

TENDAI AND THE LOTUS SUTRA

Tendai Buddhists gain their understanding of the Lotus Sutra through the works of Zhiyi and his disciples, most notably through the texts “[The] Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra” (法華玄義 Hokke-gengi/Fa-hua-hsüan-i), and “[The] Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra” (法華文句 Hokke-mongu/Fa-hua-wen-chü). Sadly, none of these texts have been translated in to English in their entirety. Fragments of them can be found, but the full picture is lacking. In the following article I have tried to explain the gist of both of these texts, followed by a look at the various sections of these texts, and the works of other Tiantai/Tendai monks, to hopefully give you a better understanding of the Lotus Sutra and Tendai Buddhism.

Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra

(法華玄義 Hokke-gengi/Fa-hua-hsüan-i)

In the ‘Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra’, Zhiyi breaks down the whole of the Sutra via the 5 characters of the title of the Sutra ‘Myo-ho Ren-ge Kyo’. First, Zhiyi posits ‘Two Levels’ of the Sutra; ‘General Interpretation’ (通釋) and ‘Specific Interpretation’ (別釋). These two levels are then broken down in to subsequent parts;

1. General interpretation
 - a. Zhiyi identifies the ‘Five Sections’ of the Lotus Sutra (and all Sutras) then discusses them in seven parts
 - i. Introductory definition
Categorizes the Five Sections and defines them
 - ii. Quotation & verification
Scriptural support for the Five Sections, to legitimize Zhiyi’s device
 - iii. Origination and arising
Explains the sequential nature of the Five Sections
 - iv. Undolding & folding
Explains the Five Sections via various Buddhist Concepts
 - v. Measuring and Selecting
Clarification of the definition Five Sections
 - vi. Contemplating mind
Causing people to simultaneously gain knowledge and practice
 - vii. Converging differences
 1. Integration of the Five Sections as a way of uncovering the profound and subtle meaning of the Buddhas teachings, utilising the Four Siddhāntas.
1. Specific Interpretation; which consists of five parts (Name, Essence, Quality, Function, & teaching. See the ‘Five Major Principles’ later in this article for more information.)
 - a. **Name**; the largest section, Zhiyi breaks down each of the five characters of the name of the Lotus Sutra, as rendered into Chinese by Kumārajīva.

- i. 妙 'Myo' – *Subtle*; Zhiyi breaks the word 'subtle' down in to two parts, 'General Interpretation of Subtle' and 'Specific Interpretation of Subtle'. These are then further broken down in to subsections.
 - 1. 'General Interpretation of Subtle'
 - a. Relative subtlety; there is 'coarse' teaching and 'subtle' teaching. The coarse teaching doesn't properly convey the full truth of the Dharma, i.e. the Buddha's intention that all sentient beings can attain full Buddhahood. The subtle teaching (i.e. the Lotus Sutra) contains the full truth of the Dharma and Buddha's intention. With the 'Relative' understanding of subtlety, these two (coarse and subtle) are understood in opposition, or rather 'outside' to each other, when compared.
 - b. Absolute subtlety; meaning the truth of the Lotus Sutra 'unifies' the coarse and subtle in the One Vehicle (Ekayana) of Buddhahood. This is further elaborated in the 'Ten Subtle Principles'.
- ii. 法 'Ho' – *Dharma*; Zhiyi defines the word 'Dharma' in three parts
 - 1. Dharma of sentient beings; Dharma is precisely the Ten Suchnesses in relation to the Ten Dharma Realms.
 - 2. Dharma of Buddha; The Ten Suchnesses and Ten Dharma Realms are both 'relative' and 'ultimate'
 - a. Relative; each realm is different and the Buddha Realm is distinguished from the rest.
 - b. Ultimate; the Ten Suchnesses and Realms are nothing but the Buddha-state. This, at the same time negates both 'relative' and 'ultimate' as they are all embracing.
 - 3. Dharma of Mind; With the mind, one is capable of penetrating all Dharmas, meaning there is not distinction between the minds of sentient beings and the Buddha. The Dharma of Mind incorporates both the Dharma of Sentient Beings and the Dharma of the Buddha.
- iii. 蓮 'Ren' – *Lotus*; Taken together with 'Flower' (below) can be understood as both a representation of the dharma, or a metaphor. As 'truth' cannot truly be conceptualised, it must be illustrated as a metaphor.
- iv. 華 'Ge' – *Flower*; as above
- v. 經 'Kyo' – *Sutra*; in two sections, Zhiyi states the word either can or can't be translated. The first five represent 5 meanings of why the word 'Kyo' can't be translated;
 - 1. Foundation for the Dharma; i.e. the result of the Buddha employing skilful means to expound the truth, represented by the Four Siddhāntas, the four kinds of teachings based on the capacities of the listener;
 - a. Wordly/Mundane (laukika siddhānta); teaching according to the desire of the listener, enabling them to accept the teaching.
 - b. Individual (prātipauruṣika siddhānta); teaching according to the capacities and capabilities of the listener.

- c. Therapeutic (prātipākṣika siddhānta); teaching that remedies the various humans afflictions.
 - d. Absolute (pāramārthika siddhānta); teaching that enables all beings to attain complete Buddhahood, which is essentially the culmination of all three.
2. Slight emanation; i.e. the Four Siddhāntas contain a gradual process of progression
 3. Gushing Spring; i.e. the meanings of the Four Siddhāntas are innumerable
 4. Line Marker; i.e. the Four Siddhāntas function as a rule for one to follow
 5. Garlands tied together; i.e. the Three Aspects of Teaching, Practice and Doctrine are tied together as a coherent whole.

