

Liberation Within This Life

Preface

I bow to the 3 Jewels
I take refuge to Buddha, Dharma, Sangha

I bow to and take refuge to three Jewels because without Buddha, Dharma (Buddha Teachings) and Sangha, I was not be able to practice and experience the miracle and the unimaginable of Dharma. If we say Dharma are unimaginable then we should not spend a lot of time to discussing the nature of Buddha, the illusion of the mind, or the middle way... In the Sutra of Perfect Enlightenment, Buddha teaches that whoever has illusions (like we do right now,) what they say is also within the illusion. Therefore, if we have not obtained enlightenment like Buddha did in the last night of the 49 days that he sat under the Bodhi tree for meditation, then our discussion about things that are out of our vision is invalid.

Consequently, whatever is written in this little book is just the individual experience of a Yogi that practiced Dharma and wanted to share with those who know him so they can practice Dharma in order to liberate themselves from the Samsara (the cycle of existence.) If this information is found to be useless to you, then you can trash this little book with no regret.

In the Shurangama Sutra Buddha said that due to the state of illusion in the mind (in Buddhism the term “**illusion**” and “**ignorance**” have been used with the same meaning) we see the mountains, the earth and the living beings... All that we see, and we know is just an illusion. We cannot understand why the illusion of the mind (intellectual material) can make our mind see mountains, earth, the living beings ... which are physical materials? A hint has been given to us: like in a dream we see mountains, earth, living beings... A similar question arises when Buddhism says illusive mind is created by pure mind?

Base on those two teachings from Buddha that we cannot understand, I draw the conclusion: If we believe in what Buddha teaches us, practice to eliminate our illusion of the mind then the true nature of our mind (pure mind, Buddha nature) will be appeared. At that moment we understand clearly the meaning of the two examples I mentioned above. This way we can verify what Buddha teachings are true or false. I am a Yogi who believes in Buddha’s teachings and I have been practicing the Dharma in the following ways to some stage that I can have a strong belief of the Buddha Teachings and I devoted my live to be monk:

1.I have created a Mandala of the Medicine Buddha and experienced the miracles of the Medicine Buddha. In many cases, Doctors in the hospital have said “your Buddha is miracle” because some Buddhists were in the coma state and they have been declared by doctors that their brain already damaged. Nothing we can do for them but just praying Medicine Buddha, and what a miracle those Buddhists recovered and got their health back to normal after three months practicing physical therapy.

2.I have Created the Mandala of the Cundi Avalokitesvara (Chuẩn Đề in Vietnamese) and experienced the elimination of bad Karmas and ease of to meditation (not to remove spirit from

haunted person as most people have wrong thought.) Nagarjuna Bodhisattva (Long Thọ Bồ tát in Vietnamese) quoted in one poem that “if you do the chanting of the Cundi Avalokitesvara’s mantra, you will get Samadhi and Enlightenment.”

3.I have created the Shurangama Mandala to practice and it helps us to understand and experience what Buddha teaches in the Shurangama Sutra (ex. Paradise light web – in Vietnamese is Lưới Đé Châu - and many other dimensions described in the Avatamsaka Sutra - in English is Flower Garland Sutra, in Vietnamese is Kinh Hoa Nghiêm – where Buddha and Bodhisattvas living...)

Learning Dharma will help us not to attach to this current life and we know where we wish to come, then we can get out of samsara (cycle of existence) when we pass away. What is listed is what we practice. It is intended for someone who thinks that they want to follow and practice Buddhism. Reading through this text will be enough if you want to practice badly enough. You never know good condition leads you to reading this book and then allow us to meet each other and discuss about Buddhism.

Dharma is forever the correct path to get out of the samsara.

Sincerely,

Sramana Di Tung

Journey of the practicing Buddhism

When we begin our journey of the practice of Buddhism, normally the practitioner has to find out the founder of Buddhism and His teachings. Therefore, we have to know who Shakyamuni Buddha is, because He was the one who provided the Dharma (His teachings) for the Saha¹ world. There are two different views about His appearance in this world. First, the so-called “the historical Buddha” have been told He was a prince, got married, had a kid, and then left the palace to go look for freedom from suffering of birth, oldness, illness and death. Second, from the Mahaparinirvana sutra (kinh Đại Bát Niết Bàn in Vietnamese,) it was said that He was already a Buddha and manifested to this life to teach us and save us from suffering if we practice His Dharma. From our view point of finding the way to liberate us from the samsara, we don’t mind how He has come to this world, but we focus on His teachings.

Buddha spent 6 years of meditation with the two famous teachers of that time Kalama and Uddhaka. He obtained the highest level of meditation that His two teachers practicing. He reached the two highest levels of heaven when He practiced those kinds of meditation “The Sphere of the Conception of Nothingness,” and “The Sphere of neither Perception nor non-perception.” But He realized those highest levels of heaven were still within the illusion of mind, that means still within samsara. He was not satisfied with the results, so He went and sat at the Bodhi tree in Bodh Gaya,

¹ Saha world: The trichiliocosm where the present Buddha Shakyamuni has manifested.

