

THIỆN PHÚC

**LIVING & CULTIVATING IN
THE SPIRIT OF THE SUTRA OF
THE EIGHT AWAKENINGS
OF GREAT PEOPLE
(SÔNG TU THEO TÌNH THẦN KINH BÁT ĐẠI NHÂN GIÁC)**

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Preface

Buddhists must definitely build up their foundation in which we cannot lack understanding of the enlightenment in cultivation. According to Buddhism, enlightenment is a complete and deep realization of what it means to be a Buddha. In Buddhism, enlightenment is achieving a complete and deep realization of what it means to be a Buddha and how to reach Buddhahood. There are many sets of sutras in Buddhist scriptures, among them, there is a sutra titled Eight Awakenings of Great People. The form of the sutra is very simple. The text form is ancient, just like the Forty-Two Chapters and the Sutra on the Six Paramitas. However, its content is extremely profound and marvelous. Shramana An Shi Kao, a Partian monk, translated from Sanskrit into Chinese in about 150 A.D. (during the Later Han Dynasty). Most Venerable Thích Thanh Từ translated from Chinese into Vietnamese in the 1970s. The original text of this sutra in Sanskrit is still extant to this day. This sutra is entirely in accord with both the Theravada and Mahayana traditions. In fact, each of the eight items in this sutra can be considered as a subject of meditation which Buddhist disciples should at all times, by day and by night, with a sincere attitude, recite and keep in mind these eight truths that all great people awaken to. These are eight Truths that all Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and great people awaken to. After awakening, they then energetically cultivate the Way. By steeping themselves in kindness and compassion, they grow wisdom. They sail the Dharma-body ship all the way across to Nirvana's other shore, only to re-enter the sea of death and rebirth to rescue all living beings. They use these Eight Truths to point out the right road to all beings and in this way, help them to recognize the anguish of death and rebirth. They inspire all to cast off and forsake the Five Desires, and instead to cultivate their minds in the way of all Sages. If Buddhist disciples recite this Sutra on the Eight Awakenings, and constantly ponder its meaning and cultivate them at all times, they will certainly eradicate boundless offenses, advance toward Bodhi, quickly realize Proper Enlightenment, forever be free of death and rebirth, and eternally abide in joy. Every one of us knows what we deeply aspire to gain is happiness and what we try to

avoid is sufferings and afflictions; however, our actions and behaviors in daily life do not bring us any joy and happiness; on the contrary, they only lead us to more sufferings and afflictions. Why? Buddhism believes that we cause our own sufferings and afflictions because we are not awakening of the truth. Buddhism claims that experiences which are apparently pleasurable in this world are ultimately states of suffering. Devout Buddhists should see clearly the point is that we perceive them as states of pleasure only because, in comparison to states of sufferings and afflictions, they appear as a form of relief. In order to have a daily life and cultivation full of mindfulness, peace and happiness, Buddhist practitioners, day and night, should wholeheartedly recite and meditate on the these eight awakenings discovered by the great beings.

According to the Sutra of the Eight Awakenings of Great People, any Buddhist practitioner who lives and cultivates in accordance with the spirit of the Sutra of Eight Awakenings of Great People, and is aware that the world is impermanent. All regimes are subject to fall; all things composed of the four elements that are empty and contain the seeds of suffering. Human beings are composed of five aggregates, and are without a separate self. They are always in the process of change, constantly being born and constantly dying. They are empty of self, without sovereignty. The mind is the source of all unwholesome deeds and confusion, and the body is the forest of all impure actions. If we meditate on these facts, we can gradually be released from the cycle of birth and death. The world is impermanent, countries are perilous and fragile; the body's four elements are a source of pain; ultimately, they are empty; the Five Aggregates (Skandhas) are not me; death and rebirth are simply a series of transformations; misleading, unreal, and uncontrollable; the mind is the wellspring of evil; the body is the breeding ground of offenses; whoever can investigate and contemplate these truths, will gradually break free of death and rebirth. Who is aware that more desire brings more suffering. The awareness that more desire brings more suffering. All hardships in daily life arise from greed and desire. Those with little desire and ambition are able to relax, their bodies and minds are free from entanglement. Too much desire brings pain. Death and rebirth are tiresome ordeals which stem from our thoughts of greed and desire. By reducing desires, we can

realize absolute truth and enjoy independence and well-being in both body and mind. Who is aware that the human mind is always searching for possessions and never feels fulfilled. This causes impure actions to ever increase. In our daily life we always want to have good food, nice clothes, attractive jewellery, but we only feel satisfied with them for a short time, after that, the very same object that once gave us pleasure might cause us frustration now. The same can also be applied to fame. At the beginning we might think ourselves that we are so happy when we are famous, but after some time, it could be that all we feel is frustration and dissatisfaction. Bodhisattvas, however, always remember the principle of having few desires. They live a simple life in peace in order to practice the Way, and consider the realization of perfect understanding as their only career. Our minds are never satisfied or content with just enough. The more we obtain, the more we want; thus we create offenses and do evil deeds; Bodhisattvas do not make mistakes, instead, they are always content, nurture the way by living a quiet life in humble surroundings. Their sole occupation is cultivating wisdom. Who is aware of the extent to which laziness is an obstacle to practice. For this reason, we must practice diligently to destroy the unwholesome mental factors which bind us, and to conquer the four kinds of Mara, in order to free ourselves from the prison of the five aggregates and the three worlds. Idleness and self-indulgence will be our downfall. With unflagging vigor, Great people break through their afflictions and baseness. They vanquish and humble the Four Kinds of Demons, and they escape from the prison of the Five Skandhas. Who is aware that ignorance is the cause of the endless cycle of birth and death. Therefore, Bodhisattvas always listen and learn in order to develop their understanding and eloquence. This enables them to educate living beings and bring them to the realm of great joy. Stupidity and ignorance are the cause of death and rebirth, Bodhisattvas are always attentive to and appreciative of extensive study and erudition. They strive to expand their wisdom and refine their eloquence. Teaching and transforming living beings, nothing brings them greater joy than this. Who is aware that poverty creates hatred and anger, which creates a vicious cycle of negative thoughts and activity. When practicing generosity, Bodhisattvas consider everyone, friends and enemies alike, as equal. They do not condemn anyone's

past wrongdoings, nor do they hate those who are presently causing harm. The suffering of poverty breeds deep resentment; wealth unfairly distributed creates ill-will and conflict among people. So, Bodhisattvas practice giving and treat friend and foe alike. They neither harbor grudges nor despise evil-natured people. Who is aware that the five categories of desire lead to difficulties. Although we are in the world, we should try not to be caught up in worldly matters. A monk, for example, has in his possession only three robes and one bowl. He lives simply in order to practice the Way. His precepts keep him free of attachment to worldly things, and he treats everyone equally and with compassion. Great people, even as laity, are not blighted by worldly pleasures; instead, they constantly aspire to take up the three precepts-robes and blessing-bowl of the monastic life. Their ideal and ambition is to leave the household and family life to cultivate the way in immaculate purity. Their virtuous qualities are lofty and sublime; their attitudes toward all creatures are kind and compassionate. Who is aware that the fire of birth and death is raging, causing endless suffering everywhere. Bodhisattvas should take the Great Vow to help everyone, to suffer with everyone, and to guide all beings to the realm of great joy. Rebirth and death are beset with measureless suffering and afflictions, like a blazing fire. Thus, great people make the resolve to cultivate the Great Vehicle to rescue all beings. They endure endless hardship while standing in for others. They lead everyone to ultimate happiness.

This little book titled “Living & Cultivating In the Spirit of the Sutra of the Eight Awakenings of Great People” is not a profound philosophical study of the Sutra of the Eight Awakenings of Great People, but a book that briefly points out essential summaries of living and cultivating in accordance with the spirit of enlightenment in the Sutra of the Eight Awakenings of Great People. Devout Buddhists should always remember that cultivation is only effective when we actually apply the Buddha's teachings on mind and consciousness as well as their roles in daily cultivation. At the same time apply these teachings into practicing well-being exercises that are linked to established daily life patterns, makes our lives more peaceful, mindful, and happier. For devout Buddhists, once you make up your mind to enter the path of cultivation, should persevere and never have the

intention of retreat; step by step, you should try your best to set a strong foundation on calmness, mindfulness and happiness. Over the times, this will help us form habits which make our life better and better. In fact, once we have these habits, they will become our natural habits. Once they become integrated in our lifestyle, we will always live with them. Devout Buddhists should also always remember the goal of any Buddhist cultivator is to achieve self-enlightening, that is examining with one's own intelligence, and not depending upon another; enlightening or awakening of others, then achieve the final accomplishment, to go beyond the cycle of births and deaths right in this very life. For these particular reasons, the Buddhist Dharma becomes exceptionally special; however, it is also a matter not easily comprehensible. The Buddhist practitioners' journey demands continuous efforts with right understanding and practice. Presently even with so many books available on Buddhism, I venture to compose this booklet titled "Living & Cultivating In the Spirit of the Sutra of the Eight Awakenings of Great People" in Vietnamese and English to briefly introduce the living and cultivating in accordance with the spirit of enlightenment in the Sutra of the Eight Awakenings of Great People to all Vietnamese Buddhist followers, especially Buddhist beginners, hoping this little contribution will help Buddhists in different levels to understand on how to achieve and lead a life of peace, mindfulness and happiness.

Respectfully,
Thiện Phúc

Part One
A Summary of Buddhism &
Cultivation In Buddhism
(Phần Một: Sơ Lược Về Đạo Phật & Tu Hành Trong Đạo Phật)

Chapter One

An Overview & Meanings of Buddhism

I. An Overview of Buddhism:

In the year 563 B.C. a baby was born into a royal family in northern India. He grew up in wealth and luxury but soon found that worldly comfort and security do not guarantee real happiness. He was deeply moved by the suffering he saw all around, so He resolved to find the key to human happiness. When he was 29 he left his wife and child and his Royal Palace and set off to sit at the feet of the great religious teachers of the day to learn from them. They taught him much but none really knew the cause of human sufferings and afflictions and how it could be overcome. Eventually, after six years study and meditation he had an experience in which all ignorance fell away and he suddenly understood. From that day onwards, he was called the Buddha, the Awakened One. He lived for another 45 years in which time he traveled all over northern India teaching others what he had discovered. His compassion and patience were legendary and he made hundreds of thousands of followers. In his eightieth year, old and sick, but still happy and at peace, he finally passed away into nirvana. It couldn't have been an easy thing for the Buddha to leave his family. He must have worried and hesitated for a long time before he finally left. There were two choices, dedicating himself to his family or dedicating himself to the whole world. In the end, his great compassion made him give himself to the whole world. And the whole world still benefits from his sacrifice. This was perhaps the most significant sacrifice ever made.

Even though the Buddha is dead but 2,500 years later his teachings still help and save a lot of people, his example still inspires people, his words still continue to change lives. Only a Buddha could have such power centuries after his death. The Buddha did not claim that he was a god, the child of god or even the messenger from a god. He was simply a man who perfected himself and taught that if we followed his example, we could perfect ourselves also. He never asked his followers to worship him as a god. In fact, He prohibited his followers

to praise him as a god. He told his followers that he could not give favors to those who worship him with personal expectations or calamities to those who don't worship him. He asked his followers to respect him as students respect their teacher. He also reminded his followers to worship a statue of the Buddha to remind ourselves to try to develop peace and love within ourselves. The perfume of incense reminds us of the pervading influence of virtue, the lamp reminds us of the light of knowledge and the followers which soon fade and die, remind us of impermanence. When we bow, we express our gratitude to the Buddha for what his teachings have given us. This is the core nature of Buddhist worship. A lot of people have misunderstood the meaning of "worship" in Buddhism, even sincere Buddhists. Buddhists do not believe that the Buddha is a god, so in no way they could possibly believe that a piece of wood or metal is a god. In Buddhism, the statue of the Buddha is used to symbolize human perfection. The statue of the Buddha also reminds us of the human dimension in Buddhist teaching, the fact that Buddhism is man-centered, not god-centered, that we must look within not without to find perfection and understanding. So in no way one can say that Buddhists worship god or idols. In fact, a long time ago, when primitive man found himself in a dangerous and hostile situations, the fear of wild animals, of not being able to find enough food, of diseases, and of natural calamities or phenomena such as storms, hurricanes, volcanoes, thunder, and lightning, etc. He found no security in his surroundings and he had no ability to explain those phenomena, therefore, he created the idea of gods in order to give him comfort in good times, courage in times of danger and consolation when things went wrong. They believed that god arranged everything. Generations after generations, man continues to follow his ancestors in a so-called "faith in god" without any further thinkings. Some says they in believe in god because god responds to their prayers when they feel fear or frustration. Some say they believe in god because their parents and grandparents believed in god. Some others say that they prefer to go to church than to temple because those who go to churches seem richer and more honorable than those who go to temples.

II. The Meanings of Buddhism:

To someone it can be only life of the Buddha; the example that the Buddha and his immediate disciples set, that glorious feat of a man, who stood before men as a man and declared a path of deliverance. To others, Buddhism would mean the massive doctrine as recorded in the Buddhist Tripitaka (literature), and it is described a very lofty, abstruse, complex and learned philosophy of life. The name Buddhism comes from the word “Bodhi” which means “waking up,” and thus Buddhism is the philosophy of Awakening. Therefore, the real definition of Buddhism is Noble Truth. The Buddha did not teach from theories. He always taught from a practical standpoint based on His understanding, His enlightenment, and His realization of the Truth. This philosophy has its origins in the experience of the man named Siddhartha Gotama, known as the Buddha, who was himself awakened at the age of 36. Buddhism is now older than 2,500 years old and has more than 800 million followers world wide (including Chinese followers in Mainland China). People in the West had heard of the Buddha and his teaching as early as the thirteenth century when Marco Polo (1254-1324), the Italian traveler who explored Asia, wrote accounts on Buddhism in his book, “Travels of Marco Polo”. From the eighteenth century onwards, Buddhist text were brought to Europe and translated into English, French and German. Until a hundred years ago, Buddhism was mainly an Asian philosophy but increasingly it is gaining adherents in Europe and America.

To the Buddha, man is a supreme being, thus, he taught: “Be your own torch and your own refuge. Do not seek refuge in any other person.” This was the Buddha’s truthful word. He also said: “All realizations come from effort and intelligence that derive from one’s own experience. Man is the master of his destiny, since he can make his life better or worse. If he tries his best to cultivate, he can become a Buddha.” Buddhism is the only way that leads people from the evil to the virtuous, from deluded to fully enlightened sagehood. Buddhism is a philosophy, a way of life or a religion. The religion of the awakened one. One of the three great world religions. It was founded by the historical Buddha Sakyamuni over 25 centuries ago. Sakyamuni expounded the four noble truths as the core of his teaching, which he had recognized in the moment of his enlightenment. He had shown

people how to live wisely and happily and his teachings soon spread from India throughout Asia, and beyond.

Buddhism is a philosophy, a way of life or a religion. The teaching of Buddha. This is not important. Buddhism is what the Buddha taught. His teaching was based on human inner wisdom. Buddhism always values reason. Blindly believing in everything is contrary to Buddha's teaching. The Buddha taught: "Do not believe blindly in my teachings. Always test them like using fire to test gold to determine whether it is authentic or counterfeit." Buddhism is not a religion versed in worshipping and imploring favors from deities. It is different from other religions and doctrines in that it respects personal opinions, beliefs, and intellectual development. Buddhism does not prevent its disciples from learning other religious teachings. The Buddha said that if there were reasonable and rational teachings in other religions, His followers were free to respect such things. From that basic principle, the Buddha declared that there was nothing hidden in the sleeve of His saffron robe when referring to His teachings. He also added that His doctrine was consistent with how people understood the Truth. It did not depend on the favors bestowed by any deity or any other spiritual power. The Buddha emphasized the concept of free inquiry when He asked His disciples to judge even the Tathagata in order to have an utter trustfulness in Him. He asked them to study, understand, and believe latter on. Whoever has not yet understood or still has doubt but blindly believes has thus defamed the Buddha. Doubt is not a sin because Buddhism has no creed to be believed. Doubt will automatically dissipate when people fully understand or perceive the Truth. In short, whether the Buddha wanted or not, His teachings and the way of life preached by Him became a religion called "Buddhism." However, Buddhism is not a religion just for discussion, but it is a religion of deliverance for those who diligently cultivate. One needs not be a scholar or a blind devotee to become a Buddhist, all you need is your sincerity of cultivation. In Buddhism, blind faith has no ground, each one of us must know how to find and absorb what is relevant and what is not to our life and to our problems. If we pay a little attention we'll see that Buddhist doctrines are boundless and timeless, but they are the inconceivable truth for all time. Messages handed down to us by the Buddha remain eternally valuable. No one can argue against or deny

the doctrine of impermanence in Buddhism. Impermanence does not mean that things are not existing. Impermanence means that everything continues in a flux, in a process of continuing change and evolution. Thus, Buddhism is able to adjust to different civilizations in different times in the world. Even in modern world, Buddhism is always appropriate in all circumstances. In fact, if you approach any aspect of Buddhism, you will immediately find out that it is something relevant, beneficial and applicable to your daily life. Sincere Buddhists should always remember that in Buddhism there is no such so-called bonds of supernatural ties, nor Godhead, nor creation, nor sin inherited from anyone else, other than what you yourself have done.

III. Teachings of the Buddha:

Buddhism is the only way that leads people from the evil to the virtuous, from deluded to fully enlightened sagehood. Besides, there is a kind of Dead Buddhism which is a kind of Buddhism with its superfluous organizations, classical rituals, multi-level offerings, dangling and incomprehensible sutras written in strange languages which puzzle the young people. In their view the Buddhist pagoda is a nursing home, a place especially reserved for the elderly, those who lack self-confidence or who are superstitious. Furthermore, there exists a dead Buddhism when the Buddhadharma is only in talking, not in practice. It's not enough to say that we believe in the Buddha; it's better not to know the Buddhadharma than knowing it only for talking. Time flies really fast like a flying arrow, and days and months fly by like a shuttlecock. The water waves follow one after another. Life is passing quickly in the same manner. Impermanence avoids nobody, youth is followed by old age moment after moment, and we gradually return to the decay and extinction of old age and death, leaving no trace or shadow. Sincere Buddhists should always remember that if we merely believe in Buddhism without practicing, it's no better than believing in a dead Buddhism. It's like going into a restaurant and reading the menu to enjoy ourselves without ordering any food for eating. It does not benefit us in the least. Thus, we should always bear in mind that if the Way is not put in practice, it's a dead or dead-end Way; if the virtue is not achieved by cultivating, it's not a real virtue. According to Most Venerable Piyadassi in "The Buddha's Ancient

Path,” some prefer to call the teaching of the Buddha a religion, others call it a philosophy, still others think of it as both religion and philosophy. It may, however, be more correct to call it a “Way of Life”. But that does not mean that Buddhism is nothing more than an ethical code. Far from it, it is a way of moral, spiritual and intellectual training leading to a complete freedom of mind. The Buddha himself called his teaching “Dhamma-Vinaya”, the Doctrine and the Discipline. But Buddhism, in the strictest sense of the word, can not be called a religion, for if by religion is meant “action of conduct indicating belief in, reverence for, and desire to please, a divine ruling power; the exercise or practice of rites or observances implying this...; recognition on the part of man of some higher unseen power as having control of his destiny, and as being entitled to obedience, reverence, and worship.” Buddhism certainly is not such a religion. In Buddhist thought, there is no awareness or conviction of the existence of a Creator of any form who rewards and punishes the good and ill deeds of the creatures of his creation. A Buddhist takes refuge in the Buddha, but not in the hope that he will be saved by the Master. There is no such guarantee, the Buddha is only a teacher who points out the way and guides the followers to their individual deliverance.

Chapter Two

An Overview of Core Teachings of Buddhism

As mentioned in the preface, after the Buddha's Enlightenment at Buddha Gaya, he moved slowly across India until he reached the Deer Park near Benares, where he preached to five ascetics his First Sermon. The Sermon preached about the Middle Way between all extremes, the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path. In the Deer Park, Benares, at first the Buddha was ignored by the five brothers of Kaundinya, but as the Buddha approached them, they felt that there was something very special about him, so they automatically stood up as He drew near. Then the five men, with great respect, invited the Buddha to teach them what He has enlightened. So, the Buddha delivered His First Teaching: Turning the Wheel of the Dharma. He began to preach: "O monk! You must know that there are Four Noble Truths. The first is the Noble Truth of Suffering. Life is filled with the miseries and afflictions of old age, sickness, unhappiness and death. People chase after pleasure but find only pain. Even when they do find something pleasant they soon grow tired of it. Nowhere is there any real satisfaction or perfect peace. The second is the Noble Truth of the Cause of Suffering. When our mind is filled with greed and desire and wandering thoughts, sufferings of all types follow. The third is the Noble Truth of the End of Suffering. When we remove all craving, desire, and wandering thoughts from our mind, sufferings will come to an end. We shall experience undescrivable happiness. And finally, the Noble Truth of the Path. The Path that helps us reach the ultimate wisdom." The path leading to the end (extinction) of suffering, the fourth of the four axioms, i.e. the eightfold noble path. The truth of the PATH that leads to the cessation of suffering (the way of cure). To practice the Eight-fold Noble Truths. The Buddha taught: "Whoever accepts the four dogmas, and practises the Eightfold Noble Path will put an end to births and deaths. In short, finally, the Buddha already discovered supportive conditions leading to bodhi or Buddhahood. The Noble Truth of the Right Way includes the following Noble Paths: The Eightfold Noble Truth, Seven Bodhi Shares, Four Right Efforts, Four

Sufficiencies, Five Faculties, Five Powers, Four Elements of Popularity, Four Immeasurable Minds, and Four Kinds of Mindfulness.

To someone, all that the Buddha said can only be considered as life of the Buddha Himself. However, in fact, the example that the Buddha and his immediate disciples set, that glorious feat of a man, who stood before men as a man and declared a path of deliverance. To others, Buddhism would mean the massive doctrine as recorded in the Buddhist Tripitaka (literature), and it is described a very lofty, abstruse, complex and learned philosophy of life. The name Buddhism comes from the word “Bodhi” which means “waking up,” and thus Buddhism is the philosophy of Awakening. Therefore, the real definition of Buddhism is Noble Truth. The Buddha did not teach from theories. He always taught from a practical standpoint based on His understanding, His enlightenment, and His realization of the Truth. This philosophy has its origins in the experience of the man named Siddhartha Gotama, known as the Buddha, who was himself awakened at the age of 36. Buddhism is now older than 2,500 years old and has more than 800 million followers world wide, including Chinese followers in Mainland China. People in the West had heard of the Buddha and his teaching as early as the thirteenth century when Marco Polo (1254-1324), the Italian traveler who explored Asia, wrote accounts on Buddhism in his book, “Travels of Marco Polo”. From the eighteenth century onwards, Buddhist text were brought to Europe and translated into English, French and German. Until a hundred years ago, Buddhism was mainly an Asian philosophy but increasingly it is gaining adherents in Europe and America. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Alan Bennett, an Englishman, went to Burma to become a Buddhist monk. He was renamed Ananda Metteya. He returned to Britain in 1908. He was the first British person to become a Buddhist monk. He taught Dharma in Britain. Since then, Buddhist monks and nuns from Sri Lanka, Thailand, Japan, China and other Buddhist countries in Asia have come to the West, particularly over the last seventy years. Many of these teachers have kept to their original customs while others have adapted to some extent to meet the demands of living in a western society. In recent years, there has been a marked growth of interest in Buddhism in Europe. The membership of existing societies has increased and many new Buddhist centers have been established. Their members include

large numbers of professionals and scholars. Today, Britain alone has over 140 Buddhist centers found in most major cities.

To the Buddha, man is a supreme being, thus, he taught: “Be your own torch and your own refuge. Do not seek refuge in any other person.” This was the Buddha’s truthful word. He also said: “All realizations come from effort and intelligence that derive from one’s own experience. Man is the master of his destiny, since he can make his life better or worse. If he tries his best to cultivate, he can become a Buddha.” Buddhism is the only way that leads people from the evil to the virtuous, from deluded to fully enlightened sagehood. Buddhism is a philosophy, a way of life or a religion. The religion of the awakened one. One of the three great world religions. It was founded by the historical Buddha Sakyamuni over 25 centuries ago. Sakyamuni expounded the four noble truths as the core of his teaching, which he had recognized in the moment of his enlightenment. He had shown people how to live wisely and happily and his teachings soon spread from India throughout Asia, and beyond.

The Buddha admitted the presence of sufferings and afflictions in human life because of the ignorant attachment to all things. But it is truly wrong to believe that Buddhism is a religion of pessimism. This is not true even with a slight understanding of basic Buddhism. When the Buddha said that human life was full of sufferings and afflictions, he did not mean that life was pessimistic. In this manner, the Buddha admitted the presence of sufferings and afflictions in human life, and by a method of analysis he pointed out to his disciples that attachment to things without a correct view as to their nature is the cause of sufferings and afflictions. Impermanence and change are inherent in the nature of all things. This is their true nature and this is the correct view. He concluded: “As long as we are at variance with this truth, we are bound to run into conflicts. We cannot alter or control the nature of things. The result is ‘hope deferred made the heart sick’. The only solution lies in correcting our point of view.” In fact, the thirst for things begets sorrow. When we like someone or something, we wish that they belonged to us and were with us forever. We never think about their true nature, in other words, or we refuse to think about their true nature. We expect them to survive forever, but time devours everything. Eventually we must yield to old age and freshness of the

morning dew disappears before the rising sun. In the Nirvana Sutra, when Ananda and other disciples were so sad and cried when the Buddha lay on his death-bed, the Buddha taught: “Ananda! Lament not. Have I not already told you that from all good things we love and cherish we would be separated, sooner or later... that they would change their nature and perish. How then can Tathagata survive? This is not possible!” This is the philosophy which underlies the doctrine of the “Three Marks” (impermanence, suffering and no-self) of existence of the Buddhist view of life and the world. All Buddhist values are based on this. The Buddha expected of his disciples, both laity and clergy, good conduct and good behavior and decent standard of living in every way. With him, a simple living did not amount to degenerate human existence or to suffer oneself. The Buddha advised his disciples to follow the “Middle Path”. It is to say not to attach to things nor to abandon them. The Buddha does not deny the “beauty”, however, if one does not understand the true nature of the objects of beauty, one may end up with sufferings and afflictions or grief and disappointment. In the “Theragatha”, the Buddha brought up the story of the Venerable Pakka. One day, going to the village for alms, Venerable Pakka sat down beneath a tree. Then a hawk, seizing some flesh flew up into the sky. Other hawks saw that attacked it, making it drop the piece of meat. Another hawk grabbed the fallen flesh, and was flundered by other hawks. And Pakka thought: “Just like that meat are worldly desires, common to all, full of pain and woe.” And reflecting hereon, and how they were impermanent and so on, he continued to contemplate and eventually won Arahanship. The Buddha advised his disciples not to avoid or deny or attach to objects of beauty. Try not to make objects of beauty our objects of like or dislike. Whatever there is in the world, pleasant or unpleasant, we all have a tendency to attach to them, and we develop a like or dislike to them. Thus we continue to experience sufferings and afflictions. Buddhists recognize beauty where the sense can perceive it, but in beauty we should also see its own change and destruction. And Buddhist should always remember the Buddha’s teaching regarding to all component things: “Things that come into being, undergo change and are eventually destroyed.” Therefore, Buddhists admire beauty but have no greed for acquisition and possession.

Chapter Three

Thirty-Seven Conditions Leading to Bodhi

I. An Overview of the Thirty-Seven Conditions Leading to Bodhi:

After mighty and terrible struggles with himself, the Buddha had conquered in his body all those natural defects and human appetites and desires that prevent our ability of seeing the truth. He had to overcome all the bad influences of the sinful world around Him. Like a soldier fighting desperately in battle against many enemies, He struggled like a hero who conquers, he eventually gained his objects. He also discovered supportive conditions leading to bodhi or Buddhahood. Thirty-seven limbs of enlightenment comprise of four right efforts, four sufficiencies, four foundations of mindfulness, five faculties, five powers, seven limbs of enlightenments, and the eightfold noble path. *Right effort of four kinds of restrain*, or four essentials to be practiced vigilantly. A Sanskrit term for “Effort.” Right Effort of four kinds of restraint, or four essentials to be practiced vigilantly, or four factors that are developed through meditation and moral training. In Buddhism, Viriya is the energy expended to direct the mind persistently, continuously toward cultivation. Even ordinary people who are hardworking and industrious have the capacity to be heroic in whatever they do. Devout Buddhists who are endowed with courageous effort will be bold in going forward, unafraid of the difficulties we may encounter in the path of cultivation. The special characteristics of “Viriya” is an enduring patience in the face of suffering or difficulty. Viriya is the ability to see to the end no matter what, even if one has to grit one’s teeth. Devout Buddhists need courageous effort, with its characteristic of forbearance in the face of difficulty. If we raise our energy level, the mind will gain enough strength to bear with challenges. Besides, viriya has the power to freshen the mind and keep it robust, even in difficult circumstances. Rddhipada or *four sufficiencies*. *Four meditations*, or four foundations of Mindfulness, or four objects on which memory or thought should dwell. Four types of Buddhist meditation for eradicating illusions and

attaining enlightenment. Hinayana calls these practices ‘basis of action’ (kammathana) which is one of the modes of analytical meditation. *Five roots* or faculties are the five roots that give rise to other wholesome dhammas. The five sense-organs can be entrances to the hells; at the same time, they can be some of the most important entrances to the great enlightenment; for with them, we create karmas and sins, but also with them, we can practise the right way. *The five powers* or faculties for any cultivator or the powers of five spiritual faculties which are developed through strengthening the five roots. Thus in Buddhism, power or ability is always used as the sense organs to discern the truth. In Mahayana Buddhism, it is the eighth “perfection” (paramita) of the tenfold list of perfections that a Bodhisattva cultivates on the path to Buddhahood. *Seven factors of enlightenment* bring extraordinary benefits for Buddhist practitioners. Once fully developed, they have the power to bring samsaric suffering to an end.” This means that the perpetual, cyclical birth and death of beings who are composed of mental and physical phenomena can come to a complete stop. Besides, these factors of enlightenment also have the capacity to pulverize mara’s armies, the destructive inner forces which keep us bound on the wheel of suffering and rebirth. The Buddha and enlightened ones develop the factors of enlightenment and are thus able to transcend all three realms of sensual pleasures, realm of subtle forms and formless realms. When fully developed, these factors of enlightenment bring practitioners to attain the peace and joy of Nirvana. In this they are comparable to strong and effective medicine. They confer the strength of mind necessary to withstand the ups and downs of life. Moreover, they often cure physical and mental illnesses. According to the Sangiti Sutta in the Long Discourses of the Buddha, there are seven Limbs (factors) of Enlightenment, or the seven Bodhi shares. Practicing the seven awakening states will result in the following achievements: Elimination of evil; development of virtue; feeling of cheerfulness versus suffering; final enlightenment. However, one does not become enlightened by merely gazing into the sky or looking around on the earth. One does not enlightened by reading or studying the scriptures, nor by thinking, nor by wishing for enlightened state to burst into one’s mind. There are certain necessary conditions or prerequisites which cause enlightenment to arise. How can one

develop these factors in himself or herself? By means of cultivation of precepts, meditation, and wisdom. The Buddha said: “Oh, Bhiksus, if the four foundations of mindfulness are practiced persistently and repeatedly, the seven types of “Bojjhargas” will be automatically and fully developed.” Practicing the four foundations of mindfulness does not simply mean studying them, thinking of them, listening to discourses about them, nor discussing them. What we must do is be directly and experientially aware of the four foundations of mindfulness, the four bases on which mindfulness can be established. *The Noble Eightfold Path* is the fourth Noble Truth in the Four Noble Truths that can help us prevent problems or deal with any problems we may come across in our daily life. This is the path that leads to the end of sufferings and afflictions. If we follow it, we are on the way to less suffering and more happiness. The eight right (correct) ways. The path leading to release from suffering, the goal of the third in the four noble truths. These are eight in the 37 bodhi ways to enlightenment. Practicing the Noble Eight-fold Path can bring about real advantages such as improvement of personal conditions. It is due to the elimination of all evil thoughts, words, and actions that we may commit in our daily life, and to the continuing practice of charitable work; improvement of living conditions. If everyone practiced this noble path, the world we are living now would be devoid of all miseries and sufferings caused by hatred, struggle, and war between men and men, countries and countries, or peoples and peoples. Peace would reign forever on earth; attainment of enlightenment or Bodhi Awareness. The Noble Eight-fold Path is the first basic condition for attaining Bodhi Consciousness that is untarnished while Alaya Consciousness is still defiled. The eightfold noble path consists in *right view, right thinking, right speech, right action, right living, right endeavor, right memory, and right meditation*. Right view means to abandon a self-centered way of looking at things and to have a right view of the Buddha, that is “Nothing has its own self; everything exists due to temporary combination. If this exists, the other exists; if this ceases to exist, the other is in no way to be able to exist.” Right thinking means not to include toward a self-centered attitude toward things but to think of things rightly. Right view teaches us to abandon the three evils of the mind such as covetousness, resentment, and evil-mindedness; and to think of things rightly, with as

generous a mind as the Buddha: not to have greedy mind (covetousness) or not to think only of one's own gain; not to have the angry mind (resentment) or not to get angry when things do not turn out as one wishes; not to have the evil mind (evil-mindedness). Right speech teaches us to use right words in our daily lives and to avoid the four evils of the mouth such as not to lie (to use false language), not to speak with a double tongue, not to commit ill-speaking, and not to use improper language (careless language). Right action means daily conduct in accordance with the precepts of the Buddha. It is to say one must refrain from the three evils of the body that hinder right action such as needless killing, stealing, and committing adultery or other sexual misconduct. Right living means to gain food, clothing, shelter, and other necessities of life in a right way. Right living teaches us not to earn our livelihood through work that makes trouble for others or through a career useless to society, but to live on a justifiable income that we can obtain through right work and a vocation useful to others. Right endeavor means to engage constantly in right conduct without being idle or deviating from the right way, avoid such wrongs as the three evils of the mind, the evils of the mouth, and the three evils of the body. Right memory means to practice with a right mind as the Buddha did, that is, we must address ourselves to all things in the universe with a fair and right mind. And finally, right meditation means not to be agitated by any change of external circumstances. In short, the sutras that the Buddha taught for forty-five years, these essential teachings can be extracted and summarized in the thirty-seven limbs. These are essential teachings that Buddhist practitioners must have in order to step on the path of enlightenment and emancipation.

II. A Summary of the Content of Thirty-Seven Conditions Leading to Bodhi:

Four Right Efforts: According to the Sangiti Sutta in the Long Discourses of the Buddha, Right effort of four kinds of restraint, or four essentials to be practiced vigilantly. A Sanskrit term for "Effort." Right Effort of four kinds of restraint, or four essentials to be practiced vigilantly, or four factors that are developed through meditation and moral training. *First, endeavor to start performing good deeds (to produce merit):* Effort to initiate virtues not yet arisen. Bringing forth

goodness not yet brought forth (bring good into existence). To induce the doing of good deeds. Here a practitioner rouses his will, makes an effort, stirs up energy, exerts his mind and strives to produce unarisen wholesome mental states. Here a monk rouses his will, makes an effort, stirs up energy, exerts his mind and strives to produce unarisen wholesome mental states. *Second, endeavor to perform more good deeds:* Effort to consolidate, increase, and not deteriorate virtues already arisen. Developing goodness that has already arisen (develop existing good). To increase merit when it was already produced. To encourage the growth and continuance of good deeds that have already started. Here a practitioner rouses his will, makes an effort, stirs up energy, exerts his mind and strives to maintain wholesome mental states that have arisen, not to let them fade away, to bring them to greater growth, to the full perfection of development. Here a monk rouses his will, makes an effort, stirs up energy, exerts his mind and strives to maintain wholesome mental states that have arisen, not to let them fade away, to bring them to greater growth, to the full perfection of development. *Third, endeavor to prevent evil from forming:* Effort not to initiate sins not yet arisen, that is to say preventing evil that hasn't arisen from arising, or to prevent any evil from starting or arising, or to prevent demerit from arising. Here a practitioner rouses his will, makes an effort, stirs up energy, exerts his mind and strives to prevent the arising of unarisen evil unwholesome mental states. Here a monk rouses his will, makes an effort, stirs up energy, exerts his mind and strives to prevent the arising of unarisen evil unwholesome mental states. *Fourth, endeavor to eliminate already-formed evil:* Effort to eliminate sins already arisen. Putting an end to existing evil, or to abandon demerit when it arises. To remove any evil as soon as it starts. Here a practitioner rouses his will, makes an effort, stirs up energy, exerts his mind and strives to overcome evil unwholesome mental states that have arisen. Here a monk rouses his will, makes an effort, stirs up energy, exerts his mind and strives to overcome evil unwholesome mental states that have arisen.

Also according to the Sangiti Sutta in the Long Discourses of the Buddha, the Buddha taught about eight occasions for making an effort for practitioners: *The first occasion for making an effort:* Here a monk who has a job to do. He thinks: "I've got this job to do, but in doing it I

won't find easy to pay attention to the teaching of the Buddhas. I'll have to stir up my energy." And he stirs up sufficient energy to complete the uncompleted, to accomplish the unaccomplished, to realise the unrealised. *The second occasion for making an effort:* "Here a monk who has done some work, and thinks: Well, I did the job, but because of it I wasn't able to pay sufficient attention to the teaching of the Buddhas. So I will stir up sufficient energy." And he stirs up sufficient energy to complete the uncompleted, to accomplish the unaccomplished, to realise the unrealised. *The third occasion for making an effort:* Here a monk who has to go on a journey, and thinks: "I have to go on this journey, but in doing it I won't find easy to pay attention to the teaching of the Buddhas. I'll have to stir up energy." And he stirs up sufficient energy to complete the uncompleted, to accomplish the unaccomplished, to realise the unrealised. *The fourth occasion for making an effort:* Here a monk who has been on a journey, and he thinks: "I have been on a journey, but because of it I wasn't able to pay sufficient attention to the teaching of the Buddhas. I'll have to stir up energy." And he stirs up energy to complete the uncompleted, to accomplish the unaccomplished, to realise the unrealised. *The fifth occasion for making an effort:* Here a monk who goes for alms-round in a village or town and does not get his fill of food, whether coarse or fine, and he thinks: "I've gone for alms-round without getting my fill of food. So my body is light and fit. I'll stir up energy." And he stirs up energy to complete the uncompleted, to accomplish the unaccomplished, to realise the unrealised. *The sixth occasion for making an effort:* Here a monk who goes for alms-round in a village or town and gets his fill of food, whether coarse or fine, and he thinks: "I've gone for alms-round and get my fill of food. So my body is strong and fit. I'll stir up energy." And he stirs up energy to complete the uncompleted, to accomplish the unaccomplished, to realise the unrealised. *The seventh occasion for making an effort:* Here a monk who has some slight indisposition, and he thinks: "I get some slight indisposition, and this indisposition might get worse, so I'll stir up energy." And he stirs up energy to complete the uncompleted, to accomplish the unaccomplished, to realise the unrealised. *The eighth occasion for making an effort:* Here a monk who is recuperating from an illness, and he thinks: "I am just recuperating from an illness. It

might be that the illness will recur. So I'll stir up energy." And he stirs up energy to complete the uncompleted, to accomplish the unaccomplished, to realise the unrealised.

Four Sufficiencies: The Four Sufficiencies or Roads to Fulfillment that the Buddha taught His disciples to equip them with the necessities for them to be successful in their cultivation. The Buddha called them 'Four Sufficiencies' for they are different roads that lead us onward. They are four different qualities of character, each reflecting a different strength of our personality. Practitioners should recognize which of them is our own particular strength, then we can develop what need be cultivated. One of the greatest challenges of practitioners is achieving the aim of emancipation, and bringing the liberating qualities of the mind to dissolve in each moment of our life in the present. The path of our mindfulness must be continuing from moment to moment and must be right here in this very life. *First, Sufficiency of Desire:* Desire to develop magic, strong aspiration or will (intensive longing). We nourish a strong desire to practice meditation in our daily life. When we possess this quality, we will sense that nothing can finally impede us in our cultivation. Furthermore, when we possess this quality, we feel that we will not be satisfied until we have realized our goal. This is a desire to cultivate, a powerful aspiration that leads us to success. Here a monk develops CONCENTRATION OF INTENTION accompanied by effort of the will power. *Second, Sufficiency of Concentration:* Endeavor to remember to practice correct dharmas (intense concentration or thoughts, intense concentration). Memory or intense holding on to the position reached, or the love for the truth that keeps our mind continually absorbed in the practice. Endeavor to remember to practice correct dharmas has great purity of consciousness and is extremely ardent. Endeavor to remember to practice correct dharmas becomes a path to understanding when it fills our minds. Here a monk develops concentration of consciousness accompanied by effort of the thought power. Once we possess 'Endeavor to remember to practice correct dharmas', we continually reflect on Dharma and practice it; nothing else seems equally important. *Third, Sufficiency of Energy:* Intensified effort, or effort to realize magic, vigor or exertion. This is the quality of energy. Practitioners who possess this quality do not only remain undaunted by the effort required, but also find

inspiration in the challenge. Here a monk develops concentration of energy accompanied by strenuous efforts. In fact, the Buddha was a typical example for this quality. Viriya is the energy expended to direct the mind persistently, continuously toward cultivation. Even ordinary people who are hardworking and industrious have the capacity to be heroic in whatever they do. Practitioners who are endowed with courageous effort will be bold in going forward, unafraid of the difficulties we may encounter in the path of cultivation. The special characteristics of “Viriya” is an enduring patience in the face of suffering or difficulty. Viriya is the ability to see to the end no matter what, even if one has to grit one’s teeth. Practitioners need courageous effort, with its characteristic of forbearance in the face of difficulty. If we raise our energy level, the mind will gain enough strength to bear with challenges. Besides, viriya has the power to freshen the mind and keep it robust, even in difficult circumstances. There are two ways that help increase our energy level: To increase viriya by ourselves, and to seek out the inspiration from spiritual friends. Before His awakening, when He was still seeking the truth, He made this determination: “If the end is attainable by human effort, I will not rest or relax until it is attained. Let only my skin and sinews and bones remain. Let my flesh and blood dry up. I will not stop the course of my effort until I win that which may be won by human ability, human effort, and human exertion.” *Fourth, Sufficiency of Contemplation:* Meditation on one subject means an intense contemplation (meditation on one subject, intense contemplation or meditation, investigation, or the state of dhyana). Some people have a strong interest in understanding the deepest and most profound aspects of the dharmas. They are not satisfied to know just the surface of things. Here a monk develops concentration of investigation accompanied by effort of deep thinking, for this kind of mind contemplates the immensity of samsara, the circle of birth and death, the immensity of planes of existence, and the implications in our lives in this world. Practitioners cultivate the reflective knowledge into the rapid arising and passing away of phenomena, then we will have an intuitive insight of impermanence, suffering and no-self.

Four Kinds of Mindfulness: Four kinds of mindfulness are four basic subjects of Buddhist meditation: impermanence, suffering, no-

self, and impurity. If we always remember and meditate on these four principles of reality, we will gradually be released from the round of birth and death (samsara). The first basic subject of Buddhist meditation is contemplation on impurity of the body. Impurity is the nature of our bodies and minds. Impurity means the absence of an immaculate state of being, one that is neither holy nor beautiful. From the psychological and physiological standpoint, human beings are impure. This is not negative or pessimistic, but an objective perspective on human beings. If we examine the constituents of our bodies from the hair on our head to the blood, pus, phlegm, excrement, urine, the many bacteria dwelling in the intestines, and the many diseases present waiting for the opportunity to develop, we can see clearly that our bodies are quite impure and subject to decay. Our bodies also create the motivation to pursue the satisfaction of our desires and passions. That is why the sutra regards the body as the place where misdeeds gather. Let us now consider our psychological state. Since we are unable to see the truth of impermanence, suffering, and the selfless nature of all things, our minds often become the victims of greed and hatred, and we act wrongly. So the sutra says, "The mind is the source of all confusion." The second basic subject of Buddhist meditation is contemplation suffering of sensation. The ancient people of India said that all things are composed of four elements: earth, water, fire, and air. Acknowledging this, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas understand that when there is a harmonious relationship among the four elements, there is peace. When the four elements are not in harmony, there is suffering. Because all things are created by a combination of these elements, nothing can exist independently or permanently. All things are impermanent. Consequently, when we are caught up in the things of the world, we suffer from their impermanent nature. And since all things are empty, when we are caught up by things, we also suffer from their emptiness. Awareness of the existence of suffering leads us to begin to practice the way of realization. This is the first of the Four Noble Truths. When we lose awareness of and do not meditate on the existence of suffering in all things, we can easily be pushed around by passions and desires for worldly things, increasingly destroying our lives in the pursuit of these desires. Only by being aware of suffering can we find its cause, confront it directly, and eliminate it. The third

basic subject of Buddhist meditation is contemplation on impermanence of the mind or the impermanent nature of all things. All things in this world, including human life, mountains, rivers, and political systems, are constantly changing from moment to moment. This is called impermanence in each moment. Everything passes through a period of birth, maturity, transformation, and destruction. This destruction is called impermanence in each cycle. To see the impermanent nature of all things, we must examine this closely. Doing so will prevent us from being imprisoned by the things of this world. The fourth basic subject of Buddhist meditation is the contemplation of selflessness of things. For practitioners, they should see the nature of our bodies are selfless. Buddhism teaches that human beings' bodies are composed of five aggregates, called skandhas in Sanskrit. If the form created by the four elements is empty and without self, then human beings' bodies, created by the unification of the five skandhas, must also be empty and without self. Human beings' bodies are involved in a transformation process from second to second, minute to minute, continually experiencing impermanence in each moment. By looking very deeply into the five skandhas, we can experience the selfless nature of our bodies, our passage through birth and death, and emptiness, thereby destroying the illusion that our bodies are permanent. In Buddhism, no-self is the most important subject for meditation. By meditating no-self, we can break through the barrier between self and other. When we no longer are separate from the universe, a completely harmonious existence with the universe is created. We see that all other human beings exist in us and that we exist in all other human beings. We see that the past and the future are contained in the present moment, and we can penetrate and be completely liberated from the cycle of birth and death.

Four meditations, or four foundations of Mindfulness, or four objects on which memory or thought should dwell. Four types of Buddhist meditation for eradicating illusions and attaining enlightenment. Hinayana calls these practices 'basis of action' (kammathana) which is one of the modes of analytical meditation. Some forty such meditations are given in the Visuddha-Magga: four 'measureless meditations, ten impurities, four formless states, ten universals, ten remembrances, one sign, and one mental reflex. *First,*

Meditation and Full Realization on the Impurity of the Body: Due to illusions, most of us think that our body is more valuable than any thing else. So it needs be provided with better foods and expensive clothes. Therefore, the ‘struggle for life’ has come into play. Life is no longer a peaceful place, but a battle field with greed, hatred, envy, arrogance, doubt, wrong views, killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying. Evil karma is gradually formed as a result. Earnest Buddhists should view the body (eye, ear, skin, hair, nose, tongue, mouth, anus, etc) is unclean (Quán thân bất tịnh) which covered with a bag of skin, inside are flesh, fat, bone, blood, mucus and waste matters of which no one wishes to touch. The body itself, if not being washed frequently with fragrant water and soap, no one wants to stay close to it. In addition, it is prone to decay minute after minute, second after second. If we stop breathing, what is the body called if not a corpse? During the first day, its color is changing. A few days later, it becomes bluish and produces offensive odor. At this time, even if that disintegrated body once was the most beautiful woman or a handsome man, no one wants to be close to it. Earnest Buddhist should always contemplate that the body is unclean. This contemplation is designed to cure greed, attachment, selfishness, and arrogance. Also, when people realize that they are physically and biologically the same, they would easily understand, tolerate and compassionate among themselves and others. The discrimination against the aging, people with disabilities, and the other race would be diminished. As we see above, through contemplation we see that our body is not clean. It is viewed as a skinned bag containing dirty trash that will soon be disintegrated. Therefore, we must not become attached to it. The nature of our bodies and minds are impure which is neither holy nor beautiful. From psychological and physiological standpoint, human beings are impure. This is not negative or pessimistic. Objectively speaking, if we examine the constituents of our bodies from the hair, blood, pus, excrement, urine, intestines, liver, and stomach, etc., they are dwelling places for many bacteria. Many diseases are awaiting for the opportunity to develop. In fact, our bodies are impure and subject to decay. The body as an abode of mindfulness. Contemplation of the impurity of the body, or to contemplate the body as impure. Mindfulness of the body as impure and utterly filthy (consider the body is impure). This negates the idea of “Purity.”. Here

a monk abides contemplating body as body, ardent, clearly aware and mindful, having put aside hankering and fretting for the world. *Second, Meditation and Full Realization on the Evils of Sensations:* All sensations are evil, no matter they are painful, joyous, or indifferent sensations. To view all the feelings are painful. There are three kinds of feelings: pleasures, pain and neutral ones; however, according to Buddha's teaching, all feelings are painful because they are impermanent, transcient, ungraspable, and therefore, they are unreal, illusive and deceptive (quán thọ thị khổ). Furthermore, when you accept something from others, naturally, you have to do something else for them in return. It might cost you more than what you have accepted. However, we can easily refuse material things, but the hardest thing to escape is our own feelings. Feeling is a form of acceptance that most of us could easily be trapped. It is very subtle, but its effect is so destructible. We usually feel whatever conveyed to us by the six senses. For example, hearing someone bad-mouth on us, we feel angry at once. Seeing something profitable, we readily feel greedy. After all, if we don't cultivate, greed and angry are two uncontrollable agents which dominate and overwhelm our daily activities. To contemplate all the feelings are painful will gradually assist us to keep the feelings under control as well as to purify our mind; and as a result, provide us the joy and peace. We experience good and bad feelings from our five senses. But good feelings never last long; and sooner or later they will disappear. Only bad feelings remain from which we will suffer. Nothing in the universe can exist independently or permanently. All things including bodies of human beings are composed of four elements: earth, water, fire, and air. When there is a harmonious relationship among these four elements, there is peace. When the four elements are not in harmony, there is suffering. Feelings as an abode of mindfulness, or to contemplate all feelings or sensations lead to suffering, or mindfulness of feeling as the cause of suffering. Sensation or consciousness as always resulting in suffering (receiving is self-binding; consider feelings or the senses as a source of suffering). This negates the idea of "Joy." Here a monk abides contemplating feelings as feelings, ardent, clearly aware and mindful, having put aside hankering. According to the Satipatthanasutta, contemplation of feelings or sensations means to be mindful of our feeling, including

pleasant, unpleasant and indifferent or neutral. When experiencing a pleasant feeling we should know that it is a pleasant feeling because we are mindful of the feeling. The same with regard to all other feelings. We try to experience each feeling as it really is. Generally, we are depressed when we are experiencing unpleasant feelings and are elated by pleasant feelings. Contemplation of feelings or sensations will help us to experience all feelings with a detached outlook, with equanimity and avoid becoming a slave to sensations. Through the contemplation of feelings, we also learn to realize that there is only a feeling, a sensation. That feeling or sensation itself is not lasting and there is no permanent entity or “self” that feels. According to the Satipatthana Sutta in the Majjhima Nikaya, the Buddha taught “How, Bhikkhus, does a Bhikkhu abide contemplating feelings as feelings? Here, when feeling a pleasant feeling, a Bhikkhu understands: ‘I feel a pleasant feeling;’ when feeling a painful feeling, he understands: ‘I feel a painful feeling;’ when feeling a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling, he understands: ‘I feel a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling.’ When feeling a worldly pleasant feeling, he understands: ‘I feel a worldly pleasant feeling;’ when feeling an unworldly pleasant feeling, he understands: ‘I feel an unworldly pleasant feeling;’ when feeling a worldly painful feeling, he understands: ‘I feel a worldly painful feeling;’ when feeling an unworldly painful feeling, he understands: ‘I feel an unworldly painful feeling;’ when feeling a worldly neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling, he understands: ‘I feel a worldly neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling;’ when feeling an unworldly neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling, he understands: ‘I feel an unworldly neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling.’ In this way he abides contemplating feelings as feelings internally, or he abides contemplating feelings as feelings externally, or he abides contemplating feelings as feelings both internally and externally. Or else he abides contemplating in feelings their arising factors, or he abides contemplating in feelings their vanishing factors, or he abides contemplating in feelings both their arising and vanishing factors. Or else, mindfulness that ‘there is feeling’ is simply established in him to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and mindfulness. And, he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. That is how a Bhikkhu abides contemplating feelings as feelings.” Cultivation on the

Sensations means meditation and full realization on the evils of sensations, no matter they are painful, joyous, or indifferent sensations. We experience good and bad feelings from our five senses. But good feelings never last long; and sooner or later they will disappear. Only bad feelings remain from which we will suffer. Nothing in the universe can exist independently or permanently. All things including bodies of human beings are composed of four elements: earth, water, fire, and air. When there is a harmonious relationship among these four elements, there is peace. When the four elements are not in harmony, there is suffering. Feelings as an abode of mindfulness, or to contemplate all feelings or sensations lead to suffering, or mindfulness of feeling as the cause of suffering. Sensation or consciousness as always resulting in suffering (receiving is self-binding. Consider feelings or the senses as a source of suffering). This negates the idea of "Joy." Here a monk abides contemplating feelings as feelings, ardent, clearly aware and mindful, having put aside hankering and fretting for the world. *Third, Meditation and Full Realization on the Evanescence or Impermanence of Mind and Thoughts:* Realization the impermanence of mind and thoughts means contemplating the impermanence of all thoughts. To view the mind is transient or impermanent. Most people think that their mind is not changed; therefore, they attach to whatever they think. They believe that what they think reflects the truth. Probably some of them would discover that their mind is changing, but they refuse to accept it. Buddhist practitioners should always contemplate their wholesome and unwholesome minds, they are all subject to rising and destroying. They have no real entity. In sitting meditation, one will have the chance to recognize the facts that the mind keeps jumping in a fast speed as pictures on a movie screen. The body, therefore, always feels restless and eager to react on the thinking pulses. That is why people are rarely calm down or experiencing true happiness. Earnest Buddhists should always remember that the mind does not have any "real entity" to itself. It changes from second to second. That's why the Buddha viewed the mind of an ordinary person is like a swinging monkey, the wind, lightning or a drop of morning dew. This contemplation helps the practitioners see that everything is changed so that the practitioners will have the ability to eliminate attachment to what they think.

Impermanence is the key nature of all things. From moment to moment, all things in this universe, including human's bodies and minds are in constant transformation. Everything passes through a period of birth, maturity, transformation and destruction. Mind as an abode of mindfulness, or mindfulness of the mind as impermanent, or to contemplate the mind as impermanent. Ordinary mind is impermanent, merely one sensation after another (mind is everchanging, consider the mind to be a constant state of flux). This negates the idea of "Permanence." Here a monk abides contemplating mind as mind, ardent, clearly aware and mindful, having put aside hankering and fretting for the world. However, on what mind do we have to contemplate? According to the Siksasamuccaya Sutra, the Buddha taught: "Cultivator searches all around for this thought. But what thought? Is it the passionate, hateful or confused one? Or is it the past, future, or present one? The past one no longer exists, the future one has not yet arrived, and the present one has no stability. In the Satipatthana Sutta in the Majjhima Nikaya, the Buddha taught: "For thought, Kasyapa, cannot be apprehended, inside, or outside, or in between. For thought is immaterial, invisible, nonresisting, inconceivable, unsupported, and non-residing. Thought has never been seen by any of the Buddhas, nor do they see it, nor will they see it. And what the Buddhas never see, how can that be observable process, except in the sense that dharmas proceed by the way of mistaken perception? Thought is like a magical illusion; by an imagination of what is actually unreal it takes hold of a manifold variety of rebirths. A thought is like the stream of a river, without any staying power; as soon as it is produced it breaks up and disappears. A thought is like a flame of a lamp, and it proceeds through causes and conditions. A thought is like lightning, it breaks up in a moment and does not stay on. Searching thought all around, cultivator does not see it in the skandhas, or in the elements, or in the sense-fields. Unable to see thought, he seeks to find the trend of thought, and asks himself: "Whence is the genesis of thought?" And it occurs to him that "where is an object, there thought arises." Is then the thought one thing and the object another? No, what is the object that just is the thought. If the object were one thing and the thought another, then there would be a double state of thought. So the object itself is just thought. Can then thought review thought? No,

thought cannot review thought. As the blade of a sword cannot cut itself, so can a thought not see itself. Moreover, vexed and pressed hard on all sides, thought proceeds, without any staying power, like a monkey or like the wind. It ranges far, bodiless, easily changing, agitated by the objects of sense, with the six sense-fields for its sphere, connected with one thing after another. The stability of thought, its one-pointedness, its immobility, its undistraughtness, its one-pointed calm, its nondistraction, that is on the other hand called mindfulness as to thought. In short, the contemplation of mind speaks to us of the importance of following and studying our own mind, of being aware of arising thoughts in our mind, including lust, hatred, and delusion which are the root causes of all wrong doing. In the contemplation of mind, we know through mindfulness both the wholesome and unwholesome states of mind. We see them without attachment or aversion. This will help us understand the real function of our mind. Therefore, those who practice contemplation of mind constantly will be able to learn how to control the mind. Contemplation of mind also helps us realize that the so-called “mind” is only an ever-changing process consisting of changing mental factors and that there is no abiding entity called “ego” or “self.” According to the Satipatthana Sutta in the Majjhima Nikaya, the Buddha taught: “Bhikkhus, does a Bhikhu abide contemplating mind as mind? Here a Bhikhu understands mind affected by lust as mind affected by lust, and mind unaffected by lust as mind unaffected by lust. He understands mind affected by hate as mind affected by hate, and mind unaffected by hate as mind unaffected by hate. He understands mind affected by delusion as mind affected by delusion, and mind unaffected by delusion as mind unaffected by delusion. He understands contracted mind as contracted mind, and distracted mind as distracted mind. He understands exalted mind as exalted mind, and unexalted mind as unexalted mind. He understands surpassed mind as surpassed mind, and unsurpassed mind as unsurpassed mind. He understands concentrated mind as concentrated mind, and unconcentrated mind as unconcentrated mind. He understands liberated mind as liberated mind, and unliberated mind as unliberated mind. In this way he abides contemplating mind as mind internally, or he abides contemplating mind as mind externally, or he abides contemplating mind as mind both internally and externally. Or else, he abides

contemplating in mind its arising factors, or he abides contemplating in mind its vanishing factors, or he abides contemplating in mind both its arising and vanishing factors. Or else mindfulness that ‘there is mind’ is simply established in him to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and mindfulness. And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. That is how a Bhikkhu abides contemplating mind as mind.” *Fourth, Contemplation of Mental Objects:* Contemplation of mental objects means contemplation of mind-objects, or meditation and full realization on the transiency selflessness of all elements (contemplating that all the dharmas are without their own nature). The contemplation of mental objects or mind contents means to be mindful on all essential dharmas. The contemplation of mental objects is not mere thinking or deliberation, it goes with mindfulness in discerning mind objects as when they arise and cease. For example, when there is a sense desire arising, we immediately know that a sense desire is arising in us; when a sense desire is present, we immediately know that a sense desire is present in us; when a sense desire is ceasing, we immediately know that a sense desire is ceasing. In other words, when there is sense desire in us, or when sense desire is absent, we immediately know or be mindful that there is sense desire or no sense desire in us. We should always be mindful with the same regard to the other hindrances, as well as the five aggregates of clinging (body or material form, feelings, perception, mental formation, and consciousness). We should also be mindful with the six internal and six external sense-bases. Through the contemplation of mental factors on the six internal and external sense-bases, we know well the eye, the visible form and the fetter that arises dependent on both the eye and the form. We also know well the ear, sounds, and related fetters; the nose, smells and related fetters; the tongue and tastes; the body and tactile objects; the mind and mind objects, and know well the fetter arising dependent on both. We also know the ceasing of the fetter. Similarly, we discern the seven factors of enlightenment, and the Four Noble Truths, and so on. Thus we live mindfully investigating and understanding the mental objects. We live independent, clinging to nothing in the world. Our live is totally free from any attachments. Practitioners must contemplate to see that everything is without-self and has no real nature. Everything in the world, either physical or

mental, is depend upon each other to function or survive. They are not free from one another or free to act on their own, on their own will. They do not have a "self." They are not capable of being self-existent. A human body is composed of billions of cells that depend on one another; one cell dies will effect so many other cells. Similarly, a house, a car, a road, a mountain, or a river all are compounded, not being self-existent. Everything, therefore, is a combination of other things. For instance, without nutritious foods, water, and fresh air, this body will certainly be reduced to a skeleton and eventually disintegrated. Thus the Buddha taught: "All existents are selfless, empty, and impermanent." Practitioners who always contemplate 'the dharma is without-self,' they should become more humble and likable. In fact, everything has no real nature, they are only a combination of the four elements, and each element is empty and without a self of itself, thus everything is without a self. Dharmas (real things and phenomena) as an abode of mindfulness, or mindfulness of dharmas as dependent, without self-entity, or to contemplate all things as being dependent, without self-nature or self-identity. All phenomena lack self-nature. There is no such thing as an ego. Things in general as being dependent and without a nature of their own (things are composed and egoless or consider everything in the world as being a consequence of causes and conditions and that nothing remains unchanged forever). This negates the idea of "Personality." Here a monk abides contemplating monf-objects as mind-objects, ardent, clearly aware and mindful, having put aside hankering and fretting for the world.

According to Majjhima Nikaya and Digha Nikaya, the Buddha taught: "Bhiksus! Whoever should be able to develop these Four Foundations of mindfulness for seven years, one of these two fruits may be expected by him: 'either Arahantship in this life or the state of Non-returning in the future. Bhiksus! Let alone 7 years. Should anyone be able to develop these Four Foundations of mindfulness for six years, five years, four years, three years, two years, one year... then one of the two above mentioned fruits may also be expected by him. Bhiksus! Let alone one year. Should anyone be able to develop these Four Foundations of mindfulness for seven months, six months... half a month, then one of the two above mentioned fruits may also be

expected by him. Bhiksus! Let alone half a month. Should anyone be able to develop these Four Foundations of mindfulness for a week, then one of the two above mentioned fruits may also be expected by him. This is the only way, Bhiksus, for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, for the destruction of suffering and grief, for winning the right path, for realizing Nirvana, namely, the Four Foundations of mindfulness.”

The Five Faculties: According to the Sangiti Sutta in the Long Discourses of the Buddha, there are five roots or faculties (indriyani). These are the five roots that give rise to other wholesome dhammas. The five sense-organs can be entrances to the hells; at the same time, they can be some of the most important entrances to the great enlightenment; for with them, we create karmas and sins, but also with them, we can practise the right way. *First, Virtue of Belief:* Faith or Sense of belief in the Triple Gem and the Four Noble Truths. Sraddhendriya also means the mind of faith. Faith in a religion, unlike intellectual learning, does not enable a believer to have the power to save others as well as himself if he understands it only in theory. When he believe from the depths of his heart, his belief produces power. His faith cannot be said to be true until he attains such a mental state. *Second, Virtue of Active Vigor:* Energy (vigor) or Sense of endeavor or vigor to cultivate good deeds. The spirit endeavoring purely and incessantly. Faith alone is not enough. Our religious lives cannot be true unless we maintain our faith purely and constantly endeavor so that our religious spirit does not weaken or lose its power. *Third, Virtue of Mindfulness:* Memory or Mindfulness or Sense of memory or right memory. The mind that always focuses upon the Buddha. Practically speaking, of course, it is impossible for us to completely forget the Buddha for even a moment. When a student devotes himself to his studies or when an adult is entirely absorbed in his work, he must concentrate on one object. Doing so accords with the way to Buddhahood. While devoting ourselves to a particular object, we reflect, “I am caused to live by the Buddha.” When we complete a difficult task we feel relieved, we thank the Buddha, saying, “How lucky I am! I am protected by the Buddha.” When an evil thought flashes across our mind or we suddenly feel angry, we instantly examine ourselves, thinking, “Is this the way to Buddhahood?” The

mind that thus keeps the Buddha in mind at all times is “sense of memory.” *Fourth, Virtue of Concentration:* Sense of meditation or Visionary meditation, samadhi, or virtue of concentration. The sense of meditation implies a determined mind. Once we have faith in a religion, we are never agitated by anything, whatever may happen. We bear patiently all persecution and temptation, and we continue to believe only in one religion. We must constantly maintain such firm determination, never becoming discouraged. We cannot be said to be real people with a religious faith unless we have such a mental attitude. *Fifth, Virtue of Wisdom or Awareness:* Sense of wisdom or thinking of the truth. The wisdom that people of religion must maintain. This is not a self-centered wisdom but the true wisdom that we obtain when we perfectly free ourselves from ego and illusion. So long as we have this wisdom, we will not take the wrong way. We can say the same thing of our belief in religion itself, not to mention in our daily lives. If we are attached to a selfish, small desire, we are apt to stray toward a mistaken religion. However, earnestly we may believe in it, endeavoring to practice its teaching, keeping it in mind, and devoting ourselves to it, we cannot be saved because of its basically wrong teaching, and we sink farther and farther into the world of illusion. There are many instances around us of people following such a course. Although “sense of wisdom” is mentioned as the last of the five organs leading man to good conduct, it should be the first in the order in which we enter a religious life.

According to the Aditta-pariyaya Sutta, Samyutta Nikaya, Volume 5.48.2, the Blessed One addressed the bhikkhus about the ‘Five Faculties’ thus: “Bhikkhus, there are these five faculties. What five? The faculty of faith, the faculty of energy, the faculty of mindfulness, the faculty of concentration, and the faculty of wisdom. And what, bhikkhus, is the faculty of faith? Here, bhikkhus, the noble disciple is a person of faith, one who places faith in the enlightenment of the Tathagata thus: ‘The Blessed One is an Arahant, fully enlightened, accomplished in knowledge and conduct, sublime, knower of the world, unsurpassed leader of persons to be tamed, teacher of devas and humans, the Enlightened One, the Blessed One.’ And what, bhikkhus, is the faculty of energy? Here, bhikkhus, the noble disciple dwells with energy aroused for the abandoning of unwholesome states and the

acquisition of wholesome states; he is strong, valiant, not shirking the responsibility of cultivating wholesome states. He generates desire for the non-arising of unarisen evil unwholesome states; he makes an effort, arouses energy, exerts his mind, and strives. He generates desire for the abandoning of arisen evil unwholesome states; he makes an effort, arouses energy, exerts his mind, and strives. He generates desire for the arising of unarisen wholesome states; he makes an effort, arouses energy, exerts his mind, and strives. He generates desire for the maintenance of arisen wholesome states, for their non-decline, increase, expansion, and fulfilment by development; he makes an effort, arouses energy, exerts his mind, and strives. This is called the faculty of energy. And what, bhikkhus, is the faculty of mindfulness? Here, bhikkhus, the noble disciple is mindful, possessing supreme mindfulness and discernment, one who remembers and recollects what was done long ago and said long ago. He dwells contemplating the body in the body ... feelings in feelings ... mind in mind ... mental phenomena in mental phenomena, ardent, clearly comprehending, mindful, having put away covetousness and displeasure in regard to the world. This is called the faculty of mindfulness. And what, bhikkhus, is the faculty of concentration? Here, bhikkhus, the noble disciple, having made relinquishment the object, gains concentration, gains one-pointedness of mind. Secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, he enters and dwells in the first jhana, which is accompanied by thought and examination, with rapture and happiness born of seclusion. With the subsiding of thought and examination, he enters and dwells in the second jhana, which has internal confidence and unification of mind, is without thought and examination, and has rapture and happiness born of concentration. With the fading away as well of rapture, he dwells equanimous and, mindful and clearly comprehending, he experiences happiness with the body; he enters and dwells in the third jhana of which the noble ones declare: 'He is equanimous, mindful, one who dwells happily.' With the abandoning of pleasure and pain, and with the previous passing away of joy and displeasure, he enters and dwells in the fourth jhana, which is neither painful nor pleasant and includes the purification of mindfulness by equanimity. This is called the faculty of concentration. And what, bhikkhus, is the faculty of wisdom? Here, bhikkhus, the noble disciple

is wise; he possesses wisdom directed to arising and passing away, which is noble and penetrative, leading to the complete destruction of suffering. He understands as it really is: 'This is suffering.' He understands as it really is: 'This is the origin of suffering.' He understands as it really is: 'This is the cessation of suffering.' He understands as it really is: 'This is the way leading to the cessation of suffering.' This is called the faculty of wisdom. These, bhikkhus, are the five faculties."

