

Buddhist Meditation and Psychology

A Selection of Books

The following is a selection of books relating to Buddhist meditation and psychology that were part of a post-graduate course in Buddhist Studies.

— Ñānamoli Bhikkhu. 2003. *The Path of Purification*. Kandy: Pariyatti Publishing/Buddhist Publication Society. Or Pariyatti Press; 1st BPE Pariyatti Ed edition (21 April 2005).

One of Buddhism's foundational texts, the *Visuddhimagga* is a systematic examination and condensation of Buddhist doctrine and meditation technique. The various teachings of the Buddha found throughout the Pali canon are organized in a clear, comprehensive path leading to the final goal of *nibbana*, the state of complete purification. Originally composed in the fifth century, this new translation provides English speakers insights into this foundational text. In the course of this treatise full and detailed instructions are given on 40 subjects of meditation aimed at concentration, an elaborate account of Buddhist Abhidhamma philosophy, and explicit descriptions of the stages of insight culminating in final liberation.

— Ven. Analayo. 2003. *Satipatthana-The Direct Path to Realization*. Birmingham: Windhorse.

"Surely destined to become the classic commentary on the Satipatthana" — Christopher Titmuss

— Bucknell, R. and Kang, C. eds. 1997. *The Meditative Way: Readings in the Theory and Practice of Buddhist Meditation*. Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press.

Buddhist meditation, while attracting less popular attention than some other meditative disciplines, has given rise to a particularly rich literature in recent years. Despite differences in style and terminology, these modern writings on Buddhist meditation serve much the same purposes as did the manuals and commentaries of the classical masters: to explicate and interpret the Buddha's teachings on meditation, to clarify the nature and value of the various meditative techniques and attainments, and/or to offer advice on the actual practice of meditation.

Meditators are increasingly inclined to compare and evaluate critically what the different contemporary meditation masters have to say, to weigh up the results of relevant scientific studies, or to consult translations of the primary texts in search of the Buddha's 'original' teachings on meditation. Writers on meditation are also increasingly adopting an appropriately critical approach, particularly as regards the reliability of textual accounts. Relatively few still commit the old error of assuming that the Pali canon is a complete and faithful record of what the Buddha said on the subject, or that the classical commentators were infallible authorities.

The present collection of twenty-eight readings is designed to give meditators, researchers, and general readers ready access to representative samples of those writings, and to the principal relevant texts.

— de Silva, P. 2001. *An Introduction to Buddhist Psychology*. 3rd ed. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

An Introduction to Buddhist Psychology is a lucid, intelligible, and authentic introduction to the foundations of Buddhist psychology. It provides comprehensive coverage of the basic concepts and issues in the psychology of Buddhism, and thus it deals with the nature of psychological inquiry, concepts of the mind, consciousness and behavior, motivation, emotions and percentile, and the therapeutic structure of Buddhist psychology. For the third edition, a new chapter on the mind-body relationship and Buddhist contextualism has been added.

— Gethin, R.M.L. 2001. *The Buddhist Path to Awakening*. Oxford: Oneworld.

An authoritative and critically acclaimed book, in which the author traces the path of enlightenment as it is found in 37 pieces of Buddhist literature, known as the bodhi-pakkhiya dhamma. The result is a thorough and engrossing piece of work, which provides a unique insight into the nature not only of Buddhism, but also the mystic experience generally.

— King, W. 1980. *Theravada Meditation: The Buddhist Transformation of Yoga*. University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press and Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

The first book in English to relate modern forms of Theravada meditational practice to its Indian roots, *Theravada Meditation*; *The Buddhist Transformation of Yoga* rectifies the publishing imbalance toward Mahayana and Zen. The classic Theravada pattern in Buddhaghosa's *Path of Purification* is shown to be relevant to the present Buddhist world.

Beginning with a general description of similarities and differences between the Upanisadic-Yogic and early Buddhist viewpoints, the author goes on to analyze Gotama's rejection-acceptance-modification of the Upanisadic-Yogic method of striving for moksa (salvation) in his search for Buddhahood (enlightenment), as related in the Pali Canon.