India, for 49 days to practice His own way of meditation. Then He reached enlightenment, and became Buddha. When He became Buddha, his vision allowed him to see the origin of the universe and living beings... For more information about the origin of the universe and living beings we can read the Shurangama Sutra.

The ultimate goal of Practicing Buddhism

When He became Buddha, the first lesson of Dharma was given to the five old friends who practiced meditation with him (five friends: Kaundinya, Bhadrīka, Vaspa, Mahanāman and Asvajit.) These five friends became His first disciples and that was the beginning of His sangha.

For either Theravada or Mahayana includes the Vajrayana we Buddhists agree that Buddha teaches the following three:

1. Do not create bad karma (do evil things) to avoid reincarnating to the realm of hell, hungry ghost, or animal.
2. Create good karma (do good things) in order to get good merits and to reincarnate in the realm of human beings, or demi-god or haven.
3. Purify your mind so that you can get out of the **samsara**² (cycle of death and reborn.)

Most Buddhists, however only try to practice the first two teachings, completely ignoring or talking but not practicing the third one. Buddha spent more than 40 years traveling to many places to **teach followers to purify their minds in order to get out of the state of samsara**. During the period He was alive and until during this time, many people would have gotten out of the samsara if they had thoroughly followed Buddha's teachings.

Yes we have to focus on purifying our minds in order to get out of the samsara. But the question is how do we purify our mind? Buddha taught in all of His sutras different techniques for various levels of practitioners. These 84,000³ teachings (**many** discourses) were gathered by His disciples throughout many generations in the form called **sutras**.

Today, in general practicing, we see the three common branches (triyana): The Theravada, Mahayana, and the Vajrayana Buddhists. The difference ways of the practices of the three branches are not very important. What is important is finding a branch that suits our current living condition, our level of thinking and knowledge, in order for us to be able to practice and reach the goal of liberating from the rebirth cycle (samsara.)

Theravadayana or Sravakayana

Goals for those who want to practice the Theravada method are as follows:

1. To reach Arhat Nirvana, no more rebirth.

² Samsara: cycle of death and reborn in **three realms**: Desire realm, Form realm, Formless realm.

³ The number 84,000 means several, many in Indian language.

2. In order to reach Arhat the practiced meditation should be focused on one point. Through meditation one should be able to verify that five aggregates (skandhas)⁴ have three characteristics: impermanence, suffering and no self (ego.)
3. You can use the Samatha method of meditation to avoid wandering thoughts, keep your mind focusing at one point through your breathing, or chanting a mantra, a Buddha's name...
4. You can use Vipassana and through meditation, you contemplate on Body, Feeling, Mind and Phenomena (*smṛtyupasthāna*.) The interpretation of Vipassana in Theravada is different from in Mahayana.
5. The 37 Qualities (37 Phẩm Trợ Đạo in Vietnamese) are the basics or foundation to practice Theravada.
6. The belief of Theravada is the only people can obtain Nirvana are Monks and Nuns. Normal (lay) people cannot, but they can work towards gathering good merits and follow the 5 vows (precepts,) taking refuges in Three Jewels. The Theravada focuses on teaching lay people to do good deeds to be reborn in the upper three levels of gods of heaven, Semi gods or human beings or can be monks or nuns.

As of many late centuries, lay people can take the ten day meditation courses of Vipassana. Before this was not given to lay people. If you are interested in learning how to practice Vipassana meditation you can contact any Theravada Temples.

In the Theravada they only believe in Buddha Sakyamuni, the Maitreya Buddha (Phật Di Lặc in Vietnamese) and not any other Buddha or Bodhisattvas.

In this small book I only want to show my experiences practicing Mahayana Meditation, so I'll only briefly discuss Theravada schooling. This book is meant for your practice, not your research. Like I said, this is just based on my individual experience practicing.

Tibetan Vajrayana and Tantrism

Vajrayana and Tantrayana, which derives from Mahayana, is the school most closely associated with Tibetan Buddhism -- this is so integral that it has virtually been identified with the Buddhism of Tibet. Tantrism is a profoundly complex subject. It might be described as an alternative route to enlightenment, requiring intense concentration and induction through special rites of initiation, but offering the hope of achieving enlightenment in accelerated time, perhaps even in a single lifetime.

The four main schools of Tibetan Buddhism

The four main schools of Tibetan Buddhism are:

1. Nyingma
2. Sakya
3. Kagyü
4. Gelug

⁴ We think human beings compose of a body and a mind. But, Buddhism said we have five elements (Skandhas) which are Form, Feelings, Perception, Volition and Consciousness.