The second section, contains 5 translations of the word 'Kyo' and their meanings, with regards to the Three Aspects;

6. Literary meaning of 'Warp' (經), with regards to;
 - a. Teaching; All scriptures contain the written words of the Buddha.
 - b. Practice; All practices penetrate truth.
 - c. Doctrine; the truth that is derived from Body, Speech and Mind.
 7. Meaning 'Tallying with' (契), the Worldly Siddhānta that tallies with the conditions of circumstances;
 - a. Teaching; The Individual Siddhānta of each person tallies with the origination of wholesomeness.
 - b. Practice; The Therapeutic Siddhānta tallies with the destruction of evil.
 - c. Doctrine; The Absolute Siddhānta tallies with the doctrine of the Supreme Truth.
 8. Meaning 'Foundation for the dharma' (法本), meaning the same as the above first view ('warp').
 9. Meaning 'Thread' (線), which links teaching, practice and doctrine together to form a whole.
 10. Meaning 'Teaching of Wholesome Words' (善語教), indicating that the Wholesome Words, Wholesome Practice, and Wholesome Doctrine are all represented by the Four Siddhāntas.
- b. **Essence**; the fundamental theory of the Lotus Sutra, and refers to the Ultimate Truth. The Ultimate Truth of the Lotus Sutra is characterized by the 'Middle Way'.
 - c. **Quality**; or 'gist' concerns the essential teaching, the cause (practice) and effect (Buddhahood).
 - d. **Function**; the power the Lotus Sutra has on benefitting Sentient Beings.
 - e. **Teaching**; classification of the various teachings of the Buddha, so that all sentient beings are included and able to attain Buddhahood.

Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra

(法華文句 Hokke-mongu/Fa-hua-wen-chü)

In the 'Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra', Zhiyi divides the Lotus Sutra in to two halves, the first half containing the 'theoretical teaching' (chapters 1-14), and the second half containing the 'essential teaching' (chapter 15-end). For the 'theoretical teaching', Zhiyi names the 'Introduction' chapter as 'preparation' (chapter 1). Chapters 2-9 (from 'Expedient Means' to 'Prophecies') as 'revelatory'. Chapters 10-14 (from 'Teaching the Law' to 'Peaceful Practices') as 'transmission'. For the 'essential teaching', Zhiyi then breaks chapter 15 in to two parts, the first part being 'preparation' and the second part being of chapter 15, chapter 16 and the first half of chapter 17 as 'revelatory'. From the second half of chapter 17 right through to the end of the sutra as 'transmission'. Zhiyi then names Four Guidelines for interpreting the 'words and phrases' of the Lotus Sutra; Causes and conditions, correlated teachings, theoretical & essential teachings, and the Observation of Mind.

In terms of the three parts,

1. 'Preparation' is explained as the Buddhas teaching that readies them for the truth.
2. 'Revelation' is explained as the Buddhas teaching that imparts the Truth.
3. 'Transmission' is explained as the Buddha urging his disciples to spread his revelation.

Further to this, Zhiyi posits Four Guidelines for interpreting the Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra;

1. Causes and conditions
 - a. To interpret the words and phrases via the causes and conditions that prompted the Buddha to teach them.
 - b. To grasp them in terms of the Four Siddhāntas.
 - c. To grasp them in terms of the Four Guidelines.
2. Correlated teachings
 - a. To interpret the words and phrases via the Four teachings & Five Periods.
3. Theoretical and essential teachings
 - a. To interpret the words and phrases via the Theoretical and Essential teachings.
4. Observation of the Mind
 - a. Via the practice of meditation, perceive the truth within one's own mind, and interpret the words and phrases via this truth.

These explanations are used by Zhiyi to explain how the Lotus Sutra expounds the 'replacement of the Three Vehicles with the One Vehicle' and the revelation of the Buddha's original enlightenment in the remote past.

See below for a further break-down of some of the teachings on the Lotus Sutra, found in these texts, and by those of subsequent Tiantai/Tendai masters.

THREE CATEGORIES OF DELUSIONS 三惑 (san waku)

All three of these delusions can be overcome through meditation on the Three Truths.

1. Delusion of thought and desire.

- a. Delusion of thought is created by distorted perceptions of truth and is mental/learned. Consists of the Five False Views 五利使 (go-rishi) and Five Delusive Inclinations 五鈍使 (go-donshi) aka the '10 Fundamental Earthly Desires' 煩惱 (bonnō/klesha);
 - i. Five False Views:
 1. The belief that there is a permanent & independent 'self'
 2. That either life ends at death, or that life is eternal
 3. The belief that karma doesn't exist
 4. Regarding false view as truth
 5. Regarding false practices as the correct way to Nirvana
 - ii. Five Delusive Inclinations:
 1. Greed
 2. Anger
 3. Foolishness
 4. Arrogance
 5. Doubt
- b. Delusions of desire are emotional/inborn & include the Five Delusive Inclinations (above)
- c. Causes people to suffer in the Six Planes 六道 (roku-dō) and the Threefold World 三界 (san gai)
 - i. Six Planes: hell, asuras, hungry ghosts, animals, humans & heaven
 - ii. Threefold World: Desire, Form & Formlessness
- d. Eradicated by all Three Vehicles
- 2. Delusions innumerable as particles of dust and sand.
 - a. Eradicated by Bodhisattvas only
 - b. Bodhisattvas must be well versed in innumerable teachings in order to be able to help sentient beings
- 3. Delusions about the true nature of existence.
 - a. Can block Bodhisattvas from realising the Middle Truth
 - b. Eradicated by Bodhisattvas only.