The Five Powers: The five powers or faculties for any cultivator or the powers of five spiritual faculties which are developed through strengthening the five roots. Thus in Buddhism, power or ability is always used as the sense organs to discern the truth. In Mahayana Buddhism, it is the eighth "perfection" (paramita) of the tenfold list of perfections that a Bodhisattva cultivates on the path to Buddhahood. It is developed on the eighth bodhisattva level (bhumi). *First, Power of Faith:* Also called force of belief which precludes all false belief or the faith to believe. *Second, Power of Zeal:* Also called force of active vigor which leads to overcoming all obstacles or the will to make the endeavor. *Third, Power of Memory:* Also called mindfulness, or force of mindfulness which is achieved through meditation or the faculty of alertness. *Fourth, Power of Meditation (Dhyana):* Also called force of concentration which leads to eliminate all passions and desires or the ability to concentrate one's mind. *Fifth, Power of Wisdom:* Also called force of wisdom which rests on insight into the four noble truths and leads to the knowledge that liberates the ability to maintain clear wisdom. Besides, there is also a tenfold list of qualities that in both Theravada Buddhism and Mahayana are said to be unique to fully awakened Buddhas (Samyak-Sambuddha): 1) power of knowledge of what is possible and what is impossible or the power to distinguish right from wrong (sthanasthana-jnana-bala); power of knowledge of retributions of actions or the power of knowing karmic retributions throughout the three periods of time (karma-vipaka-jnana-bala); 3) power of knowledge of the concentrations, eight stages of liberations, meditative absorptions, and attainments (dhyana-vimoksa-samadhi-samapatti-jnana-bala); 4) power of knowledge of the relative qualities of beings or the power of complete knowledge of the powers and faculties of all beings (indrya-parapara-jnana-bala); 5) power of

knowledge of the various intentions of beings or the power of complete knowledge of the desires or moral direction of every being (nanadhimukti-jnana-bala); 6) power of knowledge of the various states of beings or the power of knowing the states of others (nanadhatu-jnana-bala); 7) power of knowledge of the ways in which beings go everywhere within cyclic existence and nirvana (sarvatragamini-pratipajjnana-bala); 8) power of knowledge of former abodes (purva-nivasa-jnana-bala); 9) power of knowledge of death and rebirth (cyutyu-papada-jnana-bala); 10) power of knowledge that the defilements have been extinguished (asrava-jnana-bala). The five powers include the power of Faith or force of belief which precludes all false belief; power of Zeal or force of active vigor which leads to overcoming all obstacles; power of Memory, or mindfulness, or force of mindfulness which is achieved through meditation; power of Meditation (Dhyana) or force of concentration which leads to eliminate all passions and desires; and power of Wisdom (awareness) or force of wisdom which rests on insight into the four noble truths and leads to the knowledge that liberates.

Seven Bodhi Shares: In Buddhism, the seven Bodhi Shares are also called the seven limbs of enlightenment. The Buddha always told His disciples: “All of the factors of enlightenment bring extraordinary benefits. Once fully developed, they have the power to bring samsaric suffering to an end.” This means that the perpetual, cyclical birth and death of beings who are composed of mental and physical phenomena can come to a complete stop. Besides, these factors of enlightenment also have the capacity to pulverize mara’s armies, the destructive inner forces which keep us bound on the wheel of suffering and rebirth. The Buddha and enlightened ones develop the factors of enlightenment and are thus able to transcend all three realms of sensual pleasures, realm of subtle forms and formless realms. When fully developed, these factors of enlightenment bring practitioners to attain the peace and joy of Nirvana. In this they are comparable to strong and effective medicine. They confer the strength of mind necessary to withstand the ups and downs of life. Moreover, they often cause physical and mental illnesses. According to the Sangiti Sutta in the Long Discourses of the Buddha, there are seven Limbs (factors) of Enlightenment, or the seven Bodhi shares. Practicing the seven awakening states will result in the

following achievements: Elimination of evil; development of virtue; feeling of cheerfulness versus suffering; final enlightenment.

Cultivators can not become enlightened by merely gazing into the sky or just look down on earth. Cultivators can not obtain the way by simply reading books or studying the scriptures, nor by thinking, nor by wishing for becoming Buddha. According to the Sangiti Sutta in the Long Discourses of the Buddha, there are seven Limbs (factors) of Enlightenment, or the seven Bodhi shares. They are necessary conditions or prerequisites which cause enlightenment to arise. Practicing the seven awakening states will result in the following achievements: Elimination of evil; development of virtue; feeling of cheerfulness versus suffering; final enlightenment. The word “Bojjhanga” is a Pali term for “factors of enlightenment.” It is made up of “Bodhi,” which means enlightenment or an enlightened person, and “anga,” is a causative factor. Thus a “bojjhanga” is a causative factor of an enlightened being, or a cause for enlightenment. A second sense of the word “Bojjhanga” is based on alternative meanings of its two Pali roots. Thus the alternative meaning of bodhi is the knowledge that comprehends or sees the Four Noble Truths, and the Eightfold Noble Path. Sometimes, seven factors of enlightenment are known as ‘sambojjhanga’. The prefix ‘sam’ means ‘full’ or ‘complete’; however, the prefix does not change the meaning of the seven factors of enlightenment. All practitioners come to understand the Four Noble Truths to some extent, but according to Buddhism, true comprehension of them requires a particular, transforming moment of consciousness, known as path consciousness. This is one of the culminating insights of meditation practice for it includes the experience of Nirvana. Once a practitioner has experienced this, he or she is deeply knows the Four Noble Truths, and thus is considered to contain the “bojjhangas” inside him or herself. Such a person is called noble. Thus, “Bojjhangas” or enlightenment factors also are parts or qualities of a noble person. The seven factors of enlightenment include Selection of the proper dharma, Constant effort, Cheerfulness or high spirits, Peaceful mind, Remembrance of the Dharma, Concentration ability, and Non-attachment ability. Zen practitioners can find each one of the seven factors of enlightenment in all phases of meditation practices. Zen practitioners should always remember the Buddha’s reminder: “If the

four foundations of mindfulness are practiced persistently and repeatedly, the seven factors of enlightenment will be automatically and fully developed.” Thus, the Buddha Himself emphasized the relationships between Zen and the Seven Factors of Enlightenment very clearly. However, one does not become enlightened by merely gazing into the sky or looking around on the earth. One does not enlighten by reading or studying the scriptures, nor by thinking, nor by wishing for enlightened state to burst into one’s mind. There are certain necessary conditions or prerequisites which cause enlightenment to arise. How can one develop these factors in himself or herself? By means of cultivation of precepts, meditation, and wisdom. *First, Selection of the Proper Dharma:* Discrimination of true or false, or keen investigation of phenomena (dharma). It is the sharp analytical knowledge of understanding the true nature of all constituent things, animate or inanimate, human or divine. It is seeing things in their proper perspective. Only through meditation we can see all component things in their fundamental elements, right down to their ultimates. Through keen meditation and investigation, one understands that all compounded things pass through the inconceivably rapid moments of arising, reaching a peak and ceasing, just as a river in flood sweeps to climax and fades away; the whole universe is constantly changing, not remaining the same for two consecutive moments; all things in fact are subject to conditions, causes and effects; what is impermanent and not lasting producing painful or sorrow fruit; there doesn’t exist a so-called permanent and everlasting soul or self; the true nature of the three characteristics, or laws of transiency, sorrow, and non-self. *Second, Constant Effort:* Energy, zeal or undeflected progress. It is a mental property and the sixth limb of the Noble Eightfold Path, there called right effort. Effort is the energy expended to direct the mind persistently, continuously in meditation, and toward the object of observation. Zen practitioners should have courageous efforts in meditation practices. The Buddha has not proclaimed himself a saviour willing and able to take upon himself the evil of all sentient beings. He is only a Path-Revealer. Each one of us must put forth the necessary effort and work out his own deliverance with heedfulness. He cannot walk for anyone on this path. Thus he advised that each Buddhist should be sincerely zealous, strong and firm in the purpose of

reaching the final aim. He also advised: “Be islands unto yourselves, be your own refuge.” Thus did the Master exhort his followers to acquire self-reliance. A follower of the Buddha should not under any circumstances relinquish hope and effort; for the Buddha was one who never gave up courage and effort even as a bodhisattva. Zen practitioners should be patient and accept difficulties and challenges during practicing meditation; should leave behind habits and hobbies of ordinary life; and should try their best to practice meditation continually. One of the most difficult things for Zen practitioners is the wandering mind, it never wants to stay on the object you want to observe, but rather wandering around and around all day long. In our body, any time we cross our legs to practice meditation, we are likely to experience some level of pain in our body. Sometimes, we decide to try to sit still for an hour with our legs crossed, but only after ten minutes, we feel numb in our feet and stiff in our neck, and so on, and so on. Zen practitioners need courageous effort to face difficulties and challenges. Once we develop our courageous effort, the mind gains strength to bear with pain in a patient and courageous way. Effort has the power to freshen the mind and keep it strong in any difficult circumstances. Zen practitioners should always have the effort and energy to cultivate the following four things: effort to initiate virtues not yet arisen; effort to consolidate, increase, and not deteriorate virtues already arisen; effort not to initiate sins not yet arisen; effort to eliminate sins already arisen. In The Dhammapada Sutta, sentence 280, the Buddha taught: “The idler who does not strive, who, though, young and strong, is full of sloth, who is weak in resolution and thought, that lazy and idle man will never find the way to wisdom, the way to elightenment and deliverance.” *Third, Cheerfulness or High Spirits:* Rapture means joy, happiness, or delight; but a special characteristic of Rapture is that it can pervade associated mental states, making them delight and happy and bringing a sense of deep satisfaction. “Piti” is a mental property, and is a quality which deeply influences both the body and mind. A man lacking in this quality cannot advance along the path to enlightenment. In him there will always arise sullen indifference to the Dharma, an aversion to the practice of meditation, and morbid manifestations. Zen practitioners should always remember that Rapture only develops when the mind is relatively clean of afflictions. In order

for us to be clean of afflictions, we have no other choices but to be mindful from moment to moment so that concentration arises and the afflictions are eliminated. Therefore, we must be developing Rapture through mindfulness continuously, whether when we are walking, standing, lying down, sitting, or doing other tasks. To practice “piti” or joy, Buddhist cultivators should always remember that happiness is a matter of the mind and it should never be sought in external and material things, though they may be instrumental in any way. Only those who possess the quality of contentment can experience real happiness. Buddhist cultivators should always remember that there is a vast difference between pleasure and happiness. Pleasure, or pleasant feeling, is something very momentary and fleeting. Pleasant feeling may be an indicative sign of suffering, for what we hug in great glee this moment, may turn to be a source of suffering the next moment. Seeing a form, hearing a sound, perceiving an odour, tasting a flavour, feeling some tangible thing, cognizing an idea, we are usually moved, and from those sense objects and mental objects, we experience a certain degree of pleasure. However, they are all temporary; they are only a passing show of phenomena. Real happiness or rapture does not come through grasping or clinging to things, animate or inanimate, but from giving up. The Buddha left behind his glorious palace, beautiful wife, good son, as well as kingdom authority, and became a homeless monk. Eventually he attained enlightenment and deliverance, do we have any other choices if we wish to attain enlightenment and deliverance? *Fourth, Peaceful Mind:* Peaceful mind means ease, tranquility, riddance of all grossness or weight of body or mind so that they may be light, free and at ease. Many people’s minds are always in a state of agitation all the time. Their minds wandering here and there non-stop. When the mind is scattered, it is difficult for us to control our actions. On the contrary, we begin to act according to whims and fancies without considering properly whether an action is wholesome or not. There are two kinds of tranquility: the calm of the body means the calm of all mental properties rather than the only physical body. In other words, calm of the aggregates of form, feeling, perception, and the volitional activities or conformations; the calm of the mind, or the calm of the aggregate of consciousness. A man who cultivates calm of the mind does not get upset, confused or excited when confronted with

the eight vicissitudes (8 winds or influences) of the world. He is able to understand the rise and fall (come into being and pass away), as well as the momentary fragility of all things. It is hard to tranquilize the mind. It trembles and it is unsteady, difficult to guard and hold back. In the Dhammapada, from santece 33 to 36, the Buddha taught: "The mind quivers like a fish just taken from its watery home and thrown on the dry ground. It wanders at will." Calmness is not weakness. Only a person of culture is able to present the calm attitude at all times. It is not so difficult to be calm under favourable circumstances, but it is indeed difficult for a Buddhist to remain calm in the midst of unfavourable circumstances. Only the calm mind can help the aspirant to achieve enlightenment and deliverance. *Fifth, Remembrance of the Dharma:* Mindfulness, relinquishment, or power of remembering the various states passed through in contemplation. It is the instrument most efficacious in self-mastery. Besides, 'Sati' also means the power of observation, and the function of mindfulness is to keep the object always in view, neither forgetting it nor allowing it to disappear out of our contemplation. Remembrance of the Dharma includes meditation and full realization on the impurity of the body, when mindfulness is present, the object of observation will be noted without forgetfulness; contemplation of feeling or understanding that feeling is suffering; contemplation of mind, and Contemplation of thought; and contemplation of the no-self of mental objects. A person cannot be heedful unless he is fully controlling all his actions, whether they are mental, verbal or physical at every moment of his walking life. In other words, he must zealously observe all commandments required of him. In the Digha Nikaya Sutra, the Buddha's final admonition to his disciples before entering the Nirvana: "Transient are all component things. Work out your deliverance with mindfulness." Venerable Saripura also advised everybody with his last words: "Strive on with mindfulness to obtain your deliverance." In the Anguttara Nikaya Sutra, the Buddha taught: "Monks, I know not of any other single thing of such power to cause the arising of good thoughts if not yet arisen, or to cause the waning of evil thoughts if already arisen, as heedfulness. In him who is heedful, good thoughts not yet arisen, do arise, and evil thoughts, if arisen, do wane." *Sixth, Concentration Ability:* Concentration has the ability to keep the mind in Stability,

concentration; or power to keep the mind in a given realm undiverted. Concentration is a mental factor which lands on the object of observation. Concentration also pricks into, penetrates into, and stays in the object of observation. The nature of concentration is nondispersal, nondissipation, and nonscatteredness. A mind of concentration is a mind that sticks with the object of observation, sinks into it, and remains still and calm in it. During practicing of meditation, Zen practitioners should stick their mind to the object of observation or contemplate directly mental or physical phenomena without resorting to the thinking process at all. Although the moment of samadhi is momentary, such samadhi can arise from moment to moment without breaks in between if we try to practice continuously. Besides, concentration also has the ability to collect the mind together. It can keep all other mental factors in a group so that they do not scatter or disperse. Thus, the mind remains firmly embedded in the object. It is only the tranquilized mind that can easily concentrate on a subject of meditation. Once the mind is quiet and still, wisdom will arise and we can see things as they really are. Therefore, concentration is the most proximate cause for the unfolding of wisdom. The unified mind brings the five hindrances under subjugation (sensual desire, anger, stiffness and torpor, agitation and worry, and doubt hindrances), for step by step, wisdom will penetrate into more and more profound levels of truth. At that time, Zen practitioners will see clearly the natures of impermanence, suffering, and absence of self of all things, and therefore, no hindrance can dominate us anymore. Many are the impediments that confront a meditator, an aspirant for enlightenment, especially the five hindrances that hinder concentrative thoughts, and obstruct the way to deliverance. Concentration is the intensified steadiness of the mind comparable to an unflickering flame of a lamp in a windless place. Concentration has the ability to maintain the mind and the mental properties in a state of balance. It is concentration that fixes the mind aright and causes it to be unmoved; dispels passions and not only helps the mind undisturbed, but also helps bring purity and placidity of mind. One who is intent to practice “concentration” should always zealously observe Buddhist commandments, for it is virtue that nourishes mental life, and make it coherent and calm. *Seventh, Non-attachment Ability:* Equanimity means complete abandonment,

detachment, or indifferent to all disturbances of the sub-conscious or ecstatic mind. The Sanskrit word 'Upeksha' means equanimity, calmness, unbiased, unprejudice, and so on. In Zen, a mind of complete abandonment is a mind that remains unbiased and calm when confronting difficulties and challenges. A mind of equanimity is a state of balancing of energy, and it can be achieved in daily cultivation. According to The Abhidharma, "equanimity" means neutrality. It is mental equipoise and not hedonic indifference. Equanimity is the result of a calm concentrative mind. According to the Buddha, the best way to bring about equanimity is wise attention and continuous mindfulness. Once a mind of equanimity is developed, one moment of equanimity causes a succeeding moment of equanimity to arise, and so on. In our nowadays violent society, amidst the welter of experience, gain and loss, good repute and ill-repute, praise and blame, happiness and suffering, a man with the mind of equanimity will never waver. Zen practitioners have the mind of equanimity which understands that there is no one to own anything. In Dharmapada, sentence 83, the Buddha taught: "Truly the good give up longing for everything. The good sages not with thoughts of craving. Touched by happiness or by pain, the wise show neither elation nor depression." A man who has reached perfect neutrality through the cultivation of equanimity, always avoids the following four wrong paths: the path of greed, hate, cowardice, and delusion. A man who has reached perfect neutrality through cultivation of equanimity, always has his serene neutrality which enables him to see all beings impartially.

The Eighthfold Noble Path: The Noble Eightfold Path is the fourth Noble Truth in the Four Noble Truths that can help us prevent problems or deal with any problems we may come across in our daily life. This is the path that leads to the end of sufferings and afflictions. If we follow it, we are on the way to less suffering and more happiness. The eight right (correct) ways. The path leading to release from suffering, the goal of the third in the four noble truths. These are eight in the 37 bodhi ways to enlightenment. Practicing the Noble Eight-fold Path can bring about real advantages such as improvement of personal conditions. It is due to the elimination of all evil thoughts, words, and actions that we may commit in our daily life, and to the continuing practice of charitable work; improvement of living conditions. If

everyone practiced this noble path, the world we are living now would be devoid of all miseries and sufferings caused by hatred, struggle, and war between men and men, countries and countries, or peoples and peoples. Peace would reign forever on earth. Besides, to cultivate the Eightfold Noble Path also means to practice meditation to attain of enlightenment or Bodhi Awareness. The Noble Eight-fold Path is the first basic condition for attaining Bodhi Consciousness that is untarnished while Alaya Consciousness is still defiled. *First, Right View*: Buddhist practitioners of mindfulness should try to understand the natural laws which govern our everyday life. Right understanding or right view is viewing things objectively; seeing them and reporting them exactly as they are without being influenced by prejudice or emotion. Right view helps differentiate the true from the false, and determines the true religious path for attaining liberation. Right understanding means to understand the natural laws which govern our everyday life. One of the most important of these is the law of karma, the law of cause and effect, every action brings a certain result, without any exception. There is no such 'no wholesome nor unwholesome' in Buddhism. Zen practitioners should always remember that whenever we act with greed, hatred, or delusion, pain and suffering come back to us. On the contrary, when our actions are motivated by generosity, love or wisdom, the results are happiness and peace. Devout Buddhists should always have a mindful mind to skilfully integrate the understanding of the law of karma into our lives. Right understanding also means profoundly and subtly understand our true nature. In Buddhism, right understanding means the understanding of suffering or the unsatisfactory nature of all phenomenal existence, its arising, its cessation and the path leading to its cessation. Right Understanding or Right View is one of the two trainings in Wisdom (the other training is Right Thought). Right understanding can be said to mean seeing things as they really are, or understanding the real truth about things, rather than simply seeing them as they appear to be. According to Buddhist point of view, it means insight, penetrative understanding, or seeing beneath the surface of things, etc., under the lens of the Four Noble Truths, Interdependent origination, impermanence, impersonality, and so forth. Right understanding can be acquired by ourselves or by acquiring the truths that are shown by others. The process of acquiring

right understanding must follow the following order: first we must observe objectively the facts which we are presented, then consider their significance. It is to say first to study and then to consider and examine them, and finally attaining right understanding through contemplation. At this point, the two types of understanding, either by ourselves or through others, become indistinguishable. To summarize, the process of acquiring right understanding are as follows: to observe and to study, to examine intellectually what we have observed and studied, to contemplate what we have examined. In short, Right Understanding means the understanding of the four noble truths: the truths of suffering and its causes perpetuate cyclic existence, the truths of cessation and the path are the way to liberation. The mind supported by wisdom will bring forth the Right Understanding which help us wholly and entirely free from the intoxication of sense desire (kama), from becoming (bhava), wrong views (ditthi) and ignorance (avijja). Buddhist practitioners should develop right understanding by seeing impermanence, suffering, and not-self in everything, which leads to detachment and loss infatuation. Detachment is not aversion. An aversion to something we once liked is temporary, and the craving for it will return. Practitioners do not seek for a life of pleasure, but to find peace. Peace is within oneself, to be found in the same place as agitation and suffering. It is not found in a forest or on a hilltop, nor is it given by a teacher. Practitioners meditate to investigate suffering, see its causes, and put an end to them right at the very moment, rather dealing with their effects later on. Right Understanding, in the ultimate sense, is to understand life as it really is. For this, one needs a clear comprehension of the Four Noble Truths, namely: the Truth of Suffering or Unsatisfactoriness, the Arising of Suffering, the Cessation of Suffering, and the Path leading to the Cessation of Suffering. Right understanding means to understand things as they really are and not as they appear to be. It is important to realize that right understanding in Buddhism has a special meaning which differs from that popularly attributed to it. In Buddhism, right understanding is the application of insight to the five aggregates of clinging, and understanding their true nature, that is understanding oneself. It is self-examination and self-observation. Right understanding is the understanding of suffering or the unsatisfactory nature of all phenomenal existence, its arising, its

cessation, and the path leading to its cessation. Right understanding is of the highest important in the Eightfold Noble Path, for the remaining seven factors of the path are guided by it. It ensures that right thoughts are held and it co-operates ideas; when as a result thoughts and ideas become clear and wholesome, man's speech and action are also brought into proper relation. Moreover, it is through right understanding that one gives up harmful or profitless effort and cultivates right effort which aids the development of right mindfulness. Right effort and right mindfulness guided by right understanding bring about right concentration. Thus, right understanding, which is the main spring in Buddhism, causes the other limbs of the co-ordinate system to move in proper relation. There are two conditions that are conducive to right understanding: Hearing from others, that is hearing the Correct Law (Saddhamma), from others (Paratoghosa), and systematic attention or wise attention (Yoniso-manasikara). The first condition is external, that is, what we get from outside, while the second is internal, what we cultivate (manasikara literally means doing-in-the-mind). What we hear gives us food for thought and guides us in forming our own views. It is, therefore, necessary to listen, but only to that which is conducive to right understanding and to avoid all the harmful and unwholesome utterances of others which prevent straight thinking. The second condition, systematic attention, is more difficult to cultivate, because it entails constant awareness of the things that one meets with in everyday life. The word 'Yoniso-manasikara' which is often used in the discourses is most important, for it enables one to see things deeply. 'Yoniso' literally means by-way-of-womb instead of only on the surface. Metaphorically, therefore, it is 'radical' or 'reasoned attention'. These two conditions, learning and systematic attention, together help to develop right understanding. One who seeks truth is not satisfied with surface knowledge, with the mere external appearance of things, but wants to dig deep and see what is beyond the reach of naked eye. That is the sort of search encouraged in Buddhism, for it leads to right understanding. The man of analysis states a thing after resolving it into its various qualities, which he puts in proper order, making everything plain. He does not state things unitarily, looking at them as a whole, but divides them up according to their outstanding features so that the conventional and the highest truth can

be understood unmixed. The Buddha was discriminative and analytical to the highest degree. As a scientist resolves a limb into tissues and the tissues into cells, the Buddha analyzed all component and conditioned things into their fundamental elements, right down to their ultimates, and condemned shallow thinking, unsystematic attention, which tends to make man muddle-headed and hinders the investigation of the true nature of things. It is through right understanding that one sees cause and effect, the arising and ceasing of all conditioned things. The truth of the Dhamma can be only grasped in that way, and not through blind belief, wrong view, speculation or even by abstract philosophy. According to the Anguttara Nikaya, the Buddha says: "This Dhamma is for the wise and not for the unwise." The Nikaya also explains the ways and means of attaining wisdom by stages and avoiding false views. Right understanding permeates the entire teaching, pervades every part and aspect of the Dhamma and functions as the key-note of Buddhism. Due to lack of right understanding, the ordinary man is blind to the true nature of life and fails to see the universal fact of life, suffering or unsatisfactoriness. He does not even try to grasp these facts, but hastily considers the doctrine as pessimism. It is natural perhaps, for beings engrossed in mundane pleasures, beings who crave more and more for gratification of the senses and hate pain, to resent the very idea of suffering and turn their back on it. They do not, however, realize that even as they condemn the idea of suffering and adhere to their own convenient and optimistic view of things, they are still being oppressed by the ever recurring unsatisfactory nature of life.

Second, Right Thought: Buddhist practitioners should be free from sensual desire, ill-will, and cruelty. Right thought means thoughts that are free from sensual desire, ill-will, and cruelty. Thoughts free from ill-will means thoughts that are free from anger, for when anger is burning in the mind, both us and people around us will suffer. Right thoughts includes thoughts of renunciation, good will, and of compassion, or non-harm. These thoughts are to be cultivated and extended towards all living beings regardless of race, caste, clan, or creed. As they embrace all that breathes there are no compromising limitations. Right thought means that our reflection must be consistent with common sense, useful both to others and ourselves. We must strive to correct our faults, or change our wicked opinions. While

meditating on the noble formula of “Precept, Concentration, and Wisdom,” we must realize that ‘ignorance’ is the main cause of suffering, the root of all wicked acts; therefore, we must look for a way to get rid of suffering for us and for others. A mind free from sensual lust, ill-will and cruelty. Right thought means resolve in favour of renunciation, goodwill and nonharming of sentient beings. Through meditation, we can recognize anger and let it go. At that time, the mind becomes light and easy, expressing its natural loving-kindness. Also through meditation, we can recognize cruelty and let it go. At that time, we will have the mind of understanding the suffering of others and wanting to alleviate it. Right Thought is one of the two trainings in Wisdom (the other training is Right View or Right Understanding). Right thought or right thinking means avoiding attachment and aversion. According to Buddhism, the causes of suffering and afflictions are said to be ignorance, attachment, and aversion. When right understanding removes ignorance, right thought removes attachment and aversion; therefore, right understanding and right thought remove the causes of suffering. To remove attachment and greed we must cultivate renunciation, while to remove aversion and anger we must cultivate love and compassion. Renunciation is developed by contemplating the unsatisfactory nature of existence, especially the unsatisfactory nature of pleasures of the senses, for pleasures of the senses are likened to salt water, the more we drink, the more we feel thirsty. Through understanding the unsatisfactory nature of existence and recognizing the undesirable consequences of pleasures of the senses, we can easily cultivate renunciation and detachment. To develop love and compassion through recognizing the essential equality of all living beings. Like human beings, all other beings fear death and tremble at the idea of punishment. Understanding this, we should not kill other beings or cause them to be killed. Like human beings, all other beings desire life and happiness. Understanding this, we should not place ourselves above others or regard ourselves any differently from the way we regard others. Right thought means the thoughts of non-attachment, benevolence and non-harmfulness. On a deeper level, Right Thought refers to the mind that subtly analyzes Emptiness, thus leading us to perceive it directly.

Third, Correct or Right Speech: Buddhist practitioners of mindfulness

should not speak what is untrue. Right speech means not speaking what is untrue, or using slanderous, abusive or harsh language; rather, speaking words which are honest and helpful, creating a vibration of peace and harmony. Right speech implies sincere, sound, impartial, direct, not distorting, cautious, affable, harmless, useful words and discourses. Avoidance of lying, slander and gossip (false and idle talk), or abstaining from lying, tale-bearing, harsh words, and foolish babble. Right speech is one of the methods that can help us to live in harmony with other people and the world. Correct or Right Speech or Perfect Speech is one of the three higher trainings in Ethics (two other trainings are Right Action and Right Livelihood). Speech can influence millions of people. It is said that a harsh word can wound more deeply than a weapon, whereas a gentle word can change the heart and mind of even the most hardened criminal. Therefore, right speech implies respect for truth and respect for the well being of others. Right speech begins with avoiding four destructive actions of speech: lying, divisive words, harsh words and idle talk. Not only that, devout Buddhists should always try to communicate in a way pleasing to others. Rather than venting our anger or frustration onto another, devout Buddhists should think about effective ways to communicate our needs and feelings to them. Besides, Right Speech also means to sincerely make an effort to notice and comment upon others' good qualities and achievements, or to console people in time of grief, or to teach people Dharma. Speech is a powerful tool to influence others and if we use it wisely, many people will benefit. Speech can influence millions of people. It is said that a harsh word can wound more deeply than a weapon, whereas a gentle word can change the heart and mind of even the most hardened criminal. Therefore, right speech implies respect for truth and respect for the well being of others. It is to say right speech means the avoidance of lying, backbiting or slander, harsh speech and idle talk.

Fourth, Correct Action: Buddhist practitioners of mindfulness should choose a right way to do things for ourselves. Right action means to choose a right way to do things for ourselves, not killing, not inflicting pain and afflictions on others, not stealing, not taking what is not ours, not committing sexual misconduct, and not causing suffering to others out of greed or desire for pleasant sensations. Right action involves action beneficial to both others and ourselves. We must always act for

the happiness of the community, conforming to our sense of duty, without any ulterior motive for damaging others' interests, occupations, positions, honors, or lives. We must also keep strict control of our "action, speech, and mind," carrying out ten meritorious actions and avoiding ten evil ones. Right action also means to abstain from injuring living beings, from stealing and from unlawful sexual intercourse. No one among us can avoid our past karma; however, we have the right to choose the right way to do things for ourselves. To say this so we can understand that we have to reap what we sowed in the past; however, we have the right to try to cultivate to have a more peaceful life in the present time. Right action is one of the three higher trainings in Ethics (two other trainings are Right Speech and Right Livelihood). Right action implies respect for life, respect for property, and respect for personal relationships. Respect for life means not to kill or tell others to kill living beings, respect for property means not to steal or tell others to steal, respect for personal relationships means to avoid sexual misconduct (avoid adultery). Right action means acting properly. Right action can help us avoid creating the three destructive actions of the body (killing, stealing and unwise sexual behavior). Right action teaches us to be aware of the effects of our actions on others. Once we possess Right Action, instead of doing whatever pleases us at the moment, we'll be considerate of others, and of course, automatically our relationships will improve and others will be happier in our company. Right Action also includes giving old people a hand in their house work, helping storm and flood victims, and rescuing people from danger, and so on. *Fifth, Right Livelihood:* Practitioners of mindfulness should choose a right career for ourselves. Right livelihood means to choose a right career for ourselves, which is not harmful to others; not having work which involves killing, stealing or dishonesty. Right livelihood also involves action beneficial to both others and ourselves. We must always act for the happiness of the community, conforming to our sense of duty, without any ulterior motive for damaging others' interests, occupations, positions, honors, or lives. We must also keep strict control of our "action, speech, and mind," carrying out ten meritorious actions and avoiding ten evil ones. Perfect conduct also means avoidance of actions that conflict with moral discipline. Right livelihood means earning a living in a way that does not violate basic

moral values. Right livelihood is an extension of the rules of right action to our roles as breadwinners in society. Right Livelihood also means that to earn a living in an appropriate way. Devout Buddhists should not engage in any of the physical or verbal negative actions to earn a living, nor should we cause others to do so. Wisdom and understanding in Buddhism must be integrated into our lives, then Buddhism can be called a living Buddhism. No one among us can avoid our past karma; however, we have the right to choose a right career for ourselves because it is very much within our freedom. To say this so we can understand that we have to reap what we sowed in the past; however, we have the right to try to cultivate to have a more peaceful life in the present time. Right livelihood is one of the three higher trainings in Ethics (two other trainings are Right Speech and Right Action). Right livelihood means to have a right work or a right occupation that can help us avoid creating the three destructive actions of the body (killing, stealing and unwise sexual behavior). Right livelihood teaches us to be aware of the effects of our actions on others. Once we possess Right Action, instead of doing whatever pleases us at the moment, we'll be considerate of others. The Buddha taught: "There are five kinds of livelihood that are discouraged for Buddhists: trading in animals for food (selling animals for slaughter), slaves (dealing in slaves), arms (selling arms and lethal weapons), poisons, and intoxicants (drugs and alcohol, selling intoxicating and/or poisonous drinks). These five are not recommended because they contribute to the destroy of society and violate the values of respect for life and for the welfare of others." Right Livelihood is an extension of the rules of right action to our roles as breadwinners in society. In the contrary, Buddhists should live by an honest profession that is free from harm to self and others. According to the Adornment Sutra, right livelihood is a weapon of enlightening beings, leading away from all wrong livelihood. Zen practitioners who abide by these can annihilate the afflictions, bondage, and compulsion accumulated by all sentient beings in the long night of ignorance. *Sixth, Right Effort:* Buddhist practitioners of mindfulness should be always hard-working, helpful to others and ourselves. Right effort means we must be always hard-working, helpful to others and ourselves. Do not kill, cheat, or lead a wanton, gamble life. On the contrary, always try to perform good deeds

for having good karma. Correct (Right or Perfect) Zeal or Effort or Energy also means to try to avoid the arising of evil, demeritorious things have not yet arisen. Try to overcome the evil, demeritorious things that have already arisen. At the same time, try to produce meritorious things that have not yet arisen and try to maintain the meritorious things that have already arisen and not let them disappear, but to bring them to growth, to maturity and to the full perfection of development. Right effort also means cultivation of what is karmically wholesome and avoidance of what is karmically unwholesome. When developing right effort we must be sincere about our thoughts. If we analyze them we will find that our thoughts are not always good and wholesome. At times they are unwholesome and foolish, though we may not always express them in words and actions or both. Now if we allow such thoughts to rise repeatedly, it is a bad sign, for when an unhealthy thought is allowed to recur again and again, it tends to become a habit. It is, therefore, essential to make a real effort to keep unwholesome thoughts away from us. Until we succeed in stopping them to rise in our mind, unhealthy thoughts will always be taking possession of our mind. It is not only during the time of meditation that we need to cultivate our right effort. Right effort should be cultivated always whenever possible. In all our speech, actions and behavior, in our daily life, we need right effort to perform our duties wholeheartedly and successfully. If we lack right effort and give in to sloth and indolence, we can not proceed with our cultivation. Right effort is one of the three trainings in meditation (two other trainings are Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration). Right effort means cultivating a confident attitude toward our undertakings, taking up and pursuing our task with energy and a will to carry them through to the end. In Buddhism, right effort means cultivating a confident attitude of mind, being attentive and aware. To progress on the path, we need to put our energy into Dharma practice. With enthusiastic effort, we can purify negative actions already done to prevent doing new ones in the future. In addition, effort also is necessary to maintain the virtuous states we've already generated, as well as to induce new ones in the future. *Seventh, Right Remembrance:* Buddhist practitioners of mindfulness have correct memory which retains the true and excludes the false. Right remembrance, the seventh of the eightfold noble path,

means remembering correctly and thinking correctly. The looking or contemplating on the body and the spirit in such a way as to remain ardent, self-possessed and mindful. Right remembrance means looking on the body and spirit in such a way as to remain ardent, self-possessed and mindful, having overcome both hankering and dejection. Right mindfulness means to give heed to good deed for our own benefit and that of others. According to the eightfold noble path, right mindfulness means the one-pointedness of the mind, and Zen will help practitioner to have Right Remembrance. Through Zen we always have Right mindfulness. In fact, in our daily life activities, we should always be aware and attentive. We should always be aware of what we think, say and do. We must concentrate on everything we do before we can do it well. For instance, if we concentrate in class, we would not miss anything the teacher says. Right mindfulness also means remembrance including old mistakes to repent of and deep gratitude towards parents, country, humankind, and Buddhist Triple Gems. Right mindfulness also means the reflection on the present and future events or situations. We must meditate upon human sufferings that are caused by ignorance and decide to work for alleviating them, irrespective of possible difficulties and boredom. Correct Memory which retains the true and excludes the false. Dwell in contemplation of corporeality. Be mindful and putting away worldly greed and grief. Correct mindfulness also means ongoing mindfulness of body, feelings, thinking, and objects of thought. Mindfulness means being aware of what is happening in the present moment. It means noticing the flow of things, when walking, to be aware of the movement of the body; in observing the breath, to be aware of the sensations of the in-out or raising-falling; to notice thoughts or feelings as they arise or as they disappear. Mindfulness brings the quality of poise, equilibrium and balance to the mind. Mindfulness also keeps the mind sharply focused, with the attitude of sitting back and watching the passing show of our surroundings. The function of the right effort is to be vigilant and check all unhealthy thoughts, and to cultivate, promote and maintain wholesome and pure thoughts arising in a man's mind. Right Mindfulness is one of the three trainings in meditation (two others are Right Effort and Right Concentration). Mindfulness is awareness or attention, and as such it means avoiding a distracted or cloudly state of mind. In the practice of

the Dharma, right mindfulness plays as a kind of rein upon our minds for our minds are never concentrated or still. The Buddha taught: “The practice of mindfulness means mindfulness of the body, mindfulness of feelings, mindfulness of consciousness, and mindfulness of objects of the mind.” In short, right mindfulness means to watch our body and mind and to know what we are doing at all times. Right Mindfulness is an important mental factor that enables us to remember and keep our attention on what is beneficial. Right Mindfulness plays an important role in meditation, i.e., Right mindfulness can help us clear the flurry of thoughts from our minds, and eventually, we’ll be able to concentrate single-pointedly on our breath. Right mindfulness is the application or arousing of attention: be attentive to the activities of the body with the practice of concentration on breathing; be aware of all forms of feelings and sensations, pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral, by contemplating their appearance and disappearance within oneself; be aware whether one’s mind is lustful, hatred, deluded, distracted or concentrated; contemplate the impermanence of all things from arise, stay, change and decay to eliminate attachment. *Eight, Right Concentration*: Right Concentration or Correct Concentration. Detached from sensual objects, detached from unwholesome things, and enters into the first, second, third and fourth absorption. Right concentration means a strong concentration of our thoughts on a certain subject in order to set it clearly, consistent with Buddhist doctrine and for the benefit of others and ourselves. Right meditation means to keep the mind steady and calm in order to see clearly the true nature of things. This type of mental practice can make us become more understanding and a happier person. “Correct concentration” requires the previous steps. Unless one has a concentrated mind that can fix itself calmly and one-pointedly on a single object without being distracted by laxity or excitement, one cannot properly enter into meditation, which requires intense concentration. Cultivating concentration in meditation means to learn to concentrate. In our meditation, we think that noises, cars, voices, sights, and so forth, are distractions that come and bother us when we want to be quiet. But who is bothering whom? Actually, we are the ones who go and bother them. The car, the sound, the noise, the sight, and so forth, are just following their own nature. We bother things through some false idea

that they are outside of us and cling to the ideal of remaining quiet, undisturbed. We should learn to see that it is not things that bother us, that we go out to bother them. We should see the world as a mirror. It is all a reflection of mind. When we know this, we can grow in every moment, and every experience reveals truth and brings understanding. Normally, the untrained mind is full of worries and anxieties, so when a bit of tranquility arises from practicing meditation, we easily become attached to it, mistaking states of tranquility for the end of meditation. Sometimes we may even think we have put an end to lust or greed or hatred, only to be overwhelmed by them later on. Actually, it is worse to be caught in calmness than to be stuck in agitation, because at least we will want to escape from agitation, whereas we are content to remain in calmness and not go any further. Thus, when extraordinarily blissful, clear states arise from insight meditation practice, do not cling to them. Although this tranquility has a sweet taste, it too, must be seen as impermanent, unsatisfactory, and empty. Practicing meditation without thought of attaining absorption or any special state. Just know whether the mind is calm or not and, if so, whether a little or a lot. In this way it will develop on its own. Concentration must be firmly established for wisdom to arise. To concentrate the mind is like turning on the switch, there is no light, but we should not waste our time playing with the switch. Likewise, concentration is the empty bowl and wisdom is the food that fills it and makes the meal. Do not be attached to the object of meditation such as a mantra. Know its purpose. If we succeed in concentrating our mind using the Buddha Recitation, let the Buddha recitation go, but it is a mistake to think that Buddha recitation is the end of our cultivation. Right concentration is the intensified steadiness of the mind comparable to the unflickering flame of a lamp in a windless place. It is concentration that fixes the mind right and causes it to be unmoved and undisturbed. The correct practice of “samadhi” maintains the mind and the mental properties in a state of balance. Many are the mental impediments that confront a practitioner, a meditator, but with support of Right Effort and Right Mindfulness the fully concentrated mind is capable of dispelling the impediments, the passions that disturb man. The perfect concentrated mind is not distracted by sense objects, for it sees things as they are, in their proper perspective. Right Concentration is one of the three trainings in

Samadhi (two other trainings are Right Effort and Right Mindfulness). Right concentration means to concentrate the mind single-pointedly on an object. Our concentration or single-pointedness slowly improves through effort and mindfulness, until we attain calm abiding. Right Concentration may also help us progress to deeper states of concentration, the actual meditative stabilizations (form and formless realms).

Chapter Four

Cultivation In Buddhist Point of View

I. An Overview of Cultivation In Buddhist Point of View:

To lead a religious life. Cultivation in Buddhism is to put the Buddha's teachings into practice on a continued and regular basis. Cultivation in Buddhism also means to nourish the seeds of Bodhi by practicing and developing precepts, dhyana, and wisdom. Thus, cultivation in Buddhism is not only practicing Buddha recitation or sitting meditation, it also includes cultivation of six paramitas, ten paramitas, thirty-seven aids to Enlightenment, etc. Sincere Buddhists should always remember that time is extremely precious. An inch of time is an inch of life, so do not let the time pass in vain. Someone is thinking, "I will not cultivate today. I will put it off until tomorrow." But when tomorrow comes, he will put it off to the next day. He keeps putting it off until his hair turns white, his teeth fall out, his eyes become blurry, and his ears go deaf. At that point in time, he wants to cultivate, but his body no longer obeys him. Sincere Buddhists should always remember that living in this world, we all are like fish in a pond that is evaporating. We do not have much time left. Thus ancient virtues taught: "One day has passed, our lives are that much less. We are like fish in a shrinking pond. What joy is there in this? We should be diligently and vigorously cultivating as if our own heads were at stake. Only be mindful of impermanence, and be careful not to be lax." From beginningless eons in the past until now, we have not had good opportunity to know Buddhism, so we have not known how to cultivate. Therefore, we undergo birth and death, and after death, birth again. Oh, how pitiful! Today we have good opportunity to know Buddhism, why do we still want to put off cultivating? Sincere Buddhists! Time does not wait anybody. In the twinkling of an eye, we will be old and our life will be over!

There are as many as eighty-four thousand Dharma-doors for cultivating the Path. For the sake of understanding, we should be familiar with each one of these Dharma-doors. You should not limit yourself in just a single method of cultivation. However, for the sake of

practicing, we should focus on the dharma-door that is the most appropriate for us. “Tu” means correct our characters and obey the Buddha’s teachings. “Tu” means to study the law by reciting sutras in the morning and evening, being on strict vegetarian diet and studying all the scriptures of the Buddha, keep all the precepts; however, the most important factors in real “Tu” are to correct your character, to eliminate bad habits, to be joyful and compassionate, to build virtue. In reciting sutras, one must thoroughly understand the meaning. Furthermore, one should also practise meditation on a daily basis to get insight. For laypeople, “Tu” means to mend your ways, from evil to wholesome (ceasing transgressions and performing good deeds). According to the first patriarch Bodhidharma, “Requite hatred” is one of the four disciplinary processes. What is meant by ‘How to requite hatred?’ Those who discipline themselves in the Path should think thus when they have to struggle with adverse conditions: “During the innumerable past eons I have wandered through multiplicity of existences, never thought of cultivation, and thus creating infinite occasions for hate, ill-will, and wrong-doing. Even though in this life I have committed no violations, the fruits of evil deeds in the past are to be gathered now. Neither gods nor men can fortell what is coming upon me. I will submit myself willingly and patiently to all the ills that befall me, and I will never bemoan or complain. In the sutra it is said not to worry over ills that may happen to you, because I thoroughly understand the law of cause and effect. This is called the conduct of making the best use of hatred and turned it into the service in one’s advance towards the Path.

In the Dharmapada Sutra, the Buddha taught: “He who applies himself to that which should be avoided, not cultivate what should be cultivated; forgets the good, but goes after pleasure. It’s only an empty admiration when he says he admires people who exert themselves in meditation (Dharmapada 209).” According to the Forty-Two Sections Sutra, one evening a Sramana was reciting the Sutra of Bequeating the Teaching by Kasyapa Buddha. His mind was mournful as he reflected repentantly on his desire to retreat. The Buddha asked him: “When you were a householder in the past, what did you do?” He replied: “I was fond of playing the lute.” The Buddha said: “What happened when the strings were slack?” He replied: “They did not sound good.” The

Buddha then asked: “What happened when the strings were taut?” He replied: “The sounds were brief.” The Buddha then asked again: “What happened when they were tuned between slack and taut?” He replied: “The sounds carried.” The Buddha said: “It is the same with a Sramana who *cultivates or studies the Way*. If his mind is harmonious, he can obtain (achieve) the Way. If he is impetuous about the Way, this impetuosity will tire out his body, and if his body is tired, his mind will give rise to afflictions. If his mind produces afflictions, then he will retreat from his practice. If he retreats from his practice, it will certainly increase his offenses. You need only be pure, peaceful, and happy and you will not lose the Way.”

We can cultivate in charity. The pitiable, or poor and needy, as the field or opportunity for charity. We can also cultivate the field of religion and reverence of the Buddhas, the saints, the priesthood. We can also cultivate of happiness by doing offerings to those who are still in training in religion. Or we can cultivate by making Offerings to those who have completed their course. According to The Commentary on the Ten Stages of Bodhisattvahood, there are two paths of cultivation. The first way is “the Difficult Path”. The difficult path refers to the practices of sentient beings in the world of the five turbidities, who, through countless Buddha eras, aspire to reach the stage of Non-Retrogression. The difficulties are truly countless, as numerous as specks of dust or grains of sand, too numerous to imagine; however, there are basically five major kinds of difficulties: externalists are legion, creating confusion with respect to the Bodhisattva Dharma; evil beings destroy the practitioner’s good and wholesome virtues; worldly merits and blessings can easily lead the practitioner astray, so that he ceases to engage in virtuous practices; it is easy to stray onto the Arhat’s path of self-benefit, which obstructs the Mind of great loving kindness and great compassion; and relying exclusively on self-power, without the aid of the Buddha’s power, make cultivation very difficult and arduous; it is like the case of a feeble, handicapped person, walking alone, who can only go so far each day regardless of how much effort he expends. The second way is the Easy Path. The easy path of cultivation means that, if sentient beings in this world believe in the Buddha’s words, practice Buddha Recitation and vow to be reborn in the Pure Land, they are assisted by the Buddha’s vow-power and

assured of rebirth. This is similar to a person who floats downstream in a boat; although the distance may be thousands of miles far away, his destination will be reached sooner or later. Similarly, a common being, relying on the power of a 'universal monarch' or a deity, can traverse the five continents in a day and a night, this is not due to his own power, but, rather, to the power of the monarch. Some people, reasoning according to 'noumenon,' or principle may say that common beings, being conditioned, cannot be reborn in the Pure Land or see the Buddha's body. The answer is that the virtues of Buddha Recitation are 'unconditioned' good roots. Ordinary, impure persons who develop the Bodhi Mind, seek rebirth and constantly practice Buddha Recitation can subdue and destroy afflictions, achieve rebirth and, depending on their level of cultivation, obtain vision of the rudimentary aspects of the Buddha (the thirty-two marks of greatness, for example). Bodhisattvas, naturally, can achieve rebirth and see the subtle, loftier aspects of the Buddha, i.e., the Dharma body. There can be no doubt about this. Thus the Avatamsaka Sutra states: "All the various Buddha lands are equally purely adorned. Because the karmic practices of sentient beings differ, their perceptions of these lands are different."

In Buddhism, cultivation does not barely mean to shave one's head or to wear the yellow robe; nor does it mean outer practices of the body. Diligent cultivation does not only include meditation, correct sitting and controlling the breath; or that we must not be lazy, letting days and months slip by neglectfully, we should also know how to feel satisfied with few possessions and eventually cease looking for joy in desires and passions completely. Diligent cultivation also means that we must use our time to meditate on the four truths of permanence, suffering, selflessness, and impurity. We must also penetrate deeply into the profound meaning of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness to see that all things as well as our bodies are constantly changing from becoming, to maturing, transformation, and destruction. Diligent cultivation also means to obtain correct understanding and concentration so that we can destroy narrow-mindedness. Among the basic desires and passions, narrow-mindedness has the deepest roots. Thus, when these roots are loosened, all other desires, passions, greed, anger, ignorance, and doubt are also uprooted. According to the Sutra In Forty-Two Sections, Chapter 40, the Buddha said: "A Sramana who

practices the Way should not be like an ox turning a millstone because an ox is like one who practices the way with his body but his mind is not on the Way. If the mind is concentrated on the Way, one does not need the outer practices of the body.” Sincere Buddhists should select a single Dharma Door and then practice according to the teachings of that Dharma Door for the remainder of the cultivator’s life without changing and mixing in other practices. For example, once a person chooses to practice Pureland Buddhism, then for the entire life, he should always and often focus his energy into reciting the Buddha’s virtuous name and pray to gain rebirth. If he or she chooses to practice meditation, he or she should always focus on meditation and contemplation. Thus, the wrong thing to do is to practice one Dharma Door one day and switch to another the next.

In Buddhist teachings, diligence-paramita is one of the most important subjects of meditation in Buddhism. Diligent practice destroys laziness. After we cease looking for joy in desires and passions and know how to feel satisfied with few possessions, we must not be lazy, letting days and months slip by neglectfully. Great patience and diligence are needed continually to develop our concentration and understanding in the endeavor of self-realization. We must whatever time we have to meditate on the four truths of impermanence, suffering, selflessness, and impurity. We must penetrate deeply into the profound meaning of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, practicing, studying, and meditating on the postures and cycles of becoming, maturing, transformation, and destruction of our bodies, as well as our feelings, sensations, mental formations, and consciousness. We should read sutras and other writings which explain cultivation and meditation, correct sitting and controlling the breath, such as The Satipatthana Sutta and The Maha Prajna Paramita Heart Sutra. We have to follow the teachings of these sutras and practice them in an intelligent way, choosing the methods which best apply to our own situation. As necessary, we can modify the methods suggested in order to accommodate our own needs. Our energy must also be regulated until all the basic desires and passions, greed, anger, narrow-mindedness, arrogance, doubt, and preconceived ideas, are uprooted. At this time we will know that our bodies and minds are liberated from

the imprisonment of birth and death, the five skandhas, and the three worlds.

According to the Flower Adornment Sutra, Chapter 38, there are ten kinds of diligent practices of Great Enlightening Beings. Enlightening Beings who abide by these can attain the supreme practice of great knowledge and wisdom of Buddhas. First, diligent practice of giving, relinquishing all without seeking reward. Second, diligent practice of self-control, practicing austerities, having few desires, and being content. Third, diligent practice of forbearance, detaching from notions of self and other, tolerating all evils without anger or malice. Fourth, diligent practice of vigor, their thoughts, words and deeds never confused, not regressing in what they do, reaching the ultimate end. Fifth, diligent practice of meditation, liberations, and concentrations, discovering spiritual powers, leaving behind all desires, afflictions, and contention. Sixth, diligent practice of wisdom, tirelessly cultivating and accumulating virtues. Seventh, diligent practice of great benevolence, knowing that all sentient beings have no nature of their own. Eighth, diligent practice of great compassion, knowing that all things are empty, accepting suffering in place of all sentient beings without wearying. Ninth, diligent practice to awaken the ten powers of enlightenment, realizing them without obstruction, manifesting them for sentient beings. Tenth, diligent practice of the non receding wheel of teaching, proceeding to reach all sentient beings. In summary, a straight mirror image requires a straight object. If you want to reap the “Buddhahood,” you must sow the Buddha-seed. A mirror reflects beauty and ugliness as they are, the Buddha’s Teachings prevail forever, knowing that requital spans three generations, obviously good deeds cause good results, evil deeds causes evil results. The wise know that it is the object before the mirror that should be changed, while the dull and ignorant waste time and effort hating and resenting the image in the mirror. Encountering good or adverse circumstances, devoted Buddhists should always be peaceful, not resent the heaven nor hate the earth. In the contrary, sincere Buddhists should strive their best to cultivate until they attain the Buddhahood.

II. The Importance of Practice in Buddhism:

It is traditional for Buddhists to honour the Buddha, to respect the Sangha and to pay homage the religious objects of veneration such as the relics of the Buddha, Buddha images, monastery, pagoda, and personal articles used by the Buddha. However, Buddhists never pray to idols. The worship of the Buddha, ancestors, and deceased parents, are encouraged. However, the word “worship” itself is not appropriate from the Buddhist point of view. The term “Pay homage” should be more appropriate. Buddhists do not blindly worship these objects and forget their main goal is to practice. Buddhists kneel before the image of the Buddha to pay respect to what the image represents, and promise to try to achieve what the Buddha already achieved 25 centuries ago, not to seek worldly favours from the image. Buddhists pay homage to the image not because they are fear of the Buddha, nor do they supplicate for worldly gain. The most important aspect in Buddhism is to put into practice the teaching given by the Buddha. The Buddha always reminded his disciples that Buddhists should not depend on others, not even on the Buddha himself, for their salvation. During the Buddha’s time, so many disciples admired the beauty of the Buddha, so the Buddha also reminded his disciples saying: “You cannot see the Buddha by watching the physical body. Those who see my teaching see me.”

III. Cultivations in Buddhist Traditions:

According to Buddhist traditions, there are two modes or values of observing commandments. *First*, prohibitive or restraining from evil. *Second*, constructive or constraining to goodness. According to Most Venerable Thích Thiên Tâm in *The Thirteen Patriarchs of Pureland Buddhism*, Buddha Recitation has two components: Practice-Recitation and Theory-Recitation. The application of harmonizing Theory and Practice. If cultivators are able to practice Buddha Recitation in this way and maintain it throughout their lives, then in the present life, they will attain the Buddha Recitation Samadhi and upon death they will gain Rebirth to the Highest Level in the Ultimate Bliss World. *The first way is the “Practice-Recitation”*: Reciting the Buddha-name at the level of phenomenal level means believing that Amitabha Buddha exists in His Pure Land in the West, but not yet comprehending that he

is a Buddha created by the Mind, and that this Mind is Buddha. It means you resolve to make vows and to seek birth in the Pure Land, like a child longing for its mother, and never forgetting her for a moment. This is one of the two types of practices that Most Venerable Thích Thiền Tâm mentioned in *The Thirteen Patriarchs of Pureland Buddhism*. Practice-Recitation means having faith that there is a Buddha named Amitabha in the West of this Saha World, the cultivators should be about the theory: mind can become Buddha, and mind is Buddha. In this way, they practice Buddha Recitation diligently and vigorously like children missing their mother, without a moment of discontinuity. Thereafter, sincerely vow and pray to gain rebirth in the Ultimate Bliss World. Practice-Recitation simply means people reciting Buddha's name without knowing the sutra, the doctrine, Mahayana, Hinayana teachings, or anything else. It is only necessary for them to listen to the teaching of a Dharma Master that in the Western direction, there is a world called Ultimate Bliss; in that world there are Amitabha Buddha, Avalokitesvara, Mahasthamaprapta, and Great Ocean Assembly of Peaceful Bodhisattvas. To regularly and diligently practice Reciting Amitabha Buddha's Name as many times as they possibly can, follow by reciting the three enlightened ones of Avalokitesvara, Mahasthamaprapta, and Great Ocean Assembly of Peaceful Bodhisattvas. Thereafter, sincerely and wholeheartedly vow and pray to gain rebirth in the Pureland of Ultimate Bliss. After hearing the above teachings, practitioners should maintain and cultivate as they were taught, making vows to pray for rebirth in the Ultimate Bliss World for the remainder of their lives, to their last breath, and even after they have passed away, they continue to remember to recite Buddha's name without forgetting. This is called Practice-Recitation. Cultivators are guaranteed to gain rebirth in the Ultimate Bliss World. *The second method is the "Theory-Recitation":* This is one of the two types of practices that Most Venerable Thích Thiền Tâm mentioned in *The Thirteen Patriarchs of Pureland Buddhism*. Theory-Recitation is to have faith that Amitabha Buddha in the Western Direction is pre-existing and is an inherent nature within everyone because Buddha arises from within cultivator's mind. Thereafter, the cultivators use the "Virtuous Name" already complete within their minds to establish a condition to tame the mind and influence it to "Never ever forget to

recite the Buddha's name." Theory-Recitation also means "the people reciting Buddha" are individuals who learn and examine the sutra teachings, clearly knowing different traditions, doctrines, and deepest and most profound dharma teachings, etc. Generally speaking, they are well-versed knowledgeable, and understand clearly the Buddha's Theoretical teachings such as the mind creates all ten realms of the four Saints and the six unenlightened. Amitabha Buddha and Buddhas in the ten directions are manifested within the mind. This extends to other external realities such as heaven, hell, or whatever, all are the manifestations within the mind. The virtuous name of Amitabha Buddha is a recitation that already encompasses all the infinite virtues and merits accumulated through the vow-power of Amitabha Buddha. Use the one recitation of "Namo Amitabha Buddha" as a rope and a single condition to get hold of the monkey-mind and horse-thoughts, so it can no longer wander but remain undisturbed and quiescent. At minimum, this will allow the cultivator to have a meditative mind during the ritual or at least for several minutes of that time. Never forgetting to maintain that recitation. Vowing to gain rebirth.

According to Buddhist traditions, there are three sources of cultivation. The first method is the cultivation of Compassion and pity. The second method is the cultivation of Patience. The third method is the cultivation of emptiness or unreality of all things. Everything is being dependent on something else and having no individual existence apart from other things; hence the illusory nature of all things as being composed of elements and not possessing reality. For lay people, the Buddha always reminded about the three means to cultivate or practice Buddha dharma in their daily activities. *First*, to control one's body for not doing bad deeds. *Second*, to control one's mouth for not speaking vain talk or harsh speech. *Third*, to control one's mind for not wandering with unwholesome karma. For the hearers, there are also three ways of cultivation. These are also three ways of discipline of Sravaka. These three trainings are the three inseparable aspects for any cultivators. The three Universal Characteristics (Existence is universally characterized by impermanence, suffering and not-self). Three methods according to the Mahayana Buddhism. *First, practice on the impermanence*: No realization of the eternal, seeing everything as everchanging and transient. *Second, practice on suffering*: Joyless,

through only contemplating misery and not realizing the ultimate nirvana-joy. *Third, practice on non-self*: Non-ego discipline, seeing only the perishing self and not realizing the immortal self. While according to the Theravadan Buddhism, three ways to Enlightenment are “Sila-Samdhī-Prajna”. First, keeping the precepts, or training in Moral discipline by avoiding karmically unwholesome activities. Cultivating ethical conduct. Second, mental discipline, or training the mind in Concentration, or practicing concentration of the mind. Third, wisdom or prajna, meaning always acting wisely, or training in Wisdom, the development of prajna through insight into the truth of Buddhism. These are also the three studies or endeavors of the non-outflow, or those who have passionless life and escape from transmigration. In Buddhism, there is no so-called cultivation without discipline, and also there is no Dharma without discipline. Precepts are considered as cages to capture the thieves of greed, anger, stupidity, pride, doubt, wrong views, killing, stealing, lust, and lying. In the same manner with keeping precepts, in Buddhism, there is no so-called cultivation without concentration, or training the mind. The resulting wisdom, or training in wisdom. If you want to get rid of greed, anger, and ignorance, you have no choice but cultivating discipline and samadhi so that you can obtain wisdom paramita. With wisdom paramita, you can destroy these thieves and terminate all afflictions.

Should Buddhists wait until getting old and after retirement to cultivate? It is traditional for Buddhists to honour the Buddha, to respect the Sangha and to pay homage the religious objects of veneration such as the relics of the Buddha, Buddha images, monastery, pagoda, and personal articles used by the Buddha. However, Buddhists never pray to idols. The worship of the Buddha, ancestors, and deceased parents, are encouraged. However, the word “worship” itself is not appropriate from the Buddhist point of view. The term “Pay homage” should be more appropriate. Buddhists do not blindly worship these objects and forget their main goal is to practice. Buddhists kneel before the image of the Buddha to pay respect to what the image represents, and promise to try to achieve what the Buddha already achieved 25 centuries ago, not to seek worldly favours from the image. Buddhists pay homage to the image not because they are fear of the Buddha, nor do they supplicate for worldly gain. The most

important aspect in Buddhism is to put into practice the teaching given by the Buddha. The Buddha always reminded his disciples that Buddhists should not depend on others, not even on the Buddha himself, for their salvation. During the Buddha's time, so many disciples admired the beauty of the Buddha, so the Buddha also reminded his disciples saying: "You cannot see the Buddha by watching the physical body. Those who see my teaching see me." Some people believe that they should wait until after their retirement to cultivate because after retirement they will have more free time. Those people may not understand the real meaning of the word "cultivation", that is the reason why they want to wait until after retirement to cultivate. According to Buddhism, cultivation means to turn bad things into good things, or to improve your body and mind. So, when can we turn bad things into good things, or when can we improve our body and mind? Ancient virtues taught: "Do not wait until you are thirsty to dig a well, or don't wait until the horse is on the edge of the cliff to draw in the reins for it is too late; or don't wait until the boat is in the middle of the river to patch the leaks for it's too late, and so on". Most of us have the same problem of waiting and delaying of doing things. If we wait until the water reaches our navel to jump, it's too late, no way we can escape the drown if we don't know how to swim. In the same way, at ordinary times, we don't care about proper or improper acts, but wait until after retirement or near death to start caring about our actions, we may never have that chance. Sincere Buddhists should always remember that impermanence and death never wait for anybody. So, take advantage of whatever time we have at the present time to cultivate, to plant good roots and to accumulate merits and virtues.

In short, no matter what dharma door we are following, the first important thing is that we must see the benefits of studying the Dharma, only then will we develop the strong desire to study it, for owing to our study, we understand Dharma; owing to our study, we stop committing wrong doings; owing to our study, we abandon the meaningless behaviors; owing to our study, we eventually achieve nirvana. In other words, by virtue of our study, we will know all the key points for modifying our behavior. Owing to study, we will understand the meaning of the Vinaya Basket and, as a result, will stop committing

sins by following the high training of ethics. Owing to study, we will understand the meaning of the Sutra Basket, and as a result, we will be able to abandon such meaningless things as distractions, by following the high training in single-pointed concentration. Also owing to study, we understand the meaning of the Abhidharma Basket, and so come to abandon delusions by means of the high training in wisdom. Study is the lamp to dispel the darkness of ignorance. It is the best of possession that thieves cannot rob us of it. Study is a weapon to defeat our enemies of blindness to all things. It is our best friend who instructs us on the means. Study is a relative who will not desert us when we are poor. It is a medicine against sorrow that does us no harm. It is the best force that dispatches against our misdeeds. Devout Buddhists should always remember that when we know one more letter, we get rid of ourselves a bit of ignorance around that letter. So, when we know the other letters, we have dispelled our ignorance about them too, and added even more to our wisdom. The more we study the more light of wisdom we gain that helps us decrease ignorance. We should not study teaching without applying the basic and essential practices of Buddhism in order to transform our afflictions and habit energies. We also try to study teachings of a profound, metaphysical, and mystical nature, and should always ask ourselves how we may apply these teachings in our daily life to transform our sufferings and realize emancipation. Finally, the urgent and essential purposes of studying the teachings of lay people are trying not to cause sufferings, afflictions, and troubles for us and for other people, on the contrary, the benefits from studying the teachings will not only help relieve our sufferings, afflictions, and troubles, but also relieve other people's sufferings, afflictions, and troubles in this very life, so that everyone will have a life of more peace, mindfulness and happiness.

IV. Cultivation Means Changing the Karma:

Although the supreme goal of Buddhism is the supreme Enlightenment and liberation, the Buddha also taught that Buddhist practice is the source of happiness. It can lead to the end of human suffering and miseries. The Buddha was also a man like all other men, but why could he become a Great Enlightened One? The Buddha never declared that He was a Deity. He only said that all living beings

have a Buddha-Nature that is the seed of Enlightenment. He attained it by renouncing his princely position, wealth, prestige and power for the search of Truth that no one had found before. As Buddhist followers, we practice Buddhist tenets, not for entreating favors but for following the Buddha's example by changing bad karmas to good ones or no karma at all. Since people are different from one another, some are rich and intelligent, some are poor and stupid. It can be said that this is due to their individual karma, each person has his own circumstances. Buddhists believe that we reap what we have sown. This is called the law of causality or karma, which is a process, action, energy or force. Karmas of deeds, words and thoughts all produce an effect, either happiness or miseries, wealth or poverty. Karma does not mean "determinism," because if everything is predetermined, then there would be no free will and no moral or spiritual advancement. Karma is not fixed, but can be changed. It cannot shut us in its surroundings indefinitely. On the contrary, we all have the ability and energy to change it. Our fate depends entirely on our deeds; in other words, we are the architects of our karma. Cultivating in accordance with the Buddha's Teachings means we change the karma of ourselves; changing our karmas by not only giving up our bad actions or misdeeds, but also forgiving offences directed against us by others. We cannot blame anyone else for our miseries and misfortunes. We have to face life as it is and not run away from it, because there is no place on earth to hide from karma. Performing good deeds is indispensable for our own happiness; there is no need of imploring favors from deities or simply showing repentance. Changing karma also means remembrance of karma and using wisdom to distinguish virtue from evil and freedom from constraint so that we are able to avoid evil deeds, to do meritorious deeds, or not to create any deeds at all. Changing karma also means to purify our minds rather than praying, performing rites, or torturing our bodies. Changing karma also means to change your narrow-minded heart into a heart full of love and compassion and accomplish the four boundless hearts, especially the hearts of loving-kindness and compassion. True Buddhists should always remember that sooner or later everyone has to die once. After death, what can we bring with us? We cannot bring with us any worldly possessions; only our bad or good karma will follow us like a shadow of our own.