A second major section analyzes the meditational method of Buddhaghosa, showing the interaction between Upanisadic-Yogic jhanas (modes of concentration) and Buddhist Vipassana (insight meditation). Attention is given to the highest attainable state, nirodha-samapatti (cessation of thought and perception), held by Theravada Buddhism to be an actual experience of Nibbana (world-escape) in this life.

The final chapter discusses the attraction of Theravada meditation in parts of the contemporary world, notably Burma, drawing upon materials little known in the West. In Burma and, to some degree, in Ceylon and Thailand, emphasis is on a simplified meditational method open to layman as well as monk, yet viewed as fully orthodox.

About the Author:

Winston L. King is the author of six books on comparative religion and Buddhism, including *A Thousand Lives Away: Buddhism in Contemporary Burma* and *Buddhism and Christianity*. He has been a visiting professor in Burma, India, and Japan and on the faculties of Vanderbilt, Grinnell, Colorado State, and Oberlin.

— Kiyota, M. ed. 1978. *Mahayana Buddhist Meditation: Theory and Practice*. Honolulu: University Press of Hawai'i, and Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass (1998)

This festschrift volume commemorating the late Richard H. Robinson, founder of the Buddhist Studies program at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, was compiled in honor of Professor Robinson's contributions to Buddhist studies. It is designed for buddhologists and the specialized reader in religion and philosophy. The studies and essays in this collection represent some of the best of contemporary scholarship in Mahayana Buddhist studies and deal with the theory and practice of Mahayana meditation, the use of original sources, and the presentation of previously untranslated material. This makes this collection a significant contribution to the understanding of Buddhist meditation as it developed historically, intellectually and in actual practice.

— Geshe Gendun Lodro and Jeffrey Hopkins. 1998/1999. *Calm Abiding and Special Insight*. New York: Snow Lion.

Calm Abiding and Special Insight presents an intimate and detailed picture of the intricacies of meditation so vividly that the reader is drawn into a Tibetan worldview of spiritual development. Geshe Gedün Lodrö, one of the foremost scholars of Tibet, reveals methods for overcoming afflictive states and disorders to create a mind which is stable, calm, and alertly clear. This book illustrates the mind's potential for profound transformation.

The dangers of not recognizing states contrary to successful meditation are great, and the possibilities of implementing the wrong antidote, or of overextending an appropriate one until it becomes counterproductive, are many. Through such detail, Geshe Gedün Lodrö makes vividly clear a Tibetan approach to meditative transformation.

This is a completely revised new edition of *Walking Through Walls*.

— Jamgon Kongtrul. 2002. *Creation and Completion: Essential Points Tantric Meditation*. Boston: Wisdom Publications.

Creation and Completion represents some of the most profound teachings of Jamgon Kongtrul (1813-99), one of the true spiritual and literary giants of Tibetan history. Though brief, it offers a lifetime of advice for all who wish to engage in-and deepen-the practice of tantric Buddhist meditation.

The original text, beautifully translated and introduced by Sara Harding, is further brought to life by an in-depth commentary by the contemporary master Thrangu Rinpoche. Key Tibetan Buddhist fundamentals are quickly made clear, so that the reader may confidently enter into tantra's oft-misunderstood "creation" and "completion" stages.

In the creation stage, practitioners visualize themselves in the form of buddhas and other enlightened beings in order to break down their ordinary concepts of themselves and the world around them. This meditation practice prepares the mind for engaging in the completion stage, where one has a direct encounter with the ultimate nature of mind and reality.

— Tucci, G. 2001. *The Theory and Practice of the Mandala*, New York: Dover.

Examines theory and practice of the mandala and how it's used to express the infinite possibilities of the human subconscious. Individual chapters consider the doctrinal basis of the mandala, the mandala as a means of reintegration, the symbolism of the mandala and its various parts, the liturgy of the mandala, and more.

— Mullin, G.H. and Lama Tsong Khapa. 1996/1997. *Tsongkhapa's Six Yogas of Naropa*. New York: Snow Lion.

Anyone who has read more than a few books on Tibetan Buddhism will have encountered references to the Six Yogas of Naropa. These six--inner heat, illusory body, clear light, consciousness transference, forceful projection, and the bardo yoga--represent one of the most popular Tibetan Buddhist presentations of yogic technology. These teachings, given by the Indian sage Naropa to Marpa, gradually pervaded thousands of monasteries and hermitages throughout Central Asia regardless of sect.