FOUR GUIDELINES 四釈/四種釈 (shi-shaku/shishu-shaku)

Taken from the Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra, Zhiyi posits these four as a way of interpretation, and thus, understanding the Lotus Sutra;

1. Causes and Conditions; meaning to understand the teachings of the Buddha in terms of the causes and conditions that prompted the Buddha to teach them. This is then understood in terms of the 'Four Siddhāntas' (see below)
2. Correlated Teachings; meaning to interpret the Buddha's teachings in terms of the 'Four teachings of Doctrine' and the 'Five Periods' (see below)
3. Theoretical and Essential Teachings; meaning to interpret the Buddha's teachings in terms of the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra (first half), and the essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra (second half)
4. Observation of the Mind; meaning to perceive the truth with one's own mind, through the practice of meditation.

FOUR SIDDHĀNTAS 四悉檀 (shi-shitsudan)

The Four Siddhāntas, aka the Four Ways of Preaching, was first posited by Nagarjuna in his 'Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom', and illustrates the way in which the Buddha utilises 'skilful means' when teaching. This text was highly influential to Zhiyi, and thus to Tendai. Zhiyi used the teaching of the Four Siddhāntas to great effect, linking them to the Lotus Sutra and influencing his philosophy thereof. Found in both the 'Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra', and the 'Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra', the Four Siddhāntas are;

1. Wordly/Mundane (laukika siddhānta); teaching according to the desire of the listener, enabling them to accept the teaching.
2. Individual (prātipauruṣika siddhānta); teaching according to the capacities and capabilities of the listener.
3. Therapeutic (prātipākṣika siddhānta); teaching that remedies the various humans afflictions.
4. Absolute (pāramārthika siddhānta); teaching that enables all beings to attain complete Buddhahood, which is essentially the culmination of all three.

FOUR CATEGORIES OF ONENESS 四一 (Shi'itsu/shi'ichi)

From the Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra;

1. The oneness of teaching 教一; that all the teachings of the Buddha are ultimately without contradiction, and will all eventually lead one to the single goal of Buddhahood
2. The oneness of practice 行一; that all practices are in fact for the same goal of Buddhahood
3. The oneness of persons 人一; that the Buddha is non-dual and all people will ultimately attain Buddhahood
4. The oneness of reality 理一; that all phenomena is a reflection of the original Buddha.

FOUR INTERPRETATIONS OF THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS 四種四諦 (Shishu shitai)

Based on the Srimaladevi Sutra and the Mahaparinirvana Sutra, and links in with the 'Four Teachings of Doctrine' (below)

1. Arising and perishing 生滅 (tripitaka)
Those who view things with a dual mind understand the Four Noble Truths this way; that there is a cause & effect, a start and end, that things arise and perish etc. Zhiyi identifies this with the teachings & practices found in the Tripitaka, in which there is a clear beginning, progression & ending.
2. Neither arising nor perishing 無生滅 (Shared)
Those who have a basic understanding of the True Nature of Reality, in terms of Emptiness (śūnyata)
3. Immeasurable 無量 (Distinct)
Those whose understanding of emptiness is deeper, but still tainted by the relative existence of phenomena. It is immeasurable because such people see that there are immeasurable practices to overcome the immeasurable delusions of sentient beings.
4. Spontaneous 無作 (Perfect)

Those who understand the True Nature of Reality but have not yet fully perfected/completed this insight. It is spontaneous because there is no conceptualization, thought or person that 'creates' this understanding.

FOUR TEACHINGS OF DOCTRINE 化法四教 (Kehō shikyō)

Taken from '[The] Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra', Zhiyi identified Four Teachings according to the content of their doctrine, which the Buddha used to teach sentient beings, according to their different circumstances, their 'capacities and capabilities', thus is an illustration of skilful means. The Four Teachings are;

1. Tripitaka Teachings; of Sutra, Vinaya and Shastra. These are 'gradual and sequential teachings' of the Two Vehicles (Sravaka and PretyakaBuddha).
2. Shared Teachings; includes the Tripitaka and basic Mahayana, often viewed as a bridge between the Two Vehicles and the Mahayana. These are 'Variable Teachings'
3. Distinct Teachings; Mahayana teachings only that are distinct from the Tripitaka.
4. Complete/Perfect Teachings; as described in the Lotus & Nirvana Sutras, this is the 'Sudden' teachings of the Middle Path/Middle Way.

Zhiyi describes these further in the form of practices;

1. 'Tripitaka' teachings can be summarized in to three types of practice;
 - a. 'Single Practice' of concentration, in which one controls one's mind with the purpose of experiencing nirvana.
 - b. 'Two Practices' of both concentration and contemplation, enabling one to properly perceive the Four Noble Truths
 - c. 'Three Practices' of Precepts, Concentration and Wisdom, which leads to transcending the cycle of Samsaric existence.
2. 'Shared' teachings practice is summarized as the contemplation of the illusory nature of all phenomena, in order to free oneself of attachments, including the attachment to emptiness itself.
3. 'Distinct' teachings practice, is summarised as the practice and mastery of immeasurable methods. It is characterised as distinct because the practices cannot be incorporated in to one another.
4. 'Complete/Perfect' teaching practice is summarised as one practice that incorporates all practices. This is possible due to the practitioner having "higher faculties", rather than referring to a specific practice. That said, Zhiyi referred to 10 methods (十乘觀法), which he says not only incorporates all practices, but are also superior to the previous three;
 - a. 'One method' of the Bodhisattva, who practices single-minded concentration on the *suchness* of the dharma-dhatu and obtains samadhi, causing all ignorance and distortion to be forever quelled.
 - b. 'Two methods' of concentration and contemplation
 - c. 'Three methods' of 'hearing', 'thinking', and 'practicing' (śrutacintābhāvanā). These are the three ways to wisdom.
 - d. 'Four methods' of Mindfulness. These are known as 'catvāri smṛtyupasthānāni' (Shi Nen Ju 四念處/四念住). These are first practiced individually and then practiced together

after one has become proficient. These four practices eliminate false views by realising impurity, dukkha, not-self and impermanence;