Four major factions also called lineages—Nyingma, Kagyü, Sakya and Gelug—emerged as a result of the earlier and later dissemination of the Buddhist teachings in Tibet. These also formed due to the emphasis of the past great masters on different scriptures, techniques of meditation, and, in some cases, particular experiences.

Central to the Nyingma tradition is the extraordinary figure of Padmasambhava, Guru Rinpoche, the great guru who introduced Buddhism to Tibet in the eighth century. Invited by the King Trisong Detsen (742-797) based upon the advice of the great Indian Khenpo (Nalanda) Shantarakshita, Padmasambhava, Guru Rinpoche traveled throughout the country teaching, practicing, and taming the forces inhibiting the Buddha Dharma. He infused his blessings in the all of Tibet along side of his 24 ordained monks and Nalanda Shantarakshita, an abbot. Together with 108 translators, the Buddha Dharma was translated into Tibetan. Padmasambhava was in charge of the Tantras sutras. Shantarakshita was in charge of Mahayana Sutras. Nyingma Lineage was well known for The Great Perfections or Atiyoga/Dzogchen. The Nyingma teachings Long Transmission of Kama and the Short Transmission of Terma that was hidden by Padmasambhava which the book called the “**The Tibetan Book of Dead**”; other teachings were received by masters in the form of Pure Visions deities, gurus, experiences, or dreams.

Kagyü Lineage:

Tilopa received teachings directly from the primordial Buddha Vajradhara, whom is said to be an emanation, as well as from a number of human gurus. Tilopa transmitted his lineage to Naropa, a learned scholar and the ‘northern gatekeeper’ at Nalanda, who underwent a famous set of hardships during his arduous training with his master. Naropa systematized Tilopa’s teachings into ‘the six Dharma of Naropa’: inner heat (*tummo*), illusory body, dream, luminosity, phowa and bardo. These vajrayana methods, along with the profound meditation practices of Mahamudra, form the core of the Kagyü teachings.

The source of this tradition in Tibet was the translator Marpa Chökyi Lodrö (1012-1099), who travelled several times to India and Nepal, and studied with Naropa and his disciple Maitripa. The greatest of Marpa’s four chief disciples was the extraordinary yogi, poet, and saint, Milarepa (1040-1123), He has been a source of inspiration for millions of Buddhist practitioners. His life-story and Hundred Thousand Songs stands out as classics in the world’s spiritual literature. Milarepa’s two closest students were the yogi, Rechungpa Dorje Drak (1084-1161), and the scholar, Gampopa also known as Dagpo Lhajé (1079-1153). Kagyü Lineage uses the method of The Great Mahamudra and the Four Yogis of Mahamudra.

Sakya Lineage:

In the early 11 century, The Sakya tradition was established and spread by five great masters, the 'Sakya Gongma Nam Nga': Sachen Kunga Nyingpo (1092-1158), his two sons; Sönam Tsemo (1142-1182) and Drakpa Gyaltzen (1147-1216), his grandson; Sakya Pandita (1182-1251) and the latter's nephew; Chögyal Pakpa (1235-1280). The Sakya tradition follows the complete Buddhist

teaching of [sutras](#), [tantras](#) and the outer sciences, the special teaching of the Sakya school being the [Lamdré](#) ('The Path with Its Fruit'), which emphasizes the [Hevajra Tantra](#).

Gelug Lineage:

The Gelug Lineage was founded by the great [Tsongkhapa](#) (1357-1419) in the 15th century. Tsongkhapa was a psychologist and studied with many others in the Lineage. He combined his studies and those of the other lineages for the Gelug Lineage. One of his disciples was Gyalwa Dedrun Drupa, who became the First Dalai lama. The current Dalai lama, the 14th, is Tenzin Gyatso. This Lineage teaches Lamrim (Stages of the Path) and the right thinking of the Buddha Nature (Emptiness). The sutras and practice of (The Highest Yoga Tantra) are only transmitted to those yogis at a certain level. Those at that level practice it exclusively.

Between the Vajrayana and the tantras method you need to choose a teacher and method that will give you a start and an empowerment to reach liberation within this life. They only practice “The Highest Yoga Tantra” in Tibet. It is not difficult to practice Vajrayana today, because it has dispersed globally. The 14th Dalai lama, Tenzin Gyatso, knows all four of the lineages.

Mahayana Buddhism

600 years after Buddha’s death, The Theravada wrote off Mahayana Buddhism. The Hindus were against the branch and spread rumors disturbing and falsifying information about it. Asvaghosha⁵ (Mã Minh in Vietnamese), a believer of Buddhism, rejected these rumors and published a book called Awakening Mahayana Faith (“Đại Thừa Khởi Tín Luận” in Vietnamese) to clarify the true beliefs of Mahayana Buddhism. Now this book can be used to understand and discuss Mahayana Buddhism. You can refer to this book if you want to research more about this branch.