According to Buddhism, our fate depends entirely on our deeds; in other words, we are the architects of our karma. Cultivating in accordance with the Buddha's Teachings means we change the karma of ourselves; changing our karmas by not only giving up our bad actions or misdeeds, but also forgiving offences directed against us by others. We cannot blame anyone else for our miseries and misfortunes. We have to face life as it is and not run away from it, because there is no place on earth to hide from karma. Performing good deeds is indispensable for our own happiness; there is no need of imploring favors from deities or simply showing repentance. Changing karma also means remembrance of karma and using wisdom to distinguish virtue from evil and freedom from constraint so that we are able to avoid evil deeds, to do meritorious deeds, or not to create any deeds at all. Changing karma also means to purify our minds rather than praying, performing rites, or torturing our bodies. Changing karma also means to change your narrow-minded heart into a heart full of love and compassion and accomplish the four boundless hearts, especially the hearts of loving-kindness and compassion. True Buddhists should always remember that sooner or later everyone has to die once. After death, what can we bring with us? We cannot bring with us any worldly possessions; only our bad or good karma will follow us like a shadow of our own. Pure Land practitioners should always remember that to cultivate to gather merits also means to transfer karma. It includes various practices for a Buddhist such as practicing charity, distributing free sutras, building temples and stupas, keeping vegetarian diet and precepts, etc. However, the mind is not able to focus on a single individual practice and it is difficult to achieve one-pointedness of mind. To see this, Pure Land practitioners should try their best to cultivate in any free time they have. And because of this, in 'Letters From Patriarch Yin-Kuang,' Great Master Yin-Kuang said: "Outside of regular sessions of cultivation, you should also constantly recite the Buddha's name while walking, standing, sitting, reclining or engaging in other actions that do not require intense intellectual activity. When resting, you should recite, uttering only these words 'Amitabha Buddha' to facilitate concentration. You should also recite silently when not properly dressed or when doing household chores, bathing, urinating or defecating, or when walking to and from unclean places. This silent

recitation also brings the same benefits as reciting aloud. In the latter circumstances, loud recitation is improper and could reflect disrespect. Whether reciting loudly or softly or engaging in 'diamond recitation' or silent recitation, you should be attentive and keep each utterance clearly and distinctly in mind, the mouth reciting clearly and distinctly and the ears hearing clearly and distinctly. When you recite in this way, the mind is no longer chasing after external realms, deluded thoughts cease and recitation gradually becomes pure and focussed, the virtues accrued are thus immense!"

Chapter Five

Buddhists' Cultivation

The Importance of Practice in Buddhism: It is traditional for Buddhists to honour the Buddha, to respect the Sangha and to pay homage the religious objects of veneration such as the relics of the Buddha, Buddha images, monastery, pagoda, and personal articles used by the Buddha. However, Buddhists never pray to idols. The worship of the Buddha, ancestors, and deceased parents, are encouraged. However, the word “worship” itself is not appropriate from the Buddhist point of view. The term “Pay homage” should be more appropriate. Buddhists do not blindly worship these objects and forget their main goal is to practice. Buddhists kneel before the image of the Buddha to pay respect to what the image represents, and promise to try to achieve what the Buddha already achieved 25 centuries ago, not to seek worldly favours from the image. Buddhists pay homage to the image not because they are fear of the Buddha, nor do they supplicate for worldly gain. The most important aspect in Buddhism is to put into practice the teaching given by the Buddha. The Buddha always reminded his disciples that Buddhists should not depend on others, not even on the Buddha himself, for their salvation. During the Buddha’s time, so many disciples admired the beauty of the Buddha, so the Buddha also reminded his disciples saying: “You cannot see the Buddha by watching the physical body. Those who see my teaching see me.”

A Summary of Lives and Cultivations of Devout Buddhists: Buddhist is the one who believes in the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. One who accepts Buddhism as his religion. One who studies, disseminates and endeavors to live the fundamental principles of the Buddha-dharma. There are no special rites to observe to become a Buddhist. However, a Buddhist, especially laymen and lay women should follow the five precepts (not to kill, not to steal, not to commit adultery, not to lie, and not to drink liquor). The first step to become a Buddhist is to take refuge in the Triple Gem to affirm our spiritual strength by empowering the confidence and rationale in us during times

of adversity and confrontation. This also steers us in the right direction of living our lives in a more meaningful way. Devout lay disciples including two classes of upasaka and upasika. Disciples in both forms of Buddhism, Theravada and Mahayana, is a person who vows to join the religion by striving to take refuge in the Triratna and to keep the five Precepts at all times, and the Eight Precepts on Uposatha days, and who tries to follow the Eightfold Path whilst living in the world. They are Buddhist supporters by offering material supplies, food, clothes, and so on. Countries with Buddhist tradition, Formal ordination of lay followers is extremely important for this is the central ceremony of faith for them to lead a virtuous life.

To become a devoted (good) Buddhist, beside keeping five or ten basic precepts, disseminates and endeavors to live the fundamental principles of the Buddha-dharma, one must meet the criteria taught by the Buddha. First of all, that Buddhist must observe the five cardinal virtues (Five Constant Virtues). The first Constant Virtue is the Benevolence which concerns attitude. The noble man desires to be in harmony with other men. He knows that he cannot fulfill his role in daily life unless he is co-operative and accommodating. The right benevolence is revealed through conduct. People have the seed of such a benevolence within them, but it must be helped to develop. This virtuous attitude is sometimes thought of as an inner law of self-control. The second Constant Virtue is the Righteousness or right moral courage. The noble man should develop the righteousness necessary to remain loyal to himself and charitable toward his neighbors. The third Constant Virtue is the propriety or Civility or right procedure. Constant Virtue of the propriety is one of the most important virtues of the five constant virtues. The man of noble mind has made a study of the rules of conduct. He has learned how to apply them in every incident he faces. He knows all the rules for etiquette, which set forth what each social situation requires of the completely humanized person. He knows all the ceremonies and rituals centering around ancestor reverence. He knows how to sit, how to stand, how to walk, how to converse, and how to control his facial expression on all occasions. Yet all these rituals and procedures are without value if a man does not have the proper attitude. "A man without charity in his heart, what has he to do with these rigid ceremonies?" The fourth Constant Virtue is

the Good knowledge is the fourth Constant Virtue. The noble man is a knowing man, for a person must be educated in order to respond to all circumstances in the right way. The Confucianists' goal is to grow gradually from rules to habits. When Confucius stressed the importance of education, he was not suggesting a new idea. he was repeating and emphasizing what the ancients had said. The social order depends upon fundamental morality, the morality of proper words and actions. Also like the ancients, Confucius believed that morality was to be applied in all levels of life, but in a very significant way to the ruling level. For the rulers were the teachers of all. They taught the needed morality most effectively when they set a good example and when they governed kindly. The fifth Constant Virtue is Loyalty. The noble man should keep for himself the loyalty, does what he speaks and speaks only what he hears. When he promise something, even though whatever happens, he still does his best to fulfill his promise. Furthermore, the noble man always knows what his duty is on each occasion, and he always knows how to do that duty. Because he has developed the seeds of virtue within his nature, he is in harmony with everything in the universe.

In order to become a devout Buddhist, naturally that Buddhist must take refuge in the Triratna and to keep the basic five precepts or any other precepts for laypeople. To take refuge in Sakyamuni Buddha, the founding master; to take refuge in the Dharma, the supreme teachings of the Buddha; and to take refuge in the Sangha, the congregation of monks and nuns who have renounced the world and have devoted their effort to a lifelong practice of the Dharma. To keep the basic five precepts include not to kill, not to steal, not to commit sexual misconduct, not to lie, and not to drink liquor. Besides, a devout Buddhist always hears the truth with a faith mind; always knows the main purpose of Buddhism; always does good deeds; always tries not committing any evils, or not to do evil deeds; and always tries to purify the body and mind. A devout Buddhist should always venerate (respect) the elderly; should always love and care for the young; and should always comfort those who encounter calamities. A devout Buddhist should always understand the path to that goal and always try to practice the Buddha's teachings correctly. That Buddhist must be willing to change and repent when mistakes are made; must be willing

to abandon the tendencies to chase constantly after worldly matters; must be willing to return to follow the Way of enlightenment; and must practice just as the Buddha taught. Besides, there are four Great Debts which lay people should always remember. The first debt is the debt to the Triple Jewel (Buddha, Dharma, Sangha). The second debt is the debt to our parents and teachers. The third debt is the debt to our spiritual friends. The fourth debt is the debt we owe all sentient beings.

Devout Buddhists should try to train ourselves in accordance to the examples set by the Buddhas, Dharma and Sangha. If we take their behavior as a model, we will eventually become like them. Devout Buddhists should avoid being self-indulgent, and running after any desirable object we see. In addition, we should not crave for money because craving for money and position leads us to obsession and constant dissatisfaction. We will be much happier when we enjoy pleasures of the senses in moderation. Devout Buddhists should avoid arrogantly criticizing whatever we dislike. We have a tendency to see others' faults and overlook our own. This doesn't make us or others any happier. So, devout Buddhists had better correct our own faults than point out those of others. Devout Buddhists should try our best to avoid the ten destructive actions, at the same time, try to do the ten good deeds. The Buddha advised us to avoid ten destructive actions. By deliberately refraining from these ten destructive actions, we engage in the ten constructive or positive actions. For example, deciding not to lie to our employer about the time spent working on a project is in itself a positive action. This has many benefits: employer will trust our word in the future, we will live according to our ethical principles, and we will create the cause to have temporal happiness and spiritual realizations.

According to Late Most Venerable Hsuan-Hua in the Dharma Talks, Book II, first of all, devout Buddhists are not to contend. If we do not contend, then we will not try to kill sentient beings. Killing occurs because thoughts of contention take control. When we start contending, we have the attitude of 'get out of my way or die!' The casualties that result are beyond count. Devout Buddhists should try to get rid of this dangerous contention. Second, devout Buddhists are not to be greedy. If we are not greedy, then we will not steal. Why do we want to steal others' things? It is because of greed. If we are not greedy, then even if people want to offer us something, we would not

want to take it. Devout Buddhists should try to get rid of greed. Third, devout Buddhists are not to seek for desires. If we seek for nothing, we will not have thoughts of lust. Thoughts of lust arise because we seek for them. Women seek men, and men seek women. If we do not seek anything, then how could we have thoughts of sexual misconduct? Fourth, devout Buddhists are not to be selfish. If we are not selfish, then we do not tell lies. We tell lies because they are afraid of losing personal benefits. Overcome by selfishness, we cheat people and tell lies, hoping to hide our true face from others. Fifth, devout Buddhists are not to seek for personal benefits. If we do not seek for personal benefits, we will have opportunities to develop our unselfishness. Sixth, devout Buddhists are not to drink intoxicated drinks. If we do not drink intoxicated drinks, we will not violate the precept against taking intoxicants. Why do people take intoxicants? It is because they want to delight their bodies and minds. However, this temporary delight will mess up their bodies and confuse their mind in the long run. Once intoxicated, they will scold people and do as they please, and their lustful desires increase.

During the time of the Buddha, the Buddha recommended five practical suggestions that would be beneficial to Laypeople. First, harbouring a good thought opposite to the encroaching one, e.g., loving-kindness in the case of hatred. Second, reflecting upon possible evil consequences, e.g., anger sometimes results in murder. Third, simple neglect or becoming wholly inattentive to them. Fourth, tracing the cause which led to the arising of the unwholesome thoughts and thus forgetting them in the retrospective process. Fifth, direct physical force. Besides, the Buddha also taught: "One should not wish to be repaid for good deeds. Doing good deeds with an intention of getting repayment will lead to greed for fame and fortune." However, in any society, gratitude is a precious virtue and Buddhists should always remember the kindness and assistance others have given you. Even though the Buddha asked the giver not to wish to be repaid for good deeds, He always considered gratitude to be a great blessing, an extremely high quality to develop for every Buddhist. Besides, devout Buddhist should always cultivate both the body and the mind. Body cultivates but mind does not meaning, there are people who have the appearance of true cultivators by becoming a monk or nun, but their

minds are not determined to find enlightenment but instead they yearn for fame, notoriety, wealth, etc just like everyone in the secular life. Thus, cultivating in this way is entirely contradictory to the Buddha's teachings and one is better off remaining in the secular life and be a genuine lay Buddhist. Devout Buddhists should always have filial piety toward one's parents means not only to avoid causing them pain, but also to strive to make them happy. To be filial, therefore, is to have loving-kindness and compassion towards our parents, not necessarily to obey them in any circumstances. Filial piety also means to strive to guide our parents to tread on the virtuous way. The Buddha taught when one is filial towards one's parents, it is the same as one has compassion for all sentient beings for in the uninterrupted cycle of birth and death, beings had been one's parents at some time in the past. Thus, the Buddha taught: "Before joining the Order, monks and nuns should bow down before their parents one last time in gratitude, and then never again." To be a good Buddhist, you should have an appropriate conduct of a real Buddhist. You should always conduct yourself according to the Buddha's teachings. To achieve these, you will not only become a noble man and attain happiness in this very life, but you will also be able to leave this world without fear for you have committed no sins.

Devout Buddhists should always remember that the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas always support us in our cultivation. They always promote the virtues of the followers, help them remove greed, hate and delusion, and protect them from ghosts and men who may maliciously try to interfere with their spiritual practices. They bestow material benefits. Since the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are all-merciful, it was natural, and, in some ways, logical to assume that they should concern themselves with the atheal wishes of their adherents, protect their earthly fortunes and ward off disasters. Avalokitesvara, for example, protects caravans from robbers sailors from ship wreck, criminals from execution. By his help women obtain the children they wish. If one but thinks of Avalokitesvara, fire ceases to burn, swords fall to pieces, enemies become kind-hearted bonds are loosened, spells revert to where they came, beasts flee, and snakes lose their poison. However, this aspect of Buddhism is only used to help calm the mind of Buddhist beginners who encounter problems. The Buddhas and Bodhisattvas

provide favorable conditions for the attainment of enlightenment and liberation for Buddhist followers. Finally, devout Buddhists should always look up the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and consider them as objects of desire to love for all Buddhist followers.

In the Anguttara Nikaya Sutra, the Buddha commented on the four kinds of bliss a layman enjoy. The first happiness is the bliss of ownership. Herein a clansman has wealth acquired by energetic striving, amassed by strength of arm, won by sweat, and lawfully gotten. At this thought, bliss and satisfaction come to him. This is called the bliss of ownership. The second happiness is the bliss of possession of property. Herein a clansman by means of wealth acquired by energetic striving, both enjoys his wealth and does meritorious deeds. At this thought, bliss and satisfaction come to him. This is called the bliss of wealth. The third happiness is the bliss of debtlessness. Herein a clansman owes no debt, great or small, to anyone. At the thought, bliss and satisfaction come to him. This is called the bliss of debtlessness. The third happiness is the bliss of blamelessness. Herein the Aryan disciple is blessed with blameless action of body, blameless action of speech, blameless action of mind. At the thought, bliss and satisfaction come to him. This is called the bliss of blamelessness. According to the Sutra In Forty-Two Sections, Chapter 37, the Buddha said: “My disciples may be several thousands miles away from me but if they remember and practice my precepts, they will certainly obtain the fruits of the Way. On the contrary, those who are by my side but do not follow my precepts, they may see me constantly but in the end they will not obtain the Way.” Also according to the Sutra In Forty-Two Sections, Chapter 27, the Buddha said: “Those who follow the Way are like floating pieces of woods in the water flowing above the current, not touching either shore and that are not picked up by people, not intercepted by ghosts or spirits, not caught in whirlpools, and that which do not rot. I guarantee that these pieces of wood will certainly reach the sea. I guarantee that students of the Way who are not deluded by emotional desire nor bothered by myriad of devious things but who are vigorous in their cultivation or development of the unconditioned will certainly attain the way.”

The Cultivation and Thoughts of Lay Buddhist Practitioners: To help practitioners, especially laypeople overcome their disturbing

attitudes and stop committing harmful actions, the Buddha set out five precepts. During a brief ceremony performed by a monk or nun, laypeople can take refuge in the Triple Gem: Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. At the same time, they can take any of the five lay precepts and become either an upasaka or upasika. When performing the ceremony, some masters include only the first precept of not killing, and let laypeople decide themselves to take any or all of the other four. Other masters give all five precepts at the time of giving refuge. Laypeople may also take eight precepts for a period of 24 hours every month. Many laypeople like to take the eight precepts on new and full moon days, or the end of the lunar month, or on Buddhist festivals, although they may be taken on any day. The first five of these eight are similar to the five lay precepts, with the exception that the precept against unwise sexual behavior become abstinent from sex, because the precepts are kept for only one day (see Eight precepts). In Thailand's and Cambodia's traditions, there is a custom whereby most young men become monks and hold the Sramanera precepts for three months, at least once during their lives. They usually do this when they are young adults as it gives them a foundation in strict ethics and is very auspicious for their families. At the end of the three month period, they give back their precepts and return to worldly family life.

Concerning the ideas of a Buddhist in the Path of Cultivation, in the Satipatthana Sutra, the Buddha explained His Way of Enlightenment. Here, mental objects are mindfully examined and observed as they arise within. The task here is to be aware of the thoughts that arise and pass away within the mind. You must slowly understand the nature of thoughts. You must know how to make use of the good thoughts and avoid the danger of the harmful thoughts. Your thoughts need constant watching if the mind is to be purified. Concerning the methods of mindfulness of thoughts and mental states, the Buddha taught: "To sit alone and concentrate the mind on the thoughts. To watch the good thoughts and observe how they affect your mental state. To watch the harmful thoughts and observe how they disturb your mental state. Do not try to fight with the thoughts, for the more you try to fight them, the more you have to run with them. Simply observe the thoughts dispassionately and so create the opportunity to go beyond them. The moving beyond all thoughts and knowledge bring peace, harmony, and

happiness. Simply observe these thoughts, you will slowly come to understand how to control evil thoughts and to encourage good thoughts. In the course of your working day, try to observe your thinking process. Simply observe and do not identify with this process.” To be able to do these, you will experience an endless inner happiness and peace even though you are living in a society that is full of troubles, sufferings and afflictions. Thought transformation is one of the methods of cultivation that can help laypeople achieve peace, mindfulness, liberation or enlightenment in this very life. This is a way to live each moment to the fullest, for example, when we wash dishes or clothes, we think ‘may I help all beings cleanse their minds of disturbing attitudes and obscurations.’

According to Mahamudra Master, an Indian famous monk: “Thought is like a horse, let it go free, just like a dove released from a ship in the middle of the infinite ocean. For just as the bird finds nowhere to land but back on the ship, thoughts have no place to go other than returning to their place of origin.” Thus, Mahamudra Master wrote a verse on “Thought” as follow:

Clouds that drift in the sky have no roots.
They have no home.
Conceptual thoughts that float in the mind are the same.
When we see the nature of mind,
All discrimination ends.

Benefits for Those Who Cultivate Paramitas: According to Buddhist teachings, in the Sanskrit language, Paramita means the accumulated force of purity within the mind. Each time our mind is free of greed, hatred and delusion, it has a certain purifying force in the flow of consciousness. On our path of cultivation, especially practicing of meditation, we need a continuous flow of consciousness so that we can cross-over the samsara world. For Buddhist practitioners, when there is a great accumulation of the factors of non-greed, non-hatred, and non-delusion, the “Paramita” become forceful and result in all kinds of happiness including the highest happiness of enlightenment. The six paramitas are six things that ferry one beyond the sea of birth and death. In addition, the Six Paramitas are also the doctrine of saving all living beings. The six paramitas are also sometimes called the cardinal virtues of a Bodhisattva. Six Paramitas mean the six things that

ferry one beyond the sea of mortality to nirvana. Six stages of spiritual perfection followed by the Bodhisattva in his progress to Buddhahood. According to the Sutta Nipata Commentary, those who practice “Paramitas” will escape from being born in the following inauspicious states: They are never born blind; they are never born deaf; they never become insane; they are never slobbery or rippled; they are never born among savages; they are never born from the womb of a slave; they are never born in a heretic family; they never change their sex no matter how many births and deaths they have been through; they are never guilty of any of the five grave sins (anantarika-kammas); they never become a leper; they are never born as an animal; they are never born as a hungry ghost; they are never born among different classes of asuras; they are never born in the Avici; they are never born in the side hells (Lokantarika-Nirayas); they are never born as a mara; they are never born in the world where there is no perception; they are never born in a heatless heaven (Anavatapta); they are never born in the rupa world; they are never born in a small world. In short, those who practice Paramitas is practicing Bodhisattvas' practice. According to the tradition of Northern Buddhism, Bodhisattva practice (Bodhisattva's practising) comprises of to vow to devote the mind to bodhi (bodhicita); to practise the four immeasurables. Besides, that person must also practise the six Paramitas, and practise the four all-embracing virtues.

Cultivation In Accordance With the Buddha's Teachings Means We Changing the Karma of Ourselves: According to Buddhism, our fate depends entirely on our deeds; in other words, we are the architects of our karma. Cultivating in accordance with the Buddha's Teachings means we change the karma of ourselves; changing our karmas by not only giving up our bad actions or misdeeds, but also forgiving offences directed against us by others. We cannot blame anyone else for our miseries and misfortunes. We have to face life as it is and not run away from it, because there is no place on earth to hide from karma. Performing good deeds is indispensable for our own happiness; there is no need of imploring favors from deities or simply showing repentance. Changing karma also means remembrance of karma and using wisdom to distinguish virtue from evil and freedom from constraint so that we are able to avoid evil deeds, to do

meritorious deeds, or not to create any deeds at all. Changing karma also means to purify our minds rather than praying, performing rites, or torturing our bodies. Changing karma also means to change your narrow-minded heart into a heart full of love and compassion and accomplish the four boundless hearts, especially the hearts of loving-kindness and compassion. True Buddhists should always remember that sooner or later everyone has to die once. After death, what can we bring with us? We cannot bring with us any worldly possessions; only our bad or good karma will follow us like a shadow of our own.

Fourfold Assembly Should Live and Cultivate Together: Buddhism never separates itself from the secular life. On the contrary, the Buddha always reminded his followers, monks, nuns, upasakas and upasikas, to live the best and highest life and to get the most out of life. However, the best joy in life according to Buddhism are not the pleasures and materials, but the light-hearted and joyful happiness at all time in mind. Sincere Buddhists should always remember that it is true that we must study the Buddha's teachings, but the main thing is to live them in our daily life. If we can do this, we are truly Buddhists of a living Buddhism. If not, we are only embracing the corpse of a dead Buddhism. According to the Avatamsaka Sutra, there are two aspects of the Buddhist life.

Everyone has hopes that his wishes will be fulfilled someday. Hope itself is not wrong, for hope will help people try to reach to better situations. However, when a person begins to expect things have to happen the way he or she wishes, he or she begins to have trouble with disappointment. Thus, the Buddha taught: "Suffering of frustrated desire," or unfulfilled wishes cause suffering (suffering due to unfulfilled wishes), or cannot get what one wants causes suffering. The pain which results from not receiving what one seeks, from disappointed hope or unrewarded effort, one of the eight sorrows. And therefore, the Buddha advised his disciples "content with few desires." "Content with few desires" means having few desires; "knowing how to feel satisfied" means being content. Knowing how to feel satisfied with few possessions means being content with material conditions that allow us to be healthy and strong enough to practice the Way. "Knowing how to feel satisfied and being content with material conditions" is an effective way to cut through the net of passions and

desires, attain a peaceful state of body and mind and accomplish our supreme goal of cultivation

There are some people who regard this life as a life of suffering or pessimists may be tolerated as long as they are simply feeling dissatisfied with this life, but when they begin to give up this life as hopeless and try to escape to a better life by practicing austerities or self-mortifications, then they are to be abhorred. Some people believe that Buddhism is pessimistic because its significant viewpoint on the idea that there is nothing but hardship in this world, even pleasures end in hardship. It is totally wrong thinking that way. Buddhism believes that in this present life, there are both pleasures and hardships. He who regards life as entirely pleasure will suffer when the so-called “happiness” ceases to exist. The Buddha believes that happiness and sufferings intertwine in our daily life. If one is ignorant of the fact that pleasures can cause hardships, one will be disappointed when that fact presents itself. Thus the Buddha teaches that one should regard hardship as hardship, accepting it as a fact and finding way to oppose it. Hence his emphasis on perserverance, fortitude, and forbearance, the latter being one of the six Perfections. In short, according to the Buddhist view, there are both pleasures and hardships in life, but one must not be discouraged when hardship comes, or lose oneself in rapture of joy when pleasure comes. Both pleasures and hardships must be taken alike with caution for we know that pleasures end in hardship. From this understanding, sincere Buddhists will be determined to cultivate diligently to turn both worldly pleasures and hardships to an eternally transcendental joy. It is to say that we are not bound to both worldly pleasures and hardships at all times. They come and go naturally. We are always live a life without worries, without afflictions because we know for sure that everything will pass. The Buddhist point of view on both optimism and pessimism is very clear: Buddhism is not optimistic nor pessimistic on human life. Two extremes of both optimism and pessimism are prevented by the moderate doctrine of Buddhism.

In Theravada countries, “Pirit” is a Pali term for a common practice for protecting of the Three Gems of laypeople, which involves reciting Buddhist texts as a way of generating merit. Often laypeople make donations to monks who do the recitation, believing that this activity

makes merit both by supporting the monks and by causing the texts to be chanted. It is believed that this activity helps those who engage in it to accrue merit, which is conducive to a better rebirth, and it is also thought to bring benefits in the present life. The most common form of pirit involves a group of monks who chant a set of texts during the course of a night, then dedicate the merit to all beings. A worthwhile life, according to Mahayana Buddhist point of view, does not consist in merely spending one's life in peace and quiet but in creating something good for other beings. When one tries to become a better person through his practice, this endeavor is the creation of good. When he does something for the benefit of other people, this is the creation of a still higher standard of good. The various arts are the creation of beauty, and all honest professions are the creation of various kinds of energy that are beneficial to society. Creation is bound to bring with it pain and hardship. However, one finds life worth living when one makes a strenuous effort for the sake of something good. He endeavors to become a little better a person and to do just a little more for the good of other people, through such positive endeavor we are enabled to feel deep joy in our human lives.

Buddhism has a very special point of view in "outer appearance or inner world" . For the understanding of the world within, science may not be of much help to us. Ultimate truth can not be found in science. To the scientist, knowledge is something that ties him more and more to this sentient existence. That knowledge, therefore, is not saving knowledge. To one who views the world and all it holds in its proper perspective, the primary concern of life is not mere speculation or vain voyaging into the imaginary regions of high fantasy, but the gaining of true happiness and freedom from ill or unsatisfactoriness. To him, true knowledge depends on this question: "Is this learning according to actuality? Can it be of use to us in the conquest of mental peace and tranquility, of real happiness?" To understand the world within we need the guidance, the instruction of a competent and genuine seer clarity of vision and depth of insight penetrate into the deepest recesses of life and cognize the true nature that underlies all appearance. He, indeed, is the true philosopher, true scientist who has grasped the meaning of change in the fullest sense and has transmuted this understanding into a realization of the deepest truths fathomable by man, the truths of the

three signs or characteristics: Impermanence, Unsatisfactoriness, Non-self. No more can he be confused by the terrible or swept off his feet by the glamor of thing ephemeral. No more is it possible for him to have a clouded view of phenomena; for he has transcended all capacity for error through the perfect immunity which insight alone can give. Cultivator of the Way must leave behind everything, must use proper knowledge and views as their standard and cultivate vigorously. Our goal is to 'leave behind the mark of speech', so that there is nothing left to say. We also want to 'leave behind the mark of the mind and its conditions,' so that there is nothing left to climb on. We want to 'leave behind the mark of written words.' Once words also are gone, they can not represent our speech at all. Since there is no way to express with words, what is there to remember? What is there that we can not put down? What is left to take so seriously? We should apply ourselves to this, and stop toying with superficial aspects.

Chapter Six

Living With Buddhism In Daily Activities

A Summary of Buddhists' Life: Buddhist is the one who believes in the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. One who accepts Buddhism as his religion. One who studies, disseminates and endeavors to live the fundamental principles of the Buddha-dharma. The Buddhist Community consists of two groups of people, the Sangha and the Laity. The word “Sangha” means “friendly community”. It usually refers to the Buddhist monks and nuns. They live in monasteries. The laity includes Buddhist men and women who do not become monks and nuns. They usually live at home with their families. Laymen or laywomen who remain at home and observe the eight commandments. Buddhism does not demand of the lay follower all that a member of the Order is expected to observe. But whether monk or layman, moral habits are essential to the upward path. One who becomes a Buddhist by taking the three refuges is expected, at least, to observe the five basic precepts which is the very starting point on the path. They are not restricted to a particular day or place, but are to be practiced throughout life everywhere, always. There is also the possibility of their being violated, except those who have attained stages of sanctity. However, according to Buddhism, wrongdoing is not regarded as a ‘sin’, for the Buddha is not a lawyer or a judge who punished the bad and rewarded the good deeds of beings. Laypeople should always remember that the doer of the deed is responsible for his actions; he suffers or enjoys the consequences, and it is his concern either to do good, or to be a transgressor. A lay person is one who resides at home (in a family), not leaving home as a monk or a nun. All sincere Buddhists have had one and the same goal, which is the extinction of self. Generally speaking, their practices tend to foster such easily recognizable spiritual virtues as patience, serenity, detachment, consideration and tenderness for others. Lay people are also called “Laity” who observe the first eight commandments, one of the eight differentiated rules of liberation for the eight orders. Also called

“Outer company”. In contrast with the inner company or the monks and nuns. Also called “White clothes” (said to be that of Brahmans and other high-class people), but now the term is used for common people, especially laity or lay men.

A lay person is one who believes, accepts Buddhism as his religion, studies, disseminates and endeavors to live the fundamental principles of the Buddha-dharma. To become a Buddhist, one should take refuge in the Three Gems, observe the five basic precepts, and know the main purposes of Buddhism. A lay person must take refuge in the Three Gems, practice the five commandments, and know the main purpose of Buddhism: “Not committing any evils, doing all good, purifying the mind, and understand the path to that goal.” A lay Buddhist should always remember the followings: “Must be willing to change and repent when mistakes are made. Whatever harmful acts (karma) of the body, speech and mind that you have done in a disturbed mental state towards the Three Jewels of refuge, your parents, your venerable masters and all other sentient beings, either grave or light (wrong doings) must be sincerely repented. A lay Buddhist should always give the priority to the purification of the three karmas of the body, speech and mind before anything else. Must be willing to abandon the tendencies to chase constantly after worldly matters. Must be willing to return to follow the Way of enlightenment. Must practice just as the Buddha taught. A lay Buddhist should always not to look for people’s mistakes. The Buddha taught: “When we do not see others’ mistakes or see only our own rightness, we are naturally respected by seniors and admired by juniors.” According to the Dharmapada, sentence 50, the Buddha taught: “Let not one look on the faults of others, nor things left done and undone by others; but one’s own deeds done and undone.” A lay Buddhist should always be content with few desires. Content with few desires. “Thiểu Dục” means having few desires; “tri túc” means being content. Knowing how to feel satisfied with few possessions means being content with material conditions that allow us to be healthy and strong enough to practice the Way. “Knowing how to feel satisfied and being content with material conditions” is an effective way to cut through the net of passions and desires, attain a peaceful state of body and mind and accomplish our supreme goal of cultivation. Although knowing that for laypeople whose life is still subject to

worldly affairs; however, a devotee should always follow the Buddha's guidance in his daily life. The first step to becoming a member of the Laity is to go for refuge in the Triple Gem (the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha). Then, they willingly observe the Five Precepts in their daily life. The laity plays an important role in Buddhism, as they care for and support the Sangha. They build the temples and monasteries. They give offerings of food, clothing, bedding and medicine to the Sangha. In return, the Sangha carries on the work of Buddhism and teaches the laity on the Dharma. In this way the Sangha and the laity benefit each other and together, they keep the Dharma alive. Whether one is a member of the Sangha or the laity, they all are Buddhists and they should do their best to live an honest life, show compassion to all living beings and set a good example. Even when they are working or meditating, it should be for the benefit of others as well as for themselves.

To help laypeople overcome their disturbing attitudes and stop committing harmful actions, the Buddha set out five precepts. During a brief ceremony performed by a monk or nun, laypeople can take refuge in the Triple Gem: Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. At the same time, they can take any of the five lay precepts and become either an upasaka or upasika. When performing the ceremony, some masters include only the first precept of not killing, and let laypeople decide themselves to take any or all of the other four. Other masters give all five precepts at the time of giving refuge. Laypeople may also take eight precepts for a period of 24 hours every month. Many laypeople like to take the eight precepts on new and full moon days, or the end of the lunar month, or on Buddhist festivals, although they may be taken on any day. The first five of these eight are similar to the five lay precepts, with the exception that the precept against unwise sexual behavior become abstinent from sex, because the precepts are kept for only one day (see Eight precepts). In Thailand's and Cambodia's traditions, there is a custom whereby most young men become monks and hold the Sramanera precepts for three months, at least once during their lives. They usually do this when they are young adults as it gives them a foundation in strict ethics and is very auspicious for their families. At the end of the three month period, they give back their precepts and return to worldly family life.

Sense Restraint Play Important Roles in Daily Activities:

According to Buddhism, six faculties play very important roles in our daily activities. Buddhist practitioners should always contemplate on the six faculties are the main reasons that cause human beings to fall into hells, to be reborn in the realm of the hungry ghosts, or animals, asuras, devas, or human beings, etc. It is agreeable that the six faculties that help us maintain our daily activities, but they are also the main factors that bring sufferings and afflictions to our body and mind. They are the main agents that cause us to create unwholesome karma, and eventually we will fall into evil ways because of them. Do not think that the eyes are that great, just because they help us see things. It is exactly because of their help that we give rise to all kinds of sufferings and afflictions. For instance, when we see an attractive person of the opposite sex, we become greedy for sex. If we do not get what we want, we will be afflicted; and if we get what we want, we will also be afflicted. The other faculties, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind are the same way. They make one give rise to many sufferings and afflictions. Therefore, the Buddha advised his disciples thus: “You should cultivate until you are unaware of heaven above, people in between, and earth below.” If we cultivate until the time heaven, earth, people, east, west, south, north, etc., can no longer impact our six faculties, then at that point we are liberated from all hindrances.

The six sense-organs can be entrances to the hells; at the same time, they can be some of the most important entrances to the great enlightenment; for with them, we create karmas and sins, but also with them, we can practise the right way. According to the Sangiti Sutta in the Long Discourses of the Buddha, there are five roots or faculties (indriyani): Eye is one of the six senses on which one relies or from which knowledge is received. Ear is one of the six unions of the six sense organs with the six objects of the senses, the ears is in union with sound heard. Nose is in union with the smell smelt, this is one of the six unions of the six sense organs with the six objects of the senses. Tongue is in union with the taste tasted, this is one of the six unions of the six sense organs with the six objects of the senses. Body is in union with the thing touched, this is one of the six unions of the six sense organs with the six objects of the senses. And the mind is in union with the dharma thought about.

The Buddha said: “Karma that you have made for yourself can only disappear if you want it to. No one can make you want it to disappear. I have many kinds of medicine, but I can’t take it for you.” Therefore, we should be mindful of it throughout the day. But do not overdo it. Walk, eat, and act naturally, and then develop natural mindfulness of what is going on within ourselves. To force our meditation or force ourselves into awkward patterns is another form of craving. Patience and endurance are necessary. If we act naturally and are mindful, wisdom will come naturally. It is obvious that during meditation, the six organs are closed and purified in order to develop their unlimited power and interchange (in the case of Buddha). This full development enables the eye to see everything in a great chiliocosm from its highest heaven down to its lowest hells and all the beings past, present, and future with all the karma of each.

In the six sense-organs, thought, the mind-sense, the sixth of the senses, the perception of thinking or faculty of thinking or the thinking mind. According to Most Venerable Piyadassi in “The Buddha’s Ancient Path,” faculty of mind recognizes mental objects, we know, is not something tangible and perceptible like the other five faculties, which recognizes the external world. The eye cognizes the world of colors (vanna) or visible objects, the ear audible sounds, and so forth. The mind, however, cognizes the world of ideas and thoughts. Faculty of mind literally means “chief” or “lord”. Forms can only be seen by the faculty of the eye and not by the ear, hearing by the faculty of the ear, and so on. When it comes to the world of thoughts and ideas the faculty of the mind lord over the mental realm. The eye can not think thoughts, and collect ideas, but it is instrumental in seeing visible forms, the world of colors.

Buddhist Practitioners’s sense restraint is proper practice. We should be mindful of it throughout the day. But do not overdo it. Walk, eat, and act naturally, and then develop natural mindfulness of what is going on within ourselves. To force our meditation or force ourselves into awkward patterns is another form of craving. Patience and endurance are necessary. If we act naturally and are mindful, wisdom will come naturally. Besides, practicing meditation can lead to pure and objective observation and is intended to prevent emotions such as joy, sadness, love, jealousy, sympathy, antipathy, desire, hatred, ect.

Buddhist Practitioners always consider the six senses are objects of meditation practices. According to Bikkhu Piyananda in *The Gems Of Buddhism Wisdom*, you must always be aware of the sense organs such as eye, ear, nose, tongue and body and the contact they are having with the outside world. You must be aware of the feelings that are arising as a result of this contact. Eye is now in contact with forms (rupa). Ear is now in contact with sound. Nose is now in contact with smell. Tongue is now in contact with taste. Body is now in contact with touching. Mind is now in contact with all things (dharma). According to the *Samannaphala Sutta* in the *Long Discourses of the Buddha*, the Buddha taught about “a guardian of the sense-door.” How does a monk become a guardian of the sense-door? Here a monk, on seeing a visible object with the eye, does not grasp at its major signs or secondary characteristics. Because greed and sorrow, evil unskilled states, would overwhelm him if he dwelt leaving this eye-faculty unguarded, so he practises guarding it, he protects the eye-faculty, develops restraint of the eye-faculty. On hearing a sound with the ear; on smelling an odour with the nose; on tasting a flavour with the tongue; on feeling an object with the body; on thinking a thought with the mind, he does not grasp at its major signs or secondary characteristics, he develops restraint of the mind-faculty. He experiences within himself the blameless bliss that comes from maintaining this Ariyan guarding of the faculties.

Try to Balance Lust in Daily Life: Only if we have no desire for ourselves; if we are working and earning money in order to help other people; if we make cultivation our business and our business is cultivation only, then how clear and happy our life will be! However, most people don't understand this. They are only interested in making a lot of money or becoming successful in worldly business. Remember, this is only a small 'I'. Devout Buddhists should make a lot of money to help all people, then even we create our worldly business, it is a good business. It is a selfish desire for more than we need or deserve, such as food, house, car, wealth, honors, etc. Eyes are longing for viewing beautiful forms without any satisfaction, ears are longing for melodious sounds, nose is longing for fragrance, tongue is longing for delicate tastes, body is longing for soothing touches, and mind is longing for various emotions of love and hate from self and others. Human beings' greediness is like a barrel without bottom. It is just as the great ocean

obtaining continuously the water from hundreds and thousands of large and small rivers and lakes everyday. In this Dharma Ending Age, sentient beings, especially human beings use every method to manipulate and harm one another. Sentient beings' lives, especially, those of human beings' are already filled with pain and sufferings, now there are even more pain and sufferings. Through tricks, expedients, and manipulations we try to reach our goal irrespective of whatever happens to others. Greed is a powerful mental force that drives people to fight, kill, cheat, lie and perform various forms of unwholesome deeds. The desires are boundless, but our ability to realize them is not, and unfulfilled desires always create suffering. When desires are only partially fulfilled, we have a tendency to continue to pursue until a complete fulfillment is achieved. Thus, we create even more suffering for us and for others. We can only realize the true happiness and a peaceful state of mind when our desires are few. This is one of the great steps towards the shore of liberation. The Buddha taught: "Greed and desire are the cause of all unhappiness or suffering. Everything sooner or later must change, so do not become attached to anything. Instead devote yourself to clearing your mind and finding the truth, lasting happiness." Knowing how to feel satisfied with few possessions help us destroy greed and desire. This means being content with material conditions that allow us to be healthy and strong enough to cultivate. This is an effective way to cut through the net of passions and desires, attain a peaceful state of mind and have more time to help others. Cultivation in Buddhism, especially meditation practices can help us balance 'Lust' by contemplation of loathsomeness. Attachment to bodily form is one extreme, and one should keep the opposite in mind. Examine the body as a corpse and see the process of decay, or think of the parts of the body, such as lungs, spleen, fat, feces, and so forth. Remembering these and visualizing the loathsome aspects of the body will free us from lust. Furthermore, through Zen, we can see the string of craving and attachment confines us to samsara's prison. In other words, craving and attachment are not only roots that prevent us from being sufficiently moved to renounce samsara, but they are also two of the main things that bind us to samsara. In order to overcome craving and attachment, we should contemplate on the impurity of the body. When we are attached to someone, for example, consider how

that person is just a sack full of six kinds of filthy substances. Then our attachment and craving will diminish.

Try to Balance Anger in Daily Life: Anger is an emotional response to something that is inappropriate or unjust. If one does not obtain what one is greedy can lead to anger. Anger is an emotion involved in self-protection. However, according to Buddhist doctrines, anger manifests itself in a very crude manner, destroying the practitioner in a most effective way. The Buddha makes it very clear that with a heart filled with hatred and animosity, a man cannot understand and speak well. A man who nurtures displeasure and animosity cannot appease his hatred. Only with a mind delighted in harmlessness and with loving kindness towards all creatures in him hatred cannot be found. Thus, according to the Buddha's teachings in the Dharmapada Sutra, to subdue anger and resentment, we must develop a compassionate mind by meditating on loving kindness, pity and compassion. According to Buddhism, the basis of anger is usually fear for when we get angry we feel we are not afraid any more, however, this is only a blind power. The energy of anger, if it's not so destructive, it may not be of any constructive. In fact, extreme anger could eventually lead us even to taking our own life. Thus the Buddha taught: "When you are angry at someone, let step back and try to think about some of the positive qualities of that person. To be able to do this, your anger would be reduced by its own." Anger is a fire that burns in all human beings, causing a feeling of displeasure or hostility toward others. Angry people speak and act coarsely or pitiless, creating all kinds of sufferings. Of the three great poisons of Greed, Hatred and Ignorance, each has its own unique evil characteristic. However, of these poisons, hatred is unimaginably destructive and is the most powerful enemy of one's cultivated path and wholesome conducts. The reason is that once hatred arises from within the mind, thousands of karmic obstructions will follow to appear immediately, impeding the practitioner from making progress on the cultivated path and learning of the philosophy of Buddhism. Therefore, the ancient virtuous beings taught: "One vindictive thought just barely surfaced, ten thousands doors of obstructions are all open." Supposing while you were practicing meditation, and your mind suddenly drifted to a person who has often insulted and mistreated you with bitter words. Because of

these thoughts, you begin to feel sad, angry, and unable to maintain peace of mind; thus, even though your body is sitting there quietly, your mind is filled with afflictions and hatred. Some may go so far as leaving their seat, stopping meditation, abandoning whatever they are doing, and getting completely caught up in their afflictions. Furthermore, there are those who get so angry and so depressed to the point where they can't eat and sleep; for their satisfaction, sometimes they wish their wicked friend to die right before their eyes. Through these, we know that hatred is capable of trampling the heart and mind, destroying people's cultivated path, and preventing everyone from practicing wholesome deeds. Thus the Buddha taught the way to tame hatred in the Lotus Sutra as follows: "Use great compassion as a home, use peace and tolerance as the armor, use all the Dharma of Emptiness as the sitting throne." We should think that when we have hatred and afflictions, the first thing that we should be aware of is we are bringing miseries on ourselves. The fire of hatred and afflictions internally burns at our soul, and externally influences our bodies, standing and sitting restlessly, crying, moaning, screaming, etc. In this way, not only are we unable to change and tame the enemy, but also unable to gain any peace and happiness for ourselves. Cultivation in Buddhism, especially meditation practices can help us balance 'Anger' by contemplation of loving-kindness. When angry states of mind arise strongly, balance them by developing feelings of loving-kindness. If someone does something bad or gets angry, do not get angry ourselves. If we do, we are being more ignorant than they. Be wise. Keep compassion in mind, for that person is suffering. Fill our mind with loving-kindness as if he was a dear brother. Concentrate on the feeling of loving-kindness as a meditation subject. Spread it to all beings in the world. Only through loving-kindness is hatred overcome.

To See the Harms of Unlimited Seeking & Try to Be Content With Few Desires and Satisfy With What We Have At This Very Moment:
The Harms of Unlimited Seeking: Buddhist practitioners should always remember that to cultivate without thoughts of seeking fame and benefit, for they have already eradicated the five roots of the hell: wealth, sex, fame, food, and sleep in all circumstances. We should cultivate the Way with our own effort. Do not crave fame and profits. We should follow the spirit of the Bodhisattvas Manjusri,

Samantabhadra, Avalokitesvara, Ksitigarbha, and other Bodhisattvas for they feel that living beings' accomplishments are the same as their own accomplishment. They do not make distinctions between self and others. Bodhisattvas joyfully support the merit and virtue they see and hear others doing. *Content With Few Desires and Satisfy With What We Have At This Very Moment*: Content with few desires means having few desires; "tri túc" means being content. Knowing how to feel satisfied with few possessions means being content with material conditions that allow us to be healthy and strong enough to practice the Way. "Knowing how to feel satisfied and being content with material conditions" is an effective way to cut through the net of passions and desires, attain a peaceful state of body and mind and accomplish our supreme goal of cultivation. Being content with few desires means having few desires. Here "desires" include not only the desire for money and material things but also the wish for status and fame. It also indicates seeking the love and service of others. In Buddhism, a person who has attained the mental stage of deep faith has very few desires and is indifferent to them. We must note carefully that though such a person is indifferent to worldly desires, he is very eager for the truth, that is, he has a great desire for the truth. To be indifferent to the truth is to be slothful in life. To be content with few desires also means to be satisfied with little material gain, that is, not to feel discontented with one's lot and to be free from worldly cares. Nevertheless, this does not mean to be unconcerned with self-improvement but to do one's best in one's work without discontent. Such a person will never be ignored by those around him. But even if people around him ignored him, he would feel quite happy because he lives like a king from a spiritual point of view. We must have few desires in two areas: the desires for food and sex. Food and sex support ignorance in perpetrating all sort of evil. Thus, Confucius taught: "Food and sex are part of human nature." That is to say we are born with the craving for food and sex. Why is that we have not been able to demolish our ignorance, eliminate our afflictions, and reveal our wisdom? Because we always crave for food and sex. Sincere Buddhists should always remember that food gives rise to sexual desire, and sexual desire gives rise to ignorance. Once the desire for food arises, the desire for sex arises as well. Men are attracted to beautiful women, and women are charmed by handsome

men. People become infatuated and obsessed and cannot see through their desires. The nourishment from the food we eat is transformed into reproductive essence; and once that essence is full, sexual desire arises. Sincere Buddhists should always remember that the less tasty the food is, the better. Food should not be regarded as too important. Sincere Buddhists should practice moderation and eat only enough to sustain ourselves. We should neither eat very rich food, nor eat spoiled food, for either one could ruin our health. To be satisfied with what we have at this very moment means satisfaction or contentment is a characteristic of the really happy individual. The ordinary people seem to think that it is difficult to cultivate and develop contentment. However, with courage and determination to control one's evil inclination, as well as to understand the consequences of these evil thoughts, one can keep the mind from being soiled and experience happiness through contentment. For those who have wisdom, know how to apply themselves and are able to endure life, and are able to think cleverly, will find peace in his fate under whatever circumstances. With the conditions of wealth, one satisfies and is at peace with being wealthy; with the conditions of poverty, one satisfies and is at peace with being impoverished. In fact, in our lifetime, we engage in all kinds of activities, think and calculate every imaginable method without abandoning any plot, so long as it is beneficial, but whether or not our actions affect others we never care. We have been doing all these for what? For a better life, clothes, house, and for storing more money. If we think carefully, we will see that the sun rises, reaches its stand still, and then it will set and disappears in the evening; a full moon will soon become half, quarter, then lose its brightness; mountains become deep canyons; oceans become hills of berries, etc. The way of life has always been rise and fall, success and failure, victory and defeat, lost and found, together and apart, life and death, etc., goes on constantly and there is absolutely nothing that remain unchanged and eternal. People with wisdom should always satisfy with their current circumstances. The Buddha extols simple living as being more conducive to the development of one's mind. Thus, the Buddha always preaches the self-contentment for the benefit of the Bhikkhus as follow: The robes or clothes they receive, whether coarse or fine; alms or food they receive, whether unpalatable or

delicious; the abodes or houses they receive, whether simple or luxurious. Those who satisfy with these three conditions can reduce the desires, and at the same time develop the habits and values of simple living.

Satisfaction or contentment is a characteristic of the really happy individual. The ordinary people seem to think that it is difficult to cultivate and develop contentment. However, with courage and determination to control one's evil inclination, as well as to understand the consequences of these evil thoughts, one can keep the mind from being soiled and experience happiness through contentment. For those who have wisdom, know how to apply themselves and are able to endure life, and are able to think cleverly, will find peace in his fate under whatever circumstances. With the conditions of wealth, one satisfies and is at peace with being wealthy; with the conditions of poverty, one satisfies and is at peace with being impoverished. In fact, in our lifetime, we engage in all kinds of activities, think and calculate every imaginable method without abandoning any plot, so long as it is beneficial, but whether or not our actions affect others we never care. We have been doing all these for what? For a better life, clothes, house, and for storing more money. If we think carefully, we will see that the sun rises, reaches its stand still, and then it will set and disappears in the evening; a full moon will soon become half, quarter, then lose its brightness; mountains become deep canyons; oceans become hills of berries, etc. The way of life has always been rise and fall, success and failure, victory and defeat, lost and found, together and apart, life and death, etc., goes on constantly and there is absolutely nothing that remain unchanged and eternal. People with wisdom should always satisfy with their current circumstances. The Buddha extols simple living as being more conducive to the development of one's mind. Thus, the Buddha always preaches the self-contentment for the benefit of the Bhikkhus as follow: The robes or clothes they receive, whether coarse or fine; alms or food they receive, whether unpalatable or delicious; the abodes or houses they receive, whether simple or luxurious. Those who satisfy with these three conditions can reduce the desires, and at the same time develop the habits and values of simple living.

Devout Buddhists should always remember that to Buddhism, sensual pleasure are something fleeting, something that comes and goes. Can something be really called “Happiness” when it is here one moment and gone the next? Is it really so enjoyable to go around hunting for something so ephemeral, which is changing all the time? Look at the amount of trouble we have to go through to get all those sensual pleasures which we think will bring us happiness. Some people have such strong desire for pleasure that they will break the law, commit brutal crimes and cause others to suffer just so they can experience these pleasures. They may not understand how much suffering they themselves will have to endure in the future as a consequence of the unwholesome acts they have committed. Even ordinary people may become aware that a disproportionate amount of suffering is necessary to bring together a few moments of happiness, so much that it really is not worth it. Devout Buddhists should always remember that suffering will always follow craving. All the problems in this world are rooted in the desire for pleasure. It is on account of the need for pleasure that quarrels occur within the family, that neighbors do not get along well, that states have conflict and nations go to war. It is also on account of sense-based pleasures that sufferings, afflictions, and all kinds of problems plague our world, that people have gone beyond their humanness into great cruelty and inhumanity.

Meditation Practices and Bowing in Daily Life: Bowing is a very important outward form of the practice that should be done correctly. Bring the forehead all the way to the floor. Have elbows near the knees about three inches apart. Bow slowly, mindful of our body. It is a good remedy for our conceit. We should bow often. When we bow three times, we can keep in mind the qualities of the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha, that is, the qualities of purity, radiance, and peace. We use outward form to train ourselves, to harmonize body and mind. Do not make mistake of watching how others bow. Judging others will only increase our pride. Watch ourselves instead. Bow often; get rid of our pride. The bowing should be supple yet deliberate, complimenting recitation, bowing and reciting perfectly synchronized. If we add a sincere and earnest mind, body, speech and mind are gathered together. Except for the words Amitabha Buddha, there is not the slightest deluded thought. This method has the ability to destroy the

karma of drowsiness. Its benefits are very great, because the practitioner engages in recitation with his body, speech and mind. A lay practitioner of old used to follow this method, and each day and night, he would bow and recite and average of one thousand times. However, this practice is the particular domain of those with strong mind-power. Lacking this quality, it is difficult to persevere, because with extended bowing, the body easily grows weary, leading to discouragement. Devout Buddhists should always remember that 'Bowing' has the ability to help us to get rid of our pride, one of the biggest problems for us on the way of cultivation. Devout Buddhists should always remember that everything we do is a way of bowing. When walking, we walk solemnly as if we were bowing; when standing, we stand solemnly as if we were bowing; when sitting, we sit solemnly as if we were bowing; when lying, we lie solemnly as if we were bowing. Furthermore, when eating, we eat solemnly as if we were bowing; when talking to other people, we talk solemnly as if we were bowing, and so on. To be able to practice these, we have gone beyond selfishness, and we are applying Zen in our own life.

Those Who Try to Live With Buddhism Always Have Relaxation In Daily Life: Relaxation has many benefits. It can help you feel better, think more clearly, and relieve unwanted symptoms of stress, such as headaches and tight muscles. Whether you want to take a break from a stressful day or better manage your stress for the long-term, a regular practice of relaxation can be very effective in returning to a calmer state. There are many ways to relax. The three steps discussed here are among the simplest and most beneficial for busiest laypeople: deep breathing-in, progressive muscle relaxation, and then long breathing-out in a completely relaxed manner. Repeat over and over about ten times. When learning these skills, it is important to remove yourself from all outside distractions. try to practice once or twice a day for ten to twenty minutes per session. Although it may take two to three weeks to fully develop these skills, once you have trained your mind and body to relax, you will be able to produce the same relaxed feelings on the spur of the moment.

The body responds to tense thoughts or situations with muscles tension, which can cause pain or discomfort. Progressive muscle relaxation means tensing and releasing each muscle group to create a

deeper sense of relaxation. It can reduce muscle tension as well as general mental anxiety. Pick a place where you can stretch out comfortably, such as on a pad or carpeted floor. Tense each muscle group for five to ten seconds, hard but not to the point of cramping. Then completely release the muscle and give yourself ten to twenty seconds to relax each muscle group a little more each time you do this exercise. *Before relaxation:* Clench them. Extend forearms and bend hands back at the wrist. Biceps and upper arms. Clench hands into fists, bend arms at elbows. Shrug the shoulders. Wrinkle forehead into a deep frown around the eyes and bridge of nose, close eyes as tightly as possible (for those who wear contact lens, remove them before beginning this exercise). Cheeks and jaws, Grin from ear to ear around the mouth, press lips together tightly. Back of the neck, press head back against the pad or supporting floor. Front of the neck, touch the chin to the chest. Take a deep breath and hold it, then exhale. Arch the back up and away from support surface. *Start to Relax:* Sit quietly in a comfortable position with eyes closed. Deep breathing-in can bring about a feeling of calm when it is purposefully done. It can help you let go of stress and worries and focus quietly on the present moment. Place both hands on lower part of your stomach and breathe in so that the incoming air expands your belly and gently pushes against your hands. Your stomach muscles should be completely relaxed. Then, gently push with your hands as you exhale slowly. If you prefer, imagine a balloon in your stomach that inflates when you inhale and deflates when you exhale. Practice this several times. Finally, breathe in deeply and slowly, and then try to imagine the tension and stress leaving your body as you exhale while mentally saying to yourself, "I am becoming more and more relaxed and calm." Wear loose, comfortable clothing and find a quiet, relaxing place to practice. Start practicing for just one to two minutes. Slowly increase your practice time up to five minutes. practice several times a day. In the beginning, instead of sitting, you might find it helpful to practice deep breathing while lying down on your bed or on the floor. Lie on your back, bend your knees and place your feet comfortably apart. Lie on your back on a flat surface, and try to avoid using a pillow or cushion under your head. Keep your legs stretched out slightly apart and arms loosely by your sides, keep your eyes shut, do not go to deep thinking, but allow your mind to relax, and

not wander. Relax each muscle, be completely relaxed for a few minutes. At times, we may slightly fall asleep for a couple of minutes, at the end of the relaxation, get up feeling fit. We could do this type of relaxation, not only during the meditation hours, but also at any time we feel fatigued or when we have the inclination to relax. If you feel light-headed, dizzy, or anxious, you may be breathing too deeply or too quickly. If this happens, stop practicing for a moment and breathe normally until the symptoms pass. Also remember that inhaling and exhaling through your nose can help prevent hyperventilation. As you progress, practice deep breathing in a variety of settings, i.e., sitting at your desk, waiting in line, or even when you are watching television, etc. Be patient and gentle with yourself. Become aware of your breathing. Breathing slow and steady, concentrate on breathing from your abdomen and not from your chest. With each exhalation, you can recite the Buddha's name (or any other word or phrase that you like) silently or aloud. As an option, instead of focusing on a recitation, you may choose to fix your gaze on a stationary object. These manoeuvres can help you to shift your mind away from distracting thoughts. Continue this from 10 to 20 minutes. As distracting thoughts enter your mind, do not follow them. Just allow them to drift away. You should sit quietly and do not worry whether you are successful in becoming deeply relaxed. The key to this exercise is to remain passive, to let distracting thoughts slip away like waves on the beach. Practice for 10 to 20 minutes once or twice a day, but not within two hours after a meal. When you have set up a routine, the relaxation response should naturally come with little effort. *Walking after Relaxation:* If we do our sitting in relaxation for a considerable time, we may feel fatigued, we may need to ease our aching limbs a little bit. Then we can start our walking meditation. Walk slowly mindful of the movements, now we need not think of the breath but become aware of the walk. If our mind wanders give attention to our walking without getting involved in other thoughts. If we stop, turn or look around, be mindful and apply clear comprehension. When our foot touches the earth we get the sensation, become aware of it. Walking is also an exercise in mindfulness. When we are following a meditation course let us try to be mindful always everywhere. When sitting, standing, walking, working, eating, drinking, talking, laughing, wearing clothes, or even when we are silent, etc., let

us be always mindful. If our limbs get numbed while in meditation, rub and stretch them.

In conclusion, Devout Buddhists should always know how to adjust ourselves and flowing forward in a river of life. Charlotte Joko Beck wrote in *Nothing Special*: "We are rather like whirlpools in the river of life. In flowing forward, a river or stream may hit rocks, branches, or irregularities in the ground, causing whirlpools to spring up spontaneously here and there. Water entering one whirlpool quickly passes through whirlpools and rejoins the river, eventually joining another whirlpool and moving on. Though for short periods it seems to be distinguishable as a separate event, the water in the whirlpools is just the river itself. The stability of a whirlpool is only temporary. The energy of the river of life forms living things, a human being, a cat or dog, trees and plants, then what held the whirlpool in place is itself altered, and the whirlpool is swept away, re-entering the larger flow. The energy that was a particular whirlpool fades out and the water passes on, perhaps to be caught again and turned for a moment into another whirlpool." Devout Buddhists who vow to resolve to live and cultivate with the wonderful teachings that the Buddha taught more than twenty-five centuries ago and vow not to follow the dead Buddhism. Dead Buddhism is a kind of Buddhism with its superfluous organizations, classical rituals, multi-level offerings, dangling and incomprehensible sutras written in strange languages which puzzle the young people. In their view the Buddhist pagoda is a nursing home, a place especially reserved for the elderly, those who lack self-confidence or who are superstitious. Furthermore, there exists a dead Buddhism when the Buddhadharma is only in talking, not in practice. It's not enough to say that we believe in the Buddha; it's better not to know the Buddhadharma than knowing it only for talking. Time flies really fast like a flying arrow, and days and months fly by like a shuttlecock. The water waves follow one after another. Life is passing quickly in the same manner. Impermanence avoids nobody, youth is followed by old age moment after moment, and we gradually return to the decay and extinction of old age and death, leaving no trace or shadow. Sincere Buddhists should always remember that if we merely believe in Buddhism without practicing, it's no better than believing in a dead Buddhism. It's like going into a restaurant and reading the menu

to enjoy ourselves without ordering any food for eating. It does not benefit us in the least. Thus, we should always bear in mind that if the Way is not put in practice, it's a dead or dead-end Way; if the virtue is not achieved by cultivating, it's not a real virtue. In short, living with Buddhism in daily activities is the only way that leads people from the evil to the virtuous, from deluded to fully enlightened sagehood.

Chapter Seven

Should We Wait Until After Retirement to Cultivate?

Some people believe that they should wait until after their retirement to cultivate because after retirement they will have more free time. Those people may not understand the real meaning of the word “cultivation”, that is the reason why they want to wait until after retirement to cultivate. According to Buddhism, cultivation means to turn bad things into good things, or to improve your body and mind. So, when can we turn bad things into good things, or when can we improve our body and mind? Ancient virtues taught: “Do not wait until your are thirsty to dig a well, or don’t wait until the horse is on the edge of the cliff to draw in the reins for it’s too late; or don’t wait until the boat is in the middle of the river to patch the leaks for it’s too late, and so on”. Most of us have the same problem of waiting and delaying of doing things. If we wait until the water reaches our navel to jump, it’s too late, no way we can escape the drown if we don’t know how to swim. In the same way, at ordinary times, we don’t care about proper or improper acts, but wait until after retirement or near death to start caring about our actions, we may never have that chance. Sincere Buddhists should always remember that impermanence and death never wait for anybody. So, take advantage of whatever time we have at the present time to cultivate, to plant good roots and to accumulate merits and virtues.

Part Two
A Summary of Eight Awakenings
of Great People
(Phần Hai: Sơ Lược Về Tám Điều Giác Ngộ Của Các Bậc Vĩ Nhân)

Chapter Eight

An Overview & Meanings of Enlightenment

The term Enlightenment is from the Sanskrit word of “Bodhi” from the root “Bodha” which means knowing, understanding, and illumination. Buddhiboddhavya also means knowing and knowable. To enlighten means to awaken in regard to the real in contrast to the seeming, as to awake from a deep sleep. To enlighten also means to realize, to perceive, or to apprehend illusions which are harmful to good deeds, or the intuitive awareness or cognition of the Dharma-Nature, the realization of ultimate reality. According to Buddhism, enlightenment is the great avenue that leads practitioners to Nirvana. The concept of “Bodhi” in Sanskrit has no equivalent in Vietnamese nor in English, only the word “Lóe sáng,” “Bừng sáng,” “Enlightenment is the most appropriate term for the term Bodhi in Sanskrit. A person awakens the true nature of the all things means he awakens to a oneness of emptiness. The emptiness experienced here is no nihilistic emptiness; rather it is something unperceivable, unthinkable, unfeeling for it is endless and beyond existence and nonexistence. Emptiness is no object that could be experienced by a subject, a subject itself must dissolve in it (the emptiness) to attain a true enlightenment. In real Buddhism, without this experience, there would be no Buddhism. Enlightenment is the most intimate individual experience and therefore cannot be expressed in words or described in any manner. All that one can do in the way of communicating the experience to others is to suggest or indicate, and this only tentatively. The one who has had it understands readily enough when such indication are given, but when we try to have a glimpse of it through the indices given we utterly fail. In Zen, the term “enlightenment” is used for direct apprehension of truth. It literally means “seeing nature,” and is said to be awareness of one’s true nature in an insight that transcends words and conceptual thought. It is equated with “Satori” in some Zen contexts, but in others “kensho” is described as an initial awakening that must be developed through further training, while “satori” is associated with the awakening of Buddhas and the patriarchs

of Zen. Enlightenment also means to see the nature, or awakening, or seeing into your True-nature and at the same time seeing into the ultimate nature of the universe and all things (This is another way of speaking of the experience of enlightenment or self-realization. Awakening to one's true nature and hence of the nature of all existence). It is the sudden realization that "I have been complete and perfect from the very beginning. How wonderful, how miraculous!" If it is true awakening, its substance will always be the same for whoever experiences it, whether he be the Sakyamuni Buddha, the Amitabha Buddha, or any one of you. But this does not mean that we can all experience awakening to the same degree, for in the clarity, the depth, and the completeness of the experience there are great differences.

Enlightenment in Buddhism means we must strive to cultivate until we begin to get a glimmer that the problem in life is not outside ourselves, then we have really stepped on the path of cultivation. Only when that awakening starts, we can really see that life can be more open and joyful than we had ever thought possible. In Zen, enlightenment is not something we can achieve, but it is the absence of something. All our life, we have been running east and west to look for something, pursuing some goal. True enlightenment is dropping all that. However, it is easy to say and difficult to do. The practice has to be done by each individual, and no-one can do it for us, no exception! Even though we read thousands of sutras in thousands of years, it will not do anything for us. We all have to practice, and we have to practice with all our efforts for the rest of our life. The term 'Enlightenment' is very important in the Zen sects because the ultimate goal of Zen discipline is to attain what is known as 'enlightenment.' Enlightenment is the state of consciousness in which Noble Wisdom realizes its own inner nature. And this self-realization constitutes the truth of Zen, which is emancipation (moksha) and freedom (vasavartin). Enlightenment is the whole of Zen. Zen starts with it and ends with it. When there is no enlightenment, there is no Zen. Enlightenment is the measure of Zen, as is announced by a master. Enlightenment is not a state of mere quietude, it is not tranquilization, it is an inner experience which has no trace of knowledge of discrimination; there must be a certain awakening from the relative field of consciousness, a certain turning-away from the ordinary form of experience which characterizes

our everyday life. In other words, true enlightenment means the nature of one's own self-being is fully realized. The technical Mahayana term for it is 'Paravritti,' turning back, or turning over at the basis of consciousness. By this entirety of one's mental construction goes through a complete change. Enlightenment is the most intimate individual experience and therefore cannot be expressed in words or described in any manner. All that one can do in the way of communicating the experience to others is to suggest or indicate, and this only tentatively. The one who has had it understands readily enough when such indication are given, but when we try to have a glimpse of it through the indices given we utterly fail.

"Satori" is a Japanese term for "Awakening." In Japanese, it literally means "to know." In Zen, this refers to non-conceptual, direct apprehension of the nature of reality, because it is said to transcend words and concepts. It is often equated with another term "Chien-Hsing" in Chinese, both of which signify the experience of awakening to truth, but which are not considered to be the end of the path; rather, the experience must be deepened by further meditation training. In Zen, the state of satori means the state of the Buddha-mind or consciousness of pure consciousness itself. However, go back to the time of the Buddha, Prince Siddhartha, beneath the Bodhi Tree, attained Anuttara-Samyak-Sambodhi. What did he attain? Very simple, He attained the Truth, the Eternal Truth. The Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Noble Path are what the Buddha found. Devout Buddhists who want to attain the same peace and happiness, have no other route but cultivating in accordance with these Truths. That is to say, we must learn about these Truths and walk the Path the Buddha showed. As the Buddha told his disciples: "All I did can be done by every one of you; you can find Nirvana and attain joy and happiness any time you give up the false self and destroy the ignorance in your minds."

According to the Samanaphalasuttanta, the Buddha taught the followings on the experience of enlightenment: "With his heart thus serene, made pure, translucent, cultured, devoid of evil, supple, ready to act, firm, and imperturbable, he directs and bends down to the knowledge of the destruction of the defilements. He knows as it really is: 'this is pain', 'this is the origin of pain', this is the cessation of pain', and 'this is the Way that leads to the cessation of pain'. He also knows

as it really is: 'this is affliction', 'this is the origin of affliction', this is the cessation of affliction', and 'this is the Way that leads to the cessation of affliction'. To him, thus knowing, thus seeing, the heart is set free from the defilement of lusts, of existence, of ignorance... In him, thus set free, there arises the knowledge of his emancipation, and he knows: 'Rebirth has been destroyed. The higher life has been fulfilled. What had to be done has been accomplished. After this present life there will be no more life beyond!' However, the dharma which I have realized is indeed profound, difficult to perceive, difficult to comprehend, tranquil, exalted, not within the sphere of logic, subtle, and is to be understood by the wise. Sentient beings are attached to material pleasures. This causally connected 'Dependent Arising' is a subject which is difficult to comprehend. And Nirvana, the cessation of the conditioned, the abandoning of all passions, the destruction of craving, the non-attachment, and the cessation is also a matter not easily comprehensible." It is quite clear that "Satori" is the true fulfillment of the state of a perfect normal state of mind in which you will be more satisfied, more peaceful, fuller of joy than anything you ever experienced before. So, "Satori" is a state in which the person is completely tuned to the reality outside and inside of him, a state in which he is fully aware of it and fully grasped it. He is aware of it that is, not in his brain nor any part of his organism, but as the whole man. He is aware of it; not as of an object over there which he grasps with his thought, but it, the flower, the dog, or the man in its or his full reality. He who awakes is open and responsive to the world, and he can be open and responsive because he has given up holding on to himself as a thing, and thus has become empty and ready to receive. To be enlightened means "the full awakening of the total personality to reality."