- i. Mindfulness of Body, which includes the very popular 'Mindfulness of Breath'
 - ii. Mindfulness of Sensations/feelings
 - iii. Mindfulness of Mind
 - iv. Mindfulness of Dharmas
- e. 'Five methods' of Five Objects of Meditation (pañcadvārāṇi, 五門禪 'Gomonzen')
- i. Impermanence
 - ii. Suffering
 - iii. Emptiness
 - iv. Not-self
 - v. Nirvana
- f. 'Six methods', the practice of the Six Perfections (Ṣaṭpāramitāḥ, 六波羅蜜 'roku-haramitsu')
- i. Giving
 - ii. Discipline
 - iii. Patience
 - iv. Diligence
 - v. Meditative concentration
 - vi. Wisdom
- g. 'Seven methods' of Wholesome Factors (七善法 Shichizen-hō), taken from the Lotus Sutra;
- i. Timing/seasonableness
 - ii. Meaning
 - iii. Expression
 - iv. Uniqueness
 - v. Completeness
 - vi. Pure adaptability
 - vii. Noble Objective (Nirvana)
- h. 'Eight methods', referring to the Eight Fold Path (aṣṭāṅgamārga, 八正道 'Hasshōdō');
- i. Right View
 - ii. Right Intention
 - iii. Right Speech
 - iv. Right Action
 - v. Right Livelihood
 - vi. Right Endeavour
 - vii. Right Mindfulness
 - viii. Right Concentration
- i. 'Nine methods', referring to the Nine Methods of Great Dhyāna of the Bodhisattva (九種大禪 Kyū shu Dai Zen)
- i. Dhyāna of self nature; a meditation on the original nature of things, on the mind as real nature.
 - ii. Dhyāna of all; a meditation on the development of the self and on transforming others to the utmost.

- iii. Dhyāna of difficulty
- iv. Dhyāna of all doors
- v. Dhyāna of the wholesome person
- vi. Dhyāna of all practive
- vii. Dhyāna of eradicating defilement
- viii. Dhyāna of the joy of present and future periods
- ix. Dhyāna of the purity of tranquility

These are not to be confused with the ‘10 modes by 10 methods’ spoken of in the MakaShikan.

FOUR METHODS OF CONVERSION 化儀四教 (Kage shikyō)

Related to the Five Periods, the Four Methods relate to the methodology of how one attains enlightenment. These, for the most part, are self explanatory. Together with the ‘Four Teachings of Doctrine’ (see above), they are collectively known as the ‘Eight Teachings’.

1. Sudden Method
 - i.e. teaching that is expounded without request or preparation. See the Flower Garland Sutra (Avatamsaka Sutra).
2. Gradual Method
 - i.e. teaching that is given in a sequential manner, relieving suffering over time. See the Āgama Sutras.
3. Secret Method
 - i.e. teaching that the receivers understand differently, according to their capacities and capabilities, without being aware they have received different teachings. This is not by accident, but through the Buddha’s abilities to give different teachings to a specific audience whilst simultaneously teaching the entire group.
4. Variable Method
 - i.e. teaching that the receivers understand differently, according to their capacities and capabilities, but are aware that there is a difference.

FOUR LEVELS OF PRATĪYASAMUTPĀDA 四種十二因緣 (Shishu Jūni Innen)

From the ‘Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra’, the Four ways of understanding the 12 Links of Dependant Origination; Ignorance, fabrications, consciousness, name-and-form, six sense bases, contact, feeling, craving, clinging, becoming, birth, aging-death.

1. Conceivable origination and cessation; the “lowest” or most common/most easiest understanding of the 12 Links, in which one has an intellectual understanding. In the Miao-fa lien-hua ching hsuan-i, Zhiyi gives a detailed explanation of the 12 Links and how it distinguishes Buddhist teachings from non-Buddhist teachings. Drawing much from abhidharma literature, he makes distinctions between ‘dependent production and dependent origination, the Twelve into the Three Times, the simultaneous occurrence of the Twelve in a single moment, the cause and effect from the first to the last, etc
2. Conceivable non-origination and cessation; the second “lowest” understanding, in which one has an intellectual understanding of the emptiness of the 12 Links.
3. Inconceivable origination and cessation; a “higher” form of understanding, in which one understandings the mind as the cause of all dharmas. Here, Zhiyi does not adhere to the

Yogacara teaching of “mind first” principle, but neither does he adhere to the idea that mind is a product of phenomena.

- a. “Not by themselves, nor by another, not by both, and not without cause [do the dharmas arise.] According to these four propositions, [the production of the dharmas by the mind] is inconceivable. Yet given the condition of the four siddhānta, [pratītya-samutpāda] can still be explained” (*Fa-hua hsuan-i, Carl Bielefeldt*)
4. Inconceivable non-origination and cessation; the highest understanding, that the 12 links are themselves, Buddha-nature. Drawing on the Nirvana Sutra, Zhiyi equates the Three Aspects of the 12 links (i.e. kleśa, karma & vastu) as the three cause of apprehension (intellectual), conditions (ethical) and causes (metaphysical) for bodhi (awakening), mokṣa (liberation) and dharma-kāya (absolute reality).

