Sri Ramakrishna*, Swami Yogeshananda, (Sri Ramakrishna Math, Chennai: India), pp. 43-45-

would vary, according to the traits of character which I was, for the moment, most interested in acquiring. I studied the records of their lives with painstaking care. After some months of this nightly procedure, I was astounded by the discovery that these imaginary figures became apparently real.

Each of these nine men developed individual characteristics, which surprised me. For example, Lincoln developed the habit of always being late, then walking round in solemn parade. He always wore an expression of seriousness upon his face. Rarely did I see him smile.

That was not true of the others. Burbank and Paine often indulged in witty repartee which seemed, at times, to shock the pother members of the cabinet. On one occasion Burbank was late. When he came, he was excited with enthusiasm, and explained that he had been late because of an experiment he was making, through which he hoped to be able to grow apples on any sort of tree. Paine chided him by reminding him that it was an apple which started all the trouble between man and woman. Darwin chuckled heartily as he suggested that Paine should watch out for little serpents, when he went into the forest to gather apples, as they had the habit of growing into big snakes. Emerson observed – “No serpents, no apples,” and Napoleon remarked, “No apples, no state!”

These meetings became so realistic that I became fearful of their consequences, and discontinued them for several months. The experiences were so uncanny, I was afraid if I continued them I would lose sight of the fact that the meetings were purely *experiences of my imagination*.⁶²

One of the most famous Tibetan cultivators of all time (other than Milarepa, Gampopa, Naropa and Marpa) was the female yogi Yeshe Tsogyel. In her autobiography, she wrote of many strange experiences she had to go through before becoming enlightened, including the following:

Then in the extremely isolated meditation cave of Nering Senge Dzong and other places, after I had sworn an immutable commitment, I continued my physical austerity. I sat in mute *samadhi*, never relaxing the important points of posture, sitting immovable in lotus posture, my eyes set in a fixed gaze. The malicious local gods and demons, however, could not endure my *samadhi's* glory, and created magical illusions, threatening me with

⁶² *Think and Grow Rich*, Napoleon Hill, (Ballantine Publishing Group, New York, 1960), pp. 195-197.

seductive and fierce, embodied and disembodied, phantoms. First they projected themselves as various delectable foods, and repeatedly appeared in front of me. Then they transformed themselves into all manner of material objects, clothes, horses, oxen and every possible necessity and luxury that this world can offer. I overcame all these temptations with my *samadhi's* radiance. Through my insight into the nature of the world as illusion, inasmuch as I felt profound disgust for attachment to worldly things, some of these phantoms dissolved; by changing earth and stone into dung by the power of my *samadhi* I rendered some repulsive; and some vanished after my wish that they became that district's future store of food and wealth was fulfilled.

On another occasion these demons projected themselves as charming youths, handsome, with fine complexions, smelling sweetly, glowing with desire, strong and capable, young men at whom a girl need only glance to feel excited. They would begin by addressing me respectfully, but they soon became familiar, relating obscene stories and making lewd suggestions. Sometimes they would play games with me: gradually they would expose their sexual organs, whispering, "Would you like this, sweetheart?" and "Would you like to milk me, darling?" and other such importunities, all the time embracing me, rubbing my breasts, fondling my vagina, kissing me, and trying all kinds of seductive foreplay. Overcome by the splendour of my *samadhi*, some of them vanished immediately; some I reduced to petty frauds by insight into all appearances as illusion; by means of the Bodhisattva's meditation that produces revulsion, I transformed some into black corpses, some into bent and frail geriatrics, some into lepers, some into blind, deformed, dumb or ugly creatures, and without exception they all vanished.

Then these malicious gods and demons demonstrated their violent devices. The earth moved beneath me, shaking and quaking, emitting an empty roar louder than the bellow of a thousand dragons, with the intolerable banging of black lightning, the roaring of white lightning, the swishing of red lightning, the knocking of yellow lightning, the baying of blue lightning, the shimmering of iridescent lightning, and the blazing of the light of the sky. Likewise, I was threatened by a terrific display of weapons, various knives, sharp-pointed daggers and spears, all glistening steel-blue, bristling menacingly, jostling for space. I dissolved these apparitions with my *samadhi* of divine assurance.

Another day I was besieged by phantom herds of ferocious beasts. Tigers, leopards, bears, yetis and other carnivores appeared,

roaring above and outside the cave entrance. From my right and left, animals attacked from every direction, howling in their various styles, their mouths gaping ravenously, snarling in rage, beating their tails, their paws scratching at me, shaking their bodies, hackles risen, hair bristling. From the assurance I had gained from abandoning attachment to my body and love of myself, arose compassion for all these beasts, and they vanished. Then, leaving me with no respite, a vast arm of billions of different insects and worms led by spiders, scorpions and snakes inundated the area. Some slipped through my sensory doors, some bit me, some stung me, some scratched me, some climbed over me, some jumped on me, some fought each other, ate each other and left piles of carcasses scattered about. There was no trick that these insects failed to use to frighten me. I shuddered a little, yet I found pity in my heart, but the insects became increasingly terrifying and loathsome. ‘Since I have often vowed that I will in no way be attached to any form of body, speech or mind,’ I thought to myself, ‘why should I now be afraid of such illusory tricks of spirits, the activity of sentient beings – insects – that is karmic manifestation? Because all behavior is determined by positive or negative concepts, I should understand that whatever occurs, good or bad, is a mental construct, and so keep a level head.’ ... I [then] entered the samadhi of universal identity in which there is no discrimination of evaluation, and the apparitions vanished.

Again a variety of shapes and forms appeared. Many limbs without bodies hung in space before me. Many exceedingly repulsive forms flashed in and out of my vision, writhing around in spectral configurations in space. An enormous head without a body, its upper jaw lost in the clouds and its lower jaw resting on the ground with its tongue lolling in between, its fangs gleaming white, appeared closer and closer. Other violent forms also appeared: within a castle the size of a mustard seed many men struggled and fought, fires blazed, floods poured forth, landslides hurtled down, trees fell, gales blew, etc., but always I would sit unmoving in *vajra-like samadhi*, and the forms would vanish.

‘We are the legions of gods and demons, Khatra and Kangtra, come hither from the southern lands lying between E in Nepal and Ja in Bhutan,’ pronounced a voice, and these demons proceeded to threaten me with various sounds. Some wept, some raged, some wailed and some roared. Then thunderbolts fell from above, fire blazed up from below, and in between rivers flowed backwards. Blizzards of various weapons swirled about me. In this manner they strove to obstruct my meditation. ...

Not long after, led by devils, local demons and *nagas*, all the gods and demons who had previously threatened me with their illusions came to offer their lives to me. The devils, local demons and *nagas* in particular, vowed to protect my *dharmā*.⁶³

In the Taoist story of the ten trials of the sage Lu Dongbin (similar to the Twelve great tests of Naropa or Twelve Labors of Hercules), which refers to the time period prior to his enlightenment, at one time he was alone reading a book in his room when (like Yeshe Tsogyel) countless ghosts, demons and monsters suddenly came from every corner of the world to attack and slay him.

Lu Dongbin was not the slightest bit fearful but kept on doing his chores without paying them any attention, ignoring them entirely. One of the monsters yelled that Lu Dongbin had wronged him in a past life and now needed to sacrifice his life. Without any fear Lu said, “Go ahead and take my life since I took yours in a past life. This is fair.” All of a sudden Lu heard the clapping of hands, a shout in the air, and then the sky turned blue and all the ghosts and devils vanished. Standing there was his master Han Zhongli who had been looking and laughing at him while all these events were happening.

The Christian Saint Padre Pio of Pietrelcina, when going through the twelve-year period of transformation leading to enlightenment, would also commonly see apparitions of demons and devils coming to attack him. Padre Augustino reported that Padre Pio said the Devil appeared to him under many different forms: “The Devil appeared as young girls that danced naked, as a crucifix, as a young friend of the monks, as the Spiritual Father or as the Provincial Father; as Pope Pius X, a Guardian Angel, as St. Francis and as Our Lady.”

Padre Pio said that the Devil also appeared in many other horrible forms too with an army of infernal spirits or without any apparition. Furthermore, Padre Pio was often troubled with deafening noises. Nevertheless he passed through these experiences and later in life he demonstrated many miracles and superpowers. He had become capable of developing these abilities because he had gone through all the difficulties of generating a subtle deva body and then higher attainments.

The mystics St. John Vianney, St. Teresa of Avila, Venerable Anne Catherine Emmerich, St. Joseph of Copertino, St. Paul of the Cross, and St. Dominic are just some of the few Christian saints who also experienced such visions. Proof that they successfully completed their period of purification that generated the deva body, if they really did go through it,

⁶³ *Sky Dancer*, Keith Dowman, (Snow Lion Publications, Ithaca: NY, 1996), pp. 77-84.

includes the fact that they could later demonstrate various superpowers such as the ability to read minds, control the elements, heal the sick, or know the future. These powers all become possible after one attains the subtle, Causal or Supra-Causal bodies. In fact, the only reason these individuals became saints was because they went through this troublesome process that occurs when your real kundalini finally awakens and a twelve-year period commences that finally produces the deva body.

One of the most famous Christian saints who also demonstrated miraculous abilities (just like other well-recognized Hindu, Buddhist, Taoist, Sufi and Jewish masters), and who also suffered from such visions, was St. Anthony the Great. According to Athanasius's *Life of Saint Antony*, written in 357, when St. Anthony the Great was a simple monk cultivating in the desert he also he underwent great trials "caused by the devil," who afflicted him with phantom images of naked women that he overcame by the power of prayer. As with Yeshe Tsogyel, later phantoms (visions) appeared in the form of all kinds of monstrous beasts and hideous reptiles including lions, bears, leopards, bulls, wolves, asps, and scorpions that seemed as if they were about to attack him or cut him into pieces.

St. Athanasius wrote: "The demons made such a racket that the whole place was shaken, knocking over the four walls of the tomb; they came in droves, taking the form of all kinds of monstrous beasts and hideous reptiles. And the whole place was filled with lions, bears, leopards, bulls, wolves, asps, scorpions. The lions roared, ready to attack; bulls seemed to threaten him with their horns; snakes advanced, crawling on the ground, seeking a place of attack, and wolves prowled around him. They all were making a terrible noise. Groaning in pain, St. Anthony faced the demons, laughing: 'If you had any power, only one of you would be enough to kill me; but the Lord has taken away your strength, so you want to frighten me by your number. The proof of your powerlessness is that you are reduced to taking the form of senseless animals. If you have any power against me, come on, attack me! But if you cannot do anything, why torment yourselves unnecessarily? My faith in God is my defense against you.' Hearing this they left him in peace.

Later in life St. Anthony also demonstrated many miracles due to his superpowers because he had undergone the twelve years of Qi and Qi channel purification transformations necessary to create the subtle body, Causal body and higher. This story proves he went through the process.

Switching to ancient Greece, in Plato's *Apology* Socrates claimed to have a *daimonion* (divine spirit) that frequently warned him - in the form of a "voice" - against mistakes, but never told him what to do. In other words, he heard voices in his head. Until today, no one has ever been able to interpret this correctly saying whether this was a psychotic tendency, the result of disease or an artful story.

Turning to China, in the Chinese story *Journey to the West*, the protagonist monkey Sun Wukong meets his match when he encounters a Six Eared Macaque monkey, who disguises himself as Sun Wukong, knocks the monk Tang Sanzang unconscious (takes over the I-thought center within the brain stem) and steals his baggage. He fights with the real Sun Wukong and neither of them is able to overcome the other. No one is able to differentiate between the real and the fake Sun Wukong until the two appear before the Buddha.

These stories do not seem at all connected, but they are all related to the spiritual path of cultivation. Here is the meaning of these tales.

If you are meditating well and your Qi channels are opening, this is always accomplished through the help of spiritual beings which various schools call heavenly devas, *dakinis*, angels and so on. When a good person dies they become just this – a deva or angel, namely a being made of Qi rather than physical flesh and blood. However, the Qi of an ordinary person who dies is weaker than that of a cultivation practitioner who dies, or a cultivator who succeeds in attaining the subtle body. Devas also include the students of masters who achieved the subtle body, which is the Buddhist stage of at least a *Srotapanna* (Stream Enterer). Devas are people like you and me who attain the subtle body, also known as the *yin shen*, impure illusory body, deity body or deva body. The term Buddha or Bodhisattva refers to attainees of the Supra-Causal body and higher.

After the real kundalini arises, you will normally go through twelve years of hellish experiences where your Qi and Qi channels of your subtle body are being purified. This is when you will usually experience all sorts of delusive visions, like those just recounted, until you finally attain the deva body or *yin shen* body made of Qi, which is the foundational stage for attaining the final *sambhogakaya* of Buddhism. In order to attain the next higher body on the spiritual trail, which is the Causal body, devas themselves (who have bodies made of Qi) need merit and the way they obtain that merit is by doing the hard work of helping you open up your Qi channels under the direction of their teacher. They usually give you *mara* delusions during the process, and all sorts of other troubles, simply because they want to test out their powers. No one gets twelve years of work for free.

When people are at the foundational stage of having their Qi channels start to open, masters and devas will therefore typically cause you to experience all sorts of visions as well as thoughts and emotions to affect your Yin Qi and Yang Qi. If they want your Yin Qi to arise they will frighten you through *mara* visions (illusions) of ghosts and evil things so that you are frightened into believing you are haunted or being attacked by demons. Naturally these appear as real experiences to the practitioner, but they are actually just fictitious illusions – *mara* delusions. This explains why

these saints and sages all went through these frightening experiences. They were not *real* attacks by devils and demons but just illusions projected into their brains by devas practicing their skills.

If they want your Yang Qi to arise then the devas will provoke you with different visions such as of naked women to draw forth sexual desire. Anger is another emotion evoked so that your Yang Qi will arise. They might also cause other Yang stirring emotions to arise such as feelings of pride, courage, over-confidence or superiority. Along these lines, Shakyamuni Buddha explained that a practitioner might be manipulated into becoming “swollen with a sense of pride, wrongly convinced they have become equal with Vairocana Tathagata.” Self-satisfaction might be provoked along with feelings of superiority.

All throughout these stimulated emotions and visions the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are actually controlling your emotions. The thoughts you think are your own are not your own at all but are caused to arise for a purpose whose reasons you will never be able to fathom. The devas will never tell you what is going on or why but will always mislead you. That is the rule: they will always mislead you with lies and misdirection. The name “trickster” applies as a definition for their behavior. They will always be laughing throughout the process, since they seek entertainment throughout this process, which is another reason cultivators mistakenly take them as devils and demons while they mentally suffer. The laughter is due to them battling one another to see whose skill level is higher in getting you to have the thoughts they want.

While doing all this work on your Qi and channels, the devas are also being taught how to give people thoughts, and so they will practice giving you particular ideas and battle with one another in contests to see who is stronger with these abilities. You have to suffer while they undertake these battles. A common battle is “speed memory read” where they test to see who can read your memories quickest (stored in neurons) and then make connections.

A particularly popular battle is when two masters, each with several bodies, battle to see who is better at controlling all their bodies. Using their subtle bodies they will battle to see who wins at giving you a particular thought while with their Causal (Mental) bodies they will battle to give you a different thought and with other bodies they will battle to see who can win over the other in giving you thoughts and emotions. This is all done simultaneously to see who has better control over all their bodies. Since at the level of the Supra-Causal body they can emanate lighter etheric versions of this body, called *nirmanakaya*, they also project these from far away distances on the spur of the moment and battle with thee emanation bodies too in order to see who has better abilities. As you can surmise, the major way in which Buddhas help people is simply by giving them thoughts and

ideas. Sometimes this is the only way to help improve circumstances.

A common demonstration is by great masters who have a subtle body, Causal body, Supra-Causal body and others and can use them all independently with skill to both control your thoughts and those of the audience. Sometimes you will receive multiple levels of thoughts which are due to a master using three of his independent bodies to give you three separate types of thoughts or knowledge simultaneously. While it may seem like the thoughts are coming from different devas, they are all coming from just one individual even though they seem entirely independent and unlinked to one another. Since a master will develop many bodies, they must learn how to use them independently and often demonstrate this skill to the devas using you as the demonstration tool.

A higher body can override the thoughts of a lower body, which is why it is said that a master at a higher stage of attainment can “take away,” meaning block or suppress, the superpowers of someone at a lower stage of attainment. This is because all such powers are due to thinking which can be overridden through a higher level body or stage of attainment.

You are the guinea pig for contests and testing because later, as a superior level deva yourself (since you went through this process of cultivation), you will be using similar skills within the minds of people to help them. They will also do the same for emotions. All of these battles involve the brain stem, which is the seat of intentional thinking in the brain, as well as other special brain areas. The brain stem (termed the muddy pellet in Chinese cultivation), is divided into two parts, one Yin and Yang, and you are supposed to cultivate the Qi going through it on the spiritual path.

Furthermore, having access to every memory you ever had because they are all stored in your brain’s neurons, the devas will have contests to see who can find information quickest within your neurons, and then they read it back out loud. They will also pull forth into present consciousness every “sin,” wrongdoing, crime, mistake or embarrassment you ever performed in the past to yourself or others, no matter how small, and try to evoke those emotions while their teacher tries to block them. They may bit by bit work at making you hate your teacher. Sometimes they will lead your thoughts into some crazy “mission impossible” scenario so they can watch your mental processes at work as you try to mentally ponder some sort of solution to the impossible. Shakyamuni Buddha called this “indulging in unremitting deep reflection (analysis).”

Usually what devas do is just pull information from whatever is already stored in the brain’s neuronal memories to create dialogue, especially things you have forgotten. Enlightened masters aren’t restricted to this during the rules of training because Buddhas commonly give you entirely new thoughts that have nothing to do with whatever you have in your

memories. Since devas practice visualization skills, they will also typically practice giving you visions and auditory experiences, both good and bad. At a higher stage they will practice giving you dreams. Because they have little concern for you and just want to test their skills against each other in battles, a future master going through the twelve-year period of transformation goes through hell. Later they don't want to frighten people about what they went through so no one ever talks about all these experiences. They don't want to scare away adherents from the spiritual path but this is what you have to go through in this world to generate the subtle body.

In this light, and in conjunction with the subsequent chapter on *mara* spiritual delusions from the *Surangama Sutra* that explains these teachings, and which follows, some of these cited stories can be easily explained. I hope that practitioners passing through these experiences, and the previous ones mentioned in chapters four and five, can view them in this light so as not to cause harm to themselves or fall victim to the belief they are losing their sanity.

There are two categories of practitioners who experience these things. The first belong to future spiritual masters who will undergo at least twelve years of such things. The future masters will, at the minimum, develop a *yin shen*, deva body, astral body or subtle body called the initial fruit of the spiritual path during these twelve years, and perhaps higher bodies depending upon how hard they keep working during this time. The second are regular people who will only occasionally undergo just minor experiences along these lines, and those already mentioned, but who cannot explain them. These people don't have to worry about the trials and tribulations that future masters normally go through because it only happens if you go through a true kundalini awakening, which is rare.

How do we know it takes twelve years to complete the set of Qi and Qi channel transformations (kundalini awakening) necessary for building the foundation of the *sambhogakaya*?

Ramana Maharshi said, "The sastras say one must serve a guru twelve years for enlightenment." Sai Baba of Shirdi also said, "I stayed with my master for twelve years." The sage Matsyendranath, the traditional founder of Hatha Yoga, is said to have cultivated within a fish's belly and then emerged after twelve years of practice. Mahavira, the founder of Jainism, meditated as an ascetic for twelve years and then attained enlightenment. Upakoshala, practicing *bramacharya*, tended his teacher's sacred fires for twelve years. Vardhamana Mahavira, the 24th Tirthankara who founded Jainism, undertook ascetic practices for twelve years before becoming enlightened. Shivabalayogi attained self-realization after twelve years of arduous cultivation practice. Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj did vigorous cultivation work for twelve years in order to attain enlightenment.

Ramakrishna spent twelve years in practice and Asanga spent twelve years meditating in his cave. Elder Ephraim of Philotheou Monastery on Mount Athos, spiritual guide of several monasteries on Mount Athos and Greece and founder of several in the United States, was in obedience to Elder John the Hesychast for twelve years. The Vajrayana master Naropa is said to have endured twelve hardships in order to meet his teacher Tilopa. Many more accounts of the twelve-year period are found in my book *Nyasa Yoga*.

In *The Truth Is*, the Hindu sage Papaji explained, “Kundalini is lying dormant in everybody in the muladhara chakra of the astral body which is in the heart of the physical body. This energy is sleeping and you give rise to it by concentrating on different chakras one after the other. ... focusing on the chakras will cause the energy to start traveling upward through all the chakras. Finally, it reaches the top and then you will feel that you are not the body, but that you are out of the body. This is a difficult process and takes at least twelve years in a quiet place with a good teacher.”⁶⁴

Now for some other explanations. In Muktananda’s explanation of tandra, what you are seeing are samples of the fake visions normally given to people by devas. His synopsis of these visions, which are only indicative of what is possible, is essentially the same as the first ten delusional meditation states mentioned in the *Surangama Sutra*, which follows. As previously stated, if you think you see inside your body or inside other people’s body, this type of false vision is one of many types already mentioned in the *Surangama Sutra*.

In Ramakrishna’s case, most of the glorious visions were due to various masters practicing their visualization skills because he was a high stage master reborn, so he had less of the negative Yin Qi visions. This is also due to the fact that he had already used other methods to extensively cultivate his Yin Qi, such as dressing as a woman and identifying with female deities, and therefore didn’t need as many fearful Yin Qi provoking visions to arise. Many of his vision types are also explained in the *Surangama Sutra*.

In the case of Napoleon Hill, who was performing visualization practice (see my book *Visualization Power* for instructions), some devas caught on that he was doing this and started playing around with his visualizations to test their powers. As tricksters, they always have fun with people, cheating them in various ways, when they do this. Hill’s cultivation had finally reached a sufficient stage where a spiritual master and his students had started working on his Qi channels, and they took the opportunity to practice their own mental skills by possession of his thoughts at those moments.

⁶⁴ *The Truth Is*, H. W. L. Poonja, (Weiser Books, York Beach: Maine, 2000), p. 447.

Devas will set up the delusion of an entire world of fake gods and goddesses in our brain for their own amusement, in order to sharpen their skills, as they work on opening someone's Qi channels, but in this case they simply hijacked the daily visualization that Hill was already employing. With a sense of humor, because they are always laughing with joy, they basically hijacked the mental training he was using. Then they started causing trouble.

Basically, at times enlightened masters will create an entirely fictitious, false, make-believe world of gods, goddesses *or other circumstances* to teach deva students how they can slowly control someone's mind to do whatever they want. Such an event, called a "miar" (rhyming with liar), is not something you can break free of just as it is difficult to break free of astrological influences. It is like a gigantic hallucination where all your thoughts make sense, but the story you cumulatively build out of these thoughts is preposterous. In other words, it is like a bog of lies you cannot escape. During a miar you can be made to believe in almost anything. The only thing you can do is wait until it is over, never acting in the real world against common sense and never being taken in by the miar.

The *Surangama Sutra's* section of *mara* delusional states pertaining to the conception skandha (which are the thirty-first to fortieth delusions) gives a small idea of the type of mental projections that are possible. Another story within Buddhism tells of an *asura* king who vowed to kill many people, and so to prevent this fifty Arhats got together and with their "dhyana powers" made this powerful king afraid even of his own shadow. This too was an example of a miar, or the ability of enlightened beings to shape someone's thoughts to what they want.

Of course, it is nearly impossible to resist a miar as the imaginative scenario built up is entirely fictitious but "owns you," for when it occurs it is like you are possessed. You are stuck in the mud of a pile of delusions. Once within a miar your reasoning will be subverted and you won't be able to think clearly. Your thoughts will be twisted this way and that. During a miar you can therefore be brought to think anything.

For instance, when you read the Biblical story of Abraham almost sacrificing his son on an altar, this unreasonable act of almost insanity was no doubt one of the initial miars that Abraham (who certainly achieved enlightenment otherwise he would not have become the Father of the Jewish tradition) went through at the start of the twelve-year period of kundalini transformations. Who was the one who told him to sacrifice his son and why would he actually believe he should do this? Would you believe a human stranger who told you to do so? Only someone in a miar, thinking he is dealing with angels or some other type of higher beings, would believe such a thing.

At the commencement of the kundalini awakening, at least during the

first one hundred days, the miars you go through are severe and follow the exact type of pattern that Abraham went through with his son. The overlap of descriptions is unmistakable. In particular, you have to be brought to emotionally extreme states of fear and also sexual desire in order to raise your Yin Qi and Yang Qi at the appropriate times so that certain Qi channels can be worked on to help open them fully.

The temptations of Buddha and Jesus were also stories representative of these types of experiences. While the Buddhist and Christian stories suggest that Buddha's testing and Jesus' temptation happened in one day, the stories were actually just shortened representatives of what goes on during this twelve-year period.

Only by sticking to the standard societal rules of behavior can you avoid ruin during the onslaught of a miar, which is why typically only monks and nuns or sadhus are usually put through this since they have little or nothing to lose when they act incorrectly because of its influence. Most of the people who go through this become the enlightened saints, sages and religious greats of their traditions, but few want to talk about it so as not to frighten you.

The miar is one reason why Hindu tantric practitioners are told never to undertake various strange mantra and ceremonial sadhanas without a master's permission. Such sadhanas, hundreds or thousands of years old, are each administered (you might say owned or protected) by a spiritual master who will use that opportunity to teach his deva students how to do certain things, which will upset the aspirant's mind. Chaos usually results because few people can handle the onslaught of devas playing with their conscious thoughts. It is not that the aspirant is in some way impure that he cannot resist the attack. It is just that the devas have no discipline or restraint, and so are said to "consume" the practitioner with their excesses of thought-play. They don't usually practice their mental skills on ordinary people, so someone undertaking the sadhana represents a rare opportunity to learn skills they desire for affecting people's minds. As Shakyamuni Buddha explains in the *Surangama Sutra*, they will often torment a practitioner with visions causing him to do wrong and after hurting him, simply laugh and leave.

In the story of Yeshe Tsogyel, she reported many visions of being attacked by demons, which were entirely fictitious illusions created by the enlightened masters of her tradition and devas meant to scare her to affect her Yin Qi. This is the exact same thing that happened to the Christian saints. Whenever you become scared your Yin Qi arises, which then becomes a chance to open up your Yin Qi channels. Later Yeshe Tsogyel was shown visions of attractive men in order to prompt her sexual desire, which was meant to raise her Yang Qi so that the Qi could be used to help open up her Yang Qi channels. In the case of the Christian monks, they

were shown visions of beautiful naked women.

In the stories of Lu Dong Bin, Padre Pio and St. Anthony of the Desert, the same pattern follows that scary visions were used by angelic devas in order to frighten the practitioners so that their Yin Qi might arise. That is the only way to open up Yin Qi channels unless you have undertaken various severe Yin Qi exercises, such as those specified in *Nyasa Yoga*. Even if you do those exercises you will still have to go through this type of experience, but always understand that the visions are fake illusions projected into your brain by spiritual beings in order to help you transform your Qi and channels, and teach devas how to also do this and similar things.

As to Socrates hearing voices, this was the case of a deva or devas talking to him; Socrates was not being entirely honest when he said that the deva(s) would only tell him certain things and not others. This was basically a lie he created to let other adherents later know that he had passed through this stage. When going through this process you will always have devas talking to you and pretending they are personages or spiritual beings they are not. They revel in cheating people and practicing deception. Some will try to frighten you and others will pretend to be your friend until you finally attain the deva body that escapes the physical shell. With that new body your Qi will have many powers available, and you will be able to use it to open up other people's Qi channels too. The subtle deva body is the foundational start of the purified *sambhogakaya* attainment.

Devas are mischief makers throughout all parts of this process of Qi channel transformation, so always the information they provide is undependable, inaccurate and to be ignored. Like the CIA offering disinformation packaged together with good information, they can suck you into believing falsities because they must create games for themselves to keep themselves going through twelve years of work required for transforming your Qi channels. Often they go too far in creating visions that attack people, which makes some people break down or want to commit suicide. On the other hand, they will also control your thoughts through the process so that you don't do this, but mistakes happen.

Because of the dangers of attempted suicide, at the start of the period the masters overseeing the process will first mentally check how you might commit suicide if you were so disposed, and set up mental tripwires that would notify them if you ever considered hurting yourself as this can happen if the devas go too far. The torture and abuse you will go through during this period is so severe that almost everyone thinks of committing suicide. Sometimes it even occurs. Devas, even though angels, have absolutely no discipline or self-restraint going throughout this process of working on your channels because they don't get hurt themselves for every crazy idea they give you, and they can easily leave if things go wrong. The

method involves them giving you crazy thoughts while the teacher obstructs their power, and this type of system encourages abuse of the human being, which is why few master ever explain what went on during the Twelve Year period or it would dissuade people from the cultivation path. The Stanford prison experiment, which shows that people with power tend to abuse others, is an apt description of the behavior of devas throughout this process. The Stanley Milgram experiment also comes to mind.

At times during this transformation process you will have thoughts where the actual thinker is not you, but just seems to be you. This was represented in the story of the Monkey King and the competing Six Eared Macaque monkey who disguised himself as Sun Wukong. The thinker is actually an enlightened master or higher stage deva who has hijacked your thinking process to alter your thoughts, replacing them with his or her own, but uses your voice internally. It is actually a type of possession because during this time the master is using his subtle Qi body or Shen body or yet higher body (sometimes *simultaneously* using his subtle body, Causal body and Supra-Causal bodies, etc.) to control your thinking as well as move your own. This is the only way to transform your channels.

Therefore the voice you use in your head when thinking still appears to be you, but the thoughts are not really yours although it sounds like it is you. You cannot distinguish between you and the actual talker/thinker spiritual being who is masquerading as you, but you will now seem to be able to flip all arguments to their opposite when dealing with devas and your intelligence and wittiness will seem to have increased tremendously. These are explanations I am adding to those given by Shakyamuni Buddha in the *Surangama Sutra*.

The purpose behind all this is that it takes a period of many years and the committed help of thousands of devas to continuously work at transforming your Qi and channels. You have to have tremendous merit to deserve this work, and so religious texts say you will be tested. Normally future masters go into retreat during this long stretch of time so that they can undergo these body transformations in private without much disturbance or bother from the public. Many Christian saints would lock themselves in their cells for years during this time.

During this period, the devas helping you also use you as the vehicle for being taught how to enter someone's brain and control their thoughts because this is how devas – at their level of spiritual attainment - can intervene in human affairs to help people solve problems. Buddhas and Bodhisattvas can use even higher methods. If the devas didn't get anything in turn from working on you, then no one would bother working so hard and so long on purifying your channels. In the universe it seems that no one does work for free except for parents, yet they, too, expect to be taken care of by their children when they become old.

When you mantra for help in unfortunate situations, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas will try to affect people's thoughts in helpful ways if the karma allows, and they teach devas how to do this (according to their stage of abilities) during your twelve years of transformation. Buddhas and Bodhisattvas also help people change their fortunes by giving them thoughts that lead to actions that avoid errors. All angels (devas) are trained to affect the minds of human beings in similar ways to help them solve problems.

Why should you suffer through this? Because you will eventually be their colleague and have similar powers, and therefore you go through the hazing that everyone else went through. Going through it, as painful as it is, you will then be reticent to use your mind powers to harm people when you finally attain that ability due to possessing higher spiritual bodies. Everyone is tempted by superpowers, especially the power to control others, and by going through this pain you will be less inclined to inflict any harm or pain on others to achieve what you want. Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely, so by going through the process you will end up thinking twice before making unwise interventions.

As stated, this explanation of being unaware that the internal speaker is not you is symbolized by the story in *Journey to the West* where another spiritual monkey imitates Sun Wukong and no one, except an enlightened Buddha, can tell the two apart. In this case, you will not initially be able to tell apart which thoughts are yours and which actually belong to the devas, who practice doing this so that they can help change people's thoughts in cases where they are going to do wrong and should do right instead, and *where karma permits this*. When you mantra to Buddhas for help, this is how they try to help you, namely not by creating miracles but by giving you (or others) the right thoughts on how to proceed.

This explanation is also found in the "Fifty States of Delusion Afflicting Practitioners" that appears within the *Surangama Sutra*, but in a slightly camouflaged form so as not to frighten practitioners. The first thirty delusions it mentions are relevant to our meditation case studies: the first ten deal with experiences devas give you when you are cultivating your physical body (the form skandha of Jing), the next ten deal with deeper experiences related to developing the subtle body (sensation skandha of Qi), and the next thirty deal with experiences related to developing a Causal body (the conception skandha of Shen). The next ten deal with someone who attains initial enlightenment (an Arhat who attains *nirvana* with remainder by achieving the Supra-Causal body corresponding to the volition skandha), while the fifth set of ten states deals with someone about to attain complete and perfect enlightenment (a fully enlightened Buddha).

This chapter of the *Surangama Sutra* is difficult to comprehend and may require multiple readings. However, it gives a valuable non-denominational

ARHAT YOGA

outline of the types of events meditators will commonly experience on the spiritual path to enlightenment. Individuals from every religion going through this process need to read it whether you are Moslem, Christian, Jewish, Taoist, Buddhist, Hindu or a member of any other religion.

Here is the relevant chapter from the *Surangama Sutra*, “The 50 Delusive Mara States Afflicting Practitioners as They Make Meditation Progress,” with edited commentary from my book *What is Enlightenment?*

CHAPTER 8: TRANSFORMING YOUR BEHAVIOR FOR THE BETTER

One of the basic requirements for success on the spiritual path is giving up unethical thoughts, negative predispositions and unwholesome behavior and instead cultivating virtuous, ethical thinking, speech and behavior in their place. This is the foundational stage of spiritual practice, which is found in every religion. It is basically a process of transformation and growth where you attempt to rid yourself of corrupting influences and devote yourself to righteous living.

The ideal is to purify the self and to “become more perfect.” This objective is worded differently in various religions such as the injunction to stay away from evil ways, give up bad deeds and immorality, cultivate virtue, become pure of heart and purify the passions, follow the road of discipline, purify your mind and behavior, and so on. Essentially, however, this is the path of spirituality, which is a road of better conduct.

One school within Chinese Taoism advises that to attain the Tao of full enlightenment, whose initial fruit is the deva body attainment whilst alive, not only must an individual cultivate virtuous ways but they must also perform 3,000 great good deeds (saving a life is considered one great good deed) and 1,000 minor good deeds. Another school of Taoism insists that spiritual aspirants cultivate 800 virtuous deeds and more than 3,000 “hidden virtues,” which also means a lot of good deeds that you don’t announce to the world.

Christianity simply says that to win the reward of life in Heaven you need to be a good person who also actively participates in performing good works, which means practicing virtuous ways and doing good deeds. Yet other religions, such as Sikhism, say that we have to act in tune with God’s

will, which means acting virtuous intent. Most religions put a strong emphasis on helping others such as Islam's injunction to help the poor and unfortunate, especially orphans, widows, the sick, and poor. In general, you are to help the dispossessed and anyone suffering. This emphasis on helping those in need is universal amongst the world's religions and is the basis of the spiritual path. The foundational stage of the spiritual path is thus often called Virtue and Merit Provisioning.

If you are not a virtuous, ethical person then despite all your cultivation work no one will sponsor you, or even agree to help work on purifying your Qi with others for the Twelve Years of required daily work needed to purify and transform your channels to produce your deva body. This period of daily Qi rotations is entered into after a long stage of preparatory work, and is necessary so that your deva body, which is normally released upon death, can detach itself from the matrix of your physical body to become an independent spiritual body while you are alive.

No one will help you attain this body, which will give you some minor powers over others, unless you are a virtuous person with self-control, wisdom and compassion. Participating in religious rituals and adherence to imagined concepts of pollution and purity is not essential for the spiritual path, but good behavior is. If you did not train yourself in being unselfish, thinking about others' welfare and devoting yourself to help others then no one will help you attain the higher spiritual bodies which will ultimately give you the possibility to control the consciousness and behavior of other beings, including both animals and people.

So how do you go about cultivating ethics, virtue, values, character, altruism, compassion, kindness, and goodness since this is the basic requirement for the spiritual path? These traits are how you are supposed to "be" as a human being. These traits constitute expected good behavior. From the time you are young you are socialized into adopting the ways of propriety and consummate conduct, which are socially defined, and taught to you by your family, friends, society and environment so that they become deeply incorporated into your life. You are to make these virtues an essential part of your life, and you are to engineer these virtues as your *default mental state*. Religious institutions such as monasteries, ashrams, churches, synagogues, mosques, gurdwaras and so forth are meant to lead people by stages to higher moral thinking and virtuous behavior in order to enable them to transform their *gunas* (qualities, properties, conditionings, habits, etc.), and finally attain liberation that transcends the human *gunas*. You must transform your mental tendencies to become a better human being, and you must transform those tendencies in order to be qualified for the deva body attainment.

Of course, you are supposed to train in life to develop skills so that you can accomplish other goals as well. You want to become able to climb the

hierarchies of competency that give you a good livelihood and produce wealth and material security, loving relationships (of family and friends), health and peace of mind, social acceptance and approval, etcetera. Many people in life make it their number one objective to pursue the skills that allow them to climb various dominance hierarchies. Others simply want to learn skills or seek experiences in fields such as medicine, athletics, money-making, the arts and so forth.

You might alternatively say that we are meant to pursue the four aims of life that are the four aspects of *Purusartha* outlined in Hinduism. The four aspects of *Purusartha* that people pursue are: *Artha* (“means of life”) which means material prosperity, worldly success, income security and activities or resources that enable you to be in a comfortable state and environment; *Kama* which means the aesthetic enjoyment of life (pleasure, sensuality, emotional fulfillment) including sensual pleasures; *Dharma* which means living a virtuous, proper, righteous, ethical, moral life of consummate, irreproachable conduct; and *Moksha* which means pursuing spiritual liberation, enlightenment, self-actualization and release from the cycle of births and deaths.

Forget the high ideals of “spirituality” for an instant to face the facts. You need to train your consciousness so that you develop the personality, character, mindset, wisdom, skills and aspirations to be able to experience good social interactions and high-quality friendships in life, financial independence or simply economic sufficiency, a high level of health and energy, material abundance/prosperity, peace of mind, strong loving relationships, and feelings of personal fulfillment and self-esteem. You want to have worthy goals and ideals for your life’s efforts. This is what life is about. This is what everyone is seeking, and we usually lump this together and simply call it happiness. Whether or not you achieve the subtle body attainment during life you will still be pursuing these other goals. Therefore, you should learn the optimal means of pursuit, the best means for attaining these objectives, and the optimal conduct in life to experience these things.

For life you must master the survival skills, which entail the ability to earn a livelihood without being a burden on others. Life entails suffering, so you cannot avoid suffering and adversity. Your life will be full of vexations arising from phenomena. Therefore we must all learn strategies for mastering pain, suffering and challenges by learning how to put our body and mind in a good place where they won’t defeat us.

This is why I think it is important to explore difficult tasks in life especially when young because that is a time when you are constantly testing yourself to learn your limits. The challenge of constantly having to learn new skills keeps people both young and humble. The consequences to always seeking comfort, on the other hand, are that you become complacent, stop learning or risking, and have trouble handling adversity.

The benefit of frequently having to push through problems, obstacles and difficulties is that you learn how to overcome adversities in life. Facing adversity causes people to grow stronger. When you are forced to handle intense situations you learn coping skills that lessen the stresses of life. Through necessity you don't just learn how to solve problems but often learn how to make lemons into lemonade too.

Whether a monk, nun, sadhu, yogi, recluse, monastic, anchorite, ascetic and so forth, no matter how much you are supposed to give up and endure through asceticism you still need to train in the ordinary ways of life just as you will strive to train in the highest ideals of selflessness, altruistic service, virtue and morality. As a monastic, for instance, should you not still pursue good social interactions with others and high-quality friendships, loving fraternal relationships, a high level of health and energy, worthy goals and ideals, peace of mind, and feelings of personal fulfillment? Of course! As to the four aspects of *Purusartha* that rule regular living, if you don't know anything about them then how will you advise people and help them after you become enlightened? These are the objectives they are after. Who will come to you for advice if you lack mastery of these basic factors of life?

In truth, when your soul is freed from matter because you attain the first higher spiritual body (the deva body attainment or subtle body), and later the yet higher transcendental bodies, you never really "transcend" your *gunas* or *samskaras*. They are always entwined with your consciousness as a form of conditioning that rules the processes that operate your mind as it produces thinking and feeling. They are entwined with your cognitive processes. You really are run by your *gunas* and *samskaras*. They will always color your thinking, emotions and actions by biasing them in certain ways. This is why you must work on transforming them into better agencies, and this is the path of purification. They are part of the processes of your consciousness – they flavor its operating system. They are part of your automatic software of mentation that you developed due to prior conditioning, the baggage of past experience. Spiritual cultivation means working on transforming *this* – the conditioning or imprinting within your neural operations that produces automatic reflexes, perspectives and ways of doing things.

You therefore have to train yourself to think, feel, move, aspire and behave in certain ways that will bring out the "best you" that there possibly is. You must work on perfecting yourself. In regular life we call being a certain way your "character." You always want to be improving not just your skills in life, but *your character* by working to rectify your insufficiencies, developing your good points, and pushing yourself to transcend your lower self.

This is the right way to *be* in the world, which is continually following a path of learning and self-improvement. It is to always be striving to learn

new skills, transcend the flaws that you have to rise above them or transform them, and to be polishing your virtues to make them ever brighter. You have to constantly die and be reborn on the road of cultivation in the sense of transcending the flaws you already have and working to become something better – a new self with fewer faults and afflictions that is heading toward a more perfect ultimate aim, ideal, objective or aspiration in life.

The work on self-correction and self-perfection is a task of regeneration. It is a process of creating yourself to be the way you want – self-creation. You want to bring yourself into alignment with a higher ideal, and this involves incrementally improving yourself by correcting yourself in various ways that involve ennobling a lot of current things that are good or just okay and dispensing with a lot of crap. It involves learning new things too. You must transcend your current personality and passions to act in a higher fashion, and thus the target is to become reborn in the image of a much higher you.

What are the various aspects of this task? You want to improve your character, or “properties”, by adopting certain virtues and values while discarding vices, and in such way ennoble your personality and shape your identity into something more profound. You want to get rid of its coarseness and polish it so that it shines. You want to get rid of errant mental tendencies and afflictions, as well as false perspectives and wrong ways of thinking, and this is “purifying your mind.” You want to develop certain skills and abilities, such as sports or medicine or even hobbies, for talent can be learned. You want to experience certain things in life such as the benefits of *Artha* and *Kama*. It is okay to chase certain experience in life as long as you follow the principles of moderation, control, discipline and balance. You also want to elevate your conduct to consummate, noble behavior that is appropriate for all situations as well as wise, skillful, compassionate/kind and effective. You want to make the world and society a better place by contributing to activities that we call charity, merit-making or offerings. You want to find for yourself a motivating higher ideal and become wed to a journey of attainment.

We have all picked up particular conditionings and ways of thinking due to our genes, parental training, education, environment, culture, and so on. You are influenced or contaminated, for good or bad, by all these external forces. These influences have made us prejudiced or biased in certain ways. You therefore always look at the world through a value system that these influences have constructed within you, and it can be good or bad. We have to rise above our conditioning or previous imprinting to adopt the highest standards possible for the best way of being. We have to always be working on improving ourselves into the future.

We should say that the endless task throughout existence, the Great

Learning or Great Task of Conscious Life, is to transform our underlying mental processes (that control thinking and behavior) by uplifting them, elevating them, ennobling them, or perfecting them. In cultivation schools this is called purifying them. To do so we must undertake learning so deep that it changes the contents of the neurons in our brain that comprise our intellect and control our behavior. We have to imprint them with different contents and patterns that are much more optimal. We can word this another way by simply saying you must “perfect” your mind and behavior, which we simply collapse into the phrase that you need to learn how to “purify your mind,” “cultivate virtue,” “live righteously” and so on.

You are the collection of your thoughts, emotions, afflictions or defilements and their outcome. You are also the Knowledge or operating system that can transform them into something higher, better, and more noble. You are the Knowledge that can guide them to a higher purpose. This ruth can actually put meaning and direction in your life rather than the fact that you actually are just a mereological collection of simples and conditions without an individual intrinsic self-nature, composed through infinite dependent origination, that happens to have the miraculous capability of consciousness – flawed as it is – which produces a worldview of qualities as well as the thoughts, actions and experiences you enjoy. Wow, you can actually choose to become something different from what you presently are, and actually experience things you are not experiencing because of efforts you make through this miracle of consciousness! You can actually choose do something you want to do as a personal higher aim, aspiration, vow, pledge, meaning, direction, significance or objective for your life. You can select a direction and purpose for your existence that gives it a higher meaning and nobility.

A greater goal can give your life meaning and significance. Because a higher aspiration or vow is currently out of reach, beyond you, it will require incremental improvement to get there, which will always move your life forward. Thus, an aspiration that causes you to push for progress will cause you to improve your life and make it better. In pursuing betterment you will find greater meaning in life, and also a means to ignore some of life’s suffering.

Whenever you devote a portion of yourself to issues of importance to humanity you will normally experience feelings of significance and meaning that help you ignore suffering. When you cultivate mental detachment and don’t take yourself too seriously this also reduces suffering in life. To cultivate a more positive cheerful disposition enables also somewhat silences suffering. To improve your circumstances reduces sources of suffering so that less suffering arises over time too. By improving yourself in various ways, such as by upgrading your behavior or increasing your capacity to deal with pain or pressure, you can reduce suffering as well. By

increasing your stores of wisdom so that you avoid problems or solve problems that typically cause suffering you thereby reduce suffering. These are all valid strategies for dealing with the little bit of Hell we all experience now and then.

Let me give you an example. What causes poverty? Nothing. This is because poverty is the default state, the original starting point. The real question is, “what causes prosperity?” To move from the miserable state of poverty, the default state or starting point, to a state of prosperity requires that you must actively do something. It requires action powered by your intellect. You have to move in a certain direction. You have to take actions and change things. There is no way around this.

So then the question becomes “what goals do you want?,” and once you’ve decided upon those aspirations, you have to recognize that you are going to have to do to get there. They will not just happen without effort on your part. There is no way to avoid work, action, or effort on your part to either reduce suffering or achieve goals, so when you choose your goals then do so wisely and then create a plan and start working responsibly in that direction to manifest those aims. There is necessity in life, but your goals are where you derive meaning. You derive meaning from the goals, commitments, aspirations, aims or vows you assume for yourself, and the journey of doing things and working on yourself - improving yourself - to get there. This is a process of humble self-improvement. The journey is the living.

One thing is for sure, which is that if you increase the number of stupid decisions you make or wrong things you do because you don’t apply wisdom to situations then you will increase your suffering in life as well as decrease the amount of good you could do in the world. You need to cultivate thoughtfulness and self-control as part of your life. You must come up with actions that achieve your goals without producing all sorts of unwelcome side-effects. You need to cultivate your personality too, which affects the way you perform actions. Cultivating your character is the strategy that lets you do this.

Cultivating virtue is the essence of spirituality. It entails purifying your mind, living righteously, acting impeccably/consummately, transforming errant or unwholesome or animalistic tendencies into higher behavioral patterns, and transcending your passions and defilements. This is how we are supposed to be as human beings, so religions encourage us to be this way. As explained in *Color Me Confucius*, cultivating virtue is a process of incremental improvement that involves cultivating the mindset, intellect and regular habits/actions that naturally follow ethical, virtuous, righteous principles of being. The process encompasses both your thoughts and behavior.

This is the purpose behind the discipline of religious and spiritual

training, and cultivation. Cultivation involves increasing your self-awareness of how you are and what you are doing, and entails constantly taking small steps of self-correction so that you can pursue the route of virtuous conduct that transcends your old errant ways of behaving. It is a matter of transforming the automatic and deliberate processes of your mind so that they shine with positive, helpful intent. As a result, you will consistently and reliably express higher, nobler behaviors in your mind and actions.

Now virtue is not something necessarily fixed because the methods of exhibiting virtue should match the situation, which is the lesson of the *Lotus Sutra*. Sometimes an activity that looks wrong or harmful is actually of the highest virtue, such as when you punish children so that they don't develop bad tendencies for life. Behavior on your part that is highly virtuous might not look virtuous when you are practicing skillfulness, but it has to be viewed in terms what you are trying to accomplish and what will work. The *Lotus Sutra* teaches that sometimes you must use deception in order to help people, which is called skillful means.

For orthodox ethical teachings that veer away from deception you have the Ten Commandments of the Judeo-Christian path, the *yama* ethical precepts set forth in *Patanjali's Yoga Sutras*, and many other religious sets of dos and don'ts. Along these lines, Confucius offered a basic principle of goodness or impeccable behavior, a principle of exemplary behavior that constitutes "consummate conduct." He espoused an ethical test of reversibility: "*Don't do to others what you would not want them to do to you.*"

Other schools use the Golden Rule as their main moral guideline, which is to treat others (do *for* others) as you would want to be treated yourself, with Rabbi Hillel's additional admonition that other than this "the rest is commentary." The basic principle of not aggressing upon others or their possessions follows this basic principle. Thus we commonly find universal injunctions against stealing, lying, killing/hurting, bearing false witness, committing adultery, and many other behaviors that hurt/harm others because we wouldn't want this done to us. There are also injunctions against greediness and any type of conduct that leads to social disorder by threatening the harmony of a peaceful community. Basically, what is forbidden are any traits or behaviors that lead you to harm yourself or others. You should never harm yourself, others or the community at large.

Of course there are other proposed rules for determining virtuous behavior such as the conscience test (does this go against my conscience?), the consequences test (would this behavior create bad consequences?), the broadcasting test (what if everyone knew I did this?), the religion test (does this go against the rules of my religion?), the fairness test (is this fair to all the parties involved?), the "what if everybody did this?" test and all sorts of other tests to judge the properness of actions.

Kant said that people should think about whether the ethical rules

guiding your behavior could be accepted universally, and thus arrived at the rule of universalizability: “Act in accordance with the maxim that your actions should become universal law.” In other words, is the justification behind your behavior good enough to become a universal principle?

I personally feel that you should always act with a mindset to fully transcend your animal nature with as much wisdom and compassion as possible, and conduct yourself through actions that take into account the current, short-term, intermediate and long-term consequences. On the other hand, Nicholas Chamfort (*Products of the Perfected Civilization*) said, “Enjoy and give pleasure, without doing harm to yourself or to anyone else – that I think, is the whole of morality.”

We also have the guiding rule of John Wesley, which is to “Do all the good you can, in all the ways you can, in every place you can, at all the times you can, with all the zeal you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can.” Buddhism espouses, “Do everything good you can do, cut off any evil when you encounter it, don’t block any unborn good from being born, but never let unmanifest evil to be born.”

Whatever the foundational rule we apply as our test of behavioral propriety, we can remember the quote of Master Zeng who said, “Confucius’s Way lies in exerting all of one’s effort and relating to the needs of others (which means helping them). That is all.” In other words, your actions in the world should be geared toward helping others (fulfilling their needs). They should not be devoted to hurting or harming others.

In order to prevent yourself from doing wrong to others you have to watch your mind and behavior. What technology empowers you with this ability? You must constantly watch your thoughts, emotions, intentions and outward actions to *police* them, which is called applying mindfulness, awareness, watchfulness or introspection to your mind and behavior. This is how you inhibit inappropriate behavior to cultivate propriety. This is what restrains the impulsive self, and wisdom-derived behavior raises you to the transcendental self. Basically, watching your thoughts helps you live a righteous life and wiser decision-making or thought processes produce much better behavior.

One type of cultivation is to work deeply on transforming/purifying your seeds of behavior (your standard ways of thinking or default intellectual processes that you developed through prior experiences and conditioning) so that improper impulses and desires never arise. The other practice is to cultivate awareness, detachment and skillfulness so that when they do arise they are eliminated, restrained, controlled, managed, ignored or transformed into something else.