Enlightenment is the perfect normal state of mind even the final aim of Zen is the experience of enlightenment, called "Satori." Satori is not an abnormal state of mind; it is not a trance in which reality disappears. It is not a narcissistic state of mind, as it can be seen in some religious manifestations. If anything, it is a perfect normal state of mind. As Joshu declared, "Zen is your everyday thought," it all depends on the adjustment of the hinge, whether the door opens in or opens out. Satori has a peculiar effect on the person who experiences

it. All your mental activities will now be working in a different key, which will be more satisfying, more peaceful, fuller of joy than anything you ever experienced before. The tone of life will be altered. There is something rejuvenating in the possession of Zen. The spring flowers will look prettier, and the mountain stream runs cooler and more transparent. Enlightenment is the full awakening to reality. It is very important to understand that the state of enlightenment is not a state of dissociation or of a trance in which one believes oneself to be awakened, when one is actually deeply asleep. The Western psychologist, of course, will be prone to believe that “satori” is just a subjective state, an auto-induced sort of trance. A satori is the acquisition of a new viewpoint. The full awakening to reality means to have attained fully “productive orientation.” That means not to relate oneself to the world receptively, exploitatively, hoardingly, or in a marketing fashion, but creatively and actively. In the state of full productiveness, there are no veils which separate me from “not me.” The object is not an object anymore; it does not stand against me, but is with me. The rose I see is not an object for my thought, in the manner that when I say “I see a rose” I only state that the object, a rose, falls under the category “rose,” but in the manner that “a rose is a rose.” The state of productiveness is at the same time the state of highest activity; I see the object without distortions by my greed and fear. I see it as it or he is, not as I wish it or him to be or not to be. In this mode of perception there are no parataxic distortions. There is complete aliveness, and the synthesis is of subjectivity-objectivity. I experience intensely yet the object is left to be what it is. I bring it to life, and it brings me to life. Satori appears mysterious only to the person who is not aware to what degree his perception of the world is purely mental, or parataxical. If one is aware of this, one is also aware of a different awareness, that which one can also call a fully realistic one. One may have only experienced glimpses of it, yet one can imagine what it is.

Chapter Nine

Buddha's Enlightenment: The Opening of the Garden of Flowers of Enlightenment & Emancipation For the Saha World

After the visits to the scenes outside the royal palace, images of the old, the sick, and the dead always haunted the mind of the Prince. He thought that even his beautiful wife, his beloved son, and himself could not escape from the cycle of old age, sickness, and death. Human life was so short and illusionary. King Suddhodana, his father, guessed his thinking of renouncing the world; so, the king tried to build a summer palace for him and let him enjoy the material pleasure of singing, dancing, and other entertainment. However, no joys could arouse the interest of the Prince. The Prince always wanted to seek out ways and means of emancipation from the sufferings of life. One night, the Prince and Chandaka left the Royal Palace. The Prince walked out of the summer palace, went straight to the stables, mounted a horse, and started his unusual journey. So, Chandaka had no choice but going along with Him. The Prince rode his horse to the foot of a hill, he dismounted, gave all his precious dress, his crown and jewels, and told Chandaka to return to the royal palace.

In his search for enlightenment, the Prince Siddhartha Gautama joined five ascetics who were practicing the severest austerities in the hope of gaining ultimate insight. In their company Gautama learned to endure the most extreme self-mortification, becoming weak and frail through starvation and pain. Even the magnificent distinguishing marks that had adorned him since birth almost disappeared. Prince Siddhartha Gautama, who had known the greatest pleasure had now experienced its exact opposite. Eventually he came to realize that nothing would be gained from extreme deprivation. As the god Indra demonstrated to him, if the strings of a lute are too tight they will break, and if they are too slack they will not play: only if they are properly strung will music issue forth. Gautama understood that the same balance is necessary with humankind and resolved to end the useless life of extreme

asceticism by bathing and receiving food. Observing this change, his five companions deserted him, believing that he had admitted defeat and was therefore unworthy of them.

The Buddha came to understand that renunciation itself could not bring about the cessation of suffering. He acknowledged that much can be gained from leading the simple life of an ascetic, but also taught that extreme austerities are not conducive to the path of liberation. At the end of six years of varied experiences, Gautama decided to pave his own way: a middle path between the extreme of self-indulgence and self-mortification. On the banks of the river Nairajana, he accepted an offering of rice-milk from a young girl named Sujata. He knew that enlightenment was near because the previous night he had had five premonitory dreams. He therefore divided Sujata's offering into forty-nine mouthfuls, one for each of the days he knew he would spend in contemplation following the night of his enlightenment. "Roused like a lion," he proceeded to what would later become known as the Bodhi Tree, in Bodh-Gaya. After surveying the four cardinal directions, he sat in the lotus position underneath the tree and vowed not to move until he had attained complete and final enlightenment. Rarely does a Bodhisattva become a Buddha, and the onset of such an event sends ripples all throughout the world system.

After abandoning asceticism, the Prince decided to totally change his way of practicing. He walked to Nairanjana River, and let the clear flowing water cleanse the dirt that had accumulated on his body for a long time. He decided to engage in ways to purify his inner heart, exterminate delusions, and expand his wisdom to understand the truth. However, the Prince was physically exhausted from his continuous practice of asceticism. After bathing, he was so weak and feeble that he fainted on the river bank. Fortunately, at that time, a shepherd girl named Nanda, who carried a bucket of cow's milk on her head, passed by. She discovered the Prince and knew his condition was caused by extreme exhaustion. So she poured a bowl of milk for him to drink. Drinking the bowl of milk offered by the shepherd girl, the Prince found it tasted like sweet nectar. He felt more and more comfortable and he gradually recovered. After the Prince revived, he walked towards Kaudinya and other four people who had practiced asceticism with him in the past; however, all of them avoided him because they

thought the Prince had been seduced by a beautiful maid. So he left the forest alone, crossed over Nairanjana River and walked to Gaya Hill. The Prince sat down on a stone seat under the umbrella-like bodhi tree. He decided to stay there to continue to practice meditation until he was able to attain enlightenment and emancipation. At that moment, a boy walked by with a bundle of grass on his shoulder. The boy offered a straw seat made from the grass he cut to the Prince for comfort. The Prince accepted the boy's offering.

At the moment, mara, the demon of all demons, sensed that Gautama was about to escape from his power and gathered his troops to oust the Bodhisattva from his seat beneath the tree of enlightenment. The ensuing confrontation, in which Mara was soundly defeated. This is one of the great stories of the Buddhist tradition. Mara attacked the Bodhisattva with nine elemental weapons, but to no avail: whirlwinds faded away, flying rocks and flaming spears turned into lotus flowers, clouds of sand, ashes and mud were transformed into fragrant sandalwood and, finally, the darkest of darkness was outshone by the Bodhisattva. Enraged, Mara turned to the Buddha-to-be and demanded his seat. Gautama replied: "You have neither practiced the ten perfections, nor renounced the world, nor sought true knowledge and insight. This seat is not meant for you. I alone have the right to it." With a furious rage, Mara flung his razor-edged disc at the Buddha-to-be, but it turned into a garland of flowers above his head. Then Gautama challenged Mara: if the demon believed that he entitled to occupy the seat of enlightenment, let him bring witnesses to his meritorious deeds. Mara turned to his fiendish companions, who submissively gave their testimony. He then asked the Bodhisattva who would bear witness for him. Gautama drew out his right hand, pointed it downward and said: "Let this great solid earth be my witness." With this, a thunderous earthquake swept the universe and all the demons flew away. Even Mara's great elephant, Girimekhala, knelt down before the Buddha-to-be.

After Mara's defeat, the gods gathered around Gautama while he set his mind on enlightenment. In the first watch, the Bodhisattva experienced the four successive stages of meditation, or mental absorptions (dhyana). Freed from the shackles of conditioned thought, he could look upon his many previous existences, thereby gaining

complete knowledge of himself. In the second watch of the night, he turned his divine eye to the universe and saw the entire world as though it were reflected in a spotless mirror. He saw the endless lives of many beings of the universe unfold according to the moral value of their deeds (see Karma). Some were fortunate, others miserable; some were beautiful, others ugly; but none cease to turn in the endless cycle of birth and death (see Samsara). In the third watch of the night, Gautama turned his meditation to the real and essential nature of the world. He saw how everything rises and falls in tandem and how one thing always originates from another. Understanding this causal law of Dependent Origination, he finally beheld the key to breaking the endless cycle of samsara, and with this understanding he reached perfection. It is said that he became tranquil like a fire when its flames have died down. In the fourth and final watch of the night, as dawn broke, the Bodhisattva's great understanding enabled him to completely "blow out" (literal meaning of nirvana) the fires of greed, hatred and delusion that had previously tied him to rebirth and suffering. At the moment of becoming a Buddha, his entire knowledge crystallized into the Four Noble Truths. Although there are many accounts of the Buddha's night of enlightenment, at times varying in detail, there is complete unanimity about the Four Noble Truths. They can be said to contain the entire teaching of the Buddha, and consequently of Buddhism, and the extent to which they are understood is an indication of progress along the path: "to know" in Buddhism is to comprehend and realize the Four Noble Truths. Only a Buddha has complete and final understanding of their subtlest meaning, which is equal to enlightenment and nirvana.

The Prince sat straight under the tree and made a solemn oath: "If I do not succeed in attaining enlightenment and emancipation, I will not rise from this seat." The Prince sat like a rock with a mind unruffled like still water. He was unperturbed by any temptations. The Prince was even more and more steadfast in his resolve. His mind was more peaceful, and he entered into a state of utmost concentration (samadhi), having reached the realm of no-mind and no-thought. The Prince sat in a meditation pose under the Bodhi tree, warding off all worldly attachments. One night, there appeared a bright morning star. The Prince raised his head and discovered the star. He was instantly

awakened to his true nature and thus attained supreme enlightenment, with his mind filled with great compassion and wisdom. He had become awakened to the universal truth. He had become the Buddha. The Enlightened One knew that all sentient beings were transmigrating in the six states of existence, each receiving different kinds of retribution. He also knew that all sentient beings possessed the same nature and wisdom as a Buddha, that they could all attain enlightenment, but that they were drowned in the sea of suffering and could not redeem themselves because they were immersed in ignorance. After attaining the truth of life in the universe, and meditating for another 21 days under the Bodhi tree, the Buddha entered into the domain of unimpeded harmony and perfect homogeneity. So he rose from his seat and headed towards Kasi city to begin his preaching career to rescue the masses and benefit the living.

Chapter Ten

An Overview of the Sutra On the Eight Awakenings of Great People

History and Usage of the Sutra on the Eight Awakenings of Great People: Shramana An Shi Kao, a Partian monk, translated from Sanskrit into Chinese in about 150 A.D. (during the Later Han Dynasty). Most Venerable Thích Thanh Từ translated from Chinese into Vietnamese in the 1970s. The original text of this sutra in Sanskrit is still extant to this day. This sutra is entirely in accord with both the Theravada and Mahayana traditions. In fact, each of the eight items in this sutra can be considered as a subject of meditation which Buddhist disciples should at all times, by day and by night, with a sincere attitude, recite and keep in mind eight truths that all great people awaken to. Eight Awakenings of Great People mean Eight Truths that all Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and great people awaken to. After awakening, they then energetically cultivate the Way. By steeping themselves in kindness and compassion, they grow wisdom. They sail the Dharma-body ship all the way across to Nirvana's other shore, only to re-enter the sea of death and rebirth to rescue all living beings. They use these Eight Truths to point out the right road to all beings and in this way, help them to recognize the anguish of death and rebirth. They inspire all to cast off and forsake the Five Desires, and instead to cultivate their minds in the way of all Sages. If Buddhist disciples recite this Sutra on the Eight Awakenings, and constantly ponder its meaning, they will certainly eradicate boundless offenses, advance toward Bodhi, quickly realize Proper Enlightenment, forever be free of death and rebirth, and eternally abide in joy.

The Form of the Sutra: The form of the sutra is very simple. The text form is ancient, just like the Forty-Two Chapters and the Sutra on the Six Paramitas. However, its content is extremely profound and marvelous.

Chapter Eleven

A Summary of the Text of the Sutra “Eight Awakenings of Great People”

The form of the Sutra “Eight Awakenings of Great People” is very simple. The text form is ancient, just like the Forty-Two Chapters and the Sutra on the Six Paramitas. However, its content is extremely profound and marvelous. Shramana An Shi Kao, a Partian monk, translated from Sanskrit into Chinese in about 150 A.D. (during the Later Han Dynasty). Most Venerable Thích Thanh Từ translated from Chinese into Vietnamese in the 1970s. The original text of this sutra in Sanskrit is still extant to this day. This sutra is entirely in accord with both the Theravada and Mahayana traditions.

The First Awakening:

The world is impermanent,
Countries are perilous and fragile.
The body’s four elements are a source of pain;
Ultimately, they are empty.
The Five Aggregates (Skandhas) are not me.
Death and rebirth are simply
a series of transformations.
Misleading, unreal, and uncontrollable.
The mind is the wellspring of evil.
The body is the breeding ground of offenses.
Whoever can investigate and contemplate these truths,
Will gradually break free of death and rebirth.

The Second Awakening:

Too much desire brings pain.
Death and rebirth are tiresome ordeals.
They stem from our thoughts of greed and desire.
By reducing desires.
We can realize absolute truth and
enjoy independence and well-being
in both body and mind.

The Third Awakening:

Our minds are never satisfied or
 content with just enough.
 The more we obtain, the more we want.
 Thus we create offenses and do evil deeds.
 Bodhisattvas do not make mistakes.
 Instead, they are always content.
 Nurture the way by living
 a quiet life in humble surroundings.
 Their sole occupation is cultivating wisdom.

The Fourth Awakening:

Idleness and self-indulgence
 will be our downfall.
 With unflagging vigor,
 Great people break through their
 afflictions and baseness.
 They vanquish and humble
 the Four Kinds of Demons.
 And they escape from the prison of
 the Five Skandhas.

The Fifth Awakening:

Stupidity and ignorance are the
 cause of death and rebirth.
 Bodhisattvas are always attentive to.
 And appreciative of extensive study and erudition.
 They strive to expand their wisdom.
 And refine their eloquence.
 Teaching and transforming living beings.
 Nothing brings them greater joy than this.

The Sixth Awakening:

The suffering of poverty breeds deep resentment.
 Wealth unfairly distributed creates ill-will
 and conflict among people.
 So, Bodhisattvas practice giving
 and treat friend and foe alike.
 They neither harbor grudges
 nor despise evil-natured people.

The Seventh Awakening:

Great people, even as laity,
 are not blighted by worldly pleasures.
 Instead, they constantly aspire to take up the three
 precepts-robles and blessing-bowl of the monastic life.
 Their ideal and ambition is to leave the household
 and family life to cultivate
 the way in immaculate purity.
 Their virtuous qualities are lofty and sublime;
 their attitudes toward all creatures
 are kind and compassionate.

The Eighth Awakening:

Rebirth and death are beset with
 measureless suffering and afflictions,
 like a blazing fire.
 Thus, great people make the resolve to
 cultivate the Great Vehicle to rescue all beings.
 To endure endless hardship while
 standing in for others.
 To lead everyone to ultimate happiness.

In fact, each of the eight items in this sutra can be considered as a subject of meditation which Buddhist disciples should at all times, by day and by night, with a sincere attitude, recite and keep in mind eight truths that all great people awaken to. These are eight Truths that all Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and great people awaken to. After awakening, they then energetically cultivate the Way. By steeping themselves in kindness and compassion, they grow wisdom. They sail the Dharma-body ship all the way across to Nirvana's other shore, only to re-enter the sea of death and rebirth to rescue all living beings. They use these Eight Truths to point out the right road to all beings and in this way, help them to recognize the anguish of death and rebirth. They inspire all to cast off and forsake the Five Desires, and instead to cultivate their minds in the way of all Sages. If Buddhist disciples recite this Sutra on the Eight Awakenings, and constantly ponder its meaning, they will certainly eradicate boundless offenses, advance toward Bodhi, quickly realize Proper Enlightenment, forever be free of death and rebirth, and eternally abide in joy. Everyone of us knows what we deeply aspire to gain is happiness and what we try to avoid is

sufferings and afflictions; however, our actions and behaviors in daily life do not bring us any joy and happiness; on the contrary, they only lead us to more sufferings and afflictions. Why? Buddhism believes that we cause our own sufferings and afflictions because we are not awakening of the truth. Buddhism claims that experiences which are apparently pleasurable in this world are ultimately states of suffering. Devout Buddhists should see clearly the point is that we perceive them as states of pleasure only because, in comparison to states of sufferings and afflictions, they appear as a form of relief. A disciple of the Buddha, day and night, should wholeheartedly recite and meditate on the eight awakenings discovered by the great beings.

Chapter Twelve

A Summary of the Content of Eight Awakenings in the Sutra on the Eight Awakenings of Great People

Truly speaking, not only Buddhists but the whole world also are indebted to the Buddha for it is He who first showed the Way to free human beings from the coils of lust, anger, stupidity, arrogance, doubt, wrong views, killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, and lying... To Him, religion was not a bargain, but a Noble Way of life to gain enlightenment and liberation. Devout Buddhists should always try to live and to cultivate with eight awakenings of great people. Eight Awakenings of Great People is the name of an old sutra. The form of the sutra is very simple. The text form is ancient, just like the Forty-Two Chapters and the Sutra on the Six Paramitas. However, its content is extremely profound and marvelous. Shramana An Shi Kao, a Partian monk, translated from Sanskrit into Chinese in about 150 A.D. (during the Later Han Dynasty). Most Venerable Thích Thanh Từ translated from Chinese into Vietnamese in the 1970s. The original text of this sutra in Sanskrit is still extant to this day. This sutra is entirely in accord with both the Theravada and Mahayana traditions. In fact, each of the eight items in this sutra can be considered as a subject of meditation which Buddhist disciples should at all times, by day and by night, with a sincere attitude, recite and keep in mind eight truths that all great people awaken to. These are eight Truths that all Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and great people awaken to. After awakening, they then energetically cultivate the Way. By steeping themselves in kindness and compassion, they grow wisdom. They sail the Dharma-body ship all the way across to Nirvana's other shore, only to re-enter the sea of death and rebirth to rescue all living beings. They use these Eight Truths to point out the right road to all beings and in this way, help them to recognize the anguish of death and rebirth. They inspire all to cast off and forsake the Five Desires, and instead to cultivate their minds in the way of all Sages. If Buddhist disciples recite this Sutra on the Eight Awakenings, and constantly ponder its meaning, they will certainly eradicate boundless offenses, advance toward Bodhi, quickly

realize Proper Enlightenment, forever be free of death and rebirth, and eternally abide in joy. Everyone of us knows what we deeply aspire to gain is happiness and what we try to avoid is sufferings and afflictions; however, our actions and behaviors in daily life do not bring us any joy and happiness; on the contrary, they only lead us to more sufferings and afflictions. Why? Buddhism believes that we cause our own sufferings and afflictions because we are not awakening of the truth. Buddhism claims that experiences which are apparently pleasurable in this world are ultimately states of suffering. Devout Buddhists should see clearly the point is that we perceive them as states of pleasure only because, in comparison to states of sufferings and afflictions, they appear as a form of relief. A disciple of the Buddha, day and night, should wholeheartedly recite and meditate on the eight awakenings discovered by the great beings.

The First Awakening is the awareness that the world is impermanent. All regimes are subject to fall; all things composed of the four elements that are empty and contain the seeds of suffering. Human beings are composed of five aggregates, and are without a separate self. They are always in the process of change, constantly being born and constantly dying. They are empty of self, without sovereignty. The mind is the source of all unwholesome deeds and confusion, and the body is the forest of all impure actions. If we meditate on these facts, we can gradually be released from the cycle of birth and death. The world is impermanent, countries are perilous and fragile; the body's four elements are a source of pain; ultimately, they are empty; the Five Aggregates (Skandhas) are not me; death and rebirth are simply a series of transformations; misleading, unreal, and uncontrollable; the mind is the wellspring of evil; the body is the breeding ground of offenses; whoever can investigate and contemplate these truths, will gradually break free of death and rebirth.

The Second Awakening is the awareness that more desire brings more suffering. The awareness that more desire brings more suffering. All hardships in daily life arise from greed and desire. Those with little desire and ambition are able to relax, their bodies and minds are free from entanglement. Too much desire brings pain. Death and rebirth are tiresome ordeals which stem from our thoughts of greed and desire. By

reducing desires, we can realize absolute truth and enjoy independence and well-being in both body and mind.

The Third Awakening is the awareness that the human mind is always searching for possessions and never feels fulfilled. This causes impure actions to ever increase. In our daily life we always want to have good food, nice clothes, attractive jewellery, but we only feel satisfied with them for a short time, after that, the very same object that once gave us pleasure might cause us frustration now. The same can also be applied to fame. At the beginning we might think ourselves that we are so happy when we are famous, but after some time, it could be that all we feel is frustration and dissatisfaction. Bodhisattvas, however, always remember the principle of having few desires. They live a simple life in peace in order to practice the Way, and consider the realization of perfect understanding as their only career. Our minds are never satisfied or content with just enough. The more we obtain, the more we want; thus we create offenses and do evil deeds; Bodhisattvas do not make mistakes, instead, they are always content, nurture the way by living a quiet life in humble surroundings. Their sole occupation is cultivating wisdom.

The Fourth Awakening is the awareness of the extent to which laziness is an obstacle to practice. For this reason, we must practice diligently to destroy the unwholesome mental factors which bind us , and to conquer the four kinds of Mara, in order to free ourselves from the prison of the five aggregates and the three worlds. Idleness and self-indulgence will be our downfall. With unflagging vigor, Great people break through their afflictions and baseness. They vanquish and humble the Four Kinds of Demons, and they escape from the prison of the Five Skandhas.

The Fifth Awakening is the awareness that ignorance is the cause of the endless cycle of birth and death. Therefore, Bodhisattvas always listen and learn in order to develop their understanding and eloquence. This enables them to educate living beings and bring them to the realm of great joy. Stupidity and ignorance are the cause of death and rebirth, Bodhisattvas are always attentive to and appreciative of extensive study and erudition. They strive to expand their wisdom and refine their eloquence. Teaching and transforming living beings, nothing brings them greater joy than this.

The Sixth Awakening is the awareness that poverty creates hatred and anger, which creates a vicious cycle of negative thoughts and activity. When practicing generosity, Bodhisattvas consider everyone, friends and enemies alike, as equal. They do not condemn anyone's past wrongdoings, nor do they hate those who are presently causing harm. The suffering of poverty breeds deep resentment; wealth unfairly distributed creates ill-will and conflict among people. So, Bodhisattvas practice giving and treat friend and foe alike. They neither harbor grudges nor despise evil-natured people.

The Seventh Awakening is the awareness that the five categories of desire lead to difficulties. Although we are in the world, we should try not to be caught up in worldly matters. A monk, for example, has in his possession only three robes and one bowl. He lives simply in order to practice the Way. His precepts keep him free of attachment to worldly things, and he treats everyone equally and with compassion. Great people, even as laity, are not blighted by worldly pleasures; instead, they constantly aspire to take up the three precepts-robes and blessing-bowl of the monastic life. Their ideal and ambition is to leave the household and family life to cultivate the way in immaculate purity. Their virtuous qualities are lofty and sublime; their attitudes toward all creatures are kind and compassionate.

The Eighth Awakening is the awareness that the fire of birth and death is raging, causing endless suffering everywhere. Bodhisattvas should take the Great Vow to help everyone, to suffer with everyone, and to guide all beings to the realm of great joy. Rebirth and death are beset with measureless suffering and afflictions, like a blazing fire. Thus, great people make the resolve to cultivate the Great Vehicle to rescue all beings. They endure endless hardship while standing in for others. They lead everyone to ultimate happiness.

Part Three
Living & Cultivating With
The Spirit of the Sutra of
the Eight Awakenings of Great People
(Phần Ba: Sống Tu Theo Tinh Thần
Giác Ngộ Của Kinh Bát Đại Nhân Giác)

Chapter Thirteen

Living & Cultivating In Accordance With the Spirit of the First Awakening of Great People

I. An Overview & Meanings of the First Awakening in the Sutra of Eight Awakenings of Great People:

Truly speaking, not only Buddhists but the whole world also are indebted to the Buddha for it is He who first showed the Way to free human beings from the coils of lust, anger, stupidity, arrogance, doubtfulness, wrong views, killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, and lying... To Him, religion was not a bargain, but a Noble Way of life to gain enlightenment and liberation. Devout Buddhists should always try to live and to cultivate with eight awakenings of great people. Eight Awakenings of Great People is the name of an old sutra. The form of the sutra is very simple. The text form is ancient, just like the Forty-Two Chapters and the Sutra on the Six Paramitas. However, its content is extremely profound and marvelous.

According to the Sutra of Eight Awakening of Great People, the first awakening is the awareness that **the world is impermanent**. All regimes are subject to fall; all things composed of **the four elements that are empty** and contain the seeds of suffering. **Human beings are composed of five aggregates, and are without a separate self**. They are always in the process of change, constantly being born and constantly dying. They are empty of self, without sovereignty. The mind is the source of all unwholesome deeds and confusion, and the body is the forest of all impure actions. If we meditate on these facts, we can gradually be released from the cycle of birth and death. In Buddhist cultivation, each of the eight items in this sutra can be considered as a subject of meditation which Buddhist disciples should at all times, by day and by night, with a sincere attitude, recite and keep in mind eight truths that all great people awaken to. These are eight Truths that all Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and great people awaken to. After awakening, they then energetically cultivate the Way. By steeping themselves in kindness and compassion, they grow wisdom.

They sail the Dharma-body ship all the way across to Nirvana's other shore, only to re-enter the sea of death and rebirth to rescue all living beings. They use these Eight Truths to point out the right road to all beings and in this way, help them to recognize the anguish of death and rebirth. They inspire all to cast off and forsake the Five Desires, and instead to cultivate their minds in the way of all Sages. If Buddhist disciples recite this Sutra on the Eight Awakenings, and constantly ponder its meaning, they will certainly eradicate boundless offenses, advance toward Bodhi, quickly realize Proper Enlightenment, forever be free of death and rebirth, and eternally abide in joy. Everyone of us knows what we deeply aspire to gain is happiness and what we try to avoid is sufferings and afflictions; however, our actions and behaviors in daily life do not bring us any joy and happiness; on the contrary, they only lead us to more sufferings and afflictions. Why? Buddhism believes that we cause our own sufferings and afflictions because we are not awakening of the truth. Buddhism claims that experiences which are apparently pleasurable in this world are ultimately states of suffering. Devout Buddhists should see clearly the point is that we perceive them as states of pleasure only because, in comparison to states of sufferings and afflictions, they appear as a form of relief. A disciple of the Buddha, day and night, should wholeheartedly recite and meditate on the eight awakenings discovered by the great beings.

In the 1970s, Most Venerable Thích Thanh Từ translated this sutra from Chinese into Vietnamese, the original text of *The First Awakening* as follows:

The world is impermanent,
 Countries are perilous and fragile.
 The body's four elements are a source of pain;
 Ultimately, they are empty.
 The Five Aggregates (Skandhas) are not me.
 Death and rebirth are simply
 a series of transformations.
 Misleading, unreal, and uncontrollable.
 The mind is the wellspring of evil.
 The body is the breeding ground of offenses.
 Whoever can investigate and contemplate these truths,
 Will gradually break free of death and rebirth.

Which means the awareness that **the world is impermanent. All regimes are subject to fall; all things composed of the four elements that are empty and contain the seeds of suffering. Human beings are composed of five aggregates, and are without a separate self. They are always in the process of change, constantly being born and constantly dying. They are empty of self, without sovereignty. The mind is the source of all unwholesome deeds and confusion, and the body is the forest of all impure actions. If we meditate on these facts, we can gradually be released from the cycle of birth and death.** The world is impermanent, countries are perilous and fragile; the body's four elements are a source of pain; ultimately, they are empty; the Five Aggregates (Skandhas) are not me; death and rebirth are simply a series of transformations; misleading, unreal, and uncontrollable; the mind is the wellspring of evil; the body is the breeding ground of offenses; whoever can investigate and contemplate these truths, will gradually break free of death and rebirth.

II. Living & Cultivating In Accordance With the Spirit of the First Awakening of Great People:

The World Is Impermanent: In fact, in Buddhist point of view, all things last or exist only for a short time, of changing continually. Physical changes operating from the state of formation, to that of development, decay and disintegration are exact manifestations of the law of transformation. The Buddha saw, when seated beneath the Bodhi Tree that everything is changing and passing away all the time. All things in the universe, from the small grain of sand, the human body, to the big one such as the earth, moon, sun, mountains and rivers are governed by the above law, and as such, must come through these four periods. This process of changes characterizes impermanence. All things are impermanent, their birth, existence, change, and death never resting for a moment. The hills and mountains are changing all the time but we cannot notice the change because it takes place so slowly. If, on the other hand, we look at a flower in the morning and examine it again in the evening, it is easy to see how much it has changed in only twelve hours. All things in this world, including human life, and political systems, are constantly changing from moment to moment. This is

called impermanence in each moment. Everything passes through a period of birth, maturity, transformation, and destruction. This destruction is called impermanence in each cycle. To see the impermanent nature of all things, we must examine this closely. Doing so will prevent us from being imprisoned by the things of this world. The law of changing and passing away is to be found everywhere and in everything from money, position, to pleasure, our bodies and even the world itself is changing, and must in the end pass away. In most monasteries, at the end of ceremonies, monks and nuns often chant the verse of impermanence.

This day is already done.
 Our lives are that much less.
 We're like fish in a shrinking pond;
 What joy is there in this?
 We should be diligent and vigorous,
 As if our own head were at stake.
 Only be mindful of impermanence,
 And be careful not to be lax.

It is necessary for sincere Buddhists to think that the impermanence of life is sudden, time truly flies, the morning had just come but night has arrived. Why not be diligent and prepare in anticipation. In fact, the fact of impermanence has been recognized not only in Buddhist thought, but also elsewhere in the history of philosophy. It was the ancient Chinese educators who also recognized the ever-changing and transient nature of things. However, Buddhism considers impermanence is one of the three most important dharma seals: impermanence, suffering, and no-self. Buddhist scriptures always say that the three worlds are impermanent like autumn clouds; that birth and death are like a human dance; and that human life is like a flash of lightning.

Impermanence is the state of not being permanent, of lasting or existing only for a short time, of changing continually. Physical changes operating from the state of formation, to that of development, decay and disintegration are exact manifestations of the law of transformation. Impermanence is the ever changing nature of all phenomena from arising, dwelling and passing away. Anitya is one of the three fundamental of everything existing: Impermanence (Anitya),

Suffering (Duhkha) and Non-ego (Anatman). Impermanence is the basis of life, without which existence would not be possible. A Sanskrit term for “Impermanence.” Impermanence is the ever changing nature of all phenomena from arising, dwelling and passing away. Anitya is the state of not being permanent, of lasting or existing only for a short time, of changing continually. Physical changes operating from the state of formation, to that of development, decay and disintegration are exact manifestations of the law of transformation. All things in the universe, from the small grain of sand, the human body, to the big one such as the earth, moon and sun are governed by the above law, and as such, must come through these four periods. This process of changes characterizes impermanence. Anitya is one of the three fundamental of everything existing: Impermanence (Anitya), Suffering (Duhkha) and Non-ego (Anatman). Impermanence is the basis of life, without which existence would not be possible. “Impermanence” is one of the “three characteristics” (trilaksana) that Sakyamuni Buddha said distinguish all conditioned (samskṛta) phenomena, the others being selflessness and unsatisfactoriness or suffering. According to this doctrine, all conditioned phenomena, i.e., phenomena that come into being due to causes and conditions, are constantly changing, and so there is no possibility of holding onto anything. This is connected with the other two characteristics, since the transitory nature of phenomena leads to inevitably suffering, because beings are inevitably separated from things that they desire. Also, because phenomena are constantly changing, there is no possibility of a permanent and unchanging “self” or soul (atman). Everything in this world is subject to change and perish; nothing remains constant for even a single kṣaṇa or short moment. Everything, every phenomenon passes through a period of birth, maturity, transformation, and destruction. The Diamond Sutra taught: “Just examine the various conditioned dharma, it is no different than a bubble or dewdrop; observe and realize everything is impermanent, births and deaths are like lightning flashes.” Contemplation on the impermanence of things will help us prevent from being imprisoned by the things of the world.

Sincere Buddhists should always be awakened and realize: “Nothing in this world lasts forever.” In the end, everything is a part of the cycle of “Formation, Existence, Decay, and Emptiness.” If

there is birth, naturally, there will be existence for a certain amount of time, then decay will come, and, in the end, return to dirt and sand. Because we are awakened to these conditions of life, we begin realizing the theory of “Impermanence” the Buddha taught in the sutras is accurate. No matter how much glory, wealth, or success was achieved in the past, in the end, these accomplishments are not any different than a beautiful dream. Sincere Buddhists should know how to adapt and make best of their situations, able cleverly to tolerate and endure various conditions and circumstances of life, then they may be able to transform misfortunes, failures, and sufferings into blessings and happiness. Everything in life, if it has form characteristics, then, inevitably, one day it will be destroyed. A human life is the same way, if there is life, there must be death. Even though we say a hundred years, it passes by in a flash, like lightning streaking across the sky, like a flower’s blossom, like the image of the moon at the bottom of lake, like a short breath, what is really eternal? From its beginning, Buddhism has held that a direct, unbiased observation of human experience on impermanence. Even on the level of ordinary observation we can see the change of seasons, the birth and death of plants, animals, and human beings. If we make a little more intensive observation we will see that human being, both physical and mental, as well as all other things, are only changing process, in flux at every moment. Let’s take a look at our own personality, we will find that our bodies are impermanent. They are subject to constant change. Our minds are also characterized by impermanence, and everything we see around us is impermanent. Even our dear bodies, we are unable to maintain its youth, health, and vitality forever because it must endure inevitable sufferings, deterioration, old age, sickness, and death. Everything in life is impermanent, artificial, dream-like, and transient like a bubble in water. After the sunshine, there is rain; after rain there is cessation; after health there is sickness; after happiness there is sadness; after being together there is being apart; after success there is failure; after rise there is fall. Along the long river some stretch are straight, others curve; sometimes it is quite peaceful, other times turbulent and chaotic. Sincere Buddhists should always remember the impermanence of all things, should always try to cultivate, should always turn your misfortunes and setbacks as well as obstacles into

advantageous situations; should always awaken, abandon ignorance to see the light of enlightenment, and become more determined to solidify your mind to make firm progress on your cultivated path.

Everything in this world is subject to change and perish; nothing remains constant for even a single moment. The fact of impermanence has been recognized not only in Buddhist thought but elsewhere in the history of ideas. It was the ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus who remarked that one cannot step into the same river twice. He meant that everything keeps changing without a pause or the ever-changing and transient nature of things. Human's life is just like that. In fact, human's life is like a dream; it is impermanent like autumn clouds, that birth and death are like a dance; that infant changes to young age and to old age just like morning turns into afternoon, then evening. Look at our body and see it changes every second of life. The growing (becoming old) of a human's life is not different from a flash of lightning. Things around us also keep changing. No one of the things we see around us will last forever, in the same river, the current of yesterday is not the current we see today. Even our minds are constantly subject to change; friends become enemies, enemies become friends. Our possessions are also impermanent, the brand new car we bought in the year of 2000 is no longer a new car in 2004, the shirt we donate to Goodwill Charity today was once liked by us, and so on and so on. Understanding impermanence of existence is important not simply for our cultivation of the Dharma, but also in our daily lives for this understanding is a key to open the door of the ultimate nature of things and also an antidote to anger and attachment. When we see all things are perishable and change every moment, we will not try to attach to them.

In the Dharmapada Sutra, the Buddha taught: "To live a hundred years without comprehending how all things rise and pass away, is no better than a single-day life of seeing beginning and end of all things (Dharmapada Sutra 113). Thus, according to the Buddha, understanding impermanence is important not only for our practice of the Dharma, but also in our daily life. Besides these immediate benefits, understanding impermanence is also an effective skillful means that assists us in practicing the Dharma. The understanding of impermanence is an antidote to desire and ill-will. And finally, it is a key that helps us understand the ultimate nature of things, the way things really are." In

the Mijjhamaka Sutra, the Buddha gives five striking similes to illustrate the impermanent nature of the five aggregates of clinging. He compares material form or body to a lump of foam, feeling to a bubble of water, perception to a mirage, mental formations or volitional activities to a plantain trunk without heartwood, and consciousness to an illusion. So He asked the monks: “What essence, monks, could there be in a lump of foam, in a bubble, in a mirage, in a plantain trunk, in an illusion? Whatever material form there be whether past, future or present; internal or external; gross or subtle; low or lofty; far or near; that material form the meditator sees, meditates upon, examines with systematic and wise attention, he thus seeing, meditating upon, and examining with systematic and wise attention, would find it empty, unsubstantial and without essence. Whatever essence, monks, could there be in material form?” And the Buddha speaks in the same manner of the remaining aggregates and asks: “What essence, monks, could there be in feeling, in perception, in mental formation and in consciousness?” Change or impermanence is the essential characteristic of phenomenal existence. We cannot say of anything, animate or inanimate, ‘this is lasting’ for even while we say, it is undergoing change. The aggregates are compounded and conditioned, and, therefore, ever subject to cause and effect. Unceasingly does consciousness or mind and its factors change, and just as unceasingly, though at a lower rate, the physical body also changes from moment to moment. He who sees clearly that the impermanent aggregates are impermanent, has right understanding.

According to Buddhism, everything is impermanent, from the impermanence of the body, the mind, to the impermanence of the surrounding environments. Some people wonder why Buddhism always emphasizes the Theory of Impermanence. Does it want to spread in the human mind the seed of disheartenment, and discourage? In their view, if things are changeable, we do not need to do anything, because if we attain a great achievement, we cannot keep it. This type of reasoning, a first, appears partly logical, but in reality, it is not at all. When the Buddha preached about impermanence, He did not want to discourage anyone, but warning his disciples about the truth. A true Buddhist has to work hard for his own well being and also for the well being of the society. Although he knows that he is facing the changing reality, he

always keeps himself calm. He must refrain from harming others, in contrast, strive to perform good deeds for the benefit and happiness of others. All things have changed and will never cease to change. The human body is changeable, thus governed by the law of impermanence. Our body is different from the minute before to that of the minute after. Biological researches have proved that the cells in our body are in constant change, and in every seven years all the old cells have been totally renewed. These changes help us quickly grow up, age and die. The longer we want to live, the more we fear death. From childhood to aging, human life is exactly like a dream, but there are many people who do not realize; therefore, they continue to launch into the noose of desire; as a result, they suffer from greed and will suffer more if they become attached to their possessions. Sometimes at time of death they still don't want to let go anything. There are some who know that they will die soon, but they still strive desperately to keep what they cherish most. Impermanence of the body means that the body withers rapidly, soon grows old and debilitated, ending in death. The ancients have lamented: "Oh, that time when we were young and would ride bamboo sticks, pretending they were horses, in the twinkling of an eye, our hair is now spotted with the color of frost." What happened to all those brave and intelligent young men and those beautiful and enchanting women of bygone days? They ended as in the following poem: "Rosy cheeks have faded, heroes have passed away; young students' eyes, too, are weary and sad." Not only our body is changeable, but also our mind. It changes more rapidly than the body, it changes every second, every minute according to the environment. We are cheerful a few minutes before and sad a few minutes later, laughing then crying, happiness then sorrow. Impermanence of the mind means that the mind and thoughts of sentient beings are always changing, at times filled with love or anger, at times happy or sad. Those thoughts, upon close scrutiny, are illusory and false, like water bubbles. Impermanence of the environment means that not only do our surroundings always change and fluctuate, but happiness, too, is impermanent. Succulent food, once swallowed, loses all tastes; an emotional reunion, however, sweet and joyful, ultimately ends in separation; a delightful party soon becomes a thing of past; a good book, too, gradually reaches the last pages.

So, eventually what is immortal in this world? In the Lankavatara Sutra, the Buddha told Mahamati: “Oh Mahamati! The doctrine of immortality advocated by the Blessed One is not the same as that of other philosophers, not only as regards immortality, but as regards birth and impermanence. Why? According to them, there is a self-substance about which they assert immortality and unchangeability. My position is not that, for it does not fall into the categories of being and non-being. It goes beyond the categories of being and non-being, of birth and disappearance; it is not existence nor is it non-existence. How is it not non-existent? Because it is like unto a diversity of forms appearing in a dream or maya. How is it not existent? Because the self-substance of forms is not to be asserted as existent. We see them as appearances which are not realities, we grasp (grahana) them as before us yet they are not really graspable. For this reason, all existences are to be regarded neither as existent nor as non-existent. If we know that we see before us is no more than the manifestation of our own mind and abide within ourselves where no dualistic discrimination takes place, we see that there is nothing astir in the world. The ignorant assert themselves in their doings, discriminate therein, but the wise do not. Oh Mahamati! This is due to the discrimination of unrealities whereby the ignorant get altogether confused in their judgments. The ignorant are confused in the judgment of birth and no-birth, and of the created and of the uncreated; there is really no appearance, no disappearance of the magical figures, of which we can assert either as born or as passed. Oh Mahamati! By being untruthful it is meant that the self-nature of things is not truthfully discerned as it is in itself. When however an untrue view prevails, there is an attachment to the self-substance of things, failing to see them in their solitary quietude, and as long as this quietude fails to be seen, there will be no disappearance of wrongful discrimination. Therefore, Mahamati, a view based on formlessness of things is superior to that based on form, because form is the cause of birth. When there is formlessness, it puts a stop to the rise of discrimination, and there is a state of immortality, which is nirvana. Oh Mahamati! One finds Nirvana where one sees the abode of reality in its truthful signification and abandons the discrimination of all that is mind and all that belongs to mind.”

Buddhist practitioners should always see the selflessness and the impermanence of all things. To understand thoroughly the impermanence of all things, Zen practitioners should contemplate that all things in this world, including human life, mountains, rivers, and political systems, are constantly changing from moment to moment. This is called impermanence in each moment. Everything passes through a period of birth, maturity, transformation, and destruction. This destruction is called impermanence in each cycle. To see the impermanent nature of all things, we must examine this closely. Doing so will prevent us from being imprisoned by the things of this world.

According to the Samyutta Nikaya, volume III, change or impermanence is the essential characteristic of phenomenal existence. We cannot say of anything, animate or inanimate, 'this is lasting' for even while we say, it is undergoing change. The aggregates are compounded and conditioned, and, therefore, ever subject to cause and effect. Unceasingly does consciousness or mind and its factors change, and just as unceasingly, though at a lower rate, the physical body also changes from moment to moment. He who sees clearly that the impermanent aggregates are impermanent, has right understanding. In the Mijjhamaka Sutra, the Buddha gives five striking similes to illustrate the impermanent nature of the five aggregates of clinging. He compares material form or body to a lump of foam, feeling to a bubble of water, perception to a mirage, mental formations or volitional activities to a plantain trunk without heartwood, and consciousness to an illusion. So He asked the monks: "What essence, monks, could there be in a lump of foam, in a bubble, in a mirage, in a plantain trunk, in an illusion? Whatever material form there be whether past, future or present; internal or external; gross or subtle; low or lofty; far or near; that material form the meditator sees, meditates upon, examines with systematic and wise attention, he thus seeing, meditating upon, and examining with systematic and wise attention, would find it empty, unsubstantial and without essence. Whatever essence, monks, could there be in material form?" And the Buddha speaks in the same manner of the remaining aggregates and asks: "What essence, monks, could there be in feeling, in perception, in mental formation and in consciousness?"

The Four Elements Are Empty & Content the Seeds of Sufferings:

Material components which man is made are the Four tanmatra. Four great elements of which all things are made (produce and maintain life). These four elements are interrelated and inseparable. However, one element may preponderate over another. They constantly change, not remaining the same even for two consecutive moments. According to Buddhism, matter endures only for 17 thought-moments, while scientists tell us that matter endures only for 10/27th of a second. No matter what we say, a human body is temporary; it is created artificially through the accumulation of the four elements. Once death arrives, the body deteriorates to return to the soil, water-based substances will gradually dry up and return to the great water, the element of fire is lost and the body becomes cold, and the great wind no longer works within the body. At that time, the spirit must follow the karma each person has created while living to change lives and be reincarnated into the six realms, altering image, exchange body, etc in the cycle of births and deaths. Solid matter or Earth. Prithin means the element of extension, the substratum of matter. Without it objects have no form, nor can they occupy space. The qualities of hardness and softness are two conditions of this element. After death, these parts will decay and deteriorate to become soil. For this reason, they belong to the Great Soil. Water, fluidity, or liquid. Unlike the earth element it is intangible. It is the element which enables the scattered atoms of matter to cohere together. After death, these water-based substances will dry up. In other words, they have returned to water. Fire or heat. Fire element includes both heat and cold, and fire element possesses the power of maturing bodies, they are vitalizing energy. Preservation and decay are due to this element. After death, the element of fire is lost and the body gradually becomes cold. Air, wind, motion, or energy of motion. Air element is the element of motion in the body. After death, breathing ceases, body functions become catatonic or completely rigid because the great wind no longer works within the body. In other words, all things composed of the four elements that are empty and contain the seeds of suffering. They are always in the process of change, constantly being born and constantly dying.

According to Buddhism, the psycho-physical organism of the body of a being undergoes incessant change, creates new psycho-physical

processes every instant and thus preserves the potentiality for future organic processes, and leaves the gap between one moment and the next. We live and die every moment of our lives. It is merely a coming into being and passing away, a rise and fall (udaya-vaya), like the waves of the sea. This change of continuity, the psycho-physical process, which is patent to us this life does not cease at death but continues incessantly. It is the dynamic mind-flux that is known as will, thirst, desire, or craving which constitutes karmic energy. This mighty force, this will to live, keeps life going. According to Buddhism, it is not only human life, but the entire sentient world that is drawn by this tremendous force, this mind with its mental factors, good or bad. Also according to Buddhism, “life is uncertain, death is certain,” this is a well-know saying in Buddhism. Knowing fully well that death is certain and is the natural phenomenon that everyone has to face, we should not be afraid of death. Yet all of us fear death because we do not think of its inevitability. We like to cling to our life and body and develop too much craving and attachment. A German monk named Nyanatiloka, reiterated the momentariness of existence from Visuddhi-Magga as follows: “All beings have only a very short instant to live, only so long as a moment of a slash of a lightning. When this is extinguished, the being is also extinguished. The beings of the last moment is now no longer living, and does not live now or will not live again later. The being of the present moment did not live previously, lives just now, but later will not live any more. The being of the future has not lived yet in the past, does not yet lived now, and will only live later.” The Buddha taught on many occasions: “Human life is only as long as one breath, for breathing out (exhaling) without breathing (inhaling) means we have already died and stepped over into a new lifetime.” In fact, our lives are like the breath, or like the growing and falling leaves. In the old days, at temples, the novices always must sweep falling leaves together on the open grounds and walkways of the monasteries. The leaves fall, the novices sweep, and yet, even while the sweeping continues and the near end of a long path is being clear, the novices can look back to the far end they have already swept and see a new scattering of leaves already starting to cover their work. When we can really understand about falling leaves, we can sweep the paths every day and have great happiness in our lives on this changing earth.

Practitioners Contemplate & Observe on the Four Elements of the Body As Such: According to the Satipatthanasutta, the Buddha taught: Again, Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu reviews this same body, however it is placed, however disposed, as consisting of elements thus: “In this body there are the earth element, the water element, the fire element, and the air element.” Just as though a skilled butcher or his apprentice had killed a cow and was seated at the crossroads with it cut up into pieces; so too, a Bhikkhu reviews this same body as consisting of elements thus: “In this body there are the earth element, the water element, the fire element and the air element.” In this way, he abides contemplating the body as a body internally, externally, and both internally and externally... And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. That too is how a Bhikkhu abides contemplating the body as a body.

The Five Skandhas Have No Self & Are Equally Empty: *The Five Skandhas Have No Self:* The doctrine of no-self has two main characteristics: selflessness of things (dharma-nairatmya) and selflessness of person (pudgalanairatmya). Selflessness of things: Things are without independent individuality, i.e. the tenet that things have no independent reality, no reality in themselves, no permanent individuality in or independence of things. The idea that there is no self-substance or “Atman” constituting the individuality of each object is insisted on by the followers of Mahayana Buddhism to be their exclusive property, not shared by the Hinayana. This idea is naturally true as the idea of “no self-substance” or Dharmanairatmya is closely connected with that of “Sunyata” and the latter is one of the most distinguishing marks of the Mahayana. It was natural for its scholars to give the former a prominent position in their philosophy. In the Lankavatara Sutra, the Buddha taught: “When a Bodhisattva-mahasattva recognizes that all dharmas are free from Citta, Manas, Manovijnana, the Five Dharmas, and the Threefold Svabhava, he is said to understand well the real significance of Dharmanairatmya.” Man as without ego or permanent soul or no permanent human ego or soul. In other words, the five skandhas in a human being have no self.

Determinism means the theory of being determined by fate, nature, or god. Buddhism believes in the absence of a permanent, unchanging self or soul. Non-existence of a permanent self. According to the

Vimalakirti Sutra, the body consists of the five elements or skandhas, which together represent body and mind, and there is no such so-called “self.” Elements exist only by means of union of conditions. There is no eternal and unchangeable substance in them. When these come apart, so-called “body” immediately disappears. Since the form which is created by the four elements is empty and without self, then the human body, created by the unification of the five skandhas, must also be empty and without self. According to Buddhism, four elements are impure and five skandhas have no-self. For these reason, human body is in a transforming process from second to second. In Theravada, no-self is only applied to the person; in the Mahayana, all things are regarded as without essence. According to Prof. Junjiro Takakusu in *The Essentials of Buddhist Philosophy*, the Buddha regarded this world as a world of hardship, and taught the ways to cope with it. Then what are the reasons which make it a world of hardship? The first reason, as given by the Buddha is that all things are selfless or egoless, which means that no things, men, animals and inanimate objects, both living and not living, have what we may call their original self or real being. Let us consider man. A man does not have a core or a soul which he can consider to be his true self. A man exists, but he cannot grasp his real being, he cannot discover his own core, because the existence of a man is nothing but an “existence depending on a series of causations.” In short, the five skandhas that form a man do not have a self of their own. Everything that exists is there because of causations; it will disappear when the effects of the causation cease. The waves on the water’s surface certainly exist, but can it be said that a wave has its own self? Waves exist only while there is wind or current. Each wave has its own characteristics according to the combination of causations, the intensity of the winds and currents and their directions, etc. But when the effects of the causations cease, the waves are no more. Similarly, there cannot be a self which stands independent of causations. As long as a man is an existent depending on a series of causations, it is unreasonable for him to try to hold on to himself and to regard all things around him from the self-centered point of view. All men ought to deny their own selves and endeavor to help each other and to look for co-existence, because no man can ever be truly independent. If all things owe their existence to a series of causations,

their existence is a conditional one; there is no one thing in the universe that is permanent or independent. Therefore, the Buddha's theory that selflessness is the nature of all things inevitably leads to the next theory that all things are impermanent (anitya). Men in general seem to be giving all of their energy to preserving their own existence and their possessions. But in truth it is impossible to discover the core of their own existence, nor is it possible to preserve it forever. Even for one moment nothing can stay unchanged. Not only is it insecure in relation to space but it is also insecure in relation to time. If it were possible to discover a world which is spaceless and timeless, that would be a world of true freedom, i.e., Nirvana. If, as the modern physicists assert, space is curved and time is relative, this world of space and time is our enclosed abode from which there is no escape; we are tied down in the cycles of cause and effect. As long as men cannot discover a world which is not limited by time and space, men must be creatures of suffering. To assert that such a state, unlimited in time and space, is attainable by man is the message of Buddhism. Of course, there is no such thing as a limitless time. Even modern physical science does not recognize infinity in time and space. However, the Buddha brought forward his ideal, Nirvana (extinction), following his theories of selflessness and impermanence. Nirvana means extinction of life and death, extinction of worldly desire, and extinction of space and time conditions. This, in the last analysis, means unfolding a world of perfect freedom. Selflessness (no substance) and impermanence (no duration) are the real state of our existence; Nirvana (negatively extinction; positively perfection) is our ideal, that is, perfect freedom, quiescence.

The Five Skandhas Are Equally Empty: The Pali scripture declares six sense-organs, six sense-objects and six consciousnesses as well as five aggregates are Sunyata as "Eye is void of self and anything belonging to self; form is void from self and anything belonging to self; visual consciousness is void of self and anything belonging to self." Matter is just the immaterial, the immaterial is just matter (form is emptiness and the very emptiness is form). In the Heart Sutra, the Buddha told Sariputra: "Sariputra! This phenomenal world or form is emptiness, and emptiness is truly the phenomenal world. Emptiness is not different from the phenomenal world, the phenomenal world is not different from emptiness. What is the phenomenal world that is

emptiness, what is emptiness that is the phenomenal world.” The Hrdaya Sutra expands this concept by emphasis that “Rupa does not differ from Sunya”, or “Sunya does not differ from rupa” and “Sunya of all things is not created, not annihilated, not impure, not pure, not increasing, and not decreasing.” It means that because rupa must have no nature of its own, it is produced by causes or depend on anything else, so rupa is sunyata or identical with void. Therefore, the perceived object, the perceiving subject and knowledge are mutually interdependent. The reality of one is dependent upon others; if one is false, the others must be false. The perceiving subject and knowledge of the external object must also be false. So what one perceives within or without is illusory. Therefore, there is nothing, creation and annihilation, pure and impure, increase and decrease and so on. However, in reality, we cannot say a thing to be either real or unreal at the same time. Here, Sunyata must be defined as Pratityasamutpada. There is the intimate connection that exists between causality and sunyata. The one presupposes the other; the two are inseparably connected. Sunyata is the logical consequence of the Buddha’s view of causality and effect.

In the point of view of the Mahayana scriptures, sunyata is the central theme of the Mahayana philosophical system. This term has been used in the Prajna-paramita system to denote a stage where all viewpoints with regard to the real nature of mundane world are totally rejected. In other words, we may say that to have a viewpoint is to cling to a position and there can be various types of positions with regard to the real nature of things as Saddharma-Pundaria expressed: “Knowing that phenomena have no constant fixed nature, that the seeds of Buddhahood sprout through causation.” Matter is just the immaterial, the immaterial is just matter (form is emptiness and the very emptiness is form). In the Heart Sutra, the Buddha told Sariputra: “Sariputra! This phenomenal world or form is emptiness, and emptiness is truly the phenomenal world. Emptiness is not different from the phenomenal world, the phenomenal world is not different from emptiness. What is the phenomenal world that is emptiness, what is emptiness that is the phenomenal world.” According to Zen Master Seng-Tsan in Faith in Mind, abiding no where, yet everywhere. Ten directions are right before you. The smallest is the same as the largest

in the realm where delusion is cut off. The largest is the same as the smallest, no boundaries are visible. Existence is precisely emptiness and emptiness is precisely existence. If it is not like this, you should not preserve it.

Skandha in Sanskrit means “group, aggregate, or heap.” In Buddhism, Skandha means the trunk of a tree, or a body. Skandha also means the five aggregates or five aggregates of conditioned phenomena (constituents), or the five causally conditioned elements of existence forming a being or entity. According to Buddhist philosophy, each individual existence is composed of the five elements and because they are constantly changing, so those who attempt to cling to the “self” are subject to suffering. Though these factors are often referred to as the “aggregates of attachment” because they are impermanent and changing, ordinary people always develop desires for them. According to the Sangiti Sutta in the Long Discourses of the Buddha, there are five aggregates. The aggregates which make up a human being. The five skandhas are the roots of all ignorance. They keep sentient beings from realizing their always-existing Buddha-Nature. The five aggregates are considered as maras or demons fighting against the Buddha-nature of men. In accordance with the Dharma, life is comprised of five aggregates (form, feeling, perception, mental formation, consciousness). Matter plus the four mental factors classified below as feeling, perception, mental formation and consciousness combined together form life. The real nature of these five aggregates is explained in the Teaching of the Buddha as follows: “Matter is equated to a heap of foam, feeling is like a bubble, perception is described as a mirage, mental formations are like a banana tree and consciousness is just an illusion. Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh wrote in 'The Heart of Understanding': 'If I am holding a cup of water and I ask you, 'Is this cup empty?' You will say, 'No, it is full of water.' But if I pour the water and ask you again, you may say, 'Yes, it is empty.' But, empty of what? My cup is empty of water, but it is not empty of air. To be empty is to be empty of something... When Avalokitesvara (Kuan-yin or Kannon, the Bodhisattva who embodies Compassion) says (in the Heart Sutra) that the five skandhas are equally empty, to help him be precise we must ask, 'Mr. Avalokitesvara, empty of what?' The five skandhas, which may by

translated into English as five heaps, or five aggregates, are the five elements that comprise a human being... In fact, these are really five rivers flowing together in us: the river of form, which means our body, the river of feeling, the river of perceptions, the river of mental formations, and the river of consciousness. They are always flowing in us... Avalokitesvara looked deeply into the five skandhas..., and he discovered that none of them can be by itself alone... Form is empty of a separate self, but it is full of everything in the cosmos. The same is true with feelings, perceptions, mental formation, and consciousness."

According to Zen Master Seung Sahn in *The Compass of Zen*, the Heart Sutra teaches that "form is emptiness, and emptiness is form." Many people don't know what this means, even some long-time students of meditation. But there is a very easy way to see this in our everyday lives. For example, here is a wooden chair. It is brown. It is solid and heavy. It looks like it could last a long time. You sit in the chair, and it holds up your weight. You can place things on it. But then you light the chair on fire, and leave. When you come back later, the chair is no longer there! This thing that seemed so solid and strong and real is now a pile of cinder and ash which the wind blows around. This example shows how the chair is empty; it is not a permanent abiding things. It is always changing. It has no independent existence. Over a long or short time, the chair will eventually change and become something other than what it appears. So this brown chair is complete emptiness. But though it always has the quality of emptiness, this emptiness is form: you can sit in the chair, and it will still hold you up. "Form is emptiness, and emptiness is form."

Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh wrote in *'The Heart of Understanding'*: "If I am holding a cup of water and I ask you, 'Is this cup empty?' You will say, 'No, it is full of water.' But if I pour the water and ask you again, you may say, 'Yes, it is empty.' But, empty of what? My cup is empty of water, but it is not empty of air. To be empty is to be empty of something... When Avalokitesvara (Kuan-yin or Kannon, the Bodhisattva who embodies Compassion) says (in the Heart Sutra) that the five skandhas are equally empty, to help him be precise we must ask, 'Mr. Avalokitesvara, empty of what?' The five skandhas, which may be translated into English as five heaps, or five aggregates, are the five elements that comprise a human being... In fact, these are

really five rivers flowing together in us: the river of form, which means our body, the river of feeling, the river of perceptions, the river of mental formations, and the river of consciousness. They are always flowing in us... Avalokitesvara looked deeply into the five skandhas..., and he discovered that none of them can be by itself alone... Form is empty of a separate self, but it is full of everything in the cosmos. The same is true with feelings, perceptions, mental formation, and consciousness."

Thong Thien was a Vietnamese Zen master from An La, North Vietnam. He was a disciple of Zen master Thường Chiếu at Lục Tổ Temple. After he became the dharma heir of the thirteenth generation of the Wu-Yun-T'ung Zen Sect, he returned to his home town to revive and expand Buddhism there. He passed away in 1228. He always reminded his disciples: "The ancient virtues always advise us to keep seeing that the five aggregates are emptiness, the four elements are non-self, the true mind has no form, neither going, nor coming. The self-nature did not come when you were born; and will not go when you die. The true mind is always serene and all-embracing; and your mind and all scenes are one. If you always see that, you will soon attain enlightenment, be free from the bondage of the three periods, and become those who transcend the secular world. So, it is important for you not to cling to anything. We, ordinary people, do not see the five aggregates as phenomena but as an entity because of our deluded minds, and our innate desire to treat these as a self in order to pander to our self-importance. As a matter of fact, the real nature of these five aggregates is explained in the Teaching of the Buddha as follows: "Matter is equated to a heap of foam, feeling is like a bubble, perception is described as a mirage, mental formations are like a banana tree and consciousness is just an illusion. According to the Surangama Sutra, all the defiling objects that appear, all the illusory, ephemeral characteristics, spring up in the very spot where they also come to an end. They are what is called 'illusory falseness.' But their nature is in truth the bright substance of wonderful enlightenment. Thus it is throughout, up to the five skandhas and the six entrances, to the twelve places and the eighteen realms; the union and mixture of various causes and conditions account for their illusory and false existence, and the separation and dispersion of the causes and

conditions result in their illusory and false extinction. Who would have thought that production, extinction, coming, and going are fundamentally the everlasting, wonderful light of the treasury of the Thus Come One, the unmoving, all-pervading perfection, the wonderful nature of true suchness! If within the true and permanent nature one seeks coming and going, confusion and enlightenment, or birth and death, there is nothing that can be obtained. Therefore, if you have patience and the will to see things as they truly are. If you would turn inwards to the recesses of your own minds and note with just bare attention (sati), not objectively without projecting an ego into the process, then cultivate this practice for a sufficient length of time, then you will see these five aggregates not as an entity but as a series of physical and mental processes. Then you will not mistake the superficial for the real. You will then see that these aggregates arise and disappear in rapid succession, never being the same for two consecutive moments, never static but always in a state of flux, never being but always becoming.' The Buddha taught in the Lankavatara Sutra: 'The Tathagata is neither different nor not-different from the Skandhas.' (Skandhebhyo-nanyo-nanayas-tathagata).

The Mind Is the Source of All Dharmas, Both Wholesome and Unwholesome: According to Buddhism, citta or the mind is the root of all dharmas. The "Intent" is the "Discriminating Mind," the sixth consciousness. Not only does the "Mind" make discriminations, it is filled with idle thoughts. The six consciousnesses can also be said to be a perceptive nature. That is, from the six sense organs: eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind, the functions of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling, and knowing arise. When people commit offenses, they do it with the six sense organs. When they cultivate, they also do it with the six sense organs. If you can remain unperturbed by external states, then you are cultivating. If you are turned by external states, then you will fall. In Contemplation of the Mind Sutra, the Buddha taught: "All my tenets are based on the mind that is the source of all dharmas." The mind has brought about the Buddhas, the Heaven, or the Hell. It is the main driving force that makes us happy or sorrowful, cheerful or sad, liberated or doomed. "Mind" is another name for Alaya-vijnana. Unlike the material body, immaterial mind is invisible. We are aware of our thoughts and feelings and so forth by

direct sensation, and we infer their existence in others by analogy. In The Dhammapada Sutta, the Buddha taught: “Mind fore-runs deeds; mind is chief, and mind-made are they.” All of our desires develop because of the thoughts of our mental factor intention. When we see an attractive object, we develop a wish to obtain that object. In contrary, when we see an unattractive object, we develop a wish not to obtain that object; sometimes we hate the object. Generally speaking, almost all delusions created by mental ignorance or passion of the heart. The discriminating mind or the deluded mind itself lies at the roof of this birth and death, but people think that this mind is their real mind, so the delusion enters into the causes and conditions that produce suffering. In Buddhist point of view, man’s mind influences his body profoundly. If allowed to function viciously and indulge in unwholesome thoughts, mind can cause disaster, can even cause one’s death. But on the contrary, a mind imbued with wholesome thoughts can cure a sick body. When the mind is properly developed, it brings happiness and bliss. If the mind is neglected, it runs you into endless troubles and difficulties. According to the Buddhist point of view, the mind or consciousness is the core of our existence. All our psychological experiences, such as pain and pleasure, sorrow and happiness, good and evil, life and death, are not attributed to any external agency. They are only the result of our own thoughts and their resultant actions. Mind actually influences the body in every minute of life. If we allow it to function with the vicious and unwholesome thoughts, mind can cause disaster; it can even kill another being. However, when the mind is concentrated on right thoughts with right effort and understanding, it can produce an excellent effect. Thus, the Buddha taught: “No enemy can harm one so much as one’s own thoughts of craving, thoughts of hate, thoughts of jealousy, and so on.” A mind with pure and wholesome thoughts really lead to a peaceful and relaxed life. In cultivation, Buddhist practitioners should always remember that Mind is really a skilful painter because everything existence or phenomenon arises from the functions of the mind. The mind creates Nirvana; the mind creates Hells. For a Buddhist, both heaven and hell are right here, right in this world. That is to say you can create your own heaven or hell right here in this world.

In Buddhist point of view, man's mind influences his body profoundly. If allowed to function viciously and indulge in unwholesome thoughts, mind can cause disaster, can even cause one's death. But on the other hand, a mind imbued with wholesome thoughts can cure a sick body. When the mind is concentrated on right thoughts with right effort and right understanding, the effects it can produce are immense. Thus a mind with pure and wholesome thoughts leads to a healthy and relaxed life. Mind is such a subtle and intricate phenomenon that it is impossible to find two men of the same mind. Man's thoughts are translated into speech and action. Repetition of such speech and action gives rise to habits and finally habits form character. Character is the result of man's mind-directed activities and so the characters of human beings vary. Thus to understand the real nature of life, one has to explore the innermost recesses of one's mind which can only be accomplished by deep self-introspection based on purity of conduct and meditation. The Buddhist point of view is that the mind or consciousness is the core of our existence. Of all forces the force of mind is the most potent. It is the power by itself. All our psychological experiences, such as pain and pleasure, sorrow and happiness, good and evil, life and death, are not attributed to any external agency. They are the result of our own thoughts and their resultant actions. To train our "force of mind" means to try to guide our minds to follow the wholesome path and to stay away from the unwholesome path. According to Buddhism teachings, training the mind doesn't mean to gain union with any supreme beings, nor to bring about any mystical experiences, nor is it for any self-hypnosis. It is for gaining tranquility of mind and insight for the sole purpose of attaining unshakable deliverance of the mind. For a long long period of time, we all talk about air, land and environment pollution, what about our mind pollution? Should we do something to prevent our minds from wandering far deep into the polluted courses? Yes, we should. We should equally protect and cleanse our mind. The Buddha once taught: "For a long time has man's mind been defiled by greed, hatred and delusion. Mental defilements make beings impure; and only mental cleansing can purify them." Devout Buddhists should always keep in mind that our daily life is an intense process of cleansing our own action, speech and thoughts. And we can only achieve this kind of

cleansing through practice, not philosophical speculation or logical abstraction. Remember the Buddha once said: “Though one conquers in battle thousand times thousand men, yet he is the greatest conqueror who conquers himself.” This is nothing other than “training of your own monkey mind,” or “self-mastery,” or “control your own mind.” It means mastering our own mental contents, our emotions, likes and dislikes, and so forth. Thus, “self-mastery” is the greatest empire a man can aspire unto, and to be subject to our own passions is the most grievous slavery.

The Body Is the Forest of All Impure Actions: According to Buddhism, material components which man is made are the Four tanmatra. Four great elements of which all things are made (produce and maintain life). These four elements are interrelated and inseparable. However, one element may preponderate over another. They constantly change, not remaining the same even for two consecutive moments. According to Buddhism, matter endures only for 17 thought-moments, while scientists tell us that matter endures only for 10/27th of a second. No matter what we say, a human body is temporary; it is created artificially through the accumulation of the four elements. Once death arrives, the body deteriorates to return to the soil, water-based substances will gradually dry up and return to the great water, the element of fire is lost and the body becomes cold, and the great wind no longer works within the body. At that time, the spirit must follow the karma each person has created while living to change lives and be reincarnated into the six realms, altering image, exchange body, etc in the cycle of births and deaths. Solid matter or Earth. Prithin means the element of extension, the substratum of matter. Without it objects have no form, nor can they occupy space. The qualities of hardness and softness are two conditions of this element. After death, these parts will decay and deteriorate to become soil. For this reason, they belong to the Great Soil. Water, fluidity, or liquid. Unlike the earth element it is intangible. It is the element which enables the scattered atoms of matter to cohere together. After death, these water-based substances will dry up. In other words, they have returned to water. Fire or heat. Fire element includes both heat and cold, and fire element possesses the power of maturing bodies, they are vitalizing

energy. Preservation and decay are due to this element. After death, the element of fire is lost and the body gradually becomes cold. Air, wind, motion, or energy of motion. Air element is the element of motion in the body. After death, breathing ceases, body functions become catatonic or completely rigid because the great wind no longer works within the body.

