**Mastering the core teachings of the Buddha 2**

This is a compilation of warnings about the possible dangers/side effects, which can occur because of an intensive meditation practice.

**Chapter xxi: Foreword and warning**

#1: p. xxi (19): for whom this book is (not) written for

*”It is also the unrestrained voice of one whose practice has been dedicated to complete and unexcelled mastery of the traditional and hardcore stages of the path rather than some sort of vapid New Age fluff or pop psychological head-trip. If that ain’t you, consider reading something else.  
As a highly regarded senior meditation teacher and scholar (who will remain anonymous) said to me after skimming through an earlier draft of this book, “Most Buddhists are just aging boomers who want to do something to feel better about themselves as they get older and are not really interested in this sort of thing.” I wish them great success in getting those valid needs met.  
I must reluctantly advise such individuals to avoid reading this book or at least the chapters marked with a lightning bolt. This is simultaneously an admission of the limitations of this work, an invitation to adopt a more empowering view of what is possible on the spiritual path, and a warning.”*

#2: p. xxi (20)

*“Read this as another warning: if you get good enough at these practices, people will often have bad reactions to you if you go around talking about it, and the number who will instead find your achievements a source of inspiration and empowerment, an opportunity to learn something for themselves, as they rightly should, will likely be few.“*

*… ”Reading between the lines, you should take this admission as yet another warning. If you  
go way into this stuff, you will discover this same loneliness.”*

#3: p. xxi (21/22): about mental health and material stability

*“This should be seen as another warning: this book and the path presented in it are not for  
those who at this time find that they are unstable spiritual seekers. Meditation at the levels I am  
about to describe requires a baseline mental and material stability; and with respect to the latter,  
not necessarily wealth or even a 401(k), but ethically acquired requisites such as food and a safe,  
conducive shelter. You must have your psychological trip very together to be able to handle  
and integrate the intense techniques, side effects, and results I am about to discuss. In this book,  
I will explain in detail what is meant by “have your psychological trip very together”, with the  
key requisite skills being an ability to identify difficult mind states when they arise and handle  
them with kindness and aplomb. Luckily these are learnable skill sets.*

*There are plenty of gentle techniques and schools of practice available for people for whom it  
would be more skillful and constructive to apply those techniques. There are also many skillful  
healing modalities available today to help those who need to heal psychological trauma or clear  
up barriers to more intense practice. If you need those, you are highly encouraged to do that  
crucial work first. Many of the techniques and doses recommended in this book are for those  
who already have a solid platform of mental health and are willing to accept the risks inherent  
in intensive training.*

*Stated much more explicitly: people who do strong and intensive practice can hurt themselves and freak out. Just as serious athletes can hurt their bodies when they take a misstep or push themselves beyond their limits, just so serious mental athletes can strain their minds, brains, and nervous systems, and strained brains can sometimes function in very strange ways.  
To rewrite the operating system rapidly while it is running doesn’t always go so well in the short term or occasionally in the long term. Thus, while I will include nearly endless exhortations to find the depths of power and clarity that you are capable of, I will also add numerous warnings about how to keep from frying yourself.*

*By “frying yourself”, I mean explicitly severe mood instability and psychotic episodes, as well as other odd biological and energetic disturbances, with some practitioners occasionally ending up in inpatient psychiatric facilities for various periods of time. Exactly how much of this is nature (their own “inherent wiring” and potential for mental pathology), how much of it is nurture (practicing hardcore meditation techniques in high doses such as those presented here), and how much is related to other unidentified factors is a question that is still being worked out, just so that you are not in any way uninformed about the still-developing state of modern science as it applies to the art of intensive meditation.*

*Some who have read this book apparently have only noticed the former message, that being to find the depths of power and resolution you are capable of (a message put in to counterbalance a culture full of people who are underutilizing or not recognizing their inherent potential), and they missed the parts that discuss how and when to back off, a message found in numerous places in this book, much to their chicken-fried detriment. Hopefully putting this here right up front will again help people to hear both messages and find the balance between the two that works, as I am a firm believer in people being informed not only of the benefits but also of the risks so that they can make informed decisions and practice accordingly. You wouldn’t want to do power lifting without proper training, spotting, and technique, nor run marathons without lots of careful training, stretching, hydration, great nutrition, and the like: same with hardcore meditation practice. You also would be naive to imagine that you can push your body to its limits without risk: same with your brain and hardcore meditation practice.”*

**Part 1 – The Fundamentals**

**Chapter 1: Introduction**

#4: p. 3 (27)

*“If you have not yet read the Foreword and Warning, please do so now.”*

#5: p 4 (28): About pitfalls, limitations, and shadow sides of the “Three Trainings”

*“Chapter one, “The Three Trainings”, introduces morality, concentration, and wisdom (see also The Long Discourses of the Buddha, or the Digha Nikaya, sutta 10, usually referred to as DN 10)”*

*…*

*“Each training has its own specific set of premises, goals, practices, and standards of mastery for those practices. These are different from each other, and problems can arise if we conflate the premises of one training when pursuing the others. Each training also has its common pitfalls, limitations, and shadow sides, which are rarely made clear, and failure to do so has caused much confusion.”*

**Part 2 – Light and Shadows:**

**Chapter 17: Introduction to parts two through five**

p. 103 (127): contemporary meditation scenes

*“The practical reason for including Part Two at all is that what often happens between trying to apply the basics of technical meditation discussed in Part One and successful entry into real meditation territory discussed in Parts Three through Six is that we run into the mainstream culture of contemporary meditation scenes and the communities that develop around them. We need support, friends who are into what we are into, good teachers, and places to practice. We wish to be in the company of fellow adventurers rather than be lone wanderers in strange lands. The Buddhist term for this is that we want sangha, a community of like-minded people. Unfortunately, much of what we find is not particularly conducive to healthy adventure and deep exploration at all  
Thus, as one small dissenting voice against the tide, I have included Part Two to help those who want to go deeper than many around them and avoid the numerous cultural sidetracks and disempowering voices that will keep them from achieving their goals.”*

p. 104 (128): about traps and pitfalls

*“Further, the numerous traps and pitfalls presented in this book are so common that each of us needs to be wary, reflecting regularly and honestly on how we have fallen into them once more. I sometimes find myself re-reading this book and thinking, “Wow, that was a good point. I should try to remember it.““*

*… I think that most spiritual practitioners could and should become much more comfortable admitting what they don’t know and seeking clarifcation. The times when I myself have failed to do so have been much to my detriment, manifesting in the forms of slow progress, more pain and confusion than were necessary, stagnation, and occasionally regression of practice.*

p. 105 (129): about attainments

*“There are those who hold the view that attainments will always speak for themselves and that people will be able to tell, but this is not always true. There are others that point out that plenty who claim attainments are either being deceptive or err in their assessment of themselves. Perhaps it is purely my time and cultural conditioning that creates my view that reasonable, open discussions of attainments and qualifcations to teach are reasonable and valuable.”*

p. 105 (129): about counterbalancing imbalances

*“However, any point I make in some attempt to counterbalance what I perceive to be generic imbalances may not apply to you. Such counterbalancing effort can cause further imbalances in you if you are substantially to the other end of things from the mainstream. For example, if I say something like, “Make tons of effort in meditation,” and you are already overpowering your practice, then you need to be able to figure out if my advice is targeted at you specifically, and, if not, take it in context and move on to other points. In other words, reach for balance and recognize that this book was written in a specific cultural context with specific assumptions that might not apply to you at all.”*