Thinking gives you a pathway/ability for guiding your actions to create better states of being, and it is especially the activity of cultivating awareness which gives you the opportunity to use *real thinking* instead of simply

defaulting to mechanical, automatic, robotic habits of behavior. Cultivating awareness of what you are doing, sort of as a third person observer who steps out of your mind-stream and surveys the situation at hand from an detached outsider's perspective, allows you to abide in *a state of presence and perform proper behavior that is detached from blind entrainment with your thoughts*. You don't want to be inextricably caught up with the momentum of your mind-stream and lose an accurate perspective of what you are actually doing. Cultivating awareness is cultivating the necessary detachment for acting correctly, and so it is taught as mindfulness, awakesness or presence in various religions.

Buddhism excels at teaching mindfulness, but mindfulness as a practice for purifying your mind and regulating/guiding your behavior is also emphasized in Christianity, Confucianism, Greek Stoicism, Jainism, Sufism, Sikhism, Hinduism, and many other religions. It is a universal practice because using it clarifies your mind – helps it become more clear. A clear mind leads to better behavior, and better behavior leads to fewer problems in life. With fewer problems there is less suffering and more happiness. A clear mind also ensures that your cognitive abilities can work to their highest capability. It provides you with the skills of self-correction that help you produce a pure mind-stream that is maximally compassionate, clear, wise and effective.

Buddhism and Vedanta make a habit of teaching meditation practice so that people get better at watching their thoughts and can live in the moment. Living in a state of presence, where you are aware of the contents of your mind and see things with a higher perspective, helps you avoid being becoming a robotic automaton that simply reacts to circumstances without thought, or who falls under the full control of astrological and other forces. With mindfulness you avoid being simply an object that executes reflexive actions.

These two traditions also teach you to analyze your thinking and basic mental tendencies, which is what we call contemplation, introspection, discriminative analysis or training in prajna wisdom. This is learning to understand the mind's processes and how you tick.

Transforming your mindset, ways of thinking (deliberation processes), habits and behaviors is the goal. Elevating your perspective on life is another goal as well. The ultimate target is impeccable, consummate behavior and a mind-stream free of afflictions that is also full of wisdom and compassion. Therefore, from *Color Me Confucius* you will be introduced to a chapter that summarizes the actual mindfulness techniques that Liao Fan and Benjamin Franklin used to radically transform their personalities and behaviors for the better, and also accumulate vast merit in the process.

Interestingly enough, when you read the biographies of American Presidents and other political greats you will find several who also

transformed their personalities and behaviors using similar processes. The list includes George Washington, Teddy Roosevelt, Abraham Lincoln, and George Marshall. Even Ronald Reagan's presidency was characterized by a general feeling of patriotism and good-naturedness due to the influence made on his personality by the all-American movies he played in as an actor. Hence, self-development and the "perfuming" of cultural influences do matter. These men became great because they worked on perfecting their personalities and behaviors with some version of introspection and mindfulness training. Each had some ideal of perfect behavior in their mind and then strived to manifest that ideal in themselves.

Another commonality you will find of greats in life is the following. Around two-thirds of Fortune 500 CEOs have a military background and two-thirds of that two-thirds practice martial arts. The commonality is discipline and focus. This is another reason I want young children to learn both yoga and the martial arts. It is not just because they help the body, but because in practicing them you learn the limits of your body as well as self-control, discipline and concentration.

Both Liao Fan and Benjamin Franklin used the practice of mindfulness to police their mental states and their behavior in real time rather than just robotically react to situations without being cognizant (aware in the moment) of what they were really doing and how they were behaving. Thus they were able to cut off a lot of errant habits or deliberate behaviors and push themselves to perform kind, compassionate deeds in the altruistic direction of goodness, kindness, empathy, helpfulness and virtue. By regularly cutting off errant behavioral patterns and replacing them with something better, they slowly transformed their personalities. The key was practicing awareness so that they could detach from automatic responses and then elevate their behavior to something better. You want to break one type of entrainment and create a new type of beingness that relies on live awareness, wisdom and presence for each situation.

This is what you want to be doing in life. Thirty years from now you will certainly be a different person than you are now. The difference between regular people and spiritual cultivators is that cultivators want to guide this process. Cultivators create an idea of what they wish to become like and how they wish to change. They create in their minds an ideal of their best self or an ideal of perfection. They clearly establish in their minds an idea of what aliveness means. Then they use the methods of self-cultivation, self-correction and self-perfection to gradually *become just like that* ... more of what *they like* in terms of desired behaviors, perspectives, personality, thinking, energy, their base emotional template and even active skills or achievements too – which is what *they* want rather than what society, their parents, or anybody else wants.

These methods of purification, ennoblement, change, or transformation

are based on observing your mind and behavior and disciplining them in new directions, imprinting your behavioral patterns with higher models of perfection, or cultivating a yet higher option. The highest option is being so mentally free and detached from entrainment with imprinted processes that each moment your mind is absolutely clear and free and you can tap your highest wisdom/intellect to decide what is best to do – while feeling fully alive – without being overly biased due to your mental conditioning, and without becoming automatically entrained with your imprinted patterns. Your sensing, feeling and judgment should also be objective and accurate which requires emotional balance and a clear mind. This requires that you have worked on cultivating your inner Qi circulation to a harmonious state because if your Qi is not smooth then your mind cannot be peaceful.

Your mind should be calm, clear, composed and collected, unruffled by emotional concerns. In a state of presence, or pristine clarity, while consciousness operates it should seem as if the strong ego-thought we normally sense inside us is much quieter or even absent, almost non-existent. The mental experience of the world or our thinking process should predominate without emotional or other distractions. This is “no mind” or pure consciousness, or “pristine clarity and awareness” not over-burdened with ego impressions. Empty mind doesn’t mean that your mind is empty of contents because then you would be asleep. It means that the mind is free of afflictions and distractions while focused on enjoying/experiencing the objects of its attention. This is pristine clarity. It takes much cultivation to reach this as your natural state.

At the same time, your body is so healthy and its internal Qi flow so natural and smooth without tension that the feeling of the body is almost non-existent, a comfort that we call bliss. This is the stage of having “no body” or “forgetting the body” due to the fact that the body is healthy and the inner Qi flows everywhere without interruption. This is the martial arts stage of “no extremities.” The body has “no partitions” due to excellent Qi flow so all its parts feel comfortable because they are threaded together into a body unity that is a single harmonious whole. When your Qi reaches everywhere inside you, it will feel as if your body is transparent or has disappeared.

The body is in such great shape at this stage, and its internal energy flow and physical sensations so comfortable that you can forget that you have a body. You will use it naturally without experiencing any heavy feelings of pain or discomfort. Through cultivation your physical body can reach an ultimate level of development where it is relaxed in all situations, its internal Qi is balanced and flows smoothly, and it moves in every direction with natural ease. Without the heavy feelings of body discomfort or tension so that it seems non-existent, this then is the Buddhist stage of “only consciousness” or “mind only” although this also refers to the fact that our

experience of the world is only an image within consciousness. Consciousness is the only thing we can experience in life (we experience our consciousness and only our consciousness rather than an outer world), so the world is termed “consciousness only” or “mind only” within Buddhism.

Together this is the *sat, chit, ananda* of Hinduism, and “*Shen Xin Ping Heng*” of Chinese culture (“body and mind balanced”). This is the state of presence. This is the state of pure consciousness. This is how we should be experiencing life. Of course the body is there but you have cultivated it so well that you don’t even notice it; it is flexible, healthy, strong and its internal energy flows smoothly. Thus your body feels comfortable, blissful, even almost non-existent because it is so healthy you don’t notice its presence. In this state of presence where the mind operates in a visage empty of distractions – empty mind – we can also call this empty visage of clear consciousness a state of stable mind, calmness or concentration. It is a stage of “being centered” where thoughts exist, but are not pressing upon your mind in a loud, afflictive way. Of course there is still the self, of course the self still functions, but you are not absorbed in the self and it’s I-thought but can enjoy the experience. All ways of experiencing life are valid, but this is an optimal way of experiencing the moment.

Truthfully speaking, you always function according to a domain of internal decision-making rules you developed over time. All of us have developed our own personal patterns/processes of logic, wisdom, compassion and so on, but in this case you develop such a high state of presence, clarity and detachment that you can choose the best one to guide your actions, or are so open that something entirely new can come to mind.

For regular people, the idea is to learn new and better automatic intellectual patterns that become imprinted within your neurons and thus produce your standard, default decision-making processes. For instance, in sports training you want to instill within your neurons the most optimal movement patterns for the particular sport you are in, and when you move you want to be following the patterned process encoded in those neurons.

In religious training, we want individuals to upgrade/enhance their established personality and behavioral processes (habits) that have developed as a result of prior conditioning. The goal is to cultivate a new *way of being* where you strive to become more caring and kind, free of vice and faults, mentally pure, and truly alive and aware in every moment of life. The objective is that you can - with intellect, rationality and wisdom, willpower and self-control - override errant impulses, desires and passions and even knee-jerk reactions or long-established behavioral patterns to create better decisions and actions in real time. Other than just the introspection-mindfulness methods of Franklin and Liao Fan, *Color Me Confucius* has many teachings on cultivating mental purity, ridding yourself

of afflictions, adopting virtue as your template, and how to transform your habit energies. In terms of changing your habits I especially recommend *Atomic Habits* (James Clear) and *The Power of Habit* (Charles Duhigg).

Most introspection methods focus on *don'ts* – do *not* engage in such and such a behavior or some specific type of activity. Instead of focusing in life on *how* to become successful or happy, one approach to happiness emphasizes *don'ts* like this. It has you figure out what you need to *avoid* in order to avert common troubles and thereby be on the pathway to becoming successful or happy. Then you apply mindfulness to avoid the common behaviors or roads that would destroy your life such as drug usage, excessive anger, gambling, alcoholism and so on. By avoiding what produces pain and suffering, what is left is either neutral or produces progress and pleasure.

You should view many religious injunctions in this way, namely as guidelines that help you avoid certain behaviors in order that you become successful rather avoid them because they are somehow morally wrong. Avoiding pork or seafood, which carried the risks of trichinosis and salmonella poisoning in ancient times, are examples or rules meant to help you stay healthy rather than the fact that eating these foods is somehow wrong.

Benjamin Franklin himself looked at “virtue cultivation” as a way of eliminating character flaws and cultivating certain characteristics that would help him move ahead in life. This is how you need to view things, which is taking the enlightenment view into account. The enlightenment view is that you are an object, process or set of dependent conditions with certain properties, and you can change those properties. Thus, you can cultivate better characteristics or better performance in various fields to become the way you want and to experience the life you want.

The basic idea of mindfulness, awareness and detachment is to help you with this task. The idea of using mindfulness for self-correction is that if you weed a garden then the flowers will successfully grow unencumbered, and you won't need any fertilizer. Therefore you should work on avoiding or eliminating various bad habits or behaviors – procrastination, eating unhealthy food, getting into debt, getting into toxic relationships, not getting enough sleep, hanging around negative people, taking away any sort of meaning in life, etcetera. Once you get rid of the leaks then the water will stay in the bucket. You need to work on improving the quality of your daily routine so that you get your life in order.

Thus, if your fortune is somewhat bad it will become better if you start avoiding various errant aspects of behavior that typically destroy people. It will become better if you change your personality, which is a combination of mindset and behaviors. Certain behaviors or mistakes certainly do destroy professions or careers so we need not argue that personality flaws

can destroy your fortune, and polishing your personality can help you.

Along these lines, world-class poker player Phil Hellmuth wrote a book *#Positivity* in which he noted that to become a great poker player he'd have to figure out exactly how to get there. He then wrote down all the necessary building blocks to achieve world-class status in poker, and then put them in a pyramidal-shaped hierarchy. He first wrote down a set of “to do” virtues that would help him win at poker, i.e. become a world-class success. He then wrote down what he absolutely had to avoid in order to keep his winnings such as avoiding casino games, avoiding sports betting, avoiding drugs, and avoiding alcohol.

By avoiding errant behaviors that ordinarily plagued poker players, Hellmuth always maintained a positive march forward towards his objective of winning at poker tournaments. He created *outcome-based rules* for his life – “success habits” – based on what he wanted to achieve. This is what you need to do in life too. These success habits became his guides, principles or rules for success, or standards of performance. They became his standards of behavior.

To achieve a particular outcome or goal, you need to do all the necessary things right and need to avoid the behaviors that historically destroy people pursuing the same objective. This requires willpower, but it is the willpower of avoidance effected through the mindfulness practice of watching what you are thinking and doing. If you already know what to avoid, the task of preserving and prospering yourself is a lot easier.

An alternative type of goal requires involves becoming a different type of person rather than achieving an objective. This requires that you create *identity-based habits* for becoming a new type of individual. Identity-based habits means regularly acting in a certain way or avoiding certain behaviors because you want to become a certain identity. This is something that actors, musicians or other high performance individuals might wish to use.

Your inner identity is uniquely particular to you and develops as you consistently express certain values, beliefs, assumptions and mindsets that regularly influence your behavior. What runs through your head becomes your personality. Mere ideas do shape societies, and also people. Culture transmits values, beliefs, attitudes and ideas that heavily influence the behavior of people and whom they ultimately become. Therefore, ideas that people are exposed to or consistently focus upon will shape how they think and act.

Who you surround yourself with also influences your thinking and behavior as well, which is why you should hang around people who you admire, individuals better than you who will motivate you, counsel you and inspire you to greatness. People have to “change their tribe” and associate with people greater than themselves if they want to rise above their current fortune and create something better. You can rise above any of your prior

influences, no matter how negative or lower, to create yourself to be the way you want, and can thus transcend any errant ways if you train yourself to do so. What you think and do is how you become.

This is why it is said that a champion behaves like a champion before he becomes a champion. To become a champion you adopt the habits, behavior and mindset that makes you a champion because they are the ones that champions have. In thinking and acting that way you become that way. Character is what makes a champion, so you must work at developing the character of champions to become a champion.

The changes from following such principles may seem small or unremarkable, but they will compound into a remarkable result if you stick with the aspiration over time. For instance, if you can get 1% better each day for one year then you'll end up thirty-seven times better by year's end. Making a choice that seems only 1% better may seem insignificant in the now, but the collection of such moments over a lifetime of choices determines the difference between who you are and who you could be. It determines the difference between mediocrity and excellence. You should be more concerned with your current trajectory than your current results when you flub a little bit because consistency of positive effort in the right direction will build the future you want.

Success and achievement come from repeating small positive behaviors day in and day out, and compounding small choices into big, beneficial results. Great outcomes take time to grow and are generally delayed in terms of their final manifestation, so you have to keep at the march of progress with consistent effort, a constancy of purpose. Time pays off with not linear but with geometric results when you do this. If you practice certain behaviors religiously they will affect your inner Qi body enough to leave a strong impression that can even carry over into other individuals if your organs were transplanted into them. Therefore, instituting the right types of habits and behaviors will create an impression in your subtle body that will help determine your subsequent life.

Related to this is the idea of *creating a system* to follow in order to move yourself forward to a goal. The success system that you use to achieve your goals is the important thing. For instance, in stock market investments the goal is to make profits, so many people successful at it adhere to a set of rules for determining which stocks to buy and when to buy and sell. You have people following well-tested rules of value investing or momentum trading, while others follow their gut and engage in all sorts of ad hoc decision-making all the time, basically guessing on what will go up and when. In the case of non-systematic investors, whether or not they will make money will be entirely based on their fortune because their decisions are not based on using wisdom that can change a fortune. According to the averages in options or commodities trading, 97% of people lose money

because they don't use a system. Hence, if you don't use a system in stock trading it usually means you are going to lose money. You need a system for success in this arena.

The key to success in investing is not to avoid losing money because sometimes that will definitely happen. The key is that you lock yourself into following a *proven system* that will take you forward. It is not important how successful or unsuccessful you are right now in this moment because what matters is whether your system puts you on the path to ultimately becoming successful. The question is whether or not you are acting ad hoc or following a success system that will get you to your final destination.

Wedding yourself to a proven system of rules and regulations can absolutely alter a fated fortune because it will produce a better result than off the cuff decision-making. It can change your fortune because by using a "system" you will stick to something that bypasses your conscious decision-making that can be negatively altered by emotions, and thus you can avoid a second-rate fortune. The key is to act like a mechanistic robotic automaton in following the proven rules of "optimum behavior for optimum results." As long as it is a proven system then any bad results you sometimes experience through its usage should be seen as unimportant setbacks along the way because they are inevitably going to be dips on the road to success. In other words, there's no reason to ever be upset at downturns because those are unavoidable and sticking to your reliable system will still get you to the goal. As long as a system is historically tested and proven to be valid you should be willing to accept any inevitable setbacks that occur with its usage because it is still marching towards the long-run success. Thus, whenever you suffer a setback you shouldn't worry if you are following a system.

Thus, in looking at how we should run our lives, one "system" is to avoid vices and cultivate virtues, which is the path of wisdom and virtue. This is the path advocated by religion and is essentially a "system" for your operating system of consciousness. If you cultivate virtues and avoid vices your life will be better off, period. This is a proven system.

Of course, the typical means to transforming your behavior is to try and instill new habits and ways of thinking as a permanent feature of your personality. You must also practice the virtues you wish to cultivate in a proactive way, forcing yourself to express them rather than simply waiting for the chance. This is a matter of the "do's" rather than "don'ts" for virtue training. You must practice what you want, what you pretend to be, and then you *are that*. You can change your repeated beingness, your consistent personality by changing your identity-based habits, and then you can become *who* you wish to become. In other words, you can become the type of person you want to become by changing your habits, mindset, and by cultivating certain values, virtues, skills, habits and personality traits.

Frankly, this is spiritual cultivation. It isn't about worshipping God or some deity, but about changing yourself into something better.

Along these lines I often refer to the example of Cary Grant, who was an movie acting persona developed by Archibald Leach that millions of men wanted to emulate. Cary's persona was fashioned on Douglas Fairbanks and the elegant style of Noel Coward. Cary Grant represented a type of excellence – Western civilized man made perfect, an amalgam of tradition and the modern, the high and low, the elite and masses, wealth and virtue, and a masculine glamour of good natural ease that doesn't take itself too seriously yet has elegance, polish and sparkle. Leach himself said, "Everyone wants to be Cary Grant. Even I want to be Cary Grant." He also said in building the character, "I pretended to be someone I wanted to be until finally I became that person, or he became me."

In other words, Archibald Leach adopted certain behavioral patterns, mannerisms and ways of behaving to portray an image he developed in his mind, and became "Cary Grant" in film and then in real life to some degree. He configured himself in a different way and then became like that.

Acting in a certain way over time you will become that way as a result of your consistent work at self-conditioning, especially if you are in your early years including your twenties. These years particularly constitute a developmental sweet spot when you are primed for growth and change, and can dramatically, radically transform even from a simple exposure to some positive influence such as a model of behavior or the right ideas. This is a time when you can really work on accumulating your own identity capital, working on yourself bit-by-bit over time to bring a product to the adult marketplace.

When you are young your cognitive approach to things is not yet set in stone but as you get older it gets more wired in. It becomes more solidified like Plaster of Paris that begins to harden, and it then becomes more difficult to change. Regardless of age, however, you can and should engage in this process to become the person you want to be, to become more of how you want to be, to become the light you want others to see and your own future best self. You want to become the best version of yourself, the most evolved version of yourself that you can be.

This, in essence, is the mundane crux of cultivation. It is becoming a better person according to some ideal you select, and that ideal can even include success or skillfulness in certain mundane worldly directions other than just purifying yourself of the dregs you've adopted that prevent moral virtue from shining. This is called goal setting for personal development and it can even go against your genes and your fated destiny as I covered in *Move Forward*, *Color Me Confucius* and *Quick, Fast, Done*. The formula for success includes the methods within this chapter and these books.

After age thirty our thoughts, feelings and behaviors become incredibly

stable (we become more set in our ways) so we need to become devoted to superior methods like this to transform our ways of thinking and doing things. This type of cultivation, development or training we need extends to acquiring skills. Contrary to common thinking, most people are not naturals when it comes to skills but develop them through deep and deliberate practice, which has clear analogies to perfecting/purifying your behavior or modeling yourself to transform your personality. “Being a natural” is usually a myth because people we consider experts train and practice hundreds to thousands of hours to get good at something to where it finally looks and feels natural. You must practice to develop talent.

Sports stars and athletes definitely recognize this, which I revealed in *Sport Visualization for the Elite Athlete*. As to personality rather than skills, you cannot say there is any right or wrong personality, but there are virtuous traits we can adopt and choose to master through various means, the methods falling under the rubric of cultivation. You can and should become intentional about this, but in terms of various pursuits such as *Artha* (material prosperity) and *Kama* (pleasures) you should never forget or sacrifice the other two goals of pursuing *Dharma* (virtuous, proper, moral behavior) and *Moksha* (liberation, self-actualization, spiritual realization, transcendental bodies, enlightenment).

This is what self-cultivation is all about, which is not simply to cultivate more virtuous ways but to become more of the person you want to be in terms of properties, traits, characteristics, skills and activities. In other words, to change not just your actions but your steady-state personality. A better you includes new mental processes, new skills, a purification of habits and emotional tendencies, and more.

Don't be defined by your past. Your past experiences have already formed algorithms within your brain (your default operating system for your consciousness) that we call conditioning. Instead, always consciously choose how to you wish to think, feel, and behave for the moment. Start training to become more *that way* as your natural state, which requires a sense of presence. You should work towards becoming a new you, with characteristics you choose, as a natural automatic tendency/trait. We become what we do every day and what we absorb and then incorporate as part of ourselves, so make use of this teaching to start renewing yourself towards your own ideal of perfection. In nature the old dies and the new is born, and you must accept this fact to the extent that you let go of the stuff that isn't working in your life and replace it with better stuff.

Things in life don't always “just work out to be great.” We all have lousy fortunes at time so new life has a trajectory of always upwards every single day. However, self-improvement or self-perfection is the one thing you can work on cultivating regardless of your financial, physical, family or other conditions. It means to gain control of your thinking, emotions and

behaviors and change them to become more of what you want, to go in the direction you want them to be. Confucius says we should aim for consummate conduct in our thought and behavior. I would also add that we should improve our bodies too, as well as the mind-body connection since this is what you train to do when you become a deva. Devas are always training on moving the energy within their body using their mind/willpower, which is essentially *nei-gong* work or anapana. Why waste time? Start training now!

In many cases the “Here and Now” of life circumstances cannot be improved so we cannot change the disappointments we periodically feel, such as when you are suffering due to sickness or experiencing terrible conditions within your country. Nonetheless we can decide how to weather bad conditions. Even in such instances you can focus on being a certain high-class way, a noble way, and use any struggle against conditions to try to transform yourself to improve your character. During difficult times you can try to adopt personality traits and habits that set the stage for your next life when conditions will be better than they are now if you’ve performed merit in this life.

The good fortune of your life is built up from engaging in positive actions like this. Society changes when its collective intelligence increases and its group members engage in more virtuous ways of cooperating with one another. It changes when its members decide to sacrifice and work for a better group future. Therefore, it is especially important to switch from the pleasure-seeking emotional brain within us to the forward-thinking frontal lobe of our brain that makes outcomes like this turn into reality.

If you want to focus on the things that will make a huge impact on your happiness in life and create a better future then this type of devotion – a mindset of constant self-improvement – is one of them. Remember football Coach Walsh’s standards of performance, which we can also call standards of behavior. Throughout those demands is the drive for constant self-improvement:

Exhibit a ferocious and intelligently applied work ethic directed at continual improvement; demonstrate respect for each individual in the organization and the work he or she does; be deeply committed to learning and teaching, which means increasing my own experience; be fair; demonstrate character; honor the direct connection between details and improvement, and relentlessly seek the latter; show self-control, especially where it counts most – under pressure; demonstrate and prize loyalty; use positive language and have a positive attitude; take pride in my effort as an entity separate from the result of that effort; be willing to go the extra distance of the organization; deal appropriately with victory

and defeat, adulation and humiliation (don't get crazy with victory nor dysfunctional with loss); promote internal communication that is both open and substantive (especially under stress); seek poise in myself and those I lead; put the team's welfare and priorities ahead of my own; maintain an ongoing level of concentration and focus that is abnormally high; and make sacrifice and commitment the organization's trademark.

As stated, in religion we call this cultivating virtue, practicing rightness, and transcending our lower self or perfecting our behavior. These are all ways of becoming more of the ideal we want. Everyone needs a code of ethics whether it comes from the Bible, Koran, Talmud, Buddhist sutras, Hindu scriptures and so on. By becoming devoted to a set of behavioral standards, over time you will change your personality in the direction of those standards. By adopting good behavior, for instance, you will almost surely change your fortune for the better.

Another factor important to your ultimate happiness in life is picking the right spouse, which I have covered in *Husbands and Wives Were Connected in the Past*. Happiness in life certainly has far more to do with whom you marry than with what college you attend, so there are other important factors like this that are important in life also. However, for now we are focusing on the cultivation of virtue and behavior as fundamental determinants of happiness as well as success in life, and for contentment in becoming the way you want to be. For the achievement of mundane pursuits that will lead to *Artha* and *Kama* measures of happiness you need specialized discussions such as in *Husbands and Wives Were Connected in the Past*, *Super Investing*, *How to Create a Million Dollar Unique Selling Proposition*, *Detox Your Body Quickly and Completely*, *Look Younger Live Longer*, *Move Forward*, *Quick Fast Done* and *Buddha Yoga*.

Buddhism says clinging, desire or craving is the problem behind most suffering and unhappiness in life. From desire sprouts all sorts of other mental modifications such as greed, attachment, pride, conceit, jealousy, frustration, and rage. Hinduism says that all our misery, fear and suffering proceeds from the conception (ignorance) that the universe, Shakti, is other than our own self. However, we can abandon ignorance and change our attitudes to reduce desires, and thus eliminate many types of suffering.

How else can you reduce suffering in life?

You can alter your circumstances to reduce suffering because improving your circumstances is one way to reduce conflict, challenges, pain and discomfort. By striving to improve your circumstances you can you're your suffering in the world much smaller, but an even better road is to make your capacity to deal with suffering larger. By becoming stronger you can handle more things in life, including the task of reducing suffering for

others. Thus you can strive to make yourself stronger and of a happier, sunnier temperament to better deal with suffering.

You can strive to make yourself wiser and smarter so as to act better to avoid suffering, or you can practice dealing with it head on with stark honesty and learn how to transform it or work through it until sunny days come again.

You can perform acts of merit that create a better world in the here and now, which will reduce misfortune and suffering for many people, and this will also win you the karmic reward of accumulating merit so that you enjoy better states in future lives, thus reducing your future suffering. You can even pursue power so that you can protect yourself and others from the oppression and suffering caused by arrogant elites. There are so many strategies for minimizing the suffering of life. It's not just about mindset but about wise and skillful actions.

We definitely should pursue all these avenues, and in particular strive to bring about a better future for society and others. All these efforts require effort and sacrifice on our part. However, everyone understands this necessity when we pursue the *progress* of positive change in the world. We shouldn't just seek positive changes that avoid suffering in the moment, but should aim at permanently improving circumstances to eliminate the causes of poverty, disease, illiteracy, injustice and so on. For instance, the Rockefellers created a form of philanthropy that addresses the root causes of problems rather than simply ameliorating their symptoms through charity. They aim to eliminate the causes of suffering, which requires wisdom, skillfulness, work and commitment.

Suffering is still caused by conditions, but suffering is also ultimately caused by the behavioral patterns of your own mind. Without consciousness (Knowledge) you can experience no suffering. Suffering is actually necessary for life. For instance, if you cut yourself and it hurts, the pain is ultimately caused by your own mind, meaning that it is felt by consciousness that causes you to react, but there is no reason to change this mental pattern into non-pain because you need that warning for your life. If you could not feel pain in your limbs you would most likely have many accidents that would permanently harm your body.

Buddhism says we should focus on cultivating our mind, and says that the key mental behavioral problem at the root of suffering is desire or craving. Perhaps desire or craving is the key mental problem, and perhaps not. Perhaps it is one of several large problems. Life *by its very nature* will always involve some degree of inescapable suffering no matter what form of life you are or what realm or conditions you live in, so you have to learn *multiple strategies* for dealing with it. You have to analyze each new situation for yourself to derive a strategy beyond just "detachment," "ignore it," "indifference" or "transcend it" because you certainly won't ever put an end

to craving or desire during this life, and no “master” has ever done so for suffering either. It is a problem of mental management, conditions management and behavioral management.

To become an automaton without a self, such as a pure functioning like magnetism which lacks consciousness, would eliminate suffering but what would be the point of being that? If you actually want that then you might as well annihilate yourself with permanent extinction for then you become pure matter and energy without consciousness, and there is no difference between that state and a process without consciousness that simply functions.

If you are a conscious being then be that. Try to become fully conscious through broadening your mental skills, mental perspectives and by mastering the capabilities of consciousness. If you are not a sentient being then you are an insentient object, function or process that is also part of Shakti. You can never escape Shakti because you are part of Shakti, you are Shakti. That is what you are, so you are that! Furthermore, any version of not having consciousness is essentially no different from being just energy and/or matter – Shakti without an I-concept. Annihilation or extinction are also the equivalent to being just pure energy and matter, which is what you really are. Remember, there is no such thing as a real self, personality, entity or being reading this, and yet understanding is there because Knowledge is functioning. You are a living object and one of your aspects is the property of generating Knowledge, which is how you function. The great miracle of consciousness, the great boon of living existence, is our ultimate gift and treasure, and yet it is not a really existent thing. It is a conditionally derived property. It is not an inherent, intrinsic property but just a special capability we have that makes approximate pictures of the world and all sorts of interpretations that aren't valid. We make conditional rather than absolute interpretations with our limited intellects. This is the message of the *Bhagavad Gita*, *Heart Sutra* and *Diamond Sutra*.

If you give up consciousness (have no consciousness) then extinction and annihilation are essentially equivalent. You can be a lump of insentient matter that has no experience of the universe, and this is the same as the annihilation of the self in a human, which is personal extinction. Extinction means the lack of consciousness, not the lack of physical existence since you are always matter and energy in some form or another since you are Shakti. Without a self-concept you can know nothing, so the point is that when you give up the concept of being a self you are still Shakti, but you have entered the realm of insentience.

What Vedanta and Buddhism want you to realize is that you really are insentient anyway. Why? Because there is no such true thing as an independent, inherent living being or entity and there is no such true thing as consciousness. Both are just illusory superimpositions on the original

nature. Since there is no such true thing as a living being then there is no such true thing as consciousness. Since there is no such true thing as consciousness then there is no such true thing as sentience. Knowledge may seem to be there, but it is being generated by Knowledge itself for itself without any such true thing as an individual, being or entity being involved. Knowledge generates Knowledge without any real self as a knower being involved. The knower is a construction of Knowledge, and so the Knowledge, knowing and knower are all unreal. There is no living being involved, and thus the knowing is a process of not knowing since there is no actual knowing or knower. It is all an insentient process, and from a higher aspect a truly non-existent, non-real process in all!

There is no such intrinsic, inherent, independent thing as consciousness that transcends the universe. It is an insentient process within Shakti, a functioning within Shakti, a construction within Shakti, and unreal superimposition on the original nature. From this point of view, all of Shakti is insentient. You are essentially just another insentient portion of Shakti, an object or process or functioning within Shakti that we say *has consciousness*, but what is consciousness? It is a functional property of the objects/processes we call sentient beings that provides for them an experience of world qualities. Is it real, trustworthy, reliable?

Consciousness is not complete, perfect or faithful in creating images of the world, and it isn't something *outside of Shakti* that independently stands on its own that can view Shakti absolutely. So it is all conditional, unreal, an illusion that "works" but which is still an illusion. There is no such independent, intrinsic and thus ultimately thing as consciousness. It is ultimately an illusion, or you can say delusion or falsity.

Thus the *Diamond Sutra* says there is no such true thing as a sentient being, a personality, an ego, living being or life. There is no such true thing as consciousness either, for what Knowledge creates is a conditional worldview, a personal illusion, a biased and prejudiced delusion. The mirror image of the world it constructs within the mind just ain't that good. How can that be valid?

To say there are sentient beings with consciousness is just a way of talking that we've created for ourselves for convenience sake. We are just components of Shakti without any actual borders because we are the whole of Shakti, and our consciousness is not an independent existent thing. It is a conditional, dependent and thus prejudicial creation faulted with biases, and thus errant, incorrect and untrue ... but it works for us! We have understanding, which is Knowledge, but there is no one doing the understanding, and yet understanding is there. There is just Knowledge producing Knowledge for itself, and we call that consciousness. That consciousness is part of Shakti, and Shakti is an apparent version of the original nature.

Hinduism says, “Brahman is Pure Consciousness” which is saying that the original nature is Pure Consciousness. However, It is empty of consciousness and everything else, so that is just a way of speaking. It isn’t consciousness or conscious, and yet energy, matter, living things and the consciousness of sentient beings all arise within It. It turns into consciousness and everything else, so from that aspect you can certainly say It is Pure Consciousness (just as you could say It is Pure Matter or Pure Energy or Pure Space or Pure anything else that It ultimately turns into), but It certainly isn’t consciousness in the sense of a substance or essence that reflects things or knows things. And yet It gives rise to all things that are apparent existences, like images lacking a true substance, so from that aspect you can say, “It is like Consciousness where what appears within It is not real, but just an empty image.” It is not Pure Consciousness, but just a purity of aloneness that is pristine and empty of everything else, borderless like infinite space. How is that consciousness? It is nothing at all!

As a sentient being you have several omnipresent factors accompanying human consciousness that that always exist within it as part of its operating process, and one of those omnipresent factors is desire. Because it is an omnipresent process within consciousness that is a component of its operating structure, you can never get rid of desire or craving. If there is conscious then by definition desire is there. It is one of several concomitant factors of consciousness that always accompany it. The other omnipresent factors within consciousness include discrimination, recognition or distinguishing; attention; contacting awareness; intention or urge; and finally sensation or feeling.

Suffering, for instance, is a *feeling or sensation* that arises within consciousness. Feeling is an omnipresent mental factor within your mind that is always there, providing you with an experience of pleasure, pain or indifference (a neutral feeling). One way to reduce the experience of suffering is by diverting your attention away from it by tying up the *omnipresent factor of attention* with a persistent march towards a worthy goal, vow or aspiration so that suffering can be ignored. If you divert your attention to *aspiration*, which is taking a strong interest in some object or objective, you can tie up suffering. Furthermore, if you dwell in single-minded pursuit of that aspiration with grit and perseverance, suffering can also be ignored. That prolonged *single-pointedness* is called *concentration*.

In other words, your mental engagement is elsewhere, and that “elsewhere” is so worthwhile or important to you because of its meaning then that suffering can be endured or ignored. If one ignores suffering then you are either diverting your attention or *contacting awareness* away from it through preoccupation with something else.

If one falls asleep, which is abandoning *discrimination or distinguishing* entirely, then suffering also disappears from the mind just as it does during

a state of coma. If you are not *conscious of* suffering, then you will not experience any suffering at that moment even though you might be experiencing a deterioration that normally causes suffering. Unaware of it in your mind, you do not experience that mental state. *State/event consciousness* means you are aware of being in a particular state, such as suffering, which is knowing that this event is occurring within you. If state/event consciousness is absent of suffering or unaware of suffering then suffering is not experienced within you. Thus you can have unfelt pains just as you can have unnoticed visual sensations (blind sight).

Discrimination means to ascertain the characteristics of an object, and so by not discriminating suffering then it essentially does not exist for you. If by *intent* you move the mind away from suffering, you can silence it as well. An *introspective consciousness* is when the mind focuses on the internal character of its experiences, and when you abandon that focus and forget the mind and self it is possible to silence or minimize the experience of suffering.

People succumb to *urges* that ultimately cause suffering, such as addictions to drugs or alcohol, so purifying mental urges and desires (since they will always arise due to being omnipresent factors of the mind, but you just don't know what form they will assume) and one's behavior is a means to eliminate suffering. By putting your *attention* on your behavior, through mindfulness, you can correct it and thereby avoid suffering. Mindfulness helps you notice what is being thought in your own mind that influences you almost subliminally, without you even noticing, so by putting your attention on your mind and behavior you can eliminate various sources of suffering.

Or, you can put your attention on a problem that causes suffering, apply your *wisdom* to develop methods for reducing it, and through work concentrate on eliminating that cause in the world. You can say that you can detach from suffering in the mind, but detachment means freeing yourself from contacting awareness (not moving it since you still are aware of suffering), and since in the truest sense this isn't possible to abandon contacting awareness because it is an omnipresent factor of the mind, so detachment isn't really suffering's cure. You can ignore suffering or direct your attention elsewhere, but detachment doesn't really cut it by itself.

We can reverse matters by looking at joy instead of suffering. Joy has several main components such as physical pleasure, the absence of negative emotions, and meaning (higher purpose). Pleasure and joy are the result of a dopamine rush in the neural reward system of the brain, and they only last as long as the neurotransmitters continue to flow. If negative emotions (such as fear, anger, aggression or sadness) arise or negative mental afflictions arise (such as self-criticism) then pleasure and joy are reduced. Since the amygdala is responsible for generating negative emotions, for

maximum happiness in life you must keep this part of the brain's limbic system quiet, which will increase your propensity to feel positive emotions. You can do this by working on non-emotional tasks such as (the mindfulness of) keeping busy, which naturally divert your *attention* from negative emotions, involve you in *concentration* and tie-up other omnipresent factors within consciousness.

You can also try to cultivate cheerfulness, happiness or joy as your natural mental state by changing your perspective. The flavor of the moment is what you emotionally add to it, and you can deliberately choose that emotion to change your perspective. What core experience do you want your mind-stream to contain? You become the Buddha of a certain type not just by acting a certain way but by consistently cultivating particular attitudes, mind-streams, thoughts, emotions and feelings. Happiness doesn't just happen in life for you can learn to mentally create it. You need to actively create that sense of experience in yourself, permeating your mind-stream with it from time to time until it becomes a more permanent feature, and then happiness or cheerfulness becomes part of the features of your core being. Long-standing happiness must come from your inner self rather than depend on external conditions, and therefore the source of happiness must be something you cultivate within your mind.

The happiness states of human beings typically arise in certain activities: when they are exercising; engaged in intimate activities with one's spouse or partner; doing something they are good at (being involved with signature strengths) or being engaged in a skill that produces the quiet (channeled) mental state of flow where there is focus and concentration without distraction; being involved with satisfying, meaningful activities (such as charity work, spirituality, raising kids, a fulfilling career or pursuing value-aligned goals); being kind, being generous, doing charity or other altruistic deeds of compassion and caring; relaxing; socializing and spending time in social activities (such as spending time with people you care about); performing spiritual activities and engaging in spiritual experience; and meditation (such as breathing mindfulness, emptiness meditation or loving-kindness meditation).

Some of these activities engage the mind in concentration, which thereby quiets negative thoughts. Some provide a feeling of fulfilling purpose so strong that it silences other thoughts. Some flood the psyche with positive feelings of warm-heartedness and good will that overwhelm other thoughts, and some relax the mind and free it from its normal painful thoughts such as worries and anxieties. This is one of the reasons why meditation practice where we let go is so greatly beneficial, plus the fact that if the mind becomes more peaceful as a tendency from such practice then you can learn how to ignore impetus (rather than fulfill the promptings caused by urges in your neural connectivity) and always act from higher thoughts.

Concentration activities are also another way to train the mind to ignore distractions and afflictions such as bad emotions or negative self-talk. Normally we listen to music as a form of *brain soothing* in order to alter our emotions and make us feel good about things – that things are okay – or turn to *humor* in order to restore our spirits. The experience of nature can recharge us as well. The deepest and most profound solution is to learn how to control, alter, manage or transform our emotions, which is a skill that will not just help us with accomplishments but help us to ease the sufferings of life. One of the major aspects of The Great Learning is exactly this, namely learning how to control the emotional mind.

Certain mental technologies, such as NLP, can teach us how to do this. Even the martial arts, such as *taiqi*, teach us that we must learn to pacify the emotional mind so that it is less disruptive to our life. Practicing (1) *taiqi* breathing, Taoist *qi-gong* breathing exercises, yoga pranayama, and so forth, as well as (2) aligning your physical structure through the correct posture and chiropractic adjustments, are two of the ways since perfecting/harmonizing our breathing affects our Qi flow and thoughts. You can reach a higher stage of steady-state calmness by practicing breathing methods that optimize the flow of Qi throughout your body, and by aligning your body's skeleton and muscular structure so that they present no obstacles to smoother internal Qi circulation as well. When your breathing and Qi flow smoother, you will naturally attain a higher stage of steady-state calmness, comfort and mental clarity.

The key is to practice calmness, and from calmness comes steadiness and then clear, unconfused, rational thinking that produces better future outcomes. Otherwise, the tendency of the emotional mind is to be impatient, impetuous, unsteady, distracting. If we don't train it to be different, or learn how to regulate and manage it, it will present us with constant afflictions such as negative self-talk, passions and vices.

Once again, if we put the topic of actual physical pain aside it is not just activities but your internal attitude and perspective that matters as regards happiness or internal suffering. Those who cultivate a state of inner cheerfulness where they also let go of their ego and don't take themselves too seriously, knowing that all bad fortune will pass, and good as well so they should appreciate it but not cling to it, tend to be happier than others. A cheerful attitude makes it easier to bear life's burdens. This is why the path to happiness is mental training in purifying one's thoughts. From the seeds of good thoughts, good words and deeds will blossom and they will produce happiness and good fortune in turn.

Furthermore, the largest degree of happiness comes from generating meaning in your life rather than from pursuing pleasant sensations one after another. Unfortunate circumstances are not the limiting factor on happiness. Therefore we should all figure out what we want to be and do in

our lives, understand what we are looking for, and determine how we want to live our lives. You must answer the question as to who you want to be and what life you want to live. Then you have to make sure that your actions in life match the very values and principles that you want to live by. Happiness comes from alignment with noble principles and behavior for your mind rewards itself for the struggle to devote itself to a noble path and high conduct. Unhappiness comes from your behavior consistently aligning with or not matching your principles and values, the way you want to run your life and be in the world.

Deep discussions on all such matters involve the science of happiness, the Bodhisattva pledges of life purpose and effort, and even the Abhidharma teachings of Buddhism that cannot be deeply explained here. The point is that suffering will always arise, and detachment is not the cure. You have to use multiple techniques to solve this fundamental problem of existence. There is no permanent solution of existence, consciousness and bliss. Hinduism only says there is a permanent such state to lead people forward, which actually refers to higher body attainments and their stage of being, but all states of existence involve pain and suffering. A state of *moksha* or *nirvana* will always contain the potential for suffering.

As another example of how to use the omnipresent factors of consciousness to analyze strategies for your behavior, Buddhism teaches that by eliminating contact, which is the connection of objects with the mind, you remove the “other” (objects, phenomena or non-self) that causes an “I-self” to arise. An I-thought concept of beingness or existence cannot arise without juxtaposition to a not-I or other-than-onself concept such as an object or the environment. Hence, without contact with something other-than-the-self you would experience the state of no-self, which is essentially having no consciousness, and hence the equivalent to non-existence. Self-consciousness, which is having a sense of oneself as an individual who is distinct from the environment, can only arise if there is mental contact with the non-self. If you remove all mental recognition or distinguishing you then have mental chaos or quiet/absence, and in that state where there is no cognizant consciousness, once again you have no-self and the experience of non-existence.

If you tie up your intention with a worthwhile goal or commitment, such as a Bodhisattva pledge and vow, and maintain your attention and concentration on that aspiration then you can, by constantly focusing on a target of higher purpose, ignore the normal mental feelings of pain and suffering whenever they are encountered along the way. Meaning comes from contribution. Because of the commitment to achieving a higher goal, you will simply transcend them. Having a higher purpose or aim in your life that is something to work towards (an aligned purpose) will prevent you from becoming directionless and overly susceptible to boredom and

idleness as well.

If you look at things with a new perspective, which is to use your recognition, discrimination or distinguishing powers to give a new meaning to events such that you see the world through a different lens, you can also use this strategy of a higher meaning to override suffering too. Cultivating an elevated way of interpreting events, or way of looking at things, is another way to deal with suffering.

By viewing things in an optimistic or happier manner you can thereby improve your life. One example of this is the mental suffering salesmen normally experience from doing a cold-call, which is an unsolicited attempt to contact someone and ask for a sale. The response is usually rejection, causing salesmen to suffer misery and sorrow. However, if they know the average number of times they hear “No” before making a sale of average profit, they can use that fact to reinterpret how they deal with the no-sale, and turn it into a mental profit. Frank Bettger, who made over 40,000 cold calls in his life, once explained this technique, “I had secretly kept complete records of my calls for 12 months. ... I had made 1,849 calls. Out of these calls, I had interviewed 828 people, closed 65 sales, and my commission amounted to \$4,251.82. ... Each call I had made netted me \$2.30. ... One year previously, I had been so discouraged that I resigned. Now, every call I made, regardless of whether I saw the man or not, put \$2.30 down in my pocket.” In other words, after he did his analysis he viewed each no-sale as a profit. In this new way of mentally handling rejections, he was able to cut down on the mental suffering involved with the rejection of cold-calling. As another example, runners are typically nervous before a race but the experts train to turn that nervousness into excitement, and thereby re-engineer their mental perspective to reduce that form of suffering.

You can therefore minimize the pain and suffering “objects of the mind” by re-engineering your perspective of what they mean, by refusing to engage with them when they arise, or by concentrating on something else, which means putting your attention elsewhere. By ignoring them as best as possible, you help to minimize them. Thus, if you turn desire into dispassion via detachment you can minimize suffering but you can never get rid of it entirely because the mind is always accompanied by feeling and sensation states that will inevitably contain irritations, afflictions, pains, sufferings, defilements. That is the nature of life.

The short of it is that the Buddhist solution of detachment or dispassion is not enough. You have to also work on transforming your basic personality so it is more cheerful, patient and accepting, less prone to irritation, and yet unwilling to stand for wrongs and injustices and bad circumstances in life because it is your duty to fix them. You must work on transforming your mental habits such as reducing desires and clinging so there are less disappointments, but you must also transform your ways of

acting by incorporating more wisdom into decisions and more skillfulness into execution of actions. You must also act to improve your environment or circumstances so that less suffering arises.

We will all experience pains, sufferings, frustrations, afflictions and anguish in our lives but if we train ourselves to have different behavioral patterns within our own mind/consciousness then we will not feel them as strongly. This is thus a strategy for transcending suffering by ignoring it, detaching from it, diverting our attention, and so forth via other mental strategies as well. The material strategies attempt to avert suffering so that it does not arise, and you do so by acting more wisely in ways that will avert suffering, and creating new environmental conditions or circumstances that will prevent suffering in the now and future.

One particular problem is that our automatic mental processes are intertwined with a pattern of craving, desire or urges, so we have to learn how to transform this conditioning by elevating our processes as best we can. The problem is that our basic mental patterns need to be upgraded, transformed or re-engineered. Part of the solution is acceptance, patience, forbearance, endurance and tolerance so that negative events just don't have as much power over us. It is perfectly fine to give ourselves permission to feel bad about certain things, and then let those feelings go so they will disappear. What is wrong is to hold onto such feelings or to amplify them or rehash them. As explained, if we concentrate on something else because we put our focus and attention elsewhere, we can also ignore or even block pain and suffering from affecting us to some degree.

Most people cannot achieve the "ideal solution" of detachment to eliminate internal craving or desire, so when we cannot turn lemons into lemonade then the practical approach in life is that we should learn how to stomach lemons better. We should learn how to cultivate a naturally cheerful disposition so that we can ignore most small irritations and afflictions, become slow to take offense, yet still be offended enough when things are errant that we are still moved to fix them. If we can raise our steady-state level of happiness and joy by actively cultivating a sunny disposition then we will emotionally handle all of life's problems a lot better. This too is a good strategy, as is the strategy of hardening up, which is becoming harder and stronger in order to handle suffering and afflictions.

Our mental state has as great an impact on our happiness as do our social and material conditions. However, happiness is not just a matter of making conditions better because many rich people, for instance, are extremely unhappy. Happiness is essentially about cultivating a happier mindset and disposition that finds more joy in life and puts us into a higher base state of happiness and contentment regardless of situations. It is about not taking yourself so seriously, such as being slow to take offense.

We want to cultivate positive mental health rather than mental afflictions

and defilements. We want to avoid neuroticism by pursuing a quieter mind of purity, which you can achieve through meditation practice. Because a mind of purity has clarity, it can apply clear wisdom to address any situation, and thus our mental processes can function in ways that avert suffering too. We certainly want to lessen desires so that we want less and thus are hurt less in life, and we try to cultivate detachment so that we do not become prisoners of our passions, or overly cling to negative emotions when they arise.

We need to work on improving both our mental habits (other than complaining negatively, resorting to anger, etc.) and need to improve our own situations, circumstances and lot in life through wise efforts. But when the “Here and Now” has no chance for improvement, it comes down to making do with just what we have, and then it is a matter of dealing with our mental state. We have to decide how to weather our disappointments and transform our consciousness in various ways to better accept and deal with situations at hand while always looking for ways to possibly improve things. We can gain some degree of internal peace if we let go of bad feelings that arise when we accept our circumstances, but acceptance does not mean that we should forego the drive to improve matters for the better. For instance, one should never overlook evil or shrink from the efforts of administering justice. In any case, this all falls into the realm of mental training.

Even if we are in a state of poverty we can make use of that deprivation to better ourselves with mental training. When people see their lives as meaningful and worthwhile, with a higher purpose, then it is easier to bear suffering. Finding meaning in life tends to increase our happiness even though any meaning we ascribe to our lives is in an absolute sense just a delusion. Purpose is not a delusion in terms of the conventional sense, however, so it is purpose and meaning that are ultimately important!

Buddhism teaches that if we train our mentality so that we can experience things without undue craving, which requires a set of new patterns within the operating system of our mental processes, then suffering will lessen in life. For instance, if you learn to feel sadness without craving, attachment or desire then you won't be holding onto that emotion and it will frictionlessly go away when its time has run out. Without craving, clinging or attachment you will not overly suffer from sadness when you experience suffering. You will be sad for just the right amount. Yes, you *should* feel sadness (suffering) but you should not cling to it past its time. It should be just another mental experience that passes like all others, but not anything that you prolong or deepen by mentally clinging to it.

This is a correct way to live. The ordinary mind that experiences suffering when it arises is normal and proper, but you need to learn not to cling to such experiences and make them last longer than necessary. Simply

experience them and let them go. The message of Buddhism is that if you train the mind to experience *reality as it is*, without craving or attachment or other prejudices and biases added on, then you can end the suffering of the mind. Your mind should be like a mirror in creating images of the world with fidelity, but just as images don't stick in a mirror you shouldn't cling to those experiences within your mind. Attachment adds a frictional irritation to suffering and prolongs suffering while direct experience without attachment is pure and clean.

This harkens back to the fact that the ego or I-self is an artificial creation, a constructed identity that does not have an absolute identity. Why? Because it is a creation of the mind together with the physical body that supports (gives rise to) consciousness. It is a creation of the Knowledge stored within neurons, created by a process of consciousness (Knoweldge) that eventually produces the concept of the self. At core it is an I-thought connected with supporting mental processes that are all conditionally derived based on neuro-anatomy and prior conditioning.

The ego, soul or self is thus identical with Parabrahman, the fundamental nature or primordial essence, and also with Shakti, the entire field of manifestation. It is a creation within Shakti that produces an awareness of a body, mind and universe that have been superimposed on the original nature, or we can say evolved out of the original nature while being within It, not different from It. It is not part of Parabrahman but actually the whole Parabrahman itself; it is not part of Shakti but the whole Shakti itself just as an iota of the ocean within the ocean *is* the ocean and just as a wave of water is still always the substance of water rather than a wave. Whatever arises within the mind is also thus Shakti and hence, is in a sense pure and clean. But this does not mean that suffering does not arise within the mind or does not conventionally exist.