Practitioners Contemplate & Observe on the foulness of the Body Parts: Again, Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu reviews this same body up from the soles of the feet and down from the top of the hair, bounded by skin, as full of many kinds of impurity thus: “In this body there are head-hairs, body-hairs, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, sinews, bones, bone-marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, diaphragm, spleen, lungs, large intestines, small intestines, contents of the stomach, feces, bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, grease, spittle, snot, oil of the joints, and urine.” Just as though there were a bag with an opening at both ends full of many sorts of grain, such as rice, beans, peas, millet, and white rice, and a man with good eyes were to open it and review it thus: “This is hill rice, this is red rice, these are beans, these are peas, this is millet, this is white rice;” so too, a Bhikkhu reviews this same body... as full of many kinds of impurity thus: “In this body there are head-hairs and urine.” In this way he abides contemplating the body as a body internally, externally, and both internally and externally... And, he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. That too is how a Bhikkhu abides contemplating the body as a body.

On Contemplation & Actions With Karmas of the Body, the Buddha Taught As Follows: In the Ambalatthikarahulovada Sutta in the Middle Length Discourses, the Buddha taught Venerable Rahula about contemplation and actions with the three karmas of body, mouth and mind, the Buddha taught: Rahula, when you wish to do an action with the body, you should contemplate and reflect upon that same bodily action thus: “Would this action that I wish to do with the body lead to my own affliction, or to the affliction of others, or to the affliction of both? Is it an unwholesome bodily action with painful consequences, with painful results?” When you reflect, if you know: “This action that I wish to do with the body would lead to my own affliction, or to the affliction of others, or to the affliction of both; it is an unwholesome bodily action with painful consequences, with painful results,” then you

definitely should not do such an action with the body. When you contemplate and reflect, if you know: “This action that I wish to do with the body would not lead to my own affliction, or to the affliction of others, or to the affliction of both; it is a wholesome bodily action with pleasant consequences, with pleasant results,” then you may do such an action with the body. Rahula, while you are doing an action with the body, you should contemplate and reflect upon that same bodily action thus: “Does this action that I am doing with the body lead to my own affliction, or to the affliction of others, or to the affliction of both? Is it an unwholesome bodily action with painful consequences, with painful results?” Rahula, when you contemplate and reflect, if you know: “This action that I am doing with the body leads to my own affliction, or to the affliction of others, or to the affliction of both; it is an unwholesome bodily action with painful consequences, with painful results,” then you should suspend such a bodily action. But when you contemplate and reflect, if you know: “This action that I am doing with the body does not lead to my own affliction, or to the affliction of others, or to the affliction of both; it is a wholesome bodily action with pleasant consequences, with pleasant results,” then you may continue in such a bodily action. Rahula, after you have done an action with the body, you should contemplate and reflect upon that same bodily action thus: “Does this action that I have done with the body lead to my own affliction, or to the affliction of others, or to the affliction of both? Was it an unwholesome bodily action with painful consequences, with painful results?” When you contemplate and reflect, if you know: “This action that I have done with the body leads to my own affliction, or to the affliction of others, or to the affliction of both; it was an unwholesome bodily action with painful consequences, with painful results,” then you should confess such a bodily action, reveal it, and lay it open to the Teacher or to your wise companions in the holy life. Having confessed it, revealed it, and laid it open, you should undertake restraint for the future. Rahula, but when you contemplate and reflect, if you know: “This action that I have done with the body does not lead to my own affliction, or to the affliction of others, or to the affliction of both; it was a wholesome bodily action with pleasant consequences, with pleasant results,” you can abide happy and glad, training day and night in wholesome states.

According to the Satipatthana Sutta, practitioner should “Contemplate the body in the body, contemplate the feelings in the feelings, contemplate the mind in the mind, contemplate the objects of mind in the objects of mind.” This means that practitioner must live in the body in full awareness of it, and not just study like a separate object. Live in awareness with feelings, mind, and objects of mind. Do not just study them. When we meditate on our body, we live with it as truth and give it our most lucid attention; we become one with it. The flower blossoms because sunlight touches and warms its bud, becoming one with it. Meditation reveals not a concept of truth, but a direct view of truth itself. This we call “insight,” the kind of understanding based on attention and concentration.

In short, living and cultivating with the First Awakening in the Sutra of the Eight Awakeings of Great People is the awareness that the world is impermanent. All regimes are subject to fall; all things composed of the four elements that are empty and contain the seeds of suffering. Human beings are composed of five aggregates, and are without a separate self. They are always in the process of change, constantly being born and constantly dying. They are empty of self, without sovereignty. The mind is the source of all unwholesome deeds and confusion, and the body is the forest of all impure actions. If we meditate on these facts, we can gradually be released from the cycle of birth and death. The world is impermanent, countries are perilous and fragile; the body’s four elements are a source of pain; ultimately, they are empty; the Five Aggregates (Skandhas) are not me; death and rebirth are simply a series of transformations; misleading, unreal, and uncontrollable; the mind is the wellspring of evil; the body is the breeding ground of offenses; whoever can investigate and contemplate these truths, will gradually break free of death and rebirth.

Chapter Fourteen

Living & Cultivating In Accordance With the Spirit of the Second Awakening of Great People: Too Much Desire Brings Too Much Pain of Sufferings

I. An Overview & Meanings of the Second Awakening in the Sutra of Eight Awakenings of Great People:

Everyone of us knows what we deeply aspire to gain is happiness and what we try to avoid is sufferings and afflictions; however, our actions and behaviors in daily life do not bring us any joy and happiness; on the contrary, they only lead us to more sufferings and afflictions. Why? Buddhism believes that we cause our own sufferings and afflictions because we are not awakening of the truth. Buddhism claims that experiences which are apparently pleasurable in this world are ultimately states of suffering. Devout Buddhists should see clearly the point is that we perceive them as states of pleasure only because, in comparison to states of sufferings and afflictions, they appear as a form of relief. A disciple of the Buddha, day and night, should wholeheartedly recite and meditate on the eight awakenings discovered by the great beings.

In the 1970s, Most Venerable Thích Thanh Từ translated this sutra from Chinese into Vietnamese, the original text of *The Second Awakening* as follows:

Too much desire brings pain.
Death and rebirth are tiresome ordeals.
They stem from our thoughts of greed and desire.
By reducing desires.
We can realize absolute truth and
enjoy independence and well-being
in both body and mind.

Which means the awareness that more desire brings more suffering. The awareness that more desire brings more suffering. All hardships in daily life arise from greed and desire. Those with little desire and ambition are able to relax, their bodies and minds are free

from entanglement. Too much desire brings pain. Death and rebirth are tiresome ordeals which stem from our thoughts of greed and desire. By reducing desires, we can realize absolute truth and enjoy independence and well-being in both body and mind.

As a matter of fact, according to Buddhism, desire for more than we need or deserve, such as food, house, car, wealth, honors, etc. Eyes are longing for viewing beautiful forms without any satisfaction, ears are longing for melodious sounds, nose is longing for fragrance, tongue is longing for delicate tastes, body is longing for soothing touches, and mind is longing for various emotions of love and hate from self and others. Human beings' greediness is like a barrel without bottom. It is just as the great ocean obtaining continuously the water from hundreds and thousands of large and small rivers and lakes everyday. In this Dharma Ending Age, sentient beings, especially human beings use every method to manipulate and harm one another. Sentient beings' lives, especially, those of human beings' are already filled with pain and sufferings, now there are even more pain and sufferings. Through tricks, expedients, and manipulations we try to reach our goal irrespective of whatever happens to others. Greed is a powerful mental force that drives people to fight, kill, cheat, lie and perform various forms of unwholesome deeds. Greed is the first of the three poisons. Coveting others' possessions is when we plan how to procure something belonging to another person. While coveting is a mental action no one else can see, it can lead us to flatter, bribe, cheat or steal from others to obtain what we desire. Greed, the first unwholesome root, covers all degrees of selfish desire, longing, attachment, and clinging. Its characteristic is grasping an object. Its function is sticking, as meat sticks to a hot pan. It is manifested as not giving up. Its proximate cause is seeing enjoyment in things that lead to bondage. People usually have greed for wealth, sex, fame, food, sleep or greed for forms, sounds, smells, tastes, and objects of touch, and so on, and so on. According to Most Venerable in The Buddha and His Teachings, there are three conditions that are necessary to complete the evil of covetousness: first, another's possession; second, adverting to it, thinking "would this be mine"; and third, to actually take another's possession without permission. According to the Sangiti Sutta in the Long Discourses of the Buddha, there are five kinds of begrudging:

first, begrudging as to dwelling-place; second, begrudging as to family; third, begrudging as to gains; fourth, begrudging as to beauty; and fifth, begrudging as to Dhamma. There are also five kinds of selfishness: first, this abode (house or place) is mine and no one else's; second, this almsgiving household is mine and no one else's; third, I am the only one who receive this alms; fourth, I am the only one who deserve this praise; no one else who deserves this; and fifth, I am the only one who has the knowledge of truth, but I don't want to share with any one else. According to The Path of Purification, there are five kinds of avarice: first, avarice about dwellings; second, avarice about families; third, avarice about gain; fourth, avarice about Dharma; and fifth, avarice about praise.

Desire for and love of the things of this life and craving for worldly properties is unlimited. Most people define happiness as the satisfaction of all desires. The desires are boundless, but our ability to realize them is not, and unfulfilled desires always create suffering. When desires are only partially fulfilled, we have a tendency to continue to pursue until a complete fulfillment is achieved. Thus, we create even more suffering for us and for others. We can only realize the true happiness and a peaceful state of mind when our desires are few. This is one of the great steps towards the shore of liberation. The Buddha taught: "Craving and desire are the cause of all unhappiness or suffering. Everything sooner or later must change, so do not become attached to anything. Instead devote yourself to clearing your mind and finding the truth, lasting happiness." Knowing how to feel satisfied with few possessions help us destroy greed and desire. This means being content with material conditions that allow us to be healthy and strong enough to cultivate. This is an effective way to cut through the net of passions and desires, attain a peaceful state of mind and have more time to help others. In the Middle Length Discourses, the Buddha taught: "O Bhikkhus, with sense desires as cause, with sense desires as motives, kings are fighting with kings, khattiya are fighting with khattiya, brahmanas are fighting with brahmanas, householders are fighting with householders, mother is fighting with son, son is fighting with mother, father is fighting with brother, brother is fighting with sister, sister is fighting with brother, friend is fighting with friend. When they engage themselves in fighting, in quarrels, in disputes, they attack

each other with hands, they attack each other with stones, they attack each other with sticks, they attack each other with swords. Thus they are going to death, or to suffer like death. O Bhikkhus, with sense desires as cause, with sense desires as motives, they take hold of spears, they take hold of shields, they wear bows and arrows. They arrange themselves in two lines, and arrows are thrown at each other, knives are thrown at each other, swords are slashed at each other. They pierce each other with arrows, they slash each other with knives, they cut each other heads with swords. Thus they are going to death, or to suffer like death.” Buddhist practitioners should always remember that to cultivate without thoughts of seeking fame and benefit, for they have already eradicated the five roots of the hell: wealth, sex, fame, food, and sleep in all circumstances. We should cultivate the Way with our own effort. Do not crave fame and profits. We should follow the spirit of the Bodhisattvas Manjusri, Samantabhadra, Avalokitesvara, Ksitigarbha, and other Bodhisattvas for they feel that living beings’ accomplishments are the same as their own accomplishment. They do not make distinctions between self and others. Bodhisattvas joyfully support the merit and virtue they see and hear others doing.

The defilements we call lust or greed, anger and delusion, are just outward names and appearances, just as we call a house beautiful, ugly, big, small, etc. These are only appearances of things. If we want a big house, we call this one small. We create such concepts because of our craving. Craving causes us to discriminate, while the truth is merely what is. Look at it this way. Are you a person? Yes. This is the appearance of things. But you are really only a combination of elements or a group of changing aggregates. If the mind is free it does not discriminate. No big and small, no you and me, nothing. We say ‘anatta’ or ‘not self’, but really, in the end, there is neither ‘atta’ nor ‘anatta’. Greed should be balanced by contemplation of loathsomeness. Attachment to bodily form is one extreme, and one should keep the opposite in mind. Examine the body as a corpse and see the process of decay, or think of the parts of the body, such as lungs, spleen, fat, feces, and so forth. Remembering these and visualizing the loathsome aspects of the body will free us from greed.

II. Buddhist Practitioners Should Always Be Aware That Too Much Desire Brings Too Much Pain of Sufferings-How Peaceful & Happy for Those Whose Lives Have Few Desires for Possession!:

In fact, according to Buddhist teachings, too much desire brings too much pain of sufferings, only those whose lives have few desires for possession would have a peaceful and happy life. Those who want to live and cultivate in accordance with the spirit of the Sutra of Eight Awakenings of Great People should have the awareness that more desire brings more suffering. The awareness that more desire brings more suffering. All hardships in daily life arise from greed and desire. Those with little desire and ambition are able to relax, their bodies and minds are free from entanglement. Too much desire brings pain of sufferings. Death and rebirth are tiresome ordeals which stem from our thoughts of greed and desire. By reducing desires, we can realize absolute truth and enjoy independence and well-being in both body and mind.

In fact, craving (greed, affection, desire) means desire for and love of the things of this worldly life. Most people define happiness as the satisfaction of all desires. The desires are boundless, but our ability to realize them is not, and unfulfilled desires always create suffering. When desires are only partially fulfilled, we have a tendency to continue to pursue until a complete fulfillment is achieved. Thus, we create even more suffering for us and for others. Only if we have no desire for ourselves; if we are working and earning money in order to help other people; if we make cultivation our business and our business is cultivation only, then how clear and happy our life will be! However, most people don't understand this. They are only interested in making a lot of money or becoming successful in worldly business. Remember, this is only a small 'I'. Devout Buddhists should make a lot of money to help all people, then even we create our worldly business, it is a good business. It is a selfish desire for more than we need or deserve, such as food, house, car, wealth, honors, etc. Eyes are longing for viewing beautiful forms without any satisfaction, ears are longing for melodious sounds, nose is longing for fragrance, tongue is longing for delicate tastes, body is longing for soothing touches, and mind is longing for various emotions of love and hate from self and others.

Human beings' greediness is like a barrel without bottom. It is just as the great ocean obtaining continuously the water from hundreds and thousands of large and small rivers and lakes everyday. In this Dharma Ending Age, sentient beings, especially human beings use every method to manipulate and harm one another. Sentient beings' lives, especially, those of human beings' are already filled with pain and sufferings, now there are even more pain and sufferings. Through tricks, expedients, and manipulations we try to reach our goal irrespective of whatever happens to others. Greed is a powerful mental force that drives people to fight, kill, cheat, lie and perform various forms of unwholesome deeds. The desires are boundless, but our ability to realize them is not, and unfulfilled desires always create suffering. When desires are only partially fulfilled, we have a tendency to continue to pursue until a complete fulfillment is achieved. Thus, we create even more suffering for us and for others. Knowing how to feel satisfied with few possessions help us destroy greed and desire. This means being content with material conditions that allow us to be healthy and strong enough to cultivate. This is an effective way to cut through the net of passions and desires, attain a peaceful state of mind and have more time to help others. Cultivation helps us balance 'Lust' by contemplation of loathsomeness. Attachment to bodily form is one extreme, and one should keep the opposite in mind. Examine the body as a corpse and see the process of decay, or think of the parts of the body, such as lungs, spleen, fat, feces, and so forth. Remembering these and visualizing the loathsome aspects of the body will free us from lust. Furthermore, through cultivation, we can see the string of craving and attachment confines us to samsara's prison. In other words, craving and attachment are not only roots that prevent us from being sufficiently moved to renounce samsara, but they are also two of the main things that bind us to samsara. In order to overcome craving and attachment, we should contemplate on the impurity of the body. When we are attached to someone, for example, consider how that person is just a sack full of six kinds of filthy substances. Then our attachment and craving will diminish. We can only realize the true happiness and a peaceful state of mind when we get rid of greed and desires or when our desires are few. This is one of the great steps towards the shore of liberation. The Buddha taught: "Craving and desire are the cause of all

unhappiness or suffering. Everything sooner or later must change, so do not become attached to anything. Instead devote yourself to clearing your mind and finding the truth, lasting happiness.” Knowing how to feel satisfied with few possessions help us destroy greed and desire. This means being content with material conditions that allow us to be healthy and strong enough to cultivate. This is an effective way to cut through the net of passions and desires, attain a peaceful state of mind and have more time to help others. As a matter of fact, once, we, Buddhist practitioners get rid of greed and desire also means that we have already pushed away great obstacles on our own path of cultivation. In conclusion for this chapter, on the path of cultivation, practitioners should always remember the Buddha's teaching in the Sutra in Forty Two Chapters taught: “Though a person with a state of mind filled with desires dwells in heaven, still that is not enough for him; though a person who has ended desire dwells on the ground, still he is happy.” We are living in a material world where we must encounter all kinds of objects such as sights, sounds, tastes, sensations, thoughts and ideas, etc. Desire arises from contact with these pleasing objects. Buddhists should always remember that “Desire” not only obscures our mind, but it is also a main cause of grasping which causes sufferings and afflictions, forces us to continue to wander in the samsara.

At this very moment in daily life, content with few desires and satisfy with what we have is one of the most efficient way to subdue demonic obstruction of greed and desire. Content with few desires. “Thiểu Dục” means having few desires; “tri túc” means being content. Knowing how to feel satisfied with few possessions means being content with material conditions that allow us to be healthy and strong enough to practice the Way. “Knowing how to feel satisfied and being content with material conditions” is an effective way to cut through the net of passions and desires, attain a peaceful state of body and mind and accomplish our supreme goal of cultivation. Being content with few desires means having few desires. Here “desires” include not only the desire for money and material things but also the wish for status and fame. It also indicates seeking the love and service of others. In Buddhism, a person who has attained the mental stage of deep faith has very few desires and is indifferent to them. We must note carefully that

though such a person is indifferent to worldly desires, he is very eager for the truth, that is, he has a great desire for the truth. To be indifferent to the truth is to be slothful in life. To be content with few desires also means to be satisfied with little material gain, that is, not to feel discontented with one's lot and to be free from worldly cares. Nevertheless, this does not mean to be unconcerned with self-improvement but to do one's best in one's work without discontent. Such a person will never be ignored by those around him. But even if people around him ignored him, he would feel quite happy because he lives like a king from a spiritual point of view. We must have few desires in two areas: the desires for food and sex. Food and sex support ignorance in perpetrating all sort of evil. Thus, Confucius taught: "Food and sex are part of human nature." That is to say we are born with the craving for food and sex. Why is that we have not been able to demolish our ignorance, eliminate our afflictions, and reveal our wisdom? Because we always crave for food and sex. Sincere Buddhists should always remember that food gives rise to sexual desire, and sexual desire gives rise to ignorance. Once the desire for food arises, the desire for sex arises as well. Men are attracted to beautiful women, and women are charmed by handsome men. People become infatuated and obsessed and cannot see through their desires. The nourishment from the food we eat is transformed into reproductive essence; and once that essence is full, sexual desire arises. Sincere Buddhists should always remember that the less tasty the food is, the better. Food should not be regarded as too important. Sincere Buddhists should practice moderation and eat only enough to sustain ourselves. We should neither eat very rich food, nor eat spoilt food, for either one could ruin our health. To be satisfied with what we have at this very moment means satisfaction or contentment is a characteristic of the really happy individual. The ordinary people seem to think that it is difficult to cultivate and develop contentment. However, with courage and determination to control one's evil inclination, as well as to understand the consequences of these evil thoughts, one can keep the mind from being soiled and experience happiness through contentment. For those who have wisdom, know how to apply themselves and are able to endure life, and are able to think cleverly, will find peace in his fate under whatever circumstances. With the conditions of wealth, one

satisfies and is at peace with being wealthy; with the conditions of poverty, one satisfies and is at peace with being impoverished. In fact, in our lifetime, we engage in all kinds of activities, think and calculate every imaginable method without abandoning any plot, so long as it is beneficial, but whether or not our actions affect others we never care. We have been doing all these for what? For a better life, clothes, house, and for storing more money. If we think carefully, we will see that the sun rises, reaches its stand still, and then it will set and disappears in the evening; a full moon will soon become half, quarter, then lose its brightness; mountains become deep canyons; oceans become hills of berries, etc. The way of life has always been rise and fall, success and failure, victory and defeat, lost and found, together and apart, life and death, etc., goes on constantly and there is absolutely nothing that remain unchanged and eternal. People with wisdom should always satisfy with their current circumstances. The Buddha extols simple living as being more conducive to the development of one's mind. Thus, the Buddha always preaches the self-contentment for the benefit of the Bhikkhus as follow: The robes or clothes they receive, whether coarse or fine; alms or food they receive, whether unpalatable or delicious; the abodes or houses they receive, whether simple or luxurious. Those who satisfy with these three conditions can reduce the desires, and at the same time develop the habits and values of simple living.

Devout Buddhists should always remember that to Buddhism, sensual pleasure are something fleeting, something that comes and goes. Can something be really called "Happiness" when it is here one moment and gone the next? Is it really so enjoyable to go around hunting for something so ephemeral, which is changing all the time? Look at the amount of trouble we have to go through to get all those sensual pleasures which we think will bring us happiness. Some people have such strong desire for pleasure that they will break the law, commit brutal crimes and cause others to suffer just so they can experience these pleasures. They may not understand how much suffering they themselves will have to endure in the future as a consequence of the unwholesome acts they have committed. Even ordinary people may become aware that a disproportionate amount of suffering is necessary to bring together a few moments of happiness so

much that it really is not worth it. Devout Buddhists should always remember that suffering will always follow craving. All the problems in this world are rooted in the desire for pleasure. It is on account of the need for pleasure that quarrels occur within the family that neighbors do not get along well, that states have conflict and nations go to war. It is also on account of sense-based pleasures that sufferings, afflictions, and all kinds of problems plague our world, that people have gone beyond their humanness into great cruelty and inhumanity.

According to the first patriarch Bodhidharma, the 28th Patriarch from India and also the 1st Patriarch in China, “Not to seek after anything” is one of the four disciplinary processes. By ‘not seeking after anything’ is meant this: “Men of the world, in eternal confusion, are attached everywhere to one thing or another, which is called seeking. The wise, however, understand the truth and are not like the vulgar. Their minds abide serenely in the uncreated while the body turns about in accordance with the laws of causation. All things are empty and there is nothing desirable and to be sought after. Wherever there is nothing merit of brightness there follows the demerit of darkness. The triple world there one stays too long is like a house on fire; all that has a body suffers, and who would ever know what is rest? Because the wise are thoroughly acquainted with this truth, they get neer attached to anything that becomes, their thoughts are quieted, they never seek. Says the sutra: ‘Wherever there is seeking, there you have sufferings; when seeking ceases you are blessed. Thus we know that not to seek is verily the way to the truth. Therefore, one should not seek after anything.’” Bodhidharma taught about three Non-seeking practices or three doors of liberation: Emptiness, signlessness or to get rid of the idea of form, or externals. There are no objects to be perceived by sense-organs, one of the three emancipations, and wishlessness or to get rid of all wishes or desires until no wish of any kind whatsoever remains in the cultivator’s mind, for he no longer needs to strive for anything, one of the three emancipations. Truly speaking, worldly phenomena are dharmas are illusory and dream-like, born and destroyed, destroyed and born. So what is there which is true ever-lasting and worth seeking? Furthermore, worldly phenomena are all relative, in calamities are found blessings, in blessings there is misfortune. Therefore, Buddhist cultivators should always keep their

minds calm and undisturbed in all situations, rising or falling, unfortunate or blessed. For example, when a monk cultivates alone in a deserted hut with few visitors. Although his living conditions are miserable and lonely, his cultivation is diligent. After a while, virtuous people learn of his situation and come to offer and seek for his guidance, his used-to-be hut now become a huge magnificent temple, filled with monks and nuns. By then, his blessings may be great, his cultivation has not only obviously declined, sometimes external events may attract him to causing more bad karma. Therefore, Buddhist cultivators should always keep in mind these three Non-seeking practices. According to the Forty-Two Sections Sutra, “A Sramana asked the Buddha: ‘What are the causes and conditions by which one come to know past lives and also by which one’s understanding enables one to attain the Way?’ The Buddha said: ‘By purifying the mind and guarding the will, your understanding can achieve (attain) the Way. Just as when you polish a mirror, the dust vanishes and brightness remains; so, too, if you cut off and do not seek desires, you can then know past lives.’”

Truly speaking, the desires are boundless, but our ability to realize them is not, and unfulfilled desires always create suffering. When desires are only partially fulfilled, we have a tendency to continue to pursue until a complete fulfillment is achieved. Thus, we create even more suffering for us and for others. On the contrary, the less we possess, the more we are living in peace and happiness. To some extent the hold which belongings have upon us is weakened by the practice of sound rules of moral conduct. In the Middle Length Discourses, the Buddha taught: “O Bhikkhus, with sense desires as cause, with sense desires as motives, kings are fighting with kings, khattiya are fighting with khattiya, brahmanas are fighting with brahmanas, householders are fighting with householders, mother is fighting with son, son is fighting with mother, father is fighting with brother, brother is fighting with sister, sister is fighting with brother, friend is fighting with friend. When they engage themselves in fighting, in quarrels, in disputes, they attack each other with hands, they attack each other with stones, they attack each other with sticks, they attack each other with swords. Thus they are going to death, or to suffer like death. O Bhikkhus, with sense desires as cause, with sense desires as

motives, they take hold of spears, they take hold of shields, they wear bows and arrows. They arrange themselves in two lines, and arrows are thrown at each other, knives are thrown at each other, swords are slashed at each other. They pierce each other with arrows, they slash each other with knives, they cut each other heads with swords. Thus they are going to death, or to suffer like death.” We are living in a material world where we must encounter all kinds of objects such as sights, sounds, tastes, sensations, thoughts and ideas, etc. Desire arises from contact with these pleasing objects. **Buddhists should always remember that things of our common-sense world appear delusive, deceptive, remote and dreamlike, and that they are deprived of the character of solidity and reliability which is usually attributed to them, and desire not only obscures our mind, but it is also a main cause of grasping which causes sufferings and afflictions, forces us to continue to wander in the samsara.** According to the doctrine of the Old Wisdom School, wisdom alone is able to chase the illusion of individuality from our thoughts where it has persisted from age-old habit. Not action, not trance, but only thought can kill the illusion which resides in thought. Oh! How peaceful and happy for those whose lives have few desires for possession!

Chapter Fifteen

Living & Cultivating In Accordance With the Spirit of the Third Awakening of Great People: Content With Few Desires and Satisfy With What We Have

I. An Overview & Meanings of the Third Awakening in the Sutra of Eight Awakenings of Great People:

The Sutra on the Eight Awakenings of Great People is entirely in accord with both the Theravada and Mahayana traditions. In fact, each of the eight items in this sutra can be considered as a subject of meditation which Buddhist disciples should at all times, by day and by night, with a sincere attitude, recite and keep in mind eight truths that all great people awaken to. These are eight Truths that all Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and great people awaken to. After awakening, they then energetically cultivate the Way. By steeping themselves in kindness and compassion, they grow wisdom. They sail the Dharma-body ship all the way across to Nirvana's other shore, only to re-enter the sea of death and rebirth to rescue all living beings. They use these Eight Truths to point out the right road to all beings and in this way, help them to recognize the anguish of death and rebirth. They inspire all to cast off and forsake the Five Desires, and instead to cultivate their minds in the way of all Sages. If Buddhist disciples recite this Sutra on the Eight Awakenings, and constantly ponder its meaning, they will certainly eradicate boundless offenses, advance toward Bodhi, quickly realize Proper Enlightenment, forever be free of death and rebirth, and eternally abide in joy.

In the 1970s, Most Venerable Thích Thanh Từ translated this sutra from Chinese into Vietnamese, the original text of *The Third Awakening* as follows:

Our minds are never satisfied or
content with just enough.
The more we obtain, the more we want.
Thus we create offenses and do evil deeds.
Bodhisattvas do not make mistakes.

Instead, they are always content.
 Nurture the way by living
 a quiet life in humble surroundings.
 Their sole occupation is cultivating wisdom.

***II. Living & Cultivating In Accordance With the Spirit of the
 Third Awakening of Great People: Content With Few Desires
 and Satisfy With What We Have:***

Practitioners who want to live and cultivate in accordance with the spirit of the Sutra of Eight Awakenings of Great People should have the awareness that is the awareness that the human mind is always searching for possessions and never feels fulfilled. This causes impure actions to ever increase. In our daily life we always want to have good food, nice clothes, attractive jewellery, but we only feel satisfied with them for a short time, after that, the very same object that once gave us pleasure might cause us frustration now. The same can also be applied to fame. At the beginning we might think ourselves that we are so happy when we are famous, but after some time, it could be that all we feel is frustration and dissatisfaction. Bodhisattvas, however, always remember the principle of having few desires. They live a simple life in peace in order to practice the Way, and consider the realization of perfect understanding as their only career. Our minds are never satisfied or content with just enough. The more we obtain, the more we want; thus we create offenses and do evil deeds; Bodhisattvas do not make mistakes, instead, they are always content, nurture the way by living a quiet life in humble surroundings. Their sole occupation is cultivating wisdom.

According to Buddhist teachings, content with few desires means having few desires; satisfy with what we have means being content with what we have. Our ancients often said that knowing how to feel satisfied with few possessions means being content with material conditions that allow us to be healthy and strong enough to practice the Way. “Knowing how to feel satisfied and being content with material conditions” is an effective way to cut through the net of passions and desires, attain a peaceful state of body and mind and accomplish our supreme goal of cultivation. Being content with few desires means having few desires. Here “desires” include not only the desire for

money and material things but also the wish for status and fame. It also indicates seeking the love and service of others. In Buddhism, a person who has attained the mental stage of deep faith has very few desires and is indifferent to them. We must note carefully that though such a person is indifferent to worldly desires, he is very eager for the truth, that is, he has a great desire for the truth. To be indifferent to the truth is to be slothful in life. To be content with few desires also means to be satisfied with little material gain, that is, not to feel discontented with one's lot and to be free from worldly cares. Nevertheless, this does not mean to be unconcerned with self-improvement but to do one's best in one's work without discontent. Such a person will never be ignored by those around him. But even if people around him ignored him, he would feel quite happy because he lives like a king from a spiritual point of view. We must have few desires in two areas: the desires for food and sex. Food and sex support ignorance in perpetrating all sort of evil. Thus, Confucius taught: "Food and sex are part of human nature." That is to say we are born with the craving for food and sex. Why is that we have not been able to demolish our ignorance, eliminate our afflictions, and reveal our wisdom? Because we always crave for food and sex. Sincere Buddhists should always remember that food gives rise to sexual desire, and sexual desire gives rise to ignorance. Once the desire for food arises, the desire for sex arises as well. Men are attracted to beautiful women, and women are charmed by handsome men. People become infatuated and obsessed and cannot see through their desires. The nourishment from the food we eat is transformed into reproductive essence; and once that essence is full, sexual desire arises. Sincere Buddhists should always remember that the less tasty the food is, the better. Food should not be regarded as too important. Sincere Buddhists should practice moderation and eat only enough to sustain ourselves. We should neither eat very rich food, nor eat spoiled food, for either one could ruin our health. To be satisfied with what we have at this very moment means satisfaction or contentment is a characteristic of the really happy individual.

Satisfaction or contentment is a characteristic of the really happy individual. The ordinary people seem to think that it is difficult to cultivate and develop contentment. However, with courage and determination to control one's evil inclination, as well as to understand

the consequences of these evil thoughts, one can keep the mind from being soiled and experience happiness through contentment. For those who have wisdom, know how to apply themselves and are able to endure life, and are able to think cleverly, will find peace in his fate under whatever circumstances. With the conditions of wealth, one satisfies and is at peace with being wealthy; with the conditions of poverty, one satisfies and is at peace with being impoverished. In fact, in our lifetime, we engage in all kinds of activities, think and calculate every imaginable method without abandoning any plot, so long as it is beneficial, but whether or not our actions affect others we never care. We have been doing all these for what? For a better life, clothes, house, and for storing more money. If we think carefully, we will see that the sun rises, reaches its stand still, and then it will set and disappears in the evening; a full moon will soon become half, quarter, then lose its brightness; mountains become deep canyons; oceans become hills of berries, etc. The way of life has always been rise and fall, success and failure, victory and defeat, lost and found, together and apart, life and death, etc., goes on constantly and there is absolutely nothing that remain unchanged and eternal. People with wisdom should always satisfy with their current circumstances. The Buddha extols simple living as being more conducive to the development of one's mind. Thus, the Buddha always preaches the self-contentment for the benefit of the Bhikkhus as follow: The robes or clothes they receive, whether coarse or fine; alms or food they receive, whether unpalatable or delicious; the abodes or houses they receive, whether simple or luxurious. Those who satisfy with these three conditions can reduce the desires, and at the same time develop the habits and values of simple living. As for lay people, in the Pattakamma Sutta, the Buddha reminded a person should spend his wealth in five areas. First, expenditure on food and clothing and other needs. Second, maintain of parents, wife and children and servants. Third, expenditure on illness and other emergencies. Fourth, expenditure on charitable purposes. Fifth, expenditures on the followings: treating one's relatives, treating one's visitors, offering alms in memory of the departed, offering merit to the deities, offerings to monks and nuns, and payment of state taxes and dues in time.

Devout Buddhists should always remember that to Buddhism, sensual pleasure are something fleeting, something that comes and goes. Can something be really called “Happiness” when it is here one moment and gone the next? Is it really so enjoyable to go around hunting for something so ephemeral, which is changing all the time? Look at the amount of trouble we have to go through to get all those sensual pleasures which we think will bring us happiness. Some people have such strong desire for pleasure that they will break the law, commit brutal crimes and cause others to suffer just so they can experience these pleasures. They may not understand how much suffering they themselves will have to endure in the future as a consequence of the unwholesome acts they have committed. Even ordinary people may become aware that a disproportionate amount of suffering is necessary to bring together a few moments of happiness, so much that it really is not worth it. Devout Buddhists should always remember that suffering will always follow craving. All the problems in this world are rooted in the desire for pleasure. It is on account of the need for pleasure that quarrels occur within the family, that neighbors do not get along well, that states have conflict and nations go to war. It is also on account of sense-based pleasures that sufferings, afflictions, and all kinds of problems plague our world, that people have gone beyond their humanness into great cruelty.

***III. Living & Cultivating In Being Content With Few Desires
and Satisfy With What We Have Helps Practitioners Subdue
Demonic Obstructions of Greed and Desire:***

Craving here means greed, affection, or desire for worldly wealth. Most people define happiness as the satisfaction of all desires. The desires are boundless, but our ability to realize them is not, and unfulfilled desires always create suffering. When desires are only partially fulfilled, we have a tendency to continue to pursue until a complete fulfillment is achieved. Thus, we create even more suffering for us and for others. We can only realize the true happiness and a peaceful state of mind when our desires are few. This is one of the great steps towards the shore of liberation. The Buddha taught: “Craving and desire are the cause of all unhappiness or suffering. Everything sooner or later must change, so do not become attached to

anything. Instead devote yourself to clearing your mind and finding the truth, lasting happiness.” Knowing how to feel satisfied with few possessions help us destroy greed and desire. This means being content with material conditions that allow us to be healthy and strong enough to cultivate. This is an effective way to cut through the net of passions and desires, attain a peaceful state of mind and have more time to help others. In the Middle Length Discourses, the Buddha taught: “O Bhikkhus, with sense desires as cause, with sense desires as motives, kings are fighting with kings, khattiya are fighting with khattiya, brahmanas are fighting with brahmanas, householders are fighting with householders, mother is fighting with son, son is fighting with mother, father is fighting with brother, brother is fighting with sister, sister is fighting with brother, friend is fighting with friend. When they engage themselves in fighting, in quarrels, in disputes, they attack each other with hands, they attack each other with stones, they attack each other with sticks, they attack each other with swords. Thus they are going to death, or to suffer like death. O Bhikkhus, with sense desires as cause, with sense desires as motives, they take hold of spears, they take hold of shields, they wear bows and arrows. They arrange themselves in two lines, and arrows are thrown at each other, knives are thrown at each other, swords are slashed at each other. They pierce each other with arrows, they slash each other with knives, they cut each other heads with swords. Thus they are going to death, or to suffer like death.”

We are living in a material world where we must encounter all kinds of objects such as sights, sounds, tastes, sensations, thoughts and ideas, etc. Desire arises from contact with these pleasing objects. Buddhists should always remember that “Desire” not only obscures our mind, but it is also a main cause of grasping which causes sufferings and afflictions, forces us to continue to wander in the samsara. Desire is one of the twelve links in the chain of Causation (nidanas). Its source is delusion caused by attraction to the six objects of sense. Thus, the Buddha taught in the Dharmapada Sutra: “It is difficult to renounce the world. It is difficult to be a householder. It is painful to associate with those who are not friends. It is painful to be wandering in the samsara forever. Reaching the enlightenment and let wander no more! Let’s suffer no more! (Dharmapada 302). Whoever binds to craving, his sorrows flourish like well-watered birana grass (Dharmapada 335).

Whoever in this world overcomes this unruly craving, his sorrows fall away just like water-drops from a lotus leaf (Dharmapada 336). This is my advice to you: “Root out craving; root it out, just like birana grass is rooted out. Let not Mara crush you again and again as a flood crushes a reed! (Dharmapada 337). Latent craving is not conquered, suffering recovers and grows again and again, just like a tree hewn down grows up again as long as its roots is unrooted (Dharmapada 338). If in any man, the thirty-six streams of craving are still flowing, such deluded person is still looking for pleasure and passion, and torrential thoughts of lust sweep him away (Dharmapada 339). Streams of pleasure and passion flow in all directions, just like the creeper sprouts and stands. Seeing the creeper that has sprung up in your mind, cut it off with wisdom (Dharmapada 340). Common people are subject to attachment and thirst; they are always happy with pleasure; they run after passion. They look for happiness, but such men caught in the cycle of birth and decay again and again (Dharmapada 341). Men who are crazed with craving, are terrified like hunted hares. The more they hold fast by fetters, bonds, and afflictions, the longer they suffer (Dharmapada 342). Men who are crazed with craving, are terrified just like hunted hares. Therefore, a monk who wishes his own passionlessness, should first banish craving (Dharmapada 343). He who is free from desire for the household, finds pleasure (of asceticism or monastic life) in the forest, yet run back to that very home. Look at that man! He runs right back into that very bondage again! (Dharmapada 344). To a wise man, the bondage that is made of hemp, wood or iron, is not a strong bond, the longing for wives, children, jewels, and ornaments is a greater and far stronger attachment (Dharmapada 345). The wise people say that that bond is very strong. Such fetters seem supple, but hard to break. Break them! Cut off desire and renounce the world! (Dharmapada 346). A man infatuated with lust falls back into the stream as a spider into the web spun by itself. He who cuts off this bond, retire from the world, with no clinging, will leave all sorrow behind (Dharmapada 347). He who has reached the goal, without fear, without craving and without desire, has cut off the thorns of life. This is his final mortal body (Dharmapada 351). He who is without craving, without attachment; who understands subtleties of words and meanings; they are truly a great wise who bear the final mortal body (Dharmapada 352). Strive

hard to cut off the stream of desires. Oh! Brahman! Knowing that all conditioned things will perish. Oh! Brahman! You are a knower of the Unmade Nirvana! (Dharmapada 383)."

At this very moment in daily life, content with few desires and satisfy with what we have is one of the most efficient way to subdue demonic obstruction of greed and desire. Content with few desires. "Thiểu Dục" means having few desires; "tri túc" means being content. Knowing how to feel satisfied with few possessions means being content with material conditions that allow us to be healthy and strong enough to practice the Way. "Knowing how to feel satisfied and being content with material conditions" is an effective way to cut through the net of passions and desires, attain a peaceful state of body and mind and accomplish our supreme goal of cultivation. Being content with few desires means having few desires. Here "desires" include not only the desire for money and material things but also the wish for status and fame. It also indicates seeking the love and service of others. In Buddhism, a person who has attained the mental stage of deep faith has very few desires and is indifferent to them. We must note carefully that though such a person is indifferent to worldly desires, he is very eager for the truth, that is, he has a great desire for the truth. To be indifferent to the truth is to be slothful in life. To be content with few desires also means to be satisfied with little material gain, that is, not to feel discontented with one's lot and to be free from worldly cares. Nevertheless, this does not mean to be unconcerned with self-improvement but to do one's best in one's work without discontent. Such a person will never be ignored by those around him. But even if people around him ignored him, he would feel quite happy because he lives like a king from a spiritual point of view. We must have few desires in two areas: the desires for food and sex. Food and sex support ignorance in perpetrating all sort of evil. Thus, Confucius taught: "Food and sex are part of human nature." That is to say we are born with the craving for food and sex. Why is that we have not been able to demolish our ignorance, eliminate our afflictions, and reveal our wisdom? Because we always crave for food and sex. Sincere Buddhists should always remember that food gives rise to sexual desire, and sexual desire gives rise to ignorance. Once the desire for food arises, the desire for sex arises as well. Men are attracted to beautiful women,

and women are charmed by handsome men. People become infatuated and obsessed and cannot see through their desires. The nourishment from the food we eat is transformed into reproductive essence; and once that essence is full, sexual desire arises. Sincere Buddhists should always remember that the less tasty the food is, the better. Food should not be regarded as too important. Sincere Buddhists should practice moderation and eat only enough to sustain ourselves. We should neither eat very rich food, nor eat spoilt food, for either one could ruin our health.

Devout Buddhists should always remember that to Buddhism, sensual pleasure are something fleeting, something that comes and goes. Can something be really called “Happiness” when it is here one moment and gone the next? Is it really so enjoyable to go around hunting for something so ephemeral, which is changing all the time? Look at the amount of trouble we have to go through to get all those sensual pleasures which we think will bring us happiness. Some people have such strong desire for pleasure that they will break the law, commit brutal crimes and cause others to suffer just so they can experience these pleasures. They may not understand how much suffering they themselves will have to endure in the future as a consequence of the unwholesome acts they have committed. Even ordinary people may become aware that a disproportionate amount of suffering is necessary to bring together a few moments of happiness so much that it really is not worth it. Devout Buddhists should always remember that suffering will always follow craving. All the problems in this world are rooted in the desire for pleasure. It is on account of the need for pleasure that quarrels occur within the family that neighbors do not get along well, that states have conflict and nations go to war. It is also on account of sense-based pleasures that sufferings, afflictions, and all kinds of problems plague our world, that people have gone beyond their humanness into great cruelty and inhumanity.

According to the first patriarch Bodhidharma, the 28th Patriarch from India and also the 1st Patriarch in China, “Not to seek after anything” is one of the four disciplinary processes. By ‘not seeking after anything’ is meant this: “Men of the world, in eternal confusion, are attached everywhere to one thing or another, which is called seeking. The wise, however, understand the truth and are not like the

vulgar. Their minds abide serenely in the uncreated while the body turns about in accordance with the laws of causation. All things are empty and there is nothing desirable and to be sought after. Wherever there is nothing merit of brightness there follows the demerit of darkness. The triple world there one stays too long is like a house on fire; all that has a body suffers, and who would ever know what is rest? Because the wise are thoroughly acquainted with this truth, they get neer attached to anything that becomes, their thoughts are quieted, they never seek. Says the sutra: ‘Wherever there is seeking, there you have sufferings; when seeking ceases you are blessed. Thus we know that not to seek is verily the way to the truth. Therefore, one should not seek after anything.’ Bodhidharma taught about three Non-seeking practices or three doors of liberation: Emptiness, signlessness or to get rid of the idea of form, or externals. There are no objects to be perceived by sense-organs, one of the three emancipations, and wishlessness or to get rid of all wishes or desires until no wish of any kind whatsoever remains in the cultivator’s mind, for he no longer needs to strive for anything, one of the three emancipations. Truly speaking, worldly phenomena are dharmas are illusory and dream-like, born and destroyed, destroyed and born. So what is there which is true ever-lasting and worth seeking? Furthermore, worldly phenomena are all relative, in calamities are found blessings, in blessings there is misfortune. Therefore, Buddhist cultivators should always keep their minds calm and undisturbed in all situations, rising or falling, unfortunate or blessed. For example, when a monk cultivates alone in a deserted hut with few visitors. Although his living conditions are miserable and lonely, his cultivation is diligent. After a while, virtuous people learn of his situation and come to offer and seek for his guidance, his used-to-be hut now become a huge magnificent temple, filled with monks and nuns. By then, his blessings may be great, his cultivation has not only obviously declined, sometimes external events may attract him to causing more bad karma. Therefore, Buddhist cultivators should always keep in mind these three Non-seeking practices. According to the Forty-Two Sections Sutra, “A Sramana asked the Buddha: ‘What are the causes and conditions by which one come to know past lives and also by which one’s understanding enables one to attain the Way?’ The Buddha said: ‘By purifying the mind and

guarding the will, your understanding can achieve (attain) the Way. Just as when you polish a mirror, the dust vanishes and brightness remains; so, too, if you cut off and do not seek desires, you can then know past lives.”

Truly speaking, the desires are boundless, but our ability to realize them is not, and unfulfilled desires always create suffering. When desires are only partially fulfilled, we have a tendency to continue to pursue until a complete fulfillment is achieved. Thus, we create even more suffering for us and for others. On the contrary, the less we possess, the more we are living in peace and happiness. To some extent the hold which belongings have upon us is weakened by the practice of sound rules of moral conduct. The Buddhist is advised to possess as little as possible, to give up home and family, to cherish poverty rather than wealth, to prefer giving to getting, etc. In addition, the experience of trance works in the same direction. Although the state of trance itself is comparatively shortlived, nevertheless the memory of it must continue to shake the belief in the ultimate reality of the sensory world. It is the inevitable result of the habitual practice of trance that the things of our common-sense world appear delusive, deceptive, remote and dreamlike, and that they are deprived of the character of solidity and reliability which is usually attributed to them. It is, however, believed that morality and trance cannot by themselves completely uproot and destroy the foundation of our belief in individuality. According to the doctrine of the Old Wisdom School, wisdom alone is able to chase the illusion of individuality from our thoughts where it has persisted from age-old habit. Not action, not trance, but only thought can kill the illusion which resides in thought. Oh! How peaceful and happy for those whose lives have few desires for possession!

Therefore, speaking in Buddhist point of view, only if we have no desire for ourselves; if we are working and earning money in order to help other people; if we make cultivation our business and our business is cultivation only, then how clear and happy our life will be! However, most people don't understand this. They are only interested in making a lot of money or becoming successful in worldly business. Remember, this is only a small 'I'. Devout Buddhists should make a lot of money to help all people, then even we create our worldly business,

it is a good business. It is a selfish desire for more than we need or deserve, such as food, house, car, wealth, honors, etc. Eyes are longing for viewing beautiful forms without any satisfaction, ears are longing for melodious sounds, nose is longing for fragrance, tongue is longing for delicate tastes, body is longing for soothing touches, and mind is longing for various emotions of love and hate from self and others. Human beings' greediness is like a barrel without bottom. It is just as the great ocean obtaining continuously the water from hundreds and thousands of large and small rivers and lakes everyday. In this Dharma Ending Age, sentient beings, especially human beings use every method to manipulate and harm one another. Sentient beings' lives, especially, those of human beings' are already filled with pain and sufferings, now there are even more pain and sufferings. Through tricks, expedients, and manipulations we try to reach our goal irrespective of whatever happens to others. Greed is a powerful mental force that drives people to fight, kill, cheat, lie and perform various forms of unwholesome deeds. The desires are boundless, but our ability to realize them is not, and unfulfilled desires always create suffering. When desires are only partially fulfilled, we have a tendency to continue to pursue until a complete fulfillment is achieved. Thus, we create even more suffering for us and for others. Cultivation helps us balance 'Lust' by contemplation of loathsomeness. Attachment to bodily form is one extreme, and one should keep the opposite in mind. Examine the body as a corpse and see the process of decay, or think of the parts of the body, such as lungs, spleen, fat, feces, and so forth. Remembering these and visualizing the loathsome aspects of the body will free us from lust. Furthermore, through cultivation, we can see the string of craving and attachment confines us to samsara's prison. In other words, craving and attachment are not only roots that prevent us from being sufficiently moved to renounce samsara, but they are also two of the main things that bind us to samsara. In order to overcome craving and attachment, we should contemplate on the impurity of the body. When we are attached to someone, for example, consider how that person is just a sack full of six kinds of filthy substances. Then our attachment and craving will diminish. We can only realize the true happiness and a peaceful state of mind when we get rid of greed and desires or when our desires are few. This is one of the great steps

towards the shore of liberation. The Buddha taught: “Craving and desire are the cause of all unhappiness or suffering. Everything sooner or later must change, so do not become attached to anything. Instead devote yourself to clearing your mind and finding the truth, lasting happiness.” **Knowing how to feel satisfied with few possessions help us destroy greed and desire. This means being content with material conditions that allow us to be healthy and strong enough to cultivate. This is an effective way to cut through the net of passions and desires, attain a peaceful state of mind and have more time to help others.** As a matter of fact, once, we, Buddhist practitioners get rid of greed and desire also means that we have already pushed away great obstacles on our own path of cultivation. In conclusion for this writing, on the path of cultivation, practitioners should always remember the Buddha's teaching in the Sutra in Forty Two Chapters taught: “Though a person with a state of mind filled with desires dwells in heaven, still that is not enough for him; though a person who has ended desire dwells on the ground, still he is happy.”

Chapter Sixteen

Living & Cultivating In Accordance With the Spirit of the Fourth Awakening of Great People: Cultivate Right Efforts to Destroy Four Maras and Free from the Prison of Five Skandhas & Three Worlds

I. An Overview & Meanings of the Fourth Awakening in the Sutra of of Eight Awakenings of Great People:

In fact, each of the eight items in this sutra can be considered as a subject of meditation which Buddhist disciples should at all times, by day and by night, with a sincere attitude, recite and keep in mind eight truths that all great people awaken to. In the 1970s, Most Venerable Thích Thanh Từ translated the sutra from Chinese into Vietnamese, the original text of *The Fourth Awakening* as follows:

Idleness and self-indulgence
will be our downfall.
With unflagging vigor,
Great people break through their
afflictions and baseness.
They vanquish and humble
the Four Kinds of Demons.
And they escape from the prison of
the Five Skandhas.

Which means the awareness of the extent to which laziness is an obstacle to practice. For this reason, we must practice diligently to destroy the unwholesome mental factors which bind us, and to conquer the four kinds of Mara, in order to free ourselves from the prison of the five aggregates and the three worlds. Idleness and self-indulgence will be our downfall. With unflagging vigor, Great people break through their afflictions and baseness. They vanquish and humble the Four Kinds of Demons, and they escape from the prison of the Five Skandhas.

II. Living & Cultivating In Accordance With the Spirit of the Fourth Awakening of Great People: Cultivate Right Efforts to Destroy Four Maras and Free from the Prison of Five Skandhas & Three Worlds:

An Overview of Right Efforts in Buddhist Teachings: According to the Sangiti Sutta in the Long Discourses of the Buddha, Right effort of four kinds of restraint, or four essentials to be practiced vigilantly. A Sanskrit term for “Effort.” Right Effort of four kinds of restraint, or four essentials to be practiced vigilantly, or four factors that are developed through meditation and moral training. *First, endeavor to start performing good deeds (to produce merit):* Effort to initiate virtues not yet arisen. Bringing forth goodness not yet brought forth (bring good into existence). To induce the doing of good deeds. Here a practitioner rouses his will, makes an effort, stirs up energy, exerts his mind and strives to produce unarisen wholesome mental states. Here a monk rouses his will, makes an effort, stirs up energy, exerts his mind and strives to produce unarisen wholesome mental states. *Second, endeavor to perform more good deeds:* Effort to consolidate, increase, and not deteriorate virtues already arisen. Developing goodness that has already arisen (develop existing good). To increase merit when it was already produced. To encourage the growth and continuance of good deeds that have already started. Here a practitioner rouses his will, makes an effort, stirs up energy, exerts his mind and strives to maintain wholesome mental states that have arisen, not to let them fade away, to bring them to greater growth, to the full perfection of development. Here a monk rouses his will, makes an effort, stirs up energy, exerts his mind and strives to maintain wholesome mental states that have arisen, not to let them fade away, to bring them to greater growth, to the full perfection of development. *Third, endeavor to prevent evil from forming:* Effort not to initiate sins not yet arisen, that is to say preventing evil that hasn’t arisen from arising, or to prevent any evil from starting or arising, or to prevent demerit from arising. Here a practitioner rouses his will, makes an effort, stirs up energy, exerts his mind and strives to prevent the arising of unarisen evil unwholesome mental states. Here a monk rouses his will, makes an effort, stirs up energy, exerts his mind and strives to prevent the arising of unarisen evil unwholesome mental states. *Fourth, endeavor to eliminate*

already-formed evil: Effort to eliminate sins already arisen. Putting an end to existing evil, or to abandon demerit when it arises. To remove any evil as soon as it starts. Here a practitioner rouses his will, makes an effort, stirs up energy, exerts his mind and strives to overcome evil unwholesome mental states that have arisen. Here a monk rouses his will, makes an effort, stirs up energy, exerts his mind and strives to overcome evil unwholesome mental states that have arisen.

Also according to the Sangiti Sutta in the Long Discourses of the Buddha, the Buddha taught about eight occasions for making an effort for practitioners: *The first occasion for making an effort:* Here a monk who has a job to do. He thinks: “I’ve got this job to do, but in doing it I won’t find easy to pay attention to the teaching of the Buddhas. I’ll have to stir up my energy.” And he stirs up sufficient energy to complete the uncompleted, to accomplish the unaccomplished, to realise the unrealised. *The second occasion for making an effort:* “Here a monk who has done some work, and thinks: Well, I did the job, but because of it I wasn’t able to pay sufficient attention to the teaching of the Buddhas. So I will stir up sufficient energy.” And he stirs up sufficient energy to complete the uncompleted, to accomplish the unaccomplished, to realise the unrealised. *The third occasion for making an effort:* Here a monk who has to go on a journey, and thinks: “I have to go on this journey, but in doing it I won’t find easy to pay attention to the teaching of the Buddhas. I’ll have to stir up energy.” And he stirs up sufficient energy to complete the uncompleted, to accomplish the unaccomplished, to realise the unrealised. *The fourth occasion for making an effort:* Here a monk who has been on a journey, and he thinks: “I have been on a journey, but because of it I wasn’t able to pay sufficient attention to the teaching of the Buddhas. I’ll have to stir up energy.” And he stirs up energy to complete the uncompleted, to accomplish the unaccomplished, to realise the unrealised. *The fifth occasion for making an effort:* Here a monk who goes for alms-round in a village or town and does not get his fill of food, whether coarse or fine, and he thinks: “I’ve gone for alms-round without getting my fill of food. So my body is light and fit. I’ll stir up energy.” And he stirs up energy to complete the uncompleted, to accomplish the unaccomplished, to realise the unrealised. *The sixth occasion for making an effort:* Here a monk who goes for alms-round in a village or

town and gets his fill of food, whether coarse or fine, and he thinks: “I’ve gone for alms-round and get my fill of food. So my body is strong and fit. I’ll stir up energy.” And he stirs up energy to complete the uncompleted, to accomplish the unaccomplished, to realise the unrealised. *The seventh occasion for making an effort*: Here a monk who has some slight indisposition, and he thinks: “I get some slight indisposition, and this indisposition might get worse, so I’ll stir up energy.” And he stirs up energy to complete the uncompleted, to accomplish the unaccomplished, to realise the unrealised. *The eighth occasion for making an effort*: Here a monk who is recuperating from an illness, and he thinks: “I am just recuperating from an illness. It might be that the illness will recur. So I’ll stir up energy.” And he stirs up energy to complete the uncompleted, to accomplish the unaccomplished, to realise the unrealised.

Living & Cultivating In Accordance With the Spirit of the Fourth Awakening of Great People: Cultivate Right Efforts to Destroy Four Maras and Free from the Prison of Five Skandhas & Three Worlds: Those who want to live and cultivate in accordance with the spirit of the Sutra of Eight Awakenings of Great People should have the awareness that is the awareness of the extent to which laziness is an obstacle to practice. For this reason, we must practice right efforts diligently to destroy the unwholesome mental factors which bind us, and to conquer the four kinds of Mara, in order to free ourselves from the prison of the five aggregates and the three worlds. In Buddhist teachings, right effort, zeal or progress, unintermitting perseverance, the sixth of the eightfold noble path. All efforts must be for enlightenment. Right effort means to do our best to become a better person. Examples of this are to work hard at school and to drop bad habits such as laziness, quick temper, smoking and drugs. At home, try to be a good husband, wife, son, daughter, etc. Right effort means we must be always hard-working, helpful to others and ourselves. Do not kill, cheat, or lead a wanton, gamble life. On the contrary, always try to perform good deeds for having good karma. Correct (Right or Perfect) Zeal or Effort or Energy also means to try to avoid the arising of evil, demeritorious things have not yet arisen. Try to overcome the evil, demeritorious things that have already arisen. At the same time, try to produce meritorious things that have not yet arisen and try to maintain

the meritorious things that have already arisen and not let them disappear, but to bring them to growth, to maturity and to the full perfection of development. Right effort also means cultivation of what is karmically wholesome and avoidance of what is karmically unwholesome. In short, right effort means to be vigilant and check all unhealthy thoughts, and to cultivate, promote and maintain wholesome and pure thoughts arising in a man's mind that does not cause sufferings and afflictions for people and for self; on the contrary, it would bring us and other people peace, mindfulness and happiness. The function of the right effort is to be vigilant and check all unhealthy thoughts, and to cultivate, promote and maintain wholesome and pure thoughts arising in a man's mind. First, to prevent the arising of evil and unwholesome thoughts that have not yet arisen. Second, to suppress the rising of evil states. Third, to eradicate (discard) those which have arisen. Fourth, to produce and develop wholesome thoughts not yet arisen. Fifth, to stimulate good states, and to perfect those which have come into being (to promote and maintain the good thoughts already present). When developing right effort we must be sincere about our thoughts. If we analyze them we will find that our thoughts are not always good and wholesome. At times they are unwholesome and foolish, though we may not always express them in words and actions or both. Now if we allow such thoughts to rise repeatedly, it is a bad sign, for when an unhealthy thought is allowed to recur again and again, it tends to become a habit. It is, therefore, essential to make a real effort to keep unwholesome thoughts away from us. Until we succeed in stopping them to rise in our mind, unhealthy thoughts will always be taking possession of our mind. It is not only during the time of meditation that we need to cultivate our right effort. Right effort should be cultivated always whenever possible. In all our speech, actions and behavior, in our daily life, we need right effort to perform our duties wholeheartedly and successfully. If we lack right effort and give in to sloth and indolence, we can not proceed with our cultivation. Right effort is one of the three trainings in meditation (two other trainings are Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration). Right effort means cultivating a confident attitude toward our undertakings, taking up and pursuing our task with energy and a will to carry them through to the end. In Buddhism, right effort means cultivating a confident

attitude of mind, being attentive and aware. To progress on the path, we need to put our energy into Dharma practice. With enthusiastic effort, we can purify negative actions already done to prevent doing new ones in the future. In addition, effort also is necessary to maintain the virtuous states we've already generated, as well as to induce new ones in the future.

To Conquer Four Kinds of Mara: Correct effort also refers to an attitude of properly orienting the mind toward the desired goal of liberation from cyclic existence and steadily applying oneself to practices that are concordant with it. As mentioned above, those who want to live and cultivate in accordance with the spirit of the Sutra of Eight Awakenings of Great People should have the awareness that is the awareness of the extent to which laziness is an obstacle to practice. For this reason, we must practice diligently to destroy the unwholesome mental factors which bind us, and to conquer the four kinds of Mara, in order to free ourselves from the prison of the five aggregates and the three worlds. Idleness and self-indulgence will be our downfall. With unflagging vigor, Great people break through their afflictions and baseness. They vanquish and humble the Four Kinds of Demons, and they escape from the prison of the Five Skandhas. It should be reminded that Four demons in Buddhism refer to obstructions of enlightenment. There are four major sources of distraction and delusion: the demons of the mind-body clusters (form, sensation, perception, condition, consciousness), the demons of afflictions, the demons of death, and the demons of heaven (wish to be in the realm of desire and thus blocks transmundane goodness). Among them, the five maras associated with the five skandhas. The demon of the clusters of mental and material elements, giving rise to attachments. The demon of afflictions, perpetually confusing and defiling. These demons represent the afflictions of greed, anger, resentment, delusion, contempt, doubt and wrong views. They also include the demons of the Five Skandas, the Six Entrances, the Twelve Sense Fields, and the Eighteen Elements. These demons are also called "internal" as they created by topsy-turvy, delusive states of mind. Therefore, they must be overcome by the bright, enlightened mind. The human mind is easily moved, developing afflictions not only because of personal karma but also because of the common karma of living in an

environment filled, for the most part, with evil beings. Some persons cannot resist the attractions of the five Dusts and thus fall into evil ways. Others, encountering adverse conditions, grow sad and mournful and lose their determination to progress. Such developments depending on their severity, render the cultivator despondent, indignant and ill, or worse still, cause him to abandon the Buddhist Order or even to commit suicide out of despair. More harmful still, they can lead to loss of respect and good will toward other cultivators, sometimes even hatred and avoidance of clergy and lay people alike. Loss of faith in cause and effect, bad karma and finally, descent upon the three Evil Paths are the end result. The demon of death abandons life. Deva Mara or celestial demons or the demon of heaven who dwells in the sixth heaven (Paranirmita-vasavartin), at the top of the Kamadhatu, with his innumerable host, whence he constantly obstructs the Buddha-truth and followers. With the demon of heaven, practitioners can be being self-indulgent. Celestial demons refers to the type of demon that resides in the Sixth Heaven, also called the Heaven of Free Enjoyment of Others' Emanations. This type of demon possesses merits and blessings and enjoys the highest heavenly bliss in the Realm of desire, of which our world is but a small part. They then mistake such happiness and bliss as ultimate, and do not wish anyone to escape their influence. The term Deva Mara symbolizes idealistic people who disturb Buddhism.

Escaping the Five Skandhas Through Contemplating On Living Beings: At the time of the Buddha, the Buddha often advised his disciples to try to escape the five skandhas through contemplating on sentient beings. The term "Living beings" refer to all creatures that possess life-force. Each individual living being comes into being as the result of a variety of different causes and conditions. The smallest living beings as ants, mosquitoes, or even the most tiniest parasites are living beings. Every being is a combination of five elements: rupa, vedana, sanna, sankhara, and vinnana. Hence, one being is not essentially different from another, an ordinary man is not different from a perfect saint. But is the nature and proportion of each of the five constituents existing in an individual be taken into account, then one being is different from another, an ordinary man is different from a perfect saint. The combination of elements is the outcome of Karma and is happening every moment, implying that the disintegration of

elements always precedes it. The elements in a combined state pass as an individual, and from time immemorial he works under misconception of a self and of things relating to a self. His vision being distorted or obscured by ignorance of the truth he can not perceive the momentary combination and disintegration of elements. On the other hand, he is subject to an inclination for them. A perfect man with his vision cleared by the Buddhist practices and culture realizes the real state of empirical things that an individual consists of the five elements and does not possess a permanent and unchanging entity called soul. Buddhist practitioners should always contemplate to see that sentient beings create karma, the effect of karma will reflect back on sentient beings, therefore, sentient beings continue to roll in the cycle of births and deaths.

According to the Vimalakirti Sutra, Manjusri Bodhisattva obeyed the Buddha's command to call on Vimalakirti to enquire after his health. Manjusri asked Vimalakirti: "How should a Bodhisattva look at living beings?" Vimalakirti replied: "A Bodhisattva should look at living beings like an illusionist does at the illusory men (he has created); and like a wise man looking at the moon's reflection in water; at his own face in a mirror; at the flame of a burning fire; at the echo of a calling voice; at flying clouds in the sky; at foam in a liquid; at bubbles on water; at the (empty) core of a banana tree; at a flash of lightning; at the (non-existent) fifth element (beside the four that make the human body); at the sixth aggregate (beside the five that make a sentient being); at the seventh sense datum (beside the six objects of sense); at the thirteenth entrance (ayatana-beside the twelve involving the six organs and six sense data); at the nineteenth realm of sense (beside the eighteen dhatus or fields of sense); at form in the formless world; at the (non-existent) sprout of a charred grain of rice; at a body seen by a srota-apanna (who has wiped out the illusory body to enter the holy stream); at the entry of an anagamin (or a non-returning sravaka) into the womb of a woman (for rebirth); at an arhat still preserving the three poisons (of desire, anger and stupidity which he has eliminated for wever); at a Bodhisattva realizing the patient endurance of the uncreate who is still greedy, resentful and breaking the prohibitions; at a Buddha still suffering from klesa (troubles); at a blind man seeing things; at an adept who still breathes air in and out

while in the state of nirvanic imperturbability; at the tracks of birds flying in the air; at the progeny of a barren woman; at the suffering of an illusory man; at a sleeping man seeing he is awake in a dream; at a devout man realizing nirvana who takes a bodily form for (another) reincarnation; and at a smokeless fire. This is how a Bodhisattva should look at living beings.”

Also according to the Vimalakirti Sutra, Chapter Five, when Manjusri arrived to visit Vimalakirti, he asked: “Venerable Upasaka, is your illness bearable? Will it get worse with the wrong treatment? The World Honoured One sends me to inquire after your health, and is anxious to have good news of you. Venerable Upasaka, where does your illness come from; how long since it arose, and how will it come to an end?” Vimalakirti replied: “Stupidity leads to love, which is the origin of my illness. Because all living beings are subject to illness, I am ill as well. When all living beings are no longer ill, my illness will come to an end. Why? A Bodhisattva, because of (his vow to save) living beings, enters the realm of birth and death which is subject to illness; if they are all cured, the Bodhisattva will no longer be ill. For instance, when the only son of an elder falls ill, so do his parents, and when he recovers his health, so do they. Likewise, a Bodhisattva loves all living beings as if they were his sons; so when they fall ill, the Bodhisattva is also ill, and when they recover, he is no longer ill.” Manjusri asked: “What is the cause of a Bodhisattva’s illness?” Vimalakirti replied: “A Bodhisattva’s illness comes from (his) great compassion.” Manjusri asked: “Why is the Venerable Upasaka’s house empty and without servants?” Vimalakirti replied: “All Buddha lands are also void.” Manjusri asked: “What is the Buddha land void of?” Vimalakirti replied: “It is void of voidness.” Manjusri asked: “Why should voidness be void?” Vimalakirti replied: “Voidness is void in the absence of discrimination.” Manjusri asked: “Can voidness be subject to discrimination?” Vimalakirti replied: “All discrimination is also void.” Manjusri asked: “Where can voidness be sought?” Vimalakirti replied: “It should be sought in the sixty-two false views.” Manjusri asked: “Where should the sixty-two false views be sought?” Vimalakirti replied: “They should be sought in the liberation of all Buddhas.” Manjusri asked: “Where should the liberation of all Buddhas be sought?” Vimalakirti replied: “It should be sought in the minds of all

living beings.” He continued: “The virtuous one has also asked why I have no servants; well, all demons and heretics are my servants. Why? Because demons like (the state of) birth and death which the Bodhisattva does not reject, whereas heretics delight in false views in the midst of which the Bodhisattva remains unmoved.” Manjusri asked: “What form does the Venerable Upasaka’s illness take?” Vimalakirti replied: “My illness is formless and invisible.” Manjusri asked: “Is it an illness of the body or of the mind?” Vimalakirti replied: “It is not an illness of the body, for it is beyond body and it is not that of the mind, for the mind is like an illusion.” Manjusri asked: “Of the four elements, earth, water, fire and air, which one is ill?” Vimalakirti replied: “It is not an illness of the element of earth but it is not beyond it; it is the same with the other elements of water, fire and air. Since the illnesses of all living beings originate from the four elements which cause them to suffer, I am ill too.” Manjusri then asked: “What should a Bodhisattva say when comforting another Bodhisattva who falls ill?” Vimalakirti replied: “He should speak of the impermanence of the body but never of the abhorrence and relinquishment of the body. He should speak of the suffering body but never of the joy in nirvana. He should speak of egolessness in the body while teaching and guiding all living beings (in spite of the fact that they are fundamentally non-existent in the absolute state). He should speak of the voidness of the body but should never cling to the ultimate nirvana. He should speak of repentance of past sins but should avoid slipping into the past. Because of his own illness he should take pity on all those who are sick. Knowing that he has suffered during countless past aeons, he should think of the welfare of all living beings. He should think of his past practice of good virtues to uphold (his determination for) right livelihood. Instead of worrying about troubles (klesa) he should give rise to zeal and devotion (in his practice of the Dharma). He should act like a king physician to cure others’ illnesses. Thus, a Bodhisattva should comfort another sick Bodhisattva to make him happy.”