FIVE PERIODS 五時 (go-ji)

The Five Periods were Zhiyi’s attempt to both systematize the Buddhist Canon and explain the seeming contradictions found within the various texts. This type of systematization was not uncommon, and there were numerous attempts in China to categorize the various texts, however, we can easily argue that Zhiyi’s system became the most widely used and influential. Personally, It is hard to say whether Zhiyi believed these different periods to be literal and historical, however, thanks to modern scholarship we now know that wasn’t so. Even still, I believe these five categories function metaphorically, as well as making sense of Tendai doctrine. These Five Periods are also known as the Five Flavours, which explain the periods in a systematic and gradual process of refinement. The Five Periods are also directly linked to the Four Methods of Conversion.

1. Flower Garland Period; aka the Avatamsaka Period. This is, according to Zhiyi, the first teachings of the Buddha, and lasted for 21 days. In Zhiyi’s theorem the Buddha, attaining enlightenment in the very distant past, teaching in the form of Vairocana (Dainichi Nyorai) in the Avatamsaka Sutra, teaching a wholly Bodhisattva path, intended for Bodhisattvas only and is described as a ‘sudden method’ (see the Four Methods of Conversion). However, seeing the suffering of all sentient beings, and their potential for enlightenment, he changed tact. This leads us in to the next period.
2. Agama Period; aka the Tripitaka Period and the Dear Park Period. This is, according to Zhiyi, was the time in which the Buddha descended in to the womb of Queen Maya, the Buddha’s earthly mother, grew up as the prince Siddhartha, and attained enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree, i.e. the life story of the Buddha we are all familiar with. According to the Lotus Sutra, this appearance as a normal man was for the benefit of those who thought the path of the Bodhisattva as impossible, thus the Buddha’s life story gave us an example to follow, and the hope that we too can attain Nirvana. According to Zhiyi, this period lasted for 12 years, in which he taught the 4 Noble Truths, the Eight Fold Path, Dependant Origination, the Six Paramitas, and many other gems found in the Agama (and Pali) Sutras. This Period is described as the ‘gradual method’.
3. Vaipulya Period; aka the Expanded Period, in which the Buddha taught many of the Mahayana Sutras, such as the Vimalakirtinirdeśa Sutra, the Brahmaviśeṣacintīpariṣcchā Sutra, the Laṅkāvatāra Sutra, Śuraṅgamasamādhi Sutra, the Śrīmālā Sutra, and many others. These Sutras typically criticise the Hinayana and praise the Mahayana, thus they are called ‘contrasted’ teachings. This is known as the ‘Expanded Period’, as these sutras take the doctrine found in the

Tripitaka and expanded upon it. According to Zhiyi, this period lasted 8 years, and also described this as a 'gradual method'.

4. Prajna Period; aka the Wisdom Period, in which the Prajna Paramita Sutras expounded the teachings of emptiness and wisdom, and follows on from the Vaipulya Period. According to Zhiyi, this period lasted 22 years, and is also a 'gradual method'.
5. The Lotus & Nirvana Period. The fifth and final period is the Lotus & Nirvana Period. It was at this time that the Buddha expounded and revealed his true teaching, "encompassing the three (vehicles) and returning to the One (vehicle)". The previous periods were taught according to skilful means, and according to the capacities and capabilities of the audience. In the Lotus & Nirvana Sutras, the Buddha declares all these methods & periods to be one and the same Buddha Dharma, thus bringing his teachings full circle. According to Zhiyi, this period lasts 8 years.

FIVE FLAVOURS 五味 (go-mi)

The Five Flavours, as state above, are a sequential representation of the above Five Periods. The first flavour is fresh milk, then cream, then curds, then butter, and finally ghee.

1. Fresh milk; this is the Flower Garland Period and is called Fresh Milk because it is the first teaching from the Buddha and has not gone through any processes.
2. Cream; representing the Agama Period, as the Buddha's teaching goes through its first refining process.
3. Curds; representing the Vaipulya period as from cream comes the curds, just as without the teaching of the Agamas, there could be no Vaipulya.
4. Butter; representing the Wisdom Period, as curd turns to butter, naturally the Vaipulya turns to the Prajna & emptiness teachings.
5. Ghee; representing the Lotus Period, and the final stage of the refining process.

In all these stages, those of inferior capacities must go through this process of refinement. However, one of superior capacities may penetrate the Dharmadhatu and know the True teachings at any stage, without the need to go through the process.

Zhiyi took this teaching of the Five Flavours direct from the Nirvana Sutra.

FIVE MAJOR PRINCIPLES 五重玄 (Gojū-gen)

Common to the masters of his time, Zhiyi claimed that the essence of the Lotus Sutra can be found within its title; "Saddharma Puṇḍarīka Sūtra", in English "Sūtra on the White Lotus of the Sublime Dharma", in Chinese 妙法蓮華經 Miàofǎ Liánhuá jīng, and in Japanese Myōhō Renge Kyō. Zhiyi created 5 points to interpret the title, these 5 points were also used to interpret the sutra itself. These 5 points are 'name, essence, quality, function, and teaching'.

1. "Name" 名; concerns the meaning of the title of a sutra. The "Interpretation of the Name" section of '[The] Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra' gives a detailed explanation of the title and explains why it represents the essence of the Lotus Sutra.
2. "Essence" 體; concerns the ultimate or fundamental principle of a sutra. The "Clarification of the Essence" section defines the substance of the title (and thus the sutra) to be the true aspect of all phenomena.