The point is that by taking itself as a limited entity the ego or I-self distorts reality in an attempt to perceive what it wants to perceive and not what truly is. This is why Buddhists, Hindus and others practice direct awareness of reality, which is just to experience things nakedly without adding a lot of excess mental baggage, prejudices, biases and emotional overtones. This type of direct experience is called presence, awareness or direct cognition.

Of course there is always a minimum amount of other garbage that comes along with experience that must always be there, otherwise there is no such thing as a conscious experience. You cannot recognize objects without memories that are emotionally tainted with likes, dislikes and prejudices, so there is no such thing as a "true accurate view" of Shakti, especially since you also only perceive non-infinitely and imperfectly as well. There is only an impartial, imperfect subjective view, which is thus not necessarily true to others, and hence a personal delusion or illusion. Seeing

and hearing are like optical illusions. Anything that arises within a mind is a mental creation, and thus conditional nonsense that is really relevant only to the experienter/doer thinking who is experiencing things in their own unique way. That being the case, the question is how to train the mind to perceive as best as possible and without as much pain and affliction as possible since life entails lots of suffering.

Here is the kicker. Most Buddhists, Hindus, Christians, Jains, Moslems, Jews, etc. will not attain the deva body during this life because they aren't devoted to spiritual cultivation or their karma isn't yet ready. Far over 99% of people will not succeed in the deva body attainment while *alive*, but they *can* succeed in something just as profound and powerful on the mundane level. They can learn to use their mind more correctly, strive to master as many lines of intelligence as possible, shape their life as they wish, devote their life to mundane achievements, and work on perfecting their character and personality. They can plant the seeds of good fortune for the future by performing acts of merit. They can develop skills, knowledge and wisdom and in this way develop themselves.

This is what ordinary people typically want in life when they think of self-development, but most people lack the wisdom of knowing what methods will bring about consummate conduct, good fortune, internal peace, happiness and well-being. All religions or traditions insist that there is a law or dharma that must be obeyed, a Tao or Way that must be followed, if men and women are to achieve the independent spirit body or just simply be in tune with the divine.

The big principle is to shoot for as a cultivation target is to become more of the way you want to be in life so that you feel and experience more of what you want to feel and experience such as love, closeness to others, well-being, confidence, joy, self-esteem, personal growth, self-actualization, achievement and so on. One means of becoming more of a certain way you want is how Archibald Leach modeled himself on others to become the Cary Grant persona. You have to think of being a certain way and then act that way.

Visualization practice, Liao Fan/Franklin mindfulness ledgers of merit and demerit, "immeasurable" meditations, NLP methodologies (which include modeling the behavior of others and the "circle of excellence" method), and many other techniques offer a variety of mechanisms for self-transformation. The principle is that you can configure yourself to be a certain way and then become that way. This is how you can change your fate and fortune. Under a teacher's guidance, or by independently self-submitting yourself to a constant, consistent, reinforcing developmental process over time, you can become a different person.

The objective is to become more of what you want to become like and to live life more in the way that you want. This type of pursuit will not only

slowly change you over time, which is the purpose of a temple or ashram as previously stated, but investing your behavior with certain emotions will impregnate your internal energy with those emotions. Those energies will change your behavior in this life, and even carry over to a subsequent life to the extent that it changes your future fortune. Thus, efforts at self-development are investing in your future best self.

Let me provide an example that illustrates this claim. It comes from Paul Pearsall's *The Heart's Code* and proves this is possible. *The Heart's Code* talks about what happens after heart transplants. For instance, in one case the recipient of a heart transplant from a Hispanic donor started to crave spicy food and expressed a desire to learn Spanish after the operation. This occurred without him ever being told that his donor had been Hispanic. This is because something other than just the organ got passed to the donor recipient upon receipt of a new heart. The Qi of the donor, which had become imprinted with certain traits, got passed as well.

Two other interesting examples as well:

Thirty-five-year-old female heart transplant recipient (donor a twenty-four-year-old prostitute killed in a stabbing).

"I never really was all that interested in sex. I never really thought about it much. Don't get me wrong, my husband and I had a sex life, but it was not a big part of our life. Now, I tire my husband out. I want sex every night and I masturbate two to three times a day sometimes. I used to hate X-rated videos, but now I love them. I feel like a slut sometimes and I even do a strip for my husband when I'm in the mood. I would never have done that before my surgery. When I told my psychiatrist about this, she said it was a reaction to my medications and my healthier body. Then I found out that my donor was a young college girl who worked as a topless dancer and in an out-call service. I think I got her sexual drive, and my husband agrees. He says I'm not the woman he married, but he wants to marry me again."

Husband of recipient: "Not that I'm complaining, mind you, but what I have now is a sex kitten. It's not that we do it more, but she wants to talk about sex more and wants to see sexually explicit tapes which I could never talk her into before. When we do have sex, it is different. Not worse or better, just different. She never talked much during sex, but now she practically narrates the whole thing. She uses words I never heard her use before, but it kind of turns me on, so who's complaining? Our worst argument came a few months after her transplant and well before she knew who her donor was. I was joking and at a passionate moment said she knew must have gotten the heart of a whore. We didn't talk for weeks."

Fifty-two-year-old male heart transplant recipient (donor a seventeen-year-old boy killed by a hit-and-run driver).

“It’s two years after my transplant. I still feel sorry for my old heart. It just comes over me sometimes when I least expect it. It served me well and it died so I could live. Sometimes I wish I could have seen it one more time and I wonder what happened to it, but I hate thinking about that too long. That’s hard to deal with. I could never understand it. I loved quiet classical music before my new heart. Now, I put on earphones, crank up the stereo, and play loud rock-and-roll music. I love my wife, but I keep fantasizing about teenage girls. My daughter says I have regressed since my new heart and that I act like a sixteen-year-old.”

Daughter of recipient: “It is really embarrassing sometimes. When my friends come over they ask if my dad is going through his second childhood. He’s addicted to loud music and my mom says the little boy in him is finally coming out.⁶⁵

It is not “cellular memory” that’s responsible for this sort of thing. This is the result of the original donor’s Qi, which had been consistently impregnated by the habitual energies stirred up by his or her consciousness, that always influenced it in certain directions. Those Qi energies still remained as a residual in the transplanted organ. A dead organ would not contain Qi any longer, and a dead organ cannot be transplanted so those energies were passed onto the organ recipient through the transplant. In other words, the recipient received Qi with different characteristics due to the transplant, and your Qi affects your personality just as your personality affects your Qi.

This is why the new organ recipients developed cravings for certain experiences they never had before. The Qi of the donated organ was impregnated with the desires, likes, dislikes and emotions of the donor. The residual factors of Qi (and thus consciousness since Qi/Prana is connected with consciousness) were transferred over due to the transplant.

You should therefore recognize that your vital energy, or Qi/Prana, becomes a storehouse of your emotional tendencies, mindsets or perspectives, and habit energies. It becomes impregnated with mental conditionings and then carries that conditioning forward as a natural momentum unless you work hard to change those characteristics through cultivation or purification. In some schools this is called “purgation” when it refers to removing the negative aspects of your personality and behavior,

⁶⁵ Paul Pearsall, *The Heart’s Code*, (Broadway Books, New York, 1999), pp. 89-90.

namely cultivating virtues and values rather than vices, animal instincts and desires. In any case this is why you must cultivate your mind and body on the road of cultivation. It is essentially a pathway of ennoblement to raise you far above your animal nature.

When you form a habit, it gets encoded in the mind (the brain's neurons), which we call conditioning or imprinting, and is then ready to be used whenever a relevant situation arises. In this case, a person's disposition becomes encoded in the Qi/Prana of the cells of their body. Actually, your likes, dislikes, virtues, values, regular emotions, character traits and so forth influence your Qi/Prana all the time. They pollute or purify your Qi/Prana from their impression. It is this Qi/Prana influence that gets carried over due to a transplant. It resides with the organ as an ongoing influence that encodes your likes, dislikes, emotional tendencies, mindsets or perspectives and other traits, and is then ready to express itself in the right circumstances.

Here is the key point because it is the basis of any system of achievement or self-improvement. Your *regular, recurrent, repetitive, consistent, frequent, habitual, dependable, repeated* patterns in thinking, emotions, behavior and so forth percolate through, permeate, or we can even say "perfume" the Qi (vital energy) of your body. That Qi helps to determine your personality and fortune in this life, and in subsequent lives. That "personality Qi," or "Qi with characteristics," is conditioned vital energy that will indeed be carried over into another individual due to an organ transplant, and thus will have an effect on them.

When you frequently practice immeasurable meditations you will affect your Qi in a certain direction and your efforts can produce an influence on your personality. They can produce a personality trait, just as my friend Frank produced by practice in projecting an aura of authority around himself. The Qi or vital energy connected with this type of practice will be carried over as an influence into a subsequent life, which is why you should strive to cultivate new positive traits even if their expression seems thwarted or restricted in this life, or even hampered because of genetic or cultural influences so that they are not as highly expressed as you'd like. In a new incarnation, which you most certainly will have, they can blossom to an even greater extent than what you reach in this life if you so will to have those traits and work in this life to cultivate them. For this to happen, however, you cannot just wish for them to appear. You must cultivate them and seek to actualize them.

Another related example to this discussion is that continuous recitation of the Jesus Prayer – "Lord Jesus Christ, Have mercy on me a sinner" – will not only cultivate your Yin Qi but bias your personality in the direction of humbleness and humility. Continually, religiously reciting a prayer or mantra with a certain meaning or emotion can bring about great changes in

your Qi and personality over time, and this is what we want on the road of cultivation. You can use this principle to design cultivation methods that perfect your character, personality and behavior.

Since your Qi can become impregnated with your emotions and virtues (and even skillfulnesses), it forms a portion of the basis behind the karma of a subsequent incarnation. Your Qi is part of the set of factors that determine your fate/fortune for it helps determine how you think, feel and behave as well as how other people treat you! You might not be able to achieve enlightenment in this lifetime by attaining the deva body but by working on your Qi - which means working on your character, personality and aspirations (which in turn means cultivating virtue and a pathway of idealistic self-perfection) - you can accomplish incredible types of progress and radically transform your life for the better. That in itself, without the goal of achieving a new spiritual body and becoming one of the twice born *Homo Deus*, is a noble objective and achievement. It is essentially the road of spirituality, which is a road of character development and self-perfection.

For instance, just by working through (working to free yourself from) the many limitations or restrictions you've taken upon yourself in life, such as limiting beliefs, you will purify or transform layers of protective Qi you've built that encase your body within and constrict/warp the free flow of your vitality. Thus, by working on freeing yourself of self-created limitations and arbitrary standards, or simply inhibitory limitations you've unconsciously picked up because of exposure to various experiences, you will unwind layers of conditioning and transform your personality and fortune. You will evolve beyond the arbitrary limits you imposed on yourself, and can abandon patterns such as those of fear reactivity you've developed over time. You can get rid of being the prisoner of an identity you've built, which is called being formless. Your energy will then flow freer and you will become more alive. In other words, by freeing yourself of self-imposed limitations and thoughts in life that act as shackles that hold you back from your potential, you will begin to free the flow of inner vitality within you, and thus become able to *feel more alive*.

The mind is primary and affects your Qi. By freeing the mind of limitations, or by teaching it to move outside of its comfort zone, you affect the Qi of your body because of the mind-body connection. Do this often enough and you change your personality and behavior. Change your personality and behavior, and you change your mindset, how you experience life and ultimately your fortune. Therefore, work on creating a greater self-image, the most perfected being you want to be even if it seems out of reach. Then start working in that direction.

Thus, if you start to frequently cultivate joy and happiness and always smile, this new character tendency will gradually become imprinted upon your Qi, or we can say your Qi becomes "impregnated with" or

“transformed by” those emotions and behaviors. That happy Qi will then help to produce the physical shape of your body, its functioning and your habits that may even carry forward to a subsequent incarnation.

This is why women who cultivate inner joy and smile a lot, thus also bringing happiness to others, will not only seem beautiful in this life as a result but tend to win more beautiful appearances in their subsequent lives. This will be a karmic reward, transmitted through to their next life due to their Qi, for the joy they have given others through their radiant vibrancy and happy facial expressions.

Even if this weren't true there is nothing better than cultivating a sunny disposition and optimistic joy for life *in this life*. Happiness is a fleeting state, so it is better to cultivate a sunny disposition and attitude of acceptance to suffering, while still making patient efforts toward improvements, rather than constantly pushing hard to seek happiness. Modern psychologists say you can start acting a certain way until it becomes you, “acting as if” in order to actualize that emotional tone. Sometimes this is known as “fake it until it you make it.” The idea is that by imitating certain qualities or characteristics you can realize those qualities in real life.

By putting yourself emotionally and mentally *in congruence with* qualities such as joy, optimism, happiness and so forth you can definitely improve in those directions. William James (in “The Gospel of Relaxation” within the 1922 book *On Vital Reserves*) also explained, “Thus the sovereign voluntary path to cheerfulness, if our spontaneous cheerfulness be lost, is to sit up cheerfully, to look round cheerfully, and to act and speak as if cheerfulness were already there. If such conduct does not make you soon feel cheerful, nothing else on that occasion can. So to feel brave, act as if we were brave, use all our will to that end, and a courage-fit will very likely replace the fit of fear.”

Patti Stranger, the “Millionaire Matchmaker,” wrote that highly eligible wealthy men most often sought wives who were happy vibrant women without an attitude who smiled and had joy in life. By cultivating those characteristics through the “immeasurable happiness meditation” you will not only improve your current life circumstances and become steady-state happier but set up the karmic causes for more beauty in the next life too. What is it you have to lose by cultivating more smiles and a happier disposition? It is a proven fact that practicing smiles creates an inner feeling of happiness and goodwill.

Thus, you can build the characteristics of a new personality *in this life*. You can cultivate new and attractive virtues, traits or characteristics that become fundamentally central to your personality now, and they will be there in future incarnations if you practice such methods with deep consistency and deliberate intention. This you can definitely succeed at achieving no matter what because it happens anyway – whatever you

concentrate on during his life, and what you repeatedly think and do, affects your Qi that is carried over into subsequent incarnations.

This *is* spiritual cultivation, such as an effort to become more humble, kind, giving and so forth. There are other practices you can take up as well. You can also regularly, consistently inculcate certain emotions into your behavior such as when you do a simple act like brushing your teeth. You can apply a strong intention to an activity to build a new future through that activity. For instance, you can view your bricklaying of a wall as the building of a wall, of a cathedral, or a holy place where people everywhere can come and know God and solve their worries. By embedding your bricklaying with such intent, which is called adding a “principal awareness,” you will change your fortune and character.

Your attention to your behavior modulates its form, but your intention transforms its essence. If, for instance, you reframe your habit of running from “I need to go running” into “It’s time to build endurance and get fast” then you will entirely change the outcome of your practice even though you are doing the same amount of running. Your thoughts will change the product or outcome of your efforts.

You cannot downplay the importance of training to readjust your mental patterns. Martial artists in competition, for instance, are often hampered by patterns of fear reactivity such as flinching, bracing or resisting force. However, the top martial artists put themselves through training protocols to decrease their threshold of fear reactivity, and thereby improve their competitive performance dramatically. Confidence is something already inside you. It is simply covered over by patterns of tension and habits that you can unlearn or reprogram just as in some cases you can retrain worry and fear to become excitement. If you become better at coping with fear then you can learn to decrease the distractions of the mind.

Here is another trick for mental training. Let’s say you are trying to master a skill but the training effort entails quite a few mistakes. If you perform ones of those activities correctly along the lines of perfection, where at other times you sometimes fail in attempts, then you should reinforce any successes with the affirmation, “That’s the way I am!” or “That’s like me.” This will help you change your perception of yourself and your identity, and thus will help alter your character and behavior in that direction.

Let me give another instance for affirmation training. Let’s say that you get angry easily and want to learn to control your temper. If you are able to do so in a heated moment by letting go, you should immediately seal that success with a type of deep thought that grabs your being (rather than just limply recited) – “That’s the way I am” or “That’s like me!” It has to be a palpable deep feeling that penetrates you when you say it in order to lock in the feeling that the new behavior is part of your identity. You have to say

either of these phrases with a kind of intense feeling and conviction that affirms to your whole body that you are like that, which is the way you are trying to become. This acknowledgement of success is how you reinforce yourself in becoming a new you.

Another example is changing just one word in your mental dialogue that will end up changing your life. Instead of saying I *have to* make another sales call or I *have to* cook for the family you can change this to “I *get to* make another sales call” or “I *get to* make dinner for my family.” By changing just one word - “have” to “get” - you shift the entire way you view the event. Thus, by changing your mindset that views burdens as opportunities you will change your perspective on life and your Qi/Prana as a result.

This is how you can more easily build a sunny disposition that everyone loves. A sunny, optimistic disposition looks on the bright side of life, handles suffering much better, and affects everyone around you in a positive way. It turns lemons into lemonade and is wonderful to be around. Off camera actress Shirley Temple’s mother would coach her using the words, “Sparkle, Shirley, sparkle!” Thus her personality slowly transformed until she was became one of the most beloved children in cinema. She was described as “champagne charm in a baby bottle with dimpled, indomitable optimism.” When a young actress, Audrey Hepburn also shined with a natural sparkling charm that affected everyone around her.

Just as you can turn an ordinary activity into a ritual in order to heighten your poise, alertness and awareness, and also as a means to cultivate high mental and emotional states, you can use willpower to arouse your emotions just as athletes do during competitions for a competitive edge. In other words, there are various ways by which you can arouse your internal energy impregnated with the tone of specific emotions. Done over and over again such performances will change your personality/character in this life, and even for the next life as those energy-emotional pairings gradually become tendencies for your personality. Consistently doing this intentionally is equivalent to cultivating your future best self!

When you see Buddhist monks with a naturally joyous temperament, many times it is because they consistently practiced the infinite joy meditation of Buddhism (one of the four immeasurables) in a previous life and thereby created for themselves that personality mindset as a natural trait in this life. Or, they may have practiced becoming happier and more joyous in this life. For instance, the cheerfulness of Cary Grant seemed to embody the temperament of a happier time. Similarly, women who are especially vibrant and attractive in this life usually cultivated certain emotions and behaviors in a previous life that won the karmic reward of being especially beautiful in this life.

This is one of the reasons, but not the primary reason, that Buddhism teaches people to cultivate the four immeasurable meditations of infinite

joy, kindness, compassion and equanimity. The principles behind this sort of practice can be applied to other purposes, as previously discussed, and the basic practice altered in various ways as suit your needs. During four immeasurables practice, which entails mentally cultivating (steeping yourself within) the emotions of infinite joy, kindness, compassion or equanimity – you can sit passively within the emotion (and sometimes imagine dissolving yourself into it) or alternatively project your Qi outwards permeated with a large feeling of this virtue, as if you were the embodiment of its essence and were to give it to others or affect others by it.

You become selfless when you practice feeling you are just this virtue, and then you should progressively withdraw the “feel” or energy of that virtue into your body as you are leaving the meditation. Then you should try to take it with you into the rest of the day. If an emotion or virtue you are cultivating is connected with one of your hormones or vital organs (as per the indications of Chinese Traditional Medicine), you can also focus on those organs or secreting glands during the meditation session to “heal” them or impregnate them with the enriching emotion.

You can also do this with any character trait you want to develop, just as Frank did in cultivating *with intensity* the powerful projective feeling of “having authority.” Through the force of permeation over a long period of time, by sitting in a strong envelope/aura of feeling the Qi of a selected personality trait and by then acting in this way during real life situations you will gradually change your personality and character in that direction. But, you must *actively work at this*. Even an idle moment of time, such as when watching television, can be made useful through such practices. It is a type of inner energy work, or Qi and emotional work. When so practicing, it may help if you visualize or feel the Qi of an individual who ideally models the virtue you are interested in developing.

If you do this consistently, it will imprint your Qi (aura) and even your body cells with the new trait you practice being and possessing, especially if you start acting that way in real life and put that trait into effect wherever possible. This will change not just your behavior but your fortune and destiny too including your personality in subsequent incarnations.

You can actually do this with mantra practice too. For instance, the mantra Om Ah Hung can be recited in such a way that when reciting “Om” you try to feel the Qi of your head and arms, when reciting “Ah” you try to feel the Qi of your arms and chest along with middle torso (including your heart and lungs), and “Hung” (or “Hum”) can be recited while feeling the Qi in your pelvis and legs (basically the lower part of your body). “Om So Hum” can also be used in the same way.

This is the basic practice, but you can go even farther. When reciting “Ah” centered in the chest and arms you can also feel that you are generous, gregarious, warm-hearted, joyous, cheerful, friendly, outgoing,

compassionate, helpful, kind and enthusiastic. You might even think of Jesus or Krishna when you do this, or some other role model who represents the emotions/virtues you choose to bring up and impress upon your Qi. If so, you should imagine for the duration of that syllable that you *become that way*. This has to be a deep feeling that grabs your whole being, a deep conviction and intense feeling within.

When reciting “Hung” centered in the lower part of your body you can feel like you are calm, confident, brave under misfortune, steady, strong, proper, responsible, determined and energetic. You might think of Samantabhadra or some other role model for this.

When reciting “Om” in the head you can feel that you are open-minded, accepting, patient, imaginative, inventive and so forth. You can release excessive attention to the analytical processes within your head, and imagine that your emotions and thoughts are clear and balanced. You might even think of being like King Solomon of the Bible (known to be wise who also possess the power and majesty of a king) when you do this, or momentarily visualize with feeling that you are some other appropriate ideal associated with “Om” and the brain/thinking.

You can take the Six Healing Sounds of Taoism and create a mantra that changes your Qi and moves you in the direction of character perfection as well. You should realize by now that you can do this with many mantras. For instance, the Six Healing Sounds are “Ahh” for the heart and small intestine, “Shh” for the lungs, “Hoo” for the stomach and spleen, “Shoo” for the liver, “Foo” (or “Chway”) for the kidneys and bladder, and “Ssss” for the triple warmer, which is defined as the three sections of the body delineated in my description of Samatabhadra’s Om Ah Hung mantra. If you find a different *bija* sound or syllable that seems to vibrate the Qi/Prana in an organ then you can use that instead. Normally you would recite each of these sounds for thirty-six, or a much larger number of repetitions, while feeling the energy (and associated positive emotions/virtues) in the organ, which one of my close friends does as a cultivation and martial arts practice. However, you can also turn the six separate sounds into a mantra of six syllables where you recite a single syllable while focusing on the associated organ and virtues, values or emotions, and then pass on to the next one in turn to do the same. It takes time to learn how to do this, but once learned it is easy to do this.

In other words, the six vital organ sounds can be turned into a six-syllable mantra where in succession you feel your internal Qi in a particular organ region (and greater body too) when reciting each associated sound. Furthermore, at the time of reciting a syllable you can match it with emotions or strengths that you wish to develop within your body and character.

You can arrange the sounds in various sequences such as a space-wind-

fire-water-earth-everything sequence corresponding to the sequence of the lungs, liver, heart, kidneys, stomach and triple warmer. This would be Shh-Xu-Ahh-Foo-Hoo-Sss. When reciting Ah for the heart you would also extend the feeling to the large and small intestines, and similarly when reciting Shh for the lungs. Don't worry about the difference between the large and small intestines. Just try to feel the energy in the *entire abdomen* because rarely do people cultivate that region. When reciting the six healing sounds, find some way to cultivate your lower belly or abdomen with energy as well.

The body is actually a worm that has been encased in a skeleton. The food goes into our mouth, down the esophagus to the stomach, into the large and small intestines and out the anus. That's the worm. You have to cultivate the energy of this alimentary canal, including the asshole going inwards, in order to do real *nei-gong* for your complete body, but few people do.

Now, if you were to rearrange the sequence differently because the Qi felt better when reciting the syllables in a different order, then do so. For instance, you might recite Ahh-Shh-Xu-Foo-Hoo-Sss that meant a sequence of the heart, lungs, liver, kidneys, stomach and entire body. You could also add a Vah, Lah or Vah-Lah-Hum at the end of the mantra, which focuses on the abdomen (and legs) so that it would become Ahh-Shh-Xu-Foo-Hoo-Sss-Vah-Lah-Hung. Furthermore, you could add an Om or Om-Ah-Hung or Om-Ah-Vah-Lah at the front of this sequence, which focuses on body segments. For instance ...

Ahh-Shh-Xu-Foo-Hoo-Sss
 Om-Ahh-Shh-Xu-Foo-Hoo-Sss
 Om-Ah-Hung-Ahh-Shh-Xu-Foo-Hoo-Sss
 Om-Ahh-Shh-Xu-Foo-Hoo-Sss-Vah-Lah-Hung
 Om-Ah-Hung-Ahh-Shh-Xu-Foo-Hoo-Sss-Vah-Lah-Hum
 Om-Hreem-Shreem-Kleem-Ahh-Shh-Xu-Foo-Hoo-Sss-Hum
 Etcetera.

Since these are mantras you created that aren't "sponsored" by a Buddha, you'll have to work extra hard at making the sounds resonate within your body segments in order to affect your Qi, which will require a lot of energy, concentration and willpower. But this is good because that is what you want to be doing on the cultivation path. You want to learn how to move your internal energy on your own through your own thought and willpower, and want to become in control of the process. This is what devas are practicing all the time. Also, remember that sounds different than these can be tried for each organ, just as some people use "Chway" for the kidneys or "Ha" for the heart.

All sorts of sounds have different physiological effects other than just these six sounds. Through lots of experimenting you can find better sounds than these. The Indians have discovered *bija* root sounds to help vibrate the Qi within organs and body regions for similar purposes, and they are the basis of mantra construction in Hinduism. You can even use sounds for physical purposes just as many laborers use the sound “Hei” to increase their working strength. Speaking the sound “Xu” helps to stop bleeding and reduce the pain from cuts. “Hen” and “Ha” are used in the martial arts where “Ha” is a Yang sound that can raise your spirit to a high level while “Hen” leads your Qi inward or can be used while emitting muscular strength with some reserved power. Similarly, different sounds can affect the Qi in different organs and even relieve the strain or pressure within them. The high and low tones of a sound will even affect the same organ differently. The Hung Gar martial arts system even uses special sounds together with particular muscular movements in an “Iron Thread set” to vibrate the body’s internal organs to create tremendous internal power and energy. Its *Tit Sin Kyun* set uses sounds related to emotions for internal training, specifically “Mmmmm,” “Eh,” “Tek,” “Ahhhh,” “Waaahhh,” “Hit,” “He He He (laughing),” “Jaaa (crying),” “Chr,” and “Hei” as well as “Sssshhh” and “Hoh.” In this system the liver is matched with anger and shouting sounds, the heart with joy and laughing sounds, the stomach with overthinking and singing sounds, the lungs with grief and crying sounds, and the kidneys with fear and moaning sounds.

To get better at stimulating into arousal the emotions connected with various virtues, and healing or strengthening the Qi of your internal organs through such energy-impregnated emotions, you should do the following. The method emphasizes the positive emotions associated with each organ rather than the negative emotional associations, such as anger with the liver or sorrow with the lungs. When reciting Ahh you should therefore feel the energy in the chest and think of being very joyous, generous, magnanimous, gregarious, and sociable. When reciting Shh for the lungs you can think of having integrity and speaking truthfully, demanding justice and being fair, being a focused communicator, or think of automatically projecting an aura that influences with positivity your environment around you. When reciting Hoo for the stomach/spleen you should think of being stable, reliable, dependable, industrious, competent, dutiful, modest, and physical. When so practicing, you can also imagine being like some ideal individual who best represents those qualities as you arouse the energetic feeling of being like that. The stomach represents all the muscles of the body, so you can also try to feel all the muscles of the body when focusing on the stomach as their center.

When reciting Shoo (Xu) for the liver you can try to feel its energies and spread within you the feeling of being dynamic and adventurous, pioneering

and capable of creating change, slow to get angry or take offense, and kind or benevolent. While doing so you should also think being like an appropriate model. When reciting Foo (Chway) for the kidneys and bladder you should try to feel the Qi within those organs (and the entire body) and impress that energy with the emotional feeling of confidence, courage, fearlessness, moving forward, having a steady voice, and so forth. If you can think of an individual who can ideally represent those traits then you would imagine being like them during the recitation of that syllable, even if just for an instant, or for the period of time when you repetitiously recite Foo if you are doing it thirty-six or more times in a row.

If I were to take various emotions or virtues for the organs and put them into related groupings I would construct a table somewhat as follows that could be used for cultivation purposes such as the immeasurables meditation in conjunction with the six organ healing sounds. As time goes on, people will create better lists and groups than this for those who want to do similar types of cultivation practice.

HEART & LARGE INTESTINE

- Joy, happiness, cheerfulness, delight, fun, laughter, enthusiasm, exhilaration, elatedness, euphoria, feeling glorious, thrilling, feel like dancing, feel alive, sharing joy and laughter with others
 - Friendliness, warm-hearted, good-will, comforting, bonding with others, making contact with others, gregarious, desiring to express oneself socially, giving of oneself, outgoing spirit
 - Generous, liberal with your possessions, magnificence, magnanimous, charitable giving, desiring to give and share
 - Kindness, mercy, compassion, loving-kindness, tenderness, softness, intimacy, gentleness, forgiving, tolerance for the emotions of others
- You can summarize these as belonging to four Yin and Yang categories: (1) joy, cheerfulness, elatedness, gloriousness, (2) loving-kindness, mercy, compassion, (3) magnificent generosity along with a tremendous giving spirit, (4) tenderness, softness, gentleness.

LUNGS & SMALL INTESTINE

- Vibrancy, inspirational, energetically influencing your surroundings without thinking, impresses others by natural projection
 - Truthfulness in self-expression, honesty, integrity, fluency in speech, communicativeness
 - Justice, fairness, righteousness, rightness, proper indignation, independent
 - Openness, tolerance of other people and their values, acceptance
 - Focus, clarity, intensity
- You can summarize these as belonging to four Yin and Yang categories: (1)

vibrancy and inspirational energy projected into the environment, (2) tolerance, acceptance, and vast openness to others, (3) strict personal honesty, truthfulness, and integrity in expression, (4) pristine mental focus and clarity.

STOMACH, SPLEEN & PANCREAS

- Stable, grounded, responsible, reliable, practical, prudent, careful, dutiful
- Temperance (discipline and self-restraint) in the face of pleasure, restraint, abstinence or renunciation, self-discipline, disciplined
- Simple, solid, practical, industrious, physicality of the body (muscles)
- Standing behind one's principles, proper conduct, straightforward in dealings, trustworthy, honest, fidelity, loyal
- Humble, modest, respectful, patient, fortitude, values friendship, nourishes others
- Puts plans into action, paces oneself, steady, resolve, will, diligence

You can summarize these as belonging to four Yin and Yang categories: (1) steady resolve, willpower and self-discipline (2) modesty, humbleness, humility, (3) straightforwardness, standing behind one's principles (4) stableness, steadiness, being careful.

LIVER & GALL BLADDER

- Ambitious, optimistic, positive attitude, "can do," bold and creative, pioneering American spirit, dynamic, initiating, moves forward, creates change, vibrant
- Perseverance, willpower, steadfastness, endurance, determination, diligence in hard work, doing, accomplishing, achieving, like vitamins, activity with purpose and movement with direction, purpose
- Benevolence, kindness, slow to take offense, good-tempered, courteous
- Peaceful, calmness, equanimity, serenity, patient, forbearance, anti-excessive, not moody, control/domination over one's desires

You can summarize these as belonging to four Yin and Yang categories: (1) bold optimism and a dynamic positive attitude (2) kindness, benevolence, and being slow to take offence, (3) purpose, determination, perseverance in achieving a goal and moving with direction, (4) calmness, peacefulness, serenity.

KIDNEYS & BLADDER

- Courage in the face of fear, self-confidence, composure, confidence, fearless without anxiety, actively moves forward despite fear, brave under misfortune, not shy, lacking in cowardice but not reckless
- Personal magnetism, virility, attractiveness to others, steady voice in harmony with one's whole body, showing the truth of oneself in self-

expression, expresses oneself flawlessly and fearlessly, confidence in communication, creativity

- Mental clarity, mental acuity, presence, clarity in evaluating affairs, insightful, discernment, awareness, mindfulness, being true to one's word, the skill of being able to listen to others with clarity and hear them truly
- Suppleness, flexibility, able to accept change quickly and gracefully, adaptability, comfortable and at ease in all situations

You can summarize these as belonging to four Yin and Yang categories: (1) confidence, courage, fearlessness, (2) suppleness, flexibility, a willingness to accept change quickly and gracefully, (3) confidently expressing oneself flawlessly and fearlessly, showing the truth of oneself in an expression of vitality, (4) mental clarity, insight, a state of presence.

From these examples you can see how you can greatly improve ordinary mantra practice and make it a *nei-gong* practice to (1) transform your Qi more quickly, (2) help develop in yourself various character strengths or values, and (3) slowly transform not just your character and behavior but your fortune in this life and subsequent lives because you change your personality that gets expressed through your thoughts that produce your conduct or behavior. Ordinarily you simply recite a mantra that a Buddha and his students respond to by possessing your Qi with etheric energies and moving it, but by adding emotions, visualizations, movement and other aspects to mantra recitation it becomes Mantrayana practice, which is far more effective.

The more you act or become a certain way in terms of character traits, personality and emotions, the more this will become imprinted on your Qi. This is what changes your fortune and personality since your character and fate are not perfectly set in stone. If you try to change, transform, purify or override the “basic programming” you have conditionally absorbed through life into something better through any type of immeasurable meditation – such as that of infinite joy, courage, confidence, authority, leadership, cheerfulness, love, kindness, mirth, humbleness, vigor, generosity, forgiveness, mercy, compassion, adaptability, optimism, serenity, patience, carefulness, goodwill and so on – you can certainly do so.

You can use mantras in this way as well, or prayer recitation too. By reciting a prayer or mantra while holding onto a special feeling or meaning, and embedding it deep within your psyche, and by trying to act that way in regular life, you can and *will* change your character and fortune. This is what spiritual cultivation is all about. The religious injunctions to become virtuous, stay away from evil and do good deeds are all about this exact same task of self-improvement, only they approach the target through different efforts. If you want to develop the higher spiritual bodies that last seemingly forever then don't you think you better get started at developing

better personality traits that help you enjoy life, represent virtue rather than vice, and will help you help others? This, then, is one of the reasons for the emphasis on self-perfection in the spiritual path. You have to voluntarily enter into this pursuit.

You might not succeed in liberating the soul from matter whilst alive so as to attain the will-born deva body. However, you can certainly train to free your soul from lower behavioral patterns, especially the ugly human traits most akin to the animals. You can learn to transcend the pull of the passions and ennoble yourself. You can also train yourself to enjoy life more by ignoring the tiny slights and harms that normally come our way. To be unconcerned with harms, be more cheerful and not take yourself too seriously is a great boon in life for happiness. You can certainly train to put aside self-interest as your number one objective in life and become a source of inspiration and help to others in all dimensions. This is one way to do it.

You can use this method to help instill a character trait that you lack, or to help overcome some of your personal character flaws and failings as was the concern of Benjamin Franklin. This is a practice method, in addition to mental watching, that helps you change your behavior in the direction of the more positive rather than negative. This is the method involved in Christianity's *conversatio morum* "conversion of manners."

On the spiritual trail you should try to cultivate so that you become full of virtues while eliminating errant behavioral tendencies. The application of firm resolve to self-perfection, by consistently using a method such as mantra recitation with emotions or immeasurable visualizations, can help someone gradually eliminate their personality flaws and intensify, enhance or perfect their desired virtues. In order to become a Buddha you must become kinder and more naturally good-natured as a basic temperament without resorting to artificial rules of conduct and discipline.

You can and should employ these techniques to cultivate unique virtues, qualities or character traits you want to possess/master that are not pursued through the standard four immeasurables. You can definitely change your personality over time by spiritual cultivation techniques such as this. The basic idea is to every day mentally rehearse that you have a particular personality trait and to feel the Qi of that trait within you. Then you have to actualize it in real life, with every application of effort coming closer and closer to the high ideal that you have set. It is essential that you don't just think about cultivating a virtue or trait, but work to bring that behavior into the real world. Just as in sports training where you continually visualize yourself moving optimally for some athletic task, you have to do real world exercise and practice to carve those optimal movements into your neural patterns. It sometimes helps if you have a real life example of someone who possesses those traits too because you can call up that image in your mind and try to be like them.

In the deity yoga cultivation practice of Tibetan Buddhism you are supposed to practice imagining that you become a perfected being with special qualities and energy characteristics, which is a practice based on similar principles. Deity yoga helps you cultivate your Yin Qi or Yang along with associated personality qualities. The enlightened deity you use for your practice is called a *yidam*. In deity yoga there is a generation stage and completion stage of practice. During the generation stage a practitioner establishes a strong familiarity with the *yidam*, deity or Buddha by means of visualization and a high level of concentration. Examples of *yidams* include Avalokitesvara, Samantabhadra, Shakyamuni, Amitofo, Amitayus, Vairocana, Chakrasamvara, Hevajra, Yamantaka, Vajrayogini, Guhyasamaja, Marici, Vajrasattva, Tara, and Kalachakra. During the completion stage of practice, a practitioner focuses on methods to “actualize the transformation of their mind-stream and body into the meditation Deity by meditation and yogic techniques of energy-control.”

This is basically a similar type of Qi/Prana cultivation technique that is connected with the imagined characteristics/personality traits of the Buddha *yidam* visualized. During deity yoga meditation practice, you are to “identify your own form, attributes and mind with those of the deity for the purpose of transformation.” Isn’t this very similar? Why not use the principles you have learned to make the practice even more effective by cultivating other characteristics you want in your life? You will definitely be a different person thirty years from now, and you can let situations shape you or you can transform yourself into something better according to your own wishes and ideals. I suggest becoming more of the way you want to be and start working at it. It’s like someone who says “I want to get a black belt in the martial arts,” and then starts working through the program to attain it. In *Visualization Power* I showed how to do this sort of self-development work.

If you pursue personal transformation then you will become more of your intended way in this life and in the next life. However, you must start to actually act in that way rather than just think about it. It has to become part of you in terms of behavior too rather than just a flavoring to your Qi. Doing is required in addition to visualization practice.

As another instance of this type of practice put into action, I want to retell the story of one of my friends, Frank, who in his younger days was a Vice President for a large defense contractor. At one time he designed a new type of integrated circuit chip necessary for the U.S. Navy to be able to use sonar to determine where submarines and ships were located across the world’s oceans. While in a meeting with the U.S. Navy’s senior staff officers including the Fleet Admiral, despite his very young age (less than thirty) he was actually able to raise his voice and override the Fleet Admiral’s dominating presence by projecting an even larger Qi of invincible authority

during the meeting. Verbally nullifying the admiral's table announcement with direct assertiveness, he told all present that *his* company would be the lead contractor on this project instead of a subsidiary contractor the admiral had just announced, and he had his way. When he got back to his company the CEO dressed him down for talking to the Fleet Admiral that way, but after the dress down all the senior executives came in and gleefully congratulated him on winning the giant contract.

I asked Frank how he was able to do this in a room full of powerful naval commanders who never ever faced objections to their orders, and he explained that he intentionally trained to develop this ability. Frank's method was to sit in his room and visualize himself as an authority who could command others, and would practice filling his room with the Qi energy of great authority. He would impregnate a strong feeling of authority into his body and imagine its aura projecting outwards all around him. When he had mastered projecting the feeling of authority filling a room, he then repeated the same practice in a larger room, then an empty concert hall, and finally an empty sports stadium. Frank would go to an empty sports stadium, sit down in the bleachers, and would practice filling the entire stadium with the feeling of his projected authority! Many singers have visualized singing to a large audience, but Frank would actually go into a large concert hall and stadium to practice, and would unify his Qi and emotions in his projection-visualization efforts. He was not just developing an ability but changing his future.

Analogously, you can also cultivate any other traits you desire including the particular character traits of a particular Buddha you want to become like (develop into) or virtue you want to acquire. How? By also copying Frank's technique that is similar to the four immeasurables practice of Buddhism, and the visualization practices used by top athletes that I have attached from a chapter in *Sport Visualization for the Elite Athlete*. In *Visualization Power* you can learn how other types of professionals used similar techniques for goal achievement, self-development, skills development and self-actualization. It is a process of self-evolution or self-creation. In addition to changing your personality and behavior through mental rehearsal you can use versions of these techniques, such as NLP neuro-linguistic programming methods, to escalate skills and performances to ultimate excellence.

You can also apply a strong intention or awareness to any activity you engage in to raise its meaningfulness, and thus raise your participation to a higher purpose and intent. For instance, you can view your job of bricklaying a wall as the building of a wall, which embeds the activity with a much higher meaning. You can also perform your bricklaying while holding the strong thought, deep feeling, sacred intention or high aspiration that you are actually building a cathedral. Or, you might go about bricklaying

while holding the mindset, and thus imprinting your every effort, with the deep thought and feeling that you are creating a place where countless people can come to connect with God and find spiritual peace and support.

Superimposing or embedding a specifically envisioned intent to your efforts is called adding a “principal awareness,” and through continual awareness of a higher intent in what you are doing you will significantly change your fortune and character. This is because you *deeply and continuously* identify your activities with a higher meaning. That then affects your Qi, and thus your personality and ultimately your fortune. Whenever you participate in an activity, adding a principal awareness means that you always remember, or bring to mind, the fact that you are doing so with a higher ideal as your objective. You try to deeply feel that intent as guidance, and also try to envision that greater outcome. This is similar to using the immeasurable meditations, visualizations or mental rehearsals, only you are embedding your activities with a “principal awareness.”

This is related to how we choose to make sense of the world. There are many rites of passage in life such as marriage, childbirth, the first eating of solid food, the first menstruation, the first day of school, graduation and even death. We have to progress through these rites of passage, but it’s how we do so with our body, mind and emotions that counts. How we celebrate festivals, serve food, dress and adjust our appearance for the world, how we treat friends, guests, superiors or even enemies ... all these activities require us to engage our bodies, minds and emotions in certain ways. We should do so with the highest possible intentions that ennoble them.

We should impregnate such activities with the highest possible meaning and positive emotions we can envision. This too, is practicing “principal awareness.” It represents how we consciously choose to make sense of the world, and what emotions we choose to live with.

Rituals, for instance, can have a higher symbolic meaning for us or none at all. We are the ones who choose how to experience them. Ritual actions often need to be performed, such as attending a church service or lighting a stick of incense every night and reporting your deeds to heaven. What is most important is how we participate in the ritual, how we hold our mind and emotions. The most important aspect is our mindset and underlying emotions rather than whether the ritual is performed well or not.

Our emotions and a higher view of the activity (such as the perfection of the imagined future it beckons) need to be brought to the forefront of our consciousness during ceremonies. In this way they can be used as a method to purify and ennoble ourselves, and then such activities help us become “beautified” or exalted. They become a form of cultivation practice when we practice holding our mind and emotions in certain ways during our attendance and participation. During visualization practice, and mental rehearsal practice for sports training, you are taught to hold your emotions

in a certain way as well which is similar to adding a principal awareness.

As stated, it is interesting to note that several singers and speakers would practice success visualization by sitting quietly and visualizing that they were performing to overflowing stadium audiences filled with adoring fans. During such visualizations, the principal awareness would involve feeling a joy and generosity in offering songs that came from the heart. This type of mental rehearsal then becomes a ritualistic activity in that it is cultivating the opening of the heart chakra or heart-lung region that involves generosity, joy, and inspiration flowing throughout the body, but particularly centered in this region.

Frank's method, duplicated here in a different way, was that he selected a character trait (virtue) he wanted to cultivate, acquire or strengthen, concentrated on feeling it both inside himself and externally surrounding his body stretching outwards, and finally was able to successfully project that immense characteristic (authority) into the outside world.

This is one way to develop a new skill or characteristic of your personality, and become the light you want everyone to see. It doesn't matter that you don't have a particular skill or talent because as Daniel Coyle has pointed out in his books, *talent can be learned*. Greatness isn't born with you but grown through self-development. You can turn yourself into anything you want through deliberate cultivation. The point of self-cultivation is learning new talents and becoming the way you want to be that is different from the way you are now.

Another friend, hearing this story and understanding the basic principle, now practices projecting the feeling of bringing prosperity to other people during his daily marketing job that involves business dealing. By continuously doing this and embedding his actions with the same principal awareness, over time he will slowly change his habit energy, personality, and fortune in a vastly positive way because he is concentrating on helping others through service. Eventually people will be able to feel this in a tangible, palpable way. Who knows what good karma it will bring during this life and in future lives? By cultivating an attitude of offering and actually acting in congruence with this higher calling, he is creating a personality he wants and the karma for prosperity. By cultivating this mindset of producing prosperity for others, as well as actually doing it with an attitude of emotional giving, what do you think he is building for his future?

If you are trying to become like someone you admire, such as musicians, athletes or even business greats, you can employ the NLP method of modeling their behavior in order to try to replicate their excellence. NLP modeling of someone entails copying their physiology (breathing and posture), beliefs, strategies, behavioral patterns, and basically how they do things. You might not be able to duplicate someone's great good fortune,

but you can duplicate many aspects of their performance if you set out to cultivate particular skills or traits you select. Actors do this all the time when trying to become a character, and you can also change your Qi/aura in this manner if you consistently try to cultivate what you feel inside your body as the emotion or characteristic you want to develop. This is somewhat similar to the practice of Buddha mindfulness.

The point of these stories is that this is how you can develop the virtues or character traits of the Buddha or Bodhisattva you wish to become. This is how you become the person you want others to meet in the world, the light you want others to see, the influence you want to have, the way in which you want your energy and emotions to flow.

Let's now turn back to focusing on the big picture. These are all methods of not just cultivating virtue and character traits, but of *nei-gong* inner energy work. But once again, what if you cannot achieve the initial fruit of the spiritual path while alive, which is the independent deva body that can leave your physical body at will? You can still train along the lines of cultivating values, virtues, personality traits and even worldly accomplishments through such efforts. By cultivating a better character/personality, you will change your fate in this life and in future lives as well because deftly done you are cultivating merit. If you work on transforming your habits (habit energies) you also will eliminate or "purify" conditioned behavioral patterns that would ordinarily mar your life. By eliminating them they will not carry over to a subsequent life. Why not work on perfecting yourself in this way?

As previously stated, from *Color Me Confucius* you will now be taught how to cultivate virtue through mental introspection or watching, and through an attached chapter of *Culture, Country, City, Company, Person, Purpose, Passion, World* you will be provided with the cases of several individuals who chose to cultivate worldly accomplishments and their behavior/character, including Benjamin Franklin whose story I enjoy greatly. He was not the only noted American to use such techniques. As an actor, Ronald Reagan continually starred in movies that championed basic American values of goodness. Because of being absorbed in these sorts of roles that "perfumed him," this is what he ended up conveying/representing to the American people during his presidency. By championing good values that he had cultivated through acting, even his harshest critics admit that in his leadership role he restored the confidence of the American people and their belief in the presidency. His occupation turned into a form of character cultivation that produced a magnitude of beneficial results for America. With Benjamin Franklin and George Washington we can say the same thing.

It is interesting and inspiring to see how many individuals cultivated their personality and behavior in life – in particular the virtues and values of the

Buddhas and Bodhisattvas required for the spiritual path – as well as worldly, mundane accomplishment. This, too, is a legitimate worthwhile pathway towards Buddhahood.

From: COLOR ME CONFUCIUS
CH. 6 – “Cultivating Virtue To Brighten
One’s Character And Fortune”

Confucian cultivation emphasizes the practice of mindfulness, which means watching your mind to know your thoughts clearly. You practice mental watching so that you can cultivate a realm of mental purity.

Mental purity means two things: (a) achieving a higher degree of inner mental quiet and clarity where you know your thoughts clearly (you know what you are thinking rather than remain oblivious of the fact), and (b) generating “higher thoughts” or “virtuous thoughts” that are more pure because they rise above your baser instincts and urges. These two aspects of mental purity are the basis of human ennoblement and higher spiritual attainments.

Mastering our mental sphere and our behavior is what separates us from animals whose consciousness focuses on eating to satisfy hunger, drinking to satisfy thirst, copulating to satisfy carnal urges, and remaining on constant fearful alert in order to avoid being eaten. Confucian cultivation of our mind helps us avoid becoming bestial due to unchecked passions, wishes and desires. It helps us transcend our lower nature and become the higher possible person. What is this process of ennoblement? It is using our rational mind of clarity to transcend and purify the irrational parts of our consciousness that are the vestiges of our animal nature.

Mental purity and clarity – because they allow you to police your thoughts, words and behavior – are exactly the very things that also enable you to change your fortune to become better and eventually enter the realm of the sages. Of course achieving the level of a “sage” or “worthy” requires considerable individual effort past a rudimentary mastery of mindfulness. Nevertheless, every sage starts upon the spiritual path of ennoblement and transcendence by watching their thoughts so that they always know their mind clearly, and through this activity the background noise in their mind eventually dies down over time.

Knowing his thoughts and watching his behavior, a sage immediately cuts off faults and errors whenever he notices them so as to always be pursuing virtue and always be improving situations for the better. Those who strive to become sages are those who wish to take human culture to the highest levels of ennoblement. They work on becoming morally better people, more careful in handling affairs, and more active in benefitting the

world around them so that people can attain a life of human flourishing.

You too are inherently a sage. You possess the inherent capability of a sage, as do all human beings, and can bring out this potential through Confucian training. The practices of meditation and mindfulness in daily life to produce proper behavior are the tools that make this happen. When your thoughts turn away from the low towards ennoblement, such as taking a vow to improve the welfare of others, you have entered upon the path of the sages. By cultivating altruistic virtuous behavior you make your life meaningful. By no longer focusing solely on your self and your desires, you become part of the great reset movement that is trying to renew the world.

The ennoblement of human beings as a group will only happen when we all devote ourselves to higher thoughts and behavior that cultivate our cooperative humanity to help society move forward. Intimately bound with others, when we work to alleviate the collective sufferings of a group or upgrade its collective intelligence we also eliminate our own burdens. And when everyone pursues altruistic actions to help the greater whole they will build a culture that is maximally rewarding in every direction.

Like Christianity, the Confucian way especially emphasizes the practice of virtuous behavior for becoming a better human being. It also emphasizes contributing to humanity or larger social groups in a way that will create prosperity and harmoniousness. This type of activity feeds our higher nature.

No animal in nature tries to improve itself or cooperatively sacrifices itself for a group of others. However, the human drive for self-perfection and altruistic action is the natural outcome of cultivating mental watching, mental purity and a life of activity in tune with virtue and propriety. No animal chooses to consciously change itself; only humans consciously choose to improve themselves in a way they desire. Among other things, what distinguishes us from animals is the ability to set upon a path of self-improvement where an individual takes control of his life through cultivation practice and tries to make of himself whatever he wills. An individual lives his life in harmony with higher values he selects in order to make something special of his life. You can become the possible person, the ideal you have of your individual purpose.

Just as is transmitted in the Ten Commandments of Christianity or emphasized in the *Yamas* and *Niyamas* of Hindu Yoga, the task of cultivating virtuous behavior is to be regarded as the core foundation of human life because it creates higher human culture. Virtuous behavior, including discipline of various types, is what elevates us above the vicious kill-or-be-killed realm of animals where the powerful oppress the weak without restraint. This is why ethical conduct is the foundational bedrock for all the paths of religion.

Animals need strength and cunning to survive, but man can rise above

the realm of vicious creatures and their cruel tendency to kill one another. He can make a conscious decision to rise above his animal nature despite his biological instincts. For instance, this is why many religions espouse temporary periods of fasting and celibacy, which teach men that they can rise above their biological desires such as hunger and sexual gratification. Denial is good training for the mind. Men can be taught to rise above their lusts and passions – their animal heritage – and become free of their lower nature. The goal of such practices is to teach us that we can cultivate patience, self-discipline, forbearance and transcendence. We can rise above our impulses even though they be strong, and that we are more than the sum of our biological urges.