— Norbu, N. 2000. *The Crystal and the Way of Light: Sutra, Tantra and Dzogchen*. (ed. J. Shane). New York: Snow Lion.

In *The Crystal and the Way of Light*, Chogyal Namkhai Norbu examines the spiritual path from the viewpoint of Dzogchen. He discusses the base path and fruit of Dzogchen practice, and describes his education and how he met his principal master who showed him the real meaning of direct introduction to Dzogchen. By interweaving his life story with the teachings, he both sets Dzogchen in its traditional context and reveals its powerful contemporary relevance. The book is richly illustrated with photos of Buddhist masters, meditational deities, and Dzogchen symbols.

About the Author

Chogyal Namkhai Norbu is a Tibetan master of the Dzogchen tradition. He has been a professor at the Oriental Institute of the University of Naples, Italy, and is the author of many books, including "The Crystal and the Way of Light", "The Supreme Source", and "Dzogchen: The Self-Perfected State."

— Gregory, P. ed. 1986/1987. *Traditions of Meditation in Chinese Buddhism*. Kuroda Institute, Studies in East Asian Buddhism 4, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

Various learned articles by scholars from the Kuroda Institute. The essays include: Meditation in Fa-hsiang Buddhism by Alan Sponberg; the Four Kinds of Samadhi in Early T'ien-t'ai Buddhism by Daniel Stevenson; the Concept of One Practice Samadhi in Early Ch'an by Bernard Faure; Ch'ang-lu Tsung-tse's Tso-Ch'an I and the Secret of Zen Meditation by Carl Bielefeldt; From Dispute to Dual Cultivation: Pure Land Responses to Ch'an Critics by David Chappell; and Chinul's Systematization of Chinese Meditative Techniques in Korean Son Buddhism by Robert Buswell.

— Sekida, K. 1975. *Zen Training: Methods and Philosophy*. New York and Tokyo: Weatherhill, or 2005, Shambhala Publications Inc.

Zen Training is a comprehensive handbook for *zazen*, seated meditation practice, and an authoritative presentation of the Zen path. The book marked a turning point in Zen literature in its critical reevaluation of the enlightenment experience, which the author believes has often been emphasized at the expense of other important aspects of Zen training.

In addition, *Zen Training* goes beyond the first flashes of enlightenment to explore how one lives as well as trains in Zen. The author also draws many significant parallels between Zen and Western philosophy and psychology, comparing traditional Zen concepts with the theories of being and cognition of such thinkers as Heidegger and Husserl.

— Taizan Maezumi and Bernie Glassman, eds. 2002. *On Zen Practice: Body, Breath and Mind*. Boston: Wisdom Publications.

This updated landmark volume makes available for the first time in decades the teachings that were formative to a whole generation of American Zen teachers and students. Conceived as an overarching primer on the practice of Zen, chapters in this volume address every aspect of practice: beginning practice, shikantaza, chanting, sesshin, working with Mu, and the nature of koans.

In the intervening years since the publication of the earlier edition, countless books have appeared on Zen. Few, if any, have approached the strengths of *On Zen Practice* as a reference or teaching tool, and the book retains a lively, immediate quality that will appeal to today's readers.

— Pickering, J., ed. 1997. *The Authority of Experience: Essays in Buddhism and Psychology*. Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press.

This collection of writings presents contemporary views on the integration of Buddhism in the West. Over the past few decades Buddhism has deepened its presence in the West and as a result teachings and practices are becoming integrated with those of Western psychology in a more productive way.

The decline of mechanism and positivism offers new opportunities to bring together Western Buddhist views of the mind and its relationship to its surroundings.

Written by psychologists and scholars, the essays discuss many of the difficult questions raised by Buddhism's increased presence. In particular the issue of the balance between authenticity and accessibility is examined. Buddhist traditions are often perceived as inaccessible and too firmly fixed to a cultural framework with some people, especially women, left feeling alienated and undervalued.