The Mahayana Dharma is in the mind of sentimental Beings. These minds contain all phenomenon within this illusive (conceptual) world and the real (non-conceptual) world...Why? Because this mind contains two appearance stages. One is the illusive mind and the other one is the purified mind which is the mind of Buddha. The Buddha mind is the nature of Mahayana. The appearance of Condition of being born and dying from the illusive mind is the nature, the appearance, and the function of the Mahayana.

The meaning of the Mahayana is Great Vehicle. Great in 3 phases:

1. The Great Nature: The foundation of the nature of the mind remains constant. There is not an increase nor decrease of any phenomenon.
2. The Great Appearance: Nature of Buddha’s mind that contains infinite merits.
3. The Great Functions: Because they produce all the good karmas within this life and beyond this life.

The word Mahayana means Great Vehicle. All Buddha and Bodhisattva ride in this vehicle to Buddha’s nature and help all sentimental beings.

⁵ Asvaghosha (80 CE – 150 CE) it is not exactly because it cannot be confirmed.

The goal of the Mahayana meditation can be written as in “the Heart of Sutra”. The Compassion Bodhisattva practiced and examined in depth the Prajnaparamita, and concluded that the 5 aggregates contains emptiness. Therefore, all the suffering disappeared. This is different from the Theravada Meditation. In the Theravada meditation the 5 aggregates contains impermanent phenomenon, Suffering, and no ego or self.

The Maitreya Buddha Meditation School of Practice

In the Buddha Sutras it is mention that 84,000 (meaning many) methods of practice of Buddhism existed because each individual at a different levels of knowledge about Buddhism. If we say there is only one way to practice Buddhism, we contradict with what Buddha said. For example, in Tibetan Buddhism, they have different lineages which use different means of practice. In China they have 10 different major schools. Many different methods are not important. What is important is that we choose a method that is most suitable for us and convenient for us to practice in order to reach our goal of getting out of the rebirth cycle, reaching enlightenment, and becoming Buddha.

Practicing Buddhism is becoming increasingly difficult due to a decline in the interpretation of Dharma. Currently many Buddhists gear towards doing good deeds (such as charities) and the chanting of Buddha's name. They do this to try to go the Buddha land, it is good but not enough because if you do this and still have attachments to this life, the chances of reaching Buddha land are slim to none. If you focus on only Buddha’s name while chanting leads you into meditation, which is different story. At the time of death if you have attachments (doesn’t matter what kind of attachments) then your attachments will appear to force you finding way to reincarnate to this desire realm, and damage your chances of reaching Buddha land.

It is not necessary for Buddhist that come to The Maitreya Buddha Meditation Center, to practice Buddhism, to take refuge to the Three Jewels. Because The Maitreya Buddha Meditation Center emphasizes on Mind but no Appearance. They also do not need to be given a Dharma name. At this temple, the method of practice is focused within the heart, not from material appearance. Gradually, all activities that involve appearance will be eliminated. If you request to take refuge to Three Jewels, we will explain how to. We want to be sure that you understand why you are taking refuge to the Three Jewels and fully agree to what it entails before you go into the ceremony. The following are the steps for taking refuge:

1. An explanation of taking refuge to the Three Jewels is taken from the 4 vows.
 1. Try not to do evil things.
 2. Try to do good deeds.
 3. Try to purify our mind
 4. Try to liberate living beings from samsara.

2. Be Given a Dharma name.

For the Sangha, a Monk is Bhikkhu and a Nun is Bhikkhuni. There are no other ranks. The Dharma names for Monks and Nuns all end with the last name Di. When you become Monk and Nun you vow to perform Six Paramita (Lục Độ Ba la Mật in Vietnamese.) The daily activities we practice are as follows:

1. Six rules to get along with each other
2. No attachment
3. Minding your own business not other people business

The Buddhist at The Maitreya Buddha Meditation Center have to understand the following:

1. They must Fully believe in the reincarnation and the rebirth cycle.
2. They must Fully understand the path that we are practicing in order to get out the samsara.

Purifying your mind means meditating. Defilements make your mind not pure. Where do the defilements come from? They are gathered from all of the karmas in past and present lives. This includes good and bad karmas. Karmas are from the actions that we have created. We must take repentance to prevent the past karmas from occurring, and practice not having attachments. We must try to keep our mind clear. In order to purify your mind, lay Buddhist members should follow these instructions as given from the Maitreya Buddha Meditation Center:

1. Repentance using the Cundi Alovaskitsava and the Medicine Buddha Mantra.
2. For detachment, learn the Dharma of Mahayana.
3. Chant Mantras in the 3 Mandalas of Cundi Avalokitesvara, Medicine Buddha, and Shurangama.

In order to accomplish meditation practice in Mahayana Shurangama, Buddha teaches in sutras that during the decline of Buddha's Dharma, followers should practice chanting the mantras of Mahayana and tantric in the mandalas in order to eliminate karmas and receive blessing and protections from Buddha and Bodhisattvas in order to get out of the samsara.