Man can transcend the natural tendency to selfishly satisfy desires by cultivating self-discipline and virtue, which define what it means to be human. Aristotle felt that happiness was a life of activity lived in accordance with virtue, and this was a life lived meaningfully. Socrates taught the same principle, and so did Jesus. Confucius also taught that a man must follow the virtuous path at the cost of life itself. Why do all religions share this commonality?

Through his powers of consciousness and by virtue of positive character traits, man can create civilization and culture. With culture life is no longer about survival alone but about meaning. With culture one can find purposes within life. In the quest for meaning man creates society based upon the principles of virtue. Culture is what enables us to rise above bestiality, and culture is based upon communication, cooperation (where you don't take your own desires as preeminent), discipline and virtue.

The Confucian way is the road of generating higher culture. The method is to harmonize cooperative relationships between people and have individuals start watching their thoughts, speech and behavior to rise above motivations of greed, power, and selfishness. It involves teaching people to take themselves out of egotism in order to benefit others. It is utopian nonsense to believe that all people will do this or become this way. However, the Confucian ideal is that teaching this path widely will lead to many following its pathway of self-perfection.

The pathway of pursuing virtue is not an inner mental game that never projects itself into the outer world. It involves interactions with others - greater society - via actual deeds and relationships. It is a special emphasis of Confucius that we try to act compassionately and harmonize our cooperative interactions with other people. It is also a special emphasis that as soon as you recognize that you are involved in errant behavior, especially activity that might harm others, you should immediately stop doing it.

Mencius explained, "Suppose there is a person who every day appropriates one of his neighbor's chickens. Someone tells him, 'This is not the Way of an exemplary individual.' He then says, 'May I reduce it to

appropriating one chicken every month and wait until next year to stop?’ If one knows that it is not righteous, then one should quickly stop.”

Putting it frankly, whenever you know that your behavior is wrong then you must stop at that point. You stop when you recognize that you are in the wrong. Isn’t this what we normally demand of others? Isn’t this what we try to teach our children?

Confucius and Mencius both emphasized that human beings be straightforward, honest and sincere. They insisted that people show consideration for others and practice benevolence (consummate conduct) by engaging in ethical, moral, virtuous, proper, righteous behavior. This is the pathway to becoming a true human being because you are following your greater self rather than lesser self. You are putting aside your animalistic tendencies and rising above them through ennoblement.

The Great Learning required of life is the challenge to rise above the attitudes, thoughts and instincts that might impel you to choose a lower pathway of behavior in each and every situation you encounter, and choosing the highest effective pathway instead. This is spiritualizing your behavior. This is the pathway of the sage.

The basic form of Confucian self-correction is called cessation-observation practice or mindfulness, which entails watching your mind. This is the most basic of spiritual practices commonly found across the world’s religions. At the very minimum it will help you to become a better human being. At a higher level of expertise it will help you change your fortune, and with even more skillfulness this behavior will improve your health and even your longevity. At its apex of mastery it will lead you to becoming a sage and teacher of mankind. Simply observe your mind, discover what thoughts lead you to a fuller, better, higher or more meaningful life, and follow those ideas rather than weld yourself to a lower state of beingness and behavior.

Both Confucius and Socrates said that even if you face poverty or death you must always choose the pathway of spiritual ennoblement. You must do what is right even at the cost of your life. For instance, when ordered to arrest a man named Leon from Salamis so that he could be unjustly executed, Socrates returned to his home refusing to do so even though he knew it probably meant his own death. Socrates knew what he was told to do was wrong and so he refused to follow those instructions.

The basic methodology of spiritualization, self-improvement or self-correction to be practiced by everyone - including the highest emperor and most humble commoner - entails always observing, witnessing, observing or knowing your thoughts like a third person observer who sees them as objects appearing in the mind that might have to be corrected. You must train to be an observer of your thoughts and actions and clearly know what is happening inside and outside your mind. When you see your thoughts or

behavior moving in the wrong direction, when you know something is wrong, then when this comes to your attention you must pull yourself back onto the proper path.

Thoughts are just experiences in your head rather than absolute realities. They are just representations of the world and situations that are sometimes falsities or illusions. In just being ideas they are not commands you need always follow. They are just guesses as to what is going on. They are the objects or products of consciousness, which is our miraculous blessing of cognizance, and being such we need to learn what to do with them. It is which thoughts you choose to follow and how you respond to them that matters most in life.

Rather than worship, “knowing your mind” is the basis of the most effective forms of spiritual practice across the world yet no one tells you this. You are the one who has to become spiritualized, and self-cultivation of your thoughts and behavior is the means to do so. Purifying your mind because of correcting your thoughts is a higher spiritual method than any act of worship.

How are we to practice this correctly so that we get better at it and the results permanently penetrate through to regular life? How are we to engage upon the path of mental purification, which means spiritual purification, so that we are permanently better human beings?

Thoughts operate on their own, arising when you need them according to circumstances, and they depart when no longer needed. They are generated automatically by the mind because this is the nature of consciousness, and the rule of consciousness is that the flow of automatic thoughts cannot be stopped. For instance, when you concentrate on some task at hand you always develop the thoughts you need. They are generated as you need them.

This ability to form the right thoughts is just a natural capability of the mind. When you don't need to concentrate on a topic anymore then those thoughts will naturally leave you and your mind will start wandering in distractedness once again, moving from one thing to another looking for involvement while being jostled by external stimuli. Since thought generation never stops, the question for us then becomes how to deal with them properly, yet no one teaches us any principles about this in our educational systems.

Here is the solution. A man of cultivation trains to become master of his mind. He trains to master all the functions of his mind, including the automatic functions of unwanted thoughts that may plague him. He trains to control his attitude. He learns how to master his powers of focus and concentration, his thought generation and selection process, and how to deal with mental afflictions and distractions that naturally arise. As the great philosopher William James said, “The greatest discovery of my generation is

that a human being can alter his life by altering his attitudes.” A man learns to do this by developing control over his mind. If you force your behavior to be a certain way then you can use this strategy to change your mental state too, such as smiling to make yourself happy.

Mastering the mind starts with awareness, which is to know the contents of one’s mind (one’s thoughts). With awareness, by steps one learns concentration and how to ignore or decrease unhelpful thoughts and distractions that automatically arise. One also learns how to give rise to, select or manipulate thoughts as needed.

We can choose to become one of two types of human beings. We can (1) strive to always be in a clear state of knowing concentration wherein we know the thoughts flowing through our minds. Or, (2) we can choose to remain an individual who easily becomes distracted or agitated and thus entangled in thoughts or a loser of mental clarity. If you don’t cultivate then wandering thoughts and desires will predominate in your mind, obscure your present purpose and make you their prisoner.

The pathway of the clear mind that knows its contents develops a higher vantage point of dispassionate wisdom while the distracted, undisciplined mind remains mired in a realm of unclearness that easily leads to harm, wrongdoing or animalistic tendencies.

Sloppy mental habits can entangle us in clinging to our thoughts so that we lose an independent perspective, and this loss can lead to wrong decisions. We must learn how to properly discriminate between right and wrong, and further recognize that our thoughts are not absolutes. They do not necessarily embody an accurate take on reality but are just potential guidelines for opinions and behaviors.

Our educational systems do not teach us about these facts and our religions do not teach us about this either. Thoughts are just conditional events that arise in the mind in response to circumstances, and their automatic construction is based on involuntary factors we cannot control and everything we have ever previously experienced that has become a memory. For life we need to learn how to deal with whatever thoughts that arise within us. We need to learn how to think accurately and usefully as well as focus on those thoughts that move us in positive directions without getting caught up in negativity. In fact, we need to learn how to silence or disempower the negative thought afflictions that accost us. One can call the mastery of these wanted mental skills the pursuit or cultivation of wisdom.

The Confucian way to do this is to work on polishing your mind and behavior. To elevate your behavior you are to watch your internal mental tableau and then cut off errant thoughts along with the wrong words or behaviors they lead to, while remaining natural all the while. In essence you self-edit or self-correct your thoughts and behavior, and you uplift them both by watching your thoughts and elevating them whenever appropriate.

The proper Confucian way is not to become overly rigid, inflexible, sclerotic or ossified about your thoughts and behavior such that rigid rules are established and you lose all adaptability. The proper way does not involve creating a society so rigidly bound by rules – such as seen with the Amish or Orthodox Jewish communities - that people find their culture claustrophobic and oppressive.

In China's past many people made this mistake because they interpreted Confucius incorrectly, creating rigid rules of conduct and teaching that one must never deviate from tradition. In China this ossification destroyed the proper interpretation of Confucius's teachings.

As another warning, ancient Sparta was also destroyed due to a rigid adherence to ancient custom and time-sanctified tradition, which also prevented it from becoming an empire or anything spectacular in fields like philosophy, art or wealth. That adherence prevented her from adapting herself to new ways when necessary and so in defending the old without flexibility, adaptability and the willingness to change she eventually perished. Civilizations die if they do not embrace change in positive evolution.

If you don't feed errant thoughts and desires with energy but abstain from fusing with them they will eventually leave your mind and your mental realm will gradually calm down. This is one way of dealing with thought deviants, and is why you can find inner calm and serenity through the practice of sitting meditation. Meditation teaches a detachment you can carry into the regular world after you practice long enough to develop this skill. With calmness and clarity as your belt you can more easily choose to follow your highest nature, which is the highest of human achievements.

In case you are wondering, this is the actual spiritual pathway of ennoblement, spiritualization and divinization! It all has to do with perfecting your mind and behavior, but the pathway requires practice and effort. Spiritualization doesn't just happen. It requires self-work. You become more refined by gradually eliminating the faults and flaws you discover in yourself. You can only become an exemplary person, and then sage, by slowly stripping yourself of flawed ways you have picked up and practiced so many years.

When you cannot detach from thoughts that seem to impel you with pressure so that you often succumb to bad behavior, you might also try the strategy of distraction to occupy your mind with other activities in order to break any hold that negative thoughts, impulses or desires might have on you. When you can finally learn how to detach from thoughts then your mind will gradually become more quiet and it will enter into a degree of "cessation." Mental independence from getting caught up in your thoughts is what leads to better decisions and better behavior.

As Vedanta says, "If you have no connection with the mind flow, you

are out of it. You are apart from it.” You must therefore come to recognize that thoughts are just words and pictures that flow through your mind automatically and not the real world. By recognizing them as just objects of experience and by remaining independent from them you can create distance from them, and with distance you won’t follow them automatically. If you did act upon every thought, urge or emotion that ever appeared in your brain then you would probably be in jail, wouldn’t you? Obviously you need some way to censor them, change them, or detach from those that are inappropriate but won’t leave and continue to impel you.

Therefore, you first need awareness to be able to stand back like an independent observer and recognize your thoughts and emotions that are to be ignored since they don’t move you in the direction you want to go. This requires a higher independent wisdom of viewing and understanding your thoughts and emotions.

Next you need to learn how to defuse from those recurrent thoughts when they give you pressure so that they are just mental events that come and go rather than pressured commands that control you. You have to cultivate the power to override errant desires, impulses, habits or emotions. Part of that ability comes from the detachment you cultivate via the Confucian way, which is designed to help you purify your mental realm and behavior. This is a non-denominational pathway to cultivating the purity of ennoblement.

The result from doing this in life is the development of a pure mind that is awake, aware, open, balanced and bright. The mind is never to be suppressed (you must always allow your thoughts to arise) but must be tamed in the sense that we need to learn how to use it rightly. It should always remain open and free so that it clearly sees and knows the thoughts within it. Through meditation and mindfulness practice it can become like a clear mirror that reflects thoughts and images clearly but does not stick to them at all.

You should not overly play with negative thoughts when they arise within your mind so that you become stickily entangled with them. A healthy mind either leaves them alone, cuts them off using various skillful means or switches topics to concentrate on something else. As a result of mastering such skills unwanted thoughts will leave your mental realm and stop bothering you. Hence the name of this practice is cessation (thoughts stop or errant behavior ceases) and observation (you witness/watch your thoughts). You cease or stop errant thoughts through observation. By witnessing them without getting snarled inside their complex you can resist getting pulled into their nonsense and they will ultimately leave.

In addition to Confucius, the Christian monk St. Augustine also emphasized this form of mental practice as the road to help you purify your mind and transform your behavior. Only if you watch yourself can you

tame yourself, otherwise you won't ever be cognizant of what you are really doing.

Christianity often talks about how man may become God, and *this* method is the technique of spiritualization or divinization. It is the way to pursue mental and behavioral purification. This is why Confucianism, although free of religious connotations and overtones, is often considered a spiritual path for it is also a pathway to the same type of divine perfection – purity in mind and behavior. The Confucian way involves reflection, contemplation, a consistent effort for self-improvement and a devoted participation in society for society.

One of the most famous practitioners of the Confucian way was Yuan Liao Fan, whose Ming dynasty story can be found in *Liao Fan's Four Lessons*. The lessons in *Liao Fan's Four Lessons* on how to change your thoughts, personality, and fated destiny have been so popular that countless copycat versions have appeared over the centuries to promote its teachings. I highly recommend that you read it and also give it to your children to study.

As the story goes, in order to purify his mind and behavior and change his fated fortune, Liao Fan created a ledger of daily merits and demerits that he would constantly update from observing his mind and behavior. This is similar to the practice of various Christian nuns who would attach a small booklet around their waists within which they were to record any improper thoughts they had throughout the day in order to help them eliminate their character faults. Throughout his day Liao Fan similarly practiced mindfulness to watch his mind in order to cut off bad thoughts, create good thoughts in their place, practice good deeds and stop performing bad actions.

As the great Confucian Wang Yang-Ming said, “This effort must be carried out continuously. Like eradicating robbers and thieves, one must resolve to wipe them out completely. In idle moments one must search out and discover each and every selfish thought for sex, wealth, fame and the rest. One must resolve to pluck out and cast away the root of the sickness, so that it can never arise again. Only then may one begin to feel at ease. One must, at all times, be like a cat catching mice – with eyes intently watching and ears intently listening. As soon as a single [selfish] thought begins to stir, one must conquer it and cast it out. Act as if you were cutting a nail in two or slicing through iron. Do not indulge or accommodate it in any way. Do not harbor it, and do not allow it to escape.”⁶⁶

Remember that if thoughts will not move you in a proper direction then you must abandon them for better ones. First you have to watch your thoughts to note when they go astray, and then you have to cut off any

⁶⁶ Philip Ivanhoe, *Confucian Moral Self-Cultivation* (Hackett Publishing Company, Indianapolis: Illinois, 2000), p. 67.

negative inclinations while replacing them with positive ones. This is how you become a better person, or how you become “better than your (current) self.”

Liao Fan, being taught by his teacher, used a unique form of moral arithmetic to help him eliminate bad thoughts and behavior over time. He would watch his mind throughout the day, and at the end of the day kept a journal ledger which recorded a net running sum where one bad thought or bad deed cancelled out one good thought or good deed. Every evening Liao Fan would record his efforts at self-perfection by tallying such results, and then offered the net report to Heaven to show his efforts and progress. At that time he would reflect upon what had happened during the day to help strengthen his truthfulness, sincerity and desire for transforming himself.

His method is similar to the famous practice of the saintly King Kulasekhara of Southern India, who did not consider his kingdom his own but would submit at the end of each working day a report of his court activities to Heaven. Considering himself as a caretaker of the kingdom, he also practiced this mindful self-perfection throughout the day in the service to his country. Every evening Benjamin Franklin used to ask himself, “What good have I done today?” At the beginning of each day he also asked himself, “What good shall I do this day?”

The great Chinese emperor Tang Taizong practiced self-perfection a different way by encouraging officials to speak up against his faults and errors so that their remonstrance could serve as a mirror for self-correction. He knew that power corrupts, so rather than surround himself with yes men he used the judgment of his officials to help keep him away from great error.

This is, by the way, why all modern governments need a free press (the Fourth Estate) to report on their wrongdoings and keep them in line for the public good. A free press insures that a government acts in fairness to its own people. By establishing a transparency where the governed know what their government is doing, it becomes a vehicle that can reduce corruption and correct those in power.

In his autobiography, Liao Fan said that he made a vow to Heaven to perform a certain number of good deeds in order that Heaven might help him change his fated destiny as once foretold to him by an infallible fortune teller. He finally did change his fate because of this daily ledger practice, which helped him avoid the errors that were producing his bad fortune.

Liao Fan’s basic formula⁶⁷ was to practice Confucian awareness-mindfulness, mantra (asking Heaven for assistance) and merit-making (doing good deeds for others while stopping bad thoughts and deeds) in

⁶⁷ Detailed in *Move Forward: Powerful Strategies for Creating Better Outcomes in Life and Quick, Fast, Done.*

order to “accumulate the merit” necessary to change his fated destiny. It is said that success in life arises out of the steady accumulation of advantages, but we can also say that your fortune results from the steady accumulation of merit. Liao Fan tried to accumulate a great stock of merit so that he could change his fortune for the better, and mental introspection while pushing himself to do good deeds was the way he chose to do so.

What is merit? Merit is a type of spiritual and material wealth of good fortune you accumulate by doing altruistic deeds on behalf of others so that they benefit. It is a stock of positive karma then owed to you because of doing such good deeds. While Buddhists, Jains, Hindus, Taoists and many other groups believe in karma, so do Confucians because of the teachings within the *Yijing* (“Those who accumulate good deeds will certainly experience an excess of blessings, while those who accumulate bad deeds will experience excess of calamity”). Confucians feel that a family which performs good deeds will accumulate merit and this will, in turn, create for it a better and more prosperous future. This is the concept of karma.

Many Christians, as another instance, also firmly believe that doing good deeds will win you a place in Heaven, which is basically the principle of karma again. The idea of karma is that doing good deeds will win you wholesome rewards and doing bad deeds will produce an unfortunate future. Some people perform good deeds just because they like doing good deeds, some because they were taught to do good deeds, and some for the additional desire to accumulate merit for its rewards.

Liao Fan classified doing good deeds as cultivating love and respect for other people, loving and cherishing all beings, helping people in desperate need, donating money to good causes, developing public projects for the benefit of the people, helping people succeed in their endeavors, supporting the practice of kindness, persuading others to practice kindness, protecting proper teachings, and respecting elders. These are just a few examples of the many ways in which we might help others and accumulate merit. As Confucius taught, self-cultivation has the ultimate purpose of finding its expression through active helpful participation in the world like this, and that active engagement was to embody a moral commitment to benefiting others through such methods.

Liao Fan’s means of Confucian cultivation - his formula for transforming his karmic fate and destiny as told to him from the fortune teller - were taught to him by Zen Master Yungu and left for us in *Liao Fan’s Four Lessons*. The whole reason his story came about is because Liao Fan had come to believe that his astrological fortune and destiny for life was absolutely fated. He believed this because it had consistently been predicted with impossible exactitude. No tiny detail of his fate, however improbable the prediction, had ever failed to come true. This included unpredictable things such as even the amount of his salary at various points

in his career, his job positions and city postings, and his rank in passing each of several important imperial examinations. Among the predictions for his life, the infallible fortune telling Taoist monk, named Kong, had foretold that Liao Fan would only live to age 53 and never have a son. These are the two events that Liao Fan wanted to change most of all.

Master Yungu met Liao Fan after many incredible predictions had already come true, and taught him how to reform his behavior and change his character so that he could create a new destiny. Master Yungu explained the Confucian teaching that the *Book of Songs* and *Classic of History* both say that a man determines his fate himself and secures good or bad fortune by his own doing. However, while we all create our individual fate from our past actions we then certainly have the ability to change it.

The lesson you will learn from Liao Fan's story is that you must never depend on good fortune arriving from Heaven but must work to create fate yourself, for that is the true pathway of success. When a person's good deeds are incredibly numerous they can truthfully change a destiny from bad to good. They can change suffering to happiness or poverty to prosperity. You can even change the fate of a very short life to experiencing longevity by virtue of doing the right things. But you still have to work at it.

Master Yungu explained to Liao Fan that each man was indeed allotted a given fate or astrological destiny at birth that would determine specific karmic outcomes for his life. This was perfectly true, which is why methods such as astrology work wonderfully when practiced by a skillful master. However, through vigorous action – whether through good or bad deeds – a man can change his allotment of good or bad fortune that is due to transpire in life. This is why both the Chinese and Indian cultures have both methods for predicting fate and remedial measures for bad karma, otherwise what would be the point of predicting fate if it could not be changed?

Master Yungu explained that a man who automatically followed his thoughts, binding to them strongly rather than defusing from them in order to follow higher and better principles, follows the fixed path that is fated to occur due to his own rigidity. This type of individual, who binds with the thoughts that create his future, becomes unable to transcend his destiny to create a new fortune.

How do you transcend destiny? As Master Yungu explained, you must detach from the thoughts, desires, attitudes, emotions, impulses and inclinations that would normally control you and impel you down a fated pathway. The autobiographical story of Liao Fan explains how to do so. This story, taken from *Liao Fan's Four Lessons*, fully illustrates the Confucian way of spirituality, ennoblement and changing a fated destiny:

Master Yungu asked what were Mr. Kong's predictions

regarding my entire life. I honestly told him the whole story (that I would only receive certain imperial appointments, die at a young age and never have a son). He then asked if I felt that I deserve imperial appointments or a son. I reflected upon my previous deeds and attitudes in the past for a long time. Then I answered him saying, “No, I do not feel that I deserve an imperial appointment or a son. Those who received imperial appointments all had the appearance of good fortune and I do not. I do not work towards accumulating virtues to build up my good fortune either. I am very impatient, intolerant, undisciplined and narrow-minded. I also have a strong sense of pride and arrogance and sometimes show off my intelligence and talent in putting down others. I also behave arbitrarily and speak without any sense of restraint. These are all signs of scant good fortune and virtue. How could I possibly receive an imperial appointment?”

There is an old saying, “Life springs from the dirt of the earth. Clear water often harbors no fish.” The first reason why I feel I do not deserve a son is that I am overly attached to cleanliness, resulting in the lack of thoughtfulness for others. The second reason is that I have a quick temper and easily become angry. The third reason is based on the principle that I overly guard my own reputation and cannot sacrifice anything for the sake of others. The fourth reason is that I talk too much which wastes a lot of Qi, or energy. The fifth reason is that I also delight in drinking alcohol and that depletes my spirit. The sixth reason I do not have a son is my habit of staying up nights, not knowing how to conserve my energy. Aside from these, I have many, many, other faults which are too numerous to mention.

Master Yungu then said, “According to you then, there are many things in life you do not deserve, not only fame and a son! Those who have millions of dollars in this life must have cultivated the good fortune worthy of that amount in the past. Those who have thousands of dollars must also have good fortune, which is worthy of generating that sum. Those, who die of starvation were in fact were meant to die in that manner. We must understand that their own past thoughts and actions created the fate of these people; the karmic result today is simply the fruit of their deeds. Heavenly beings do not have any intentions for us.

“Bearing children is similar to bearing fruit from seeds. If the seeds are planted well, the fruits will flourish. If the seeds are not planted well, then the fruits will become malnourished. For

example, if a person has accumulated enough merits and virtues for a hundred generations, then he or she will have descendants to last a hundred generations. One who accumulates enough merits and virtues to last ten generations will then have ten generations of descendants to live out that good fortune. The same goes for three generations or two generations. For those who have no descendants at all, it is because they have not accumulated enough good merits and virtues.

“Now that you recognize your own shortcomings, you need to put forth your utmost efforts into working to change and into reforming your misdeeds, which cause you not to have a child or become an imperial official. You would do well to cultivate virtue and tolerance and to treat others with compassion and harmony. Also, care for your health and conserve your energy and spirit.

“Live as though everything of the past dissolved yesterday and all of the future begins today. If you can accomplish this, then you are a person born anew, a person of virtue and sincerity. If even our body is governed by destiny, then how can a body of virtue and sincerity not evoke a response from Heaven?

“As is said in the ‘*Tai Jia* Chapter’ of the *Classic of History*, ‘One may run away from the decrees of Heaven, but one can never escape the retribution for one’s own wrong deeds.’ In other words, one can alter the retribution due from past deeds, but if one continues to behave immorally, then there is no chance of avoiding disaster.

“It is also said in the *Book of Songs*, ‘People should often reflect upon their own thoughts and actions to see if they accord with the ways of Heaven. If one practices in this way, then good fortune will come without being sought. The choice to seek good fortune or to bring about adversity is all up to the individual.’

“Mr. Kong had predicted that you would not receive an imperial appointment or have a son. We can think of these as the decrees of Heaven, but even that can still be changed. You only need to develop your virtue, diligently try to practice kind deeds and work to accumulate many hidden merits and virtues. These are your own transactions to create good fortune. How is it then possible that you will not get to enjoy them?

“The *Yijing* was written to help people bring about good fortune and avoid adversity. If everything is predestined with no room for change, then how can we improve upon our good fortune and avoid adversity? The very first chapter of the *Yijing* also said, ‘Families who often perform kind deeds will have an

excess of good fortune to pass on to the next generations.' Do you believe this?"

I replied "Yes."

I understood and believed the Master and gratefully paid my respects to him by prostrating. Then I began to regret all my past wrongdoings, whether large or small, in front of the Buddha's image. I wrote down my wish to pass the imperial examinations and vowed to complete three thousand meritorious deeds to show my gratitude towards ancestors, earth and Heaven.

Upon hearing my vow, Master Yungu showed me a merit-fault chart and taught me how to keep a daily record of all the kind and unkind acts I committed in a day. He told me that bad deeds could neutralize the merits I had accrued from good deeds. The Master also taught me to recite the Zhunti mantra. Only with a pure and concentrated mind could what I seek for come true.

Master Yungu explained, "It is said, 'Those who are considered experts in the art of drawing talismans but do not know the right way to do it will be laughed at by spirits and gods.' The secret behind writing a talisman is the absence of thoughts from start to finish. In the process of drawing, one must not give rise to a single wandering thought; even kind thoughts have to be let go of. Only under these circumstances can drawing a talisman be successful. When one asks for or seeks something in terms of changing one's fate, it is important that one does so with a mind that is clear and empty. In this way, one will easily receive a response.

"Mencius discussed in his 'Principle of Forming Destiny' that, 'There is no difference between a long life and a short life.' At first glance, one would find this hard to understand. How can long life and short life be the same? In fact, when we do not give rise to thought there is no duality, so there is no difference between a long life and short life. We will see everything with eyes of equality and live morally regardless of good or bad times. If one can practice accordingly, then one can master the fate of wealth and poverty. When we are able to create and form our own destiny, it does not matter whether we are presently rich or poor."

Master Yungu said, "If one can practice morality regardless of conditions, then he or she will surely change a poor life into a prosperous one, and a prosperous life into an even longer lasting prosperity.

"One should also look upon long life and short life equally.

A person who knows he or she is short-lived should not think, 'I am going to die anyway, so there is no point in being virtuous. I should steal and kill for my benefit while I can.' One who is long-lived should not think, 'I have all the time in the world. It does not matter if I do something bad once in while.' One who understands this principle will be able to change a short life into a long life through virtuous behavior.

"The most important concern for human beings is that of life and death. So talking about long life and short life (since this is the matter of life and death) encompasses all conditions that apply to wealth and poverty, good or bad reputation, whether favorable or unfavorable, whether gain or loss.

"One who wishes to cultivate needs to do so daily and to be mindful of his or her conduct every moment, ensuring that no transgressions are made. We have to wait until our cultivation reaches a certain level and then our destiny will change. This change depends on the accumulation of merits, and on seeking a response from Heaven. When cultivating, one needs to be aware of one's own faults and resolve to correct them just as in curing a sickness.

"Perseverance is required and attainment comes when one's practice matures and ripens. In that case, one's destiny will most definitely change for the better. We should work toward severing all bad habits and thoughts. It would be quite an accomplishment in cultivating these teachings to be able to reach the innate state of 'no thought.' It is the actual learning and practice of wisdom.

"The actions of worldly people usually follow their thoughts. Whatever has to be 'thought' is not considered natural. I know that you are still unable to accomplish the state of 'no thought,' but if you practice reciting the Zhunti mantra continuously, it will help you to overcome scattered thoughts. When you recite, you must not think of reciting, but recite consciously and diligently without any attachment. When the reciting becomes second nature, it will be effective."

Liao-Fan said, "My name used to be Xue-Hai, which meant 'broad learning,' but after receiving these teachings from Master Yungu, I changed it to Liao-Fan, which means 'transcending the ordinary.' It signified my understanding of the fact that we create our destiny and that I did not wish to be like worldly people, who allowed destiny to control them."

From then on, I began to be very cautious and careful in whatever I thought or did. Soon I felt quite different from before. In the past, I used to be careless and lived my days in

distraction and had no self-discipline at all. Now, I found myself being naturally cautious and conscientious in my thoughts, speech and actions. I maintain this attitude even when I am alone, for I know that there are spirits and gods everywhere who can see my every action and thought. Even when I encounter people, who dislike or slander me, I can take their insults with a patient and peaceful mind and not feel compelled to quarrel with them.

The year after I met Master Yungu, I took the preliminary imperial exam in which Mr. Kong had predicted I would come in third place. Amazingly, I came in first! Mr. Kong's predictions were beginning to lose their accuracy. He had not predicted I would pass the imperial exam at all, but that autumn, I did! None of these were part of my original destiny. Master Yungu had said that destiny can be changed. And now I believe it more than ever! Although I had corrected many of my faults, I found that I could not wholeheartedly do the things I ought to do. Even if I did do them, it was forced and unnatural. I reflected within and found that I still had many shortcomings.

Sometimes I forced myself to act kindly, but my speech was still untamed and offensive. I found I could contain myself when sober, but after a few drinks I would lose self-discipline and act without restraint. Although I often practiced kind deeds and accumulated merits, my faults and offenses were so numerous, they seemed to outnumber my good deeds. A lot of my time was spent vainly and without value. It took me more than ten years to complete the three thousand meritorious deeds I had vowed to do.

I was not able to dedicate the merits from these three thousand kind deeds at a temple until I returned to my hometown in the south a few years later. Then I made my second wish and that was for a son. I vowed to complete another three thousand good deeds. A few years later, your mother gave birth to a boy and named him Tian-Chi.

Every time I performed a kind deed, I would record it in a book. Your mother, who could not read or write, would use a goose feather dipped in ink and make a red circle on the calendar for every kind deed she did. Sometimes she gave food to the poor or bought living creatures from the marketplace to free in the wild. She recorded all of these with her circles on the calendar. At times, she could accumulate more than ten red circles in one day!

Everyday we practiced like this and in four years, the three

thousand deeds were completed. Again, I made the dedications, this time in our home. On September thirteenth of that same year, I made my third wish and that was to pass the next level of the imperial examination, the Jinshr level. I also vowed to complete ten thousand meritorious deeds. After three years, I attained my wish and passed the Jinshr level. I was also made the mayor of Baodi province. While in that office, I prepared a small book to record my merits and faults, and called it “The Book of Disciplining the Mind.”

From that day, I recorded all my good and bad deeds in that book and kept it on my desk. Every evening, I would burn incense and make a report of my deeds to the heavens at the little altar in the garden.⁶⁸

This, in short, is the method that Liao Fan used to purify his mind, upgrade his behavior and thereby change his fortune. He transcended his fate by accumulating merit through reducing his faults that were leading him astray. By policing his mind and behavior he was able to create a new fate that was much better, but all of this took time and effort. If you want to change your fate and fortune, you must accept the fact that it will require a continuous push toward self-improvement, and then get on with it.

All achievement, whether to achieve a success in life already fated or to achieve a success in defiance of fate, requires effort. This means a gritty perseverance or “never give up” attitude of pursuit and endurance. In the case of mentally watching ourselves we can say that vigilance has its limits because attention grows tired and mental guards go down, so Liao Fan created a ledger recording system for his efforts to help catch himself in any acts of wrongdoing and keep himself on track.

Benjamin Franklin

The American hero Benjamin Franklin also practiced a similar form of Confucian introspection in order to eliminate his character flaws and take on the task of cultivating virtue. Franklin was a man who rose from nothing, who gained no advantages from parentage or patronage and who enjoyed no advantages of an early education, but became one of the greatest Americans of achievement known to history. He credited a particular method of self-observation with helping him build his character. He used it to develop a garden of virtues and excellences that made him both more effective in life and endearing to others, and this helped him

⁶⁸ Liao-Fan Yuan, *Liao-Fan's Four Lessons* (Buddha Dharma Education Association, Taiwan).

achieve much of his success and happiness in life.

Franklin explained in his autobiography that on a daily basis, just like Liao Fan, he would mentally watch his own behavior and police himself against committing thirteen different types of non-virtuous acts. His method can also easily be emulated by any individual who wishes to change their thoughts, attitudes, habits, character, personality or behaviors.

Either method, or some new method constructed from their similarities, can be used by anyone who wishes to pursue a pathway of great accomplishment or self-perfection. Since they are similar to sports training techniques, you can also vary these basic methods in various ways to create your own technique for self-perfection or self-accomplishment. First you must decide upon an ideal you want to strive for, and then you can use some version of these techniques to get there from here.

The specialness of Franklin's method was that he chose to focus on mastering only one virtue per week – either temperance (“eat not to dullness, drink not to elevation”), silence (“speak not but what may benefit others or yourself; avoid trifling conversation”), order (“let all your things have their places”), resolution (“resolve to perform what you ought; perform without fail what you resolve”), frugality (“waste nothing”), industry (“lose not time; be always employed in something useful”), sincerity (“use no hurtful deceit”), justice (“wrong none by doing injuries”), moderation (“avoid extremes”), cleanliness (“tolerate no uncleanness in body, clothes or habituation”), tranquility (“be not disturbed at trifles, or at accidents common or unavoidable”), chastity (“rarely use sex but for health or offspring, never to the injury of your own or another's peace or reputation”) and humility (“imitate Jesus and Socrates”). While Liao Fan was looking to decrease every type of fault at once, Franklin chose to concentrate on eliminating just one type of fault per week.

The number of virtues one might cultivate is always a personal matter, but in *Analects* 17.6 Confucius suggested that humans focus on cultivating five traits of character: “People who can put into practice five things in the broader world can be considered consummate in their conduct.” When his student Zigong asked what were the five, Confucius answered respectfulness, magnanimity (so that you can influence others), being true to one's word (so that others can depend on you), a nimble mind (which allows you to succeed) and generosity.

Christianity suggests seven virtues – chastity or purity (abstinence), temperance (equanimity), charity (benevolence, generosity or sacrifice), diligence or persistence, patience (forgiveness or mercy), kindness (compassion), and humility or modesty. Buddhism espouses ten – generosity, morality, renunciation, wisdom, diligent effort, tolerance or patience, honesty, resolute determination, loving-kindness or goodwill friendliness, and serenity. Other religions propose other cardinal virtues to

cultivate, so what you decide to work upon if you choose this method should depend upon your own faults and higher objectives.

Franklin wrote in his autobiography, “I judg’d it would be well not to distract my attention by attempting (to perfect) the whole at once, but to fix it on one of them at a time.” Accordingly, for an entire week he paid very strong attention to cutting down any offenses against a single chosen virtue while allowing a normal (but somewhat elevated) attitude to infractions against the other virtues he had also wanted to perfect. Unlike Liao Fan who monitored everything evenly, Franklin considered himself a gardener who was removing weeds from one of thirteen flower beds at a time, and who was scheduled to return to repeat the course again after twelve weeks with each time pass expecting to find fewer weeds amidst the flowers. Weeding out his faults in this way may seem like a trivial affair not worth the effort, but perfecting the mundane details of life and conduct are what contribute significantly to the formation of one’s character.

The inherent idea behind Franklin’s technique, or Liao Fan’s methodology for self-change and merit accumulation, was that you have to become conscious of yourself, watch your mind, and give self-policing your full attention if you want to truly change in any way. Just saying you want to change is not enough. The results of this process will not necessarily be quick, but in time with its application there will definitely be more clarity in your thinking and purity in your behavior. By restricting your focus and attention to improving just one aspect of your character per week you are more likely to be successful at achieving positive results in behavioral change.

Franklin’s method mirrors modern psychological findings that those who try to make big changes in their life usually fail if they try to do too much at once. People normally must scale down big desires to focus on smaller objectives that are achievable. To become successful at character development, you have to recognize that becoming a better person is a gradual process of moral development that heavily depends on a steady accumulation of simple acts rather than a grand burst of goodness.

Franklin admittedly wrote that by initially trying to monitor and change all his faults at once, “While my care was employ’d in guarding against one fault, I was often surprised by another. Habit took the advantage of inattention; inclination was sometimes too strong for reason.” This is why he developed a gradual course to virtue that was divided into thirteen weeks with a special emphasis on just one virtue every seven days.

Consider that those people who want to simultaneously quit smoking, drinking, substance abuse or overeating usually *fail at all of them* because they place too many simultaneous demands on their self-control. Willpower then fails them, as does their commitment to attentive watching and concentration. Only when they reduce their consumption a little at a time

do they usually succeed, as Franklin suggested.

Liao Fan treated all his misconduct equally, but Franklin's efforts to cultivate virtue were more focused and concentrated. However, they did not put an emphasis on doing good deeds to accumulate merit, which is a fantastic part of Liao Fan's system. Franklin did that separate from this system. Nonetheless, both of their systems involved cultivating attention to one's thoughts and behavior. Both systems also involved a recording system of feedback so that progress could be honestly monitored and measured. Both realized that without honest, accurate feedback (measurement or monitoring recorded in a ledger-based system) neither would be able to determine whether or not they were actually making progress. Without a progress measuring system they would not be able to determine whether they were doing something right or wrong, how they were falling short or doing well, and where they needed to improve.

In *How I Raised Myself From Failure to Success in Selling*, ex-major league baseball player turned insurance salesman Frank Bettger decided to take Franklin's method and adapt it for business pursuits. As a result of his adapted technique, he became one of the most outstanding salesmen in his company, achieving *both material and psychological goals*. This is something to take note of, which is the fact that this basic technique can be used to help you attain worldly goods and accomplishments rather than just character virtues. If you want to excel in business success you might consider using it.

As stated, many Christian monks and nuns also practiced a similar mindfulness technique by carrying around a notebook attached to their waist, using it to record all infractions against mental purity or proper behavior during the day. The method has even been used in Tibetan Buddhism because it embodies the basic technique of mindfully watching your mind for faults, and then cutting them off whenever you see them.

As previously mentioned, the great benefit of the Confucian technique used by Liao Fan and Benjamin Franklin is that their infractions were recorded on paper, thus formalizing their efforts and thus increasing their effectiveness. We already know about Liao Fan's exact methodology whereas we didn't reveal Franklin's exactly. It is as follows: "I made a little book, in which I allotted a page for each of the virtues. I rul'd each page with red ink, so as to have seven columns, one for each day of the week, marking each column with a letter for the date. I cross'd these columns with thirteen red lines, on which line, and in its proper column, I might mark, by a little black spot, every fault I found upon examination to have been committed respecting that virtue upon that day.

"I determined to give a week's strict attention to each of the virtues successively. Thus, in the first week, my great guard was to avoid every the least offense against Temperance, leaving the other virtues to their ordinary chance, only marking every evening the faults of the day. Thus, if in the first

week I could keep my first line, marked T, clear of spots, I suppos'd the habit of that virtue so much strengthen'd, and its opposite weaken'd, that I might venture extending my attention to include the next, and for the following week keep both lines clear of spots. Proceeding thus to the last, I could go thro' a course compleat in thirteen weeks, and four courses in a year. And like him who, having a garden to weed, does not attempt to eradicate all the bad herbs at once, which would exceed his reach and his strength, but works on one of the beds at a time, and, having accomplish'd the first, proceeds to a second, so I should have, I hoped, the encouraging pleasure of seeing on my pages the progress I made in virtue, by clearing successively my lines of their spots, till in the end, by a number of courses, I should be happy in viewing a clean book, after a thirteen weeks' daily examination."

Franklin's daily record of his progress provided a means of positive feedback on measuring the effectiveness of his efforts. By recording his progress on paper it forced him to admit where mistakes were continually being made in inhibitory control. Writing things down allowed him to examine his track record, whose daily review motivated him to constantly improve on his personal best to become better than himself. As Mencius said, "Those who follow what is great within them become great; those who follow what is small become small."

Franklin's daily record employs the principle of "measurement ends argument" because measuring things allows you to know if you are improving or not. If you don't measure things to know where you stand, how can you take the right steps to improve your behavior? Franklin and Liao Fan each reviewed the day's cultivation record on a nightly basis so that their progress was monitored.

Another saying runs, "people respect what they measure." If you use either of these methods of self-improvement or some variation thereof and submit to the formal discipline of nightly review (where you "report your progress to Heaven") you are sure to elevate your behavior because looking at the track record will motivate you to improve upon it.

Just as in sports, only dedicated commitment to supervised training can drive you to make elevating changes in your behavior. It doesn't require a commitment to religion, but few can develop an extraordinary purity of behavior without the structural guidance offered by a religious path. This is why you must use these special efforts revealed by Liao Fan and Ben Franklin, or some variant that is equally effective. In *Analects* 1.4 Confucius's student Zengzi stated that he used a version of this technique for he said, "I examine my personal conduct every day in three ways. First, in my interactions with others, have I done all that I can? Second, when dealing with friends and peers, have I managed to keep my word? Finally, have I received and acted upon what I learned?"

The right sort of self-reflective and self-corrective practice carried out over time always leads to self-improvement. Lectures on good behavior do not. This type of technique is the only thing that does.

The self-observational method of vigilant mindfulness has a set of general principles upon which various alternative methods, such as Liao Fan's, Franklin's, Bettger's and Zengzi's, are all based. Many individuals have found that various derivatives of these awareness-mindfulness practices - such as ACT or cognitive therapy - have helped them change their lives and fortunes in a most positive way. Just as people gradually learn how to do things that were not previously possible, through these methods they can step-by-step learn how to elevate their behavior to separate themselves from their lower nature. This pursuit of consummate behavior is what produces the noble person and eventually the sage, which is why Confucius called this the Great Learning.

What is the Great Learning in life? To understand this we must first recognize that China has three great religions - Taoism, Buddhism and Confucianism. Taoism feels that the Great Learning is to realize the Tao (achieve enlightenment), cultivate the Tao (use all your enlightenment capabilities) and prove the teachings of the Tao. Buddhism says you are to enlighten yourself, help enlighten other people and enlighten your mind and behavior perfectly, meaning that your actions should exhibit compassionate action consummately joined with wisdom. Confucius said that Great Learning involves enlightening yourself as to the potential of pristine awareness or pure consciousness (cultivating bright virtue), being kind to all people (loving and teaching the people and working for them), and working to reach a final state of pure virtue.

How does a Confucian go about cultivating the Great Learning? Through meditation practice and the daily mindfulness process of self-reflection and self-correction. Both Confucius and Zengzi both said that this process of self-observation - which we now call self-reflection, self-policing or introspection - works better if we make it a daily process just as Liao Fan and Franklin stressed. Vigilant mindfulness or self-reflection will help us guide our thinking and behavior to higher octaves, but only if we do so regularly. As Confucius made clear in *Analects* 14.42, you should "Cultivate in yourself respectful attentiveness."

Confucius also said in *Analects* 14.23, "Exemplary people reach higher, petty people descend lower." In other words, we have to make this higher commitment work in our own lives otherwise we are just moving text around in our heads about proper behavior rather than actually becoming better people. We cannot develop virtues by simply talking or thinking about them. They are actualized through repeated practice so you cultivate them by regularly expressing them. You have to have real commitment to them becoming part of your life rather than remaining just thoughts in your

head. An ethical, moral, virtuous life is about having a willful personal commitment to better behavior that you self-police, self-correct and self-improve. Being mindful of one's behavior is a type of moral cultivation.

You cannot magically act in the world in a better way simply by studying texts about virtue and ethics. You have to establish new habits. You have to become committed to exemplifying virtuous wisdom in outer conduct. You have to rise up and use what you know to become the sunshine that you want others to see. For instance, in *Analects* 13.5 Confucius said, "If people can recite the three hundred passages in the *Book of Songs* yet still fail to make use of that knowledge when given a government position or when sent abroad on diplomatic missions, then what is the use of their studying? Even though they may have learned so much, what is the use of it to them?" Only if you use what you know has personal study been worthwhile, and only if you do what is right do you become a virtuous person.

Countless religions teach us some of the many reasons why you ascend higher from cultivating more self-awareness. For instance, cultivating mental purity through this method while pushing yourself to do good deeds stirs the Qi within your body. Yang Qi arises within you due to meditation, as well as in response to doing good deeds and acting ethically. When this Qi arises in your body it starts to open up your Qi channels, including those within the spine leading to the brain and within the brain.

The frictionless circulation of Qi within you benefits your health and longevity. It also contributes to the preservation of your spirit in the afterlife since it strengthens the cohesiveness of your internal Qi body – the subtle energy substrate of your physical body - that becomes your deva body after death. The stronger the cohesiveness of your inner Qi body from these efforts, which you can improve through spiritual Qi cultivation methods such as meditation, the better the quality of your body in the hereafter.

In order to enhance the cohesiveness of people's subtle bodies, enlightened beings interact with the Qi of human beings all the time in order to help them. The reason for the intervention is to strengthen their Qi and help them open their Qi channels. They often put people through - or make opportune use of - strong emotional experiences of great yin (ex. fear and anxiety or worry) and great yang (ex. joy or ambition) to flood people's inner subtle bodies with higher levels of yin Qi or yang Qi, thus strengthening them everywhere so that they function better during life and last longer after death.

As the Qi channels of the nervous system become clear of obstructions due to the resultant Qi enervation from meditation and virtuous behavior, over time consciousness then becomes more quiet and clear because of better flowing energy. Watching your mind's mental activities therefore

becomes much easier and more natural, and your awareness seems to become brighter because wandering thoughts die out and distractions disappear. Troublesome, distracting or afflictive thoughts decrease, but you still need to learn how to deal with thoughts properly.

This is the gist of spiritual training, is it not? Is it not all about purifying our minds and our behavior? Isn't it about elevating or bettering our minds and how we act in the world to handle experiences and interact with others? When you strip away everything superstitious or supernatural, all the world's spiritual paths come down to the task of divinizing our minds and our behaviors, which are controlled by our minds. The problem or challenge is that we tend to give ourselves over to animalistic tendencies or calculated self-interest instead.

How do we divinize or spiritualize our minds? The mind is the seat of our consciousness, and sentience is the highest ability of a living being. Spirituality therefore entails learning how to use the mind (consciousness) in the highest way possible, for the mind is the ruler of behavior. Fix the mind – purify it - and you fix behavior. Learn how to deal with your thoughts and you learn how to control your mind. Learn how to create the ones you need/want and ignore the ones you don't and then you elevate your ordinary mental realm.

The path of spirituality therefore entails mastering your mind – dealing skillfully with the thoughts and emotions that arise automatically within it, some of which we don't want (but which won't seem to go away), and how to generate or remain focused on intentional thoughts that *we do want* in order to accomplish any tasks that we want accomplished.

Spirituality comes down to how to master (a) the conscious reasoning process, intentional thought generation process and other functional capacities of the mind (attention, mental image making, concentration, intention, distinguishing discrimination, etc.) and (b) automatic processes of the mind such as habits, attitudes and emotions that simply arise. Spirituality is a process of self-improvement or self-mastery because it ultimately involves training your mind to master your thoughts and emotions, and from there your body (its movements and internal energy) and behavior. You can master your behavior only if you master your thoughts and automatic habit energies. This is the key to mastering your body *and its internal energies* too.

Part of mastering your mind involves mastering concentration and focus so that your mental realm is not always haphazardly scattered with wild content so that it is unable to accomplish anything. Concentration entails pursuing focus and mental stability, which entails not paying attention to random, wandering or distracting thoughts while holding onto the thoughts you want.

Mastering your mind also entails mastering a specific capability little

discussed, namely how to use it to control your internal energy and move it in various ways inside your body for specific purposes. Your Qi and consciousness are linked, so this capability is something we all have that only needs to be developed through practice. This is what cultivation schools such as Yoga, Taoism and Vajrayana teach.

Mastering your mind also entails mastering your physical body, such as learning how to move it in various excellent ways for dance, athletic sport, when you are trying to be persuasive, and so forth.

Mastering your mind involves perfecting your outer behavior, including the task of establishing virtuous relationships with people and the environment. It also involves mastering external skills (such as fishing, skiing, flying a plane, using a computer program, etc.) and the ability to accomplish things, like knowing how to organize and manage people.

The spiritualization of our mind so that it rises as far as possible above the realm of the animals entails how to properly use thoughts, namely how to relate to them as well as how to gain skills from mastering our thoughts and emotions and their expression into behavior. The spiritualization of our mind entails *cultivating the capabilities and functions of a rational mind while transcending the influences of the irrational mind and emotions*. A first step is to start training yourself to witness your mind's doings so that you can gradually develop a detached independent wisdom for dealing with the contents of your mind.

The mind is a vehicle that creates our thoughts and behavior, so purifying its contents of incorrect mental objects and wild randomness while learning how to use it in the highest possible manner *is the true road of spirituality*. What else could it be? These goals on how to use the mind correctly might seem mundane, but are actually what the path of spirituality is all about.

A truly empty mind absent of thoughts is essentially non-aware or insentient. Therefore the true path of spirituality is not about pursuing having no thoughts, but learning how to use the mind correctly and master all its possible functions. A spiritual "mind of purity" is not totally empty of thoughts. Rather, it is a quieter and clearer mind than untrained consciousness that predominantly gives birth to virtuous thoughts. Using the mind correctly, because of the wisdom of proper judgment, is also "a mind of correctness" or "mind of purity."

Spirituality thus entails learning how to ignore distracting thoughts or emotions (especially how to detach from emotions), how to focus and concentrate for long periods of time, how to effectively shift the focus of your attention from one perspective to another, how to set aside short-term gratification for longer-term goals, how to perform long-term planning, how to persevere with tenacity and grit (zeal and hard work) through difficulty and failure, and more.

Spirituality entails learning how to develop analytical mental skills and how to think inductively, deductively, heuristically and dialectically. It involves learning how to understand cause and effect relationships, how to use the rules of logic and inference so as not to be ruled by emotions or jump to conclusions, and learning how to handle ambiguity and manage risks (probabilities). It entails a commitment to reasoning and questioning, and a demand for logical justification of opinions and positions. Spirituality should add intellectual consistency to your life, and entails becoming a critical free thinker. It involves testing the things you believe with reason rather than falling for mysticism and superstition.

Spirituality entails learning how to discern between the true and false, how to tell right from wrong, how to seek truth from facts rather than from dogma or ideology, how to distinguish between the important and unimportant, and it involves knowing the difference between proper and improper behavior. It entails learning how to make good judgments and proper decisions, learning how to form models of expectations and learning how to recognize distortions in your thoughts so that you can form better opinions without bias. Being shrewd or astute is actually a characteristic of spirituality because that is wisdom.

Spirituality must focus on people's livelihoods by emphasizing practical, down-to-earth solutions and tangible benefits for humanity rather than supernatural promises that cannot be proved. It must emphasize cooperation between human beings where people work together for the public welfare of all members of society, for it is coordinated cooperation that builds society and holds it together. Societies are a mixture of self-centered and group-centered activities and spirituality must address both of these aspects.

Spirituality entails learning how to create moral values, moral emotions, moral reasoning, moral behavioral capacity and moral willpower. It involves the practice of ethics, morality and virtuous conduct in body and mind. It entails getting along with other people (working with others) in positive relationships, accepting responsibility and remaining accountable for your actions. It entails mastering self-discipline, learning how to change undesired habits and behaviors, learning how to identify needed personality traits and turn them into habits, and learning how to become a lifelong learner who can achieve mastery of any skills you want to acquire.