Sentient beings, minds, and Buddhas are without essential difference (the three that are of the same nature). The nature of mind is the same in Buddhas, men, and all the living beings; the nature and enlightenment of all Buddhas is the same; and the nature and enlightenment of all living beings is the same. Outside the mind there

is no other thing; mind, Buddha, and all the living, these three are not different. There is no differentiating among these three because all is mind. All are of the same order. This is an important doctrine of the Hua-Yen sutra. The T'ien-T'ai called "The Mystery of the Three Things." T'ien-T'ai Chih I Great Master quotes the Avatamsaka Sutra that "the mind, the Buddha, and sentient beings are not distinct," and emphasizes the unity of the three. Chih I does not use this verse to support a mind-only idealism. He proposes instead that the mind, or one's thoughts, is the most accessible of the three dharmas, and thus should be the focus of one's contemplation and meditation. Since the Buddha, objects, other sentient beings, and so forth, are all part of one reality, they are all included when one concentrates on one simple thought. This is illustrated with another quote from the Avatamsaka Sutra: "If one disports one's mind in the dharmadhatu as if in space, then one will know the objective realm of all Buddhas." In the "Song of Meditation," Hakuin Zenji says, "All sentient beings are intrinsically Buddhas." We are all right to begin with. So when called, just answer. If you cannot answer, that, too, is okay. Regardless of whether you answer or not, you are this fundamentally, originally enlightened ground. We practice on this ground of original enlightenment because that is our life. We do not need to look for anything else because everything is already right here. This life itself, your life itself, is the valley that has no echo. When you look for something else, you are putting another head on top of your own. How do we appreciate the life that we have? Unfortunately, we often experience this life as if it were a roller coaster, spinning around in the six realms. Sometimes you feel marvelous. The next day, you hit bottom. You go from heaven to hell and all kinds of spheres in between from day to day, maybe even in one day. What are you doing with this life? You wonder, "Am I really the same as the Buddhas?" Many of you respond, "Hardly." So what will you do? This is a very common dilemma. That is why if we just rely on one perspective, such as "We are all okay, be just as you are," we fall into a trap. It sounds good, but unfortunately, not all of us can live like that. Something is not quite right. We, Zen practitioners, must examine who we are and truly see what this life is, what is the very nature of existence. This is a very natural inquiry. For these reasons, at

the time of the Buddha, the Buddha often advised his disciples to try to escape the five skandhas through contemplating on sentient beings.

The Elimination of & Escaping From the Prison of the Five Aggregates: Suffering of all the ills of the five skandhas or suffering due to the raging aggregates. This is the suffering of a body and mind that are too demanding and almost uncontrollable. As mentioned above, according to Buddhism, there are five aggregates which make up a human being. First, “Form” or aggregate of matter (material or physical factors), which includes four elements of our own body and other material objects such as solidity, fluidity, heat and motion comprise matter. The aggregate of form includes the five physical sense organs and the corresponding physical objects of the sense organs (the eyes and visible objects, the ears and sound, the nose and smell, the tongue and taste, the skin and tangible objects). Second, “Feeling or sensation” or aggregate of feeling. Aggregate of feeling or sensation of three kinds pleasant, unpleasant and indifferent. When an object is experienced, that experience takes on one of these emotional tones, either of pleasure, of displeasure or of indifference. Third, “Thinking” or Thought, cognition or perception. Aggregate of perception includes activity of recognition or identification or attaching of a name to an object of experience. Perceptions include form, sound, smell, taste, body. Fourth, “Aggregate of mental formation” or impression. This mental formation is a conditioned response to the object of experience including volition, attention, discrimination, resolve, etc. Fifth, “Aggregate of consciousness” or consciousness, which includes the six types of consciousness (seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching and mental consciousness). Awareness or sensitivity to an object, i.e. the consciousness associates with the physical factors when the eye and a visible object come into contact, an awareness of a visible object occurs in our mind. Consciousness or a turning of a mere awareness into personal experience is a combined function of feeling, perception and mental formation. The five skandhas are the roots of all ignorance. They keep sentient beings from realizing their always-existing Buddha-Nature. The five aggregates are considered as maras or demons fighting against the Buddha-nature of men. In accordance with the Dharma, life is comprised of five aggregates (form, feeling, perception, mental formation,

consciousness). Matter plus the four other mental factors as feeling, perception, mental formation and consciousness combined together from life. We, normal people, do not see the five aggregates as phenomena but as an entity because of our deluded minds, and our innate desire to treat these as a self in order to pander to our self-importance. Therefore, the Buddha taught: “If you have patience and the will to see things as they truly are. If you would turn inwards to the recesses of your own minds and note with just bare attention (sati), not objectively without projecting an ego into the process, then cultivate this practice for a sufficient length of time, then you will see these five aggregates not as an entity but as a series of physical and mental processes. Then you will not mistake the superficial for the real. You will then see that these aggregates arise and disappear in rapid succession, never being the same for two consecutive moments, never static but always in a state of flux, never being but always becoming.” Zen practitioners should always see the real nature of these five aggregates and should always remember the Teaching of the Buddha on how to eliminate these aggregates in the Lotus Sutra, including the method of elimination of form aggregate in chapter Bhaisajyarajasamudgata (Bodhisattva of Healing), elimination of feeling in chapter Wonderful Sound, elimination of perception in chapter Avalokitesvara, elimination of mental formations in chapter Dharani, and elimination of consciousness in chapter Subhavyuha as follows: “Matter is equated to a heap of foam, feeling is like a bubble, perception is described as a mirage, mental formations are like a banana tree and consciousness is just an illusion.” The same is true with feelings, perceptions, mental formation, and consciousness.” Therefore, if trying to cultivate, practitioners will have a chance to eliminate and escape from the prison of the five aggregates, the prison of suffering of all the ills of the five skandhas or suffering due to the raging aggregates of a body and mind that are too demanding and almost uncontrollable which we once suffered. In other words, if we practice in accordance the Buddha’s teachings, then surely we can easily eliminate the grasping of form, of feelings, of perceptions, of mental formations, and of consciousness.

Escaping from the Burning House of the Triple World: According to The Long Discourses of the Buddha, Sangiti Sutra, the realms of births and deaths divided into three realms of existence. They are the realm

of desire, the realm of form, and the formless realm. The realm of (sensuous) desire of sex and food. The realm of desire, of sensuous gratification; this world and the six devalokas (includes the six heavens, the human world, and then hells); any world in which the elements of desire have not been suppressed. The world of desire. The region of the wishes. This is the lowest of the three realms of existence, the other two being rupa-dhatu and arupa-dhatu. It is also the realm in which humans live, and it receives its name because desire is the dominant motivation for its inhabitants. All beings in this realm possess five aggregates or panca-skandha. Realm of desire or sensual realm (human world, desire world, or passion world), one of the three realms. Realm of desire is a realm where there exists all kinds of desires. This is the realm of (sensuous) desire of sex and food. We are living in an age of rush and speed. It is tension, tension everywhere. If you stand at the corner of a busy street and scan the faces of the people hurrying feverishly by, you will notice that most of them are restless. They carry with them an atmosphere of stress. They are most pictures of rush and worry. Rarely will you find a picture of calm, content and repose in any of these faces. Such is the modern world. The world of today is characterized by inordinate haste leading to quick decisions and imprudent actions. Some shout when they could speak in normal tones and other talk excitedly at a forced pitch for long periods and finish a conversation almost exhausted. Any kind of excitement is a stress in the psychologist's sense of the word, and stress causes the speeding up of bodily processes. In fact, we are living crowded in the suffering conditions of this Saha World is similar to living in a house on fire, full of dangers, life can end at any moment. Even so, everyone is completely oblivious and unaware, but continues to live leisurely, chasing after the five desires, as if nothing was happening. Sincere Buddhists should always remember this and should always diligently cultivate to seek liberation.

According to The Long Discourses of the Buddha, Sangiti Sutra, the realms of births and deaths divided into three realms of existence. They are the realm of desire, the realm of form, and the formless realm. In the Lankavatara Sutra, the Buddha taught: "The Bodhisattva-mahasattvas sees that the triple world is no more than the creation of the citta, manas, and mano-vijnana, that it is brought forth by falsely

discriminating one's own mind, that there are no signs of an external world where the principle of multiplicity rules, and finally that the triple world is just one's own mind. The realm of (sensuous) desire of sex and food. The realm of desire, of sensuous gratification; this world and the six devalokas (includes the six heavens, the human world, and then hells); any world in which the elements of desire have not been suppressed. The world of desire. The region of the wishes. This is the lowest of the three realms of existence, the other two being rupa-dhatu and arupa-dhatu. It is also the realm in which humans live, and it receives its name because desire is the dominant motivation for its inhabitants. All beings in this realm possess five aggregates or *panca-skandha*. Realm of desire or sensual realm (human world, desire world, or passion world), one of the three realms. Realm of desire is a realm where there exists all kinds of desires. This is the realm of (sensuous) desire of sex and food. Form is used more in the sense of "substance," or "something occupying space which will resist replacement by another form." So it has extension, it is limited and conditioned. It comes into existence when conditions are matured, as Buddhists would say, and staying as long as they continue, pass away. Form is impermanent, dependent, illusory, relative, antithetical, and distinctive. The realm of form or matter or material world. It is above the lust world. It is represented in the *Brahmalokas* (tứ thiên thiên). Form is used more in the sense of "substance," or "something occupying space which will resist replacement by another form." So it has extension, it is limited and conditioned. It comes into existence when conditions are matured, as Buddhists would say, and staying as long as they continue, pass away. Form is impermanent, dependent, illusory, relative, antithetical, and distinctive. The realm of form. Being in the world of form have material form, but it is above the lust world (free from desires). It is represented in the fourth Heavens or *Brahmalokas* (tứ thiên thiên). This realm is considered to be higher than the one in which human beings live, i.e., the desire realm or *kama-dhatu*. According to Buddhism, the four form-realm-meditations have the form-heaven as their objective. The realm of no Beauty (non-form). The formless or immaterial realm of pure spirit. There are no bodies, palaces, things. Where the mind dwells in mystic contemplation. Its extent is indefinable in the four "empty" regions of spaces (Tứ không xứ). This

is the realm of the higher deities. This is one of the three worlds (triloka) of traditional Buddhist cosmology. This is one of the “three worlds” (triloka) of traditional Buddhist cosmology. Beings are born into this realm as a result of successful cultivation of meditative states called the “four formless absorptions” (arupya-samapatti), each of which corresponds to a heaven realm within the Formless Realm. The formless realm of pure spirit, where there are no bodies, places, things. Its extent is undefinable in the four empty regions (Tứ không xứ). In the Formless Realm there is no physicality, and the beings who reside there have lives free from pain, anxiety, or afflictions, but this is seen as unsatisfactory from a Buddhist standpoint, because when their lives in the Formless Realm end they are again reborn in the lower levels of cyclic existence. The heavens without form, immaterial, consisting only of mind in contemplation. According to Buddhism, formless-realm-meditations have the formless heaven as their objective. It is a well-known fact that in the Buddha’s career he practiced the formless dhyana with Arada Kalama, and ascetic who attained the mental state of boundless consciousness, and Udraka Ramaputra, another ascetic who reached the highest stage of being neither conscious nor unconscious. Finally, the would-be Buddha surpassed his teachers and, having found no more to learn from them, went his own way in spite of their eager requests to stay and train their respective pupils.

Chapter Seventeen

Living & Cultivating In Accordance With the Fifth Awakening of Great People: Ignorance Is the Root of Birth and Death-Cultivation of Paramita Wisdom

I. An Overview & Meanings of the Fifth Awakening in the Sutra of Eight Awakenings of Great People:

These are eight Truths that all Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and great people awaken to. After awakening, they then energetically cultivate the Way. By steeping themselves in kindness and compassion, they grow wisdom. They sail the Dharma-body ship all the way across to Nirvana's other shore, only to re-enter the sea of death and rebirth to rescue all living beings. In the 1970s, Most Venerable Thích Thanh Từ translated this sutra from Chinese into Vietnamese, the original text of *The Fifth Awakening* as follows:

Stupidity and ignorance are the
cause of death and rebirth.
Bodhisattvas are always attentive to.
And appreciative of extensive study and erudition.
They strive to expand their wisdom.
And refine their eloquence.
Teaching and transforming living beings.
Nothing brings them greater joy than this.

II. Living & Cultivating In Accordance With the Fifth Awakening of Great People: Ignorance Is the Root of Birth and Death-Cultivation of Paramita Wisdom to Escape from the Samsara:

As mentioned above, in the eighth awakening, practitioners should always be awakened that ignorance is the cause of the endless cycle of birth and death. Therefore, practitioners should try to follow Bodhisattvas' good examples, clearly see that ignorance is the root of birth and death. Then, practitioners should always listen and learn in

order to develop their understanding and eloquence, and eliminate ignorance. This enables them to educate living beings and bring them to the realm of great joy. Stupidity and ignorance are the cause of death and rebirth, Bodhisattvas are always attentive to and appreciative of extensive study and erudition. They strive to expand their wisdom and refine their eloquence. Teaching and transforming living beings, nothing brings them greater joy than this.

Ignorance Is the Root of Birth and Death: Ignorance is the main cause of our non-enlightenment. Ignorance is only a false mark, so it is subject to production, extinction, increase, decrease, defilement, purity, and so on. Ignorance is the main cause of our birth, old age, worry, grief, misery, and sickness, and death. In Buddhism, ignorance is a mind of illusion or darkness without illumination, the ignorance which mistakes seeming for being, or illusory phenomena for realities. Avidya is ignorance or noncognizance of the four noble truths, the three precious ones (triratna), and the law of karma, etc. Avidya is the first link of conditionality (pratityasampada), which leads to entanglement of the world of samsara and the root of all unwholesome in the world. This is the primary factor that enmeshes (làm vướng víu) beings in the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. In other words, ignorance is the root of reincarnation in the cycle of birth and death. In a Buddhist sense, it refers to lack of understanding of the four noble truths (Arya-satya), the effects of actions (karma), dependent arising (pratitya-samutpada), and other key Buddhist doctrines. In Madhyamaka, “Avidya” refers to the determination of the mind through ideas and concepts that permit beings to construct an ideal world that confers upon the everyday world its forms and manifold quality, and that thus blocks vision of reality. “Avidya” is thus the nonrecognition of the true nature of the world, which is empty (shunyata), and the mistaken understanding of the nature of phenomena. Thus “avidya” has a double function: ignorance veils the true nature and also constructs the illusory appearance. “Avidya” characterizes the conventional reality. For the Sautrantikas and Vaibhashikas, “Avidya” means seeing the world as unitary and enduring, whereas in reality it is manifold and impermanent. “Avidya” confers substantiality on the world and its appearances. In the

Yogachara's view, "avidya" means seeing the object as a unit independent of consciousness, when in reality it is identical with it.

Ignorance is the starting point of the twelve links of causes and effects are one of the basic teachings of Buddhism; the twelve links of causes and effects which explain the samsaric state of sentient beings' birth and death. The twelve links of "Cause and Effect" or "Karmic Causality" include: ignorance (unenlightenment), action (moving, activity, conception, disposition), consciousness, name and form, six organs (mắt, tai mũi, lưỡi, thân, ý/eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind, contact (touch), feeling or perception (sensation), thirst (desire or craving or attachment), grasping (laying hold of), being (existing or owning or possessing), birth, old age, illness and death. Because of ignorance, the mind is moved. This Moving is the second link. If the mind is moved, it will move everything. So everything else comes into being due to that initial Moving. Subsequent to this Moving, the third link of Consciousness arises. Owing to the consciousness wrong views arise, that's the fourth link. Because of the wrong views, arising the fifth link of Form and Name. Form (visible), Name (invisible) combine themselves together to form everything else and of course there arises the Six Roots or Six Senses. When the six senses come into contact with the internal and external, the sixth link of Contact arises. After the arising of Contact, Perception or Feeling is brought forth. When happiness, unhappiness, anger, love, jealousy, etc are all perceived, the eighth link of attachment arises. When we attached to our perceptions, we have a tendency to grasp on whatever we have. It's very difficult to detach ourselves from them, the ninth link of Grasping arises. We always grasp our feelings very strongly and never let go what we grasp in hands, the tenth link of Owning or Possessing arises to bind us tightly with the samsara. Subsequent to Owning, there will arise Birth (the eleventh link), Old Age, Illness and Death (the twelfth link).

Ignorance is also the starting point of the wheel turns around, the state of transmigration or samsara, where beings repeat cycles of birth and death according to the law of karma. What happens to us after death? Buddhism teaches that we remain for some time in the state of intermediate existence in this world after death, and when this time is over, in accordance with the karma that we have accumulated in our previous life, we are reborn in another appropriate world. Buddhism

also divides this other world into the following realms: hell, hungry ghosts, animals, demons, human beings, heavens, sravakas, pratyekabuddhas, bodhisattvas, and buddhas. If we die in an unenlightened state, our minds (consciousnesses) will return to the former state of ignorance, and we will be reborn in the six worlds of illusion and suffering, and will again reach old age and death through the stages mentioned above. And we will repeat this round over and over to an indefinite time. This perpetual repetition of birth and death is called “Transmigration.” But if we purify our minds by hearing the Buddha’s teachings and practicing the Bodhisattva-way, the state of ignorance is annihilated and our minds can be reborn in a better world. So, whether the world is Samsara or Nirvana depends entirely on our state of mind. If our mind is enlightened, then this world is Nirvana; if our mind is unenlightened, then this world is Samsara. Thus the Buddha taught: “For those who strive to cultivate, samsara is Nirvana, Nirvana is samsara.”

Besides, ignorance means regarding the self as real. In a Buddhist sense, it refers to lack of understanding of the four noble truths (Aryasatya), the effects of actions (karma), dependent arising (pratityasamutpada), and other key Buddhist doctrines. In other words, Avidya is noncognizance of the four noble truths, the three precious ones (triratna), and the law of karma, etc. Avidya is the first link of conditionality (pratityasampada), which leads to entanglement of the world of samsara and the root of all unwholesome in the world. This is the primary factor that enmeshes (làm vướng víu) beings in the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. In Madhyamaka, “Avidya” refers to the determination of the mind through ideas and concepts that permit beings to construct an ideal world that confers upon the everyday world its forms and manifold quality, and that thus block vision of reality. “Avidya” is thus the nonrecognition of the true nature of the world, which is empty (shunyata), and the mistaken understanding of the nature of phenomena. Thus “avidya” has a double function: ignorance veils the true nature and also constructs the illusory appearance. “Avidya” characterizes the conventional reality. For the Sautrantikas and Vaibhashikas, “Avidya” means seeing the world as unitary and enduring, whereas in reality it is manifold and impermanent. “Avidya” confers substantiality on the world and its appearances. In the

Yogachara's view, "avidya" means seeing the object as a unit independent of consciousness, when in reality it is identical with it. In Zen, ignorance is not seeing things as they really are. It is failing to understand the truth about life. As long as we have not develop our minds to obtain wisdom, we remain ignorant of the true nature of things. In short, delusion or ignorance is not seeing things as they really are. It is failing to understand the truth about life. As long as we have not develop our minds to obtain wisdom, we remain ignorant of the true nature of things. According to Buddhism, ignorance means regarding the self as real. Ignorance is the main cause of our non-enlightenment. Ignorance is only a false mark, so it is subject to production, extinction, increase, decrease, defilement, purity, and so on. Ignorance is the main cause of our birth, old age, worry, grief, misery, and sickness, and death. Ignorance of the way of escape from sufferings, one of the three affluences that feed the stream of mortality or transmigration. Sometimes ignorance means "Maya" or "Illusion." It means complete darkness without illumination. The ignorance which mistakes seeming for being, or illusory phenomena for realities. Ignorance is one of the three fires which must be allowed to die out before Nirvana is attained. The erroneous state of mind which arises from belief in self. Due to ignorance, people do not see things as they really are, and cannot distinguish between right and wrong. They become blind under the delusion of self, clinging to things which are impermanent, changeable, and perishable. Once anger arises, one has nothing but "ignorance."

To Cultivate to Eliminate Ignorance: In order to eliminate "ignorance," you should meditate on causality. All of our psychological problems are rooted in ignorance, in delusion. Ignorance is the crowning corruption. Our greeds, hates, conceits and a host of other defilements go hand in hand with our ignorance. The solutions are to be found in the problems themselves and hence we should not run away from our problems. Analyze and scrutinize the problems, and you will see that they are human problems, so do not attribute them to non-humans. Our real problems can be solved only by giving up illusions and false concepts and bringing our lives into harmony with reality and this can be done only through meditation. Just as the Buddha described in His discourses how He would exclaim, "Mara! I see you." Zen practitioners should remember that the purpose of disciplined

meditation practice is to eliminate ignorance, to open the essential nature of mind, and to stabilize awareness. Through meditation, we concentrate on things with an undistracted awareness. We are not thinking about anything, not analyzing, not getting lost in flux of things, but just seeing the nature of what is happening in the mind. Through practices of meditation, our mind becomes clearer and clearer; it is to say 'ignorance' is gradually eliminated through the course of meditation. If you think that your mind can only be opened by a certain master out there, you are never cultivating in accordance with Buddhism at all. If you think someone out there can eliminate ignorance for you, you are not a devout Buddhist.

To Replace Illusions With Insight & to Destroy Ignorance: Wisdom, one of the eight chief characteristics of 'satori.' In Zen. That there is a quality in mystic experience has been pointed out by James in his *Varieties of Religious Experience*, and this applies also to the Zen experience known as satori. Another name for satori is 'to see the essence or nature,' which apparently proves that there is 'seeing' or 'perceiving' in satori. That this seeing is of quite a different quality from what is ordinarily designated as knowledge need not be specifically noticed. Hui-K'o is reported to have made this statement concerning his satori which was confirmed by Bodhidharma himself: "As to my satori, it is not a total annihilation; it is knowledge of the most adequate kind; only it cannot be expressed in words." In this respect, Shen-Hui was more explicit, for he says that "The one character of knowledge is the source of all mysteries." Without this noetic quality satori will lose all its pungency, for it is really the reason of satori itself. It is noteworthy that the knowledge contained in satori is concerned with something universal and at the same time with the individual aspect of existence. When a finger is lifted, the lifting means, from the viewpoint of satori, far more than the act of lifting. Some may call it symbolic, but satori does not point to anything beyond itself, being final as it is. Satori is the knowledge of an individual object and also that of Reality which is, if we may say so, at the back of it.

Master Mohnyin Sayadaw was one of the most outstanding meditation masters in Burmese Buddhism in the modern time. According to the master, meditators should become familiar with the

most basic concepts of the Abhidharma before undertaking practice. This prior knowledge will help them direct attention to the true nature of all phenomena in a precise and clear way. The most essential concepts one should understand before meditation are descriptions those ultimate realities that make up our seemingly solid and continuous world. The elements as we perceive them, consciousness, the sense organs and their objects, and the corporeal groups of matter, appear to us as a solid world because of their rapid change. It is by examining the arising and dissolution of these groups and elements and consciousness in the body and the mind that the meditator develops true insight knowledge. As this deepens, he sees all perceivable events as fleeting and unsubstantial, no place to cling or look for happiness. No longer fooled by their nature, no longer clinging, he experiences true liberation. Therefore, meditators should always remember that all physical phenomena are destructible, impersonal, and non-substantial. In the same manner, all mental phenomena are impersonal and non-substantial. The ultimate truths exist in all physical and mental phenomena and can be seen when we examine their functions and properties. However, these truths are hard to see because of our own concepts, because of illusion we have of solidity or permanence in the physical and mental world. And this true knowledge can only be perceived through direct experience in the meditation. A meditator who contemplates the arising and vanishing of phenomena at every posture during the four modes of deportment will eventually realize that the mental and physical phenomena having arisen disappear immediately and the new formations of existence arise in place of the older ones, just as sesame seeds are disintegrated with craking sounds when heated in a frying pan. During the practice of Vipassana at the point where the practitioner can clearly perceive the arising and vanishing of all phenomena, there arises in him the defilements of insight. These are especially likely to arise in the meditator who has been practicing Vipassana combined with tranquility or concentration meditation. Some of the subtle defilements that arise are attachment to the rapture, tranquility, happiness, energy, awareness, equanimity, and delight that arise in him. These subtle attachments or defilements are overcome when the meditator realizes that none of them are the true path to the cessation of suffering, and that he must relinquish his

attachment and simply continue contemplating clearly the process of all phenomena arising and vanishing. So, in practicing the Vipassana meditation according to these instructions, a meditating disciple will find that by paying constant attention to the characteristics of the alterations, displacements, disturbances, modes of changing of body and mind, he is developing his mental faculties in such a way that the deep insight experienced by him will be free from both eternity and annihilation beliefs. His insight will dispel the following illusions: 1) the idea of permanence, 2) the idea of worldly happiness, 3) the idea of ego or fixed personality, 4) the idea of pleasure in lust, 5) greed, 6) becoming, 7) grasping, 8) the idea of compactness or solidity, 9) wrong view about karma formations, 10) the idea of stability, 11) the conditions of becoming, 12) delight, 13) clinging, 14) grasping and adherence to the idea of substance, 15) adherence to delusion regarding the ego and the world, 16) attachment, 17) thoughtlessness, and 18) getting entangled in any aspect of body or mind. These are the fruits of proper Vipassana practice. This truth will lead to escape from old age, sickness, death, and rebirth.

III. To Cultivate Wisdom Until Achieving the Wisdom of Emancipation of Reaching the Other Shore (The Prajna-Paramita Emancipation):

An Overview of Prajna-Paramita: In Buddhism, the sixth paramita is Prajna-Paramita or “wisdom.” Wisdom means the right way of seeing things and the power of discerning the true aspects of all things. Wisdom is the ability both to discern the differences among all things and to see the truth common to them. In short, wisdom is the ability to realize that anybody can become a Buddha. The Buddha’s teachings stress that we cannot discern all things in the world correctly until we are completely endowed with the ability to know both distinction and equality. We cannot save others without having wisdom, because even though we want to do good to others but we don’t have adequate knowledge on what should be done and what should not be done, we may end up doing some harm to others. There is no corresponding English word for prajna, in fact, no European word, for it, for European people have no experience specifically equivalent to prajna. Prajna is the experience a man has when he feels in its most fundamental sense

the infinite totality of things, that is, psychologically speaking, when the finite ego, breaking its hard crust, refers itself to the infinite which envelops everything that is finite and limited and therefore transitory. We may take this experience as being somewhat akin to a totalistic intuition of something that transcends all our particularized, specified experiences.

The difference between Buddhi and Jnana is sometimes difficult to point out definitively, for they both signify worldly relative knowledge as well as transcendental knowledge. While Prajna is distinctly pointing out the transcendental wisdom. Knowledge paramita or knowledge of the true definition of all dharmas. The cultivation of the Bodhisattva's intellectual and spiritual journey comes with his ascent to the Jnana Paramita, then immediately preceding his transformation into a fully awakened Buddha. The most significant event in this level and the paramount symbol of the Bodhisattva's highest accomplishment, is entrance into a meditative state of balanced concentration immersed in non-dualistic knowledge of emptiness. This event is represented by his initiation into the omniscience of a perfect Buddha, which is quintessential perfection. Knowledge perfection or Prajna paramita has an analysis quality which does not seem to figure as a specific characteristic of non-dualistic knowledge developed by the Bodhisattva at the stage of Jnana Paramita. So, whereas Jnana refers more to intellectual knowledge, Prajna paramita has more to do with intuition.

The prajna-paramita or paramita wisdom means the right way of seeing things and the power of discerning the true aspects of all things. Wisdom is the ability both to discern the differences among all things and to see the truth common to them. In short, wisdom is the ability to realize that anybody can become a Buddha. The Buddha's teachings stress that we cannot discern all things in the world correctly until we are completely endowed with the ability to know both distinction and equality. We cannot save others without having wisdom, because even though we want to do good to others but we don't have adequate knowledge on what should be done and what should not be done, we may end up doing some harm to others. There is no corresponding English word for prajna, in fact, no European word, for it, for European people have no experience specifically equivalent to prajna. Prajna is the experience a man has when he feels in its most fundamental sense

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Wisdom-paramita or the path of wisdom means transcendental knowledge. This is what constitutes enlightenment; it is an intuition into the power to discern reality or truth, or into the ultimate truth of things, by gaining which one is released from the bondage of existence, and becomes master of one's self. Wisdom Paramita is used to destroy ignorance and stupidity. The prajna-paramita is a gate of Dharma-illumination; for with it, we eradicate the darkness of ignorance. Devout Buddhists should always remember that the opposite of Wisdom is Ignorance and the reward from Wisdom is discrimination or powers of exposition of the truth. The prajna-paramita is the wisdom which enables one to reach the other shore, i.e. wisdom for salvation; the highest of the six paramitas, the virtue of wisdom as the principal means of attaining nirvana. It connotes a knowledge of the illusory character of everything earthly, and destroys error, ignorance, prejudice, and heresy. Among the basic desires and passions, ignorance has the deepest roots. When these roots are loosened, all other desires and passions, greed, anger, attachment, arrogance, doubt, and wrong views are also uprooted. The prajna wisdom which enables one to reach the other shore, i.e. wisdom for salvation; the highest of the six paramitas, the virtue of wisdom as the principal means of attaining nirvana. It connotes a knowledge of the illusory character of everything earthly, and destroys error, ignorance, prejudice, and heresy. In order to obtain wisdom-paramita, practitioner must make a great effort to meditate on the truths of impermanence, no-self, and the dependent origination of all things. Once the roots of ignorance are severed, we can not only liberate ourselves, but also teach and guide foolish beings to break through the imprisonment of birth and death.

Cultivation of the Prajna-Paramita in the Heart Sutra: The Heart of the Prajna-Paramita-Sutra or Heart Sutra, the shortest of the forty sutras that constitute the Prajanparamita-sutra. It is one of the most important sutras of Mahayana Buddhism. The sutra is especially

emphasized on emptiness (Shunyata). It is recited so frequently in the temple that most Buddhists chant it from memory. One of the most famous sentences in the sutra is “Form is no other than emptiness; emptiness is no other than form,” an affirmation that is frequently referred to in Zen. The Prajna-Paramita Heart Sutra literally means “the wisdom that leads to the other shore.” The sutra was translated into Chinese by Hsuan-Tsang. The Heart Sutra is one of the smallest sutras, contained in the Vast Prajnaparamita. The full title of this sutra is “Heart of Prajna Paramita Sutra.” Probably the most popular sutra in the world today. The Heart Sutra explains the meaning of “Prajna Paramita,” the perfection of wisdom that enables one to perceive clearly the emptiness of self and of all phenomena. The Heart Sutra is the heart of the perfection of wisdom; it is also the heart of the entire family of “Prajna Paramita Sutras.” According to Zen Master D. T. Suzuki in *Essays in Zen Buddhism, Volume III*, what superficially strikes us most while perusing the text of the Hridaya or Heart Sutra of the Prajnaparamita is that it is almost nothing else but a series of negations, and that what is known as Emptiness is pure negativism which ultimately reduces all things into nothingness. The conclusion will then be that the Prajnaparamita or rather its practice consists in negating all things... And at the end of all these negations, there is neither knowledge nor attainment of any sort. Attainment means to be conscious of and be attached to an understanding which is the result of relative reasoning. As there is no attainment of this nature, the mind is entirely free from all obstructions, that is, errors and confusions which arise from intellectualization, and also from the obstruction that are rooted in our cognitive and affective consciousness, such as fears and worries, joys and sorrows, abandonments, and infatuations. When this is realized, Nirvana is reached. Nirvana and enlightenment are one. Thus from the Prajnaparamita arise all the Buddhas of the past, present, and future. The Prajnaparamita is the mother of Buddhahood and Bodhisattvahood, which is reiterated throughout the Prajnaparamita literature. The period of Prajnaparamita-Sutra or Lotus-Sutra was one of the five periods of the Buddha’s teachings. The Time of Wisdom mainly teaches the Round Doctrine and yet is linked with the Common and Distinct Doctrines. Therefore, it is not quite perfect or complete. This phase lasted twenty-two years, in which the Buddha

expounded a higher level of provisional Mahayana and refuted his disciples' attachment to the distinction between Theravada and Mahayana by teaching the doctrine non-substantiality or emptiness. He taught the teachings of shunyata in the Prajnaparamita-sutra.

Wisdom of Emancipation of Reaching the Other Shore in The Avatamsaka Sutra (Prajna-Paramita Emancipation): According to the Avatamsaka Sutra, there is only one kind of paramita that is the Wisdom of Emancipation of Reaching the Other Shore or Prajna-Paramita Emancipation. One day, Sudhana asked Sucandra: "How does one come to the Prajna-paramita emancipation face to face? How does one get this realization?" Sucandra answered: "A man comes to this emancipation face to face when his mind is awakened to Prajnaparamita and stands in a most intimate relationship to it; for then he attains self-realization in all that he perceives and understands." Sudhana asked: "Does one attain self-realization by listening to the talks and discourses on Prajnaparamita?" Sucandra replied: "That is not so. Because Prajnaparamita sees intimately into the truth and reality of all things." Sudhana asked: Is it not that thinking comes from hearing and that by thinking and reasoning one comes to perceive what Suchness is? And is this not self-realization?" Sucandra said: "That is not so. Self-realization never comes from mere listening and thinking. O son of a good family, I will illustrate the matter by analogy. Listen! In a great desert there are no springs or wells; in the spring time or summer time when it is warm, a traveller comes from the west going eastward; he meets a man coming from the east and asks him: 'I am terribly thirsty, please tell me where I can find a spring and a cool refreshing shade where I may drink, bathe, rest, and get revived.' The man from the east gives the traveller, as desired, all the information in detail, saying: 'When you go further east the road divides itself into two, right and left. You take the right one, and going steadily further on you will surely come to a fine spring and a refreshing shade. Now, son of a good family, do you think that the thirsty traveller from the west, listening to the talk about the spring and the shady trees, and thinking of going to that place as quickly as possible, can be relieved of thirst and heat and get refreshed? Sudhana replied: "No, he cannot; because he is relieved of thirst and heat and gets refreshed only when, as directed by the other, he actually reaches the fountain and drinks of it

and bathes in it." Sucandra added: "Son of a good family, even so with the Bodhisattva. By merely listening to it, thinking of it, and intellectually understanding it, you will never come to the realization of any truth. Son of a good family, the desert means birth and death; the man from the west means all sentient beings; the heat means all forms of confusion; thirst is greed and lust; the man from the east who knows the way is the Buddha or the Bodhisattva who, abiding in all-knowledge has penetrated into the true nature of all things and the reality of sameness; to quench the thirst and to be relieved of the heat by drinking of the refreshing fountain means the realization of the truth by oneself. Sucandra added: "O son of a good family, the realm of self-realization where all the wise ones are living is free from materiality, free from purities as well as from defilements, free from grasped and grasping, free from murky confusion; it is most excellently pure and in its nature indestructible; whether the Buddha appears on earth or not, it retains its eternal oneness in the Dharmadhatu. O son of a good family, the Bodhisattva because of this truth has disciplined himself in innumerable forms of austerities, and realizing this Reality within himself has been able to benefit all beings so that they find herein the ultimate abode of safety. O son of a good family, truth of self-realization is validity itself, something unique, reality-limit, the substance of all-knowledge, the inconceivable, non-dualistic Dharmadhatu, and the perfection of emancipation." Thus, to Prajnaparamita emancipation must be personally experienced by us, and that mere hearing about it, mere learning of it, does not help us to penetrate into the inner nature of Reality itself.

To Cultivate Wisdom Until Achieving the Wisdom of the Other Shore: Prajna, a Sanskrit term, is ordinarily translated as "knowledge" in English, but to be exact "intuition" may be better. It is sometimes translated as "transcendental wisdom." The fact is even when we have an intuition, the object is still in front of us and we sense it, or perceive it, or see it. Here is a dichotomy of subject and object. In prajna this dichotomy no longer exists. Prajna is not concerned with finite objects as such; it is the totality of things becoming conscious of itself as such. And this totality is not at all limited. An infinite totality is beyond our ordinary human comprehension. But the prajna-intuition is this "incomprehensible" totalistic intuition of the infinite, which is

something that can never take place in our daily experience limited to finite objects or events. The prajna, therefore, can take place, in other words, only when finite objects of sense and intellect are identified with the infinite itself. Instead of saying that the infinite sees itself, it is much closer to our human experience to say that an object regarded as finite, as belonging in the dichotomous world of subject and object, is perceived by prajna from the point of view of infinity. Symbolically, the finite then sees itself reflected in the mirror of infinity. The intellect informs us that the object is finite, but prajna contradicts, declaring it to be the infinite beyond the realm of relativity. Ontologically, this means that all finite objects or beings are possible because of the infinite underlying them, or that the objects are relatively and therefore limitedly laid out in the field of infinity without which they have no moorings. There are two kinds of prajna. First, temporal wisdom. Second, supernatural wisdom. There are also original wisdom and contemplative wisdom. Original wisdom is the first part of the Prajnaparamita. Contemplative wisdom is the second part of the Prajnaparamita, or the wisdom acquired from cultivation or contemplation. There are also prajna of the three stages of Sravaka and Pratyeka-buddha and the imperfect bodhisattva sect. The prajna of the perfect bodhisattva teaching. Prajna means “Enlightened wisdom,” the wisdom which enables one to reach the other shore, i.e. wisdom for salvation; the highest of the six paramitas, the virtue of wisdom as the principal means of attaining nirvana. It connotes a knowledge of the illusory character of everything earthly, and destroys error, ignorance, prejudice, and heresy. There are three prajnas or perfect enlightenments. The first part of the prajnaparamita. The wisdom achieved once crossed the shore. The second part of the prajnaparamita. The necessary wisdom for actual crossing the shore of births and deaths. Third, the wisdom of knowing things in their temporary and changing condition. The necessary wisdom for vowing to cross the shore of births and deaths.

According to the Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch’s Dharma Treasure, the Sixth Patriarch, Hui-Neng, taught: “Good Knowing Advisors, Maha Prajna Paramita is a Sanskrit word which means ‘great wisdom which has arrived at the other shore.’ It must be practiced in the mind, and not just recited in words. When the mouth recites and the

mind does not practice, it is like an illusion, a transformation, dew drops, or lightning. However, when the mouth recites and the mind practices, then mind and mouth are in mutual accord. One's own original nature is Buddha; apart from the nature there is no other Buddha. Good Knowing Advisors, what is meant by 'Prajna?' Prajna in our language means wisdom. Everywhere and at all times, in thought after thought, remain undeluded and practice wisdom constantly; that is Prajna conduct. Prajna is cut off by a single deluded thought. By one wise thought, Prajna is produced. Worldly men, deluded and confused, do not see Prajna. They speak of it with their mouths, but their minds are always deluded. They constantly say of themselves, 'I cultivate Prajna!' And though they continually speak of emptiness, they are unaware of true emptiness. Prajna, without form or mark, is just the wisdom of the mind. If thus explained, this is Prajna wisdom. Prajna is a Sanskrit term which means wisdom. There are three kinds of prajna: real mark prajna, contemplative prajna, and literary prajna. Prajna also means the real power to discern things and their underlying principles and to decide the doubtful. The Prajna-paramita-sutra describes "prajna" as supreme, highest, incomparable, unequalled, unsurpassed. Prajna means real wisdom or transcendental wisdom. According to the Mahayana Buddhism, only an immediate experienced intuitive wisdom, not intelligence can help man reach enlightenment. Therefore, to achieve prajna is synonymous with to reach enlightenment. One of the two perfections required for Buddhahood—The wisdom which enables us to transcend desire, attachment and anger so that we will be emancipated (not through the mercy of any body, but rather through our own power of will and wisdom) and so that we will not be reborn again and again in "samsara" or transmigration.

Cultivation of wisdom is correcting our erroneous thoughts, speech, and actions. However, in order to be able to do this, what methods should we cultivate? It should be reminded that all methods of cultivations were once taught to all disciples by the Buddha. In this case, the most effective ways are discipline and meditation. Buddhist rules are external rules that set out by the Buddha, but observation of these rules is coming from the willingness very deep inside of each one of us. While meditation will help us to purify our mind. The standards that the Buddha once set out are very important, but the observation or

practice of these standards is much more important, for owing to the practice we can attain the real wisdom. At anywhere and at all time, Devout Buddhists' actions must be in accordance with "Prajna" at all time. Worldly people always brag with their mouths, but their minds are always deluded. This is one of the three kinds of Prajna, the prajna or wisdom of meditative enlightenment on reality, for prajna is wisdom for salvation, and through wisdom is the mother or source of all Buddhas. Prajna is the spear of wisdom, which is able to cut off illusion and evil. Prajna is the intuitive understanding. In general, this refers to the development of intuitive understanding of key Buddhist concepts. According to the Mahayana Buddhism, the "prajna paramita" or the "perfection of wisdom" is the sixth of the perfections that a Bodhisattva cultivates on the path to Buddhahood, and only an immediate experienced intuitive wisdom, not intelligence can help man reach enlightenment. Therefore, to achieve prajna is synonymous with to reach enlightenment. One of the two perfections required for Buddhahood. The wisdom which enables us to transcend desire, attachment and anger so that we will be emancipated (not through the mercy of any body, but rather through our own power of will and wisdom) and so that we will not be reborn again and again in "samsara" or transmigration. Prajna is abruptly seeing. Prajna is really a dialectical term denoting that this special process of knowing, known as "abruptly seeing," or "seeing at once," does not follow general laws of logic; for when prajna functions one finds oneself all of a sudden, as if by a miracle, facing Sunyata, the emptiness of all things. This does not take place as the result of reasoning, but when reasoning has been abandoned as futile, and psychologically when the will-power is brought to a finish. The use of prajna contradicts everything that we may conceive of things worldly; it is altogether of another order than our usual life. But this does not mean that Prajna is something altogether disconnected with our life and thought, something that is to be given to us by a miracle from some unknown and unknowable source. If this were the case, prajna would be of no possible use to us. It is true that the functioning of Prajna is discrete, and interrupting to the progress of logical reasoning, but all the time it underlies it, and without Prajna we cannot have any reasoning whatever. Prajna is at once above and in the process of reasoning. This is a contradiction,

formally considered, but in truth this contradiction itself is made possible because of Prajna.

That most of religious literature is filled with contradictions, absurdities, paradoxes, and impossibilities, and demands to believe them, to accept them, as revealed truths, is due to the fact that religious knowledge is based on the working of Prajna. Once this viewpoint of Prajna is gained, all the essential irrationalities found in religion become intelligible. It is like appreciating a fine piece of brocade. On the surface there is an almost bewildering confusion of beauty, and the professional fails to trace the intricacies of the threads. But as soon as it is turned over all the intricate beauty and skill is revealed. Prajna consists in this turning-over. The eye has hitherto followed the surface of the cloth, which is indeed the only side ordinarily allows us to survey. Now the cloth is abruptly turned over; the course of the eyesight is suddenly interrupted; no continuous gazing is possible. Yet by this interruption, or rather disruption, the whole scheme of life is suddenly grasped; there is the "seeing into one's self-nature." It is Prajna which lays its hands on Emptiness, or Suchness, or self-nature. And this laying-hands-on is not what it seems. This is self-evident from what has already been said concerning things relative. Because the self-nature is beyond the realm of relativity, its being grasped by Prajna cannot mean a grasping in its ordinary sense. The grasping must be no-grasping, a paradoxical statement which is inevitable. To use Buddhist terminology, this grasping is accomplished by non-discrimination; that is, by discrete, an act of the conscious; not an unconscious act but an act rising from self-nature itself, which is the unconscious.

Prajna must once be awakened in self-nature; for unless this is experienced we shall never have a chance of knowing the Buddha not only in ourselves but in others. But this awakening is no particular deed performed in the realm of empirical consciousness, and for this reason it is like a lunar reflection in the stream; it is neither continuous nor discrete; it is beyond birth and death; even when it is said to be born, it knows no birth; even when it is said to have passed away, it knows no passing away; it is only when no-mind-ness or the Unconscious is seen that there are discourses never discoursed, that there are acts that never acted. According to the Sixth Patriarch Hui Neng in the Platform

Sutra, Prajna is awakened in self-nature abruptly, and the term “abrupt” not only means ‘instantaneously’, ‘unexpectedly’ or ‘suddenly’, but signifies the idea that the act of awakening which is seeing is not a conscious deed on the part of self-nature. In other words, Prajna flashes from the Unconscious and yet never leaves it; it remains unconscious of it. This is the sense of saying that “seeing is no-seeing, and no-seeing is seeing,” and that the Unconscious or self-nature becomes conscious of itself by means of Prajna, and yet in this consciousness there is no separation of subject and object. Therefore, Hui-Neng says: “One who understands this truth is without thought, without memory, and without attachment.” But we must remember that Hui-Neng never advocated the doctrine of mere nothingness, or mere-doing-nothing-ness, nor assumed an unknown quantity in the solution of life. Also according to Hui-Neng, Prajna is the name given to self-nature, or the Unconscious, as we call it, when it becomes conscious of itself, or rather to the act itself of becoming conscious. Prajna therefore points in two directions to the Unconscious and to the world of consciousness which is now unfolded. The one is call the Prajna of non-discrimination and the other the Prajna of discrimination. When we are so deeply involved in the outgoing direction of consciousness and discrimination as to forget the other direction of Prajna pointing to the Unconscious, we have what is technically known as “Prapanca,” imagination. Or we may state this conversely: when imagination asserts itself, Prajna is hidden, and discrimination has its own sway, and the pure, undefiled surface of the Unconscious or self-nature is now dimmed. The advocates of “no-thought” or “no-mind” want us to preserve Prajna from going astray in the direction of discrimination, and to have our eyes looking steadily in the other direction. To attain “no-mind” means to recover, objectively speaking, the Prajna or non-discrimination. When this idea is developed in more detail we shall comprehend the significance of “no-mind” in Zen thought.

Once resolving in cultivation of wisdom, practitioners must make up the mind to cultivate until attaining the wisdom of the other shore. Once Buddhist practitioners enter the prajna-paramita or the wisdom that connotes a knowledge of the illusory character of everything earthly, and destroys error, ignorance, prejudice, and heresy. The prajna-paramita is a gate of Dharma-illumination; for with it, we

eradicate the darkness of ignorance. Among the basic desires and passions, ignorance has the deepest roots. When these roots are loosened, all other desires and passions, greed, anger, attachment, arrogance, doubt, and wrong views are also uprooted. In order to obtain wisdom-paramita, practitioner must make a great effort to meditate on the truths of impermanence, no-self, and the dependent origination of all things. Once the roots of ignorance are severed, we can not only liberate ourselves, but also teach and guide foolish beings to break through the imprisonment of birth and death. The cultivation of the Bodhisattva's intellectual and spiritual journey comes with his ascent to the Jnana Paramita, then immediately preceding his transformation into a fully awakened Buddha. The most significant event in this level and the paramount symbol of the Bodhisattva's highest accomplishment, is entrance into a meditative state of balanced concentration immersed in non-dualistic knowledge of emptiness. This event is represented by his initiation into the omniscience of a perfect Buddha, which is quintessential perfection. Knowledge perfection or Prajna paramita has an analysis quality which does not seem to figure as a specific characteristic of non-dualistic knowledge developed by the Bodhisattva at the stage of Jnana Paramita. So, whereas Jnana refers more to intellectual knowledge, Prajna paramita has more to do with intuition.

At the time, practitioners will possess the right way of seeing things and the power of discerning the true aspects of all things. Wisdom is the ability both to discern the differences among all things and to see the truth common to them. In short, wisdom is the ability to realize that anybody can become a Buddha. The Buddha's teachings stress that we cannot discern all things in the world correctly until we are completely endowed with the ability to know both distinction and equality. We cannot save others without having wisdom, because even though we want to do good to others but we don't have adequate knowledge on what should be done and what should not be done, we may end up doing some harm to others. There is no corresponding English word for prajna, in fact, no European word, for it, for European people have no experience specifically equivalent to prajna. Prajna is the experience a man has when he feels in its most fundamental sense the infinite totality of things, that is, psychologically speaking, when the finite ego, breaking its hard crust, refers itself to the infinite which envelops

everything that is finite and limited and therefore transitory. We may take this experience as being somewhat akin to a totalistic intuition of something that transcends all our particularized, specified experiences.

In cultivating wisdom, practitioner must make a great effort to meditate on the truths of impermanence, no-self, and the dependent origination of all things. Buddhist practitioners must strive to cultivate very until the roots of ignorance are severed, we can not only liberate ourselves, but also teach and guide foolish beings to break through the imprisonment of birth and death. Wisdom-paramita is an intuition into the power to discern reality or truth, or into the ultimate truth of things, by gaining which one is released from the bondage of existence, and becomes master of one's self. Wisdom Paramita is used to destroy ignorance and stupidity. The prajna-paramita is a gate of Dharma-illumination; for with it, we eradicate the darkness of ignorance. Among the basic desires and passions, ignorance has the deepest roots. When these roots are loosened, all other desires and passions, greed, anger, attachment, arrogance, doubt, and wrong views are also uprooted. The prajna wisdom which enables one to reach the other shore, i.e. wisdom for salvation; the highest of the six paramitas, the virtue of wisdom as the principal means of attaining nirvana. It connotes a knowledge of the illusory character of everything earthly, and destroys error, ignorance, prejudice, and heresy.

In short, ignorance is the root of birth and death, only living and cultivating in accordance with the fifth awakening of great people: cultivating on the prajna-paramita (paramita wisdom), then practitioners can dispel illusion, get rid of ignorance and eventually reach the other shore. In our daily life, illusion arising from primal ignorance which covers and hinders the truth. Those who want to live and cultivate in accordance with the Fifth Awakening in the Sutra of the Eight Awakenings of Great People should always be aware that ignorance is the cause of the endless cycle of birth and death. Therefore, Bodhisattvas always listen and learn in order to develop their understanding and eloquence. This enables them to educate living beings and bring them to the realm of great joy. Stupidity and ignorance are the cause of death and rebirth, Bodhisattvas are always attentive to and appreciative of extensive study and erudition. They strive to expand their wisdom and refine their eloquence. Teaching and transforming living beings, nothing brings them greater joy than this.

Chapter Eighteen

Living & Cultivating In Accordance With the Sixth Awakening of Great People: Impartial Almsgiving

I. An Overview & Meanings of the Sixth Awakening in the Sutra of Eight Awakenings of Great People:

In fact, each of the eight items in this sutra can be considered as a subject of meditation which Buddhist disciples should at all times, by day and by night, with a sincere attitude, recite and keep in mind these eight truths that all great people awaken to. These are eight Truths that all Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and great people awaken to. After awakening, they then energetically cultivate the Way. By steeping themselves in kindness and compassion, they grow wisdom. They sail the Dharma-body ship all the way across to Nirvana's other shore, only to re-enter the sea of death and rebirth to rescue all living beings. They use these Eight Truths to point out the right road to all beings and in this way, help them to recognize the anguish of death and rebirth. They inspire all to cast off and forsake the Five Desires, and instead to cultivate their minds in the way of all Sages. If Buddhist disciples recite this Sutra on the Eight Awakenings, and constantly ponder its meaning and cultivate them at all times, they will certainly eradicate boundless offenses, advance toward Bodhi, quickly realize Proper Enlightenment, forever be free of death and rebirth, and eternally abide in joy. Every one of us knows what we deeply aspire to gain is happiness and what we try to avoid is sufferings and afflictions; however, our actions and behaviors in daily life do not bring us any joy and happiness; on the contrary, they only lead us to more sufferings and afflictions. Why? Buddhism believes that we cause our own sufferings and afflictions because we are not awakening of the truth.

In the 1970s, Most Venerable Thích Thanh Từ translated from Chinese into Vietnamese, the original text of *The Sixth Awakening* as follows:

The suffering of poverty breeds deep resentment.
Wealth unfairly distributed creates ill-will
and conflict among people.

So, Bodhisattvas practice giving
and treat friend and foe alike.
They neither harbor grudges
nor despite evil-natured people.

***II. Living & Cultivating In Accordance With the Sixth
Awakening of Great People: Impartial Almsgiving & Not
Discriminating Among Sentient Beings:***

As mentioned above, in the sixth awakening, practitioners should always be awakened that poverty creates hatred and anger, which creates a vicious cycle of negative thoughts and activity. When practicing generosity, Bodhisattvas consider everyone, friends and enemies alike, as equal. They do not condemn anyone's past wrongdoings, nor do they hate those who are presently causing harm. The suffering of poverty breeds deep resentment; wealth unfairly distributed creates ill-will and conflict among people. So, Bodhisattvas practice giving and treat friend and foe alike. They neither harbor grudges nor despite evil-natured people. Impartial giving means giving that does not discriminate among sentient beings. It means practitioners are living and cultivating in accordance with the sixth awakening of great people. ***Giving Dana With Good Heart:*** According to Buddhist teachings, there are twelve kinds of people who have truly good heart and genuine giving. *First*, benefit others without asking for anything in return. *Second*, help others without wishing for something in return. *Third*, make offerings to others without wishing for compensation, not even to be thanked. *Fourth*, lower themselves, or less emphasis on self-importance, so others' wishes will be fully realized. *Fifth*, let go of things that are difficult to let go. *Sixth*, tolerate things that are difficult to tolerate. *Seventh*, accomplish things that are difficult to accomplish. *Eighth*, rescue when it is difficult to rescue. *Ninth*, not to discriminate between relatives or strangers, but maintain an equal and fair mind in helping others as well as carrying out conducts that are proper to the truths. *Tenth*, speak of goodness, then they should be able to "make good" what they say. This means speech and action are consistent with one another. *Eleventh*, have kind and gentle souls, who often carry out wholesome conducts without boasting to everyone. *Twelfth*, have only

intent is simply to help others. Otherwise, they do not hope for fame, praise, notoriety or for self-benefits.

Dana and Being Repaid In Buddhist Point of View: In the eighth rule of the Ten Non-Seeking Practices, the Buddha taught: we should not wish to be repaid for our good deeds, lest we develop a calculating mind. This leads to greed for fame and fortune. In fact, according to Buddhist teachings, we, Buddhists, should grant people favours without wishing to be repaid for good deeds. Doing good deeds with an intention of getting repayment will lead to greed for fame and fortune. In Buddhist scriptures, the Buddha always reminded the four assemblies regarding dana with wish be repaid for good deeds, good results in the human and deva worlds, and real dana in Buddhism. *First*, Buddhists performed charity with generosity and with a pure mind which is freed from greed, hatred, and delusion can produce good results in the human world and the world of celestial beings. A person of generosity can be reborn in the realm of the devas and stay there for so long; however, the benefit of mundane result is still within the cycle of birth and death. *Second*, usually people wish be repaid when granting or doing someone a favour. However, in Buddhism, when giving charity, one does not cherish the thought that he is the giver, and sentient beings are the receivers, what is given and how much is given, thus, in one's mind no arrogance and self-conceit would arise. This is an unconditioned alms-giving or compassion on equity basis. The Buddha taught: "One should not wish to be repaid for good deeds. Doing good deeds with an intention of getting repayment will lead to greed for fame and fortune." If you do good, then do it for the sake of doing service to some other beings. The happiness which arises in your mind together with the performance of the good deed is itself an extremely big reward.

Real Almsgiving: Real Almsgiving means correct donation. The Buddha always reminded the four assemblies regarding dana with wish be repaid for good deeds, good results in the human and deva worlds, and real dana in Buddhism. *First*, Buddhists performed charity with generosity and with a pure mind which is freed from greed, hatred, and delusion can produce good results in the human world and the world of celestial beings. A person of generosity can be reborn in the realm of the deva and stay there for so long; however, the benefit of mundane

result is still within the cycle of birth and death. Second, usually people wish be repaid when granting or doing someone a favour. However, in Buddhism, when giving charity, one does not cherish the thought that he is the giver, and sentient beings are the receivers, what is given and how much is given, thus, in one's mind no arrogance and self-conceit would arise. This is an unconditioned alms-giving or compassion on equality basis. The Buddha taught: "One should not wish to be repaid for good deeds. Doing good deeds with an intention of getting repayment will lead to greed for fame and fortune." If you do good, then do it for the sake of doing service to some other beings. The happiness which arises in your mind together with the performance of the good deed is itself an extremely big reward.

In Japan, once there was a wealthy man, Hei-zayemon by name, who strove to realize in his life the virtues commended by ancient sages. An earnest and studious man, Hei-zayemon used to spend liberally of his wealth in acts of benevolence, charity, and welfare. Many infants of impoverished families were rescued by his intervention, and he personally financed the construction of numerous bridges and roads in his province for the convenience of the people. When he died, Hei-zayemon stipulated in his will that his bequest should be used to continue relief work through the generations, and this was honored by his children and grandchildren. One day, they say, there appeared at the door of Hei-zayemon a certain Buddhist friar. It seems that this clergyman had heard of the wealthy man's selfless benevolence, unusual among the rich of his time, and had come to ask him for money to build a temple gate. The philanthropist laughed in the friar's face and said, "I help people because I cannot bear to see them suffer. What's so bad about a temple without a gate?" Sincere Buddhists should understand clearly about correct donation.

Boundless and No Attachment Giving: Giving also includes boundless giving and no attachment in acts of charity. Boundless giving will bring the benefactors infinite and endless meritorious retributions. There are five categories of boundless giving. *First*, give to the Buddha. *Second*, give to the Sangha, or community of ordained Buddhist monks or nuns. *Third*, give to those who speak and elucidate the Proper Dharma. *Fourth*, give to one's father. *Fifth*, give to one's mother. The Sanskrit term Apratisthita means thoughts that are mindful

but not abiding on anything. The complete sentence which the Buddha taught Subhuti as follows: “Do not act on sight. Do not act on sound, smell, taste, touch or Dharma. One should act without attachments.” According to the Diamond Sutra, a Bodhisattva should produce a thought which is nowhere supported, or a thought awakened without abiding in anything whatever. Also according to the Diamond Sutra, the Buddha reminded Subhuti about “acts of charity without attachment” as follows: “Subhuti! Bodhisattvas in truth have no attachment in acts of charity. One should not attach to sight while giving. One should not attach to sound, smell, taste, touch, or consciousness in giving. Subhuti ! Bodhisattvas should give without attachment. Why ? If they do, the merits and virtues are immeasurable. Also, Subhuti! Bodhisattvas who give without attachment have equal amounts of merit and virtue. It is incomprehensible and immeasurable. Subhuti! If Bodhisattvas give with attachments, they are walking in darkness and see nothing. If Bodhisattvas give without attachments, they are walking under the sun and everything is clear.”

Paramita-Charitable Giving: According to the Sanskrit language, Paramita means the accumulated force of purity within the mind. Each time our mind is free of greed, hatred and delusion, it has a certain purifying force in the flow of consciousness. On our path of cultivation, we need a continuous flow of consciousness so that we can cross-over the samsara world. For Buddhist practitioners, when there is a great accumulation of the factors of non-greed, non-hatred, and non-delusion, the “Paramita” become forceful and result in all kinds of happiness including the highest happiness of enlightenment. The six paramitas are six things that ferry one beyond the sea of birth and death. In addition, the Six Paramitas are also the doctrine of saving all living beings. The six paramitas are also sometimes called the cardinal virtues of a Bodhisattva. Six Paramitas mean the six things that ferry one beyond the sea of mortality to nirvana. Six stages of spiritual perfection followed by the Bodhisattva in his progress to Buddhahood. The six virtues of perfection are not only characteristic of Mahayana Buddhism in many ways, they also contain virtues commonly held up as cardinal by all religious systems. They consist of the practice and highest possible development. Thus, practicing the six paramitas will lead the practitioner to cross over from the shore of the unenlightened

to the dock of enlightenment. The cultivation of Paramita is popular for both Mahayana and Theravada Buddhism. However, while in Theravada Buddhism, practitioners usually cultivate ten paramitas, in Mahayana Buddhism, practitioners cultivate six paramitas.

One should help other people, as best as one can, to satisfy their needs. When giving charity, one does not cherish the thought that he is the giver, and sentient beings are the receivers, what is given and how much is given, thus, in one's mind no arrogance and self-conceit would arise. This is an unconditioned alms-giving or compassion on equality basis. Dana paramita is also a gate of Dharma-illumination; for with it, in every instance, we cause creatures to be pleasant, we adorn the Buddhist land, and we teach and guide stingy and greedy living beings. Some people think that they can only practice generosity if they are wealthy. This is not true. Some people who are wealthy seldom practice generosity. If they do, they do with the aim of gaining fame, merit, profiting, or pleasing others. Generous and compassion people are seldom rich. Why? First of all, because they always share whatever they have with others, secondly because they are not willing to enrich their lives financially at the cost of others' poverty. Thus, the Buddha reminded us on the "Generosity-Paramita." Generosity-Paramita means to we should consider everyone equally when we practice charitable giving, not discriminating against anyone, i.e. to give alms to relatives, and not to give alms to enemies, etc.

Buddhist practitioners should always remember that to cultivate does not mean to renounce the world. In the contrary, we should go straight to the market places to help other people, as best as one can, to satisfy their needs. When giving charity, one does not cherish the thought that he is the giver, and sentient beings are the receivers, what is given and how much is given, thus, in one's mind no arrogance and self-conceit would arise. This is an unconditioned alms-giving or compassion on equality basis. Dana paramita is also a gate of Dharma-illumination; for with it, in every instance, we cause creatures to be pleasant, we adorn the Buddhist land, and we teach and guide stingy and greedy living beings. Especially, Bodhisattvas give alms to all beings, so that they may be happy without investigating whether they are worthy or not. In the Jataka literature, many stories are found which show how the Bodhisattva fulfilled the Paramita-charitable giving, the

former birth stories of Gautama, when he was a Bodhisattva, either in human form or non-human form, it is written that he practiced such types of Paramita-charitable giving. In the Mahakapi Jataka, the Bodhisattva is a great monkey leader, who at the attack by men of the Varanasi king, allowed fellow monkeys to pass off safely by treading on his body, stretched as the extension of a bridge. In the Sasa Jataka, the Bodhisattva is a young hare who offers his own body in the absence of any other thing to offer, just to observe the sacred vow. The story of Prince Vessantara, which is widely appreciated, shows Prince Vessantara in fulfillment of his vow to give whatever he is asked to give, not only surrenders the palladium of his father's kingdom, but even his own wife and children. According to the Visuddhimaga, Great Enlightening Beings are concerned about the welfare of living beings, not tolerating the sufferings of beings, wishing long duration to the higher states of happiness of beings and being impartial and just to all beings, by fulfilling the Paramita-charitable giving they fulfill all other paramitas. According to the Apadana, the Bodhisattva gave the gift to the needy. He then observed precepts perfectly and fulfilled the paramitas in the worldly renunciation. He then attained the Supreme Enlightenment.

As mentioned above, charity or giving, is to give away for the benefit and welfare of all beings anything and everything one is capable of giving: not only material goods, but knowledge, worldly as well as religious or spiritual (or knowledge belonging to the Dharma, the ultimate truth). The Bodhisattvas were all ready to give up even their lives to save others. Giving of material goods, that is, to give others money or goods. In this world, there is no one who is unable to perform some form of giving. No matter how impoverished one is, he should be able to give alms to those who are worst off than he or to support a public work with however small a donation, if he has the will to do so. Even if there is someone who absolutely cannot afford to do so, he can be useful to others and to society by offering his services. Giving of law means to teach others rightly. A person who has knowledge or wisdom in some field should be able to teach others or guide them even if he has no money or is physically handicapped. Even a person of humble circumstances can perform giving of the Law. To speak of his own experience in order to benefit others can be his

giving of the Law. Giving of fearlessness means to remove the anxieties or sufferings of others through one's own effort. To comfort others in order to help them overcome their difficult time can be considered as "giving of fearlessness." Charity does not merely mean to give away what one has in abundance, but it involves even the giving-up of one's whole being for a cause. Charity, or giving, including the bestowing of the truth and courage giving on others. Giving Paramita is used to destroy greed, selfishness, and stinginess.

The reward stimulated by Dana is Enrichment. The opposite of Charity is Meanness. In the Lotus Sutra, Introduction Chapter, Maitreya Bodhisattva addresses Manjusri Bodhisattva that within the ehile hair mark emitted by the Buddha, the World Honored One, he can see Bodhisattvas as numberless as the grains of the sands in the Ganges River are giving all kinds of charity such as gold, silver, pearls, seashell, diamonds. Not only do these Bodhisattvas give valuable objects, but they even give their bodies, their own flesh, their hands and feet. These Bodhisattvas practice such giving in order to attain the supreme enlightenment. According to the Maharatnakuta Sutra, Bodhisattvas who have attained the realization of the non-arising of dharmas always practice dana-paramita for the benefits of other sentient beings. In the Chapter XII: Devadatta, Sakyamuni Buddha himself describes that during many thousands of aeons that long back when he had been a king, he had taken the strong resolution to arrive at supreme perfect enlightenment. For that he exerted himself to fulfill the Six Paramitas and He has given innumerable without a thought of self-complacency. Also in this chapter, Bodhisattva Prajnakuta says that he himself had seen the Blessed Sakyamuni, the Thathagata performing numberless charitable tasks while he was striving after enlightenment. And during many aeons the Buddha did not feel satisfied about His arduous tasks. He went everywhere for the welfare of sentient beings. In short, Charity or giving-paramita is to give away for the benefit and welfare of all beings anything and everything one is capable of giving: not only material goods, but knowledge, worldly as well as religious or spiritual (or knowledge belonging to the Dharma, the ultimate truth). The Bodhisattvas were all ready to give up even their lives to save others. Practitioners who cultivate merits alongside wisdom always mindfully develop unaffected compassion like a loving

mothers spare for their precious child, by considering how all tormented beings are our mothers, who have raised us with kindness again and again. Practitioners who cultivate merits alongside wisdom always try to complete the perfection of generosity, and always try to enhance the mind that gives without attachment, transforming the body, wealth and collection of virtue of the three times into objects desired by each sentient being.

