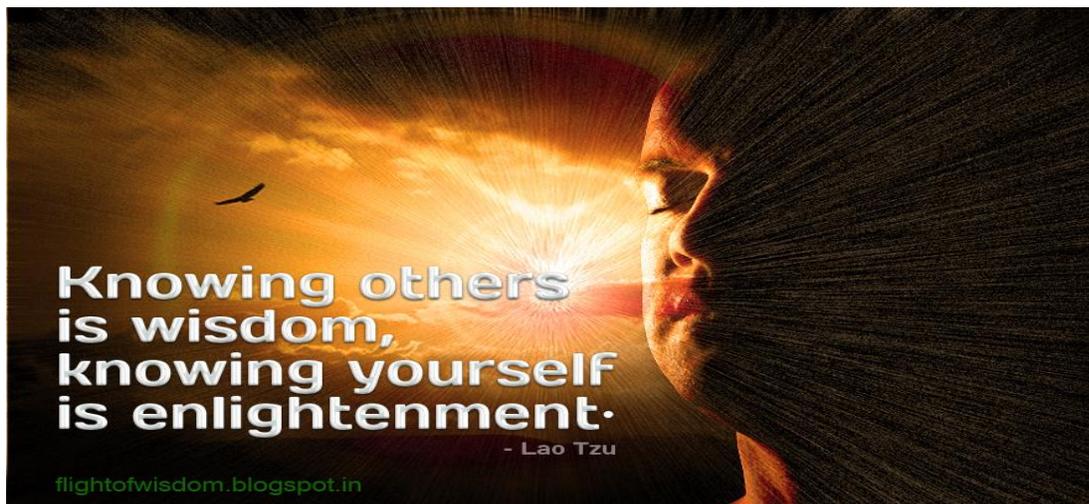


## ENLIGHTENMENT 啟示



While Enlightenment refers to the process of understanding, the Pàëi word usually translated as enlightenment, bodhi, both means 'to awaken', or 'to understand', to open the eyes. When, as a result of practicing the Buddha's Dhamma, one deeply, fully and directly realizes the inadequate, impermanent and selfless nature of conditioned phenomenon one is said to have become or to have attained enlightenment. Frustration, anxiety and fear are replaced by peace and joy. A person who is enlightened is called either a Buddha. The state of Buddhahood itself is also often called nirvana.

According to the Buddha, enlightenment comes in four stages, each triggered by the presence of particular spiritual qualities and the realization of certain truths. The first of these stages, Stream Winning starts a process which inevitably leads to complete enlightenment, either within a matter of minutes or perhaps a few lifetimes. Stream Winning is characterized by unshakable sense of certainty about the Three Refuges, effortless morality, a realization that the body is not the self and no longer clinging to rules or morality. The other stages are

called Once Returning, Non Returning and the final stage, complete enlightenment.

Enlightenment is a state of perfect knowledge or wisdom, combined with infinite compassion. Enlightenment is an understanding of both the relative mode of existence (the way in which things appear to us) and the ultimate mode of existence (the true nature of these same appearances). This includes our own minds as well as the external world. Such knowledge is the basic antidote to ignorance and suffering.

But by ignorance we do not mean a simple lack of information. Rather we mean a distorted vision of reality that makes us think that what we see around us is permanent and solid, or that our “self” is a real, autonomous entity. This leads us to mistake fleeting pleasures or the alleviation of pain for lasting happiness. Such ignorance also makes us attempting to build our happiness on others' misery.