All these skills, and more, simply enable you to use your mind rightly and to fullest flavor, which thereby separates you greatly from the realm of the animals. This is what spiritual ascension is all about. When developing these skills you don't just uplift yourself from the realm of the animals but also elevate yourself from the realm of ordinary human beings. Mastering the mind in these ways *is* the road of the sages.

Your thoughts control your words, physical body movements, internal

energy (once trained) and your behavior so the path of spirituality entails learning how to properly use your mind to gain control of all these functions. Even when you make mistakes, but arrived at those thoughts or actions using the highest methods possible, you have actualized the spiritual way. Spirituality is learning how to use all the capabilities of the mind without falling into lower pathways (such as being controlled by animalistic emotions and impulses).

The spiritual path of transcendence, the pathway of the sages, is to exhibit through your actions the highest values of humanity consistent with wisdom, rationality, empiricism, or however else you wish to word “clear and proper thinking.” We also call this the path of consummate behavior. When you have done your absolute best to use all your mental skills to arrive at the ethical decision “this is the right thing to do” and then do it, you have embodied the spiritual way even when you make an error in judgment. Another way of putting it is that virtue or spirituality consists in using the correct, highest or best reasoning and wisdom possible to guide your actions and behavior even if they come out wrong at times. Spirituality doesn’t mean you are always perfect, but using the best you know.

The spiritual life should be known as a life of the highest ethics and reasoning that can be maintained independent of any circumstances. This is what separates us from the animals. Ethics and highest reasoning characterizes the best of humanity and leads to the best results in all affairs. Therefore once again, seen from this angle, mastering your mind with all its various facets and functions is the true road of spirituality. Nothing is higher.

One must acquire knowledge and skills for life, but the spiritual path is how to properly use the mind in general. For instance, in *Analects* 9.8 Confucius asked, “Do I have great knowledge of anything? No, I do not. Yet if a simple rustic asks me a question and I have no answer, I will pursue it from beginning to end until I have gained deeper insight.” Through this lesson Confucius taught us how to use our minds properly – when we don’t know something we must use all our facilities to work hard to figure it out, researching matters by going to the core of the problem and tracing things back to their causal roots to seek answers. This is the practical way of learning through investigation, and being above the animals this is also the human way or spiritual way.

When we meditate the Qi channels within our body start to open and when we use our mind rightly in virtuous ways they open as well. As more and more Qi channels open within your body you will also fill with vitality and become healthier because your Qi can then flow more freely everywhere. The fact that your Qi channels become less obstructed and fill with flowing Qi helps to eliminate latent sicknesses within your body too, which is why meditation helps to produce many spontaneous cures of

illness. This naturally leads to better health and longevity, and it all comes about due to the practice of self-watching. Naturally if you stretch your muscles through exercise and practice inner energy work you can reach supreme heights through this route too.

As stated, by cultivating a mental purity via meditation, and by establishing the habit of mindfully witnessing/watching your thoughts and behavior, you can avoid many behaviors and blunders that would result in negative fortunes. Confucius taught this while Liao Fan and Benjamin Franklin proved it. Meditation and mindfulness will help you change the automatic behaviors of your mind that produce errors and stand in the way of self-perfection! Trying to perfect your mental and outer behaviors is definitely the pathway of spiritualization.

For instance, with greater awareness you might be able to resist a temptation to yell at someone in anger and avoid permanently poisoning a relationship. That mindfulness can help you keep your job whereas expressing anger might lose it. Such a simple example proves that you become a higher human being simply by transcending normal emotional responses. Thus the path of cultivating meditation and good deeds leads to a clear mind, the accumulation of merit, the ability to change your fortune, a healthier body, longevity and even spiritual progress.

This is the pathway for the individual, but also for society as a whole. For society to reach transcendence Confucius not only advised that individuals devote themselves to ethics but that society as a whole practice proper behavior, which Confucianism called the rites or rituals. How can we encourage this? Through various yearly gatherings to renew the sense of spirit in society. Most people think that Confucius over-emphasized rituals in life, but fail to perceive that their purpose is simply to pose a means of ethical aspiration.

Taken rightly, the purpose of state rituals, such as public ceremonies and holidays, is to help uplift and unite society so that people feel more solidly connected. They help to inspire people and allow them a rare opportunity to directly touch a larger spirit in a transcendent fashion. They help to coalesce cooperative and moral value-based societies. They help create stronger bonds of safety and trust where people feel connected and close to one another (even if just temporarily) due to belonging to a mutual identity that shares in a joint future.

Confucius emphasized state rituals because of their ability to form cooperative national unity and embed higher spiritual aspirations within a nation. They can take man further and further away from his animal nature by refining his behavior and uplifting his emotions to a sense of purity or greatness that involves a larger whole.

Sometimes people can feel a sense of “lift,” elevation, transcendence, sublimity or even glorification at such events which greatly enriches their

lives for the better. These feelings can help to promote the group and unify its bonds since people know it originates within the group. When people partake of such get-togethers and celebrations they want the benefit of feeling that they are (1) close or united, (2) safe or protected and (3) have a joint shared future (an aspiration). Thus rightly employed they can be used to help unite societies.

Many individuals might not otherwise encounter these uplifting and unifying emotions if they didn't come together during national holidays and celebrations. This is why "state rituals" such as national celebrations and holidays are not to be despised. They have the potential for great unifying influences to bind together communities and countries. Cooperation, after all, is the main thing that societies are involved with because in societies people must work together to produce the public goods that benefit all. Countries live or die based on the strength of their national cohesion, and such events are the symbols of national unity. Thus everything possible should be done to increase the cooperative nature within societies and countries by promoting greater cohesion.

Self-reflection helps man on a daily basis cultivate personal purity and greatness of behavior, as well as altruistic cooperation with others, but those results belong to the individual. However, the rites, rituals, holidays or ceremonies held at yearly junctures pertain to society as well as the individual, helping to build cooperative relationships among the people. They are the means for helping to transform a nation as a whole to a better state of being. They not only shape the character of those who practice them but serve the overarching goal of helping to produce on a large-scale the particular set of attitudes and dispositions needed for a peaceful, meaningful, flourishing society. A Confucian cultivates personal virtue through reasoning (wisdom), growing strong relationships, and by *minimizing the negative* while recognizing that these processes can be achieved at the national level too if approached in certain ways.

Confucius once explained that if you simply governed a people by laws then the people would obey them to stay out of jail, but this would do nothing to change their moral nature. However, "Guide the people by virtue and align them with *li* (social norms of conduct, a sense of propriety, personal deportment and behavior), the people will develop a sense of right or wrong and have standards to follow" (*Analects* 2.3). Is this not transforming a nation and the road of spirituality as well?

From: *SPORT VISUALIZATION FOR THE ELITE ATHLETE*
Ch. 2 – "Elite Athletes Who Have Used Visualization Practice"

Championship golfer **Jack Nicklaus** has said that he would use mental imagery before every shot he ever took, each time visualizing his ideal body posture and how he would execute the stroke.

Sports training science agrees with his technique because when athletes first imagine a task and its result before actually doing it then the subsequent performance is always better than when not preceded by the imagined performance. Therefore, before you serve a tennis ball, hit a shot in golf or undertake any sensory-motor activity you should imagine a perfect performance of that task.

In his book, *Golf My Way*, Nicklaus described how he always visualized his performance at the tee, writing: “I never hit a shot even in practice without having a sharp in-focus picture of it in my head. It's like a colour movie. First, I ‘see’ the ball where I want it to finish, nice and white and sitting up high on the bright green grass. Then the scene quickly changes, and I ‘see’ the ball going there: its path, trajectory, and shape, even its behaviour on landing. Then there’s a sort of fade-out, and the next scene shows me making the kind of swing that will turn the previous images into reality and only at the end of this short private Hollywood spectacular do I select a club and step up to the ball.” This is a correct way to visualize.

Another great golfer, **Jason Day**, closes his eyes and also imagines the exact shot he wants to make during his pre-shot routine. Day once revealed that he also practices Outcome visualization, which is visualizing the successful completion of a goal. To do so he continually visualized himself holding the winning trophy for the 2015 Farmers Insurance Open before actually winning the competition.

Arnold Schwarzenegger, who won the Mr. Olympia bodybuilding contest four times and the Mr. Universe contest five times, used visualization practice for both Process and Outcome purposes.

What are Process and Outcome visualizations? In *Think and Grow Rich*, Napoleon Hill stated that you must know the steps leading to your life goals and should visualize working through them. You must clearly know the goals or objectives you are committing to (Outcome) as well as what you must do to attain them (Process), and then visualize yourself performing those steps (Process) and getting to that final Outcome. You visualize your intention.

During sports visualization practice you should also train by seeing yourself executing the actions for becoming successful (Process) and actually achieving the successful Outcome you want, namely winning or breaking records. For improvement purposes you should emphasize Process visualizations that have you repeatedly mentally imagine performing perfect executions of your motor movements.

You cannot become magically successful just by repeatedly visualizing a positive Outcome state, such as winning a sports competition, because it is

the work of practice itself that will take you there. For instance, you cannot just read a diet book and then expect to lose weight. If you never go through the proper Process steps of achievement then you will never get to the Outcome, so you must concentrate on executing Process steps correctly. You must train to master the optimal execution of a selected Process in sports by devoting yourself to both physical training and mental imagery practice.

Schwarzenegger addressed the Process objective by visually sculpting his muscles while exercising so that they would become the ideal shape he wanted. Like Jason Day, he also used Outcome imagery by visualizing that he won his contests, saying, “I visualized myself being and having what it was I wanted. Before I won my first Mr. Universe title, I walked around the tournament like I owned it. I had won it so many times in my mind that there was no doubt I would win it. Then when I moved on to the movies, the same thing. I visualized myself being a famous actor and earning big money. ... I just knew it would happen.”

Former NBA great **Jerry West**, who is known for hitting clutch shots at the buzzer, once explained that what accounted for his ability to make the big shots was that he had mentally rehearsed making those same shots countless times in his mind. He was an avid practitioner of using mental imagery to improve his sports performance.

NBA player **Steve Nash** also engages in imaginary movements before every free throw. Specifically, he steps up to the line and mimes a few imaginary free throws before taking the actual free throws. He first rehearses the shot in his mind through visual imagery before taking it.

Is his imaginary visualization routine effective? Nash has achieved a career free throw percentage of .904, making him the NBA’s all-time leader in free throw percentage.

Nolan Ryan, baseball’s all-time leader in strikeouts and no-hitters said, “The night before a game I lie down, close my eyes, relax my body, and prepare myself for the game. I go through the entire lineup of the other team, one batter at a time. I visualize exactly how I am going to pitch to each hitter and I see and feel myself throwing exactly the pitches that I want to throw. Before I ever begin to warm up at the ballpark, I’ve faced all of the opposition’s hitters four times and I’ve gotten my body ready for exactly what it is I want to do.”

Wade Boggs, one of baseball’s best hitters, revealed that as mental practice he would go into a preparatory “quiet time cocoon” for 15-20 minutes before each game. During that time he would focus on the pitcher and mentally deduce how he might try to get Boggs out, but Boggs “would envision getting a hit off the pitcher.” He used his mental imagery time to both figure out strategy and imagine a successful Outcome to his game.

The Brazilian footballer **Ronaldinho Gaucho**, considered by some to

be the best footballer of all time, is renowned for his athletic creativity such as his use of tricks, overhead kicks, no-look passes and free-kick accuracy. Ronaldinho regularly employs mental imagery for game preparation and strategy purposes, once explaining, “When I train, one of the things I concentrate on is creating a mental picture of how best deliver the ball to a teammate, preferably leaving him alone in front of the rival goalkeeper. So what I do, always before a game, always, every night and every day, is try and think up things, imagine plays, which no one else will have thought of, and to do so always bearing in mind the particular strength of each team-mate to whom I am passing the ball. When I construct those plays in my mind I take into account whether one team-mate likes to receive the ball at his feet, or ahead of him; if he is good with his head, and how he prefers to head the ball; if he is stronger on his right or his left foot. That is my job. That is what I do. I imagine the game.” Note that Ronaldinho regularly rehearses in his mind all the different strategies he might use to win.

Ted Williams was one of the greatest hitters in baseball history with a .344 batting average. In his book, *The Science of Hitting*, he explained that when batting he would mentally divide the strike zone into a quadrant composed of 77 discrete color-coded compartments, each of which was the size of a baseball. He would only swing at pitches when the ball entered a compartment where he could get a hit a high percentage of time.

Knowing that a strike was better than swinging at a bad pitch, which could result in an out, he would patiently wait for the right pitch, waiting through strikes on the fringe of his best connecting zone. Williams’ power of visualization and his self-control enabled him to become the last player ever to hit .400 for an entire season (he batted .406 in 1941). His ability to project his grid into his real life batting zone is something we should note.

Atlanta Braves’ pitcher **John Smoltz** experienced a great turnaround in his baseball career when he finally learned to visualize his previous successes while on the mound and bring the strong emotions associated with those successes into his present reality. The turnaround he then experienced is understandable since imagining the peak performance of past successes helps evoke positive emotions that you can use to booster your real time sports performance. Imagery studies definitely show that incorporating the appropriate positive emotions into sports training can lead to superior performance.

Interpret it this way: getting psyched will favorably influence performance, and mental imagery practice can help you learn how to psych yourself up at will. Although it initially takes some effort, visualizing previous successes to do this is actually easier than imagining something new, as when learning a new technique, because you already have the perfect success scenery in your memory.

Brazilian soccer player **Pele** is another athlete who would practice

visualizing his previous successes an hour before every game. During his visualization routine he would run through a mental movie of his entire soccer life that started with him playing soccer as a child and ending with him reliving the best moments of his career at the World Cup. He would remind himself of the fun he felt playing as a young boy and try to bring those evoked emotions into his present state so that he could use that entrainment for the upcoming game.

Pele's case is instructive in demonstrating the point once again that having positive emotions on call can propel athletic performance. At critical times they can act as a beneficial stimulus that will support the physical responses you want, so you want to learn how to generate them at will. If you keep a "mental game journal" of your best performances like Pele, through regular visualization practice you can learn how to evoke the positive emotions you might need during a game so that you can use them at need during a competition.

Most visualization practices are used to perfect the Process or Response motor skills of an athlete. Most practice entails that athletes create mental images of an optimal motor program for what they should do in a particular scenario. The visualized imagery you create in your mind and refresh over and over again should be like a program on how to act/move in a way you want or respond to a particular situation.

If you use it to train your emotions then mental imagery can also be used as a Stimulus vehicle ("help me get psyched") rather than as just a way to train your motor responses. Using it in this way you can train yourself to recall upon need any arousing sensations you might benefit from during events, such as emotions of confidence and motivation. This ability to summon arousing emotions at will can provide you with an extra edge in crucial athletic situations where tiny differences separate the champions from the losers. You can also use mental imagery training to learn how to reduce anxiety when preparing for action.

If you richly combine visual, auditory, tactile, and kinesthetic images with emotions when creating your mental training imagery, this multimodal "composite image" will produce the best training results. The closer that the mental imagery you create within your mind mirrors realism – including being accompanied by the appropriate emotions - the easier it will be to interact with those images as if they were the real world. Such polysensual composite images are the best way to train yourself to achieve both psycho and physiological changes in your body.

Visualization practice should include your emotions, and can be used to train yourself to generate emotional states on call such as the competitive emotional arousal that leads to peak performance. Therefore in addition to the Process-Outcome dimensions of regular visualization practice, we also have its possible usage on a Stimulus-Response basis. Later we will learn

about an even more important Internal-External imagery perspective that is probably the most important for training.

In visualization practice you should always vividly picture your mental imagery with as much emotional color as possible, which will increase your ability to call on the right emotions as needed during any athletic performance. Emotions you might choose to master include arousal, endurance, grit, courage, optimism, fearlessness and confidence. If you practice rehearsing sensory imagery with emotional intensity, you can learn how to bring such emotions to the table as a beneficial stimulus whenever they are needed.

As an example, golfer **Jordan Spieth's** coach once credited a portion of Jordan's tournament win at Augusta to the image reel they had created showing Jordan's best shots, which he was taught how to recall as a peak performance stimulus during play.

Gold medal Olympic swimming champion **Michael Phelps** learned how to use visualization techniques from his coach, Bob Bowman. After each session of swimming practice Michael would go home, and before falling sleep and upon waking would follow his coach's instructions to "watch the videotape" of a perfect race in his mind. Phelps had to mentally visualize the perfect race in exact detail, with each swimming movement executed flawlessly with perfection. In conjunction with his intense physical practice, his visualization exercises helped him achieve Gold medals and world records during the 2008 and 2012 Olympic games.

Michael Phelps trained by not only seeing the perfect race in his mind, but would also imagine going through disaster scenarios where things did not go well such as his goggles breaking or his suit ripping. He would regularly visualize a variety of adversity scenarios so that he already had a plan in his head for any contingency that might happen during a race.

This is an important lesson because the most successful athletes work out good adaptation and coping skills for staying in control during problems, such as when they might become injured, rip their uniform, or receive an adverse call by an umpire. They mentally rehearse how to handle problematic outcomes that have occurred in the past or are possible in the future, and have been coached to visualize positive outcomes whenever adversity arises during their events. In this case, Phelps mentally rehearsed all the possible calamities that might happen to him during a race and through visualization practice worked to create new neural pathways that would automatically handle them should they occur.

Coach Bowman once explained that Phelps has all of these possible outcomes in his mental database so that when Michael swims a race he has already programmed his nervous system to react in one of those ways, and he'll just pick the one that happens to be necessary. Bowman explained that if everything is perfect then Phelps will just go with the perfect routine, but

if he has to make any sort of change then he already has the “programming” in there. Because of his extensive visualization practice Phelps never has to worry about adapting on the day of a competition but can focus solely on winning.

American sports shooter **Launi Meili**, who won gold at the 1992 Summer Olympics in Barcelona, once explained how like Phelps she also used mental imagery practice to train to win and prepare for adversity during a competition. The July-August 2009 issue of USA Shooting News contains a feature from her book *Rifle* where she wrote, “While preparing for the Olympics, I used imagery and relied on it a great deal. I thought I was going the extra mile in my training, but I did not realize I was leaving out an important element. I was able to see myself shooting perfect shots all day long, even at a record-level pace in my mind. My mental imagery paid off, and I set an Olympic record in the preliminary match using it on every shot in my shot plan, just like I rehearsed thousands of times.

“What I was not prepared for was the feeling going into the final in first place, and dealing with the pressure in a way that did not come up and bite me. It bit me hard, and I found out my shot plan and imagery were not tailored for this incredibly demanding situation. The nerves were controlling me, I was not controlling them. So over the next few years, I adapted my shot plan and the imagery in it to encompass those feelings and demands. I would not see myself shoot a perfect a perfect shot, I would see and feel myself shoot a perfect shot while thinking about being behind in the final, tied and a just one tenth of a point ahead in the final.

“Every situation that I felt I could anticipate, I set up mentally in my training and then performed the perfect shot. Placing the demands on myself through imagery and in practice helped a great deal the next time I faced an Olympic final, four years later in Barcelona, Spain. During that match I again relied on the imagery that included my ultimate goal – winning an Olympic gold medal by executing a perfect shot plan and shooting a tough final. And on July 30, 1992 at the Olympic 50 meter small bore range in Barcelona, my dream came true.

“Obviously, I am a firm believer in the power of imagery to help strengthen and focus your motivation and belief in yourself.”

Sprint canoeist **Thomas Hall** is another Olympic athlete who attributed his success to his visualization practices. He was an underdog during the Beijing 2008 Olympics who was not expected to win any metals at all, but he ended up finishing in third place with a Bronze medal. He attributed this great accomplishment to his diligent pursuit of visualization and mental rehearsal practices. Olympic diver Greg Louganis achieved double gold medals in back-to-back Olympics due to his work at goal setting and visualization practice too.

Marathon champion **Mark Plaatjes** also used mental training to help

him win the IAAF World Championships marathon gold medal in 1993. While preparing for that race, Plaatjes practiced visualization techniques so much that he knew every undulation on the course and had “run” every possible scenario of the race in his mind before ever arriving in Stuttgart, Germany where the race was to be held. During the actual race, Plaatjes’s mental preparation helped him to snatch victory from the likely winner just three minutes from the finishing line. As a result of this achievement, he became the first American to win a gold medal in a long-distance running event at the World Championships.

Lastly, Swiss bobsledder **Gustav Weder** would videotape his bobsled runs and study them for hours with intensity. He once took pictures of an entire bobsled course a year prior to the Olympic games so that he could study the entrance and exit details of every course. Every day he would mentally drive the course for one hour in his mind. So successful was his career that he won four medals in three Winter Olympics, eight medals at the FIBT World Championships, and he was the Bobsleigh World Cup champion four times.

Actually, most Olympic athletes report that they now engage in visualization training efforts. Athletes in most every sport and at all levels of competition have started to commonly incorporate visualization and mental imagery into their training routines so let’s now see some of the science behind this trend.

From: *CULTURE, COUNTRY, CITY, COMPANY,*
PERSON, PURPOSE, PASSION, WORLD
CH. 8 – “People”

“Over the ages men have painstakingly built civilization and culture by aligning themselves with higher principles of ethics and virtue. In this way men have far separated themselves from being just animals. When it comes time to make an important decision involving self-interest and the profits of money, power, fame and status that all desire but which are fleeting, consider the troubles of that ages long struggle.”

Why do some people prosper in life while others do not? It isn’t just due to luck. You will find a large proportion of people who became successful and prosperous because they adhered to tested principles such as saving, minimizing debt, working hard, investing, and so forth. By aligning with such principles you will give yourself better chances to move ahead in life.

Prosperity principles don’t just include the ones found within *Think and Grow Rich* (Napoleon Hill), *Super Investing* (Bill Bodri), *Rich Dad Poor Dad* (Robert Kiyosaki), *The Science of Getting Rich* (Wallace Wattles), *The Millionaire Mind*

(*Thomas Stanley*), *Secrets of the Millionaire Mind* (*T. Harv Eker*), *Automatic Wealth* (*Michael Masterson*), or *The Success System That Never Fails* (*W. Clement Stone*). There are also said to be karmic principles of giving that bring the prosperity of health, wealth, happiness and peace of mind in return.

Errant Men of Business

Some people in life may seem to enjoy prosperity, wealth and high position as a result of evil actions they commit such as drug lords, crooked politicians or just ordinary errant men of business, which is what you will encounter most often. What are “errant men of business”? They are people who compromise professionalism, ethics and their bond with humanity because of a pursuit of profits. They may outwardly look like elegant gentlemen and act like outstanding members of society, but errant men of business have put aside a bit of their humanity and responsibility to fellow humans and/or the environment we live in because of the pursuit of money. Men choose their values in life, and errant men of business choose the wrong ones. Here are some blatant examples of errant men of business who were willing to commit gigantic crimes that harmed other human beings just for the sake of income.

When the top executives of America’s cigarette companies ignored all the evidence and maintained that there was absolutely no relationship between smoking and cancer, and also attempted to engineer cigarettes to become more addictive while standing in front of Congress testifying that cigarettes were not addictive, they proved themselves to be errant men of business. They choose profits over lives.

When Nestle distributed the company’s baby formula to nursing mothers in the Third World for free, it gave just enough baby formula so that while using it the lactating mothers would stop producing their own milk. Poor Third World mothers and their babies then became entirely dependent on the free formula, but they could not afford to purchase it after the trial period ended and a mother’s milk had dried up. Thus, thousands of babies died. Through this marketing method used in order to increase sales, Nestle executives became errant men of business. To their own credit, however, they vowed never to let such behavior happen again.

When vaccine manufacturers consistently deny that vaccines cause damage when the evidence strongly indicates otherwise, and when the medical community persecutes doctors and parents who say this damage exists or that the number of vaccines children must receive is far too high, these resisters to truth all become errant men of business who have chosen profits over the welfare of human lives.

When Monsanto sued farmers because its own GMO products contaminated their fields, its executives and lawyers became errant men of

business who tried to reverse roles and turn their victims into criminals. The company in hundreds of publicized actions has shown that its executives have consistently positioned it incorrectly in the moral universe. Monsanto has many times demonstrated a principle that when profits become the only destination that matters then people will often choose the low road to get there, and will try to hide their actions because they know they are wrong. How can you say you didn't know your actions were wrong if you take steps to hide them because you know they will provoke criticism?

When investment banking employees mislead their clients to sell them lousy products to clean out their own books, and then bet against those same products they just sold to “suckers,” they become errant men of business. When the executives of Goldman Sachs perjured themselves before Congress about the doings of their firm (claiming that they were not significantly net-short the mortgage market when their own position was internally called “the big short” that accounted for 54% of the company's risk) they became text book models of errant men of business.

The top salesmen at many firms regularly lie to their clients/customers through exaggeration and omission in order to make sales. They too have become errant men of business. Too many people have lost their moral center in this way solely for the pursuit of profits.

Many other examples can be given of lawyers, lobbyists, government officials and politicians who abandoned their ethical training in the pursuit of profits and self-interest. To sacrifice morality for money is to enter the folds of the errant men of business.

Capitalism is by far the best economic system in the world, but there should be limits on what companies are allowed to do within capitalism in order to make profits. Many corporations, if given the blessing of legality, would readily suck every drop of blood out of human beings and kill a large swath of humanity. For the United States, one of the kisses of death that accelerated this reign of terror appeared when it gave corporations the same rights as individuals and allowed them to contribute to political campaigns, thus sealing the fate of its citizenry to be treated as unchecked plunder. The U.S. did not design its system towards just ends. It forgot that people are primary, not corporations or other non-living entities, and there should be principles to follow that are higher than making money. The lives and rights of people are to be protected, not profits and money-making.

We must all treasure human life more than profits, doing the right thing in all situations even though money tempts us to do otherwise. This is a humanistic principle ignored by modern profit-seeking corporations. After all, they are supposed to maximize profits, and humanistic values often stand in the way of that objective. The principle of the Confucian, Buddhist Hindu and Christian ways, on the other hand, are to live an ethical, moral

life that contributes to communities rather than preys on society by making money through immoral means.

“Success” or “station” in life are typically measured by the level of wealth, power, position or prestige we achieve. However, Confucius reframed the importance of these results by recasting true success in life in terms of a man’s behavior. He focused man’s efforts on becoming what has been translated as virtuous individuals, nobles, gentlemen of benevolence, exemplary men and women, or men and women of consummate conduct. Confucius taught that whether or not you become an exemplary man or woman of consummate conduct is determined by whether you are living according to the highest ethical values and trying to become more that way because of a devotion to self-improvement. This effort, rather than a high birth, is what makes someone truly noble. You are noble because of what you do and what you are working on becoming as a person, not because of the family you were born into.

An example that comes to mind is Dwight Eisenhower, who wanted to be a leader, and knew he needed to project optimism and confidence to do so. Therefore he especially worked on developing a moderate, balanced and cheerful demeanor. After recognizing that anger was his major personality flaw, Eisenhower did a number of things to tame it such as writing down the names of people he hated on slips of paper, tearing them up and then throwing them away. In time he developed a mature temperament by attacking his faults through self-cultivation, which is one of the signs of a man of consummate conduct.

You don’t have to be perfect to pursue “consummate conduct,” but you must be working on decreasing your faults to become better. Since it takes an average of six days to acquire a new habit, you just have to keep working at yourself to see improvements in any personal behaviors you want to change. Men and women of consummate conduct – upstanding people who radiate goodness and virtue – were not born that way but *made themselves that way*. They worked at becoming better people. They cultivated themselves through efforts of self-improvement.

Men of Consummate Conduct

The opposite of errant men of business are therefore the men and women of self-cultivation who work at developing consummate conduct. Like others they work on their own businesses or work as employees for someone else, but they also work on improving their knowledge, skills, habit energies, and behavior. With the capital and skills they accumulate in life they try to improve/help others and improve/help the world. Instead of just taking from the world they try to turn around and make a contribution so that the world becomes better off because they were here.

As exemplary models who followed this pattern we can turn to great men such as Benjamin Franklin, Andrew Carnegie, Sylvanus Thayer, James Jerome Hill, Julius Rosenwald, Johns Hopkins and David Packard. All of these men were known for having high values and they engaged in self-cultivation (self-improvement) efforts and consummate conduct. They all lived honorable lives, even in business, and made efforts to give back to others and help society using whatever funds they had accumulated in life.

To understand this ideal of the businessman who was a contributor to society and who also followed the pathway of merit-making and consummate conduct, it is best to start out with Benjamin Franklin, one of the most important Founding Fathers of America. Franklin was clearly both a man of self-cultivation as well as a servant of mankind who helped to greatly develop American civic society and culture.

Franklin served in a number of professional positions during his life – printer, postman, soldier, ambassador, inventor. When he was starting out in the printing business he worked on cultivating his character so that he was known to the locals as someone ambitious, hardworking and trustworthy. As he once wrote, “Industry, perseverance, and frugality make fortune yield.” From wise dealings he accumulated enough wealth and steady income that he could retire at age 42, which was primarily due to property investments and his printing business. He became one of the wealthiest men in Philadelphia.

Not just a printer himself, Franklin multiplied his income by setting up printing joint ventures with other individuals where he would buy the printing presses and typeface for the partnerships and thereafter receive a share of the business profits. In his autobiography, Franklin explained the reasons why his partnerships normally succeeded while those of others often failed. “Partnerships often finish in quarrels; but I was happy in this, that mine were all carried on and ended amicably, owing, I think, a good deal to the precaution of having very explicitly settled, in our articles, everything to be done by or expected from each partner, so that there was nothing to dispute, which precaution I would therefore recommend to all who enter into partnerships; for, whatever esteem partners may have for, and confidence in each other at the time of the contract, little jealousies and disgusts may arise, with ideas of inequality in the care and burden of the business, etc., which are attended often with breach of friendship and of the connection, perhaps with lawsuits and other disagreeable consequences.”

Franklin was also a scientist who investigated the characteristics of electricity, and the first person to chart the Gulf Stream. He also was the inventor of various items such as bifocals, an odometer, and the Franklin stove. Thinking of the public, Franklin never patented his inventions to make money from them but made them freely available to the public, commenting that he “should be glad of an opportunity to serve others by

any invention of ours; and this we should do freely and generously.”

Benjamin Franklin’s many contributions to the United States changed the landscape of its political, educational and social life. In particular, he greatly benefitted the city of Philadelphia. It is said that he was behind nearly every project that made the city of Philadelphia a more attractive place to live. In Philadelphia he founded the first lending library, the first scholarly voluntary association focused on mutual improvement (the Junto), the first fire department and postal system.

One of Franklin’s talents lay in bringing together people for benevolent purposes, which is what he did to also create the Philadelphia Hospital, and the Pennsylvania Academy that is now the University of Pennsylvania. In all these projects Franklin rarely presented himself as their proposer and avoided taking credit. Rather, he adopted the lifelong habit of presenting philanthropic ideas as a “scheme of a number of friends.” He also pioneered the mechanism of the matching grant while raising funds for the Pennsylvania Hospital, proposing that the colonial government contribute the same amount to its establishment as private contributions. He did so many good things for the public that we can only remember his words, “It is prodigious the quantity of good that may be done by one man, if he will make a business of it.”

Toward the end of his life, Franklin wanted to give even more back to both Boston and Philadelphia, the city of his birth and his city of residence. He therefore funded two small gifts in his will totaling 1,000 pounds sterling (around \$4,500) that were to be placed in a trust and invested for 100 years. Upon the 100-year mark, 75% of the accumulated sum was to be used to help tradesmen and fund civic projects, but the rest was to be invested for another 100 years, after which it was to be given in full to the cities. Thus he blessed future posterity in this way as well.

Thanks to the miracle of compound interest, after 100 years the trusts in Boston and Philadelphia were worth \$400,000 and \$100,000 respectively, prior to disbursements. One hundred years later they had grown to \$4.5 million and \$2 million due to interest compounding, a great gift to the cities. Thus, two hundred years after he lived students who were studying to become tradesmen have been able to go to school thanks to the money Franklin had set aside years ago. As you can see demonstrated by this case, in his dealings Franklin often developed projects that he thought might extend great benefits to posterity.

Despite his many accomplishments, perhaps Franklin’s greatest legacy was his emphasis on the cultivation of virtue found in his autobiography. He created a famous ledgering system for self-improvement purposes that helped him reduce his vices and cultivate positive character traits, and its story has been a great contribution to American culture. The details of the method (and its usage by famous individuals) can be found in *Color Me*

Confucius.

It was Franklin's own cultivation emphasis on self-improvement that transformed his personality into that of someone who was quite affable and could get along with others. For instance, rather than outright contradict individuals and create arguments, Franklin adopted the habit of first saying, "It appears to me ..." or "If I am not mistaken ..." His affability enabled many of his legislative proposals to be accepted by his fellow countrymen and allowed him to become one of the most well-liked of America's Founding Fathers. Franklin showed how a person's life and character could become a noble one through constant self-assessment.

Another man known for outstanding character traits that he had cultivated was Sylvanus Thayer, a military officer who was ordered by President James Monroe in 1817 to become the superintendent of West Point in order to bring order out of the academy's laxity and chaos. Under his stewardship West Point became America's first college of engineering and the world's finest military academy. The West Point motto of "Duty, Honor, Country" originated with Thayer.

Often compared to a kind of military monk, Thayer established West Point's ideals and values system – high academic standards, strict discipline, the demerit system, summer encampment, and an emphasis on honor and responsibility. He also ran West Point as a meritocracy when it came to admission standards, which was a revolutionary idea at the time since it avoided any sort of favoritism. Thayer would discharge cadets he believed were unsuited to West Point's ideals, and finally left the institution only when President Jackson, for political reasons, would by presidential order return a cadet that Thayer had dismissed.

Thayer then went to Dartmouth in order to establish a civilian school to train engineers. He even donated \$40,000 to the trustees of Dartmouth College "for the purpose of establishing ... a School or Department of Architecture and Civil Engineering," which thus created the Thayer School of Engineering. On the front of Cummings Hall at Dartmouth is carved a quote from Thayer on the purpose of the school: "To prepare the most capable and faithful for the most responsible positions and the most difficult service." Thayer was a true man of consummate conduct who executed his duties according to the highest principles, which he tried to instill within an educational system that would train men.

Andrew Carnegie, born in Scotland, was another self-taught man of virtue who devoted his accumulated wealth to helping the world. He created the largest iron and steel maker in the world, and became one of the richest men in America. As a youth he lacked a formal education, just like Benjamin Franklin, but like Franklin also became an avid reader to teach himself. He was proud of the fact that he succeeded in many of his ventures because he always surrounded himself with men having more talents than

himself. He was also known for his honesty, once returning \$500 he found while a messenger boy. Imagine the temptation to keep such a sum of money that was equal to ten times his wages!

While most of his fellow capitalists financed their various business projects with watered down stock, Carnegie chose a higher road by founding all his early organizations as either partnerships or associations, and invited partners into the business based on the character and quality of the men. Therefore he was one to share his wealth and success with others. Many of the heads of his departments became millionaires due to their relationship with Carnegie.

In his autobiography, which revealed his own style of self-cultivation, Carnegie wrote that men should invest in themselves and become master of topics of their own choosing. They should seek knowledge and wisdom and value contribution in life rather than just money. Success, he felt, came from being open with others and treating people well. People desiring success should enlarge their circle of friends, be eager to repay favors and share their success with others. Most of all they should learn to control their mood for he felt that a sunny disposition was worth more than a fortune.

Carnegie thought you should divide a man's life into a period of accumulation and then distribution of the wealth you had accumulated during life. In the second half of one's life he felt that a person should divest themselves of their overabundance, saying that it was a disgrace for a man to die rich. Specifically, he said "The man who dies rich dies disgraced." Within ten years of his death he had given away 90% of his fortune, and at one time write, "Try to make the world in some way better than you found it is to have a noble motive in life."

Altogether Carnegie used his great wealth to establish 2,811 public libraries around the world and donate 7,689 organs to churches. He established Carnegie Technical Schools, which is now Carnegie Mellon University. He also established the first modern philanthropic organization, which is the Carnegie Foundation. In the purposes for the foundation, Carnegie thought that a man should give away most of his wealth in philanthropy to help others, but should spend it in the right way so as not to encourage idleness or destroy men's ambitions.

Although a businessman most of his life, he thought deeply on how to use his wealth to help society and put his thoughts into an article, "The Gospel of Wealth," which has become one of the most important American blueprints for philanthropy and benevolence. In the *The Gospel of Wealth* he articulated his view that the rich were trustees of the wealth they had accumulated and urged wealthy individuals to use their funds to help their communities and to promote the welfare and happiness of others.

Realizing that money given to others often leads to bad results, he felt that charitable funds should be used to support libraries, hospitals,

universities, meeting halls, recreational facilities and other projects that would strengthen individuals so that they could become more independent and productive. He said, "Neither the individual nor the race is improved by almsgiving. The best means of benefiting the community is to place within its reach the ladders upon which the aspiring can rise." He wanted to give people the means by which they could help themselves.

This is why Carnegie funded institutions that would help men improve themselves, such as libraries. Carnegie had two major reasons for supporting libraries: (1) the books would enable people to educate themselves and, (2) as an immigrant himself Carnegie believed that America's newcomers needed to acquire cultural knowledge of the country that a library would make possible. Because of his support for various self-improvement measures like this, Carnegie was one of the most influential philanthropists in American history whose deeds greatly improved America's society and culture.

Another philanthropist who greatly changed America is someone few know about. Most people have heard of the company Sears Roebuck founded by Richard Sears, but they usually haven't heard of his partner, Julius Rosenwald. Rosenwald took care of operational measures at Sears Roebuck, which sold mail order catalog products during an era known for deception and slick sales pitches. He was the one who set the high standards of company honesty so that customers who ordered by mail got exactly what was described in the company's mail order catalog. Because of Rosenwald, Sears Roebuck offered one of the first money-back guarantees in America and pioneered the trusting "send no money" advertisement.

In addition to his fame for instilling Sears's high ethics, Rosenwald became known for his multi-million dollar philanthropies. He also encouraged other wealthy individuals to support good causes on their own, feeling that "property entails duties." Although Jewish, his philanthropy transcended all barriers of religion, race, and nationality. As an example, he advanced the cause of black education by funding Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute and by building thousands of schools (4,977 to be exact) for black children in the rural American South. He also built several dozen YMCAs across America and one of Chicago's largest philanthropic housing developments.

Rosenwald was one of America's most innovative donors. When building schools, for instance, similar to Franklin he insisted that his donations would not be made unless matched by the local residents, and usually maneuvered local and state education authorities into participating. He did not give anonymously because he felt that the credibility from his name, when visibly supporting a project, was valuable to the project, but he also fought to keep his name from being affixed to any properties or institutions. This is why he is largely unknown, which is thanks to his good

motives of keeping his name off projects.

Rather than establish a charitable fund to exist forever like the Carnegie Foundation, Rosenwald established a philanthropic fund to “sunset” itself out of existence in order to achieve better immediate results. His fund was instructed to use all of its monies for charitable purposes within 25 years of his death. Rosenwald had seen how other foundations had lost their way by eventually focusing on their own perpetuity rather than their mission of getting things done. Therefore he felt that foundations should attack national problems with urgency and use up their funds within a reasonable time while leaving future challenges to future philanthropists.

I actually agree with this approach rather than the perpetual (and bureaucracy-laden) philanthropic foundation that sometimes gets co-opted by intelligence agencies for their own purposes. Personally I would like to see more philanthropy flowing from individuals alive than being directed by the wills of dead rich people. Help to society usually has a greater impact today than if it is delayed. When you give, what a joy it is to see most of the action is made during your lifetime when you can still correct matters such as preventing other entities, who want to take control of your wealth, from usurping your original intent. If you want to give and make a difference you should start giving now, and put a sunset limit on unexpended philanthropy after your death – perhaps thirty years or half of a Kondratieff cycle. When people say, “I’m going to leave it in my will” rather than donate to good causes now, what they are really saying is, “If I could live forever I wouldn’t give any of it away.”

Rosenwald gave to many projects but once said, “I can testify that it is nearly always easier to make \$1,000,000 honestly than to dispose of it wisely.” Andrew Carnegie also said that it is more difficult to give money away intelligently than to earn it in the first place. Before you give you must think about the consequences of your gift, such as unintended side effects, and whether an organization can actually manage the project you sponsor.

The founder of *Forbes* magazine, B.C. Forbes, once described Rosenwald by saying, “The most notable thing about Julius Rosenwald is not any superhuman business ability, nor any phenomenal smartness in seeing and seizing mercantile opportunities. ... The greatest thing about Julius Rosenwald is not his business but himself, not what he has but what he is, his character, his character, his personality, his sincerity, his honesty, his democracy, his thoughtfulness, his charity of heart, his catholicity of sympathy, his consuming desire to help the less fortunate of his fellow creatures.” Rosenwald was therefore a man who not only cultivated himself and consummate conduct, but held to a mission to help others.

Another man of interest was James J. Hill, a Canadian-American railroad executive who had the dream of building a transcontinental railroad line across the United States. This was purely a business aspiration, which is

perfectly fine. It is what Hill did along the railroad line to help promote his own interests that was special, which is to help build towns, settlements and businesses that would help make the railroad a success.

Hill's railroad, the Great Northern, purchased land along the railroad from the federal government and resold it to settlers at cheap prices. He also sold lumber across his rail lines to encourage the construction of towns. He invested in founding schools and churches for these new communities and developed livestock and crops that settlers could profitably raise near the railroad. Furthermore, he often offered free breeding stock to farmers to help them build the livestock business in the region. He taught farmers better farming methods and erected large grain elevators in Buffalo. Basically, the Great Northern invested in people and communities in order to build its own business (just as Henry Ford had raised his workers' wages so that they could buy his automobiles) and there is nothing wrong in that! He enriched the local economies in order to sell more product and become richer himself. Rather than just take, he raised people up in order to raise up his own fortunes.

Hill also maintained a strong philanthropic presence all his life, such as founding a theological seminary at St. Paul. The interesting thing about his life is that he used his business interests to perform a great social service in building up the Pacific Northwest region (Montana, Minnesota, Oregon and the Dakotas), thus playing a critical role in developing the U.S. through his railroad empire. His work caused the founding of countless cities and hundreds of thousands of farms, which helped bring great prosperity to the masses.

Johns Hopkins is yet another American entrepreneur who amassed a great fortune through a career in banking, real estate and investing and who thereafter determined to devote the gains he had acquired to the public. He became Baltimore's guardian protector and greatest philanthropist by endowing it with a university, hospital, medical school, school of nursing, and orphan asylum for black children. During the Civil War, he rushed to offer Baltimore emergency aid by loaning the city half a million dollars. As Carnegie had suggested, after making provisions for his family Hopkins devoted most of his fortune to the service of humanity.

Nine months before he died, Hopkins wrote an instructional letter to his hospital's trustees informing them of his charitable objectives: "The indigent sick of this city and its environs, without regard to sex, age, or color, who may require surgical or medical treatment, and who can be received into the hospital without peril to the other inmates, and the poor of this city and state, of all races, who are stricken down by any casualty, shall be received into the hospital, without charge ... You will also provide for the reception of a limited number of patients who are able to make compensation for the room and attention they may require ... you will thus

be enabled to afford to strangers, and to those of our own people who have no friends or relatives to care for them in sickness, and who not objects of charity, the advantage of careful and skillful treatment.” These ideas are similar to those of the Aravind eye hospital system that we will later encounter.

David Packard, the co-founder of the electronics giant Hewlett-Packard, is another industrialist businessman who made his mark through ethical business practices and because of giving back to society through philanthropy. Hewlett-Packard became one of the most admired electronics companies in America with Hewlett spearheading product innovation and Packard focusing on managing the company. The corporate environment it created was incredibly unique, and was the forerunner of Silicon Valley. So well known were Packard’s administrative skills with technology issues that during the Nixon administration he was asked to take a hiatus from HP during the middle of his career and go to Washington to serve the country as Deputy Secretary of Defense.

The two Hewlett-Packard partners developed a special set of business principles, known as the “HP” Way, which reflected a corporate morality that included high respect and concern for employees. They promised never to layoff employees and offered a generous profit-sharing plan. During economic recessions, for instance, to avoid layoffs the company scaled back on working hours instead. Part of the HP way was to also avoid long-term debt, which could become crippling during an economic downturn, and not to enter into any businesses that the company did not understand.

Packard donated more than \$1 billion in charity during his lifetime, and his projects included founding the Monterey Bay Aquarium and helping Stanford University through generous contributions. The university stated upon his death, “Dave Packard, along with his wife, Lucile, and his partner, Bill Hewlett, have shaped and nurtured this university in ways that can only be compared to the founders, Jane and Leland Stanford.” Like many other businessman who became wealthy only because of the free enterprise capitalistic system that existed, Packard also funded political institutions that promoted free enterprise such as the Hoover Institute and American Enterprise Institute.

The Ethics Test

All these men lead honorable business lives, and also were devoted to the people. They showed that you can and should pursue business profits, but it should be done in the right way so that you do not become an errant man of business. Remember the few fundamental rules of ethics that should apply even in business: do not do to others what you do not want them to do to you, do not aggress in any way upon a person or their

property, and before you undertake any questionable action you should consider whether its righteousness could be justified as universal law.

The profit motive can warp even the best of minds so that a man becomes unclear and unsure what is proper. Therefore all sorts of tests for business ethics have been proposed for judging the righteousness of behavior such as the conscience test (does this go against my conscience?), the consequences test (would this behavior create bad consequences?), the broadcasting test (what if everyone knew I did this?), the religion test (does this go against the rules of my religion?), the fairness test (is this fair to all the parties involved?), the “what if everybody did this?” test and all sorts of other tests to judge the properness of actions.

It is not just the propriety of business decisions that makes you a man or woman of consummate conduct, but what you do with the wealth you accumulate from business, meaning money derived from *others*, that also matters in life. Wealth can be used entirely for personal consumption, or it can be used in other ways, some of which might benefit mankind. Which will you choose?

John Wesley spoke towards this saying, “Do all the good you can, in all the ways you can, in every place you can, at all the times you can, with all the zeal you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can.” Buddhism espouses, “Do everything good you can, eliminate any evil when you encounter it, never block any unborn good from arising, and never let any unborn evil ever arise.” Jesus said to do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Master Zeng explained of his teacher Confucius’s way, “The Master’s Way lies in exerting all of one’s effort and relating to the needs of others. That is all.” These are just some thoughts to think about. I personally ask people to act wisely and think about doing whatever would elevate you the most above your animal nature.

Excel at Your Career

All these wealthy individuals pursued business or occupational interests, but they particularly distinguished themselves by adhering to strong ethical principles and values in their lives. This doesn’t mean that they never made mistakes or offended others, but that they indeed tried to do their best and avoid obvious wrongs. Some were also known for continual efforts at self-improvement. For instance, Franklin and Carnegie both taught themselves by reading books, Thayer and Franklin were famous for the work they did on cultivating their personal behavior, all of these men were famous for working hard, and Carnegie and Rosenwald were especially known for the virtue of honesty.

The second commonality to these men of consummate conduct is that they all made efforts to contribute to society with a determination that

something could be done to make things better. They all contributed a share of their efforts to the greater good and tried to leave the world a better place than when they found it. This usually meant some form of philanthropy, but the important point is how they went about it. Some concentrated on helping their city, some on helping their country, some on helping individuals, and others (such as Carnegie) worked on spreading a positive influence throughout the world.

All these men had different philanthropic priorities, different views on what would make society better off, and thought deeply about the effects of charity on human nature. For instance, Carnegie believed that charity could be injurious unless it helped the recipients to become independent of it. Therefore he searched for ways to help society without creating dependence. As the multi-millionaire John Rockefeller said, who was also known for his own large charitable activities, "The best philanthropy is constantly in search of the finalities - a search for a cause, an attempt to cure evils at their source." Rockefeller focused on curing the source of society's ills rather than battle the never-ending symptoms of illnesses. He attempted to give to charities that would address the root of problems rather than their outcomes and thereby benefit subsequent generations.

Rockefeller was by no means a man of consummate conduct in his business affairs. Nevertheless his views on philanthropy are instructive to would-be benefactors since he also thought deeply on the issue due to the fact that he was one of the largest philanthropists in the world. He was allegedly influenced along these lines by a meeting with Swami Vivekananda in 1893, who urged him to use more of his philanthropy in projects to help poor and distressed people. Rockefeller later wanted his family to share in a sense of duty to improve the common good, and felt that family traditions played a critical role in the transmission of these values from generation to generation.

You don't have to be a multi-millionaire superstar like some of these individuals to become a man of consummate conduct. There are only three requirements to becoming noble: devote yourself to the road of self-cultivation (self-improvement), keep to your ethics and the road of high principles during difficult times, and try to be of service to others. Those are the three principles: cultivate yourself to improve yourself; never depart from your values in life including for the needs of your occupation or money-making; and practice compassion in trying to give back to others.

The third principle is to help society with your resources (time, money, talents, etc.), however great or scanty they might be, to be of service when and wherever you can. In other words, try to contribute however you can even if it is but small. Some people have such few resources that there is little they can do but survive, and thus cultivating your own character and behavior, even in the midst of poverty, is still the core essence, rather than

giving, of what makes one the most noble.

There are only three main options for how to make a living in the world. The major alternatives are that you either (a) work for the government, (b) work for yourself in your own business or profession, or (c) work for someone else such as a boss, company or institution.

If you work for yourself then it might be possible to make your occupation part of your life purpose or life mission, but this is rarely the case. Sometimes a business or career just puts food on the table without any higher mission, and that's perfectly fine because that *is* the major purpose of a business or career. Who can criticize the fact that businesses need profits to survive and we all need money to live? The problem is that many service sector jobs, which are the only paycheck opportunity available for some individuals, provide no useful skill sets and leave people with no productive abilities whatsoever. Life seems empty if it is just about work, and for people who only have such jobs they must seek a higher purpose.

People can easily become stuck in meaningless office or retail jobs and squander away their lives knowing that they are accomplishing nothing meaningful other than earning a paycheck. This is why I say you have to build skills, opportunities and activities outside of work, for in this case this is the only place to find a higher meaning or purpose for your life. It is also why I tell people to use their free time and freewill efforts, however small, to train to become Bodhisattva protectors or build merit in this direction. Those who become Bodhisattvas are the ones who already did this.

Most people wish that their work could serve a larger purpose in the world and constitute a higher mission, but you cannot guarantee that this will be possible even when you *do* own your own business. Therefore it is a matter of what you do *outside of work* that will or will not create a more meaningful life. We make a living by what we get from others, but we make a life by what we give. This is what you need to consider.

Few people are lucky enough to be able to build their personal career on a compelling mission that gives meaning to their work. Just because you want to organize your work and life around a mission doesn't mean that you can make it happen. If transforming missions that supported a life were that easy to create then everyone would be doing them, but you rarely see this happening. Most of us have to work for others to make a living.

When you do work for someone else you should always do your best and work your hardest to excel for your boss. Be loyal, think of your boss's interests, and try to give him and your company your best. A man or woman of consummate conduct sets the goal of contributing wherever they can and being the best they can be at whatever they do. You should approach your work like a true performer who takes this to heart, which is the proper career principle of alignment.

Advertising legend David Ogilvy once advised the following in a 1977

interview with John Chrichton, “Be more ambitious. Don’t bunt. Try to hit the ball out of the park every time. Compete with the immortals. Try to make whatever you do the greatest that anyone has ever done. You won’t always succeed but reach for the stars. Don’t bunt. Be more ambitious. Ambition is the key. Try to do remarkable things. Try to be great. It is the lack of ambition that cripples most people.” Ogilvy’s principle of success was that you should always try to excel. He promoted the ideal of not only doing your best, but “to be always pre-eminent,” which is the Greek idea of *arête*. The Greeks stressed this ideal of “excellence” not just by an emphasis on cultivating an ideal physical form. They stressed that individuals should use all their faculties to full force for effectiveness in the world, which is *arête*. In the Greek view, one could only live up to their full potential by cultivating/involving all the abilities and potentialities available to humans.