III. Living & Cultivating In Accordance With the Sixth Awakening of Great People: Always Live & Cultivate In Accordance With The Buddha's Teachings on Dana In Buddhist Scriptures:

Practitioners always live and cultivate in accordance with the Buddha's teachings on almsgiving in Buddhist scriptures also means they are living and cultivating in accordance with the sixth awakening of great people. The Buddha taught: "Greed is the origin of various pains and sufferings in the cycle of births and deaths. For if there is greed, there is attachment; if there is attachment, there is bondage; if there is bondage, there is the cycle of births and deaths; if there is a cycle of rebirths, one is still a sentient being; if one is still a sentient being, there are still pains, sufferings, and afflictions." Realizing the calamities from greediness, the Buddha emphasized a dharma door of generosity. According to *The Essence of Buddhist Studies* from Most Venerable Thich Thien Tam and the *Letters to Buddhists Followers* from Venerable Thích Hải Quang, the Buddha taught that lay Buddhists Bodhisattvas should practice the "Conduct of Giving." When someone comes to ask for assistance, it is important to give rise to the following thoughts in order to avoid having regrets, sadness, anger, or giving rise to various thoughts of greed, hatred, and ignorance toward the receiver of charity, only to decrease or lose the virtues and merits they would have obtained from the acts of practicing charity. First, following the teachings of the Buddha. When someone needs assistance, we should use the sincere mind to think that all the Buddhas in the ten directions across the three time-spans of past, present, and future are able to attain the Ultimate Enlightenment because of their ability to fully realize the "Giving Paramita." Now that we are Buddha's children, if we wish to attain enlightenment or to become

Buddha, it is absolutely essential for us to follow the Buddha's teachings. We should practice His Teachings. We must diligently cultivate the conduct of giving in order to eliminate various mind states of greed, selfishness, and stinginess. In this way, our practice of giving of today demonstrate we are following the teachings of the Buddhas. Second, giving rise to the thought that asking person is a good knowledgeable advisor. When someone comes and asks for assistance, we should think. From many lives in the past until now, we have been unbelievably greedy and stingy; thus, gathering and accumulating as much as possible are the only things we have known, while we refuse to give and let go of anything. Or even when we did give, we still feel regrets and sadness later, or we may have given but our minds were not peaceful and joyous while giving. Therefore, we continue to remain as unenlightened mortals drifting and drowning in the six realms of the cycle of rebirths. If we are like this in this life, who knows what we will be like in the next life! Where are all of our possessions from the former lives? It will be the same way with the possessions of this life because once we die, we must leave behind everything, as we will not be able to bring anything along with us. Fortunately, in this life, we are knowledgeable of Buddhism, we know clearly the Buddha's teachings with regard to the conducts of giving. So why should we not courageously practice what we know in order to eliminate our old selfish greedy habits? Now immediately after we have just developed our minds to carry out the conduct of giving, someone comes to ask for assistance. It is truly a good opportunity. Because owing to this person we are able to abandon the greed and selfishness that have followed us from the infinite past to the present; we are able to accomplish the mind of "Letting Go" and the giving conduct of a saintly being; we will be able to accomplish the various fruits of enlightenment and liberation in the future; the person who has asked us is truly our good knowledgeable advisor, our benefactor, as well as our cause for enlightenment; if one is able to give rise to and hold on to these thoughts, that good charitable person will feel happy and honored from giving without having the slightest worries and regrets. Third, giving rise to the thought of wealth and luxury in another life or attaining the meritorious retributions in the Desire World. When seeing the needy person approaching us, we should hold the following

thought: just as the Buddha taught, all conducts of giving will result in wholesome retributions. This means one will be a wealthy person reaping merits in the human realm or will be born in Heaven to be a Heavenly Being with complete supreme blessings of the Heaven. Talking about the merits and virtues of the conduct of giving, if we practice conduct of giving, even if our minds do not give rise to the wish of being rich and wealthy in the future in Heaven or Human realms, those meritorious retributions from giving will come to us naturally. In the present life, we are wealthy, having extra money to spend on nice cars, homes, etc. because in the former life, we practiced giving. Thus, in this life we are able to reap the wholesome karmic retribution in this way. If we just look to the outside world and our surrounding, it will be obvious how many people live in poverty, not having enough of anything, but must struggle to make it from day to day. It is because in their former lives, these people were consumed with greed, stinginess, and never opened their hearts to give to anyone. Consequently, in this life, they must suffer and struggle in poverty as their karmic retributions. We are fortunate to be able to rely on the wholesome karma of the past enabling us to live luxurious lives; therefore, we should give more so that the wholesome merits of the present will increase with each passing day. And in the future lives, we will avoid the karmic consequences of not having enough. If one is able to hold these thoughts that are true to the Proper Dharma, the good person will feel happy and honored to give without having sadness, regrets, and resentments. Fourth, when someone asks us for assistance, we should think that practicing the conduct of giving will help us eliminate the two evil characteristics of greed and stinginess and to conquer evil. Fifth, look upon those who ask for charity as family and friends. When someone asks for assistance, we should think that from infinite past till now, in the six realms in the cycle of rebirths, sentient beings continue to follow their karmic actions to go up and down constantly, changing their appearances; sometimes they are relatives and friends, but once they pass on to another life, covered by ignorance, they are no longer able to recognize one another. Today we develop the mind to give because those asking for assistance can very well be our family and friends of the past or, who knows, it is possible, in the future lives they will become a part of our immediate or

extended family. Having these thoughts we should be happy to give without the slightest regrets or feel we have given in vain. Sixth, in the process of endless births gives rise to the thought of liberation. When someone asks us for assistance, we should think that all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, as well as other greatly enlightened sages were able to attain the Bodhi Mind and are liberated from the cycle of rebirths because they were able to attain the conduct of Giving Paramita. Owing to the fact that they have achieved the Giving Paramita, these greatly enlightened beings are able to eliminate the cycle of reincarnations. As for us, sentient beings, in the near future we will abandon this body and then we will be born with another body in another life and will continue to go up and down in the six realms of the cycle of rebirths. In this way, from infinite and endless aeons ago to the present, we have lived and died, died and lived, and yet we are still unable to free ourselves from this vicious cycle of birth and death. Therefore, in this life, we must be determined to develop the vow to practice the conduct of giving without regression. All sentient beings who come to us for assistance are our benefactors and are great opportunities for us to attain the Giving Paramita in the future. Only practicing this we will be able to attain enlightenment and find liberation from infinite and endless lives of births and deaths in the future. Seventh, using the conduct of giving as a means of assistance to all sentient beings. Eighth, giving rise to the thought of attaining the path of enlightenment. When we see a needy person approaching us, we want to hold the following thoughts: among the Six Paramita Practices attained by Maha-Bodhisattvas and the Buddhas, the giving paramita is first. These Virtuous Beings are able to attain the Giving Paramita because they have often carried out the conducts of giving with a non-retrogression mind in infinite and innumerable kalpas in the past, but are never tired, bored, nor will they rest and stop such practices. Therefore, they are to accumulate infinite, endless, and unimaginably supreme meritorious retributions. If those who meritorious retributions were used to give to all the sentient beings in the ten directions of infinite universes for infinite and innumerable kalpas they would still have some left the meritorious blessing of the Maha-Bodhisattvas are inherently limitless; furthermore, at the present time, they have attained the various enlighten stages of Maha-

Bodhisattvahood, and are on their way to the realization of the Ultimate Enlightenment. As lay Buddhists, cultivating for Bodhisattvahood, we should also follow these enlightened beings' virtuous paths. This means we should work within our means and limitations to practice the conduct of giving. If our conducts of giving result in any wholesome virtuous or meritorious consequences, then we should not vow or pray to be reborn in the Heaven or Human realms in order to reap those meritorious retributions. This is because no matter how much pleasure we may enjoy from those wholesome meritorious retributions in the heaven and human realms, in the end, we will be able to escape and free ourselves from the cycle of birth death. In contrast, we should be determined to dedicate all those merits and virtues to adorn our future state of Ultimate Enlightenment. We continue to give without resting.

Charity does not merely mean to give away what one has in abundance, but it involves even the giving-up of one's whole being for a cause. Charity, or giving, including the bestowing of the truth and courage giving on others. Giving Paramita is used to destroy greed, selfishness, and stinginess, at the same time to increase blessings. The Buddha always reminded the four assemblies regarding dana with wish be repaid for good deeds, good results in the human and deva worlds, and real dana in Buddhism. First, Buddhists performed charity with generosity and with a pure mind which is freed from greed, hatred, and delusion can produce good results in the human world and the world of celestial beings. A person of generosity can be reborn in the realm of the devas and stay there for so long; however, the benefit of mundane result is still within the cycle of birth and death. Second, usually people wish be repaid when granting or doing someone a favour. However, in Buddhism, when giving charity, one does not cherish the thought that he is the giver, and sentient beings are the receivers, what is given and how much is given, thus, in one's mind no arrogance and self-conceit would arise. This is an unconditioned alms-giving or compassion on equality basis. The Buddha taught: "One should not wish to be repaid for good deeds. Doing good deeds with an intention of getting repayment will lead to greed for fame and fortune." If you do good, then do it for the sake of doing service to some other beings. The happiness which arises in your mind together with the performance of the good deed is itself an extremely big reward.

In the Dharmapada Sutra, the Buddha Taught: “Some people give according to their faith, or according to their pleasure. He who is envious of others’ food and drink, will not attain tranquility by day or by night (Dharmapada 249). He who fully cut off, uprooted and destroyed such feeling, gain peace by day and by night (Dharmapada 250). No gift is better than the gift of Truth (Dharma). No taste is sweeter than the taste of truth. No joy is better than the joy of Truth. No conquest is better than the conquest of craving; it overcomes all suffering (Dharmapada 354). Human beings are damaged by lust just as weeds damage the fields. Therefore, what is given to those who are lustless, yields great reward (Dharmapada 356). Human beings are damaged by hatred in just the same manner as weeds damage the fields. Therefore, to give to those who are free from hatred, yields great reward (Dharmapada 357). Human beings are damaged by delusion just like weeds damage the fields. Therefore, to give to those who are free from delusion, yields great reward (Dharmapada 358). Human beings are damaged by craving just like weeds damage the fields. Therefore, to give to those who rid of craving, yields great reward (Dharmapada 359).”

In the Forty-Two Sections Sutra, the Buddha Taught: “When you see someone practicing the Way of Giving, help him joyously and you will obtain vast and great blessings. A Saramana asked: ‘Is there an end to those blessings?’ The Buddha said: ‘Consider the flame of a single lamp, though a hundred thousand people come and light their own lamps from it so that they can cook their food and ward off the darkness, the first lamp remains the same as before. Blessings are like this, too’ (Chapter 10). The Buddha said: “Giving food to a hundred bad people does not equal to giving food to a single good person. Giving food to a thousand good people does not equal to giving food to one person who holds the five precepts. Giving food to ten thousand people who hold the five precepts does not equal to giving food to a single Srotaapanna. Giving food to a million Srotaapannas does not equal to giving food to a single Sakridagamin. Giving food to ten million Sakridagamins does not equal to giving food to one single Anagamin. Giving food to a hundred million Anagamins does not equal to giving food to a single Arahant. Giving food to ten billion Arahants does not equal to giving food to a single Pratyekabuddha. Giving food to a

hundred billion Pratyekabuddhas does not equal to giving food to a Buddha of the Three Periods of time. Giving food to ten trillion Buddhas of the Three Periods of time does not equal to giving food to a single one who is without thoughts, without dwelling, without cultivation, and without accomplishment (Chapter 11).” Charity does not merely mean to give away what one has in abundance, but it involves even the giving-up of one’s whole being for a cause. Charity, or giving, including the bestowing of the truth and courage giving on others. Giving Paramita is used to destroy greed, selfishness, and stinginess, at the same time to increase blessings.

In short, those who want to live and cultivate in accordance with the spirit of the Sutra of Eight Awakenings of Great People should have the awareness that poverty creates hatred and anger, which creates a vicious cycle of negative thoughts and activity. When practicing generosity, Bodhiattvas consider everyone, friends and enemies alike, as equal. They do not condemn anyone’s past wrongdoings, nor do they hate those who are presently causing harm. The suffering of poverty breeds deep resentment; wealth unfairly distributed creates ill-will and conflict among people. So, Bodhisattvas practice giving and treat friend and foe alike. They neither harbor grudges nor despise evil-natured people.

IV. Those Who Awaken the Sixth Awakening in the Eight Awakenings of Great People Sutra Always Love & Never Despite Extremely Wicked People:

Practitioners always live and cultivate in accordance with the Buddha's teachings on love and compassion to all living beings including extremely wicked beings in Buddhist scriptures also means they are living and cultivating in accordance with the sixth awakening of great people. ***An Overview of Love in Buddhism:*** There are many different meanings of “Love”. Love as craving or sexual desire is one of the major causes of sufferings and rebirth. According to Buddhism, love is understanding, love does not judge or condemn, love listens and understands, love cares and sympathizes, love accepts and forgives, and so on and so on. Thus, in Buddhism, love has the meaning of “selfless love” which accompanies with loving-kindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity. Love goes hand-in-hand with compassion. When

we have a loving heart, compassion arises easily in us. Whenever we see somebody suffering, we feel an urge to reach out to help the person ease his or her suffering. To remove or ease another's suffering is the main characteristic of love. Thus, those who are compassionate, loving and forgiving, they really understand the meanings of the word "Love" in Buddhism. In fact, emancipation in Buddhism is not unrealistic, if we know how to focus from "Selfish" to "Altruistic", and think more about others' well-being and welfare, we have already liberated ourselves.

Loving-kindness has the power of bestowing temporal happiness upon us in this lifetime. Without love, people in this world will encounter a lot of problems (anger, hatred, jealousy, envy, arrogance, etc). A Buddhist should develop love for all sentient beings and to cherish others more than oneself. Love should be given equally to everyone including relatives or strangers, friends or foes, given without any conditions, without self-interests or attachment. First, loving kindness or love will help us gain strong meritorious power. Second, when we offer loving kindness to other people, we will gain their love and respect at the same time. Third, loving kindness helps us overcome all kinds of graspings of wealth, and other hindrances. Fourth, loving kindness help us experience more physical comfort. Fifth, loving-kindness (benevolence) is one of the most important entrances to the great enlightenment; for with it, good roots prevail in all situations in our daily life.

According to the Vimalakirti Sutra, Chapter Seventh, Contemplating at Living Being, when Manjusri called on to enquire Vimalakirti's illness, Manjusri asked Vimalakirti: "When a Bodhisattva meditates, how should he practise kindness (maitri)? Vimalakirti replied: When a Bodhisattva has made this meditation, he should think as the followings. First, devout Buddhists should teach living beings to meditate in the same manner; this is true kindness. Second, devout Buddhists should practise causeless (nirvanic) kindness which prevents creativeness. Third, devout Buddhists should practice unheated kindness which puts an end to klesa (troubles and causes of trouble). Fourth, devout Buddhists should practice impartial kindness which covers all the three periods of time (which means that it is eternal involving past, future and present). Fifth, devout Buddhists should

practice passionless kindness which wipes out disputation. Sixth, devout Buddhists should practice non-dual kindness which is beyond sense organs within and sense data without. Seventh, devout Buddhists should practice indestructible kindness which eradicates all corruptibility. Eighth, devout Buddhists should practice stable kindness which is a characteristic of the undying self-mind. Ninth, devout Buddhists should practice pure and clean kindness which is spotless like Dharmata. Tenth, devout Buddhists should practice boundless kindness which is all-pervasive like space. Eleventh, devout Buddhists should practice the kindness of the arhat stage which destroys all bondage. Twelfth, devout Buddhists should practice the Bodhisattva kindness which gives comfort to living beings. Thirteenth, devout Buddhists should practice the Tathagata kindness which leads to the state of thatness. Fourteenth, devout Buddhists should practice the Buddha kindness which enlightens all living beings. Fifteenth, devout Buddhists should practice spontaneous kindness which is causeless. Sixteenth, devout Buddhists should practice Bodhi kindness which is one flavour (i.e. uniform and unmixed wisdom). Seventeenth, devout Buddhists should practice unsurpassed kindness which cuts off all desires. Eighteenth, devout Buddhists should practice merciful kindness which leads to the Mahayana (path). Nineteenth, devout Buddhists should practice untiring kindness because of deep insight into the void and non-existent ego. Twentieth, devout Buddhists should practice Dharma-bestowing (dana) kindness which is free from regret and repentance. Twenty-first, devout Buddhists should practice precepts (sila) upholding kindness to convert those who have broken the commandments. Twenty-second, devout Buddhists should practice patient (ksanti) kindness which protects both the self and others. Twenty-third, devout Buddhists should practice Zealous (virya) kindness to liberate all living beings. Twenty-fourth, devout Buddhists should practice serene (dhyana) kindness which is unaffected by the five senses. Twenty-fifth, devout Buddhists should practice wise (prajna) kindness which is always timely. Twenty-sixth, devout Buddhists should practice expedient (upaya) kindness to appear at all times for converting living beings. Twenty-seventh, devout Buddhists should practice unhidden kindness because of the purity and cleanness

of the straightforward mind. Twenty-eighth, devout Buddhists should practice profound minded kindness which is free from discrimination. Twenty-ninth, devout Buddhists should practice undeceptive kindness which is faultless. Thirtieth, devout Buddhists should practice joyful kindness which bestows the Buddha joy (in nirvana). “Such are the specialities of Bodhisattva kindness” Should practice joyful kindness which bestows the Buddha joy (in nirvana). “Such are the specialities of Bodhisattva kindness”.

According to Buddhist point of view, there are two kinds of love: *First, Passion-love:* In Buddhism, the term “desire,” is specifically referred to sexual desire. In many scriptural contexts it is used to encompass desire in general. Kama refers to desire toward sensually satisfying objects and to the joy taken in these things. It is seen as one of the primary obstacles on the spiritual path (considered to be one of the major hindrances to the Buddhist path). Sense-pleasures, desire for sense-pleasures, desire (sexual) or sensual desire, or mental defilement, refers to desire toward sensually satisfying objects and to the joy taken in these things. There are types of sensual desire: form, sound, smell, taste, and bodily feeling. When craving is connected with sense pleasure, it is call “sensuous craving.” Passion-love, love inspired by desire. Love in the passion realm or ordinary human love springing from desire, in contrast with religious love (Pháp ái). Love inspired by desire through any of the five senses. *Second, Religious love:* Religious love is the love inspired by the dharma. Bodhisattva or religious love springing from the vow to save all creatures. Bodhisattva love with desire to save all creatures, in contrast with ordinary love (Dục ái).

Love and Compassion in Buddhism: In Buddhism, loveing-kindness is one of the greatest emotions toward all sentient beings. Immeasurable loving kindness is the greatest love dedicated to all sentient beings, together with the desire to ring them joy and happiness. Human joy is totally impermanent; it is governed by misery, that is, when our passions such as greed, anger, and ignorance are satisfied, we feel pleased; but when they are not satisfied, we feel sad. To have a permanent joy, we must first sever all sufferings. Loving kindness generally goes together with pity whose role is to help the subjects sever his sufferings, while the role of loving kindness is to save sentient beings from sufferings and to bring them joy. However,

loving-kindness is not an inborn characteristic. If we really want to develop our loving-kindness, we have to devote more time to practice. Sitting in meditation alone cannot bring us the so-called “loving-kindness.” In order to achieve the loving-kindness, we must put loving-kindness in actions in our daily life. In our daily activities, we must develop empathy and closeness to others by reflecting on their sufferings. For example, when we know someone suffering, we should try our best to console them by kind words or to help them with our worldly possessions if needed. Loving-kindness has the power of bestowing temporal happiness upon us in this lifetime. Without love, people in this world will encounter a lot of problems (anger, hatred, jealousy, envy, arrogance, etc). A Buddhist should develop love for all sentient beings and to cherish others more than oneself. Love should be given equally to everyone including relatives or strangers, friends or foes, given without any conditions, without self-interests or attachment. As a matter of fact, loving kindness or love will help us gain strong meritorious power. When we offer loving kindness to other people, we will gain their love and respect at the same time. When we offer loving kindness to other people, we will gain their love and respect at the same time. Loving kindness helps us overcome all kinds of graspings of wealth, and other hindrances. Loving kindness helps us overcome all kinds of graspings of wealth, and other hindrances. Loving kindness help us experience more physical comfort. Loving-kindness (benevolence) is one of the most important entrances to the great enlightenment; for with it, good roots prevail in all situations in our daily life.

It was the spirit of loving-kindness and compassion taught by the Buddha that touched the heart of King Asoka, the great Buddhist Emperor of India in the third century B.C. Before he became a Buddhist he was a warlike monarch like his father, King Bimbisara, and his grandfather, King Candragupta. Wishing to extend his territories he invaded and conquered Kalinga. In this war thousands were slain, while many more were wounded and taken captive. Later, however, when he followed the Buddha’s creed of compassion he realized the folly of killing. He felt very sad when he thought of the great slaughter, and gave up warfare. He is the only military monarch on record who after victory gave up conquest by war and inaugurated

conquest by righteousness. As his Rock Edict XIII says, 'he sheathed the sword never to unsheath it, and wish no harm to living beings.' The spread of the Buddha's creed of compassion throughout the Eastern world was largely due to the enterprise and tireless efforts of Asoka the Great. The Buddha-law made Asia mild and non-aggressive. However, modern civilization is pressing hard on Asian lands. It is known that with the rise and development of the so-called civilization, man's culture deteriorates and he changes for the worse. With the match of modern science very many changes have taken place, and all these changes and improvements, being material and external, tend to make modern man more and more worldly minded and sensuous with the result that he neglects the qualities of the mind, and becomes self-interested and heartless. The waves of materialism seem to influence mankind and affect their way of thinking and living. People are so bound by their senses, they live so exclusively in the material world that they fail to contact the good within. Only the love and compassion taught by the Buddha can establish complete mental harmony and well-being.

According to Buddhism, to be compassionate is to pity and to be empathetic, wishing to help and rescue others without having discriminations or attachment to various characteristics; it means love without desire. This means 'altruism' or to have mercy and compassion, wishing to help others but not to have any intention of taking advantages. For instance, seeing someone rich, beautiful, etc, one pretends to be compassionate by helping, but having ulterior motives of self-gain. This is called "Desirous Views," or developing love and lust when seeing wealth and beauty according to binding ways of sentient beings; thus, to act in this way cannot be called being 'compassionate.' In Buddhism, love and desire means loves that attach to desires or love of family. Love and desire are the stumbling blocks in cultivation. Besides, the sea of emotional love of birth and death is fundamental obstacle to the Way. If cultivators feel love and desire, whether for people or objects, it will hinder them from making progress in cultivation. In one word, love and desire are just birth and death, and birth and death are just love and desire. Thus love and desire are the root of birth and death. If we don't break through the ignorance of love and desire, there is no way we can escape the cycle of birth and death.

Sincere Buddhists should always remember that before thinking of the Buddhahood, we should first cut off desire and get rid of love. More than twenty-five hundred years ago, Prince Siddhartha Gautama did just that before he became a wandering ascetic monk. Sincere Buddhists should always remember that we all are human beings, and human beings surely have emotions, but we Buddhists should not cling to such emotions of love and desire. We should treat everyone equally, showing loving-kindness and compassion to all, but we must be careful not to get trapped in the trap of love and desire. Buddhists have no other way to transcend but cutting off desire and getting rid of love, for whatever we are fond of, we love, and whatever we dislike, we hate. So if we don't cut desire and get rid of love, we will continue to go round and round in the cycle of love and hate forever.

V. Practitioners Who Always Live and Cultivate In Accordance With The Buddha's Teachings on Love and Compassion Also Means They Are Living and Cultivating In Complete Tally With the Sixth Awakeing of Great People:

Practitioners always live and cultivate in accordance with the Buddha's teachings on love and compassion to all living beings including extremely wicked beings in Buddhist scriptures also means they are living and cultivating in complete tally with the sixth awakening of great people. 1) *The Buddha's teachings of loving-kindness in the Vimalakirti-Sutra*: According to the Vimalakirti Sutra, Chapter Seventh, Contemplating at Living Being, when Manjusri called on to enquire Vimalakirti's illness, Manjusri asked Vimalakirti: "When a Bodhisattva meditates, how should he practise kindness (maitri)? Vimalakirti replied: When a Bodhisattva has made this meditation, he should think that he ought to teach living beings to meditate in the same manner; this is true loving or kindness. A Bodhisattva should practise causeless (nirvanic) loving or kindness which prevents creativeness. A Bodhisattva should practice unheated loving or kindness which puts an end to klesa (troubles and causes of trouble). A Bodhisattva should practice impartial loving or kindness which coves all the three periods of time (which means that it is eternal involving past, future and present). A Bodhisattva should practice passionless loving or kindness which wipes out disputation. A

Bodhisattva should practice non-dual loving or kindness which is beyond sense organs within and sense data without. A Bodhisattva should practice indestructible loving or kindness which eradicates all corruptibility. A Bodhisattva should practice stable loving or kindness which is a characteristic of the undying self-mind. A Bodhisattva should practice pure and clean loving or kindness which is spotless like Dharmata. A Bodhisattva should practice boundless loving or kindness which is all-pervasive like space. A Bodhisattva should practice the loving or kindness of the arhat stage which destroys all bondage. A Bodhisattva should practice the Bodhisattva loving or kindness which gives comfort to living beings. A Bodhisattva should practice the Tathagata loving or kindness which leads to the state of thatness. A Bodhisattva should practice the Buddha loving or kindness which enlightens all living beings. A Bodhisattva should practice spontaneous loving or kindness which is causeless. A Bodhisattva should practice Bodhi loving or kindness which is one flavour (i.e. uniform and unmixed wisdom). A Bodhisattva should practice unsurpassed loving or kindness which cuts off all desires. A Bodhisattva should practice merciful loving or kindness which leads to the Mahayana (path). A Bodhisattva should practice untiring loving or kindness because of deep insight into the void and non-existent ego. A Bodhisattva should practice Dharma-bestowing (dana) loving or kindness which is free from regret and repentance. A Bodhisattva should practice precepts (sila) upholding kindness to convert those who have broken the commandments. A Bodhisattva should practice patient (ksanti) kindness which protects both the self and others. A Bodhisattva should practice Zealous (virya) loving or kindness to liberate all living beings. A Bodhisattva should practice serene (dhyana) loving or kindness which is unaffected by the five senses. A Bodhisattva should practice wise (prajna) loving which is always timely. A Bodhisattva should practice expedient (upaya) kindness to appear at all times for converting living beings. A Bodhisattva should practice unhidden loving because of the purity and cleanness of the straightforward mind. A Bodhisattva should practice profound minded loving which is free from discrimination. A Bodhisattva should practice undeceptive loving which is faultless. A Bodhisattva should practice joyful loving or

kindness which bestows the Buddha joy (in nirvana). “Such are the specialities of Bodhisattva loving or kindness”.

2) *The Buddha's teachings on “Loving-kindness” in the Dhammapada Sutta*: “Loving-kindness is the only way to destroy hatred. Hatred cannot be defeated with more hatred. There is no greater love in this world than the love of the mother and father. If a person, carrying father on the left shoulder and mother on the right shoulder, were to walk around the Sumeru Mountain hundreds of thousands of times, with blood covering both feet, it would still not be enough to repay the love and hardship of child rearing.” In the Dharmapada Sutra, the Buddha taught: It is difficult to renounce the world. It is difficult to be a householder. It is painful to associate with those who are not friends. It is painful to be wandering in the samsara forever. Reaching the enlightenment and let wander no more! Let's suffer no more! (Dharmapada 302). Whoever binds to craving, his sorrows flourish like well-watered birana grass (Dharmapada 335). Whoever in this world overcomes this unruly craving, his sorrows fall away just like water-drops from a lotus leaf (Dharmapada 336). This is my advice to you: “Root out craving; root it out, just like birana grass is rooted out. Let not Mara crush you again and again as a flood crushes a reed! (Dharmapada 337). Latent craving is not conquered, suffering recovers and grows again and again, just like a tree hewn down grows up again as long as its roots is unrooted (Dharmapada 338). If in any man, the thirty-six streams of craving are still flowing, such deluded person is still looking for pleasure and passion, and torrential thoughts of lust sweep him away (Dharmapada 339). Streams of pleasure and passion flow in all directions, just like the creeper sprouts and stands. Seeing the creeper that has sprung up in your mind, cut it off with wisdom (Dharmapada 340). Common people are subject to attachment and thirst; they are always happy with pleasure; they run after passion. They look for happiness, but such men caught in the cycle of birth and decay again and again (Dharmapada 341). Men who are crazed with craving, are terrified like hunted hares. The more they hold fast by fetters, bonds, and afflictions, the longer they suffer (Dharmapada 342). Men who are crazed with craving, are terrified just like hunted hares. Therefore, a monk who wishes his own passionlessness, should first banish craving (Dharmapada 343). He who is free from desire for the

household, finds pleasure (of asceticism or monastic life) in the forest, yet run back to that very home. Look at that man! He runs right back into that very bondage again! (Dharmapada 344). To a wise man, the bondage that is made of hemp, wood or iron, is not a strong bond, the longing for wives, children, jewels, and ornaments is a greater and far stronger attachment (Dharmapada 345). The wise people say that that bond is very strong. Such fetters seem supple, but hard to break. Break them! Cut off desire and renounce the world! (Dharmapada 346). A man infatuated with lust falls back into the stream as a spider into the web spun by itself. He who cuts off this bond, retire from the world, with no clinging, will leave all sorrow behind (Dharmapada 347). He who has reached the goal, without fear, without craving and without desire, has cut off the thorns of life. This is his final mortal body (Dharmapada 351). He who is without craving, without attachment; who understands subtleties of words and meanings; they are truly a great wise who bear the final mortal body (Dharmapada 352). Strive hard to cut off the stream of desires. Oh! Brahman! Knowing that all conditioned things will perish. Oh! Brahman! You are a knower of the Unmade Nirvana! (Dharmapada 383).

3) *The Buddha's teachings on Loving in the Metta Sutta*: According to the Metta Sutta, the Buddha taught: "May all beings be happy and secure. May their mind be contented. Whatever beings there may be. Feeble or strong, long, great or medium. Small or large, seen or unseen. Those dwelling far or near, Those who are born, and those who are yet to be born. May all beings, without exception, be happy... Just as a mother would protect her only child. Even at the risk of her own life. Even so, let one cultivate boundless heart towards all beings. Let one's thoughts of boundless love. Pervade the whole world, above, below and across. Without any obstruction, any hatred or any enmity."

Chapter Nineteen

Living & Cultivating In Accordance With the Seventh Awakening of Great People: Five Categories of Desire Lead to Difficulties-Once Freeing from Desire, Living in the World, But Not to Be Caught Up in Worldly Matters

I. An Overview & Meanings of the Seventh Awakening in the Sutra of Eight Awakenings of Great People:

The form of the Sutra “Eight Awakenings of Great People” is very simple. The text form is ancient, just like the Forty-Two Chapters and the Sutra on the Six Paramitas. However, its content is extremely profound and marvelous. Shramana An Shi Kao, a Partian monk, translated from Sanskrit into Chinese in about 150 A.D. (during the Later Han Dynasty). Most Venerable Thích Thanh Từ translated from Chinese into Vietnamese in the 1970s. The original text of this sutra in Sanskrit is still extant to this day. This sutra is entirely in accord with both the Theravada and Mahayana traditions.

In the 1970s, Most Venerable Thích Thanh Từ translated this sutra from Chinese into Vietnamese, the original text of ***The Seventh Awakening*** as follows:

Great people, even as laity,
are not blighted by worldly pleasures.
Instead, they constantly aspire to take up the three
precepts-robles and blessing-bowl of the monastic life.
Their ideal and ambition is to leave the household
and family life to cultivate
the way in immaculate purity.
Their virtuous qualities are lofty and sublime;
their attitudes toward all creatures
are kind and compassionate.

II. Desire: Both Five & Six Categories of Desire Lead to Difficulties:

As mentioned above, in the seventh awakening, practitioners should always be awakened that the five categories of desire lead to difficulties. Although we are in the world, we should try not to be caught up in worldly matters. A monk, for example, has in his possession only three robes and one bowl. He lives simply in order to practice the Way. His precepts keep him free of attachment to worldly things, and he treats everyone equally and with compassion. Great people, even as laity, are not blighted by worldly pleasures; instead, they constantly aspire to take up the three precepts-robes and blessing-bowl of the monastic life. Their ideal and ambition is to leave the household and family life to cultivate the way in immaculate purity. Their virtuous qualities are lofty and sublime; their attitudes toward all creatures are kind and compassionate.

According to Buddhist teachings, greed or desire is the cause of unlimited seekings and begets sorrow. Most people define happiness as the satisfaction of all desires. The desires are boundless, but our ability to realize them is not, and unfulfilled desires always create suffering. When desires are only partially fulfilled, we have a tendency to continue to pursue until a complete fulfillment is achieved. Thus, we create even more suffering for us and for others. We can only realize the true happiness and a peaceful state of mind when our desires are few. This is one of the great steps towards the shore of liberation. The Buddha taught: "Craving and desire are the cause of all unhappiness or suffering. Everything sooner or later must change, so do not become attached to anything. Instead devote yourself to clearing your mind and finding the truth, lasting happiness." Knowing how to feel satisfied with few possessions help us destroy greed and desire. This means being content with material conditions that allow us to be healthy and strong enough to cultivate. This is an effective way to cut through the net of passions and desires, attain a peaceful state of mind and have more time to help others.

We are living in a material world where we must encounter all kinds of objects such as sights, sounds, tastes, sensations, thoughts and ideas, etc. Desire arises from contact with these pleasing objects. Buddhists should always remember that "Desire" not only obscures our

mind, but it is also a main cause of grasping which causes sufferings and afflictions, forces us to continue to wander in the samsara. Desire is one of the twelve links in the chain of Causation (nidanas). Its source is delusion caused by attraction to the six objects of sense.

Unlimited Seeking: Craving is the cause of unlimited seekings, and is also interpreted as “tainted with the dust or dirt of love, or lust. In Buddhism, lust is another name for affliction. The way of temptation or passion which produces bad karma (life’s distress and delusion), cause one to wander in the samsara and hinder one from reaching enlightenment. “Kama” is also a Sanskrit term for “desire,” but it specifically refers to sexual desire. In many scriptural contexts it is used to encompass desire in general. Kama refers to desire toward sensually satisfying objects and to the joy taken in these things. It is seen as one of the primary obstacles on the spiritual path (considered to be one of the major hindrances to the Buddhist path). Sense-pleasures, desire for sense-pleasures, desire (sexual) or sensual desire, or mental defilement, refers to desire toward sensually satisfying objects and to the joy taken in these things. It is seen as one of the primary obstacles on the spiritual path. “Kamacchanda” is a Pali term for “Greed” or “Sensuous lust” or “Lust for sense objects.” Sensual thoughts definitely retard mental development. They disturb the mind and hinder concentration. Sensuality is due to non-restraint of the senses, which when unguarded give rise to thoughts of lust so that the mind-flux is defiled. Therefore, there is an urgent need for the practitioner to be on his guard against this hindrance which closes the door to deliverance. According to Buddhism, passions and delusions which aid rebirth and hinder entrance into nirvana. Klesa is also means hindrance of the afflictions (the barrier of temptation, passion or defilement, which obstructs the attainment of the nirvana). Klesa is generally divided into two groups, primary and secondary. The primary comprises of such evil impulses that lie at the foundation of every tormenting thought and desire. Buddhist practitioners should always remember that the nature of seeking is unlimited. Practitioners who cultivate without thoughts of seeking fame and benefit, for they have already eradicated the five roots of the hell: wealth, sex, fame, food, and sleep in all circumstances. We should cultivate the Way with our own effort. Do not crave fame and profits. We should follow the spirit of the

Bodhisattvas Manjusri, Samantabhadra, Avalokitesvara, Ksitigarbha, and other Bodhisattvas for they feel that living beings' accomplishments are the same as their own accomplishment. They do not make distinctions between self and others. Bodhisattvas joyfully support the merit and virtue they see and hear others doing.

Desire For Things Begets Sorrow: In the Anattalakkhana Sutta, the Buddha taught: "The thirst for things begets sorrow. When we like persons or things, we wish that they belonged to us and were with us forever. We do not stop to think about their true nature or in our great enthusiasm refuse to think about their true nature. We expect them to survive time, but time devours everything. Youth must yield to old age and the freshness of the morning dew disappears before the rising sun. Both are expression of the natural law of change.

Five Desires Lead to Troubles and Difficulties: According to the seventh awakening of the Eight Awakenings of Great People, practitioners should always be awakened that the five categories of desire lead to difficulties. Ordinary people define happiness as the satisfaction of all desires, but Buddhism believes that more desire brings more suffering because these desires are boundless but our ability to realize them is limited. Once desires are unfulfilled, we suffer. When desires are partially fulfilled, we continue to pursue their complete fulfillment, and we create more suffering. It is only after we feel self-sufficient with few desires, and no longer pursue fulfillment of desires, we then can have a peaceful state of mind. According to Buddhism, five desires mean the five creature desires stimulated by the objects of the five earthly senses. The five desires, arising from the objects of the five senses or internal organs, such as things seen, heard, smelt, tasted, or touched. Five desires are five kinds of desire stimulated by external materials. First, the Desires of wealth which includes a) the desires of power and money, b) desires for talent. Second, desire of sex or beauty. Third, desire of fame, influence and praises. Fourth, desire of food and drink or eating. Fifth, desire of sleep and rest. Buddha Sakyamuni compared sentient beings chasing after the fleeting pleasures of this world to a child licking honey off a sharp knife. There is no way they can avoid hurting themselves.

According to the Sangiti Sutta in the Long Discourses of the Buddha, there are five strands of sense-desire (cords of sensual

pleasure): First, a sight seen by the eye as being desire, attractive, nice, charming, associated with lust and arousing passion. Second, a sound heard by the ear as being desire, attractive, nice, charming, associated with lust and arousing passion. Third, a smell smelt by the nose as being desire, attractive, nice, charming, associated with lust and arousing passion. Fourth, a flavour tasted by the tongue as being desire, attractive, nice, charming, associated with lust and arousing passion. Fifth, a tangible object felt by the body as being desire, attractive, nice, charming, associated with lust and arousing passion. How can we practice the practice of disgust of the five desires? If a Pure Land cultivator wishes to be assured of rebirth, he or she should always practice the practice of disgust of the five desires. This practice of disgust refers to the fact that common people have been bound by the five desires from time immemorial. Thus, they wander along the six paths, enduring untold suffering! In that quagmire, unless they become disgusted with the five desires, how can they escape the cycle of birth and death? Therefore, the Pure Land cultivator should constantly visualize this body as a mass of flesh and bones, blood and pus, a skinbag containing phlegm, pus, urine, feces and other foul-smelling substances. The Parinirvana Sutra states: "This fortress of body, only evil, deluded demons could tolerate living in it. Who with any wisdom could ever cling to or delight in such a skinbag!" Another scripture states: "This body is the confluence of all kinds of suffering; it is a jail, a prison, a mass of ulcers; everything is impure. In truth, it is not worth clinging to, even the celestial bodies of deities are no different." Therefore, whether walking, standing, sitting or reclining, whether asleep or awake, cultivators should always visualize this body as nothing but a source of suffering, without any pleasure, and develop a deep sense of disgust, thus gradually becoming free from lustful thoughts. Moreover, the cultivator should also engage in the seven types of meditation on impurity. Our own bodies being thus, the bodies of others are likewise. If we constantly meditate on these seven impurities, we will develop disgust toward those male and female forms which ordinary people judge handsome and beautiful. The flames of lust will thus gradually diminish. If, in addition, we can practice the meditations on the Nine Kinds of Foulness, so much the better. In the Buddha and His Teachings, Most Venerable Narada

mentioned six conditions that tend to the eradication of sense-desires: First, perceiving the loathsomeness of the objects. Second, constant meditation on loathsomeness. Third, cultivating sense-restraint. Fourth, having moderation in food. Fifth, having good friendship. Sixth, having profitable talk.

Six Desires Also Cause Lofty Troubles and Difficulties: Desire for and love of the things of this life. Craving (greed, affection, desire). Most people define happiness as the satisfaction of all desires. Greed and lust are unrestrained desires for material possessions such as food, sleeping, sexual intercourse, etc., all related to sensual pleasures. Sentient beings always wish for different things. Their greed is insatiable. Once we fulfill one wish, we will start craving for something else. The greed of sentient beings can be compared to a bottomless barrel that can never be filled. We have been greedy ever since the time we were born. From youth through middle age to old age and death, our whole life are driven by greed. **Thus, according to Buddhism, six desires also cause lofty troubles and difficulties.** If we are greedy for fame, we will die in the pursuit of fame. If we are greedy for profit, we will die in the pursuit of profit. Pursuing fame, we get burned to death by the fire of fame; pursuing profit, we die by drowning under the flood of profit. If we are pursuing wealth and honor, the wind of wealth and honor will cause our death. Besides, we also have a desire for appropriations, showing off, authority, and profits. Since they are like bottomless barrel, neither obsessive greed nor desire can be stopped or satisfied. Through tricks, expedients, and manipulations we try to reach our goal irrespective of whatever happens to others. We Buddhists must see that greedy people are generally selfish, wicked, and prone to cause sufferings to others. As a result, they transform this world into a battlefield where tears are shed like streams, and sufferings rise like an ocean tide.

As mentioned above, emotions, negative or positive, are impermanent (they would not last), but we cannot say we don't care about our emotions because they are impermanent. Buddhists cannot say both suffering and happiness are impermanent so we need not seek nor avoid them. We all know that negative emotions lead to suffering, whereas positive ones lead to happiness, and the purpose of all Buddhists is to achieve happiness. So should try to achieve things that

cause happiness, and whatever causes suffering we should deliberately happiness. According to Buddhism, six emotions arising from the six organs of sense: Emotions arising from the eyes. Emotions arising from the ears. Emotions arising from the nose. Emotions arising from the tongue. Emotions arising from the body. Emotions arising from the mind. Practitioners of mindfulness always consider the six senses are objects of cultivation. According to Bikkhu Piyananda in *The Gems of Buddhism Wisdom*, you must always be aware of the sense organs such as eye, ear, nose, tongue and body and the contact they are having with the outside world. You must be aware of the feelings that are arising as a result of this contact: eye is now in contact with forms (rupa); ear is now in contact with sound; nose is now in contact with smell; tongue is now in contact with taste; body is now in contact with touching; and mind is now in contact with all things (dharma).

Worldly desires are boundless, but our ability to realize them is not, and unfulfilled desires always create suffering. When desires are only partially fulfilled, we have a tendency to continue to pursue until a complete fulfillment is achieved. Thus, we create even more suffering for us and for others. We can only realize the true happiness and a peaceful state of mind when our desires are few. This is one of the great steps towards the shore of liberation. Buddha taught: “Craving and desire are the cause of all unhappiness or suffering. Everything sooner or later must change, so do not become attached to anything. Instead devote yourself to clearing your mind and finding the truth, lasting happiness.” Knowing how to feel satisfied with few possessions help us destroy greed and desire. This means being content with material conditions that allow us to be healthy and strong enough to cultivate. This is an effective way to cut through the net of passions and desires, attain a peaceful state of mind and have more time to help others.

Desires Are Also Main Causes of Birth and Death-Death and Birth: In fact, desire is the main reason to force sentient beings to wander in the Samsara. Human beings always desire for different things. The greed of beings can be compared to a bottomless barrel that can never be filled. We have been greedy ever since the time we were born. From youth through middle age to old age and death, our whole lives are driven by greed. If we are greedy for profit, we will die in the

pursuit of profit. Pursuing fame, we get burned to death; chasing after profit, we die by drowning. If we pursue wealth and honor, the fire of wealth and honor will burn us to the ground. We are living in a material world where we must encounter all kinds of objects such as sights, sounds, tastes, sensations, thoughts and ideas, ect. Desire arises from contact with these pleasing objects. Buddhists should always remember that “Desire” not only obscures our mind, but it is also a main cause of grasping which causes sufferings and afflictions, forces us to continue to wander in the samsara.

According to Buddhism, so long as you are caught in the iron pincers of craving, you experience pain and afflictions. However, if you wish to reduce or eliminate that pain, you will have to subdue, and even renounce, your strong craving for sensual pleasure. You are confronted with a choice: to enjoy sensual pleasure, you must be prepared to experience suffering and afflictions, or to renounce craving so as to delight in spiritual happiness. There are no two ways at the same time for you. In the sea of birth and death, emotional love is the fundamental obstacle to the Way. Sincere Buddhists should always remember that feelings of love and desire, whether for people or things, will hinder us from making progress in our cultivation. In other words, love and desire are just birth and death, and birth and death are just love and desire. Love and desire are to root of birth and death. If we do not break through the ignorance of love and desire, we can never escape the sea of birth and death. How can we escape the sea of birth and death? Sincere Buddhists should listen to the Buddha’s Teachings, should cut off love and desire. Other than that, there exists no other way, and there is no exception!

Sincere Buddhists must minimize in engaging emotional love because once you have emotional love, you cannot cut off the root of suffering, and thus, you must be sinking and floating in the sea of birth and death. In the Forty-Two Sections Sutra, the Buddha taught: “For women, you should think of those who are elderly as your mothers, those who are older than you as your elder sisters, those who are younger than you to you as your younger sister, and those who are very young as your children. Resolve to save them and get rid of all unwholesome thoughts.” Furthermore, whatever you are fond of, you love; and whatever you dislike, you hate. Both love and hate deal with

things on an emotional level. Buddhist cultivators should be compassionate to all beings, should treat people with a spirit of kindness and compassion, should always be considerate of others and make people happy, but there should never let any thoughts of emotional level involved. Sincere Buddhists should see that love and desire are very troublesome. From beginningless eons until now, we have failed to end birth and death because of craving of love and desire. Thus, we can only transcend the Triple Realm and liberated from the sea of birth and death by cutting off love and desire.

III. Living & Cultivating In Accordance With the Seventh Awakening of Great People: Once Freeing from Desire, Living in the World, But Not to Be Caught Up in Worldly Matters

Beside cravings or desires, sentient beings in the Saha World also has five turbidities: 1) the kalpa turbidity: life is turbid or this Saha world is filled with impurity or the defilement of the life-span, when the human life-span as a whole decreases. 2) the view turbidity or the turbidity of view: turbidity of view means all different views, perceptions, and knowledge of sentient beings that are based on false conceptions. They are gossip, competition, fame, self, egotism, right, wrong, etc. 3) the affliction turbidity: turbidity of affliction means sentient beings are constantly plagued with afflictions, worries, anger, vengeance, false views, etc. All such impure thoughts consume their minds and bodies, but kindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity are very rare. Thus, they cause one another innumerable afflictions. 4) the living beings turbidity: turbidity of sentient beings or sentient beings turbid; everyone is filled with greed, hatred, ignorance, egoism, skepticism, etc. The defilement of human condition, people are always dissatisfied and unhappy. The period where all creatures are stupid and unclean. 5) the life turbidity: turbidity of life, physical body or the defilement of the world-age, when war and natural disasters are rife. Human lifetime gradually diminishes to ten years. Furthermore, the body is the accumulation of the four elements of earth, water, fire, and air, wrapped around a thin layer of skin masking the internal wreaking odors of the flesh, blood, bone, phlegm and other bodily secretions, and upon death, becomes rotten and eaten by worms. In fact, it becomes so

disgusting that no one dare to go near. As mentioned in the above section, in the seventh awakening, practitioners should always be awakened that the five categories of desire lead to difficulties. Although we are in the world, we should try not to be caught up in worldly matters. In fact, if practitioners live and cultivate in accordance with the spirit of the seventh awakening of great people, they will no longer be impacted by troubles and difficulties caused by cravings and desires, for once being freed from desires, they live in the worldly world, but not be caught up in worldly matters.

King Tran Nhan Tong, the First Truc Lam Patriarch, composed a Hymn titled Taking Delight in Religion While Dwelling in the World in the thirteenth century. It was king Tran Nhan Tong who was able to utilize the potential of Buddhism to serve his country and people. The fact of king Tran Nhan Tong's renunciation and his years of practicing meditation and spreading Buddhism all over the country made the Truc Lam Zen Sect strong enough to support the entire dynasty. For Zen master Trần Nhân Tông, the secret of happy, successful living lies in doing what needs to be done now; when hungry, just eat; when thirsty, just drink; when tired, just sleep; and not worrying about the past and the future. We cannot go back into the past and reshape it, nor can we anticipate everything that may happen in the future. There is one moment of time over which we have some conscious control and that is the present. What is essential of Truc Lam Ch'an Buddhism is that it lays the emphasis on the mental cultivation in whatever condition one may live. It is a mind-oriented training for every Buddhist, whether he is a monk, or she is a nun, or a lay person. This way of practicing the Dharma is best expressed in a hymn titled "Taking Delight in Religion While Dwelling in the World". King Tran Nhan Tong always reminded his disciples with the conclusion of the verses:

“Living in the world, happy with the Way.
 We should let all things take their course.
 When hungry, just eat; when tired, just sleep.
 The treasure is in our house; do not search any more.
 Face the scenes, and have no thoughts,
 Then we do not need to ask for Zen.”

In fact, if we can completely live with the teachings of Zen master Trần Nhân Tông, we are able to live with the water, not with the waves

risign and falling; live with the nature of mirror to reflect, not with the images appearing and disappearing; and live with the essence of the mind, not with the thoughts arising and vanishing. Therefore, what can we call our life if not a Nirvana? The world we are living now is the Saha World, where we physically see all phenomena born and passed away, how can we say 'all phenomena are unborn and undying'? Zen practitioners should always remember once we make up our mind to follow the Buddha's Path, we should listen to the Buddha's and Patriarchs' teachings; we should look inward to see our real mind, then we will have the ability to see that 'all phenomena are unborn and undying'. Let's look into our mind and be honest with ourselves, then we can see the real nature of everything: emptiness, unborn and undying. The thoughts coming and going, but the nature of 'seeing and knowing' of the mind is unmoved.

Those who want to live and cultivate in accordance with the spirit of the Sutra of Eight Awakenings of Great People should have the awareness that both five and six categories of desire lead to difficulties. Although we are in the world, we should try not to be caught up in worldly matters. A monk, for example, has in his possession only three robes and one bowl. He lives simply in order to practice the Way. His precepts keep him free of attachment to worldly things, and he treats everyone equally and with compassion. Great people, even as laity, are not blighted by worldly pleasures; instead, they constantly aspire to take up the three precepts-robes and blessing-bowl of the monastic life. Their ideal and ambition is to leave the household and family life to cultivate the way in immaculate purity. Their virtuous qualities are lofty and sublime; their attitudes toward all creatures are kind and compassionate.

IV. Practitioners Who Always Live and Cultivate In Accordance With The Buddha's Teachings on Desire & Methods of Being Free From Desire Also Means They Are Living and Cultivating In Complete Tally With the Sixth Awakening of Great People:

According to Buddhism, craving and desire are the cause of all unhappiness or suffering. Everything sooner or later must change, so do

not become attached to anything. Instead devote yourself to clearing your mind and finding the truth, lasting happiness.” Knowing how to feel satisfied with few possessions help us destroy greed and desire. This means being content with material conditions that allow us to be healthy and strong enough to cultivate. This is an effective way to cut through the net of passions and desires, attain a peaceful state of mind and have more time to help others.

In the Middle Length Discourses, the Buddha taught: “O Bhikkhus, with sense desires as cause, with sense desires as motives, kings are fighting with kings, khattiya are fighting with khattiya, brahmanas are fighting with brahmanas, householders are fighting with householders, mother is fighting with son, son is fighting with mother, father is fighting with brother, brother is fighting with sister, sister is fighting with brother, friend is fighting with friend. When they engage themselves in fighting, in quarrels, in disputes, they attack each other with hands, they attack each other with stones, they attack each other with sticks, they attack each other with swords. Thus they are going to death, or to suffer like death. O Bhikkhus, with sense desires as cause, with sense desires as motives, they take hold of spears, they take hold of shields, they wear bows and arrows. They arrange themselves in two lines, and arrows are thrown at each other, knives are thrown at each other, swords are slashed at each other. They pierce each other with arrows, they slash each other with knives, they cut each other heads with swords. Thus they are going to death, or to suffer like death.”

In The Long Discourse, the Buddha taught: “Craving and desire are the cause of all unhappiness. Everything sooner or later must change, so do not become attached to anything. Instead devote yourself to clearing your mind and finding the truth, lasting happiness.”

In the Dharmapada Sutra, the Buddha’s teaching on “Desire” as follows: Craving grows like a creeper which creeps from tree to tree just like the ignorant man wanders from life to life like a fruit-loving monkey in the forest (Dharmapada 334). Whoever binds to craving, his sorrows flourish like well-watered birana grass (Dharmapada 335). Whoever in this world overcomes this unruly craving, his sorrows fall away just like water-drops from a lotus leaf (Dharmapada 336). This is my advice to you: “Root out craving; root it out, just like birana grass is rooted out. Let not Mara crush you again and again as a flood crushes a

reed! (Dharmapada 337). Latent craving is not conquered, suffering recovers and grows again and again, just like a tree hewn down grows up again as long as its roots is unrooted (Dharmapada 338). If in any man, the thirty-six streams of craving are still flowing, such deluded person is still looking for pleasure and passion, and torrential thoughts of lust sweep him away (Dharmapada 339). Streams of pleasure and passion flow in all directions, just like the creeper sprouts and stands. Seeing the creeper that has sprung up in your mind, cut it off with wisdom (Dharmapada 340). Common people are subject to attachment and thirst; they are always happy with pleasure; they run after passion. They look for happiness, but such men caught in the cycle of birth and decay again and again (Dharmapada 341). Men who are crazed with craving, are terrified like hunted hares. The more they hold fast by fetters, bonds, and afflictions, the longer they suffer (Dharmapada 342). Men who are crazed with craving, are terrified just like hunted hares. Therefore, a monk who wishes his own passionlessness, should first banish craving (Dharmapada 343). He who is free from desire for the household, finds pleasure (of asceticism or monastic life) in the forest, yet run back to that very home. Look at that man! He runs right back into that very bondage again! (Dharmapada 344). To a wise man, the bondage that is made of hemp, wood or iron, is not a strong bond, the longing for wives, children, jewels, and ornaments is a greater and far stronger attachment (Dharmapada 345). The wise people say that that bond is very strong. Such fetters seem supple, but hard to break. Break them! Cut off desire and renounce the world! (Dharmapada 346). A man infatuated with lust falls back into the stream as a spider into the web spun by itself. He who cuts off this bond, retire from the world, with no clinging, will leave all sorrow behind (Dharmapada 347). Men who are disturbed by evil thoughts, swayed by strong passions and yearned only for pleasure; his craving grows more and more. Surely he strengthens his own fetters (Dharmapada 349). He who wants to subdue evil thoughts, should meditate on the impurities of the body. Be mindful to make an end of craving, and to stop Mara's bond (Dharmapada 350). He who has reached the goal, without fear, without craving and without desire, has cut off the thorns of life. This is his final mortal body (Dharmapada 351). He who is without craving, without attachment; who understands subtleties of words and meanings; they

are truly a great wise who bear the final mortal body (Dharmapada 352). I have overcome myself, I do know all. I am attached to none. I have renounced all, I am free from all craving; having by myself attained supernatural knowledge, to whom shall I call my teacher? (Dharmapada 353). No gift is better than the gift of Truth (Dharma). No taste is sweeter than the taste of truth. No joy is better than the joy of Truth. No conquest is better than the conquest of craving; it overcomes all suffering (Dharmapada 354). Riches ruin the foolish, not the seekers of Nirvana. He who craves for wealth destroys himself as if he were ruining others (Dharmapada 355). Human beings are damaged by craving just like weeds damage the fields. Therefore, to give to those who rid of craving, yields great reward (Dharmapada 359). Strive hard to cut off the stream of desires. Oh! Brahman! Knowing that all conditioned things will perish. Oh! Brahman! You are a knower of the Unmade Nirvana! (Dharmapada 383)."

In the Forty-Two Sections Sutra, the Buddha taught on "Desire" as follows: "People who cherish love and desire do not see the Way. It is just as when you stir clear water with your hand; those who stand beside it cannot see their reflections. People who are immersed in love and desire have turbidity in their minds and because of it, they cannot see the Way. You Sramanas should cast aside love and desire. When the filth of love and desire disappears, the Way can be seen." (Chapter 16). "There are people who follow emotion and desire and seek for fame. By the time their reputation is established, they are already dead. Those who are greedy for worldly fame do not study the Way and wear themselves out in wasted effort. It is just like a stick of burning incense which, however fragrant its scent, consumes itself. So too, greed for fame brings the danger of a fire which burns one up in its aftermath." (Chapter 21). "As to love and desire, no desire is as deep-rooted as sex; there is nothing greater than the desire for sex. Fortunately, it is one of a kind. If there were something else like it, no one in the world would be able to cultivate the Way." (Chapter 24). "A person with love and desire is like one who carries a torch while walking against the wind, he is certain to burn his hand." (Chapter 25). "Those of the Way are like those who carry dry grass; it is essential to keep it away from oncoming fire. People of the Way look upon desire as something they must keep at a distance." (Chapter 30). "Out of love and desire, people give rise to worry; out of worry they give rise to fear. If you are apart from love, what worries are there? What fears?" (Chapter 32).

Chapter Twenty

Living & Cultivating In Accordance With the Eighth Awakening of Great People: The Fire of Birth and Death Is Raging-Vow to Help Everyone to the Realm of Great Joy

I. An Overview & Meanings of the Eighth Awakening in the Sutra of of Eight Awakenings of Great People:

According to the Sutra of the Eight Awakenings of Great People, any Buddhist practitioner who lives and cultivates in accordance with the spirit of the Sutra of Eight Awakenings of Great People, and is aware that the world is impermanent. All regimes are subject to fall; all things composed of the four elements that are empty and contain the seeds of suffering. Human beings are composed of five aggregates, and are without a separate self. They are always in the process of change, constantly being born and constantly dying. They are empty of self, without sovereignty. The mind is the source of all unwholesome deeds and confusion, and the body is the forest of all impure actions. If we meditate on these facts, we can gradually be released from the cycle of birth and death. The world is impermanent, countries are perilous and fragile; the body's four elements are a source of pain; ultimately, they are empty; the Five Aggregates (Skandhas) are not me; death and rebirth are simply a series of transformations; misleading, unreal, and uncontrollable; the mind is the wellspring of evil; the body is the breeding ground of offenses; whoever can investigate and contemplate these truths, will gradually break free of death and rebirth. Who is aware that more desire brings more suffering. The awareness that more desire brings more suffering. All hardships in daily life arise from greed and desire. Those with little desire and ambition are able to relax, their bodies and minds are free from entanglement. Too much desire brings pain. Death and rebirth are tiresome ordeals which stem from our thoughts of greed and desire. By reducing desires, we can realize absolute truth and enjoy independence and well-being in both body and mind. Who is aware that the human mind is always searching

for possessions and never feels fulfilled. This causes impure actions to ever increase. In our daily life we always want to have good food, nice clothes, attractive jewellery, but we only feel satisfied with them for a short time, after that, the very same object that once gave us pleasure might cause us frustration now. The same can also be applied to fame. At the beginning we might think ourselves that we are so happy when we are famous, but after some time, it could be that all we feel is frustration and dissatisfaction. Bodhisattvas, however, always remember the principle of having few desires. They live a simple life in peace in order to practice the Way, and consider the realization of perfect understanding as their only career. Our minds are never satisfied or content with just enough. The more we obtain, the more we want; thus we create offenses and do evil deeds; Bodhisattvas do not make mistakes, instead, they are always content, nurture the way by living a quiet life in humble surroundings. Their sole occupation is cultivating wisdom. Who is aware of the extent to which laziness is an obstacle to practice. For this reason, we must practice diligently to destroy the unwholesome mental factors which bind us, and to conquer the four kinds of Mara, in order to free ourselves from the prison of the five aggregates and the three worlds. Idleness and self-indulgence will be our downfall. With unflagging vigor, Great people break through their afflictions and baseness. They vanquish and humble the Four Kinds of Demons, and they escape from the prison of the Five Skandhas. Who is aware that ignorance is the cause of the endless cycle of birth and death. Therefore, Bodhisattvas always listen and learn in order to develop their understanding and eloquence. This enables them to educate living beings and bring them to the realm of great joy. Stupidity and ignorance are the cause of death and rebirth, Bodhisattvas are always attentive to and appreciative of extensive study and erudition. They strive to expand their wisdom and refine their eloquence. Teaching and transforming living beings, nothing brings them greater joy than this. Who is aware that poverty creates hatred and anger, which creates a vicious cycle of negative thoughts and activity. When practicing generosity, Bodhisattvas consider everyone, friends and enemies alike, as equal. They do not condemn anyone's past wrongdoings, nor do they hate those who are presently causing harm. The suffering of poverty breeds deep resentment; wealth

unfairly distributed creates ill-will and conflict among people. So, Bodhisattvas practice giving and treat friend and foe alike. They neither harbor grudges nor despise evil-natured people. Who is aware that the five categories of desire lead to difficulties. Although we are in the world, we should try not to be caught up in worldly matters. A monk, for example, has in his possession only three robes and one bowl. He lives simply in order to practice the Way. His precepts keep him free of attachment to worldly things, and he treats everyone equally and with compassion. Great people, even as laity, are not blighted by worldly pleasures; instead, they constantly aspire to take up the three precepts-robes and blessing-bowl of the monastic life. Their ideal and ambition is to leave the household and family life to cultivate the way in immaculate purity. Their virtuous qualities are lofty and sublime; their attitudes toward all creatures are kind and compassionate. Who is aware that the fire of birth and death is raging, causing endless suffering everywhere. Bodhisattvas should take the Great Vow to help everyone, to suffer with everyone, and to guide all beings to the realm of great joy. Rebirth and death are beset with measureless suffering and afflictions, like a blazing fire. Thus, great people make the resolve to cultivate the Great Vehicle to rescue all beings. They endure endless hardship while standing in for others. They lead everyone to ultimate happiness.

In the 1970s, Most Venerable Thích Thanh Từ translated this sutra from Chinese into Vietnamese, the original text of *The Eighth Awakening* as follows:

Rebirth and death are beset with
measureless suffering and afflictions,
like a blazing fire.
Thus, great people make the resolve to
cultivate the Great Vehicle to rescue all beings.
To endure endless hardship while
standing in for others.
To lead everyone to ultimate happiness.

Which means the awareness that the fire of birth and death is raging, causing endless suffering everywhere. Bodhisattvas should take the Great Vow to help everyone, to suffer with everyone, and to guide all beings to the realm of great joy. Rebirth and death are beset with

measureless suffering and afflictions, like a blazing fire. Thus, great people make the resolve to cultivate the Great Vehicle to rescue all beings. They endure endless hardship while standing in for others. They lead everyone to ultimate happiness.

II. The Fire of Birth and Death Is Raging & Causing Endless Suffering Everywhere:

An Overview of Birth and Death: In Buddhist belief, the so-called birth-death and rebirth is the recombination of mind and matter. After passing away of the physical body or the matter, the mental forces or the mind recombine and assume a new combination in a different material form and condition in another existence. Rebirth is the result of karma. In Buddhist belief, there is no transmigration of soul or any substance from one body to another. What really happens is that the last active thought (Javana) process of dying man releases certain forces which vary in accordance with the purity of the five thought moments in that series. These forces are called karma vega or karmic energy which attracts itself to a material layer produced by parents in the mother's womb. The material aggregates in this germinal compound must possess such characteristics as are suitable for the reception of that particular type of karmic energy. Attraction in this manner of various types of physical aggregates produced by parents occurs through the operation of death and gives a favourable rebirth to the dying man. An unwholesome thought gives an unfavourable rebirth. Each and every type of sentient being will have different appearance whether it be beautiful or ugly, superior or inferior. This is determined and is manifested based solely on the various karma sentient beings created while alive with their antecedent bodies.

Birth-Death and Rebirth also mean "Reincarnation", which means going around as the wheel turns around. The state of transmigration or samsara, where beings repeat cycles of birth and death according to the law of karma. What happens to us after death? Buddhism teaches that we remain for some time in the state of intermediate existence in this world after death, and when this time is over, in accordance with the karma that we have accumulated in our previous life, we are reborn in another appropriate world. Buddhism also divides this other world into the following realms: hell, hungry ghosts, animals, demons, human

beings, heavens, sravakas, pratyeka-buddhas, bodhisattvas, and buddhas. If we die in an unenlightened state, our minds (consciousnesses) will return to the former state of ignorance, and we will be reborn in the six worlds of illusion and suffering, and will again reach old age and death through the stages mentioned above. And we will repeat this round over and over to an indefinite time. This perpetual repetition of birth-death and rebirth is called "Transmigration." But if we purify our minds by hearing the Buddha's teachings and practicing the Bodhisattva-way, the state of ignorance is annihilated and our minds can be reborn in a better world. So, whether the world is Samsara or Nirvana depends entirely on our state of mind. If our mind is enlightened, then this world is Nirvana; if our mind is unenlightened, then this world is Samsara. Thus the Buddha taught: "For those who strive to cultivate, samsara is Nirvana, Nirvana is samsara."

There is one problem of human life that cannot be solved through human knowledge and endeavor. This is the problem of life and death. Man's life expectancy has increased considerably with the development of medical science and undoubtedly will be further prolonged in the future. Nevertheless, death invariably comes to us all. We instinctively feel death to be undesirable and frightening. Young people do not feel so horrified by death because they are so full of vitality and strong feelings that they do not think of death as it really is. They are not afraid of death because they do not think about it. If they gave it serious consideration, they would probably tremble with fear. How much more fear must a person who is seriously ill feel! His heart must almost burst with horror and loneliness when he thinks of death, which may come upon him at any moment. Moreover, the pain of his illness will torment him. The thought of death will double his pain during his remaining days. Someone may say that he is not especially afraid of death. But he says this when he is not confronted by death. He will surely not be able to keep his composure when the moment of death actually approaches. Sometimes, though, the suffering of pain actually makes us forget the true pangs of death. When we feel extreme pain our minds are so filled with the desire for freedom from pain that often we are able to forget our terror of death. In a sense, however, all people are just like criminals sentenced to death. The

time will come when they will all surely die. When medical science makes further progress, their physical suffering at the time of death may be alleviated. But even so, they will not be free from the terror, anxiety, and suffering of death itself. There is one way to be free from the threat of death. This is a religion through which we can believe in eternal life, that we do not die, our lives only change in form. When we can perfect our consciousness through religion, we will be truly free from the terror and suffering of death.

We are shadowed not only by the pangs of death but also by the suffering of life. We are assaulted day and night by material, physical, spiritual and other sufferings. Among these many sufferings, two, material and physical sufferings, should be alleviated through human knowledge and endeavor. Although these two forms of suffering cannot be entirely abolished in our present state of knowledge, they are being lessened bit by bit with the development and elevation of human knowledge. In fact, these kinds of suffering may almost disappear in time. When people encounter a serious suffering that they cannot resolve however hard they may try, they feel as if they must depend upon something more powerful than themselves, something absolute, and they ask for help. They entrust themselves body and mind to this absolute power, as if to say, "Do as you please. I leave everything up to you." What should we depend upon? To what should we entrust our body and mind? Primitive people prostrated themselves before the sun, mountains, animals, plants, or other human beings and spirits dwelling within them. But such a behavior is out of the question now. Believers in a more advanced form of religion depend on its absolute power, on a god that is considered to be the almighty being who creates and governs everything in heaven and on earth. They manage to obtain a certain degree of mental peace by praying to this god and asking his help. But even this peace of mind is limited. We cannot obtain absolute assurance and peace from such a god because this god exists externally in some transcendental sphere like heaven. A god who majestically looks down on the world from heaven, a god who mercilessly punishes evil and rewards good. The more absolute the power this god possesses, the more dependent we become and at the same time, the more we fear we feel because we do not know when we may be forsaken by the god or when we may be punished by him. For this

reason, we live in a great fear of the god, although we depend upon him with our whole heart. With such mental dependence on an external force, we cannot attain true mental peace or nirvana.

