

108 學年度佛教學系碩士班入學試題

科目：佛學英文

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1. Please translate the following passage into Chinese. (50%)

Buddhism does not see humans as a special creation by ‘God’, or as having been given either ‘dominion’ or ‘stewardship’ over animals etc. Like all other sentient beings, they wander in the limited, conditioned realm of *samsāra*, the round of rebirths. Nevertheless, a human rebirth is seen as a very rare and fortunate one – a ‘precious human rebirth’ – as it is the only one where the key work for enlightenment can be accomplished. Accordingly, in the Buddhist account of the types of rebirth – gods, humans, animals, ghosts and hell-beings – humans are listed in one group, while all other animals (i.e. land animals, birds, fish, worms, insects) are listed in another. That is, while all sentient beings are ‘in the same boat’ – *samsāra* – humans are in a specific compartment of this. This is because they have a greater freedom and capacity for understanding than animals (and a greater motivation for spiritual progress than gods). Most moral and spiritual progress, or its opposite, is made at the human level. This is not to say that animals are all seen as amoral automatons. Buddhist *Jātaka* stories often attribute noble actions to such animals as monkeys and elephants, and there is also a reference to some animals keeping the five precepts. Nevertheless, animals clearly have much less of a capacity for choice than humans, and if they are virtuous, for example less greedy, or generous, this is more an expression of their existing character, or a response to an encouraging human example, than any deliberate desire for moral development. Moreover, it is clear that there is a gradation among animals as regards their relative degree of freedom, or capacity for virtue. Insects would seem to have little, if any, of either. [...]

The Western concept of ‘nature’ is one which places humans and their artifices over and against the ‘natural’ world of animals, plants and the physical environment. In the present century, industrialization etc. has led to many environmental problems, and thus to reflection on how humans should act and live so as to be in a less destructive and self-undermining relationship with ‘nature’. As the Vietnamese monk Thich Nhat Hanh says, though:

We classify other animals and living beings as nature, acting as if we ourselves are not part of it. Then we pose the question ‘How should we deal with Nature?’ We should deal with nature the way we should deal with ourselves! We should not harm ourselves; we should not harm nature . . . Human beings and nature are inseparable. (Eppsteiner, 1988: 41)

2. Please summarize the following passage in Chinese. (50%)

The Buddha said: 'O bhikkhus, there are two kinds of illness. What are those two? Physical illness and mental illness. There seem to be people who enjoy freedom from physical illness even for a year or two... even for a hundred years or more. But, O bhikkhus, rare in this world are those who enjoy freedom from mental illness even for one moment, except those who are free from mental defilements' (i.e., except arahants).

The Buddha's teaching, particularly his way of 'meditation', aims at producing a state of perfect mental health, equilibrium and tranquility. It is unfortunate that hardly any other section of the Buddha's teaching is so much misunderstood as 'meditation', both by Buddhists and non-Buddhists. The moment the word 'meditation' is mentioned, one thinks of an escape from the daily activities of life; assuming a particular posture, like a statue in some cave or cell in a monastery, in some remote place cut off from society; and musing on, or being absorbed in, some kind of mystic or mysterious thought or trance. True Buddhist 'meditation' does not mean this kind of escape at all. The Buddha's teaching on this subject was so wrongly, or so little understood, that in later times the way of 'meditation' deteriorated and degenerated into a kind of ritual or ceremony almost technical in its routine.

Most people are interested in meditation or yoga in order to gain some spiritual or mystic powers like the 'third eye', which others do not possess. There was some time ago a Buddhist nun in India who was trying to develop a power to see through her ears, while she was still in the possession of the 'power' of perfect eye-sight! This kind of idea is nothing but 'spiritual perversion'. It is always a question of desire, 'thirst' for power.

The word meditation is a very poor substitute for the original term *bhāvanā*, which means 'culture' or 'development', i.e., mental culture or mental development. The Buddhist *bhāvanā*, properly speaking, is mental culture in the full sense of the term. It aims at cleansing the mind of impurities and disturbances, such as lustful desires, hatred, ill-will, indolence, worries and restlessness, skeptical doubts, and cultivating such qualities as concentration, awareness, intelligence, will, energy, the analytical faculty, confidence, joy, tranquility, leading finally to the attainment of highest wisdom which sees the nature of things as they are, and realize the Ultimate Truth, Nirvāna.

There are two forms of meditation. One is the development of mental concentration (*samatha* or *samādhi*), of one-pointedness of mind (*cittakaggatā*, Skt. *cittaikāgratā*), by various methods prescribed in the texts, leading up to the highest mystic states such as 'the Sphere of Nothingness' or 'the Sphere of Neither-Perception-nor-Non-Perception'. All these mystic states, according to the Buddha, are mind-created, mind-produced, conditioned (*samkhata*). They have nothing to do with Reality, Truth, Nirvāna. This form of meditation existed before the Buddha. Hence it is not purely Buddhist, but it is not excluded from the field of Buddhist meditation. However it is not essential for the realization of Nirvāna. The Buddha himself, before his Enlightenment, studied these yogic practices under different teachers and attained to the highest mystic states; but he was not satisfied with them, because they did not give complete liberation, they did not give insight into the Ultimate Reality. He considered these mystic states only as 'happy living in this existence'

(*ditthadhammasukhavihāra*), or 'peaceful living' (*santavihāra*), and nothing more.

He therefore discovered the other form of 'meditation' known as *vipassanā* (Skt. *Vīpaśyanā* or *vidarśanā*), 'Insight' into the nature of things, leading to the complete liberation of mind, to the realization of the Ultimate Truth, Nirvāna. This is essentially Buddhist 'meditation', Buddhist mental culture. It is an analytical method based on mindfulness, awareness, vigilance, observation.

It is impossible to do justice to such a vast subject in a few pages. However an attempt is made here to give a very brief and rough idea of the true Buddhist 'meditation', mental culture or mental development, in a practical way.

The most important discourse ever given by the Buddha on mental development ('meditation') is called the Satipatthāna-sutta 'The Setting-up of Mindfulness' (No. 22 of the Dīgha-nikāya, or No. 10 of the Majjhima-nikāya). This discourse is so highly venerated in tradition that it is regularly recited not only in Buddhist monasteries, but also in Buddhist homes with members of the family sitting round and listening with deep devotion. Very often bhikkhus recite this sutta by the bed-side of a dying man to purify his last thoughts. The ways of 'meditation' given in this discourse are not cut off from life, nor do they avoid life; on the contrary, they are all connected with our life, our daily activities, our sorrows and joys, our words and thoughts, our moral and intellectual occupations.