If you work for the government as the third career option you will have a whole set of other behavioral expectations in front of you that are quite different from the expectations of the business world. However, you can still become a man of consummate conduct even though the establishment may think you are otherwise. A bit of advice that most often comes to mind for such a career originates from Colonel John Boyd of the United States Air Force. Boyd was a remarkable unsung hero in military history who revolutionized American military practice and policy by writing the first manual on jet aerial combat, spearheading the design of the F-15 and F-16, teaching the U.S. Marine Corps how to fight on the ground, and shaping the tactics which won the Gulf War. When he was hiring someone to work for him in the Air Force he would tell him the following, which has come to be known as the “To Be or To Do” speech:

“You are at a point in your life where you have to make a choice about what kind of person you are going to be. There are two career paths in front of you, and you have to choose which path you will follow. One path leads to promotions, titles, and positions of distinctions. To achieve success down that path, you have to conduct yourself a certain way. You must go along with the system and show that you are a better team player than your competitors. The other path leads to doing things that are truly significant for the Air Force, but the rewards will quite often be a kick in the stomach because you have to cross swords with the party line on occasion. You can’t go down both paths, you have to choose. So, do you want to be a man of distinction or do you want to do things that really influence the shape of the Air Force? To be or to do, that is the question.”⁶⁹

Naturally this type of advice doesn’t apply to all types of government jobs, but does provide some food for thought for government career

⁶⁹ Robert Coram, *Boyd: The Fighter Pilot Who Changed the Art of War*, (Little, Brown and Company, Boston, 2002), pp. 284-285, 340.

professionals. As government employees often relate, if you step out of line to shake up the system you might lose your job or even get prosecuted, so every workplace by doing what is right has its own survival and flourish rules that must be taken into consideration.

Most people are taught to follow their passion in life in order to develop a rewarding career. This and a lot of related advice can be traced back to mythologist Joseph Campbell's dictum to "follow your bliss." This sounds wonderful if you have a passion that people are willing to pay for, but most people don't, nor do they usually have skills in those areas that would produce an income. Who would pay to watch you play golf or tennis? The truth is that you shouldn't follow your passion but should bring it with you wherever you find yourself.

For instance, I might have an incredible passion to play basketball, but people certainly won't pay anything to watch me play because I don't have exceptional skills at either of them - I'm not good enough. I might want to grow roses, but there might not be enough money in it even if I become an expert at rose gardens. As Warren Buffett also said, his own incredible investing skills were only valuable because he was born in the United States, a perfect *location* where he had a chance to use them. Had he been born in Communist China his skills would have gone to waste. John Paul Getty also said he became rich (for awhile the richest man in the world, in fact) only because he was born at the *right time*, so the circumstances of *time and place* factor into whether you can become rich or not. It isn't just a matter of hard work, skills and interest. All sorts of other considerations and circumstances come into play as well.

In actuality, most people were not born with preexisting passions. However, we are all free to develop as many skills as we like and uplift our mental perspective to find a higher meaning in whatever we are doing. You can certainly cultivate more passion by changing this attitude and mindset. To live larger in life, you must adopt the viewpoint that your energies are being devoted to some higher purpose, such as in the story of the bricklayer who believed he was building a cathedral while his companions only saw themselves as building a wall. You must believe that your efforts are enriching the world in some way, such as when brushing your teeth thinking that you are bringing a brighter smile to the world. You also don't have to be the singular hero of a social movement that wants to change the world either, but can simply be part of a larger cooperative effort shared with others. This is how most people at NASA feel about their work ... they feel they are part of a larger team that works on a joint mission. In identifying with the mission of a larger group, people can forget their private interests and lose themselves in the pursuit of larger communal ends.

This principle of looking for a higher meaning in what you do is

championed in *So Good They Can't Ignore You* where Cal Newport masterfully points out that “following your bliss” fails to describe how most people end up with compelling careers. People are often taught to follow their passion but a passion mindset focuses on *what the world can offer you* (the value your job gives to you) whereas a more realistic craftsman mindset focuses on *what you can offer the world*. What can you offer that is of value to others? What can you contribute?

You can certainly make money at what the world will pay you to do, but don't expect the world to simply give you an exciting, valuable career because you want one. Having one is a rare luxury. Most people would love a job that allows them to be creative, make an impact on the world, and have control over how they spend their time but such jobs are rare and valuable, and the only way to get something valuable is to offer something valuable in return. For instance, a craftsman develops skills over time by devoting them to some calling. People will pay for the craftsman's work; he gets paid because he offers something valuable in return.

Most people usually want their work to serve a higher purpose but no one can guarantee that you will ever enter a profession of such caliber. You usually only get such plum jobs after you have already established that you have developed exceptional skills, like a craftsman. Compelling missions that give meaning to your work and provide you with money are the exception rather than the rule in life. Therefore it is often what you do *outside of work* that is where you will find a higher set of purposes in life.

Regardless as to how you feel about your job, the craftsman mindset is a reliable foundation upon which you can build a compelling career. It requires you to master the art of continual improvement at your job, which is the process of self-cultivation or self-perfection illustrated by the life of Benjamin Franklin, George Washington, George Marshall or even Andrew Carnegie who constantly looked for improvements that would cut the price of steel by even a few cents. A craftsman mindset requires you to relentlessly focus on the value you are offering the world. It asks of you to shine so bright that people won't ignore you.

You should think of it in this way. A *job* is simply a way to pay the bills. This is what most people have in life, so for most people meaning in life has to be found outside of their working job. A *career*, because you continually master new skills, is a path that leads to increasingly better work but a career may or may not provide much in terms of a higher purpose or mission. A *calling*, on the other hand, involves work that is an important part of your life and part of your identity so it might involve a life purpose or higher meaning. In all of these options you must avoid becoming an errant man of business, but focus on the possibilities of self-perfection, improvement and service to others.

Each of these alternatives has limitations or constraints on what it can

provide you in terms of monetary rewards, feelings of satisfaction, and feelings of a higher purpose or mission. The hard truth is that you will usually have to find a higher purpose, mission or meaning in life outside of your job and career. It will usually be what you do outside of your working life that counts, and something you want to do because of its deep meaning to you rather than something you feel obligated to do. That is where most people can contribute the most. Meaning comes from contribution, from being able to contribute.

That being said, your work is going to fill a large portion of your life and while it might not amount to a calling the only way to become satisfied is to do great work. In any endeavor you find yourself you should try to do your best, master the skills of achievement, and try to contribute to others in a meaningful way.

Thinking About Life Purpose

How do you contribute to others? Aside from the service or value you supply through your work, Buddhists say there are three ways you can contribute to others, known as the three methods of offering. Normally these are thought of as three forms of charitable giving, but they are also three forms of cooperative contribution.

First, you might give wealth or resources to help others as a type of contribution. Second, you might provide others with some degree of fearlessness (confidence or protection) when they become anxious or afraid. You might give them hope or take away some of their concerns. Third, you might provide other people with teachings that can help their lives mentally, spiritually and physically, which is called giving Dharma.

These three ways of helping other people are called the three forms of offering or three ways of generating merit. Regardless of whether or not your business, job or occupation is fulfilling you can always practice some degree of the three forms of offering as a way of lightening the burdens of others, contributing to society and accumulating merit. As Aesop said, “No act of kindness, however small, is wasted.” A key principle is to not just help for the moment but create permanent positive change. Each generation flows into the next, so wherever and whenever possible you should try to fix problems that will affect subsequent generations, and therefore you should sacrifice yourself through hard work to solve the pressing or permanent problems of mankind.

We are all here in this world as stewards only, and take nothing with us upon our death. As living beings we have the power to do something for the lasting betterment of mankind that can help reduce the number of unhappy people around us, but will you take any such steps to help others? There is a domino chain effect from doing kind deeds such that kindness

gets passed forward to spread everywhere, so whatever we do for the world can in one sense be viewed as immortal. Therefore why not take some steps to do something for others?

That being said, what star is your North star? What does your life truly revolve around? What do you really care about? Where do you want to make a contribution? What light do you want to see in the world?

Every now and then you must separate yourself from the script you are presently following in life and ask, “Is my life on track? Am I headed in the right direction? Am I satisfied with the plot that has already played out or do I need to change directions? What do I want my life to really be about and are my actions taking me there? Where *are* they taking me? Am I pursuing what others expect of me or my own dreams and aspirations? Am I being in my own identity or acting according to somebody else’s expectations? What do I ultimately want to accomplish? Are my present goals even worthy of my time and efforts? Am I doing what I feel I am placed here on earth to do?”

By asking these questions you will determine whether or not you should be altering course and the direction in which you should be headed.

What else might you ask to spur the right sort of self-reflection? You should consider whether you are holding to your ethics and values in whatever you are doing, or sliding down the slippery slope that eventually produces errant men of business.

Try asking yourself, “Am I personally living my ideal of an honorable and virtuous life? Am I living with integrity? Is my present behavior reflecting my values? Would I be okay with my family and friends knowing what I do and how I behave? Am I cultivating my humanity?”

Furthermore, “What do I ultimately stand for? Am I remaining silent, or am I standing up and raising my voice? Am I supporting the light that I want others to see? Am I following my inner voice?”

“What am I trying to realize as my best self, and am I accomplishing that? Are my goals serving a higher purpose? Am I allowing myself to express my true self? Am I letting myself be happy?”

How about personal skills? If you are reading this you are obviously alive and intelligent, so you still have time to develop nearly any skill you want through self-study and self-effort. Years ago Earl Nightingale helped instill within America a characteristic of self-improvement and recognition of the need for lifelong learning by urging people to spend one hour per day studying a topic until they achieved basic mastery. The books of Daniel Coyle on developing talent, since it is something you develop rather than are born with, would also be immensely helpful in this area.

Along these lines you need to ask yourself, “What do I want to learn and master in life with the time remaining? If I have an aim of achievement then what must I learn for those accomplishments? How must I better myself

and how do I better myself? How do I want to be in whatever I must do? Am I committed to my own individual excellence?”

What about the question of contributing to mankind? For this every small effort counts but you should always be asking yourself, “What is the ultimate purpose of my business, career or job other than just making money? Am I creating benefit for others and doing something that society finds useful? Am I helping to make a better future? At the end of my life, facing death, will I be able to say I did something and that it is better that I was here? Am I making the difference I want?”

This very moment you should pause and ask yourself what you can offer the world, and reevaluate what goals and activities seem worthy of your money, time, energy and efforts. With the time you have left, you should consider what type of positive impact you want to make in the world. A decomposing skeleton is what you will one day become, so with that finality in mind you should consider doing something starting *now*. Mother Teresa aptly said, “If you can’t feed a hundred people then feed just one.” Desmond Tutu said, “Do your little bit of good where you are; it’s those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world.”

And finally, many life coaches ask people to consider the following legacy questions that are also useful to ponder, such as, “How would you like your obituary to read? What do you want to be remembered for after death ... what is it that you want people to be reading on your tomb stone? What do you want to accomplish with the time you have left?”

I personally like to bring up the story of Linds Redding, a New Zealand-based art director who had worked at BBDO and Saatchi & Saatchi. Redding wrote an essay “A Short Lesson in Perspective” after he was diagnosed with terminal lung cancer, and being reflective before his death therefore penned the following:

Perhaps I am not alone in this assessment. Many people have their own idea of a person’s life, without knowing what really goes on, on the inside. Some even envy the lives of their friends and colleagues, without realizing, their lives are much better. Now that I am out of that life, I am able to have a different perspective of my old life.

And here’s the thing.

It turns out I didn’t actually like my old life nearly as much as I thought I did. I know this now because I occasionally catch up with my old colleagues and work-mates. They fall over each other to enthusiastically show me the latest project they’re working on. Ask my opinion. Proudly show off their technical prowess (which is not inconsiderable.) I find myself glazing over but politely listen as they brag about who’s had the least sleep and the most takeaway food. “I

haven't seen my wife since January, I can't feel my legs any more and I think I have scurvy but another three weeks and we'll be done. It's got to be done by then. The client's going on holiday. What do I think?"

What do I think?

I think you're all fucking mad. Deranged. So disengaged from reality it's not even funny. It's a fucking TV ad. Nobody gives a shit.

This has come as quite a shock I can tell you. I think, I've come to the conclusion that the whole thing was a bit of a con. A scam. An elaborate hoax. ...

Countless late nights and weekends, holidays, birthdays, school recitals and anniversary dinners were willingly sacrificed at the altar of some intangible but infinitely worthy higher cause. It would all be worth it in the long run ...

This was the con. Convincing myself that there was nowhere I'd rather be was just a coping mechanism. I can see that now. It wasn't really important. Or of any consequence at all really. How could it be. We were just shifting product. Our product, and the clients. Just meeting the quota. Feeding the beast as I called it on my more cynical days.

So was it worth it?

Well of course not. It turns out it was just advertising. There was no higher calling. No ultimate prize. Just a lot of faded, yellowing newsprint, and old video cassettes in an obsolete format I can't even play any more even if I was interested. Oh yes, and a lot of framed certificates and little gold statuettes. A shit-load of empty Prozac boxes, wine bottles, a lot of grey hair and a tumor of indeterminate dimensions.

It sounds like I'm feeling sorry for myself again. I'm not. It was fun for quite a lot of the time. I was pretty good at it. I met a lot of funny, talented and clever people, got to become an overnight expert in everything from shower-heads to sheep-dip, got to scratch my creative itch on a daily basis, and earned enough money to raise the family which I love, and even see them occasionally.

But what I didn't do, with the benefit of perspective, is anything of any lasting importance. ... Economically I probably helped shift some merchandise. Enhanced a few companies bottom lines. Helped make one or two wealthy men a bit wealthier than they already were.

As a life, it all seemed like such a good idea at the time. ...

Pity.⁷⁰

What did a life lived 100% for work accomplish except work? Such individuals become errant men of living, squandering their life essence. If such a life is so great, why do people on their deathbed commonly look back and lament, “I worked too much and should have spent more time with my friends and family. I wish I would have let myself enjoy more. I wish I had travelled more.”

Do you want to know what the definition of “folly” is? It is consuming the greater part of your life making a living rather than following an inner calling, great or small, that elevates and ennobles you and your life’s activities. I remember listening to John Taylor Gatto recount Adam Smith’s opinion that if you spend all your time and focus all your life on making money then it’s a mark of insanity. All it buys you is a bad life. Nonetheless we should be grateful to those who do so because they assemble capital, pay the biggest price and create improvements for everyone else, but do you want to become like that yourself? Remember, this opinion/warning came from Adam Smith!

Are you living a life that is soul numbing in the pursuit of work, or are you actually doing something of consequential importance? Are you incorporating some downtime and fun or is it just seriousness all day long? Are you following your own dreams and aspirations, and ultimately carving out a life purpose or set of purposes in life that are meaningful to you or the world? Don’t be a fence sitter anymore. Try to have the courage to take a few steps in the direction of your heart even if those things might be scary because they are unfamiliar. Get into some action - feel the fear and do it anyway.

These are issues that you should think about to help you decide what is truly meaningful to you in life. By pondering such questions you can slowly arrive at a mission, purpose or purposes within life that will make your life more satisfying.

As I point out in *Quick, Fast, Done* it is of great benefit to step back on a daily, weekly, quarterly and even yearly basis and consider some of these questions in order to help yourself stay on track towards achieving your personal goals of success and happiness. No one ever tells you to do this, but this is how you can make sure you continue to align yourself with the highest principles that bring both happiness and prosperity.

Most people are searching for a higher purpose in life and are craving to feel a sense of belonging to something with *gravitas* that is much bigger than

⁷⁰ Linds Redding, “A Short Lesson in Perspective,” accessed July 19, 2018, <http://www.lindsredding.com/2012/03/11/a-overdue-lesson-in-perspective/>.

themselves. They want to dedicate themselves to something greater than themselves, or at least identify with a larger entity or mission and feel part of it. They don't necessarily want a mission but are looking to be associated with a larger identity of excellence, grandeur, beauty or hope that is absolutely sublime and of which they can say, "I am part of this, I belong to this, I want to be connected with this." Throughout life people commonly strive for unity with Heaven, grandeur or some other type of greatness.

Thus people end up searching out their ancestral roots, absorb themselves with religion, promote customary traditions, or strongly identify with nationalism, team sports or some idealistic movement. It's all about looking for a larger identity of greater significance than their own small life. They are looking for a larger meaning by seeking something to align with other than to just trudge through the protoplasmic need to sustain the process of survival. One of the ways to feel you are greater is by seeking a sense of unity with a larger whole that represents a sacred mission of *gravitas*.

You cannot ask "why" about life or existence, but must find meaning in it by your own thoughts and actions. Meaning comes from contribution, from being able to contribute to others in a helpful way. To live is the goal of life, so there is no meaning or intended purpose to it other than just living. Therefore you have to *create meaning in your life by your own thoughts and efforts*. You have to get in sync with the real you to find a personal meaning to life, a reason and purpose to live other than just survival that gets you up in the morning.

A life purpose is different than the purpose of life. It is you who must personally decide what to live for. Your everyday decisions are what bring meaning to the elements of your life, raising you upwards with nobility or not. The purpose or purposes of your life will be whatever you decide upon and work towards.

My suggestion is simple. Seek within to find your highest and best aspirations, and then align yourself with a set of values and ideals that represent those elevating aspirations on what you would like to do or become.

CHAPTER 9: SUMMARY

Now you have a synopsis of some of my major writings and thoughts on Arhat Yoga. Arhat Yoga is the secret basis within many religions that remains unrecognized even though *it is the core purpose of religion!* In time, others will correct many of my earlier writings on the topic, and mistakes I didn't catch, while recognizing that Arhat Yoga is the *universal religion*. I am only a learner in this field rather than an expert of accomplished master, so there are doubtless mistakes and misstatements within.

Due to different types of social and cultural evolution, various religions have developed over time that contain the basics of Arhat Yoga in different forms. The world's religions are characterized by varying dogmas, rituals, practices and so on but the genuine ones always contain within themselves the principles and methods of Arhat Yoga.

What is the basis of Arhat Yoga?

First, most every *major* religion states that the universe evolved from an attributeless, changeless, self-so, eternal foundational state or essence they call the True Self, original nature, primordial essence, God, Allah, Father, sunyata, Parabrahman, Brahman, and so forth. This is your True Self because this is what you came from, so It is your absolute self-nature. Somehow – through an unknown process – this pure, unmovable, unmanifesting primordial essence gave birth to Shakti, the manifest universe of ever-moving energy and impermanent forms, and within Shakti life somehow evolved.

Our form of life has higher consciousness compared to most other living beings. Consciousness is the great miracle of existence, the great shining pearl and miraculous treasure because most of the universe is insentient. Within consciousness there is often joy, happiness, tranquility

and other positive emotions such as bliss. However, within consciousness there are also frequent states of pain and suffering - unpleasantness. Consciousness has evolved in such a way as to push us to avoid suffering and pursue pleasure for our survival.

A major question therefore arises: how do we live life without pain and suffering? A related question is: what experiences or activities will bring to our lives joy, happiness and bliss?

Aside from either extreme of unpleasantness or joy, another ultimate question is how to live life “properly” in terms of how should we behave? Life requires specific behaviors for survival, and behaviors for relationships that assist with survival that can also provide us with friendship and happiness and all sorts of other good things, so what should those behaviors entail?

Yet another question is: what is the purpose or ultimate meaning of life ... what justifies our existence and gives us a reason for living?

There are many questions like this.

Consciousness gives rise to thoughts, emotions, sensory perceptions, physical sensations and of course our behavior. Consciousness depends on there being a body; without a body there can be no consciousness. As human beings with consciousness we essentially have two skills – cognitive skills and physical skills.

For physical skills we can perfect our physical body-self in many ways, and some of the chief goals we should pursue include greater health, higher energy, being pain free, and the athletic abilities of flexibility, strength, endurance and the physical grace of movement and form.

We can also perfect our cognitive skills to learn how to do many things because cognitive talents can be learned. For instance, we are not born with mathematical skills but can learn them. We are not born with super memory skills but can learn them. We can master deliberate, intentional uses of our thought-stream. This includes cognitive skills such as an observing self (that is objective and seems separate from our intellect, emotions and conditioning), the ability to “know” or understand the world through metaphorical patterns, rational processing capabilities (such as reasoning, logic, deduction, inference, calculation, etc. that can question, analyze and plan), concentration (sustained attention), pattern recognition, problem solving, learning in general, language, the inhibition of responses (impulsive or habitual), ability to form rapport and connect with others, memory, imagination (a reality simulator), mind-body coordination, mind-energy coordination, mood control and so forth. The cognitive skills we can master are endless because from basic skills we can develop other skills such as the ability to drive a car, swim, cook, hunt, read, plan, effectively communicate or persuade, sing, dance, and so forth.

As sentient beings, we are also subject to unintentional, mechanical

mental processes that arise automatically within our consciousness without conscious deliberation. At times this is just chatter or negative self-talk and various types of irritations or afflictions that interrupt clear concentration. We can train ourselves to gain influence over some of these automatic mental processes, and can often retrain, re-condition or re-engineer some of these processes to be more optimal (to our liking).

In particular, we can learn how to eliminate or reduce mental afflictions or defilements that disturb our peace of mind and defile our mental states with non-virtuous content. We can learn how to eliminate mental suffering/unpleasantness entirely or upon demand and instead bring about regular states of joy, bliss, happiness, pleasure, comfort, peace, satisfaction, harmony and so forth.

These are some of the objectives of the road of spiritual cultivation, also known as the pathway of self-actualization, self-perfection or just “cultivation.” It involves perfecting our bodies, our minds and also our behaviors.

We are essentially material bodies, composed of condensed or agglomerated energies, that have the ability of constructing consciousness. It turns out, it just happens to be so, that the vital energy (Qi or Prana) of our bodies is entwined with our physical matrix and upon death this more transcendental material is released to free an independent subtle body, namely a deva body, that can enjoy a heavenly life on the earthly plane. When people die they arise in this state of being that leaves the physical shell behind, but individuals who spiritually cultivate the right way to a sufficient extent can release the subtle body whilst alive and then have two bodies connected with each other that they can use. Possessing two bodies, this actually makes them a different species than the ordinary human being. It makes them *Homo Deus*, whose achievement is the whole point of not just Christianity but all spiritual traditions.

Obviously the subtle body, the initial fruit of the spiritual path, has powers that the physical body does not possess since it is composed of energy and etheric matter. It also resides on a more etheric plane than physical materiality and within that plane we can say that the human condition tends to be characterized by more joy and less suffering. For the subtle body achievement this is the earthly heavenly plane that people normally call “Heaven.” For more transcendental bodies other Pure Lands are available for residence. When humans achieve the subtle body while retaining the human body they become saints, sages, yogis, masters, gurus and so forth. This is the initial stage of enlightenment, the true initial fruit of the spiritual path.

It turns out, it just happens to be that the subtle body has within its matrix the energy of a Causal body composed of higher energy than the Qi/Prana which composes the subtle body, and you can cultivate the

Causal body to become free of being locked within the matrix of the subtle body.

It turns out, it just happens to be so that the Causal body has within its matrix the energy of a yet higher Supra-Causal body that is composed of a more transcendental energy/substance than that which composes the Causal body. That vital energy of the Causal body is released if it succeeds in spiritual cultivation. Individuals at the Causal body plane of existence who cultivate sufficiently can achieve its release.

It turns out, it just happens to be so that the Supra-Causal body has wrapped within its structure a yet higher energy/substance that can be freed through spiritual cultivation and then this Immanence body will reside on a yet higher transcendental plane.

These are realities that just happen to be so. The spiritual masters, saints, prophets, gurus, yogis and so forth of the world's traditions are the ones who cultivate these bodies, attain their powers with the ability to influence the lower planes, and then tell us about these transcendental possibilities. But they clothe their explanations in the guise of religion. They also use the sphere of religion to urge people forward to this attainment, helping them (with the deceptions religions offer) to cultivate virtuous living and their inner vital energy through reverence and other pursuits. Its internal integrity is stronger upon death as a result, and therefore lasts longer before the next transition to a new life, which is a process which they help guide.

One of the purposes of religion is to help you achieve these higher spiritual bodies while alive, and at minimum the first one. This requires that you cultivate your mind (consciousness), body and behavior through specific techniques that apply specific principles.

The way to achieve the first higher body is through a pathway of intensified yoga practice, or preparatory yoga practices that purify the Qi/Prana of your physical nature. The principles of such practice to affect, transform, or purify your Qi/Prana are incorporated within many religious practices. They involve inner energy work, and thus go by names such as *nei-gong*, *keriya* yoga, kundalini yoga and so forth. The inner energy work of Qi/Prana cultivation requires disciplined effort over a prolonged period of time, and thus the spiritual path requires patience, persistence and perseverance in effort.

Another necessity for this accomplishment is meditation practice. That is, mental or spiritual practices that frequently quiet your mind (thoughts) and help you develop a mindful clear, lucid awareness of your thought-stream. With this skill of always being mentally present, aware, lucid and radiant so that you know your thoughts without being caught up within the stream of thoughts themselves, you have enough freedom from entrainment that you can police your mind of errant thoughts, impulses, desires, passions and behaviors. You can develop the habit of open-

mindedness, mental non-clinging and thought control. You can get good at self-regulation of your mind and behavior.

Another necessity to spiritual accomplishment is that you are a good person, an ethical being of virtuous behavior and character. If you are not a virtuous person then transcendental-bodied beings, who help individuals achieve the higher bodies, will not help you with this attainment. The attainment of becoming *Homo Deus* requires their significant help and cooperation over a long period of time in transforming and purifying the Qi/Prana of your inner subtle body.

If you achieve the initial fruit of Arhat Yoga, the spiritual path, then upon attaining the deva body you will then learn how to attain the yet higher transcendental bodies. You will then have a choice to live for yourself, as many Arhats do, or become a Bodhisattva or Buddha who takes upon themselves the sufferings of the world by assuming vows or missions to help others.

What happens if I start to cultivate Arhat Yoga in this life and don't succeed in attaining the initial fruit of the spiritual, which is the deva (subtle) body?

If I cultivate mental watchfulness, mindfulness or awareness through the practice of meditation I will improve my worldly activities because I will avoid more behavioral errors. I will become able to incorporate more wisdom into my actions because I will not be blindly entrained with the momentum of my mind-stream but will be able to detach from it. With more wisdom in my actions I will thereby cut down on producing bad ends that might produce suffering for myself and others, and I will also be able to improve my life and worldly fortune. By cultivating meditation I will become able to detach from my habit energies, desires and passions that may lead me astray. By cultivating meditation I will also improve my Qi/Prana or vital energy and reap all the attendant benefits. Devoted meditation practice will lead to more frequent relaxed states of mind, and a more peaceful and clear mind as my steady-state of conscious existence.

If during this life I cultivate various skills and learn various bodies of knowledge to prepare for a Bodhisattva career I will still have those skills upon death. I will be less of a useless person in this and future lives precisely because of the accumulated wisdom, knowledge and experience involved in skills acquisition. If I perform merit or charity I will also make the world a better place as my legacy, and create the karmic seeds of reward for my own future.

If I cultivate virtuous character traits and virtuous behavior then I will become more of the person I want to become in life, and will mentally experience a more peaceful and enjoyable life along with the satisfaction of that achievement. My fortune (such as relationships) in this life will improve, and I will accumulate skills, excellences and merits for future lives

(as an inherited tendency or talent) instead of having accumulated nothing at all.

If I cultivate my Qi/Prana I will improve my health and longevity, and strengthen as well as purify my inherent subtle body of vital energy. By purifying my vital energy my deva body can live longer than others in the earthly heavenly plane before yet another rebirth occurs from that state of being. Furthermore, because I will have cultivated my Qi/Prana in this life, I may be able to actually succeed in cultivating the Causal body when I become a deva after death.

In other words, if I engage in Arhat Yoga and devote myself to the pathway of spiritual cultivation whilst alive but fail to achieve the independent deva body, I will still reap tremendous benefits and rewards. The benefits will appear in my mind, body, behavior, worldly fortune and also my karmic fortune for subsequent lives even if I don't succeed. This is the benefit of Arhat Yoga.

If I do succeed in spiritual cultivation, which is actually the universal religion hidden within the world's religions, then I will become either an Arhat, Bodhisattva or Buddha, and what I can then choose to do is covered amply in *Buddha Yoga*. The study and cultivation pathway of preparation to become a Buddha or Bodhisattva is fully covered in that text.

Let me now leave you with the following.

Essentially the purpose of life is whatever you choose it to be. Life purpose or purposes for your life are a subjective thing - something you choose and define yourself that have significance for you. No one gives them to you because you must select them yourself. Meaning in life is something you consciously create yourself.

At the very ultimate source of consciousness everything is empty, missing, gone, non-existent and therefore phenomena don't exist, but out of this emptiness, void, abyss, chaos, formlessness, unmanifestness, non-differentiation, or purity the universe is somehow born. Shakti arises and is constantly evolving through transformations. Because you have consciousness so you can learn the principles of these transformations and then guide some of these changes. That ability is the gift which consciousness gives to you.

Out of this ultimate infinite freedom of potential you are free to create your own directions for your life. You can define life to be about whatever you want it to be, and you do so by the choices and actions you take. Stay true to yourself and pursue what you are interested in doing. Find your authentic self that is buried beneath your layers of habit energies, social conditioning, fear reactivity programming, and pursue it. Pursue what your really want your life to be about.

I once heard podcaster Joe Rogan in a conversation with mushroom expert Paul Stamets (Joe Rogan Experience #1385), and the two were

talking about the benefits of psychedelics to free you from your normal mental conditioning. Rogan said,

“People need to understand that there’s a lot of this squirreling away of resources and money and things and trying to climb that corporate ladder. This is a finite life. It doesn’t last that long. It’s a trick. You get sucked into this trick and this trick is what every CEO, and every head of every corporation, every chief financial officer, all these people that are just trying to like improve the bottom line, rake in more money, keep this company growing and keep kicking ass. It’s a trick. You’re sucked up in a trick. There’s a natural human tendency to accumulate numbers, for whatever reason. It goes back to our early days when resources were scarce.

“And if you get sucked into that trick, one day you’re gonna wake up, and that’s gonna usually be too late. Usually it’s on your deathbed. Usually it’s close to it. You’re like, ‘What did I do? This is it. My health is failing. My life is falling apart, and what has my life been? It’s been 10, 12, 14 hours a day in these stuffed offices, under fluorescent lights, crunching numbers, and trying to acquire things, and for what? What impact have I made on humans? What has been the negative impact of my ambition on the people around me?’

“The one thing that psilocybin and particularly just psychedelics in general, can provide is a break from patterns, a stopping, a ceasefire of all the momentum of our culture, civilization, finances, taxes, credit card debt, all that shit just *WHOOSH* stops! And you get a chance to step back and look at the machine, watch it all whirl and spin in front of you and you get to say, ‘Oh, I got sucked into the trick. I got sucked into the trick.’”

Stamets countered, “A lot of people I’ve talked to said exactly what you’re mentioning. They did a heroic journey and looked back, ‘Why was I prioritizing that when I want to be out with my children, and looking at birds or walking in nature? ...’”

This is the same issue as raised by Alan Watts who said, “‘Then you get into some racket where you’re selling insurance. And they’ve got that quota to make, and you’re gonna make that. And all the time that thing is coming – It’s coming, it’s coming, that great thing. The success you’re working for. ... Then you wake up one day about 40 years old and you say, ‘My God, I’ve arrived. I’m there.’ And you don’t feel very different from what you’ve always felt.’”

It is the same as the message left to us by Linds Redding, a New Zealand-based art director, who had worked at BBDO and Saatchi & Saatchi. I recounted his dying message to us in *Buddha Yoga*, for he wrote “A Short Lesson in Perspective” after he was diagnosed with lung cancer, which eventually killed him. Redding wrote:

Perhaps I am not alone in this assessment. Many people have

their own idea of a person's life, without knowing what really goes on, on the inside. Some even envy the lives of their friends and colleagues, without realizing, their lives are much better. Now that I am out of that life, I am able to have a different perspective of my old life.

And here's the thing.

It turns out I didn't actually like my old life nearly as much as I thought I did. I know this now because I occasionally catch up with my old colleagues and work-mates. They fall over each other to enthusiastically show me the latest project they're working on. Ask my opinion. Proudly show off their technical prowess (which is not inconsiderable). I find myself glazing over but politely listen as they brag about who's had the least sleep and the most takeaway food. "I haven't seen my wife since January, I can't feel my legs any more and I think I have scurvy but another three weeks and we'll be done. It's got to be done by then. The client's going on holiday. What do I think?"

What do I think?

I think you're all fucking mad. Deranged. So disengaged from reality it's not even funny. It's a fucking TV ad. Nobody gives a shit.

This has come as quite a shock I can tell you. I think, I've come to the conclusion that the whole thing was a bit of a con. A scam. An elaborate hoax. ...

Countless late nights and weekends, holidays, birthdays, school recitals and anniversary dinners were willingly sacrificed at the altar of some intangible but infinitely worthy higher cause. It would all be worth it in the long run ...

This was the con. Convincing myself that there was nowhere I'd rather be was just a coping mechanism. I can see that now. It wasn't really important. Or of any consequence at all really. How could it be. We were just shifting product. Our product, and the clients. Just meeting the quota. Feeding the beast as I called it on my more cynical days.

So was it worth it?

Well of course not. It turns out it was just advertising. There was no higher calling. No ultimate prize. Just a lot of faded, yellowing newsprint, and old video cassettes in an obsolete format I can't even play any more even if I was interested. Oh yes, and a lot of framed certificates and little gold statuettes. A shit-load of empty Prozac boxes, wine bottles, a lot of grey hair and a tumor of indeterminate dimensions.

It sounds like I'm feeling sorry for myself again. I'm not. It was fun for quite a lot of the time. I was pretty good at it. I met a lot of

funny, talented and clever people, got to become an overnight expert in everything from shower-heads to sheep-dip, got to scratch my creative itch on a daily basis, and earned enough money to raise the family which I love, and even see them occasionally.

But what I didn't do, with the benefit of perspective, is anything of any lasting importance. ... Economically I probably helped shift some merchandise. Enhanced a few companies bottom lines. Helped make one or two wealthy men a bit wealthier than they already were.

As a life, it all seemed like such a good idea at the time. ...
Pity.⁷¹

The question then is, as a being in this world with the luck of having higher consciousness, what are you here to do, what do you want to do, and how do you want to shape your life and yourself for the rest of the infinite journey of life after life ahead?

Next, how do you start instituting what you decide upon? How do you start walking in that direction?

Further, what do you want to do for the long game? And what value do you want to create for society now? How do you find meaning, purpose, fulfillment and satisfaction in life rather than simply survive via the routine of monotony?

You define your own purpose of existence and future. You define your own destiny by your aspirations and efforts. You define the personal way you wish to contribute. You can shape your thoughts to be whatever you want, you can learn whatever skills you want, you can reshape your personality to eliminate bad traits and develop new ones, you can develop your body skills to excellence, you can work to achieve whatever deeds you want. Whatever you choose to accomplish you can work to accomplish. Whatever you select to build you can start to build. Whatever you want to master you can start to master.

Talent is not intrinsic but can be learned. Wherever you want to apply your efforts you can do so and achieve a result. With practice the result will become better. Eventually you can achieve mastery.

You can definitely transform your personality if you want to do so, and thereby change your fate line since it is a function of your character. Your values and virtues determine your character, which determines your thoughts and behaviors, so by transforming your core basics you alter your fate for better or worse. Think of the long game. What do you want to

⁷¹ Linds Redding, "A Short Lesson in Perspective," accessed July 19, 2018, <http://www.lindsredding.com/2012/03/11/a-overdue-lesson-in-perspective/>.

work on?

Your own inner directives can guide your purposes within life and your purposes for life. No one can guarantee a successful result or even a completed result for whatever you want to pursue, but you can definitely work on your aspirations to the utmost extent of your abilities within your constraining conditions. You're not trying to be the very best but *the best you can be*, and *do the best you can do*. It is simply a matter of deciding to commit to something and then following through to pursue that aspiration, goal, commitment, responsibility or whatever. You should commit to a plan or undertaking and then start executing it. You should always try to cultivate a clarity of mind free of desires and afflictions that bind or blind you so that you can always detach from the situations at hand and see what you are actually doing from a higher perspective. This ability to detach from your mind-stream is how you stay on track but don't, as Joe Rogan says, "fall into the trick."

If you think there is some ultimate meaning or some ultimate reason for life, then you are wrong. Life is something that simply appeared in the universe over time, like everything else, and it's up to you to decide what to do with it. There is no ultimate plan for you determined by someone else. Again - there is no plan for you, but there is a trajectory you yourself determine. There is only the trajectory of a living object with consciousness that will go through life after life and experience all sorts of events until it decides to cultivate to reach the higher realms where life lasts longer, seemingly forever, and can achieve freedom from more of various binding influences.

The purpose of life is just life. It is living protoplasm that exists in a certain way, with certain needs and requirements (such as food), and thus is just like uncountable other types of phenomena that exist according to conditions. However, the purpose of not "life" but *your life* is how you guide it, how you choose to live it. The purpose is whatever you ultimately choose it to be. This is where meaning comes into the picture, so what will you choose?

Some types of life lack sentience, like viruses or fungi that live mechanistically. Other types of life, such as ourselves, have the great miracle of consciousness that is one of our many properties. With all its faults and imperfections consciousness is still the great miracle of the universe, the great treasure of all treasures, the priceless pearl, the wish-fulfilling gem that makes all things possible. It has developed out of the chaos of conditions in order to help this living form bolster its chances for replication. Within life you are constrained by circumstances, including karmic forces that limit and restrict your capabilities and conditions, but within those limitations you have conscious comprehension. Therefore with consciousness, with wisdom, with right thinking, with insight, with

comprehension you can solve problems and surmount challenging conditions to make of life what you want to the best of your resources and abilities.

Just as you can send the electrons of an atom into higher orbital shells if you inject energy into the atom, so you can elevate your life to a higher level and absolutely change the rigidity of your fate and karma if you add more energy and wisdom to your efforts, or ask for spiritual assistance from the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas to inject attention and energy into your life. In *Move Forward: Powerful Strategies for Creating Better Outcomes in Life* and *Color Me Confucius* I even showed how individuals like Benjamin Franklin, Yuan Liao Fan, Frank Bettger and others did this on their own to break karmic destinies, stubborn habits, accumulate merit and fashion entirely new fates and fortunes.

You absolutely can overcome habits, insecurities and emotions that block you or hold you hostage in life such as fear, blame or guilt. It is always possible to free yourself from being stuck in patterns of consciousness such as various mindsets or habits that hamper your life. In *Culture, County, City, Company, Product, Person, Passion, World* I also showed how some people chose a deep life purpose of creating value for society and gathered together with others for joint missions to create great positive change in the world. This is the Buddha and Bodhisattva way. This is Karma Yoga.

In the ultimate sense there is no such thing as an independent being, ego, I, personality or life in the universe. All things have developed from the one fundamental essence through a mechanistic set of transformations linked to everything else in existence. There are just phenomena, or you can say just one phenomenon – Shakti – and whether you refer to Shakti or the individual phenomena that you identify through your mind they are basically, fundamentally, inherently the primordial essence. Or you can say they are just processes within Shakti. We just happen to be one of the transformational results, effusions, phenomena, objects, or intersections of conditions.

We are basically evolutes that use consciousness to call ourselves a “living being” rather than a non-living object or force or process, and because of having consciousness we can perceive, think, feel and do. Consciousness provides for us a world of experiences with qualities, and without it we are of no-mind. Our consciousness and the way it functions to create thoughts and world images is ruled by our makeup, by our anatomical structure, by our conditioning and conditions. Because of consciousness we can produce Knowledge. Because of Knowledge we can actually change our properties, guide our behavior and therefore craft our own destiny. By changing ourselves we can change our lives and the lives of others.

Everyone saying “I” is in the deepest sense just referring to our one original nature since that is our Supreme Self. That is the True-I of everything. Our self-essence is our I. You, are that one Self that is in All. So what are you afraid of if you want to do anything? Your True Self does not forbid it. You can do anything you want because everything is your body, your manifestation. You are free to work at accomplishing anything and free to transform in any way you choose. Where will you go? What do you want to be, do and achieve?

Our true Self is the only genuine self-nature, the only independent self. We are just Its aspects. And since it is empty of restrictions but perfectly free it offers endless possibilities. Our lives are ultimately free so we are permitted to direct them along any avenues of creation, accomplishment and experience we choose. There is karma for our efforts. The manifestation of consequences is ruled by cause and effect.

So are we “living beings”? We are just phenomena linked to everything else in one large soup of energy and phenomena that comprises one whole of Oneness, but within it we can move and create according to our conscious wishes. You need a mind to discriminate parts within Shakti, and the smallest building blocks or simples you can discriminate within Shakti are actually separate, individual atoms (or yet smaller units) that never become non-individual. Thus they never *really* compose any wholes, they never compose any pattern at all, they never agglomerate into anything we can call a structure because they always remain themselves. We say that they clump in agglomerations that have a pattern, but are those patterns or agglomerations really there if you need a mind to know them? They are not! If there is any such thing as an agglomeration then it is one agglomeration, namely Shakti in total – an entire universe. To say that there are separate patterns within Shakti is a fiction of your mind. Since an entity/phenomena has no definite borders because it is formed from infinite conditions, what is its ultimate pattern? The ultimate pattern would be infinite, and thus all of Shakti. Since Shakti is the original nature in apparent form, actually there is nothing there at all. How then can you say there is such a thing as a living being ego, entity or self?

To say we are independent egos, souls, entities or living beings is therefore really just a convenient way of speaking for our own identification purposes that we use for our state of beingness. It’s just a relative way of mentally carving out phenomena within an endless soup where nothing is actually a proper part of anything else and thus no composite objects truly exist. There are no actual objects with limited perimeters since everything defines “individual” objects. Our minds only make the limitations seem to exist.

The borders of phenomena are actually fuzzy. Borders are false/errant discriminations we make because of limited sense organs and because of

our own conceptual mistakes. For instance, spiritual masters know the future because the pattern of the future already exists within Shakti. It exists as a cause and effect consequence that is already determined, like the trajectory of gas molecules in a closed box that can be computed, unless something radically changes. Your future is already connected to you as an individual so it is already part of your being or existence even though you cannot see it. By changing your qualities (personality, character) and behaviors (actions) you can change it.

Therefore in just seeing a person as you regularly do (without seeing the attached pattern of fate) you are agglomerating incompletely. The future self is already attached to that person but you cannot see it because you don't have access to the higher realms. You're cut off from seeing the future part of whatever a person already will become, a future that already exists because cause and effect has computed that result as fated karma. Not seeing this etheric pattern that exists in the higher realms, you simply make people into smaller embodied objects with limited borders. You clip your definition of the size of human beings for they are always connected to their future, yet that future can be changed if you use the right methods of changing your properties and behavior. The story of Liao Fan illustrates this. Your existence is not limited to your body as an object but stretches across time as a process, and if you want to change yourself as a functional process then you have to change your thinking, personality and behavior.

We are a consequential manifestation from infinite conditions within Shakti, part of its entire fabric, and those intersecting conditions (of interdependent arising) have given us consciousness as a by-product. Consciousness is not our capability because some Creator created us. We are just processes, phenomena, appearances or objects within Shakti that developed consciousness via evolution. It's a mechanical, automatic aspect of us that operates in certain ways as one of our properties. The point is that we can learn to master it. We can grow it, purify it, direct it, master it to excellence. We can make use of it to do whatever we like.

As a phenomenon that is inherently equal to all others because of being the original nature, or being Shakti, I say you must put aside fear and define for yourself your own life purpose of what you want to do in the universe. Be courageous, for what bars you? Be bold. Decide what you want to do in the universe and make use of everything to achieve it, for the universe is yourself so you have a right to it. Nothing prevents you except circumstances, but you have a mind that lets you overcome circumstances. This is the nature of your existence in Shakti.

There will almost always be obstacles standing in front of you for whatever you want to achieve through cause and effect relationships, but you can try to become or do whatever you imagine. Other people have the right too, including the right to stop you if you are errant, non-virtuous and

hurting people or the environment, so consider carefully. They are part of the consciousness of Shakti as well so they certainly have a right to intervene in errant affairs to correct things for themselves and the whole. To you they are one of your aspects (since you are Shakti), while to them you are one of their aspects that is acting errantly and needs to be corrected if you are doing wrong. Nevertheless, you have the right to decide your own direction and fate in life as long as you do not infringe upon others.

With your highly developed intellect, however, you should consider that we have a responsibility to the other life forms within Shakti, whose existence may be threatened by our own. We also have a responsibility to our own species, and especially to our parents, family, friends, community, society and so forth who have protected us, taken care of us and fed us from when we were young. If we don't reciprocate in helping others, we are not repaying our debts to family, society and nature.

Being the Self, you should *choose* your own destiny in the universe rather than just go along with the present karmic fate of interconnections you have previously built. Don't just let the winds of conditions push and pull you without your own conscious determination of what you want and where you want to go. Pick a course and stay on course. Create that fate by renewing your aspiration in each instant, changing each situation that comes to you for the better. Master detachment from entanglement so that you can always view what you are doing within the overall structure of life, culture, and civilization. Be independent enough of mind that you can see whether you are heading in the direction you want.

You want to cultivate an independent perspective so you don't waste your time stuck in false paths and ruts. You want to always orient yourself correctly to truly achieve what you prize. You want to always be making the right effort.

So make of yourself what you want to make of yourself and do what you want to do in the world. If you fail, then so what? Life is in the doing, in the attempt, in the journey. The dancing is the wonderful things you experience along the way to accomplishment. Feeling alive is in the journey, not the goal. Since no fate or fortune can be guaranteed, it is *in the trying* that we must find happiness and fulfillment. It is in the dancing or journey that we must find joy and the sense of beingness with meaning, so cultivate a sunny and cheerful disposition along the way that enjoys life and its many processes.

I want you to think about "minimizing your regret functions" in all you do so that by the end of your life you will have started involving yourself with whatever you really wanted to do in this life and won't be regretting not having lived the life you wanted or worked at the mission you feel you came here for. You also want to be able to look back and see that you always tried to be your authentic self. Therefore, don't leave personal

desires unfulfilled so that upon your deathbed you will look back regretting you didn't do what you wanted to do, say what you wanted to say, pursue what you wanted to pursue and experience what you wanted to experience.

When interviewed, people who are dying of terminal illnesses rarely say they regret having tried things in life that failed. What they consistently regret is *not having attempted* what they truly wanted to do whether because of fear. They feared criticism by others, lack of money/resources, just plain fear itself (lack of courage), not bothering to take the time, or other circumstances. Don't let yourself find yourself in such a condition at the end. Just be true to yourself and try to accomplish, experience or do what you want along the way!

No one actually cares whether you fail or succeed in life because people are not keeping score on you, so stop worrying about other people's opinions. Even if people were watching you they'd lose interest the next moment and move onto someone or something else. You're the only one who is really counting so be authentic to yourself, be true to yourself, be courageous, be your true heart.

There will always be obstructions, challenges, limitations and karmic bonds hampering human beings in their efforts to accomplish great things in life. This includes not just obstacles to mundane achievements but obstructions to the personal goals of finding joy, peace, contentment and fulfilling self-expression.

With life there always come unavoidable pains and suffering. Pain and suffering are problems intrinsic to life, unavoidable. Life will therefore always contain various forms of pain, conflict and suffering. As a living sentient being it is your job, however, to learn how to use cause and effect to wisely guide changes to produce any positive results you want rather than just complain about problems, obstacles, challenges and setbacks. As the *Yijing* says, you must learn how to "master the changes" to mold situations, including cause-and-effect chains, to produce a future you desire. An understanding of scientific principles, for instance, has produced wave after wave of innovations that have enabled humans to gain control over their lives. Those purposes you cannot achieve in one life you can always set out to achieve in a subsequent life. Bodhisattvas and Buddhas make vows that will require eons to fulfill.

With this in mind, does it not make sense to start training to achieve the deva body now, before passing away, by taking up the road of spiritual cultivation? At the same time, doesn't it also make sense to prepare to become a guardian benefactor – which countless devas, spirits or heavenly beings voluntarily do – since that is what enlightened individuals typically end up doing despite all of the other options available in the universe? There must be some very good reasons for that pretty consistent decision.

You should set for yourself a goal of becoming some type of Buddha,

Bodhisattva or guardian spirit, which is Buddha Yoga. You should start cultivating meditation, inner energy work and *start mastering the bodies of knowledge and skills* that would be relevant to the type of mission or vow you want to achieve, or the type of helper, guardian, benefactor, Buddha or Bodhisattva you would want to become. If you start doing this in life then the spiritual/religious life is not wasted even if you don't achieve the deva body.

You must start training to be a force of light in the world, the light you want others to see. This training means intellectual study, participation in the activities you wish to master, cultivation work and self-improvement.

Of course, you can choose entirely different objectives or life purposes than those of famous Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Their careers or vows are just indicative of what can be done. To help you for such a decision, and for life in general to make it more meaningful, what follows are two excerpts from earlier works on choosing a life purpose. The first is from *Buddha Yoga*, and the second is from *Color Me Confucius*.

I leave you with these discussions on life purpose because cultivation is to get you to beautify your personality, conduct and attain the deva body. But what do you do with it? Where you put your efforts in the universe is a matter of deciding upon a life purpose.

Edited From: BUDDHA YOGA
CH. 3 – “LIFE PURPOSE”

Ice, steam and ocean waves are nothing but water. No matter what the shape or form in which water appears it is always water just the same. Similarly, a thousand ornaments made out of gold are still nothing but gold. To think that ornaments of gold are anything else but gold due to their different shapes is just a grand illusion. From the perspective of gold, if it had consciousness it could look at all the ornaments and say, “It is all me, there is nothing there but me. There isn't any such thing as rings or necklaces ... there is just me.” On the level of gold, from its absolute standpoint ornaments exhibit no trace of independent This-ness that is non-gold.

We too are equally just derivatives, aspects, effusions, evolutes, transformations or manifestations of the original source nature, the Supreme Ultimate, primordial substance or original essence. We are just phenomena ultimately composed out of this fundamental essence like the ornaments of gold made from gold, but with one major difference from most other phenomena that have manifested in the universe. The major difference is that we can think and feel because we have consciousness and thus Knowledge.

But what is really happening when we think to produce Knowledge and develop some type of understanding? What happens is that Knowledge is just knowing itself. There is really just Knowledge being produced within a body vehicle and it is just referencing itself in a reflexive arc. It happens inside a phenomena we conventionally call a person, who is actually just the original nature in an effused form. So we might think we are special phenomena within the universe, but we are just phenomena that can spin Knowledge that understands itself, and we call this a living being.

It is not a person but Knowledge that is actually the true experienter of everything. The I-thought of a doer or experienter is just Knowledge and that is what “understands.” There is no independent, inherent self-so self. There is just this Knowledge automatically being generated in a body vehicle and this body of Knowledge is doing everything, even thinking the thought “I am.” That whole body unit, called a sentient being, is just another phenomenon in the universe with the special characteristic that it automatically generates Knowledge as part of its functioning. We call it an “independent sentient being,” but it is certainly not independent and it is really the functioning of Knowledge that is doing everything rather than a “being.”

Of course, Knowledge is what makes us a sentient being. Conventionally we call ourselves a living being, self, person, *atman*, *jiva*, and so on whereas we are just another phenomenon (albeit having consciousness) that is ultimately the original nature. Conventionally we are an effusion that is connected to everything else in existence, like a single particle moving within a grand soup that doesn't actually compose anything. We cannot see all the energetic connections of magnetism, electricity, gravity and other forces that permeate and compose us, but they are there. It is impossible to unravel the total causes and effects for our existence. We are like a drop of water in the ocean that in being a drop of the ocean is just the ocean itself. This is how we are connected to all beings and all things.