2. “Quality” 宗; concerns the essential doctrines of the sutra, and takes the practice of attaining Buddhahood as ‘cause’, and the attaining Buddhahood as ‘effect’. The section “Elucidation of Quality” defines the principal doctrine of the theoretical teaching (first half) of the Lotus Sutra to be the replacement of the provisional teachings with the true teaching, and the principal doctrine of the essential teaching (latter half) to be the revelation of the Buddha’s true identity, i.e., his original attainment of enlightenment, as well as the revelation of the true cause and true effect of his enlightenment. This section of Profound Meaning also states that the quality, or main point, of the sutra as a whole is the causality of the supreme vehicle of Buddhahood.
3. “Function” 用; concerns the benefit and power of a sutra for sentient beings. The “Discussion of Function” section says that the theoretical teaching dispels belief in the three vehicles (teachings for voice-hearers, cause-awakened ones, and bodhisattvas) and arouses faith in the one vehicle of Buddhahood, and that the essential teaching denies the Buddha’s attainment of enlightenment in this life and arouses faith in his original attainment of enlightenment in the remote past. Moreover, the function of the Lotus Sutra as a whole is to lead all people to Buddhahood.
4. “Teaching” 教; concerns the position and influence of a sutra with respect to other sutras, that the Lotus Sutra incorporates and made valid by the Lotus Sutra. The section “Evaluation of the Teaching” asserts that the Lotus Sutra encompasses all other teachings, and that its influence permeates all phenomena. This section introduces the systems of classifying the sutras advocated by the three schools of southern China and the seven schools of northern China, and refutes them with Zhiyi’s own classification of “five periods and eight teachings,” a system that defines The Lotus Sutra as the supreme sutra. Zhiyi’s five major principles are based on the passage of the “Supernatural Powers” (twenty-first) chapter of the Lotus Sutra that begins the transfer of the essence of the sutra to the Bodhisattvas of the Earth. It reads: “To put it briefly, all the doctrines possessed by the Thus Come One [name], all the freely exercised supernatural powers of the Thus Come One [function], the storehouse of all the secret essentials of the Thus Come One [essence], all the most profound matters of the Thus Come One [quality] —all these are proclaimed, revealed, and clearly expounded in this sutra [teaching].”

The entirety of “[The] Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra” is Zhiyi’s interpretation of the title and how it illustrates the essence, or “profound meaning” of the Lotus Sutra.

SIX IDENTITIES 六即

Taken from the ‘Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra’, this is a teaching with the meaning that we are essentially (inherently) Buddhas, however in order for our Buddhahood to bear fruit, we must practice. Thus, the 6 Identities can be viewed in progression from ‘unenlightened’ to complete Buddhahood.

1. Identity in principle (Buddhahood is inherent)
2. Verbal identity (An intellectual understanding that Buddhahood is inherent)
3. Identity of religious practice (One’s behaviour begins to accord with an understanding of identities 1&2)
4. Identity of resemblance (one beings to look like a Buddha in conduct)
5. Identity of partial truth (one partially realizes one’s identity with Buddhahood)
6. Ultimate identity (complete Buddhahood)

TEN SUBTLE PRINCIPLES 十妙 (Jū-myō)

The 'Ten Subtle Principles' were put forth by Zhiyi in '[The] Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra', based around the word "subtle", which is found in the title of the Lotus Sutra. It should be noted, that Zhiyi used Kumārajīva's translation of the Lotus Sutra, who's translation is the only version to contain the word "subtle". The translations by Dharmarakṣa and Dharmagupta used the term "right/true" (正), which is close to the Sanskrit meaning of the title.

Zhiyi broke the Lotus Sutra in to two sections; the first half of the Lotus Sutra being the 'cause', or the provisional, and the second half the 'effect', or the ultimate. Based on this, Zhiyi subdivided the Ten Subtle Principles for each half; "Ten Subtleties of the Gateway to the Traces" (jimen shimiao, 跡門十妙) (first half), and "Ten Subtleties of the Gateway to the Origin" (benmen shimiao, 本門十妙) (second half).

The Ten Subtleties of the Gateway to the Traces are based on the concepts of the true aspect of all phenomena and the replacement of the three vehicles with the one vehicle. They are;

1. Subtle Principle of Phenomena 境妙; According to Zhiyi, all phenomenon can be seen as an expression of spiritual truth. Our understanding of reality, and how it manifests or is revealed to us, is based on how enlightened we are, ie our own wisdom. The more enlightened we are, or the more wisdom we have, the more phenomena will appear identical to the principle. (Zhiyi created many systems to categorise Phenomena, such as; the Ten Suchnesses, The Twelfefold Causality, The Threefold Truth etc. Included in this is also well established Buddhist doctrine, such as the 4 Noble Truths, etc.)
2. Subtle Principle of Doctrine 智妙; 'Doctrine' is a provisional device used by schools or teachers as a means for us to gain wisdom and understand reality, to reveal the principle. The doctrine that perfectly reflects and reveals the principle is the best.
3. Subtle Principle of Practice 行妙; The 'doctrine' thus outlines the framework of 'practice' and conduct. The practice that perfectly reflects and reveals the doctrine is the best. (Zhiyi illustrated three major streams of practice; precepts, meditation and wisdom, and includes ALL forms of Buddhist practice of the śrāvakas, pratyekabuddhas, and the bodhisattvas.)
4. Subtle Principle of Stages [to Liberation] 位妙; When ones practice is inconsistent with the doctrine, one will forever be caught in samsara. When ones practice is consistent with doctrine, one will progress through the stages to liberation. (Zhiyi identified 6 stages of attainment according to different levels of practice 六即 roku-soku;
 - a. The stage of being a Buddha in theory. One has Buddha-nature, but not yet heard the Buddhas teachings.
 - b. The stage of hearing the name or word. One comes to an intellectual understanding that one has Buddha-nature.
 - c. The stage of perception and action. One is able to perceive the truth of their Buddha-nature through study and practice.
 - d. The stage of resemblance to enlightenment. One eliminates the first two causes of illusion and purifies the six sense organs, and ones wisdom resembles that of a Buddha.
 - e. The stage of progressive awakening. Once eradicates all illusion except fundamental darkness, awakening progressively to ones Buddha-nature.
 - f. The stage of ultimate enlightenment. One finally eliminates fundamental darkness and fully manifests the Buddha nature.