1. Cundi Aloskivatvas's Repentance:

We have created infinite karmas in many lives, if we don't do repentance it will be difficult for us to meditate and purify our mind. In any Mahayana Temples, every morning the Sangha practices different mantras such as the compassion Mantra from Compassion Bodhisattva or Buddha repentance, Luong Hoang Sam repentance, or 6 senses repentance....etc..

The reason why at The Maitreya Buddha Meditation we chose the Cundi Avalokitesvara repentance is because it has more benefits for those who choose a more aggressive action towards practice.

Cundi Avalokitesvara is another form of Compassion Bodhisattva. Cundi Avalokitesvara's vow is to help human beings to get out of the rebirth cycles. Compassion bodhisattva's vow is to help those in need from suffering.

When we chant the Cundi Avalokitesvara Repentance, we are:

1. Fulfilling the 10 vows of Samantabhadra Bodhisattva (Phổ Hiền Bồ tát in Vietnamese.) In Shurangama sutra, Samantabhadra Bodhisattva said He will help people who vow to practice 10 vows of Samantabhadra Bodhisattva to having liberation from samsara.
2. Prostrating the 5 Buddha that belong to Mahayana and Tantric. This creates a connection with the 5 Buddha so that when we die our wishes are directed towards their Buddha lands.
3. According to Nagarjuna Bodhisattva (Long Thọ in Vietnamese) chanting the Cundi's Mantra could bring you to enlightenment.

The Mantra of Cundi is very powerful. It is hard to imagine the power that comes with each Mahayana Temple constantly chanting it each morning of their recital.

Historically The Cundi Avalokitesvara Repentance only taught Monks and Nuns of the Sangha who practice The Cundi Avalokitesvara tantra, rarely would they teach lay Buddhists. That's why the Cundi Repentance is not well known, but it exists all over the internet now. If you ever have a chance on meeting someone practicing Cundi's Repentance you are very fortunate. Master Thích Viên Đức wrote a book, called "Trọn Bộ Mật Tông," (complete books of tantra) about the Cundi Tantric had to get the Sutra from 2 different masters that teach Cundi's Repentance. In the sutra of "Thất Câu Chi Phật Mẫu Sở Thuyết Đà-la ni kinh" it is said "To spread out Tantric books to public is very risky". Please note that in order to practice of Cundi's Repentance you must have a teacher for Mahayana and Tantric.

2. Medicine Buddha Repentance

For many years at the Mahayana Temple, Buddhist members requested the sangha at the temple to pray for them into the new year according to the lunar calendar. They prayed for health and wealth. These prayers were only taught at temples. The ritual was to light 49 lights for 49 days and chant the medicine Buddha's sutra, which carries many miracles.

However, the Maitreya Buddha Meditation Center does not focus on praying for Buddhist members, but teaching them to pray by themselves. According to the Medicine Buddha Sutra, normal people can chant His name and His mantra at home and or they can come to the temple and do the repentance with the 49 lights and flags that have 5 different colors.

At this temple, we stress heavily on the 12 vows of the Medicine Buddha and a very special, important vow is "**fulfilling living beings' wish.**" Even those who wish to go the Amitabha Buddha's Land by chanting the Medicine Buddha's name and Mantra can also be guided by Him or His avalokitesava to the Amitabha Buddha's Land if he or she wishes.

2. Learning Dharma

Buddhism is the religion of Wisdom (Wisdom of a Buddha). Therefore, learning Dharma is the foundation of practice. In the **Eight Noble Paths**, the Right Understanding is the 1st step – a foundation step. If we don't build the right understanding, then we practice toward the wrong understanding, so how can we get out of the rebirth cycles? And how can we become Buddha? Therefore, every week at The Maitreya Buddha Meditation Center we have lectures on Dharma and guidance for all levels of understanding. This is one of the techniques we use to detach from the world. If perceptions are not changed by using Dharma, then there is no detachment. Having attachment to the current life, leaves no chance of getting out of the rebirth cycles. This is like having your boat tied a pole, and expecting the boat to go off or leave the dock. The engine keeps roaring but the boat will not go. The Perception is the way of understanding of Buddhism about the universe and outside of the universe. According to the foundation of the Buddhism, perceptions we encounter in this universe should be encountered with understanding Buddhism. The **Right Understanding** will guide us on the right path, and we will not be misled to other religions, by non-qualified teachers. Our thinking is based on the Right Understanding that is called as **Right Thought**. Buddhists should use the **Right Speech** when we talk. The **Right Action** is needed when we act, **The Right Livelihood** for our living. The first 5 steps of the Noble Paths should always be followed. We should be diligent (**Right Effort**) in our

practice. When we go into meditation we should be in the **Right Mind** (mindfulness.) When conditions are met we will reach the Samadhi (**Right Samadhi**.) This is the essence of Buddhism. These are all of the Eight Noble Paths.