Think of it this way. We have a body with a brain and nervous system that generates Knowledge or knowing (thoughts). The master thought of all thoughts is an inherent thought of being a “I,” which is also part of the body of Knowledge that our nervous system automatically generates. The concept of being an I, ego, self, person or being is also composed of a number of thoughts, and so that I-concept is also Knowledge. Without that self-thought (“I”) there is no such thing as consciousness being possible for there has to be a self-referential center, or “I” who is an experienter or doer. Consciousness needs a self or doer but that doer-unit, when you think about it, is just more Knowledge operating a program that produces consciousness rather than an independent person, being, entity or soul. Essentially, on a conventional level you are just your body along with its Knowledge processes for generating sensory perceptions and conceptions.

The I-thought is Knowledge and thinking as well as sensory perceptions are just Knowledge as well. You seem to know things because Knowledge can self-reference itself – it is referencing memories of labels and names and definitions stored in your brain that are Knowledge, including the thought of being an “I am” which arises automatically, mechanically within us because of our structure. Other living beings, such as viruses or fungi, don’t have this capability.

You know yourself in Knowledge, that knowing is Knowledge and the knower is Knowledge. It is all just Knowledge referencing itself in a circle. Therefore in a grand sense the Knowledge we generate through thoughts and conceptions, despite its usefulness, is all just a relative illusion. It is all conditional on what we already know and nothing is absolute within that circle of Knowledge. There is no such thing as an independent living being, there is only Knowledge knowing itself in a limited vehicle that can generate Knowledge that makes knowing possible. When we know something it is actually Knowledge knowing Knowledge, so as the *Diamond Sutra* of Buddhism explains, where is there a person in all this? It is just an automatic process going on.

There is no *absolute* validity to anything we know and sense either, but all our sense perceptions and thoughts work for us to produce a world! Who can say what the universe is *really* like, however, because other beings/animals see, hear and taste things entirely different from us, and think quite differently as well. We are just automatic phenomena that can generate conditional Knowledge.

This is the nature of consciousness – it is a reflexive form of illusion, delusion or self-deception that actually works. It works according to cause and effect to produce understanding, but there is no one who understands, and yet understanding is there. It is an illusory knower that is a “living being.” It creates a world according to false views, and the world is just a transformation of the mind - Knowledge. Furthermore, in the ultimate sense there is only the cloudless original nature that lacks any traces of cause and effect due to its purity of one substance, and within It there is nothing except Itself. Everything that has appeared within It is a transitory, fluctuating illusion – an apparent existence that is momentary and ungraspable like a dream lacking inherent reality even though we think of things as stable forms and phenomena. The Knowledge knowing itself with us is all conditional, relative and not absolute like the changeless original essence. Yet it works for us.

Knowledge, thinking, consciousness or awareness are all made possible not because we are pre-existing immortal spirits, but simply because a biological machine, the human body, has evolved in the universe with the functional capability of producing knowing, memories, thoughts, emotions, and conceptions – which we in aggregate call consciousness, awareness or

Knowledge – because of its structure. Plants and viruses and rocks do not have this capability but the human form does because of its neural structures, and thus is sentient. That's all we can really say.

Consciousness is thus the great *miracle* of our existence because most of the universe does not have it so cannot comprehend. Magnetism doesn't have Knowledge, argon gas doesn't, an electron doesn't, a cloud doesn't, the sun doesn't, space doesn't but we do. These other phenomena have no recognition of anything. They simply have qualities or properties and function in certain ways according to certain laws. Without consciousness we are the same as them; even with consciousness we are, in a sense, the same as them because we too are just phenomena that developed out of the original nature. All phenomena are equal but our difference is that we have knowing or Knowledge that makes us conscious or sentient, and we can cultivate transcendental bodies that free us from lower states. There is really just one equality that truly exists, namely that all phenomena are equally composed of one original essence that evolutionarily appears in various forms, so being It have no fear and choose the route of cultivation.

Since we have consciousness, the question is what to do with it. The cultivation path of transcendental self-perfection, ennobling ourselves to spiritual heights by mastering our thoughts and behavior so that we can improve situations that remove suffering and bring joy, is Buddha Yoga.

An amazing capability of higher consciousness is that we have discovered how, through spiritual cultivation practices, to generate a higher subtle body out of the energy of the denser human body. By making use of our life force and engendering transformations of our Qi to purify its nature, we can strengthen an internal Qi body double and cause it to emerge from the physical body shell at will to attain a subtle body. We can do the same thing with that subtle body and then generate an entirely new but different spiritual body composed of yet a higher transcendental substance or energy called Shen.

The subtle body, attested to by many religious saints, exists on a transcendental plane because it is made of Qi or Prana rather than matter. It exists at the level we normally call Heaven, which includes an etheric earthly plane all around us and other higher, transcendental Pure Lands of being. The higher bodies can travel Pure Lands that are not earth-bound whereas first stage masters, and people who die, can only experience the earth-bound heavenly plane of existence.

Qi/Prana is a different energy than magnetism, electricity, nuclear forces, radioactivity and so on. We cannot yet measure it, and so we certainly cannot find/see the higher bodies transcending it. We don't even know that there are entire civilizations of existence on higher planes throughout the universe – uncountable numbers of them. Of this, until you die and receive the teachings that all heavenly beings learn, you know

nothing.

Here is a summary. Using the same process of generation with some minor differences, the subtle body can generate from within itself yet another body duplicate composed of a yet higher transcendental essence, energy or substance called Shen, and this forms the Causal body. The heavenly beings of earth, for their own spiritual practice, are working on precisely *this*.

From that Causal body one can continue with spiritual practices to generate a yet more transcendental and longer lasting body double called the Supra-Causal or Dharma body composed of yet higher energies (namely Clear Light energy or Later Heavenly Prana) that is still linked to all the prior lower bodies. At this stage you can even generate and project temporary spiritual bodies, made of the denser energies (the lower evolutes) you have ascended from, and use them to perform various functions in the world simultaneously.

This is the occupation of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas to give human beings help in life, and they do so by giving people thoughts and energy. If you have a high enough body you can even generate physical copies of yourself that others can see and touch. Many traditions have stories of masters doing this, but the capability is only possible with attainments much higher than the subtle body. If you only have a subtle body attainment then this is impossible. The really big superpowers only come from much higher body attainments than this first deva body accomplishment.

A man or woman can keep cultivating upwards to create more transcendental bodies countless times if they put in the effort, so it begs the question, why all the effort? What is the ultimate purpose to all this work and to those bodies and lives if you generate them? You must determine your own purpose if you are to live seemingly forever in the universe with these higher bodies. What will you do with them ... just be a consumer or enjoyer of good fortune? The lower bodies can all be used as appendages for the highest body, which becomes the true center of your life, so the question arises as to why you would bother maintaining them after you attain something higher.

From the highest viewpoint there is no such thing as a self-existing independent being, soul, personality or life in the universe. We are just manifestations, phenomena that can think that are infinitely connected to everything else in ways we cannot see. Everything in the universe is just a complex derivative of the original substance/essence with each separate phenomenon seeming independent but not independent at all. Why? Because every phenomenon is linked to everything else through a complex, infinite chain of interdependent origination. Nothing exists by itself so there are no independent phenomena; nothing is self-so with an inherent existence except the original, primordial, self-so fundamental essence.

All phenomena have their own unique properties, functions, aspects, attributes and capabilities different from all others. The truth of the matter is that sentient life is just one of these many possible manifestations. It exists, and if it didn't exist then other things would still exist without consciousness existing in the universe. If life didn't exist then so what? At one time it surely didn't exist. Now it does. In the future maybe it won't. Who can say? All we can say is that it is rare and precious to us since we have thinking, but certainly not precious to anything inanimate. In terms of the original nature's viewpoint, if it could have one (since it isn't consciousness nor a being with any organs of knowing), everything is the original nature only so there are no "things" that exist at all. To the original nature, whether there is or isn't life, so what?

Life is just something that has developed in the universe along with everything else that has developed, and therefore there is no ultimate purpose or significance to life other than the meaning you decide to give to it. The meaning of your life are the activities you do for they define what you are about. You are a conscious being with thoughts who can think about such things and devote your life to purposes according to your free will. So what will you do with your life that is ultimately born from the cosmos? What mission or purpose is worthy of your existence? What is it that you will subscribe to as your ideal? What is the light that you want others to see through your efforts?

Ask yourself, "Who am I and what do I stand for? What do I want to make my life about?" Not a single life is permanent, so what goals are worthy of you such that you should spend your limited precious life force, energy time and resources working towards their achievement? The tricky thing is finding a purpose, goal or mission that you can be passionate about because it is truly worthy, and then focus on this objective for an extended period of time. What will it be? What larger identity are you seeking?

Your ultimate *ground of being* is no different from the ultimate ground of being of the universe. It is the same with me. Our equality is ultimately the same. However, your life is a unique manifestation of that ground state different from mine, as are your goals and aspirations. Your beingness is under your control because you are sentient with thoughts and willpower. You have karma from past lives, but you created that karma so you can change it during this life as I teach in *Move Forward* and *Quick, Fast, Done*. You can control your actions and behaviors, regardless of what comes to you, so you are in charge of your destiny. You can change bad habits by replacing default behaviors with better behaviors, cultivate new skills and character virtues, and even create a new personality. You can make use of your life in whatever ways you want and strive to achieve whatever you want.

The meaning of life is therefore whatever you select it to be, whatever

you choose to be your own personal target, aim, purpose, mission, commitment or objective – however you use your energies and actions. You cannot ask why there is life, but you can ask what is there to live for and then live for that. This is why I asked you to think about becoming a Guardian Spirit, but you don't have to take the Bodhisattva path if you don't want. You can choose to become an automated vehicle of consumption to find your happiness, or take other paths too.

Even so, you should still strive to make your life worthwhile if you want to find contentment and the peace and happiness that most everyone longs for. As King Solomon of the Bible wrote, you certainly won't find it through material goods and experiences. I truly suggest that you give your life purpose some thought, and then start cultivating the ways of any Buddha or Bodhisattva you might want to become, for that really is a type of life purpose! It is possible to move in any direction of accomplishment you desire although it will require study, cultivation, and effort. Nonetheless, you should invest in your future best self.

The purpose of life is not just so that some lump of living protoplasm, because of "selfish genes," can pursue survival and then replicate some version of itself before it disappears. The purpose is whatever you take as your higher mission, aspiration or calling as you continue onwards through eternity, or until it all ends if you believe there is some termination point. Life is its own purpose, and therefore the ennobling of life is whatever we want to make of it that raises it higher. That ennobling should become the purpose of your existence. Take the high road, don't take the low road. Make your life count by living a bigger life.

Don't let your life become like a leaf tossed in the wind that blows this way and that because it follows circumstances instead of a direction. Choose for yourself a higher calling or mission within this effervescent scintillation called the universe, a purpose that will provide you with fulfillment and satisfaction. Become your best self. Fulfill your potential. Make life count. Winning isn't always possible so put that thought aside and instead just do your best in whatever you do. This will require study in wisdom and skillfulness.

After you think about this and decide upon some possible directions, the next step is learning the skills to help you tread those paths and finding, building or associating with the people and things that will help you achieve them. You don't have to do things by yourself but do need to associate with whatever can help you achieve the goals, missions or purposes you want to pursue. You have to find the designs that will help you achieve your desires, goals, purposes, missions or objectives, and associate with other people who can help you achieve them.

Whatever directions you ultimately choose, they are something you can work towards. You can chart a course of actions towards any

accomplishment you want to achieve but must afterward dedicate your actions towards its fulfillment. What is the desired outcome that you want to produce?

Think about it this way. What will be the consistent dedication you choose for your existence? What are you going to try to bring about? What is the light you want to bring to the world?

When you watch a video of the galaxies in the universe, such as that produced by the Sloan Digital Sky Survey (“A Flight Through the Universe”), or the stars within our Milky Way galaxy alone (see stars.cromeexperiments.com), and then realize that life goes on forever within this vastness but you are insignificantly small in terms of the whole shebang, it pretty much comes down to the line of Rick Blaine in Casablanca, “It doesn’t take much to see that the problems of three little people don’t amount to a hill of beans in this crazy world.” Your life is pretty much insignificant in terms of the vastness of the universe so how do you make it matter? Through self-purpose. Through purposes for your life.

This being the case, how can you make your life more meaningful by finding a self-purpose? Well, what skills and talents would you like to acquire that will help you do or achieve something worthwhile? If you had absolutely no obstacles or obstructions, what would you want to do in the universe? What function or role would you want to play? What type of Buddha or Bodhisattva, with ultimate powers, would you want to become?

There is *no* master “plan for you” in the universe other than the path you choose for yourself. You indeed have karma from past lives that is working itself out in this life but you can create your own path in life different from this karma due to skillful causes on your part. Self-cultivation for personal achievement must be part of that mix.

Karma indeed comes along as a consequence for how you behave and we all are bound to some circumstances (such as the need to go through puberty, the need to breath oxygen and eat food, our karma, etc.) but you essentially create your own fate in life. The great unfortunate thing is that most people do not proactively choose to do so but let the circumstances of life create a road for them, and thus they don’t create and live the future they really want. Nonetheless, everyone always creates consequences by how they live and thus a future appears according to our actions. Wouldn’t it make sense to put more consideration and planning into creating those karmic outcomes?

Karmic consequences, meaning the results of cause and effect, indeed happen to everyone because of what we build/do in this life together with our accumulations from past lives, but much of what happens to us is built unknowingly because of ignorance rather than because of careful choices and careful actions. This is why we need to develop greater wisdom or understanding of how things work and what normally happens if we hold

to some road of behavior. This is why people read the works of wisdom writers such as Baltasar Gracian, Benjamin Franklin, the Stoics, Plutarch, and so forth.

Up and down you have been bobbing through countless lives without generating the higher spiritual bodies whose ultimate longevity provides some restful respite along with powers to accomplish great deeds in the world. Why? Because you did not direct your energies in the right way. You did not work on helping others so that the merit of this pathway became available to you; spiritual beings won't help others achieve the higher bodies if they don't have the basic tendency to help others. You have not been generating higher consequences but simply living for yourself and suffering what has come along due to your past actions. The Buddha or Bodhisattva path gives you access to the highest spiritual and material achievements, and a way to transcend the difficulties of life. Now it is finally available to you.

If you are wise and adopt the pathway of Buddha Yoga then you can become a more active participant in the universe who actually builds something wonderful because of your activities. You have the power to make life something of much greater significance, *even cosmic significance*, because you can choose to build anything you want just like the accomplished Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. It just starts with a decision. Through dedication to a higher noble direction/purpose you can create a future fortune of greatness.

This is what a hero does. This is who a hero is. Empowerment, or authority, is not something given to you by others so that you can tread the path of a hero. Empowerment is something you assume for yourself just as Napoleon crowned himself Emperor of France rather than have someone else place the crown on him. You are the ultimate authority of your own life and its trajectory. You give to yourself your own empowerment or permission to do whatever you want, and of course there will be consequences for whatever you do because cause and effect is the nature of the cosmos.

You must therefore select your own course in life and then move in that direction, so invest purpose into your actions. It is all in your hands to decide whatever purposes your life will be about. You can eventually become a master of anything if you stay with it long enough, but the road always starts with study, immersion in that activity, and the commitment to practice it.

Few people at a young age know enough to choose any ultimate pathways for their life. However they can choose things they would like to study or master, and directions they might want to try. Passion doesn't always come at the beginning of something, but only after you put in the hard work of individual effort to become excellent at it. Once you have passion or skills at something then you can choose to become a benefactor,

protector or guardian of that activity.

There are obstacles for everything in life, but you are ultimately free to choose and then create whatever you want in the universe. You are the original nature, so why not? When you face obstacles and obstructions then wisdom, perseverance, timing and skillfulness are keys to surmounting them. Your life purpose is up to you, but consider that endless lives lie ahead. Therefore choose carefully what you want to do knowing that there is an endless horizon ahead of you.

What is then worthy of your efforts? Anything can be accomplished, but achievement takes skills and learning. It takes preparation. That being so, should your efforts be spent on a tiny goal that isn't worthwhile, or should you exert yourself towards a far longer-term, broader-minded objective? What should you try to create, and what should you try to protect? What is in line with your inner sense of transcendence? What aim or aspiration gives you energy and inspiration? What is it the world needs that you want to help supply?

You are free to accomplish whatever you set out to do in the universe because you will have the time. However, this does not mean you can block bad karma coming to you. You will have to learn how to deal with it. To accomplish anything you will have to learn how to deal with whatever you encounter as obstacles and obstructions. Two obstacles stand out clearest: circumstances and yourself.

Swami Sivananda of Rishikesh once said, "You are the architect of your own fate. You are the master of your own destiny. You can do and undo things. You sow an action and reap a tendency. You sow a tendency and reap a habit. You sow a habit and reap your character. You sow your character and reap your destiny. Therefore destiny is your own creation. You can undo it if you like because destiny is a bundle of habits. Purushartha is self-exertion. Purushartha can give you anything. Change your habits, change the mode of thinking and you can conquer destiny." As also explained in *Color Me Confucius*, the skill at getting things done is changing yourself and doing what needs to get done.

What Swami Sivananda said is that you can create a life of your own design through self-exertion. You can even change yourself - your personality, habits and behaviors - because you are the one in charge of yourself. The stories of Yuan Liao Fan, Benjamin Franklin and Frank Bettger within *Color Me Confucius* and *Move Forward* show there are ways you can change your personality and habits to break the hold that karma has on you. This is what allows you to create a new fate, fortune and destiny outside of karmic bounds. Benjamin Franklin, in particular, showed how a person's character could become noble through constant self-correction. You can also study the life of Dwight Eisenhower, George Washington and Abraham Lincoln to see how they also practiced self-control and worked

on transforming their personalities to change their fortunes.

Ancient Hindu astrologers have often said that there would be no purpose to predicting fate or destiny unless there were also a means to change it. While teaching that karma from past lives is a fact, Hinduism says you can change it and your future fortune. But what new goals or new future are worthy of you with an endless future ahead? What auspicious circumstances would you like to build for others or yourself, and what skills would you like to have, now knowing that talents can be learned (see *The Talent Code* by Daniel Coyle) and you can indeed attain them? What objectives are worthy enough of you that they should become part of your total life purpose? In your own mind, what efforts are worthy of your beneficial sustenance and protection?

Religions offer us some guidance on these topics.

The highest ideal of Christianity is exemplified by Jesus who sacrificed himself for others. The teachings of Christianity are that Jesus sacrificed himself for people's benefit, and that we should love and serve one another according to his example. People who emulate his example therefore engage in incredible charitable activities for the world, which is a great outcome from his teachings. Jesus taught that we should be of service to one another by doing for others what we would appreciate others doing for us.

The highest ideal of Hinduism is that of the Avatar who descends from the divine to become human in order to rescue people from disasters, empower the good and fight against evil. The Avatar saves society by solving deep problems and restores balance by establishing righteousness once again when evil has become too strong.

The ideal of Sikhism set up by Guru Nanak can be seen in the vegetarian community meals freely provided to all, which are considered a task of service to mankind. The free meal, called *langar*, represents the equality of all people and the importance of charity to help one another. Sikhs are also known to fight against any sorts of social injustice.

The ideal of Confucianism espoused by Confucius is that we should fulfill our relationship obligations to our family and friends as well as to our community, country and leaders. However, in so doing we should not impose upon others what we would not wished imposed upon ourselves. As with Christianity, we should love other people and work for their betterment.

Confucius said that during our lives there is a mission we must all work to accomplish. It is a great mission that is the singular core of the human life purpose, which he called the "Great Learning." The three objectives of the great learning are that we are to cultivate, regardless of our status or circumstances in life, to find our "bright virtue," to benefit other people

(which Confucius called loving the people or teaching the people), and to never stop until reaching the highest good.

Zen master Nan Huai Chin said that one's life purpose should be to "realize enlightenment, save people and save the world." The Confucian Chang Tsai said that the ideal purpose is to "Establish true mind for the universe, direction for humanity, re-establish the discontinued studies of the ancient sages, and establish great peace for 10,000 generations." The Yogi Tirumalai Krishnamacharya said, "Rid your body of its impurities, let your speech be true and sweet, feel friendship for the world, and with humility seek wealth and knowledge."

In the light of these standards, a true life purpose is not to just do better for oneself, which you should work to do, but to do better for humanity and the world as well. What will your choices then be to create the Great Betterment? What purpose or purposes do you want to serve?

The highest ideal of Buddhism is the Mahayana Bodhisattva or Buddha of cosmic vows whose compassionate activity entails undergoing sufferings and burdens without complaint to teach others the path of enlightenment, relieve their suffering and free them from misfortunate situations. The Bodhisattvas and Buddhas are enlightened individuals who have, since attaining their higher body achievements, devoted themselves to accomplishing great vows (purposes) that take care of people while also helping them to realize the divine as well. They internalize their aspirations and values so that they don't break their vows and are not shaken by any storm. They become benefactors, guardians or protectors over all sorts of worldly efforts. Their elevated position is something you can start working towards now by donating your money or efforts to charitable causes, or by studying to master some field of endeavor that you would want to help prosper and shepherd.

Greatness is not where we stand but the direction we are heading in life because of what we do with ourselves. Greatness and nobility arise in us because of what we do. The Bodhisattvas and Buddhas, because of the vows they have made and actions they thereby perform, are role models who might inspire you to do great deeds yourself and be greater than you otherwise might not be. They select their own compassionate missions and then work to fulfill their vowed commitments. Those become part of their life purpose.

Although many root causes of their personal suffering have been eliminated forever, if one is to exist nearly forever one must have a worthy target or purpose for one's existence other than just surrounding oneself with luxurious enjoyments and engaging in conspicuous consumption. Each Bodhisattva and Buddha has chosen special missions they want to execute

for long periods of time, and while they try to help everywhere are especially committed to compassionate forms of wise and skillful action in certain fields of expertise to help others.

Basically, they are individuals who attain many transcendental bodies and then develop special skills and expertise in certain areas in order to help mankind. Naturally these skills don't just appear because you attain transcendental bodies. You have to gain those skills and capabilities from study and training, building your expertise in the directions of your choosing.

The world has loads of spiritual literature, but very little discusses the idea of a cosmic mission that can run across multiple lives and even eternity. Buddhism actually discusses this in several sutras including the *Diamond Sutra*, *Lotus Sutra* and *Avatamsaka Sutra* among others.

In the *Diamond Sutra* it is taught that you can sacrifice heaps of jewels worth more than galaxies or even countless lives throughout millennium but the merit you achieve by such deeds is still not as great as attaining enlightenment. In the *Lotus Sutra* it is taught that the Buddhas live endless lives as long as eons, and during that time accomplish vast, uncountable deeds for the helpful sake of all living beings.

In the *Avatamsaka Sutra*, Shakyamuni Buddha introduces many galaxies by name and even describes their inhabitants. The Sloan Digital Sky Survey offers an incredibly accurate 3D view of this universe (“A Flight Through the Universe”) that Shakyamuni described, and today we know that there are countless inhabitable planets around stars. The stars of our galaxy can be seen in stars.chromeexperiments.com. In just our galaxy alone it is estimated that there are between 40 and 100 billion habitable planets that can support life. Viewing the vastness of the cosmos and knowing there are innumerable, uncountable world systems and beings within it, and knowing that there is life everywhere that is cyclically reincarnating again and again in endless fashion, the question arises as to the purpose of it all.

There is no ultimate purpose as imposed from an all powerful external agent. The only purpose of your life is what you select to do as your own mission or calling. In the *Avatamsaka Sutra* the measure of success is enlightenment (attaining the “infinite life” or longer-lived bodies) since it enables you to jump out of the infinite rounds of reincarnation in the lower realms. Success is also using these bodies in compassionate activity to help others.

Buddhism offers many role models of individuals who succeeded on the spiritual path and who took cosmic vows to help this whole conglomerate of world systems and beings. According to the Buddhist sutras, all the Bodhisattvas achieved enlightenment through the power of their vows because those vows propelled them forward to keep working hard at

cultivation, self-improvement and offering (altruistic charitable activities and generosity on behalf of others). There is not one single Bodhisattva who was enlightened without first making great vows. The ideal of Buddhism, and of the cosmic Bodhisattvas and Buddhas, is for people to succeed at enlightenment and then devote themselves to various types of service that improve the welfare of living beings. The purpose of life is then a life of purpose, but a Buddha or Bodhisattva decides upon that purpose himself.

Thus there is the Medicine Buddha who has vowed to endlessly help sick and physically disabled people in all respects so that they are thereafter blessed with good health, both physically and mentally. You actually become a Medicine Bodhisattva yourself in regular life when you become a doctor, nurse, volunteer ambulance driver, or donate to hospitals and medical charities. When you learn CPR, acupuncture or herbal medicine with the intent to help others, even such humble beginnings start to give you the skills or contributions related to the larger direction of becoming a Medicine Buddha. They prepare you to become a Medicine guardian spirit after death.

Limited by time and resources, all people are constrained in what they can do to help others in the world. However, this is the nature of the world so one cannot complain. That being the case, all people must start from wherever they are right now, doing whatever they can, to help others in the various directions they choose. If you want to master any particular skills or become a guardian spirit of any type, it is necessary to form your own Bodhisattva or Buddha vows of what you want to accomplish in life, and the calling you want to devote yourself to achieving. Then you need to start training yourself in the directions that will give you the knowledge, skills, merit and contributions related to those directions.

Avalokitesvara, also known as Kuan Yin, has vowed to listen to the cries for help in the world and provide aid to all who are suffering in various difficulties. He has vowed to always stay in this world helping beings by listening to their cries for help and responding with rescuing aid. He has vowed to help people end all their troubles, sufferings and difficulties. He has vowed to destroy all the realms of suffering while practicing mental equanimity at all times and cutting off all mental fetters and knots. He took the immeasurable vow to save all sentient beings, and even guide them to different world systems if they want to be reborn in a different realm.

Ksitigarbha, the Earth Store Bodhisattva or “Hell Buddha,” has vowed to help all living beings who are dying, in purgatory (hungry ghosts) or in the hells. Specifically, the great vow undertaken by Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva is to liberate all beings from hell before he himself becomes a fully perfected Buddha. The compassionate vow of Ksitigarbha is, “If I do not

go to the hells to help the suffering beings there, who else will go? ... If the hells are not empty I will not become a Buddha. Only when all living beings have been saved will I attain complete enlightenment (Bodhi).”

The wisdom Buddha Manjushri has made eighteen great vows, Samantabhadra has made ten great vows, Amitabha Buddha (*Sutra of Infinite Life*) has made forty-eight great vows, Maitreya has made ten great vows and *Shakyamuni Buddha* made five hundred great vows that you can read in the Buddhist sutras. Reading these vows inspires people to perform similar charitable acts, make similar vows and increase their cultivation efforts in order to gain the skills and abilities to help others. You can actually take such vows yourself and start working toward their fulfilment, which is a type of Karma Yoga. When you do you are on the road of the Bodhisattvas and Buddhas whose first step is to become a guardian protector of some type.

These particular Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are just a few role models for the many directions in which you can devote yourself after you attain a nearly immortal spiritual body (actually, properly speaking you attain a *set of bodies* since each lower body will be linked to the next higher, which will live longer than the lower). What directions would be worthy of your efforts? What would you want to accomplish? In *Culture, Country, City, Company, Person, Purpose, Passion, World* I brought up the examples of individuals who devoted their lives to various missions, and the Bodhisattva vow tries to get you to think of such things.

The people who attain the subtle body (first dhyana attainment) can immediately start doing many things to invisibly help people without their knowing, and will live a long time in that body. It lasts far longer than the subtle body people normally attain after death, for theirs is weaker since most people do not cultivate. Those who attain both the subtle and Causal body (third dhyana attainment) can do even more good to help others. Those who attain the subtle body, Causal body and Supra-Causal body (fourth dhyana attainment) can do more still. Those who attain the subtle, Causal, Supra-Causal and Immanence bodies (complete and perfect enlightenment) can do the most.

You can achieve these bodies in this life if you cultivate correctly. Many people do although they are usually the swamis, sadgurus, gurus, masters, mazjobs, chief rabbis, head monks, archbishops, cardinals, patriarchs, etc. at the highest commitment of spiritual practice or religious organization. It takes a devoted consistency of practice effort over a long period of time, and intensity of practice effort. A concert pianist, and Olympic sports athletes, typically practice 5-6 hours a day, and so do many of the people who finally attain the deva body attainment.

Therefore, what vows will be worthy of your efforts? What will make a difference in peoples' lives? What skills and activities should you start to

study and master if you want to be able to give the right type of thoughts and invisible aid to others? What cosmic vows are worthy of your time, and what skills and excellences do you want to master?

*As an illustration of the great vows made and carried out by the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, we can examine in detail the twelve great vows of the Medicine Buddha as reported in the *Sutra of the Vows of the Medicine Buddha Healing*. Those twelve vows undertaken by the Medicine Buddha to relieve beings of their sufferings are as follows (paraphrased):*

1. I vow that my body shall shine as beams of brilliant light on infinite and boundless worlds, showering on all beings, getting rid of their ignorance and worries with my teachings. I will help all beings to become like me with a perfect status and character, upright mind and soul, and finally attain enlightenment like the Buddha.
2. I vow that my body be like crystal, pure and flawless, majestic with merit and virtue, radiating rays of splendid light to every corner, brightening up and enlightening all beings with wisdom. With the blessings of compassion, I will help all beings strengthen their spiritual power and physical energy so that they can succeed in all their endeavors.
3. I vow that I shall grant by means of boundless wisdom, all beings with the inexhaustible things that they require so they are without the slightest want, and relieve them from all pains and guilt resulting from materialistic desires. Although clothing, food, accommodation and transport are essentials, they should be utilized wisely as well. Besides self-consumption, the remaining should be generously shared with the community so that all can live harmoniously together.
4. I vow to lead those who have gone astray back to the path of righteousness. Let them be corrected and returned to the Buddha way for enlightenment.
5. I vow that I shall enable all sentient beings to observe precepts for spiritual purity and moral conduct. Should there be any relapse or violation, they shall be guided for repentance. Provided they truly regret their wrong-doings, and vow for a change with constant prayers and strong faith in the Buddha, they will receive the rays of forgiveness, recover their lost morality and purity, and not fall into evil destinies.
6. I vow that all beings who are physically disabled or sick in any aspect, or who are ugly, dull, blind, deaf, mute, deformed, paralyzed, hunchbacked, or afflicted with skin disease, insanity, or

various other sicknesses and sufferings, will through me be blessed with good health, both physically and mentally. I will help them all become endowed with upright features, keen intelligence, and perfect faculties. All who pay homage to Buddha faithfully will by me become free of sickness and suffering.

7. I vow to relieve all pain and poverty of the very sick and poor who are oppressed by many illnesses and who are without aid, without a place to turn, without a doctor, without medicine, without relatives, and without a family, who are poverty-stricken and filled with suffering to be cured of their sicknesses. The sick will be cured, the helpless helped, and the poor will be assisted by me.
8. I vow to help women who are undergoing sufferings and tortures and give rise to a deep loathing for having a woman's body because they are oppressed by the myriad sufferings of being female, and seek transformation into men in the next life. By hearing my name, paying homage and praying, their wishes will be granted and they will ultimately attain Buddhahood.
9. I vow to free all beings from errant paths, evil thoughts and their control. I shall lead them to have proper views by inculcating them with righteousness and honor so that they gradually cultivate the practices of Bodhisattvas and quickly realize unsurpassed enlightenment.
10. I vow to save prisoners who are bound, interrogated, whipped, fettered, imprisoned, sentenced to execution, or subjected to endless disasters, hardships, abuse, and humiliation so that they are torn by grief and distress and suffering in body and mind. Those who are sincere will be blessed by my supreme powers and be freed from worry and sufferings.
11. I vow to save those who suffer from starvation and thirst and those who committed a crime or created all kinds of bad karma in order to obtain food. If they hear my name and faithfully cherish it they will obtain delicious food and drink and afterwards settle in ultimate peace and happiness.
12. I vow to save those who are poor and lacking clothes so that day and night they are troubled by mosquitoes and flies, and by cold and heat. If they come across my name, cherish it with sincerity and practice dharma to strengthen their merits, they will be able to achieve their wishes.

The Medicine Buddha constantly works toward accomplishing these tasks for all beings, working to help them using his thoughts, energies and by performing countless actions on their behalf.

Many guardian spirits, who help people who are sick and respond to

mantras for medical assistance, are also announced in the Buddhist sutras. Here are a few from the *Avatamsaka Sutra* whose names provide us with some idea of their virtues, personalities, excellences, expertise or method of cultivation: Medicine-ruling Spirit Auspicious; Medicine-ruling Spirit Candana Forest; Medicine-ruling Spirit Pristine Radiance; Medicine-ruling Spirit Universal Renown; Medicine-ruling Spirit Shining Pores; Medicine-ruling Spirit Pervasive Healing and Purifying; Medicine-ruling Spirit Roaring Loudly; Medicine-ruling Spirit Banner of Light Eclipsing the Sun; Medicine-ruling Spirit Clear Vision of the Ten Directions; and Medicine-ruling Spirit Replenishing Energy and Brightening the Eyes.

In Indian and Chinese culture these Medicine Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and healing guardian spirits or deities sponsor all sorts of mantras that contact them for help in pain relief (back pain, rib pain, stomach pain, etc.) and assistance for healing medical conditions such as diabetes, ulcers, sprains, wounds, eye troubles (cataracts, eye pain, eye infections, swollen eyes, etc.), nail diseases, migraines, sunstroke, cancer, teeth problems and dental diseases, piles, jaundice, high blood pressure, skin disease, small pox, measles, fever, urinary diseases, pregnancy, menstrual pain, hernia, gland disorders, poison, scorpion stings, dog bites, wounds, leprosy, asthma, breastfeeding, bleeding, panic attacks, vomiting, and so forth.

Another Buddha whose vows are often read are those of Ksitigarbha, also known as the Earth-Store or Hell Buddha who as previously stated ministers to those who are sick, dying or have entered the hells and inferior states of being. In the *Original Vows of Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva Sutra*, Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva speaks to Shakyamuni Buddha and explains the vows he has been undertaking for countless lives.

“I teach and transform obstinate living beings like these in the evil age of the five degenerations, causing their minds to be regulated and tamed so that they abandon the false and return to the true. However, there are one or two out of every ten who still have evil habits. I too transform into hundreds of thousands of millions of emanations and employ many skillful means [for living beings]. Some beings are of keen capacity: they immediately believe and accept upon hearing [the Dharma]. Some are reaping the results of wholesome [deeds]: they achieve accomplishments through energetic encouragement. Some are ignorant and dull: they return [to the true] only after long being instructed. Some have karma that is heavy: they do not give rise to respect [for the Dharma].

“Living beings like these types are each different. I therefore transform into emanations to guide them across to liberation. The emanations are manifested in the forms of a man, a woman, a deva, a naga, a spirit, a ghost, or a mountain, a forest, a stream, a plain, a river, a pond, a spring, or a well to benefit people, so that they all may be guided across to liberation. The

emanations are also manifested in the forms of Sakra, Brahma, a wheel-turning king, a householder, a king, a high minister, a government official, or a bhiksu, a bhiksuni, an upasaka, an upasika, or a sravaka, an arhat, a pratyekabuddha, a Bodhisattva, or others to teach and guide living beings across. It is not only in the form of a Buddha that I have manifested before them.

“You see how, kalpa after kalpa, diligently and arduously I guide difficult-to-teach, obstinate, wrongdoing, suffering beings such as these across to liberation. Those not yet regulated and tamed experience ripened effects according to their karma. If they fall into the lower realms and undergo great suffering, you should remember what I am earnestly entrusting to you now in the Trayastrimsa Heaven: Help all living beings in the saha world from now until Maitreya [Buddha] arises in the world—cause them to attain liberation, to leave all suffering forever, and to meet [Maitreya] Buddha and be given prediction.

“At that time, emanation Ksitigarbha Bodhisattvas from the various worlds returned together to one form, and weeping from pity and great love, he said to the Buddha, ‘throughout many long kalpas Buddhas have guided me, so that I am able to attain inconceivable spiritual power and be replete with great wisdom. My emanations fill worlds as numerous as the sand grains in hundreds of thousands of myriads of millions of Ganges Rivers. In each of these worlds, I transform into hundreds of thousands of myriads of millions of emanations. Each emanation guides hundreds of thousands of myriads of millions of people across, causing them to revere and take refuge in the Triple Gem, leave samsara forever, and reach the bliss of nirvana. As long as they do good deeds in Buddhadharmā, even if such deeds are as little as a strand of hair, a drop of water, a grain of sand, a speck of dust, or a bit of a minute down hair, I will gradually guide them across to liberation, causing them to gain great benefits. O World-Honored One, please do not be concerned about future living beings who have unwholesome karma.’

“Thus he said three times to the Buddha, ‘O World-Honored One, please do not be concerned about future living beings who have unwholesome karma.’

“At that time, the Buddha praised Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva, saying, ‘Excellent, excellent! I will help in your aspirations. You will be able to fulfill the profound vows taken throughout many long kalpas, finish guiding [beings] far and wide [to the other shore], and immediately attain bodhi.’”⁷²

This sutra excerpt basically explains that Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva has

⁷² Jeanne Tsai translation from the Fo Guang Shan International Translation Center.

attained the Immanence body that then confers upon him the capability of emanating (upon need) countless astral subtle body projections that can enter into people's brains and give them thoughts. This capability of emanating body projections (called *nirmanakaya*) on a vast scale especially occurs at the Supra-Causal body attainment level (*nirvana* with remainder) and higher. Prior to that attainment level you have to use your own subtle or Causal body to appear before others or enter into them, but starting at the Supra-Causal level you can create many instantaneous projections or emanations to do such jobs and then dissipate them when finished. If human beings can see such a projection, it is called a *Yang shen*, which is Chinese Taoist terminology. Many people who report seeing their master in two places at once (bilocation) are actually seeing one of his *Yang shen* emanation bodies. Countless individuals have written of such stories.

At the Immanence body level your capabilities are even greater, and at body attainments superior to this your attainments are greater still. This is why Nagarjuna said:

The seventh (stage of Bodhisattva development which corresponds to the Supra-Causal body) is the Far-going. ... he becomes a lord of the gods of Paranirmitavasavartin heaven. ... The eighth is the Immovable. ... He becomes a Brahma, lord of a thousand worlds, unsurpassed by Saints and Hermit Buddhas. ... The ninth stage is called Good Genius ... He becomes a Brahma, lord of a million worlds ... The tenth is called Raincloud of Dharma (Immanence body level attainment), because the rain of the excellent teaching falls, and the Bodhisattva is consecrated with light by all the Buddhas. He becomes a lord of the gods of the Pure Abodes, a supreme great lord of the sphere of infinite wisdom.⁷³

Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva has basically stated his vow that he will use uncountable *nirmanakaya* emanations to continually help counter sentient beings' negative thoughts and guide them to better states of being. He will keep doing this forever in his long-lived bodies, and since the higher the bodies he attains the longer he lives, we are talking about a nearly infinite lifetime ... equivalent to waiting for all beings in the universe to become enlightened. With the prospect of living forever, what would you choose to do to occupy yourself? What tasks, goals, purposes or objectives would be worthy of your aspirations? You will have absolute freedom to support, protect and promote whatever you want because no one binds you. What would be your Bodhisattva vows, and how would start training now so as to

⁷³ *The Christ and the Bodhisattva*, ed. by Donald S. Lopez Jr. & Steven C. Rockefeller, (SUNY Press, Albany: New York, 1987), p. 86.

be able to fulfill them?

Manjusri, Samantabhadra, Avalokitesvara and Maitreya have also vowed to use their abilities to transform into hundreds of thousands of forms (meaning that they will project *nirmanakaya* “emanation bodies” to enter into people to give them thoughts, emotions, courage, energy, strength, healing, comfort, dreams, motivation, inspiration, aspirations and so forth) in order to help people in all sorts of hidden ways. This is what you do when you achieve enlightenment.

When billionaires and kings die they are nobodies in Heaven because their money is gone and they didn't bring anything with them. They should have brought merit with them, but they take little to Heaven if they didn't do any good deeds. They no longer have a staff, company, money, possessions, retainers or anything major and are stuck with the fact that they did a lot of bad deeds and didn't use their money, resources or position to perform any great acts of altruism, philanthropy or charitable merit. Many did not bother to cultivate any special skills either. Basically they squandered their merit during life, and didn't create any great good karma of service to others to bring good fortune with them into a new life. Politicians and kings find themselves no longer as people of power or influence, so no one listens to them or bows at their mere presence. What was it all for if they did not create an enduring legacy that continued to help others after they were gone ... to have made some difference they lived at all? Most swelled, foamed for a moment, and then disappeared into oblivion. After years of hard training and struggle, it is common for Olympic medal winners to experience states of depression after their win. What was all the training for now that it is over? Think deeply on this well-known fact.

The only thing you take with you upon death is your personality, behavior and your accumulation of karma or merit. Good karma is accumulated by performing good deeds to help others, especially deeds that benefit subsequent generations, while bad karma is accumulated by doing evil, unethical or bad deeds. Good karma is what you want to be accumulating in life, and the footprint of the good effects from the help you render can be considered the size of your karma.

It is strange that a poor sadhu that you might daily ignore - dirty, scantily clad, with unkempt hair and meager rations - might actually be enlightened as he sits there and uses his *nirmanakaya* emanations to perform helpful functions everywhere without your notice. That is the great one living resplendent in Heaven while you see a dirty body below, and he or she doesn't care that they don't seem rich on the earthly plane because their real life is in a higher body that resides in a more pleasant existence. The human body you see in the world is like an appendage tethered to their higher

bodies which they continue using like a tool until the karma is ripe for it to disappear.

This is another reason you should always monetarily contribute to monks and nuns, swamis, sadhus, padres, priests, rabbis, and others who might actually be enlightened (they have at minimum a subtle body), or are qualified for enlightenment, for they hate asking for money yet need personal funds just like everyone else but have no way to earn it. Hampered by a lack of funds, how do you think they feel despite the fact that they know more than everyone else and are running around trying to help people and fix unfortunate affairs? If you solve some of their problems then they will have more free time to help more people and do greater deeds than if encumbered by too many earthly fetters.

If enlightened, in return they will not only start protecting you in unseen ways as a return for your kindness but those personal funds, rather than just funds contributed for a monastery, nunnery, temple, church or mosque, will free them from some basic concerns so that they can do more good deeds in this world without people knowing.

My point is, donate some personal funds to some spiritual monks and nuns or other religious functionaries for their own personal use when you can, especially when you see they are poor and need it. I suggest making this a habit twice a year, and whenever you encounter a worthy. As the sage Nisargadatta said, "There are people in the world who do more good than all the statesmen and philanthropists put together." He was talking precisely of these people.

The *Sutra in Forty Sections* of Buddhism says, "Feeding a hundred evil people is not as good as feeding one good person. Feeding a thousand good people is not as good as feeding one who upholds the precepts. Feeding ten thousand people who uphold the precepts is not as good as feeding one Srotapanna (someone who has attained the subtle body). Feeding one million Srotapanna is not as good as feeding one Sakadagami. Feeding ten million Sakadagami is not as good as feeding one Anagami (someone who has attained the subtle body *and* Causal body). Feeding one hundred million Anagami is not as good as feeding one Arhat (someone who has attained the subtle body, Causal body and Supra-Causal body). Feeding one billion Arhats is not as good as feeding one Pratyekabuddha. Feeding ten billion Pratyekabuddhas is not as good as feeding one Buddha of the past, present and future" (someone who has attained the subtle body, Causal body, Supra-Causal body and Immanence body)." Although figurative, the numbers indicate that the higher one's highest spiritual body, the more people one can help.

In the *Surangama Sutra* of Buddhism, Samantabhadra Bodhisattva said: "World Honoured One, I always use my mind to listen in order to distinguish the variety of views held by living beings. If in a place, separated

from here by a number of worlds as countless as the sands in the Ganges, a living being practises Samantabhadra deeds, I mount at once a six tusked elephant and reproduce myself in a hundred and a thousand apparitions to come to his aid. Even if he is unable to see me because of his great karmic obstruction, I secretly lay my hand on his head to protect and comfort him so that he can succeed.” In Buddhism Samantabhadra always rides a six-tusked elephant that is white in color to symbolize purified sexual desire. It represents a man’s pelvis because the elephant head symbolizes his sex organs and its six tusks represent the six nerves exiting each side of the sacrum. So yes, Samantabhadra rides a six-tusked elephant everywhere because it represents his pelvis.

If you succeed in enlightenment you can generate countless *nirmanakaya* emanation bodies just like Samantabhadra and project them to do good things in the world, such as to give people thoughts and ideas. The higher your transcendental body the further you can project yourself in the universe and the more you can do.

When you succeed at enlightenment, which can happen in this life if you get the right master and work hard enough at cultivation, you too will also have this capability (as do many masters in the world), so you must start to think now upon what activities you would perform and vows you would undertake if you attained enlightenment. What are you involved in now, what do you find yourself doing? Those are some of your interests. With that in mind, you must start to think about what you might train to deal with and master.

While in the Buddhist sutras many Buddhas and Bodhisattvas announce their vows regarding the ways in which they will help people, the saints in other religions offer similar help to humans but don’t announce it so overtly. Many Christian saints, Sufi saints, Jain saints, Taoist legends, Confucian sages, Hindu saints, Buddhist great monks, and enlightened rabbis are said to respond to prayers or perform protective functions for various occupations, festivals, institutions, locations and so on.

In Hinduism, many enlightened individuals have left us countless mantras they created, as a sort of telephone number, that people can recite to request different types of assistance from enlightened beings that masquerade as famous deities such as Ganesh, Kali, Saraswati, Shiva, Krishna, and so forth. Sometimes their help can change your karma, but do not expect miracles without helping yourself as much as possible. When people encounter difficult situations it often (but not always) means heavy karma that cannot be changed. Nevertheless, sometimes higher powers can bend things just enough so as to improve your situation from what it would be, but it is hard for you to know this.

In order that people call upon these saints for help, spiritual texts

provide us their names and mantras or sutras they sponsor (respond to) when someone reads them. The Buddhist sutras even provide lists of the ways in which various Buddhas and Bodhisattvas will help people if individuals establish a connection with these masters.

For instance, Shakyamuni Buddha describes twenty-eight kinds of benefits in the *Original Vows of Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva Sutra* that can be received by people who pay homage to Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva. “Pay homage” simply means to think of the Buddha and pray/mantra for help and assistance in order to establish a connection. Their homage will establish a karmic connection with Ksitigarbha so as to earn his watchful concern and assistance of various types:

- First, devas and nagas will protect them.
- Second, their wholesome results will increase daily.
- Third, they will accumulate superior causes for holiness.
- Fourth, they will not retreat from bodhi.
- Fifth, their food and clothing will be abundant.
- Sixth, they will not be infected by diseases or pestilence.
- Seventh, they will not be in disasters of flood or fire.
- Eighth, they will not fall victim to robbery or theft.
- Ninth, people who see them will admire and respect them.
- Tenth, spirits and ghosts will aid and support them.
- Eleventh, women [who wish to] will be reborn as men.
- Twelfth, [if reborn as women] they will be daughters of kings and ministers.
- Thirteenth, they will be good looking and with perfect features.
- Fourteenth, they will frequently be reborn in the heavens.
- Fifteenth, they may be emperors or kings.
- Sixteenth, they will have the wisdom to know past lives.
- Seventeenth, they will fulfill their wishes.
- Eighteenth, their family members will be happy.
- Nineteenth, untoward dire occurrences will be eliminated.
- Twentieth, they will forever leave the karmic paths.
- Twenty-first, they will pass through safely wherever they go.
- Twenty-second, their dreams at night will be peaceful and happy.
- Twenty-third, their deceased relatives will leave suffering behind.
- Twenty-fourth, they will be reborn on the strength of their past merit.
- Twenty-fifth, holy ones will praise them.
- Twenty-sixth, they will be intelligent and have keen faculties.
- Twenty-seventh, their hearts will be replete with kindness and compassion.
- Twenty-eighth, they will ultimately become Buddhas.

According to the culture, many people also construct shrines for saints, deities, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas within or outside of their homes. This is not without merit because these small shrines usually become used by heavenly beings who choose to become guardian spirits under the tutelage of a fully enlightened Buddha. For instance, the same *Original Vows of Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva Sutra* records how people who pay homage to Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva will receive certain benefits:

- First, their lands will be rich and fertile.
- Second, their families and homes will ever be in peace.
- Third, all their deceased relatives will be reborn in the heavens.
- Fourth, the living will enjoy greater longevity.
- Fifth, they will obtain what they seek with ease.
- Sixth, they will not suffer disasters of flood or fire.
- Seventh, events that cause depletion (bad becomings) will be eliminated.
- Eighth, they will not have bad dreams (nightmares).
- Ninth, they will be protected by guardian spirits in their daily comings and goings.
- Tenth, they will come across many causes of holiness.

These benefits become possible because Bodhisattvas, guardian spirits, local deities and dharma protectors make them possible. Why would they bother to take on such tasks? You cannot have significance in life if it is all about you. You get your significance, joy, contentment and satisfaction through altruistic service, offering and even sacrifice for others. Once you start working for others all the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, deity protectors and guardian spirits will start protecting you. This is the benefit of Karma Yoga.

Accordingly, many Asian cities and villages construct a suitable residence for the city's guardian protectors, or shrines to pay homage to them. These are the protective spirits of a place, sometimes called protect gods. In Indian culture these are the *Sapta Matrikas*, city protect gods or guardian deities in Chinese culture, *grama devata* village deities in Tamil Nadu (India), *kami* in Japanese Shintoism, *Landvaettir* in Norse mythology, and *Genius loci* in Roman religion. Other cultures use different names but they all refer to the same type of beings.

Whenever a master reaches a high enough stage and is ready to leave this world, he will sometimes publicly announce his Bodhisattva vows. Such was the case of Sufi master Sai Baba of Shirdi, who announced "Eleven Promises" to adherents after his departure. Although a Moslem, these constitute Buddha vows like those made by Ksitigarbha or the Medicine King Buddha:

ARHAT YOGA

Whoever puts his feet on Shirdi soil, his sufferings would come to an end.

The wretched and miserable would rise into plenty of joy and happiness, as soon as they climb the steps of my Mosque.

I shall be ever active and vigorous even after leaving this earthly body.

My tomb shall bless and speak the needs of my devotees.

I shall be active and vigorous even from my tomb.

My mortal remains would speak from my tomb.

I am ever living to help and guide all, who come to me, who surrender to me and who seek refuge in me.

If you look at me I look at you.

If you cast your burden on me, I shall surely bear it.

If you seek my advice and help, it shall be given to you at once.

There shall be no want in the house of my devotees.

The promises made to practitioners devoted to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, passed on to us by Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque, also reveal a similar type of commitment by many great Buddhas who succeeded through Christianity and strive to fulfill those vows:

I will give them all the graces necessary for their state of life.

I will give peace in their families.

I will console them in all their troubles.

I will be their refuge in life and especially in death.

I will abundantly bless all their undertakings.

Sinners shall find in my Heart the source and infinite ocean of mercy.

Tepid souls shall become fervent.

Fervent souls shall rise speedily to great perfection.

I will bless those places wherein the image of My Sacred Heart shall be exposed and venerated.

I will give to priests the power to touch the most hardened hearts.

Persons who propagate this devotion shall have their names eternally written in my Heart.

In the excess of the mercy of my Heart, I promise you that my all powerful love will grant to all those who will receive Communion on the First Fridays, for nine consecutive months, the grace of final repentance: they will not die in my displeasure, nor without receiving the sacraments; and my Heart will be their secure refuge in that last hour.

Life goes on forever, and each Buddha or Bodhisattva has decided upon

their own activities and life purpose within that foreverness. You are a Bodhisattva if you work for people's benefit even if you don't succeed in spiritual cultivation. Therefore you should decide what directions are of interest to you so that you can start working or developing skills along those avenues while living. With a deva body you gain a new life free of most worldly restrictions and constraints, and with that life you will be free to do whatever occupation or charitable activities you want. Therefore you should start training now, even if it seems just a little. That little bit is enough to start creating the karma you need for a grand fruition. When you speak of life purpose, studying the vows of various Buddhas and Bodhisattvas will demonstrate the possible types of activity that one can become involved in.