Zhiyi further linked these with the 52 Stages of a Bodhisattva 五十二位 Gojūni-i)

5. Subtle Principle of Three Elements 三法妙; The True Principle only arises from the correct application of both Doctrine & Conduct. This is the truth of cause and effect.
6. Subtle Principle of Empathy & Response 感應妙; Just like Shakyamuni Buddha, when one attains the 'Buddha eye', one gains the drive to establish and manifest the Dharma. The Buddha sees the truth of reality and has *empathy*. He then *responds* by applying the teachings skilfully using Upaya.
7. Subtle Principle of Transcendental (Supra-mundane) Power 神通妙; The Buddha uses his supernatural powers to reveal the truth;
8. Subtle Principle of Expounding [the Dharma] 說法妙; the Buddha uses his words to bring sentient beings to enlightenment, regardless of the vehicle.
9. Subtle Principle of Relationship/Retinues 眷屬妙; Resulting from the Buddhas teachings, Zhiyi illustrated 5 kinds of retinues, that relates to the Buddha, assuring all sentient beings will be freed from Samsara eventually.
10. Subtle Principle of Benefit (merit) 利益妙; as a result of being a retinue of the Buddha, all beings, depending on their capacities and capabilities, receive various benefits, derived from the teachings of the Buddha. This is why a teaching may be seen as simple or sublime to different people.

“Ten Subtleties of the Gateway to the Origin” are based on the revelation of the Buddha’s original enlightenment countless kalpas in the past as expounded in the “Life Span” (sixteenth) chapter. The Ten Subtleties of the Gateway to the Trace are essentially derived from those of the Origin, and are their manifestations. That is to say, the Gateway to the Trace are preparatory to the Origin. Thus, although they are identified as separate, they are in essence one in the same, and inseparable. The reason for the separation, as Zhiyi points out, is to illustrate that the Buddha’s Dharma is *subtle*, and in many ways inconceivable with mere words and rudimentary understanding. Furthermore, although the ‘Traces’ represent ‘Relative Truth’ and the ‘Origin’ represents the ‘Ultimate Truth’, both are neither Relative nor Ultimate. This is the essence of Zhiyi’s middle truth.

The Ten Subtleties of the Gateway to the Origin are;

1. Subtlety of the Original Cause 本因妙. The first three Trace Subtleties (Phenomena, Knowledge & Practice) are the manifestations of the original cause, which was the Buddha’s original practice from the very beginning, countless kalpas ago.
2. Subtlety of the Original Effect 本果妙. As the Buddha’s initial attainment of Buddhahood indicates that the Threefold Dharma in the Traces is the manifestation of this original effect.
3. Subtlety of the Original Land 本國土妙. The original land that the Buddha attained enlightenment in is called the Sāha land. The Sāha land in which the Buddha teaches the traces is derived from this original land.
4. Subtlety of the Original Empathy & Response 本感應妙. The empathy for living beings that the Buddha has by teaching the Traces is the continuation of the empathy that took place in the Origin.
5. Subtlety of the Original Supra-mundane Powers 本神通妙. Similarly, the Trace supra-mundane powers are manifestations of his Original supra-mundane powers.

6. Subtlety of the Original Proclamation of the Dharma 本說法妙. The teaching of the Trace all point to the teaching of the Original, and are extensions/manifestations of the Origin.
7. Subtlety of the Original Retinues 本眷屬妙. Sentient beings are all retinues of the Buddha, through both the Trace and the Origin.
8. Subtlety of the Original Nirvana 本涅槃妙. The Buddha's declaration of entering nirvana at death in the Traces is a skilful means, for the sake of sentient beings. In truth, he constantly abides in original nirvana.
9. Subtlety of the Original Life-span 本壽命妙. The Buddha's original lifespan has no limits.
10. Subtlety of the Original Benefits 本利益妙. Thanks to the Buddha's original result of enlightenment and his tireless efforts of teaching, countless sentient beings are continuously benefiting, through the doors of Trace and Origin.

(It should be noted that in Nichiren Buddhism, these are known as the Ten 'mystic' principles. This is because Nichiren interpreted the word 'myo' to mean mystic. However, in Tendai it is understood to mean 'subtle/sublime'. This interpretation is supported by Zhiyi's own works.

TEN SUCHNESSES 十如是 (jū nyoze)

Taken directly from chapter 2 of the Lotus Sutra, "Expedient Means", the 10 Suchnesses is a description of the true aspect of all phenomena (which can only really be understood by Buddhas). Since these Ten are common to both Buddhas and all sentient beings, there is ultimately no fundamental distinction between them. This is then the bases of Zhiyi's teaching of 'Ichinen Sanzen' (3000 realms in a single thought/moment).

1. Such as Appearance (form): the attributes of everything that is discernible, such as color, shape, or behavior.
2. Such as Nature (nature): the inherent disposition or quality of a person or thing that cannot be discerned from the outward appearance.
3. Such as Entity (embodiment): the substance of life that permeates as well as integrates both appearance and nature.