The way we practice at the Maitreya Buddha Meditation Center is that we build the right understanding of Buddhism by **changing our perceptions** of this illusion world and gear our perception toward Nirvana, so that way we can go directly toward the source and eliminate of greed, hatred and ignorance, so that we can leave this world and get out of the rebirth cycles when we die.

3. Meditation

The overall basic of understanding the word of meditation is that to keep your mind still and at one point. After that it is up to the one who is meditating where and what goal they want to get to. For example, some want to go into a meditation to work with the Chakras. Some want to meditate to move their Chi (energy) and have a powerful energy. Others meditate on the Highest Yoga Tantra like the yogi of Tibetan. Some meditate to create chi's and the Chi's turn into energy to go to the door of heaven (crown of the head.) All different kinds of Meditations listed understand their ways of liberation.

The Buddhist Meditation also has many techniques to reach their goal. It is based upon the individual's practice. For example, The meditation school of China specializing in Mahayana began with Bodhidharma. His first disciple was Huệ Khả (Huike in Chinese.) Huệ Khả understood the technique of "mind peace". After that, this kind of meditation was passed on to Tăng Xáng (Sengcan in Chinese,) Đạo Tín (Daoxin in Chinese,) Hoàng Nhãn (Hongren) and Huệ Nãng (Huineng.) The Platform Sutra (Kinh Pháp Bảo Đàn in Vietnamese) stated that Huệ Nãng was an illiterate but had many followers which spread across many other countries near China like Korea, Japan, and Vietnam.

Please refer to the Platform Sutra to understand the way his meditation was taught.

Master Hue Nang taught his disciples:

Good friends! My technique is to use Wisdom as the foundation. My students shouldn't misunderstand that the Samadhi differs from Wisdom. Samadhi and Wisdom are one. Samadhi is the nature (body) of the Wisdom. Wisdom is the use of Samadhi. When Wisdom is obtained then Samadhi is within the Wisdom. If you understand this then Samadhi and Wisdom are equally studied. The ones who do meditation shouldn't say that when Samadhi is reached then Wisdom is produced. When it is seen like that, it would mean that the Phenomena has two phases. The wording sounds good, but the thoughts within the heart are not.

"The Samadhi of oneness' (Nhất Hạnh Tam Muội in Vietnamese) is straightforward mind at all times, walking, staying, sitting, and lying. The Ching-ming ching (Kinh Tịnh Danh in Vietnamese) says: 'Straightforward mind is the place of practice; straightforward mind is the Pure Land.' Do not with a dishonest mind speak of the straightforwardness of the Dharma. If while speaking of the Samadhi of oneness, you fail to practice straightforward mind, you will not be disciples of the Buddha. Only practicing straightforward mind, and in all things having no attachments

whatsoever, is called the Samadhi of oneness. The deluded man clings to the characteristics of things, adheres to the Samadhi of oneness, [thinks] that straightforward mind is sitting without moving and casting aside delusions without letting things arise in the mind. This he considers to be the Samadhi of oneness. This kind of practice is the same as insentiency (being like tree, rock that has no mind,) and the cause of an obstruction to the Tao.

Tao must be something that circulates freely; why should he impede it? If the mind does not abide in things the Tao circulates freely; if the mind abides in things, it becomes entangled (attached to, abided to). If sitting in meditation without moving is good, why did Vimalakirti (Duy ma Cát in Vietnamese) scold Sariputta (Xá lợi Phất in Vietnamese) for sitting in meditation in the forest?

"Good friends, some people teach men to sit viewing the mind and viewing purity, not moving and not activating the mind, and to this they devote their efforts. Deluded people do not realize that this is wrong, cling to this doctrine, and become confused. There are many such people. Those who instruct in this way are, from the outset, greatly mistaken.

"Good friends, in the Dharma there is no sudden (Đốn in Vietnamese) or gradual (Tiệm in Vietnamese,) but among people some are keen and others dull. The deluded recommend the gradual method, the enlightened practice the sudden teaching. To understand the original mind of yourself is to see into your own original nature. Once enlightened, there is from the outset no distinction between these two methods; those who are not enlightened will for long kalpas (kiếp in Vietnamese) be caught in the cycle of transmigration.

"Good friends, in this teaching of mine, from ancient times up to the present, all have set up **no-thought** (Vô niệm in Vietnamese) as the main doctrine, **non-form** (Vô tướng in Vietnamese) as the substance, and **non-abiding** (Vô trụ in Vietnamese) as the basis. Non-form is to be separated from form even when associated with form. No-thought is not to think even when involved in thought. Non-abiding is the original nature of man. "Successive thoughts do not stop; prior thoughts, present thoughts, and future thoughts follow one after the other without cessation. If one instant of thought is cut off, the Dharma body separates from the physical body, and in the midst of successive thoughts there will be no place for attachment to anything. If one instant of thought clings, then successive thoughts cling; this is known as being fettered. If in all things successive thoughts do not cling, then you are unfettered. Therefore, non-abiding is made the basis.