However, by responding to this by attempting to synthesise Buddhism with the values of contemporary culture can lead to doubts about authenticity and dilution. Examining these issues and many more, the contributors seek to bring Buddhism into a realistic and informed relationship with contemporary Western thought.

— Shaw, Sarah. 2014. *The Spirit of Buddhist Meditation*. London: Yale University Press.

Is it possible to capture the spirit of Buddhist meditation, which depends so much upon silence and unspoken wisdom? Can this spirit be found after two millennia? This wise and reassuring book reminds us that the Buddhist meditative tradition, geared to such concerns from its inception, has always been transmitted through texts. A great variety of early writings—poems, stories, extended practical guides, commentaries, and chants—were purposely designed to pass teachings on from one generation to the next.

Sarah Shaw, a long-time practitioner and teacher of Buddhism, investigates a wide and varied range of ancient and later Buddhist writings on meditation. Many of these texts are barely known in the West but, as the author shows, they can be helpful, moving, and often very funny. She begins with early texts of the Pali canon—those that describe and involve the Buddha and his followers teaching meditations—and moves on to “commentaries,” with their copious range of practical tips, anecdotes, and accounts of early meditators. The author then considers other early texts that were inspirational as Buddhist traditions spread through India and on to China, Korea, Japan, and Tibet. Centuries after being written, early Buddhist texts have lost none of their relevance, this authoritative book shows. In a tradition characterized by flexibility and mobility, these writings offer wisdom unchanged by time.

— Shaw, Sarah. 2008. *An Introduction to Buddhist Meditation*. New York: Routledge.

Sarah Shaw’s lively introduction to Buddhist meditation offers students and practitioners alike a deeper understanding of what meditation is, and its purpose and place in the context of different Buddhist schools.

She describes the historical background to the geographical spread of Buddhism, and examines the way in which some meditative practices developed as this process occurred. Other chapters cover basic meditative practice, types of meditation, meditation in different regions, meditation and doctrine, and the role of chanting within meditation.

Although not a practical guide, *An Introduction to Buddhist Meditation* outlines the procedures associated with Buddhist practices and suggests appropriate activities, useful both for students and interested Buddhists.

Vivid quotations from Buddhist texts and carefully selected photographs and diagrams help the reader engage fully with this fascinating subject.

— Shaw, Sarah. 2006. *Buddhist Meditation: An Anthology of Texts from the Pali Canon*. New York: Routledge.

Meditative practice lies at the heart of the Buddhist tradition. This introductory anthology gives a representative sample of the various kinds of meditations described in the earliest body of Buddhist scripture, the Pali canon.

It provides a broad introduction to their traditional context and practice and supplies explanation, context and doctrinal background to the subject of meditation. The main themes of the book are the diversity and flexibility of the way that the Buddha teaches meditation from the evidence of the canon. Covering fundamental features of Buddhist practice such as posture, lay meditation, and meditative technique it provides comments both from the principal early commentators on Buddhist practice, Upatissa and Buddhaghosa, and from reputable modern meditation teachers in a number of Theravadin traditions.

This is the first book on Pali Buddhism which introduces the reader to the wide range of the canon.

It demonstrates that the Buddha's meditative tradition still offers a path of practice as mysterious, awe-inspiring yet as freshly accessible as it was centuries ago, and will be of interest to students and scholars of Buddhism as well as Buddhist practitioners.

ADDITIONAL BOOK

— Rinpoche, Sogyal (2002). *The Tibetan Book of Living And Dying*. Edited by Patrick Gaffney and Andrew Harvey. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.

“A magnificent achievement. In its power to touch the heart, to awaken consciousness, [*The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*] is an inestimable gift.”

—*San Francisco Chronicle*

A newly revised and updated edition of the internationally bestselling spiritual classic, *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*, written by Sogyal Rinpoche, is the ultimate introduction to Tibetan Buddhist wisdom. An enlightening, inspiring, and comforting manual for life and death that the *New York Times* calls, “The Tibetan equivalent of [Dante’s] *The Divine Comedy*,” this is the essential work that moved Huston Smith, author of *The World’s Religions*, to proclaim, “I have encountered no book on the interplay of life and death that is more comprehensive, practical, and wise.”

Source: Most annotations taken from the website *amazon.com*

Compiled by Alexander Peck, 2015