Since they have attained spiritual bodies that live nearly forever, which is the spiritual trail and standard accomplishment of anyone who cultivates towards enlightenment, the question of meaning comes down to selecting worthy missions and personal efforts other than just doing what life requires for survival. You must start thinking of vows, commitments, pledges and aspirations and start thinking about what to train for were you to engage in a cosmic mission. In other words, what type of Buddha would you want to be? What powers would you want to have? What services would you want to be rendering? An aligned purpose will take care of many things in your life.

There is no ultimate Heaven or resting place in the universe since everything is impermanent. Considering that fact, and that we are in a realm of forever transformations, what missions are worthy of your life essence? What should you devote yourself to accomplishing if money, power, fame or fortune are not the issues at stake? What are the causes or issues that matter to you that you have an urge to do something about? Are you contributing any money or efforts to such causes now? Are you in any way acting as a guardian spirit already?

Wealth is a highly insufficient motivation for someone who will attain numerous spiritual bodies that will live incredibly long lives, have the capability to travel subtle planes and Pure Lands, and be able to give people helpful thoughts and energies. With many spiritual bodies you will actually finally be able to do something about solving some of the sufferings in the world. What is it that you would want to do? That is something you must think about. Once you decide what type of Buddha or Bodhisattva you'd like to become, why aren't you moving in that direction? Why aren't you training to do something about it?

There is great folly in the idea that successful careers will bring people life fulfillment. Your career should enable you to perform your higher calling, but they rarely do so. While a vocation may reward you with fame or incredible sums of money, many people may not feel any satisfaction at

all in what they do to earn a living. Most people complain about their jobs and don't like what they do, but are stuck in a hole because of the necessity to make an income. They are dependent upon a wage and an employer, who they might not even like. As a result they usually end up living an empty script for their life and are just miserable. But, if you look for money and security that is all that you are likely to get. Chronic dissatisfaction is likely to be your outcome without a higher life purpose to hold you up.

Confucius even spoke a little about a proper career in his Appendix to the *Yijing*, writing, "Deeds leading the people of the world to settle peacefully is called career (cause and undertaking)." In other words, acting to help the world by benefiting mankind and society is a career. On the other hand, setting up a business or working for a monthly salary is not a career but a vocation. Thus, most of what people do for a living is a vocation, not a career. To be a merchant, for instance, is not a career but a vocation. It is a way to make a livelihood but not your ultimate mission in life. Work that you do simply for money constitutes a job, occupation or vocation, but isn't your true career. A Bodhisattva or Buddha vow is a career.

What most people really want to do, since they have a time frame that is only as long as this life, is make good money to support a great lifestyle. Within that lifestyle they make the mistake of equating acquisitions, entertainment or exotic experiences with happiness and contentment, and unfortunately this trio is usually only accessible because of money. If you then say that getting money is the most important thing in life then you will spend your life completely wasting your time. As Alan Watts once said in a speech, "You will be doing things you don't like in order to stay miserable doing things you don't like doing. It is incredibly stupid to spend your time doing things you don't like in order to continue spending your time doing things you don't like, and to teach your children to follow in the same footsteps. It's all a wretched *nirvana* – it never gets there."

Would you like to know what the definition of "folly" is? It is consuming the greater part of your life making a living rather than fulfilling the higher purposes in your heart that elevate and ennoble you and your life's efforts. Even if you feel it might be out of reach, you must take steps to elevate yourself to some exceptional purpose.

The Dalai Lama once said, "Man sacrifices his health in order to make money. Then he sacrifices money to recuperate his health. And then he is so anxious about the future that he does not enjoy the present; the result being that he does not live in the present or the future. He lives as if he is never going to die, and then dies having never lived."

People waste their entire lives doing unimportant things, and when their time is nearly up they regret what they didn't do and what they did do to get what they got, which they then admit was not worth the price. They

struggle their whole lives for financial success and when they finally get it discover that it lacks meaning. People should believe that somehow, somewhere their efforts are helping the world in some way and devote themselves to that. How many can say, “I did something positive for the world today – I made a meaningful difference”?

Benjamin Franklin once wrote a related and highly instructive story about his early life as a boy, called “The Whistle,” to teach the principle that people “pay too much” in life for careers and vocations that are not worthy of their time. It runs as follows:

When I was a child, seven years old, my friends, on a holiday, filled my pockets with coppers. I went directly to a shop where they sold toys for children; and, being charmed with the sound of a whistle that I saw on the way in the hands of another boy, I voluntarily offered the storekeeper all my money for one.

I then came home and went whistling all over the house, much pleased with my whistle, but disturbing all the family. My brothers and sisters and cousins, hearing about the bargain I had made, told me I had given four times as much for it as it was worth.

This put me in mind of what good things I might have bought with the rest of the money; and they laughed at me so much for my folly that I cried with vexation.

This, however, was afterward of use to me, the impression continuing in my mind; so that often, when I was tempted to buy some unnecessary thing, I said to myself, “Don’t give too much for the whistle,” and so I saved my money.

As I grew up, came into the world, and observed the actions of men, I thought I met with many, very many, who gave too much for the whistle.

When I saw anyone too ambitious of the favor of the great, wasting time in attendance on public dinners, sacrificing his repose, his liberty, his virtue, and perhaps his friends, to attain it, I have said to myself, “This man gives too much for his whistle.”

When I saw another fond of popularity, constantly employing himself in politics, neglecting his own affairs, and ruining them by that neglect, “He pays, indeed,” said I, “too much for this whistle.”

If I knew a miser, who gave up every kind of comfortable living, all the pleasure of doing good to others, all the esteem of his fellow-citizens, and the joys of benevolent friendship, all for the sake of accumulating wealth, “Poor man,” said I, “you do indeed pay too much for your whistle.”

When I met a man of pleasure, sacrificing the improvement of his mind, or of his fortune, to mere bodily comfort, “Mistaken

man,” said I, “you are providing pain for yourself instead of pleasure; you give too much for your whistle.”

If I saw one fond of fine clothes, fine furniture, or fine horses, all above his fortune, for which he contracted debts, and ended his career in prison, “Alas!” said I, “he has paid dear, very dear, for his whistle.”

In short, I believed that a great part of the miseries of mankind were brought upon them by the false estimates they had made of the value of things, and by their giving too much for their whistles.

So it is that many people in the world are alive but not living due to the prison of occupations/vocations that do not suit them. They aren't happy because of what they must give up of themselves to continue in that unsatisfying line to make money. What initially seemed fun, interesting or romantic about some subject often disappeared after they made it their profession. Because of an unsuitable job or career it is as if they have cut off access to any inner joy, happiness, or vitality they once had. They might inwardly feel that they have a much higher calling, but they often feel miserable because they aren't involved with it.

People want to follow their dreams but they also wish to take care of their loved ones, so sometimes their financial responsibilities make following their inner dreams impossible. It is a wasted life when people know what they want to do but are working at something different they don't value. At the end of their lives such people are disappointed.

People might not be able to quickly identify what it is that they truly wish to do in the world, such as a career mission like the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas have vowed, but people can use them as role models for inspiration until they find their own vows. The best thing you can do until you find your own vows is actively contribute to many charitable causes until you eventually find your own calling.

For instance, a hadith from Islam recounts that Mohammed said we should carry on with life doing good deeds until we find what we want: “Carry on doing good deeds, for everyone will find it easy to do such deeds that will lead him towards that for which he has been created.” If you cannot think of appropriate Buddha vows for yourself right now you can start thinking about it. At some point your deepest aspirations will finally hit you and then you will know what you want to do.

Spiritual cultivation, which leads to the attainment of the subtle deva body, will let you finally be able to do things, such as become a guardian spirit. This is the route that Buddhas and Bodhisattvas have chosen in trying to heal the ills of mankind. However, you must think about what you might do as a vow if you chose to become a Buddha or Bodhisattva and started working on specific activities to create a karmic impulse and stock

of merit. What cannot be accomplished in this life because of circumstances can certainly be accomplished later if you have a strong enough desire and commitment. How will you show any interest other than through some preparation?

My advice is to be an original. Be authentic and true to yourself as much as possible. Don't be a lemming who just follows the crowd and does what others say is right or proper. Do the good acts you want to do. Think for yourself and follow your own code of ethics, for sometimes society is quite wrong. Work towards your own objectives. Don't die with a hole in your soul from denying what you want to accomplish with this life. Don't be afraid but manage the risks and strike out, even if just a little, for what you want to experience or accomplish.

Most people never touch upon what they really want to do in life, not even in their idle hours or as a hobby. Instead they imprison themselves in a life of unsatisfying work and waste away hours at frivolous past times like useless television or the internet. They don't lift a finger to travel in the most profitable directions they are interested in. They are born an original, but most people sadly die copies because they follow the crowd rather than their own authentic selves. Everyone needs a wake-up call or warning, and you are getting it right now.

The man or woman who remains in the wrong career when they have the *free choice and ability to change* lives the life of a lie. They live the unsatisfying life of the "company man" who must resolve himself to nerve-deadening standards of conformity. Your life cannot find completion if it settles for a routine that lacks fire.

Michael Masterson in *Automatic Wealth for Grads* said, "Somewhere inside you a fire is burning. It is your core desire—your desire—your deepest, truest idea about what you'd like to do and the person you'd like to become. If you can vent that fire, it will give you all the energy, imagination, and boldness you need to make your life full, rich, and satisfying. If you ignore that fire, it will consume everything that is potentially great and good about you. It will burn out your secret hopes, desires, and passions, one at a time, and leave you – as an older person reflecting back on your life – with a cold, charred core."⁷⁴ Question: is your life structure as it is now consonant with your Dream?

Masterson would say that you should tap the passionate sweet spot of your life and get in sync with the real you to start doing what you really want in your heart and soul. Become more in touch with what you are all about. Seek out that path which makes you feel most deeply and vitally alive, along with which comes the inner voice that says, "This is the real me.

⁷⁴ Michael Masterson, *Automatic Wealth for Grads*, (John Wiley & Sons, New Jersey, 2006).

Forget the higher income. This I want to do.” Seek out work with a good purpose and higher calling. Work on something you value - spend your life on something important that will outlast it. Live for something bigger than yourself, something bigger than you are. Life is too short to be little, so create a larger aim of leaving a legacy. Play the long game knowing that there are multiple lives ahead.

You can be a great source of positivity for the world, and through endless lives as well. All of us have a greatness specific to us, our own greatness no one else has. Start bringing that greatness to the forefront. Find out where your greatness lies, decide upon your transformative ambitions, and if you aren't there yet then start taking the steps of study, skills development and self-improvement – self-cultivation – to get there. There are things where you want to be your very best, where you want to be impeccable. What are they? There are ways in which you want to have consummate conduct. What are they? There are ways in which you may want to make a difference. What are they? Start doing them even if your actions seem small and insignificant.

Look for more than just a job if you can get it. Look for a direct link between what you do and a higher meaning. Try to make your life more contributive to a greater cause and if you cannot, then use your free time to start preparing for what you would later do if you were able to become a guardian spirit. Start chipping away at creating a new future now. Start cultivating the character and ways of the Buddha, Bodhisattva, protect god or guardian spirit you want to become.

In an interview with John Chrichton the advertising legend David Ogilvy once advised people: “Be more ambitious. Don't bunt. Try to hit the ball out of the park every time. Compete with the immortals. Try to make whatever you do the greatest that anyone has ever done. You won't always succeed but reach for the stars. Don't bunt. Be more ambitious. Ambition is the key. Try to do remarkable things. Try to be great. It is the lack of ambition that cripples most people.”

You should be this way with your life and your efforts, especially when you discover your inner calling! Success is disguised as work, so involve all your abilities and potentials in whatever you choose to do. Use your faculties to fullest force in all your efforts and live up to your full potential. This is the way of a Bodhisattva warrior who lives their best, doing their utmost to bring about whatever they desire. You are the original nature, so what is there to worry about? Manage the risks and then just do it.

You don't have to be the best in the world at anything, just the best you can be. You don't have to be #1 in the world. Just try to “be so good that others cannot ignore you.” Walt Disney put it, “Do what you do so *well* that others cannot resist telling others about you.” That in itself will help to propel you into the category of greatness.

Furthermore, in training to be your best what is as important as the skill you desire is the character traits that you develop simultaneously. Rather than just a skill, when training to be your best you should put time into developing attendant, accompanying character traits/virtues that are linked with that accomplishment. This is what is important, but training should always be about improving your habits, personality, and character for the better to become the best version of yourself.

Your historical biography is not equal to destiny, and your past is not equal to your future. With training and effort you can remake yourself into anything you want. Personalities and habits can be changed and talents can be learned. You can develop any skills you want to master, travel anywhere you want to go, and do whatever you want to do. Decision is the ultimate power of a human being that enables him to change the direction in which he is heading and move in a new direction he desires. Use decision to your advantage. I suggest you choose a path of study and then immerse yourself within it to become more proficient in the direction of your heart's calling. What does the phrase "benefit the world" look like to you? The famous poet Rumi once said,

There is one thing in this world that you must never forget to do. If you forget everything else and not this, there's nothing to worry about; but if you remember everything else and forget this, then you will have done nothing in your life.

It's as if a king has sent you to some country to do a task, and you perform a hundred other services, but not the one he sent you to do. So human beings come to this world to do particular work. That work is the purpose, and each is specific to the person. If you don't do it, it's as though a priceless Indian sword were used to slice rotten meat. It's a golden bowl being used to cook turnips, when one filing from the bowl could buy a hundred suitable pots. It's a knife of the finest tempering nailed into a wall to hang things on.

You say, "But look, I'm using the dagger. It's not lying idle." Do you hear how ludicrous that sounds? For a penny, an iron nail could be bought to serve the purpose. You say, "But I spend my energies on lofty enterprises. I study jurisprudence and philosophy and logic and astronomy and medicine and all the rest." But consider why you do those things. They are all branches of yourself.

Remember the deep root of your being, the presence of your lord. Give your life to the one who already owns your breath and your moments. If you don't, you will be exactly like the man who takes a precious dagger and hammers it into his kitchen wall for a peg to hold his dipper gourd. You'll be wasting valuable keenness

and foolishly ignoring your dignity and your purpose.⁷⁵

You have a reason to be here in life, but that reason is whatever *you* decide that reason to be. Your reason and purpose are your own. They don't come from anyone else. In the entire universe, you are unique and whatever you choose to do, whatever actions you choose to make, they are entirely your own choice. My advice is to use the Buddha and Bodhisattva vows as an inspirational motivation for discovering what issues really matter to you and then setting forth upon that path. Now is the moment to do so, because few ever make the effort. Life is too short not to be ambitious.

A life purpose is different than the purpose of life. Life is its own purpose, therefore how you use your life is your life purpose. My suggestion is this ... since life is its own purpose, bring meaning to your life by ennobling it. Decide on the light you want to bring to the world and then *be that light*. Decide on the happiness you want to bring to others, and then create that happiness and joy. Decide on the types of fulfillment you want to give or provide to others, and then start doing it, even if they are just small steps. Decide on becoming the best version of yourself, the most evolved version of yourself that you can be and then become that person. This is how to develop a fulfilling life for yourself.

There is a popular myth that there is something God wants you to do in your life, but this is just wishful thinking. There is only what you personally want to accomplish, what you personally decide to do. Choose ennoblement. Choose your best self. Bring a greater purpose to the elements of your life and to your life as a whole. Work on your relationships because they keep people happy and healthy.

The Buddhist sutras provide memorable examples of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas who are role models of devotion to causes and missions which they have themselves personally chosen. You can do the same. For yourself, there is a whole new exciting journey ahead of you when you decide upon your own type of commitment and vows.

You have to read the cosmic vows of these tireless Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and then ask yourself, "For me, what tasks in life are worthy of my efforts? In my own heart, what tasks are worthy of a life of commitment? What is interesting to me? What type of Buddha or Bodhisattva do I want to become? As a Buddha, what goals would I want to achieve and what vows would I want to accomplish?"

⁷⁵ Robert Ullman and Judyth Reichenberg-Ullman, *Mystics, Masters, Saints, and Sages: Stories of Enlightenment*, (Conari Press, York Beach: ME, 2001), p. 28.

These types of questions can help you find a life path greater than just a simple money-making occupation. It can help you decide where you will put your free time and efforts. We all have a deep human need to not only direct our own lives (to live independently on our own terms), but to learn and create new things, and to do better by ourselves and our world. But what will you choose to do along these lines?

People are motivated by all sorts of things in life – empowerment, transcendence, aliveness, accomplishment or the most material objectives such as money, power, status, fame, sex, social influence and so on. If something matters to you then you must start thinking about shaping your life so that its structure and activities, such as going to the gym or eating a better diet, start creating whatever you want to pursue. Try to pick the high road of ennoblement, betterment, self-improvement and consummate conduct rather than just the road of experiential consumption.

All things must pass away, but your actions will endure in a never-ending chain of consequences proceeding forward forever. For good or bad, this is the legacy you will leave behind in the world. The highest legacy is to leave behind a better world than what you first encountered. In other words, to make a contribution that will change lives and improve situations for the better.

You are unique amidst everyone who has come and gone in the world and are called upon to a personal purpose. What will it be? What type of Bodhisattva, benefactor or guardian will you choose to become? What missions do you want to empower and protect? What type of light giver do you want to become for the world? To become that, whatever it is, you must cultivate and study to achieve it.

So how do you discover your real purpose in life? I mean the real reason why you are here, the very reason you exist. I'm not talking about your job, your daily responsibilities, or even your long-term goals. I'm talking about any inner ache in your soul to make a difference.

You have to decide you want to ultimately accomplish in life. To accomplish something requires the acquisition of skills, study and application. It requires require grit and perseverance of effort. When you do feel a pull towards some purpose, activity or goal that you believe reflects your inner self, then pursue it fully and vigorously with great intent. Follow this road to become who you really are.

What personal vows are worthy of you? Here are some examples typical of aspirants following the Buddhist path:

I vow to become enlightened (a Buddha)
Save uncountable numbers of sentient beings

ARHAT YOGA

Master the study and application of infinite dharmas, propagating best practices everywhere

Cut off all mental afflictions for myself and others

Master skillful means to accomplish my tasks, and transform all situations I encounter to something better

Master purity of mind, wisdom and skillfulness, the way of perfect virtue and consummate conduct during all my activities on an endless road of self-perfection

Eliminate the causes of suffering in the world while establishing happiness, joy, confidence, courage, wisdom, moral discipline, mindfulness and inspiration for others in their place

Practice good deeds, never practice evil deeds, prevent evil and harm from arising, remove (cut off) evil and harm that exists, and remove the obstacles that prevent goodness from arising but fertilize those good roots instead.

Do all the good I can, in all the ways I can, in all the places I can, in all the times I can, to all the people and situations I can, as long as ever I can

As explained in *Color Me Confucius*, what people typically do is recite their personal vows at the end of the day after mentally reviewing their day's activities and reporting those activities to Heaven. In Asia they do this every evening after making an offering of a few grains of rice and small cup of water to feed hungry ghosts.

What I suggest is to review the day's activities at the end of the day, light a stick of incense and report what you did to Heaven, and then make a to-do list for tomorrow. At the beginning of each day Benjamin Franklin used to ask, "What good will I do today?" and at the end of the day in review he also asked, "What good did I do today?" The important point is to review your day's activities, noting where you went wrong, and determine not to repeat those errors. Then reaffirm your vows nightly to keep your commitment to self-improvement fresh. At the end of a week I would also review the entire week's activities, and also use some time to plan for the week ahead. This is all explained in *Quick, Fast, Done*.

**From: COLOR ME CONFUCIUS
CH. 11: "YOUR LIFE PURPOSE AND
PURPOSES WITHIN YOUR LIFE"**

The Confucian Zhang Zai said that the ideal purpose or goal of life entails:

ARHAT YOGA

To establish true mind for the universe,
To build up a good life for the populace,
To re-establish the discontinued studies of the ancient sages, and
To establish great peace for 10,000 generations.

Master Nan Huai Chin always said that one's life purpose should include the following three objectives: "realizing enlightenment, saving people and saving the world." Since most people would not consider this their life purpose, you should consider these objectives as possible *purposes within life* that you might work to accomplish.

Too often people are looking for one greater life purpose and become befuddled and bewildered when they actually should be devoted to a number of smaller purposes within life that they feel are important. You must decide whether to be pursuing a vision of establishing virtue, justice, prosperity or anything else for others and then work toward it. One guiding principle is that a purpose is more motivating if it is bigger than yourself.

"Saving the people," which Confucius called "loving the people," doesn't mean that you must undertake grandiose actions or missions. It simply means that you should try to contribute as much as you can. Most people don't have big resources and not everyone can be a superman of compassion with a superhuman commitment like Albert Schweitzer who donated his life to help others. While the work of Mahatma Gandhi, Mother Theresa, Muhammad Yunus, or Martin Luther King can be incredibly inspiring, few can emulate the great sacrifices they made. Few of us can consider such great missions, especially when we know that such roads are filled with deprivation and hardship. The ideal is to definitely help make the world a better place as much as you can even though your contribution might be small. Small does not matter. It means cooperating with others in all sorts of ways to help to bring peace and prosperity to the world.

What people are really seeking in life is some way to make a contribution, some way to be part of a larger context or mission. People want to feel that their life has meaning, and they usually feel that it does when it incorporates service to and care for others. Life has meaning when it is not an ascetic's solitude but involves an active virtuous participation in a larger whole.

All people, whether they know it or not, are seeking to forget themselves and bring their lives into harmony with something they deem divine, transcendental or universal – a larger and more perfect greatness. They are seeking a connection between their own lives and a larger context outside of it. That larger context is the condition of your community, society, nation, and world. The context is the fact, previously discussed, that you are intimately bound up with everyone such that the burdens and

benefits of others are also yours through the interdependence of cause and effect. Therefore by alleviating the pains and sufferings of others/society you not just help them but yourself.

There is a pervasiveness of suffering in the world, but if everyone acts just a tiny bit altruistically so as to improve the whole, do not we all benefit from a better whole that becomes elevated because its burdens have been reduced? Do we not all share in that benefit, including the giver? Isn't this the way to materialize the dream of a better society? It doesn't need grand schemes. It just needs the multitude of many tiny beneficial actions.

We have an opportunity to make a difference rather than simply be mechanical cogs within a wheel. Our lives are actually valuable because in this universe we are the rare phenomena that have consciousness so that we can think and act in ways to make things better.

Associating With Larger Groups

Although most of us can only make a small contribution in helpful directions, nonetheless many great men have taken upon themselves lofty goals of not just helping themselves and their families but of extending a helpful influence to their community, state and then the world. As Confucius said in *The Great Learning*, one extends their influence outwards from themselves to their family, their community, and then larger groups of men. This is the standard progression of expansion, which is to progressively enlarge one's group feelings to greater wholes starting from identification with your family to your clan, society, state, country and world.

Napoleon Hill taught us how to extend our influence and associations to a larger group and use it to help our own selves using a Mastermind alliance. In a Mastermind alliance a group of men come together for similar interests. A common focus brings the people together to solve problems and work on some common goals. They pool their mind-power, experience, education and knowledge and move in response to a common motive to change things for the better.

Can a small group of people actually change the world or a community even though small? Margaret Mead correctly said, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed it's the only thing that ever has." Local level initiatives can produce national and international fruits.

The Mastermind alliance has been used across the world to achieve all sorts of objectives, and is something you should start using. There are many such useful techniques in Napoleon's Hill's success classic *Think and Grow Rich*, which has sold over 100 million copies since it was initially written to become one of the most popular self-improvement classics of all time. I

urge you to read it; most business millionaires have.

If you start banding together with a group of people of like mind then camaraderie will sustain you during your efforts to achieve group objectives. Even Benjamin Franklin formed a Mastermind group, creating a mutual improvement club in Philadelphia named the Junto whose club members met on a weekly basis to encourage each other's intellectual pursuits. You should use participation in a group like this to achieve your greater objectives.

All progress in the world starts with an individual, and that individual might even be *you* for some special initiative. Some unexpected spark of motivation might suddenly turn you into a hero of change. All one can say is that change in the world starts with awareness, action and a commitment to perseverance of effort. It starts with what you think, say and do and moves on to how this involves others. It involves learning how to use your mind rightly to accomplish what you want. Thus the importance of the Confucian way for mastering your mind.

From the work on ennobling your personal conduct you can influence your family, community and then the larger world for the better. You are almost always influencing others in some way even if you don't know it. You can also band together with others of like rapport to pursue some mission of higher calling that serves a greater objective. After all, many people want to add something to life and this is a way to do it.

Confucius made it perfectly clear that self-cultivation ("learning") involved cultivating a heart of public virtue, which we can also call beneficial cooperation or altruism. Buddhism calls this charity or compassion while Christianity calls this "good works." The purpose of self-cultivation is not withdrawal from the world, but rather an altruistic active participation in the world dependent on contemplative reasoning. Think before and while you act. It is a commitment to positive change through personal efforts. In *Analects* 2.2 Confucius said, "The three hundred items in the *Book of Songs* (a foundational text of Chinese culture) can be concentrated into a single expression: Charge forth without swerving."

According to Confucius, personal conduct is always tied to social action; you cultivate yourself in order to be a helpful actor to people. The Confucian way thus mirrors the ideals of Christianity to make the world a little better because you are in it. As Zengzi had said (*Analects* 4.15), "The Master's way lies in exerting all one's effort (giving one's utmost) and relating to the needs of others."

According to Confucius, you don't have to be a hero who stands apart from others, but you should strive to better your own behavior and become a positive influence on others. The best way to influence others is to first become a model of behavior yourself by deciding to devote yourself to consummate conduct. This is the road that Benjamin Franklin chose. The

principle is that being the best version of yourself gets you to greatness.

The spiritual path doesn't start with rabble-raising that demands a better government or utopian world, but starts with this decision to perfect your own individual behavior instead. You must be unrelentingly persistent in trying to cultivate a higher standard of personal behavior using the transformative process of self-correction, which is why the Confucian way espouses mindful self-observation. First change yourself, and then "guide the changes" to help others.

Cultivating consummate conduct (man being his very best) was the center of all Confucius's teachings and should become the center of your life today, the center of your life story. Since we cannot control what arises as our thoughts nor control the results of our actions, and since we cannot even control our fate then is this not what life is about? Is it not about learning how to use our mind as a tool, and learning how to properly deal with our thoughts and will? Is it not about the path of behavioral ennoblement? Whether there is an afterlife or not, we can and should consider this life a process of purification.

As your own behavior improves from the admirable self-effort to become better than how you currently are, your conduct can serve as a model that radiates the message of proper conduct to others. Confucius stated in *Analects* 12.17, "The key to governing lies in being correct. When leaders are themselves correct their influence will pervade the rest of society." The more that you perfect your behavior towards ennoblement, the greater can and will be your influence in the outer world. The message is to go ahead and try to be the possible person you always wanted.

Thoughts are needed to guide our cultivation of self-control and ennoblement, and yet thoughts are also our problem. However, one of the most powerful principles discovered by modern research is that thinking lofty thoughts can help us achieve control of our thoughts, just as Confucius recommended. Lofty thoughts, such as devoting yourself to something larger than yourself, can guide you away from lower actions and the baser habits of behavior that are leftovers from the barbaric realm of animals.

Lofty thoughts and goals raise us higher. Giving in to baser thoughts and instincts takes us lower. Think in high-level terms to inspire yourself, associate with others similarly motivated whenever possible, and this will help guide your behavior to something better, which is the Confucian way. We must all cultivate lofty goals in life and a persevering spirit to try to reach them.

The methods of Confucian cultivation are so powerful because they are clean, non-denominational and extremely effective at helping people attain their higher goals in life. They can separate you from your animal nature so that you are not ruled by the irrational mind. By emphasizing the

rational mind together with mental discipline they lead to an ennoblement stage of existence - they spiritualize the individual. They also purify and harmonize society. The road of spirituality simply involves a process of learning how to use the qualities of your mind to become a true human being rather than a beast.

Whether we employ the related methods of Liao Fan, Benjamin Franklin, Frank Bettger, Napoleon Hill, Frank McKinney and others, rest assured that the method of mindfulness when practiced with persevering, resilient commitment will change your life for the better. They will enable you to overcome the environmental and even astrological influences of fate. When you can so purify yourself that you always rise above these normally dominant influences then you will have become a master, a man who can skillfully operate and control his mind. This is the objective of a sage. At this point you can become a great leader of mankind.

Mindfulness exercises our mental muscles to observe our behavior and its impact on others. It teaches us to distinguish between good and evil in real time so that we can do more of one and less of another. The Confucian way of mindfulness in its various forms has enabled countless people to raise themselves higher by purifying their behavior so that they could accomplish great things. Although only a small minority might subscribe to its standards, everywhere it produces the best. When we ask how “good behavior” may best be developed in society, the method is by promoting the non-denominational methods of the Confucian way. A man is to master his mind not only to accomplish great things in the world, but also so as to beautify his behavior and find the greatest internal peace and happiness.

The structured method of Liao Fan/Franklin, if you truly apply it to your daily life with consistency, will radically transform all your outcomes just as it did for Franklin and Liao Fan. The baseball player Frank Bettger, wishing to change his business fortunes, reasoned that it should also work for him in the business field via his sales efforts. It paid off in spades, which he recounted in *How I Raised Myself From Failure to Success in Selling*. Dale Carnegie and Frank McKinney revealed how to successfully use it on larger time scales to have even greater impacts on your life purpose. These are all sample methods you should emulate.

Death can snatch us at a moment's notice, so knowing this you must ask yourself what goals, purposes or objectives are truly worthy of your life. What holds meaning since you can die at any moment due to some unforeseen accident? Confucius advised (*Analects* 4.8), “If at dawn one hears and grasps the Way, even death can be faced at dusk.” Know the path and get started – this is enough.

Determining a life purpose is truly a subjective thing. It is something *you* create because you define it yourself. Yours is different than mine, and it should be that way because no two people are alike. You can derive

inspiration from others for developing your own life purpose, but it should truly be yours alone. Some purposes can be large and some should be humble because the resources and circumstances available to you prevent a greater vision from being possible. Who can criticize you as to whether you go for something big or stay with something small? At the end of your life, you are the final judge who measures yourself. The key determinant to success or not is whether your efforts have helped care for other people, meaning that what you did mattered to people other than yourself. This is what gives a life purpose true meaning other than its existence as simply a goal.

In any form that it takes, Confucian practices should be part of the personal effort you make to fulfill your life purposes. Whatever you choose to accomplish in life – be it a somewhat minor goal or a higher, loftier objective – the going will be easier when you use the methods of Confucian cultivation. I have detailed the best methods in *Quick, Fast, Done and Move Forward* to help with your journey.

Wherever you apply your efforts in life there will be a result. What will that result be? Not a single human being can guarantee your success in achieving your dreams or goals, but you can certainly maximize your chances of doing that. Confucian cultivation provides a reliable vehicle and structural guide to help you get there. The only question is what pursuits are worthy of your time.

Your life has a time limit, and if you do not use your time wisely then you will not have a second opportunity for each second lost. If we have an opportunity to benefit the world and then don't use it, when will it come again? Since our moments of life are limited, valuing the moments we have means they should be put to good use. That being the case, what will you fill your life with in the free moments still left to you?

Charity and Merit-Making

Here we should once again turn to the topic of merit because life purpose is ultimately about the creation of merit from trying to build a better world. Liao Fan and his master both taught that accumulating merit is necessary if we want to be able to change our fortunes for the better. Confucius also taught that the purpose of self-improvement was social engagement in moral acts of service to the community, which is creating merit. Ben Franklin, through a wide variety of his actions, also showed a dedication to altruistically helping people through many acts of charitable merit. Because few understand what “merit” entails or how to accumulate it, let us reveal some of the practical ways by which we can improve our lives and those of others by performing merit.

The question is, what are the various types of good deeds we can do in

life that might produce for us a stock of merit? Buddhism, for instance, traditionally says there are three forms of charity that accumulate merit: giving money and material goods, giving helpful teachings or instructions (*dharmā*) to others, and giving them fearlessness (confidence or mental support). Especially valuable are good deeds that benefit all subsequent generations. If we decided to devote ourselves to performing such good deeds in order to collect their positive results as “merit,” what should those deeds then be? What did Liao Fan, for instance, devote himself to?

Liao Fan showed through his confession it was his own faults – what he called his own lack of virtue – that prevented him from achieving the merit he desired in life such as obtaining a son and higher position. He started to accumulate merit by not only doing good deeds but by transforming his own attitudes and behavior.

When you are virtuous, moral and righteous in your behavior you are accumulating merit, and Confucius emphasized that this was more important than pursuing profits, status, power or any other objective in life. Basically, when you extend kindness and respect to others in ways such as charity, without doing so as a calculated investment seeking a dividend, this is accumulating merit.

Most people lack the wealth of independent means so they must work for a living. Holding a job is their primary source of income and they usually do not have much money to spare. Some people, however, start businesses to create income. One way to help these people and generate merit might be by offering them practical support for their business or occupation such as farming. This could be done by extending resources to them or even by offering courses on success training.

A perfect example of such help might be to support Kiva.org, which makes microloans to budding entrepreneurs so that they can create micro-businesses that improve their lives. Heifer International also makes the gift of farm animals to those in poverty while teaching the recipients how to raise them. The animals will typically produce both food and income for poor families for the rest of their lives. When an animal reproduces, the gift recipient is charged with the responsibility of also making a similar gift to others.

Another way to help others is by supporting those who are suffering disabilities such as those who are blind, deaf, or disabled. Many charitable organizations have been established to do just this, and focus on helping those who are suffering through a variety of different means. By supporting these charities with your labor or funds you also build merit.

When we find people who are mentally suffering in life and teach them the way to happiness, such as teaching them the methods of Confucian cultivation or that taking niacin supplements can end mental illness, we also generate merit. Once we help people recognize that

happiness or unhappiness comes from within their own minds then we can help them cut off their unhappiness and create new mental attitudes for the true way to happiness is by purifying one's thoughts and perspectives.

Sometimes we cannot stop the mental pain a person experiences. However, we might be able to help reduce their pain and prevent those individuals from doing whatever might create future pain and misery. In ministering to others this way, even though we might stand at a higher vantage point we still need to accord with their dispositions. Skillfulness and patience are required in yourself if you want to help others and prevent them from pursuing goals that work against their own happiness. Nonetheless, the overall principle is that directing those heading for trouble back to the right path is a type of merit. This type of service improves peoples' lives by helping them avoid present and future suffering.

Another means of helping others, which is espoused by most religions across the world, is to extend courtesy to travelers and assist them in a gracious and friendly way. In many cultures it has always been considered of great merit to offer hospitality - including food, medicine or accommodations - to strangers on journeys. As John Wesley's maxim summarized, you try to: "Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can."

Another means of aiding others is by "offering fearlessness," which means protecting, calming or giving confidence to people who are unsettled because of suffering anxiety or fear. For instance, we might console the grief-stricken who lose their possessions due to some tragedy or suffer the loss of loved ones. This is offering fearlessness. By offering counseling, resources, and other types of support to those at emotional lows we can accumulate merit by lightening their load and helping them recover. By helping the emotionally discouraged we can assist them to get over troubles and continue onwards in the pursuit of a higher purpose.

Another type of merit-making is protecting life. For instance, helping people survive an accident, paying for a surgical operation or medicine, or protecting people from discovery during times of persecution is a type of merit-making. Volunteers who try to save animals from being burned in forest fires, dying from toxic oil spills, or from being cruelly farmed and killed also accumulate this type of merit. Becoming vegetarian or reducing your meat intake also falls into this category of merit-making as does protecting people's jobs since protecting their income preserves their lives.

While we might not be able to free people from prison, including those jailed unjustly, we can often help those in prison in order to accumulate merit. We can also provide aid to those suffering torture or refused basic human rights by contributing to organizations like Amnesty International that champion human rights and freedom.

Helping the poor and needy through charity is another way to accumulate merit. This type of merit-making is called “giving wealth” and means addressing poverty with various remedies that involve sharing what we have. “Giving wealth” doesn’t just mean giving money to the needy but providing valuable resources they might need to improve their conditions. For example, you might provide the needy with some of the basic necessities for life they need but are too poor to purchase. We can even help finance special events in their life such as by paying for funeral costs or wedding expenses as is done in Chinese culture.

Charitable contributions always generate merit but when people have little income, how is giving charity possible? Remember that charity is not just giving money. It is a type of sacrificing of yourself for the sake of others, either for individuals or for a collective good. It is sacrificing your individual advantages (whether they be money, time, labor, etc.) for the sake of someone else’s benefit in order to help them.

You should also consider charity as a type of *cooperation*. Civic participation (which societies hope to encourage by stressing the ideal of “civic duty”) is a form of charity, or we can say that charity is a form of civic participation since it helps others. Charity, whether provided by individuals or a group, is basically a form of cooperation.

Cooperation is the glue that holds societies together. Religion usually provides the integrative ideology that helps hold society together because it engenders cooperation at a very large scale beyond ethnic communities. Religion serves an integrative role for society by instilling cooperation among disparate groups. This is important for a nation, which is why groups trying to take over a country immediately try to fracture religion.

Charity itself, in terms of helping others, must be seen in the same way as it is also a form of beneficial public cooperation that helps glue people together. It is a cooperative contribution to others - a means of providing some form of aid or goods that benefit members of society.

Without having income to spare, one’s time and labor volunteered for the public welfare (doing something for others instead of leisure) are indeed a form of charity that you can also label as beneficial cooperation for the good of all. The contribution, in whatever form it takes, is a kind of sacrifice for the welfare of others. By engaging in charity you help others, and when many more people act benevolently in the same way then everyone will benefit from this cooperative effort. Cooperation or harmony builds societies, which is one of the reasons that it is stressed in the Confucian way.

Cooperation is not just one of the things that societies do - *it is the main thing they do*, so it must be encouraged in all ways possible. Without mutual trust and cooperation between its members most societies will collapse into instability and disorder. The byproduct will be social dysfunction. Without

the cooperation of the masses, sometimes a ruling government is overthrown through revolution too. Confucius often taught lessons on how to rule a country by stressing social harmony, which is why I am emphasizing these lessons that update his original teachings.

Societies are built upon the foundation of cooperation, which includes altruistic acts of charity that solve problems for the public good. When you examine many historical events such as the collapse of the Roman Empire, the Hundred Years War, English Civil War, the Russian Revolution and War of the Roses you will find that disintegrating cooperation was a leading indicator of the coming social collapse.

Countries disintegrate when they lose their ability to cooperate at the level of the whole society, which is why public holidays, ceremonies and shared national ideals are needed to keep strong the glue of social cohesion. Failed states, more often than not, suffer from losing their ability to cooperate at the level of the entire society. This is why charity, in sacrificing for others' benefit, helps build communities and national solidarity. The very fact that many members in a society think of others in this way reveals a strong degree of cooperative spirit in the country, making it harder to conquer, and that common attitude will also help those people to achieve any shared goals.

Addressing spiritual poverty is another means of rendering assistance to others and thereby accumulating merit. Many people have a strong longing to seek inner change or outer behavioral change but don't know how to bring it about. Seeking personal change is usually a do-it-yourself project but people often have no one to turn to for guidance and advice. By teaching others the road of genuine spiritual practice, which includes meditation and reflective self-correction, we can help them to positively change their lives.

True spiritual training teaches people how to properly deal with their thoughts, how to counteract disturbing emotions and afflictions, how to master many life skills, and how to transform themselves through self-correction. Devoting yourself to the Way will change your life for the better. The far-reaching positive effects of the Confucian way cannot be understated.

Since Buddhism says we should "do good, avoid evil, never oppose all unborn good from being born but oppose all evil from being born," accumulating merit means supporting others involved in various types of good works and helping them in their efforts. Benjamin Franklin, for instance, led a large number of private, voluntary initiatives to enhance society during his life. Though a Deist, he financially contributed to nearly every church in Philadelphia, including the first synagogue, since he felt that houses of worship helped people fortify their self-discipline and morality. He was non-denominational in his outlook.

A final type of merit-making is to remind people who practice charity of the excellent results they have brought about due to their efforts, which in turn encourages givers to continue their social contributions. Everyone likes to hear they did a good job or good deed, and publicly recognizing whoever gives is a form of merit that encourages equivalent efforts from others in society. As a form of merit we can also work to remove obstacles standing in the way of people trying to do these good deeds and encourage/support them so they are not discouraged in their attempts. We want to see more of such offerings rather than less.

The Time Remaining

Since the crux of any life purpose or purposes within life involve improving yourself and helping to build a better world, ask yourself what merit you want to do with the time left in your life. How will you best spend the one precious resource you have, which is your hours of living? Are they to be wasted away absorbed in television? Are they to be frittered away in the pursuit of superficial trivialities that might be wiped out in an instant through some tragic accident or disaster?

Every now and then you need to step back and ask yourself, “While I’m still healthy and have the opportunity to devote my energies to something larger than myself that is of importance to the world, even if my contribution might seem only a little, what should it be?” You need to become the architect of your deeds just as you need to become the architect of your thoughts.

This very moment you must ask yourself, “Who am I really and what do I stand for? What is the most significant and worthy goal I want for my life? What am I trying to realize as my best self? Am I satisfied with the plot of my life? Am I being or supporting the light that I want others to see? What do I want to accomplish with the time I have left?”

After you choose your ultimate purposes, the next steps involve associating with the people who will help you achieve your goals or finding a way to tread those steps on your own. Most people cannot achieve their goals by themselves but need to associate with others who can help them achieve what they want in life. From just yourself you move to associating with a larger group of people and then from strength in numbers you can create a greater impact on the world. Sometimes you can indeed make that impact just by yourself, but most people require the camaraderie of others. Confucianism says that an influence starts with the self and then moves onto involving greater numbers.

Confucian cultivation essentially entails improving yourself to improve the world. We strive to improve in order to do better by ourselves and our world. Working on yourself is therefore enough in life because sometimes that is

all that you can do due to the lack of opportunities and resources. Never be ashamed that you don't have much to contribute. Only be ashamed that you don't cultivate yourself in life. People regularly become monks, nuns, priests, etc. who take on vows of poverty in order to cultivate, so there is no guilt or shame in not having money in order to perform charity and accumulate merit in that way. What is important in the world is that you cultivate your self-behavior.

All throughout life, from the Emperor down to the common man, everyone must cultivate mindfulness to help purify their mind and behavior and continually guide them on a path of merit. Do not worry about the results of your actions in the world. Only worry that you are doing this and the right thing. Hinduism rightly says to become indifferent to the results of your actions, but strive to bring about what is better. Your guideline throughout all activities should be as Mencius said, "*bijou shiyan*" which means "always work at self-cultivation."

The Confucian way is excellent because it offers a fusion of the highest aspirations with down-to-earth practical methods. It teaches you how to master unwanted mental activities, use your mind properly, rise above your natural animal tendencies, and live your life in a higher fashion.

This is what the spiritual road is all about. If in using its methods you don't reach the highest heights, you will still be able to look back and say you have improved yourself, your outcomes, and have dramatically progressed from where you started. If you get really good at this, and cultivate your internal energy, you may even become a sage.

People often wonder about the role that religion should play in the future but those following the Confucian way don't worry. Why? Because you spiritualize yourself through these very methods. You *divinize* yourself by subscribing to higher, loftier principles that ennoble yourself and improve society. This is the highest road of philosophy, science and religion. This is the spiritual path.

The Confucian path of self-cultivation is that you work to cultivate both your body (including its internal energy) and mind for you can and must spiritualize both. You must train to master both the automatic and rational thinking processes of your mind with the objective of purifying both so that your mind can be used as the wish-fulfilling gem that it is.

You must also train to gain control of both your physical body and its internal vital energy or Qi.

You must also train to master your outer behavioral conduct of word and deed, involving yourself in harmonious relationships that help others while working to accomplish anything else you want to achieve in life.

Whatever your status in life - whether of wealth or deprivation - you should strive to find a purpose *for* your life along with purposes *within* your life. Hitch yourself to a dream or vision bigger than yourself. Unfortunately,

many people must live in a restrained or inhibited way because of constraints or obligations, but the ideal is to *live your work* because of its contribution or importance rather than *working to live*. You want to find something to do in life that is contributing to make the world a better place. You want to devote yourself to a higher ideal greater than yourself with the free resources you have.

What you want to work on in life is becoming a better person, family member, friend to others, and member of your community and country. You want to perfect yourself by mastering purity of thought and deed, recognizing that your only true possession is consciousness that must be perfected. You want to work on polishing your character and freeing your thought processes of unnecessary afflictions so that you are always involved in correct thinking, and you want to seek out, learn and employ the best models you know of for arriving at decisions, determinations and plans of action. You want to master your body and its energy, your emotional attitudes and your behavior in the world of men and accomplishments.

This path of perfection is the Confucian way.

CHAPTER 10: FINALE

There you have it - a set of readings on the non-denominational topic of spiritual cultivation. As a recap ...

Most all the genuine religions share the view that the universe originated from a self-so, pre-existing essence or substance that was perfectly stainless, pure, and attributeless like space. Thus It is sometimes referred to as Emptiness. Although alone, It somehow gave birth to everything else, and you can use the idea that It is inherently empty in your meditation practice in order to let go of thoughts and get a taste of a quiet, empty mind. Somehow Shakti, the transforming universe, developed out of the infinite potential of this pure, infinite everywhere substance of reality. Furthermore, due to evolutionary transformations between its internal forces, those interacting interconnections have created within Shakti the gift of life and consciousness.

We are just phenomena within the universe, and “ultimate” amongst phenomena only because we have consciousness. We are living objects, living phenomena with the property or functional capability of sentience. By training, growing, managing and perfecting our consciousness we can develop wisdom, insight and understanding. We can learn how to master the changes of phenomena within the universe of Shakti and learn to maneuver within them or guide them to achieve whatever we want. Consciousness lets us become master of the powers of nature, planes of existence and our own lives. The cultivation path involves mastering consciousness as well as developing the possibilities of consciousness.

As to ourselves, since we are also sentient living beings we can learn how to better guide our own behavior, develop skills we want and accomplish tasks we want, and develop better characters (properties or

attributes) so that we think and act in ways that will enable us to better succeed in life and live peacefully with others.

Religions and spiritual paths help us to do this. They stress proper values to give us guidance, teach us the wisdom of proper behavior, and help us change our character so that it abandons vices and evils and becomes directed towards more virtuous ways that enable us to all live together peacefully and prosperously. Christianity, for instance, calls us to a change of life, a change of direction, in turning towards what is good and virtuous and leaving behind all that is negative. The religions and spiritual paths therefore encourage self-development and self-improvement. Such teachings constitute the foundational Stage of Wisdom Accumulation and Virtue Training within religions.

This stage also involves “laying the foundation” for the spiritual path by engaging in activities that make you healthier, increase your vigor and energy, and improve not just your health but longevity. This includes proper food choices and the proper use of herbal or other medicines to adjust your body and health. It involves replenishing, augmenting and furthering both your body and Qi.

For instance, “wisdom” at this stage means recognizing that people’s own self-destructive behavior and conditions from the natural environment can be detrimental to their health, and they should take responsibility for their health by not injuring themselves and avoiding or overcoming the damaging effects of changes in the natural environment. Too few religions emphasize taking care of the body and developing it properly even though it is the vehicle of consciousness, and *the key factor you must cultivate if you want to attain enlightenment* or simply experience healthy physical bliss as your natural state. Such wisdom, for instance, is emphasized in Taoism which strongly teaches the natural laws humans must adhere to and align with if they wish to remain healthy. However, this is a body of knowledge *everyone* should learn at the Stage of Virtue Training and Wisdom Accumulation.

This foundational stage of spiritual practice doesn’t just refer to spiritual study but learning wisdom for life including rules and guidelines for survival; how to manage, protect and prosper the body (including proper diet and exercise); how to manage one’s emotions, mental afflictions and how to think properly, learn and use the mind; and how to behave in circumstances. If you understand the laws of the universe (science and scientific principles) as well as the principles of human behavior, and regulate your actions in conformity with them, then you can manage life to your advantage. You can bring about a higher state of well-being by learning such wisdom, such as how to conduct yourself in situations. In terms of health, the Stage of Wisdom Accumulation and Virtue Training certainly includes learning how you should eat and drink, how you should dress, how much to rest or work, how to manage your sex life, and so forth

since they teach the principles of how to protect and promote your health.

If you have a healthy body, there is a process of intensified practices you can follow within religions that produces spiritual gong-fu and ultimately the deva body attainment, which is the first of the potential transcendental body attainments available to us in the cosmos. The higher transcendental bodies allow you to access (experience) higher subtle energy planes of existence within the universe. The spiritual exercises of intensified cultivation within religions, which enable you to attain these bodies, constitute the Stage of Preparatory Yoga or Intensified Yoga Practices.

Those who achieve the deva body, which is the initial fruit of the spiritual path, achieve the Stage of Realizing the Tao. They they can then work to achieve the Causal body, then Supra-Causal body and then Immanence body. Each is composed of yet higher transcendental energies where the attained body is free from the impure, coarser elements of the previous lower body. Pursuing these higher bodies through spiritual energy yoga after attaining the first subtle body attainment constitutes the Stage of True Cultivation Practice.

Once you achieve any of these higher bodies, you are considered enlightened, but the apex achievement is the Immanence body where you are considered a full-fledged Buddha with tremendous capabilities. This achievement is also called the Stage of No More Learning, Complete and Perfect Enlightenment, Great Golden Arhatship, Perfect Buddhahood or final liberation. When you attain this body it is called realizing the “mind of *bodhi*” because at this stage your mind can naturally know the thoughts of all sentient beings since when they think the energy of their thoughts project into the environment, and transcendental composition the body-mind complex of a Buddha body is higher than this thought energy, and thus can naturally “hear them” or know them. This is the meaning of “Kuan Yin hears the cries of the world.” Kuan Yin is not projecting a nirmanakaya emanation body into each sentient being to know what they are thinking, but trains to hear the thoughts that call upon his name or which ask for help in troublesome situations. For instance, he trains to hear those who recite his mantra. All Buddhas do this, which is called “knowing the minds of sentient beings.”

As a being with any degree of higher body attainments, you can choose to perform any functions or pursue any purpose you want in the universe just as you can in life now. Many devas, for instance, have chosen to help humans by serving as Bodhisattva protectors and guardians. Many ascended masters, which we typically call saints, sages or Immortals, have chosen to stick around and help us as well.

Life, at every stage where you find yourself, comes down to pursuing happiness and making decisions that have a purpose that actualizes meaning for you. It is up to you to determine what life purpose will give you

ARHAT YOGA

meaning and happiness. It is up to you to determine the activities or skills you will pursue in life to actualize the objectives that have significance for you. This is where you will find your happiness, fulfillment, significance, contentment and reward. It is all about cultivation, and cultivation is basically a process of Yoga through to the end.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

William Bodri has written several dozen books on cultivation topics, the most important of which to study, if you are interested, would be the following on cultivation, and then the others on related topics:

- *Buddha Yoga*
- *Neijia Yoga*
- *Nyasa Yoga*
- *Meditation Case Studies*
- *Color Me Confucius*

- *Sport Visualization for the Elite Athlete*
- *Visualization Power*
- *Detox: Cleanse Your Body Quickly and Completely*
- *Look Younger, Live Longer*
- *Husbands and Wives Were Connected in the Past*
- *Super Investing*
- *Culture, Country, City, Company, Person, Passion, World*
- *Quick, Fast, Done*
- *Move Forward.*

For the correct view of enlightenment and finding your purpose in the world, I highly recommend five in particular for your life:

- *Buddha Yoga*
- *Culture, Country, City, Company, Person, Purpose, Passion, World*
- *Color Me Confucius*
- *Quick, Fast, Done*
- *Move Forward*