"Good friends, being outwardly separated from all forms, this is non-form. When you are separated from form, the substance of your nature is pure. Therefore, non-form is made the substance. "To be unstained in all environments is called no-thought. If on the basis of your own thoughts you separate from environment, then, in regard to things, thoughts are not produced. If you stop thinking of the myriad things, and cast aside all thoughts, as soon as one instant of thought is cut off, you will be reborn in another realm. Students, take care! Don't rest in objective things and the subjective mind. [If you do so] it will be bad enough that you are in error, yet how much worse that you encourage others in their mistakes. The deluded man, however, does not himself see and slanders the teachings of the sutras.

Therefore, no-thought is established as a doctrine. Because man in his delusion has thoughts in relation to his environment, heterodox ideas stemming from these thoughts arise, and passions and false views are produced from them. Therefore this teaching has established no-thought as a doctrine. Men of the world, separate yourselves from views; do not activate thoughts. If there were no thinking, then no-thought would have no place to exist. 'No' is the 'no' of what? 'Thought' means 'thinking' of what? 'No' is the separation from the dualism that produces the passions. 'Thought' means thinking of the original nature of True Real- True Reality is the substance of thoughts; thoughts are the function of True Reality. If you give rise to thoughts from your self-

nature, then, although you see, hear, perceive, and know, you are not stained by the manifold environments, and are always free. The Vimalakirti Sutra says: 'Externally, while distinguishing well all the forms of the various dharmas, internally he stands firm within the First Principle.' "

"Good friends, in this teaching from the outset sitting in meditation does not concern the mind nor does it concern purity; we do not talk of steadfastness. If someone speaks of 'viewing the mind,' [then I would say] that the 'mind' is of itself delusion, and as delusions are just like fantasies, there is nothing to be seen. If someone speaks of 'viewing purity,' [then I would say] that man's nature is of itself pure, but because of false thoughts True Reality is obscured. If you exclude delusions then the original nature reveals its purity. If you activate your mind to view purity without realizing that your own nature is originally pure, delusions of purity will be produced. Since this delusion has no place to exist, then you know that whatever you see is nothing but delusion. Purity has no form, but, nonetheless, some people try to postulate the form of purity and consider this to be Ch'an (Meditation) practice. People who hold this view obstruct their own original natures and end up by being bound by purity. One who practices steadfastness does not see the faults of people everywhere. This is the steadfastness of self-nature. The deluded man, however, even if he doesn't move his own body, will talk of the good and bad of others the moment he opens his mouth, and thus behave in opposition to the Tao. Therefore, both 'viewing the mind' and 'viewing purity' will cause an obstruction to Tao." (End of the extraction from The Platform Sutra)

At The Maitreya Buddha Meditation Center, our Meditation is based on the following:

The goal of the Meditation is to purify our mind. **When our illusion mind is cleared, then the true nature of our mind appears.** The opposite of the purified mind is the illusion of the mind. The illusion of the mind is caused by defilements and thoughts. We Buddhists have a saying that "one karma is from one thought." Karma can be good, bad or neutral. Actions or Karmas comes from the past, or the present. To eliminate past karmas, we must do repentance, also we must always keep our mind not to attach to anything acting like we do not hear, see, know following the Diamond Sutra's advice. By having no attachments we will not give more information to the eighth consciousness (A Lại Da Thức in Vietnamese.)

To go into practice, the Body and Mind are perceived as two parts but from the Buddhism point of view those two parts are ONE and also NOT ONE. On a chair or on the floor, in the lotus/half lotus position sit with a straight back and neck and relax all the muscles. Place the right hand on top of the left hand and connect the thumbs. When the body is relaxed we know that we are sitting but we don't feel like we are. Our mind focuses on empty space so that we are not distracted by our surroundings. Relaxation is the first step of going into no thought. Having no thoughts state of mind is due to past karmas do not appear and new karmas are not accumulated and due to the detachment with all phenomenon.

Please remember that having No Thoughts is different from Emptiness. The Heart Sutra says, when the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara perceived that all Five Skandhas (Aggregates) are empty. Our technique is to reach the No thought stage and prolong this stage in order to go deeper and deeper until we reach samadhi like Sakyamuni Buddha when He sat under the Bodhi Tree for the 49 days to reach Buddhahood stage.

Session of Shurangama Mandala:

Base upon the teaching of Buddha in the Shurangama Sutra we have to build the Mandala to practice. Every year we have 2 sessions. One session in the beginning of April and another session in the Beginning of October in Texas. The conditions leading to be able to build the Shurangama Mandala is a hidden miracle therefore we will not go into this discussion. For many century we did not see any place where the Shuganrama Mandala could to be built to practice meditation. Only once in the Shurangama sutra, (Kinh Thủ Lăng Nghiêm Tông Thông) translated by Nhãn Tế Thiên Sư, the person who gives comments mentionning the existence of one Precept Mandala about 1,000 years ago in China but without details. Recently, in Taiwan in the city of Cao Hung, the Quảng Đức Temple sets up the Mandala once a year, and people come and chant the Shurangama Sutra and the Mantra in a week, it is not as the way instructed in the Shurangama Sutra. It is said cameras or videos are not allowed when they come inside.