The above three suchnesses describe the reality of life itself. The next six suchnesses, from the fourth through the ninth, explain the functions and workings of life.

4. Such as Power (potency): life's potential energy.
5. Such as Influence (function): the activity produced when life's inherent power or potential energy is activated.
6. Such as Internal cause (primary cause): the potential cause in life that produces an effect of the same quality as itself, i.e., good, evil, or neutral.
7. Such as Relation (secondary Cause): the relationship of secondary, indirect causes to the internal cause. Secondary causes are various conditions, both internal and external, that help the internal cause produce an effect.
8. Such as Latent effect (effect): the dormant effect produced in life when an internal cause is activated through its related conditions.

9. Such as Manifest effect (recompense): the tangible, perceivable effect that emerges in time as an expression of a dormant effect and therefore of a potential cause, again through its related conditions.
10. Such as Consistency from beginning to end (complete fundamental whole): the unifying factor among the ten suchnesses. It indicates that all of the other nine suchnesses from Appearance to Manifest Effect are consistently interrelated. All nine suchnesses thus harmoniously express the same condition of existence at any given moment.

20 PRINCIPLES OF THE LOTUS SUTRA

Taken from the 'Hokke Mongu Ki' by Miao-lo ('Annotations of the "Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra"), a commentary on the 'Hokke Mongu' by Zhiyi. Unknown translation.

1. Giving the prophecy of enlightenment in near future to two vehicles (chap. 3)
2. Showing (or Opening) Buddha's original enlightenment and his immeasurable life span (chap 16)
3. Praising that benefits will accrue even to the fiftieth person who rejoices upon hearing of it (chap 18)
4. Person who hear of the 阿含 (sacred works) attains Buddhahood in this lifetime (chap 17)
5. Shakyamuni shows that Devadatta was his teacher in the past life (chap 12)
6. Manjushiri shows that eight-year-old dragon king's daughter was his student in the past life (chap 12)
7. Giving the promise that anyone who hears only one phrase of the LS shall attain Buddhahood (chap 10)
8. Anyone who protects the name of the LS will receive innumerable benefits (chap 26)
9. Women who hear the chapter of Medicine King shall never receive women's lives or be born as women (chap 23)
10. Anyone who hears and reads and recites the LS shall know neither old age nor death (chap 23)
11. Those who carry out five practices shall get to the stage of resemblance to enlightenment (chap 19)
12. Those who carry out four Peaceful Practices shall get into copper-wheel in their dream (chap 14)
(Here perhaps some explanation should be given. Zhiyi connected four wheel-kings, which you can find in traditional Indian folk stories, with stages of enlightenment in "The Words and Phrases of the LS". Miao-lo commented on this saying that copper-wheel king means four Peaceful Practices.)
13. Those who vex or trouble the practitioners of the LS will have their heads split into seven pieces (chap 26)
14. Those who alms to the practitioners of the LS will enjoy good fortune surpassing the ten honorable titles (chap 10)
15. Among the sutras Shakyamuni has preached, now preach, and will preach, the LS is the most difficult to believe and the most difficult to understand. (chap 10)
16. Offering ten similes to praise the teachings of the LS. (chap 23)
17. Maitreya doesn't know any single one of Bodhisattvas of the Earth. (chap 15)
18. The Omen of Lotus in the east which even Manjushiri didn't understand (chap 24)
19. Teaching major world system dust particle kalpas to bodhisattvas of the theoretical teaching. (chap 07)

20. Giving a metaphor of numberless major world system dust particle kalpas to show the original enlightenment (chap 16)

THE OUTSTANDING PRINCIPLES OF THE LOTUS SUTRA 法華秀句 (Hokke-shuku)

A work written in 821 by Dengyo, the founder of the Japanese Tendai school. It explains why the Tendai school, which is based on the Lotus Sutra, is superior to the Dharma Characteristics (Hosso), Three Treatises (Sanron), Flower Garland (Kegon), True Word (Shingon), and other schools.

It was written to refute the arguments of Tokuitsu, a priest of the Dharma Characteristics school, who asserted that some people are by nature eternally incapable of attaining Buddhahood, and that the three vehicle teachings are true while the one vehicle teaching is provisional. In this work, Dengyolists ten superior characteristics of the Lotus Sutra, in light of which he argues its supremacy over all other teachings. The ten superior characteristics of the Lotus Sutra are as follows:

1. Shakyamuni Buddha reveals the truth only in this sutra.
2. The title of the sutra as well as various names later given to the sutra has profound meaning.
3. In this sutra, the Buddha spontaneously expounds the teaching of his enlightenment without being asked to do so.
4. The sutra reveals that the five categories of Buddhas (all Buddhas, past Buddhas, present Buddhas, future Buddhas, and Shakyamuni Buddha) employ a similar device to lead people to the one Buddha vehicle; that is, they first expound the teachings that serve as expedient means to develop the people's capacity, and then reveal the one Buddha vehicle, the direct path to Buddhahood.
5. Shakyamuni declares the Lotus Sutra to be foremost among all the sutras.
6. He expounds ten similes to illustrate the superiority of the Lotus Sutra over all other sutras.
7. The sutra can purify the workings of the six sense organs.
8. The sutra enables people to attain Buddhahood in their present form.
9. In the assembly of the Buddha Many Treasures and the Buddhas of the ten directions who are Shakyamuni's emanations, Shakyamuni declares that he will entrust the sutra to someone to ensure that it will be perpetuated.
10. The sutra expounds the encouragements of Bodhisattva Universal Worthy who said to Shakyamuni Buddha that he will guard and protect those who accept and uphold the sutra after the Buddha's death.

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