The session of Shurangama that is offered at the Maitreya Buddha Meditation Center is dedicated for monks, nuns and lay Buddhists who practice our doctrine. We are unable to open widely to public because we have a very limited space in our Mandala. In the past, many of the sessions that we offered gave many Monks, Nuns, and Lay Buddhist a tremendous gain in experience of what is the Great Shurangama Samadhi and many also have received miracles from the Mandala. These have proved the teachings of Buddha in the Shurangama Sutra are true.

Experience of Practicing in our Doctrine:

-Always remember that we are living in the Illusion world. We are human beings meaning we belong to one of the six realms. During the illusion the knowledge from our six senses is limited and not always correct. We are not seeing, hearing, or knowing things from our purified mind (which is the nature of the Buddhahood), so they are not true. In the Shurangama Sutra it says that whatever those appearing in the illusion world is not real since it is not from the purified Buddha nature. If we use this illusion knowledge to practice and wish to attain the Buddhahood, it's like cooking sand and wanting for sand to turn into rice, it is impossible. So how do we practice? We will not allow our 6 senses control us. In our daily lives we can practice **“let go”** and **no attachment**.

-How do we practice no attachment? We are attached because of our 6 senses. We see all the phenomenon here are true and real. Therefore the Diamond Sutra says all phenomenon are like a dream:

All phenomena in this universe are like,
A dream, a bubble, a picture in the mirror,
A mock show, dew drop, a lightning flash,
So one should contemplate all are conditioned.

that includes all 5 aggregates that make up human beings, we also view it as empty, like mentioned in the Heart Sutra.

-We have to stay away from the misconception of Taoism (Lão giáo in Vietnamese) and Confucianism (Khổng giáo in Vietnamese) in order for us to practice getting out of the samsara. These two Chinese philosophies have been embedded into our lives for so

long. Confucianism is the philosophy teaching people to do good for the world, country, and family in this illusion world. Taoism is the philosophy of liberating us from this polluted earth and going to heaven. But heaven according to Buddhism is still within one of the 6 realms. So when people announce that the three religions Taoism, Confucianism and Buddhism are the same origin that perception is not only wrong, but also three religions are not even comparable.

-Always, to have the mindfulness that all phenomenon are conditioned. Beings and phenomenon have no self. When conditions are met, then phenomenon appears. When conditions are not met then phenomenon disappears. Therefore, why should we hold on those phenomenon and what we call I and Me for?

-We have to view our current lives like a hotel. Sooner or later we have to checkout and leave, so don't be attached and try to take care of it like a permanent place. We just have to be content of what we have, just enough for us to get by so we can practice out of the rebirth cycles and come back to help all sentimental beings. When we leave this world, we go alone, we cannot take anything with us. We only bring with us the Karmas.

-We have to acknowledge the difference between having the heart of Bodhisattva and practicing Bodhisattva. When we confuse them, we create many mistakes. It is like the saying where the blind lead the blind. Buddha Sakyamuni left the palace with the heart of a Bodhisattva in order to seek the way out of Samsara to escape suffering for Him and for all sentimental beings. But He still had to demonstrate that He practiced diligently for 6 years with many difficulties in the jungle. He also sat under the Bodhi Tree for 49 days to reach Buddhahood. After reaching Buddhahood, then He started the teachings to help sentimental beings.

There are 4 vows that all Mahayana practitioners take as the heart of Bodhisattva has:

1. To save all Sentimental beings.
2. To eliminate all suffering.
3. To learn all of Buddha's Dharma.
4. To obtain the enlightenment of the Buddhahood.

Bodhisattva has not reached the stage of Buddhahood, we still have to work hard and diligently with our practice to the minimum stage of getting out of the rebirth cycles. If not, through us still being attached to this world we also tie our friends down to the samsara. It wastes having a human body this life.

-The Mahayana Sutras indicate 4 levels of Buddha's Land once we get out of the Samsara:

- 1st. Pure land where human being and saints live.
- 2nd. Pure land where arhats live.
- 3rd. Pure land where Bodhisattvas live.
- 4th. Permanent Light Pure land where all Buddha live.

You get to know these Pure lands through meditation. It's not like the world we live in now and those Pure lands cannot be seen through the naked eyes. We tend to mistakenly think that we are

happy here with ourselves, family and social lives and we call it Pure lands (Nirvana.) It is not Nirvana. It is the illusion world.

Bow to Buddha,

Sramana Di Tung