Can we depend upon anything inside ourselves? No, this is also unreliable because our mind is always subject to illusion. Our body is also unreliable, being destined to disintegrate eventually. If we could depend wholly upon something within us, we would have no need of religion and should be able to save ourselves by our own efforts. What then should we depend upon for our salvation? We must here remember the Buddha's teaching: "Make the self your light, make the Law your light," the words the Buddha spoke to Ananda, one of his ten great disciples, before dying. Ananda felt anxious, reflecting: "When the World Honored One, who is unparalleled leader and teacher, dies, who on earth should we depend upon in our practice and life?" In response to Ananda's anxiety, the Buddha taught him as follows: "Ananda! In the future, you should make yourself your light and depend upon your own self. You must not depend upon other people. You should make the Law your light and depend upon the Law. You must not depend upon others. In what way can we gain such consciousness? Needless to say, the way is to study the teachings of the Buddha repeatedly and to root them deeply in our minds by meditating on them. We must keep firmly in mind the realization that our lives should be unified with the universal life or the Buddha. This indeed is meditation from the religious point of view. Through this kind of meditation, we can purify even the mind of which we cannot be conscious ourselves, that is, our subconscious mind, and we can make our thought and conduct harmonize spontaneously with our surroundings. If our thought and conduct are in harmony with our surroundings, sufferings and worries cannot trouble us. This mental state is true peace of mind; it is the state of "nirvana is quiescence," the absolute quiet state in which we cling to nothing. This state of mind is not limited to a passive mental peace. Our consciousness of being enlivened by this great universal life gives us great hope and courage. Energy springs from this consciousness so that we advance to carry out our daily lives, our work, and our bodhisattva-way for the benefit of others in this world.

Causes of Birth-Death: According to the Surangama Sutra, book Nine, in the part of the ten states of formation skandha, the Buddha reminded Ananda: “Ananda, you should know that when the good person has obtained proper knowledge and his practice of samatha, his mind is unmoving, clear, and proper, and it cannot be disturbed by the ten kinds of demons from the heavens. He is now able to intently and thoroughly investigate the origin of all categories of beings. As the origin of each category becomes apparent, he can contemplate the source of the subtle, fleeting and pervasive fluctuation. But if he begins to speculate on that pervasive source, he could fall into error with two theories of the absence of cause.” First, perhaps this person sees no cause for the origin of life. Why? Since he has completely destroyed the mechanism of production, he can, by means of the eight hundred merits of the eye organ, see all beings in the swirling flow of karma during eighty thousand eons, dying in one place and being reborn in another as they undergo transmigration. But he cannot see beyond eighty thousand eons. Therefore, he concluded that for the last eighty thousand eons living beings in the ten directions of this and other worlds have come into being without any cause. Second, perhaps this person sees no cause for the end of life. And why? Since he perceives the origin of life, he believes that people are always born as people and birds are always born as birds; that crows have always been black and swans have always been white; that humans and gods have always stood upright and animals have always walked on four legs; that whiteness does not come from being washed and blackness does not come from being dyed; and that there have never been nor there will be any changes for eighty thousand eons. He says: “As I now examine to the end of this life, I find the same holds true. In fact, I have never seen Bodhi, so how can there be such a thing as the attainment of Bodhi? You should now realize that there is no cause for the existence of any phenomena.” Because of this speculation, he will lose proper and pervasive knowledge, fall into externalism, and become confused about the Bodhi nature.

According to Buddhism, children are born from four causes: First, repaying past kindness which the child incurred a debt of gratitude to the parents in previous lifetime. To repay it, the child has come to be born in the parent’s household and will attend painstakingly to their

needs throughout their life. Second, repaying the past wrongs which the parents committed in their previous life. To seek retribution, the children have come to be born in their household. Thus when they are still young, they are so unruly and when grown they will create misfortunes and calamities implicating their parents. In old age the parents will be left in want, and their treatment after the parents' death will not only dishonor them, but the shame will extend to the ancestors as well. Third, for repaying past debts, the children have come to be reborn in their parents' household. If it is a great debt, repayment can be for the parents' entire lifetime. If the debt is small, repayment can cover part of the parents' lifetime before the children die. Fourth, to claim past debts, the children have come to be reborn in the family. If the debt is small, the parents will merely have to spend money to feed, clothe, education, health and helping them getting married. If the debt is big, the children may sometimes deplete all the parents' assets.

Birth and Death in the Six Paths: In Buddhist belief, birth and death are only two points in the cycle of "Birth and Death". The passing away from one body to be reborn in another body. Where the being will be reborn depends on his accumulated good or bad karma. There is no transmigration of soul or any substance from one body to another. What really happens is that the last active thought (Javana) process of dying man releases certain forces which vary in accordance with the purity of the thought moments in that series. These forces are called karma vega or karmic energy which attracts itself to a material layer produced by parents in the mother's womb. The material aggregates in this germinal compound must possess such characteristics as are suitable for the reception of that particular type of karmic energy. Attraction in this manner of various types of physical aggregates produced by parents occurs through the operation of death and gives a favourable rebirth to the dying man. An unwholesome thought gives an unfavourable rebirth. Each and every type of sentient being will have different appearance whether it be beautiful or ugly, superior or inferior. This is determined and is manifested based solely on the various karma sentient beings created while alive with their antecedent bodies. The original word for reincarnation is translated as transmigration. The passing away from one body to be reborn in another body. Where the being will be reborn depends on his

accumulated good or bad karma. The belief that living beings, including man, have a series of bodily lives, only ceasing when they no longer base their happiness on any of the objects of the world. This comes about when the Buddha-nature is found. This belief is very common to all Buddhists.

Birth and Death or Rebirth is the result of karma. The doctrine of rebirth is upheld by all traditional schools of Buddhism. According to this doctrine, sentient beings (sattva) are caught up in a continuous round of birth, death, and rebirth, and their present state of existence is conditioned by their past volitional actions or karma. In Buddhist belief, there is no transmigration of soul or any substance from one body to another. What really happens is that the last active thought (Javana) process of dying man releases certain forces which vary in accordance with the purity of the five thought moments in that series. These forces are called karma vega or karmic energy which attracts itself to a material layer produced by parents in the mother's womb. The material aggregates in this germinal compound must possess such characteristics as are suitable for the reception of that particular type of karmic energy. Attraction in this manner of various types of physical aggregates produced by parents occurs through the operation of death and gives a favourable rebirth to the dying man. An unwholesome thought gives an unfavourable rebirth. Each and every type of sentient being will have different appearance whether it be beautiful or ugly, superior or inferior. This is determined and is manifested based solely on the various karma sentient beings created while alive with their antecedent bodies. Since the cycle inevitably involves suffering and death, Buddhism assumes that escape from it is a desirable goal. This is achieved by engaging in cultivating oneself, and the most important of which is meditation. The doctrine of rebirth has become problematic for many contemporary Buddhists, particularly for converts to Buddhism in Western countries whose culture does not accept the notion of rebirth. However, this doctrine is extremely important in Buddhism, for all sincere attitudes of cultivation originated from the thorough understanding of this doctrine.

Rebirth in hells where beings undergo sufferings at all times. This is one of the eight conditions or circumstances in which it is difficult to see a Buddha or hear his dharma; or eight special types of adversities

that prevent the practice of the Dharma. Rebirth as a hungry ghost, or the ghost-world, where beings never feel comfortable with non-stop greed. This is one of the eight conditions or circumstances in which it is difficult to see a Buddha or hear his dharma; or eight special types of adversities that prevent the practice of the Dharma. Rebirth in an animal realm where beings has no ability and knowledge to practice dharma. Rebirth in the men realm includes rebirth with impaired, or deficient faculties such as the blind, the deaf, the dumb and the cripple. This is also one of the eight conditions or circumstances in which it is difficult to see a Buddha or hear his dharma; or eight special types of adversities that prevent the practice of the Dharma, or rebirth as a man in the intermediate period between Sakyamuni Buddha and his successor, or life in a realm wherein there is no Tathagata, or in the intermediate period between a Buddha and his successor. During this period of time, people spent all the time to gossip or to argue for or their own views on what they heard about Buddha dharma, but not practicing. This is also one of the conditions or circumstances in which it is difficult to see a Buddha or hear his dharma; or eight special types of adversities that prevent the practice of the Dharma. Besides, sentient beings can be reborn among rich and honorable men; or be reborn as worldly philosophers (intelligent and well educated in mundane sense) who think that they know everything and don't want to study or practise anymore, especially practicing dharmas. This is also one of the eight conditions or circumstances in which it is difficult to see a Buddha or hear his dharma; or eight special types of adversities that prevent the practice of the Dharma. Sentient beings can be reborn among men, become monks, and obtain the truth. Sentient beings can be reborn in Uttarakuru (Northern continent) where life is always pleasant and desires that beings have no motivation to practice the dharma. This is also one of the eight conditions or circumstances in which it is difficult to see a Buddha or hear his dharma; or eight special types of adversities that prevent the practice of the Dharma. Sentient beings can be reborn in the heavens from the Four Dhyana Heavens to the Four Heavenly Kings, such as the Suyama-heavens, the Indra heavens, the Tusita Heaven, the nirmanarati heaven, the Brahma-heavens, the paranirmita-vasavartin, any long-life gods or heavens, or the heavens of the four deva kings.

According to the Buddhist tradition, on the night of His enlightenment, the Buddha provided us with testimony on the matter of birth, death and rebirth. He acquired three varieties of knowledge⁽¹⁾ and the first of these was the detailed knowledge of His past lives. He was able to recollect the conditions in which He had been born in His past lives. Besides the Buddha's testimony, His eminent disciples were also able to recollect their past lives. Ananda, for example, acquired the ability to recollect his past life soon after his ordination. Similarly, throughout the history of Buddhism, so many Zen masters and Saints have been able to recollect their past lives. In Buddhism, the process of "birth, death, and rebirth" is part of the continuous process of change. In fact, we are not only reborn at the time of death, we are born, died, and reborn at every moment. This process is no difference from the process of change in our body, for example, the majority of the cells in the human body die and are replaced many times during the course of one's life. The Buddha observed that disturbing attitudes and karma cause our minds to take one rebirth after another. At the time of death, we ordinary people usually crave for our bodies. We are afraid to lose our bodies and to be separated from everything around us. When it becomes obvious that we are departing from this body and life, we try to grasp for another body. The state of transmigration or samsara, where beings repeat cycles of birth and death according to the law of karma. Living beings are absolutely free to choose their own future. If they wish to be reborn in the Western Pureland, they can make a vow to that effect, then, vigorously recite the name of the Buddhas. If they prefer the hells, they simply do evil deeds and they will fall into the hells for sure. All life, all phenomena have birth and death, beginning and end. The Madhyamika School deny this in the absolute, but recognize it in the relative. The Madhyamika-Sastra believed that all things coming into existence and ceasing to exist, past and future, are merely relative terms and not true in reality. Birth and death is a grove for Enlightening Beings because they do not reject it. This is one of the ten kinds of grove of Great Enlightening Beings. Enlightening Beings who abide by these can achieve the Buddhas' unexcelled peaceful, happy action, free from sorrow and affliction. Birth-and-death is a weapon of enlightening beings because they continue enlightening practices and teach sentient beings. Enlightening Beings who abide by

these can annihilate the afflictions, bondage, and compulsion accumulated by all sentient beings in the long night of ignorance. The birth and death of saints, i.e. without action and transformation, or effortless mortality, or transformation such as that of Bodhisattva. Time flies really fast. The years and months have gone by really fast too. In the same way, people progress from birth to old age and death without being aware of it. Birth, old age, sickness, and death come in quick succession as we pass the years in muddled confusion. If we do not wake up to our own birth and death, then, having been born muddled, we will also die muddled according to the law of karma. What a meaningless life!

The Fear of Birth and Death: There is one problem of human life that cannot be solved through human knowledge and endeavor. This is the problem of life and death. Man's life expectancy has increased considerably with the development of medical science and undoubtedly will be further prolonged in the future. Nevertheless, death invariably comes to us all. We instinctively feel death to be undesirable and frightening. Young people do not feel so horrified by death because they are so full of vitality and strong feelings that they do not think of death as it really is. They are not afraid of death because they do not think about it. If they gave it serious consideration, they would probably tremble with fear. How much more fear must a person who is seriously ill feel! His heart must almost burst with horror and loneliness when he thinks of death, which may come upon him at any moment. Moreover, the pain of his illness will torment him. The thought of death will double his pain during his remaining days. Someone may say that he is not especially afraid of death. But he says this when he is not confronted by death. He will surely not be able to keep his composure when the moment of death actually approaches. Sometimes, though, the suffering of pain actually makes us forget the true pangs of death. When we feel extreme pain our minds are so filled with the desire for freedom from pain that often we are able to forget our terror of death. In a sense, however, all people are just like criminals sentenced to death. The time will come when they will all surely die. When medical science makes further progress, their physical suffering at the time of death may be alleviated. But even so, they will not be free from the terror, anxiety, and suffering of death

itself. There is one way to be free from the threat of death. This is a religion through which we can believe in eternal life that we do not die, our lives only change in form. When we can perfect our consciousness through religion, we will be truly free from the terror and suffering of death.

We are shadowed not only by the pangs of death but also by the suffering of life. We are assaulted day and night by material, physical, spiritual and other sufferings. Among these many sufferings, two, material and physical sufferings, should be alleviated through human knowledge and endeavor. Although these two forms of suffering cannot be entirely abolished in our present state of knowledge, they are being lessened bit by bit with the development and elevation of human knowledge. In fact, these kinds of suffering may almost disappear in time. When people encounter a serious suffering that they cannot resolve however hard they may try, they feel as if they must depend upon something more powerful than themselves, something absolute, and they ask for help. They entrust themselves body and mind to this absolute power, as if to say, "Do as you please. I leave everything up to you." What should we depend upon? To what should we entrust our body and mind? Primitive people prostrated themselves before the sun, mountains, animals, plants, or other human beings and spirits dwelling within them. But such a behavior is out of the question now. Believers in a more advanced form of religion depend on its absolute power, on a god that is considered to be the almighty being who creates and governs everything in heaven and on earth. They manage to obtain a certain degree of mental peace by praying to this god and asking his help. But even this peace of mind is limited. We cannot obtain absolute assurance and peace from such a god because this god exists externally in some transcendental sphere like heaven. A god who majestically looks down on the world from heaven, a god who mercilessly punishes evil and rewards good. The more absolute the power this god possesses, the more dependent we become and at the same time, the more we fear we feel because we do not know when we may be forsaken by the god or when we may be punished by him. For this reason, we live in a great fear of the god, although we depend upon him with our whole heart. With such mental dependence on an external force, we cannot attain true mental peace or nirvana.

Can we depend upon anything inside ourselves? No, this is also unreliable because our mind is always subject to illusion. Our body is also unreliable, being destined to disintegrate eventually. If we could depend wholly upon something within us, we would have no need of religion and should be able to save ourselves by our own efforts. What then should we depend upon for our salvation? We must here remember the Buddha's teaching: "Make the self your light, make the Law your light," the words the Buddha spoke to Ananda, one of his ten great disciples, before dying. Ananda felt anxious, reflecting: "When the World Honored One, who is unparalleled leader and teacher, dies, who on earth should we depend upon in our practice and life?" In response to Ananda's anxiety, the Buddha taught him as follows: "Ananda! In the future, you should make yourself your light and depend upon your own self. You must not depend upon other people. You should make the Law your light and depend upon the Law. You must not depend upon others. In what way can we gain such consciousness⁽¹⁾? Needless to say, the way is to study the teachings of the Buddha repeatedly and to root them deeply in our minds by meditating on them. We must keep firmly in mind the realization that our lives should be unified with the universal life or the Buddha. This indeed is meditation from the religious point of view. Through this kind of meditation, we can purify even the mind of which we cannot be conscious ourselves, that is, our subconscious mind, and we can make our thought and conduct harmonize spontaneously with our surroundings. If our thought and conduct are in harmony with our surroundings, sufferings and worries cannot trouble us. This mental state is true peace of mind; it is the state of "nirvana is quiescence," the absolute quiet state in which we cling to nothing. This state of mind is not limited to a passive mental peace. Our consciousness of being enlivened by this great universal life gives us great hope and courage. Energy springs from this consciousness so that we advance to carry out our daily lives, our work, and our bodhisattva-way for the benefit of others in this world.

Notes:

- (1) Mind is another name for Alaya-vijnana, as they both store and give rise to all seeds of phenomena and knowledge. According to the Kosa Sastra, the two are considered as identical in the Abhidharma-Kosa, but different in Mahayana. Zen Master Hakuun-Yasutani

(1885-1973) taught: "Your mind can be compared to a mirror, which reflects everything that appears before it. From the time you begin to think, to feel, and to exert your will, shadows are cast upon your mind which distort its reflections. This condition we call delusion, which is the fundamental sickness of human beings. The most serious effect of this sickness is that it creates a sense of duality, in consequence of which you postulate 'I' and 'not-I.' The truth is that everything is One, and this of course is not a numerical one. Falsely seeing oneself confronted by a world of separate existence, this is what creates antagonism, greed, and, inevitably, suffering. The purpose of zazen is to wipe away from the mind these shadows or defilements so that we can intimately experience our solidarity with all life. Love and compassion then naturally and spontaneously flow forth." (according to "The Three Pillars of Zen").

III. Practitioners Vow to Help Everyone to the Realm of Great Joy:

Those who want to live and cultivate in accordance with the spirit of the Sutra of Eight Awakenings of Great People should have the awareness that the fire of birth and death is raging, causing endless suffering everywhere. Bodhisattvas should take the Great Vow to help everyone, to suffer with everyone, and to guide all beings to the realm of great joy. Rebirth and death are beset with measureless suffering and afflictions, like a blazing fire. Thus, great people make the resolve to cultivate the Great Vehicle to rescue all beings. They endure endless hardship while standing in for others. They lead everyone to ultimate happiness.

IV. Buddhist Practitioners Always Advance on the Path of "Above to Seek Bodhi, Below to Transform All Beings" With the Mind of Saving the Suffered and Offering Joy to Beings of Bodhisattvas' Compassion:

The aim of Buddhist practitioners is the attainment of Supreme Buddhahood. Therefore, Bodhisattva Way is also called the Buddha-Way or Tathagata-Way. This is the way in which practitioners seek "to benefit self and benefit others, leading to Buddhahood," or "Above to seek bodhi, below to transform all beings". Those who discipline themselves in the Path should think thus when they have to struggle with adverse conditions: "During the innumerable past eons I have wandered through multiplicity of existences, never thought of cultivation, and thus creating infinite occasions for hate, ill-will, and wrong-doing. Even though in this life I have committed no violations,

the fruits of evil deeds in the past are to be gathered now. Neither gods nor men can fortell what is coming upon me. I will submit myself willingly and patiently to all the ills that befall me, and I will never bemoan or complain. In the sutra it is said not to worry over ills that may happen to you, because I thoroughly understand the law of cause and effect. This is called the conduct of making the best use of hatred and turned it into the service in one's advance towards the Path.

According to Buddhism, the thought of compassion is the thought that broadly spreads out for the happiness of beings. The Buddha died at 80 instead of 100. He left 20 years of his own happiness to his disciples, and also the Tripitaka for universal salvation. Here a Buddhist, with a heart filled with compassion. Thus he stays, spreading the thought of compassion, above, below, across, everywhere, always with a heart filled with compassion, abundant, magnified, unbounded, without hatred or ill-will. Compassion also makes the heart quiver when other are subject to suffering. It is the wish to remove the suffering of others, and it is opposed to cruelty. Karuna means sympathy, or pity (compassion) for another in distress and desire to help him or to deliver others from suffering out of pity. The compassion is selfless, non-egoistic and based on the principle of universal equality. A compassionate mind is a mind with wholesome thoughts which always wishes others to be released from their sufferings and afflictions. A compassionate mind does not only bring forth happiness and tranquility for others, but also to ourselves. The compassionate mind also helps us dispel our negative thoughts such as anger, envy and jealousy, etc. Compassion extends itself without distinction to all sentient beings. However, compassion must be accompanied by wisdom in order to have right effect. Karuna or compassion is one of the most important entrances to the great enlightenment; for with it, we do not kill or harm living beings.

According to the Vimalakirti Sutra, Chapter Seventh, Contemplating on Living Beings, when Manjusri Bodhisattava called on to enquire after Vimalakirti's health, he asked Vimalakirti about "Karuna" as follows: Manjusri asked Vimalakirti: "What should be compassion (karuna) of a Bodhisattva?" Vimalakirti replied: "A Bodhisattva's compassion should include sharing with all living beings all the merits he has won." Bodhisattvas' compassion is inconceivable.

Bodhisattvas are enlightenment-beings, Buddhas-to-be, however, they vow to continue stay in this world for a long period of time. Why? For the good of others, because they want to become capable of pulling others out of this great flood of sufferings and afflictions. But what personal benefit do they find in the benefit of others? To Bodhisattvas, the benefit of others is their own benefit, because they desire it that way. However, in saying so, who could believe that? It is true that some people devoid of pity and think only of themselves, find it hard to believe in the altruism of the Bodhisattvas. But compassionate people do so easily. Do we not see that certain people, confirmed in the absence of pity, find pleasure in the suffering of others, even when it is not useful to them? And we must admit that the Bodhisattvas, confirmed in pity, find pleasure in doing good to others without any egoistic preoccupation. Do we not see that certain, ignorant of the true nature of the conditioned Dharmas which constitute their so-called “Self”, attach themselves to these dharmas, as a result, they suffer pains and afflictions because of this attachment. While we must admit that the Bodhisattvas, detach themselves from the conditioned Dharmas, no longer consider these Dharmas as “I” or “Mine”, growing in pitying solicitude for others, and are ready to suffer pains for this solitude?

In short, Bodhisattvas are enlightening beings who, deferring their own full Buddhahood, dedicate themselves to helping others attain liberation, and vow to forego complete enlightenment until they help all other beings attain enlightenment. In their self-mastery, wisdom, and compassion Bodhisattvas represent a high stage of Buddhahood, but they are not yet the supreme enlightened, or fully perfected Buddha. Bodhisattvas have numerous different ways that they manifest to help beings, but here, we only mention some typical ways of compassion that Bodhisattvas have practiced. If practitioners want to follow in the footsteps of Bodhisattvas, we should try to cultivate some typical methods of Bodhisattvas' ways of cultivation. It should be reminded that the mind of compassion is an infinite pity for all, one of the four immeasurable minds (catvari-apramanani). Boundless pity, to save from suffering. Here a monk, with a heart filled with compassion. Thus he stays, spreading the thought of compassion, above, below, across, everywhere, always with a heart filled with compassion,

abundant, magnified, unbounded, without hatred or ill-will. Compassion also makes the heart quiver when other are subject to suffering. It is the wish to remove the suffering of others, and it is opposed to cruelty. However, a Bodhisattva always has two characteristics that go simultaneously in cultivation: pity and wisdom, for these two characteristics of a bodhisattva seeking to attain perfect enlightenment and the salvation of all beings. Karuna or compassion means below is to save sentient beings. Jnana or wisdom means above is to seek Bodhi. In Mahayana Buddhism, Pity is typified by Avalokitesvara and wisdom by Mahasthamaprapta. In the esoteric sects, pity is represented by the garbhadhatu or the womb treasury, while wisdom is represented by the vajradhatu or the diamond treasury. Besides, compassion and wisdom are also two doors (of Karuna and Jnana) that help practitioners with two aims: above to seek bodhi, below to save (transform) beings. This is also one of the great vow of a Bodhisattva. First, Buddha-pity, or Bodhisattva-pity, the way of pity directed to others. Second, Wisdom gate or Buddha-wisdom, or the way of enlightenment.

V. Buddhist Practitioners Always Vow to Transform & Save All Sentient Beings:

Education in Buddhism Is the First Phase in the Process of Transformation & Salvation: Education in Buddhism may be understood as teaching people to deliver from destruction, sufferings, afflictions, and so on, and to bring that person to the state of being safe from destructive forces, natural or supernatural. The goal of any Buddhist cultivator is to achieve self-enlightening (examine with one's own intelligence, and not depending upon another), enlightening or awakening of others, then achieve the final accomplishment, that is to become a Buddha. Devout Buddhists should always remember that the goal of Buddhist education is to help sentient beings become Buddhas, or at least become real Buddhists, and not aiming at socializing human beings as worldly people. Because Buddhism is a religion of returning to self (looking inward), the goal of its education must be inward and not outward for appearances and matters. As mentioned above, the main causes of sufferings and afflictions are greed, anger, hatred, ignorance, pride, doubt, wrong views, killing, stealing, sexual

misconduct, lying, and so on... and the ultimate goal of Buddhism is to help sentient beings, especially, human beings to eliminate these troubles so that if we are not able to become a Buddha, at least we can become a real Buddhist. Therefore, the goal of Buddhist education is freeing cultivators from being led by these troubles so that they could see Reality and the Truth as it is. The Buddha taught that man of this present moment is the result of millions and millions of his past thoughts and actions, and not ready-made as a cake or a piece of candy. Man's character is determined by his own thinking, thus man is not perfect by nature. In order to become perfect, man has to educate and train himself. Among other sentient beings, human beings have the ability to think and to reason, and the intelligence to educate and build their life a better one. However, in order to achieve a better or a perfect life, Buddhist or non-Buddhist has no other ways but educating himself with the five precepts (not killing, not stealing, not committing sexual misconduct, not lying and not drinking alcohol or doing drugs), the four noble truths and the eightfold noble path (right view, right thinking, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration)... that is to say education in morality. Besides, the core of Buddhism is the law of "Cause and Effect" so Buddhist education cannot miss this law. Devout Buddhists should always remember that "If this is, that comes to be; from the arising of this, that arises. If this is not, that does not come to be; from the ceasing of this, that ceases." Buddhist education helps point out to everybody that the law of "Cause and Effect" is for everybody, from normal people to saints. If you sow good deeds, you'll reap good results. In the contrary, if you sow bad deeds, you'll reap bad results without any exception. Therefore, according to the Buddhist education, whichever causes increases of greed, anger, ignorance, pride, doubt, wrong views, killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying... is bad and we should stay away from; and whichever helps decreasing or stopping the above mentioned troubles is good and we should pursue. Whatever we say, devout Buddhists should always remember that Buddhism is not a mere system of doctrine, it is a way of life. If we educate ourselves the way the Buddha taught, we would surely have a peaceful, mindful and happy life.

Buddhists always need two ways of education. The first way is secular education and the second one is religious education. These two ways are considered as the two wings for a bird. Without two wings, no bird can fly. Similarly, without these two ways of education, Buddhists would lead to a poor and obscure life, not only in the secular world but also in the spiritual life. Secular education will help us with an appropriate profession to support our family while religious education will help us lead a true happy life. As a matter of fact, religious education is extremely necessary, for it teaches us how to think and act in order to be good and happy. Besides, it also helps us love and understand the meaning of life so that we are able to adjust ourselves to its laws in any circumstances. After experiencing six years in ascetic practices, the Buddha advised his followers to follow the middle path. He taught: “Buddhists should always make best use of their secular life while cultivating the path of true happiness in this world and hereafter.”

Buddhist Practitioners Always Advance on the Path of Teaching and Saving of Sentient Beings: Salvation may be understood as the deliverance of someone from destruction, sufferings, afflictions, and so on, and to bring that person to the state of being safe from destructive forces, natural or supernatural. To other religions, salvation means deliverance from sin and death, and admission to a so-called “Eternal Paradise”. These are religions of deliverance because they give promise of some form of deliverance. They believe that a person’s will is important, but grace is more necessary and important to salvation. Those who wish to be saved must believe that they see a supernatural salvation of an almighty creator in their lives. In Buddhism, the concept of salvation is strange to all sincere Buddhists. One time, the Buddha told His disciples: “The only reason I have come into the world is to teach others. However, one very important thing is that you should never accept what I say as true simply because I have said it. Rather, you should test the teachings yourselves to see if they are true or not. If you find that they are true and helpful, then practice them. But do not do so merely out of respect for me. You are your own savior and no one else can do that for you.” One other time, the Buddha gently patted the crazy elephant and turned to tell Ananda: “The only way to destroy hatred is with love. Hatred cannot be defeated with more hatred. This

is a very important lesson to learn.” Before Nirvana, the Buddha himself advised his disciples: “When I am gone, let my teachings be your guide. If you have understood them in your heart, you have no more need of me. Remember what I have taught you. Craving and desire are the cause of all sufferings and afflictions. Everything sooner or later must change, so do not become attached to anything. Instead devote yourselves to clearing your minds and finding true and lasting happiness.” These are the Buddha’s golden speeches on some of the concepts of salvation.

In salvation, Mahayana Buddhism has temporary manifestation for saving, converting and transporting beings. It is difficult for ordinary people like us to understand the teaching with infinite compassion of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Sometimes, they use their speech to preach the dharma, but a lot of times they use their way of life such as retreating in peace, strictly following the precepts to show and inspire others to cultivate the way. “Temporary manifestation for saving beings” means temporarily appear to save sentient beings. The power of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas to transform themselves into any kind of temporal body in order to aid beings. Salvation includes converting and Transporting (to teach and save, to rescue and teach). To transform other beings. The region, condition, or environment of Buddha instruction or conversion. Salvation also means any land which a Buddha is converting, or one in which the transformed body of a Buddha. These lands are of two kinds: pure like Tusita heaven and vile or unclean like this world. T’ien-T’ai defines the transformation realm of Amitabha as the Pure Land of the West. Other schools speak of the transformation realm as the realm on which depends the nirmanakaya. According to Tao-Ch’o (562-645), one of the foremost devotees of the Pure Land school, in his *Book of Peace and Happiness*, one of the principal sources of the Pure Land doctrine. All the Buddhas save sentient beings in four ways. First, by oral teachings such recorded in the twelve divisions of Buddhist literature. Second, by their physical features of supernatural beauty. Third, by their wonderful powers and virtues and transformations. Fourth, by recitating of their names, which when uttered by beings, will remove obstacles and result their rebirth in the presence of the Buddha.

There are four reasons for a Buddha's appearing in the world. *The first reason is Introduction:* To disclose, or to open up treasury of truth, or to introduce and open the Buddhas' views and knowledge to sentient beings; so they can follow, learn, understand the truths, and clearly distinguish right from wrong. *The second reason is Guidance:* To display or to indicate the meanings of Buddhas' teachings, or to teach sentient beings to learn and practice the views and knowledge introduced by Buddhas, to help them know clearly the proper path from the improper path, right from wrong, in order to eliminate the various false views and knowledge. *The third reason is Awaken:* Awaken means to realize or to cause men to apprehend it, or to be awakened to the Buddha Dharma, avoid false doctrines in order to escape from sufferings of births and deaths in the three evil paths of hell, hungry ghost, and animal, and be able to be reborn in the more peaceful and happier realms of heaven and human. *The fourth reason is Penetration:* To enter, or to lead them into it, or to penetrate deeply into the enlightenment fruit of the saintly beings, being able to transcend and to find liberation from the cycle of rebirths.

Four ways the Buddha used to transform and save sentient beings. According to Tao-Ch'o (562-645), one of the foremost devotees of the Pure Land school, in his Book of Peace and Happiness, one of the principal sources of the Pure Land doctrine. All the Buddhas save sentient beings in four ways. *First*, by oral teachings such recorded in the twelve divisions of Buddhist literature. *Second*, by their physical features of supernatural beauty. *Third*, by their wonderful powers and virtues and transformations. *Fourth*, by reciting of their names, which when uttered by beings, will remove obstacles and result their rebirth in the presence of the Buddha. It is difficult for ordinary people like us to understand the teaching with infinite compassion of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Sometimes, they use their speech to preach the dharma, but a lot of times they use their way of life such as retreating in peace, strictly following the precepts to show and inspire others to cultivate the way. "Temporary manifestation for saving beings" means temporarily appear to save sentient beings. The power of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas to transform themselves into any kind of temporal body in order to aid beings.

Buddhas and Bodhisattvas also transform and save all sentient beings by “Breaking (disproving) the false and making manifest the right.” According to the Madhyamika School, the doctrine of the school has three main aspects, the first aspect is the “refutation itself of a wrong view, at the same time, the elucidation of a right view.” Refutation is necessary to transform and save all sentient beings who are drowned in the sea of attachment while elucidation is also important in order to propagate the teaching of the Buddha. Refutation of all wrong views, refutation means to refute all views based on attachment. Also views such as the ‘self’ or atman, the theory of Brahmanic philosophers. The pluralistic doctrines of the Buddhist Abhidharma schools (Vaibhasika, Kosa, etc) and the dogmatic principles of Mahayana teachers are never passed without a detailed refutation. The Realistic or all exists, and the Nihilistic or nothing exists are equally condemned. Elucidation of the good cause means elucidation of a right view. According to Prof. Takakusu in *The Essentials of Buddhist Philosophy*, the Madhyamika School strongly believed that the truth can be attained only by negation or refutation of wrong views within and without Buddhism, and of errors of both the Great and Small Vehicles. When retaining wrong views or error, one will be blind to reason. How can a blind man get a right view without which the two extremes can never be avoided? The end of verbal refutation is the dawn of the Middle Path. Refutation and refutation only, can lead to the ultimate truth. The Middle Path, which is devoid of name and character is really the way of elucidation of a right view.

According to the Vimalakirti Sutra, when Manjusri Bodhisattva called to enquire after Vimalakirti’s health, Vimalakirti told Manjusri about “saving sentient beings”. Manjusri asked: “What should a Bodhisattva wipe out in order to liberate living beings?” Vimalakirti replied: “When liberating living beings, a Bodhisattva should first wipe out their klesa (troubles and causes of troubles)?” Manjusri asked: “What should he do to wipe out klesa?” Vimalakirti replied: “He should uphold right mindfulness.” Manjusri asked: “What should he do to uphold right mindfulness?” Vimalakirti replied: “He should advocate the unborn and the undying.” “Manjusri asked: “What is the unborn and what is the undying?” Vimalakirti replied: “The unborn is evil that does not arise and the undying is good that does not end.” Manjusri asked:

“What is the root of good and evil?” Vimalakirti replied: “The body is the root of good and evil.” Manjusri asked: “What is the root of the body?” Vimalakirti replied: “Craving is the root of the body.” Manjusri asked: “What is the root of craving?” Vimalakirti replied: “Baseless discrimination is the root of craving.” Manjusri asked: “What is the root of baseless discrimination?” Vimalakirti replied: “Inverted thinking is the root of discrimination.” Manjusri asked: “What is the root of inverted thinking?” Vimalakirti replied: “Non-abiding is the root of inverted thinking.” Manjusri asked: “What is the root of non-abiding?” Vimalakirti replied: “Non-abiding is rootless. Manjusri, from this non-abiding root all things arise.”

VI. In Teaching and Saving of Sentient Beings, Sentient Beings Are Subject to Illness, So Bodhisattvas Are Ill As Well:

In Buddhism, a person who is not enlightened is “ill” by definition. The healing process into the aspiration to attain enlightenment. According to the Vimalakirti Sutra, at the time of the Buddha, one day Upasaka Vimalakirti was sick, the Buddha asked his great disciples, one after another, to call on Vimalakirti to enquire after his health, but no one dared to accept. Eventually, Manjusri Bodhisattva accepted the Buddha’s command to call on Vimalakirti to enquire after his health. The Buddha then said to Manjusri: “You call on Vimalakirti to enquire after his health.” Manjusri said: “World Honoured One, he is a man of superior wisdom and it is not easy to match him (in eloquence). For he has reached reality, and is a skillful expounder of the essentials of the Dharma. His power of speech is unhindered and his wisdom is boundless. He is well versed in all matters pertaining to Bodhisattva development for he has entered the mysterious treasury of all Buddhas. He has overcome all demons, has achieved all transcendental powers and has realized wisdom by ingenious devices (upaya). Nevertheless, I will obey the holy command and will call on him to enquire after his health.” The Bodhisattvas, the chief disciples of the Buddha and the rulers of the four heavens who were present, thought to themselves: “As the two Mahasattvas will be meeting, they will certainly discuss the profound Dharma.” So, eight thousand Bodhisattvas, five hundred sravakas and hundreds and thousands of devas wanted to follow Manjusri. So Manjusri, reverently surrounded by the Bodhisattvas, the

Buddha's chief disciples and the deva, made for Vaisali town. Vimalakirti, who knew in advance that Manjusri and his followers would come, used his transcendental powers to empty his house of all attendants and furniture except a sick bed. When entering the house Manjusri saw only Vimalakirti lying on sick bed, and was greeted by the upasaka, who said: "Welcome, Manjusri, you come with no idea of coming and you see with no idea of seeing." Manjusri replied: "It is so, Venerable Upasaka, coming should not be further tied to (the idea of) coming, and going should not be further linked with (the concept of) going. Why? Because there is neither whence to come nor whither to go, and that which is visible cannot further be (an object of) seeing. Now, let us put all this aside. Venerable Upasaka, is your illness bearable? Will it get worse by wrong treatment? The World Honoured One sends me to enquire after your health, and is anxious to have good news of you. Venerable Upasaka, where does your illness come from; how long has it arisen, and how will it come to an end?" Vimalakirti replied: "Stupidity leads to love which is the origin of my illness. Because all living beings are subject to illness I am ill as well. When all living beings are no longer ill, my illness will come to an end. Why? A Bodhisattva, because of (his vow to save) living beings, enters the realm of birth and death which is subject to illness; if they are all cured the Bodhisattva will no longer be ill. For instance, when the only son of an elder falls ill, so do his parents, and when he recovers his health, so do they. Likewise, a Bodhisattva loves all living beings as if they were his sons; so when they fall ill, the Bodhisattva is also ill, and when they recover, he is no longer ill."

VII. Buddhist Practitioners Always Follow Bodhisattvas' Examples to Advance on the Path of Their Saving and Supporting All Sentient Beings:

Buddhist Practitioners do not only with the determination to be free from cyclic existence, but also with the motivation of attaining enlightenment in order to benefit all beings. According to the Buddha in The Flower Adornment Sutra, chapter 25 (Ten Dedications), Enlightening Beings save other sentient beings without any mental image of sentient beings: *First*, Enlightening Beings think that, they may use these roots of goodness universally to benefit all sentient

beings, causing them to be purified, to reach the ultimate shore, and to forever leave the innumerable pains and afflictions of the realms of hells, hungry ghosts, animals and asuras (titans). *Second*, when the great Enlightening Beings plant these roots of goodness, they dedicate their won roots of goodness thus. I should be a hostel for all sentient beings, to let them escape from all painful things. I should be a protector for all sentient beings, to let them all be liberated from all afflictions. I should be a refuge for all sentient beings, to free them from all fears. I should be a goal for all sentient beings, to cause them to reach universal knowledge. I should make a resting place for all sentient beings, to enable them to find a place of peace and security. I should be a light for all sentient beings, to enable them to attain the light of knowledge to annihilate the darkness of ignorance. I should be a torch for all sentient beings, to destroy all darkness of nescience. I should be a lamp for all sentient beings, to cause them to abide in the realm of ultimate purity. I should be a guide for all sentient beings, to lead them into the truth. I should be a great leader for all sentient beings, to give them great knowledge. *Third*, Great Enlightening Beings dedicate all foundations of goodness in this way, to equally benefit all sentient beings and ultimately cause them all to attain universal knowledge. Enlightening Beings' protection of and dedication to those who are not their relatives or friends are equal to those for their relatives and friends. Enlightening Beings enter the equal nature of all things, they do not conceive a single thought of not being relatives or friends. Even if there be sentient beings, who have malicious or hostile intentions toward the Enlightening Beings, still the Enlightening Beings also regard them with the eye of compassion and are never angered. *Fourth*, Enlightened Beings are good friends to all sentient beings. They always explain the right teaching for sentient beings, so that they may learn and practice it. *Fifth*, Enlightening beings dedicate because they are just as the ocean which cannot be changed or destroyed by all poisons. The various oppressive afflictions of all the ignorant, the unwise, the ungrateful, the wrathful, those poisoned by covetousness, the arrogant and conceited, the mentally blind and deaf, those who do not know what is good, and other such evil sentient beings, cannot disturb the Enlightening Beings; they are just as the sun, appearing in the world not concealed because those

who are born blind do not see it, not hidden by the obstruction of such things as mirages, eclipses, trees, high mountains, deep ravines, dust, mist, smoke, or clouds, not concealed by the change of seasons. Enlightening Beings dedicate with great virtues, with deep and broad minds. They dedicate because they want ultimate virtue and knowledge, their minds aspire to the supreme truth; the light of truth illumines everywhere and they perceive the meanings of everything. Their knowledge freely commands all avenues of teaching, and in order to benefit all sentient beings they always practice virtuous ways, never mistakenly conceiving the idea of abandoning sentient beings. *Sixth*, Enlightening Beings do not reject sentient beings and fail to cultivate dedication because of the meanness of character of sentient beings, or because their erroneous will, ill-will and confusion are hard to quell. *Seventh*, Enlightening Beings just array themselves with the armor of great vows of Enlightening Beings, saving sentient beings without ever retreating. *Eighth*, Enlightening Beings do not withdraw from enlightening activity and abandon the path of enlightenment just because sentient beings are ungrateful. *Ninth*, Enlightening Beings do not get sick of sentient beings just because ignoramuses altogether give up all the foundations of goodness which accord with reality. *Tenth*, Enlightening Beings do not retreat because sentient beings repeatedly commit excesses and evils which are hard to bear. *Eleventh*, Great Enlightening Beings do not cultivate roots of goodness and dedicate them to complete perfect enlightenment just for the sake of one sentient being; it is in order to save and safeguard all sentient beings everywhere that they cultivate roots of goodness and dedicate them to unexcelled complete perfect enlightenment. *Twelfth*, it is not purify just one Buddha-land, not because of belief in just one Buddha, not just to see one Buddha, not just to comprehend one doctrine that they initiate the determination for great knowledge and dedicate it to unexcelled complete perfect enlightenment. It is to purify all Buddha-lands, out of faith in all Buddhas, to serve all Buddhas, to understand all Buddha-teachings, that they initiate great vows, cultivate the foundations of goodness, and dedicate them to unexcelled complete perfect enlightenment. *Thirteenth*, Enlightening Beings vow that: "By my roots of goodness, may all creatures, all sentient beings, be purified! May they be filled with virtues which cannot be ruined and are

inexhaustible! May they always gain respect! May they have right mindfulness and unfailing recollection! May they attain sure discernment! May they be replete with an immeasurable knowledge. May all virtues of physical, verbal and mental action fully adorn them!” *Fourteenth*, Bodhisattvas use these roots of goodness to cause all sentient beings to serve all Buddhas, to their unfailing benefit, to cause all sentient beings’ pure faith to be indestructible, to cause all sentient beings to hear the true teaching, cut off all doubt and confusion, remember the teaching without forgetting it, to cause all sentient beings to cultivate in accord with the teaching, to cause sentient beings to develop respect for the enlightened, to cause sentient beings to act with purity, to rest securely on innumerable great foundations of goodness, to cause all sentient beings to be forever free from poverty, to cause all sentient beings to be fully equipped with the seven kinds of wealth (faith, vigor, shame, learning, generosity, concentration and wisdom), to cause all sentient beings to always learn from the Buddha, to perfect innumerable roots of goodness, to cause sentient beings to attain impartial understanding, to abide in omniscience, to look upon all sentient beings equally with unobstructed eyes, to adorn their bodies with all marks of greatness, without any flaws, beautiful voices, replete with all fine qualities, to have control over their senses, to accomplish the ten powers, to be filled with good will, to dwell or depend on nothing, to cause all sentient beings to attain the enjoyments of Buddhahood and abide in the abode of Buddhas. *Fifteenth*, seeing sentient beings doing all sorts of bad things and suffering all sorts of misery and pain, and being hindered by this from seeing the Buddha, hearing the teaching and recognizing the community, the enlightening beings vow to enter those states of woe, take on the various miseries in place of the sentient beings, to cause them to be free. *Sixteenth*, Enlightening Beings suffer pain in this way, but they are not discouraged. In the contrary, they vigorously cultivate without ceasing because they are determined to carry all sentient beings to liberation. They are determined to save all sentient beings and to enable them to attain emancipation, so that they can be free from the realm of pain and troubles of birth, old age, sickness, and death. They are determined to save all sentient beings from revolving in erroneous views, bereft of qualities of goodness. They are

determined to save all sentient beings who are wrapped up in the web of attachments, covered by the shroud of ignorance, clinging to all existents, pursuing them unceasingly, entering the cage of suffering, acting like maniacs, totally void of virtue or knowledge, always doubtful and confused, do not perceive the place of peace, do not know the path of emancipation, revolve in birth and death without rest, and always submerged in the mire of suffering. *Seventeenth*, Enlightening Beings are not seeking liberation for themselves, but they want to use what they practice to cause all sentient beings become supreme sovereign of knowledge, attain the omniscient mind, cross over the flow of birth and death, and be free from all suffering. *Eighteenth*, Enlightening Beings vow to accept all sufferings for the sake of all sentient beings, and enable them to escape from the abyss of immeasurable woes of birth and death. *Nineteenth*, Enlightening Beings always vow to accept all sufferings for the sake of all sentient beings in all worlds, in all states of misery forever, but still always cultivate foundations of goodness for the sake of all beings. *Twentieth*, Enlightening Beings vow that they would rather take all this sufferings on themselves than allow sentient beings to fall into hell, animal, hungry ghost, and asura realms. *Twenty-first*, Enlightening Beings vow to protect all sentient beings and never abandon them. This is a sincere vow because they set their mind on enlightenment in order to liberate all sentient beings, not seeking the unexcelled way for their own sake. *Twenty-second*, Enlightening Beings do not cultivate enlightening practice in search of pleasure or enjoyment. Why? Because mundane pleasures are all sufferings and mundane pleasures are the realms of maniacs. Only craved by ignorant people, but scorned by Buddhas because all misery arises from them. The anger, fighting, mutual defamation and such evils of the realms of hells, ghosts, animals and asuras are all caused by greedy attachment to objects of desire. By addiction to desires, one become estranged from the Buddhas and hindered from birth in heaven, to say nothing of unexcelled complete perfect enlightenment. *Twenty-third*, Enlightening Beings vow to dedicate roots of goodness to enable all sentient beings to attain ultimate bliss, beneficial bliss, the bliss of nonreception, the bliss of dispassionate tranquility, the bliss of imperturbability, immeasurable bliss, the bliss of not rejecting birth and death yet not regressing from

nirvana, undying bliss, and the bliss of universal knowledge. *Twenty-fourth*, for all sentient beings, Enlightening Beings vow to be a charioteer, to be a leader, to be holding the torch of great knowledge and showing the way to safety and peace, freeing them from danger, to use appropriate means to inform sentient beings of the truth. In the ocean of birth and death, they are skillful captains of the ship, who know how to deliver sentient beings to the other shore. *Twenty-fifth*, Enlightening Beings dedicate all their roots of goodness and save sentient beings by employing means appropriate to the situation to cause them to emerge from birth and death, to serve and provide for all the Buddhas, to attain unhindered, omniscient knowledge, to abandon all maniacs and bad associates, to approach all Enlightening Beings and good associates, to annihilate all error and wrongdoing, to perfect pure behavior, and to fulfill the great practical vows and innumerable virtues of Enlightening Beings. *Twenty-sixth*, sentient beings cannot save themselves, how can they save others? Only Enlightening Beings have this unique determination of cultivating amass roots of goodness and dedicate them in this way to liberate all sentient beings, to illumine all sentient beings, to guide all sentient beings, to enlighten all sentient beings, to watch over and attend to all sentient beings, to take care of all sentient beings, to perfect all sentient beings, to gladden all sentient beings, to bring happiness to all sentient beings, and to cause all sentient beings to become freed from doubt. *Twenty-seventh*, Enlightening Beings' dedications should be like the sun shining universally on all without seeking thanks or reward; not abandoning all sentient beings because one sentient being is evil, just diligently practicing the dedications of roots of goodness to cause all sentient beings to attain peace and ease. Enlightening Beings are able to take care of all sentient beings even if they are bad, never giving up their vows on this account. Even if their roots of goodness be few, but because they want to embrace all sentient beings, so they always make a great dedication with a joyful heart. If one has roots of goodness but does not desire to benefit all sentient beings that is not called dedication. When every single root of goodness is directed toward all sentient beings that is called dedication. *Twenty-eighth*, Enlightening Beings cultivate dedication to place sentient beings in the true nature of things where there is no attachment. *Twenty-ninth*, Enlightening

Beings cultivate dedication to see that the intrinsic nature of sentient beings doesn't move or change. *Thirtieth*, Enlightening Beings cultivate dedication without depending on or grasping dedication. *Thirty-first*, Enlightening Beings cultivate dedication without attachment to the appearances of roots of goodness. *Thirty-second*, Enlightening Beings cultivate dedication without false ideas about essential nature of consequences of actions. *Thirty-third*, Enlightening Beings cultivate dedication without attachment to the characteristics of the five clusters of material and mental existence. *Thirty-fourth*, Enlightening Beings cultivate dedication without destroying the characteristics of the five clusters. *Thirty-fifth*, Enlightening Beings cultivate dedication without grasping action. *Thirty-sixth*, Enlightening Beings cultivate dedication without seeking reward. *Thirty-seventh*, Enlightening Beings cultivate dedication without attachment to causality. *Thirty-eighth*, Enlightening Beings cultivate dedication without imagining what is producing by causality. *Thirty-ninth*, Enlightening Beings cultivate dedication without attachment to reputation. *Fortieth*, Enlightening beings cultivate dedication without attachment to location. *Forty-first*, Enlightening Beings cultivate dedication without attachment to unreal things. *Forty-second*, Enlightening Beings cultivate dedication without attachment to images of sentient beings, the world, or mind. *Forty-third*, Enlightening Beings cultivate dedication without creating delusions of mind, delusions of concepts, or delusions of views. *Forty-fourth*, Enlightening Beings cultivate dedication without attachment to verbal expression. *Forty-fifth*, Enlightening Beings cultivate dedication observing the true nature of all things. *Forty-sixth*, Enlightening beings cultivate dedication observing the aspects in which all sentient beings are equal. *Forty-seventh*, Enlightening Beings cultivate dedication stamping all roots of goodness with the seal of the realm of truth. *Forty-eighth*, Enlightening Beings cultivate dedication observing all things dispassionately; they understand that all things have no propagation and that roots of goodness are also thus. *Forty-ninth*, Enlightening Beings cultivate dedication observing that things are nondual, unborn, and unperishing. *Fiftieth*, Enlightening Beings use such roots of goodness to cultivate and practice pure methods of curing spiritual ills. *Fifty-first*, all of their roots of goodness are in accord with transcendental principles, but they do not conceive of them

dualistically. *Fifty-second*, it is not in their deeds that they cultivate omniscience. *Fifty-third*, Enlightening Beings cultivate omniscience, but it is not apart from deeds that they cultivate omniscience. Omniscience is not identical to action, but omniscience is not attained apart from action either. Because their action is pure as light, the consequences are also pure as light; because the consequences are pure as light, omniscience is also pure as light. They detach from all confusions and thoughts of self and possession, Enlightening Beings skillfully cultivate dedication of all roots of goodness. *Fifty-fourth*, Enlightening Beings cultivate dedication in this way to liberate sentient beings ceaselessly; they do not dwell on appearances. Though they know that in all things there is no action and no consequences, yet they can skillfully produce all deeds and consequences without opposition or contention. Enlightening Beings cultivate dedication, free from all faults and are praised by all Buddhas.

Chapter Twenty-One

Practitioners Who Live & Cultivate In Accordance With the Spirit of the Sutra of Eight Awakenings of Great People Are on the Path Leading to the Nirvana in the Buddha Land

I. The Goal of Cultivation Is To Reach Enlightenment and Emancipation:

Enlightenment is a complete and deep realization of what it means to be a Buddha. In Buddhism, enlightenment is achieving a complete and deep realization of what it means to be a Buddha and how to reach Buddhahood. While emancipation or moksha means the escaping from bonds and the obtaining of freedom, freedom from transmigration, from karma, from illusion, from suffering of the burning house in the three realms (lokiya). Practitioners should always remember that instead of wanting enlightenment and emancipation, we should try fix our mind for it is very important for any practitioners to fix the mind. The more we want enlightenment, the further away it will be. If we want to find a good place to practice meditation, no place we find will be good enough. But if in anywhere we can cut off all thinking and return to beginner's mind, that itself will be a wonderful enlightenment for a Zen practitioner. If we can keep true empty mind, then any place we are is Niravana. So true Buddhist practitioners must strongly keep a closed mouth; and we must only learn from the blue sky, the white clouds, the deep quiet mountains, and the noisy cities. They are just like this. That is our true great teacher. Devout Buddhists should first kill our strong self and find clear mind all the time, then talk about helping all people from sufferings and afflictions. Practitioners should always remember that we should not desire to achieve anything, even the attainment of enlightenment or emancipation. The very desire to be free or to be enlightened will be the desire that prevents our freedom. We can try as hard as we wish, practice ardently night and day, but if we still have a desire to achieve something, we will never find peace. Why? Because real wisdom never arises from desires. So, all

practitioners need to do is to simply let go everything. Simply watch the body and the mind mindfully, and do not try to achieve anything, even the enlightenment or the emancipation. Never stop paying attention to what is happening in our body and mind; and do not concern about our progress. Let's pay close attention to what is happening in our body and mind, then we will naturally see. Remember, the more we pay attention, the more we will see. And remember, the truth cannot be unfolded when there are still clusters of cloud, even a small cluster of emancipation cloud. Furthermore, the immediate, un-reflected grasp of reality, without affective contamination and intellectualization, the realization of the relation of oneself to the Universe. This new experience is a repetition of the pre-intellectual, immediate grasp of the child, but on a new level, that the full development of man's reason, objectively, individuality. While the child's experience, that of immediacy and oneness, lies before the experience of alienation and the subject-object split, the enlightenment experience lies after it.

Practitioners should always remember that the core of Buddhism is a doctrine of salvation. Deliverance (Moksha) means the escaping from bonds and the obtaining of freedom, freedom from transmigration, from karma, from illusion, from suffering of the burning house in the three realms (lokiya). According to Buddhism, deliverance means deliverance from all the trammels of life, the bondage of the passion and reincarnation. Thus, moksha also denotes nirvana. Moksha can be achieved in dhyana-meditation. Zen practitioners should always remember that in Buddhism, it is not the Buddha who delivers men, but he teaches them to deliver themselves, even as he delivered himself. The need for it arises from the hopelessly unsatisfactory character of the world in which we find ourselves. Buddhists always take an extremely gloomy view of the conditions in which we have the misfortune to live. It is particularly the impermanence of everything in and around us that suggests the worthlessness of our worldly aspirations which in the nature of things can never lead to any lasting achievement or abiding satisfaction. In the end death takes away everything we managed to pile up and parts us from everything we cherished. In order to reach enlightenment and emancipation, first of all, practitioners should cultivate or practice mental training which is

carried out for three distinct, but interconnected, purposes. Cultivation of meditation aims at a withdrawal of attention from its normal preoccupation with constantly changing sensory stimuli and ideas centred on oneself. It aims at effecting a shift of attention from the sensory world to another, subtler realm, thereby calming the turmoils of the mind. Sense-based knowledge is as inherently unsatisfactory as a sense-based life. Sensory and historical facts as such are uncertain, unfruitful, trivial, and largely a matter of indifference. Only that is worth knowing which is discovered in meditation, when the doors of senses are closed. The truth of this holy religion must elude the average worldling with his sense-based knowledge, and his sense-bounded horizon. It aims at penetrating into the suprasensory reality itself, at roaming about among the transcendental facts, and this quest leads it to Emptiness, the ultimate reality.

II. Practitioners Who Live & Cultivate In Accordance With the Spirit of the Sutra of Eight Awakenings of Great People Are on the Path Leading to the Nirvana in the Buddha Land:

According to the Sutra of Eight Awakenings of Great People, any Buddhist practitioner who lives and cultivates in accordance with the spirit of this Sutra, and is aware that the world is impermanent. All regimes are subject to fall; all things composed of the four elements that are empty and contain the seeds of suffering. Human beings are composed of five aggregates, and are without a separate self. They are always in the process of change, constantly being born and constantly dying. They are empty of self, without sovereignty. The mind is the source of all unwholesome deeds and confusion, and the body is the forest of all impure actions. If we meditate on these facts, we can gradually be released from the cycle of birth and death. The world is impermanent, countries are perilous and fragile; the body's four elements are a source of pain; ultimately, they are empty; the Five Aggregates (Skandhas) are not me; death and rebirth are simply a series of transformations; misleading, unreal, and uncontrollable; the mind is the wellspring of evil; the body is the breeding ground of offenses; whoever can investigate and contemplate these truths, will gradually break free of death and rebirth. Who is aware that more desire brings more suffering. The awareness that more desire brings

more suffering. All hardships in daily life arise from greed and desire. Those with little desire and ambition are able to relax, their bodies and minds are free from entanglement. Too much desire brings pain. Death and rebirth are tiresome ordeals which stem from our thoughts of greed and desire. By reducing desires, we can realize absolute truth and enjoy independence and well-being in both body and mind. Who is aware that the human mind is always searching for possessions and never feels fulfilled. This causes impure actions to ever increase. In our daily life we always want to have good food, nice clothes, attractive jewellery, but we only feel satisfied with them for a short time, after that, the very same object that once gave us pleasure might cause us frustration now. The same can also be applied to fame. At the beginning we might think ourselves that we are so happy when we are famous, but after some time, it could be that all we feel is frustration and dissatisfaction. Bodhisattvas, however, always remember the principle of having few desires. They live a simple life in peace in order to practice the Way, and consider the realization of perfect understanding as their only career. Our minds are never satisfied or content with just enough. The more we obtain, the more we want; thus we create offenses and do evil deeds; Bodhisattvas do not make mistakes, instead, they are always content, nurture the way by living a quiet life in humble surroundings. Their sole occupation is cultivating wisdom. Who is aware of the extent to which laziness is an obstacle to practice. For this reason, we must practice diligently to destroy the unwholesome mental factors which bind us, and to conquer the four kinds of Mara, in order to free ourselves from the prison of the five aggregates and the three worlds. Idleness and self-indulgence will be our downfall. With unflagging vigor, Great people break through their afflictions and baseness. They vanquish and humble the Four Kinds of Demons, and they escape from the prison of the Five Skandhas. Who is aware that ignorance is the cause of the endless cycle of birth and death. Therefore, Bodhisattvas always listen and learn in order to develop their understanding and eloquence. This enables them to educate living beings and bring them to the realm of great joy. Stupidity and ignorance are the cause of death and rebirth, Bodhisattvas are always attentive to and appreciative of extensive study and erudition. They strive to expand their wisdom and refine

their eloquence. Teaching and transforming living beings, nothing brings them greater joy than this. Who is aware that poverty creates hatred and anger, which creates a vicious cycle of negative thoughts and activity. When practicing generosity, Bodhisattvas consider everyone, friends and enemies alike, as equal. They do not condemn anyone's past wrongdoings, nor do they hate those who are presently causing harm. The suffering of poverty breeds deep resentment; wealth unfairly distributed creates ill-will and conflict among people. So, Bodhisattvas practice giving and treat friend and foe alike. They neither harbor grudges nor despise evil-natured people. Who is aware that the five categories of desire lead to difficulties. Although we are in the world, we should try not to be caught up in worldly matters. A monk, for example, has in his possession only three robes and one bowl. He lives simply in order to practice the Way. His precepts keep him free of attachment to worldly things, and he treats everyone equally and with compassion. Great people, even as laity, are not blighted by worldly pleasures; instead, they constantly aspire to take up the three precepts-robes and blessing-bowl of the monastic life. Their ideal and ambition is to leave the household and family life to cultivate the way in immaculate purity. Their virtuous qualities are lofty and sublime; their attitudes toward all creatures are kind and compassionate. Who is aware that the fire of birth and death is raging, causing endless suffering everywhere. Bodhisattvas should take the Great Vow to help everyone, to suffer with everyone, and to guide all beings to the realm of great joy. Rebirth and death are beset with measureless suffering and afflictions, like a blazing fire. Thus, great people make the resolve to cultivate the Great Vehicle to rescue all beings. They endure endless hardship while standing in for others. They lead everyone to ultimate happiness.

In fact, each of the eight items in this sutra can be considered as a subject of meditation which Buddhist disciples should at all times, by day and by night, with a sincere attitude, recite and keep in mind eight truths that all great people awaken to. These are eight Truths that all Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and great people awaken to. After awakening, they then energetically cultivate the Way. By steeping themselves in kindness and compassion, they grow wisdom. They sail the Dharma-body ship all the way across to Nirvana's other shore, only to re-enter

the sea of death and rebirth to rescue all living beings. They use these Eight Truths to point out the right road to all beings and in this way, help them to recognize the anguish of death and rebirth. They inspire all to cast off and forsake the Five Desires, and instead to cultivate their minds in the way of all Sages. If Buddhist disciples recite this Sutra on the Eight Awakenings, and constantly ponder its meaning, they will certainly eradicate boundless offenses, advance toward Bodhi, quickly realize Proper Enlightenment, forever be free of death and rebirth, and eternally abide in joy. Everyone of us knows what we deeply aspire to gain is happiness and what we try to avoid is sufferings and afflictions; however, our actions and behaviors in daily life do not bring us any joy and happiness; on the contrary, they only lead us to more sufferings and afflictions. Why? Buddhism believes that we cause our own sufferings and afflictions because we are not awakening of the truth. Buddhism claims that experiences which are apparently pleasurable in this world are ultimately states of suffering. Devout Buddhists should see clearly the point is that we perceive them as states of pleasure only because, in comparison to states of sufferings and afflictions, they appear as a form of relief. A disciple of the Buddha, day and night, should wholeheartedly recite and meditate on the eight awakenings discovered by the great beings.

According to the Vimalakirti Sutra, Chapter One, the Buddha said: “Ratna-rasi, all species of living beings are the Buddha land sought by all Bodhisattvas. Why is it so? Because a Bodhisattva wins the Buddha land, according to the living beings converted by him (to the Dharma); according to the living beings tamed by him; according to the country (where they will be reborn to) realize the Buddha-wisdom and in which they will grow the Bodhisattva root. Why is it so? Because a Bodhisattva wins the pure land solely for the benefit of all living beings. For instance, a man can build palaces and houses on vacant ground without difficulty, but he will fail if he attempts to build them in (empty) space. So, a Bodhisattva, in order to bring living beings to perfection seeks the Buddha land which cannot be sought in (empty) space. All Bodhisattvas in the Buddhaland were well known for having achieved all the perfections that lead to the great wisdom. They had received instructions from many Buddhas and formed a Dharma-protecting citadel. By upholding the right Dharma, they could fearlessly

give the lion's roar to teach sentient beings; so their names were heard in the ten directions. They were not invited but came to the assembly to spread the teaching on the Three Treasures to transmit it in perpetuity. Also according to the Vimalakirti Sutra, Chapter Buddha Land, those practitioners who had overcome all demons and defeated heresies; and their six faculties, karmas of deeds, words and thoughts were pure and clean; being free from the (five) hindrances and the (ten) bonds. Those practitioners who had realized serenity of mind and had achieved unimpeded liberation. They had achieved right concentration and mental stability, thereby, acquiring the uninterrupted power of speech. Those practitioners who had achieved all the (six) paramitas: charity (dana), discipline (sila), patience (ksanti), devotion (virya), serenity (dhyana) and wisdom (prajna), as well as the expedient method (upaya) of teaching which completely benefit self and others. However, to them, these realizations did not mean any gain whatsoever for themselves, so, that they were in line with the patient endurance of the uncreate (anuttara-samyak-sambodhi-ksanti). Those practitioners who were able to turn the wheel of the Law that never turns back. Being able to interpret the (underlying nature of) phenomena, they knew very well the roots (propensities) of all living beings; they surpassed them all and realized fearlessness. Zen practitioners should always cultivate their minds by means of merits and wisdom, with which they embellished their physical features which were unsurpassable, thus, giving up all earthly adornments. Their towering reputation exceeded the height of Mount Sumeru. Their profound faith (in the uncreate) was unbreakable like a diamond. Their treasures of the Dharma illuminated all lands and rained down nectar. Their speeches were profound and unsurpassed. They entered deep into all (worldly) causes but cut off all heretical views, for they were already free from all dualities and had rooted out all (previous) habits. They were fearless and gave the lion's roar to proclaim the Dharma, their voices being like thunder. They could not be gauged, for they were beyond all measures. They had amassed all treasures of the Dharma and acted like (skillful) seafaring pilots. They were well versed in the profound meanings of all Dharmas. They knew very well the mental states of all living beings and their comings and goings (within the realms of existence). They had reached the state near the

unsurpassed sovereign wisdom of all Buddhas, having acquired the ten fearless powers (dasabala) giving complete knowledge and the eighteen different characteristics (of a Buddha as compared with Bodhisattvas (avenikadharma). Although they were free from (rebirth in) evil existences, they appeared in five mortal realms as royal physicians to cure all ailments, prescribing the right medicine in each individual case, thereby, winning countless merits to embellish countless Buddha lands. Each living being derived great benefit from seeing and hearing them, for their deeds were not in vain. Thus, they had achieved all excellent merits, extremely excellent merits!!!

III. Attainment of the State of Total Extinction of Desires and Sufferings (the State of Nirvana in the Buddha Land):

According to the Sutra of Eight Awakenings of Great People, any Buddhist practitioner who lives and cultivates in accordance with the spirit of eight awakenings of this Sutra, will surely attain the total extinction of desires and sufferings. This is the state of nirvana. Nirvana is the supreme goal of Buddhist endeavor. When we speak about Nirvana we encounter some problems of expression, because the exact nature of an experience cannot and never can be communicated merely by words. This experience must be experienced directly by each one of us, without any exception. We have to experience the end of sufferings and afflictions for ourselves, and the only way we can do this is by eliminating the causes of sufferings and afflictions: the attachment, aversion, and ignorance. When we have eliminated such causes of sufferings and afflictions, then we will experience nirvana for ourselves. “Nirvana” is a Sanskrit term for “cessation.” The term is a combination of the Sanskrit prefix “nir” plus the verbal root “va” and literally means “blow out” or “extinguish.” This is a “cessation” of the process of becoming, eternal peace, or extinction or Ultimate reality Absolute Truth, or the state achieved by the conquest of craving, the extinction of birth and death. This is the highest state of bliss, peace and purity. This is the unconditioned reality. This is also the supreme Goal of Buddhist endeavour (the spiritual goal of Buddhism); release from the limitations of existence. A state which is free from rebirth by extinguishing of all desires and the elimination of egoism. According to the Lankavatara Sutra, Nirvana means to see the abode of reality as it

is, and after seeing this a Bodhisattva with great compassion forgo his own nirvana in order to lead others to liberation. Nirvana consists of 'nir' meaning exit, and 'vana' meaning craving. Nirvana means the extinguishing or liberating from existence by ending all suffering. So Nirvana is the total extinction of desires and sufferings, or release (giải thoát). It is the final stage of those who have put an end to suffering by the removal of craving from their mind. In Mahayana Buddhism, Nirvana has the following meanings: inaction or without effort (diệt), no rebirth (vô sanh), calm joy (an lạc), and extinction or extinguish or tranquil extinction or transmigration to extinction (tịch diệt). In other word, Nirvana means extinction of ignorance and craving and awakening to inner Peace and Freedom. Nirvana with a small "n" stands against samsara or birth and death. Nirvana also refers to the state of liberation through full enlightenment. Nirvana is also used in the sense of a return to the original purity of the Buddha-nature after the dissolution of the physical body that is to the perfect freedom of the unconditioned state. The supreme goal of Buddhist endeavor. An attainable state in this life by right aspiration, purity of life, and the elimination of egoism. The Buddha speaks of Nirvana as "Unborn, unoriginated, uncreated, and unformed," contrasting with the born, originated, created and formed phenomenal world. The ultimate state is the Nirvana of No Abode (Apratisthita-nirvana), that is to say, the attainment of perfect freedom, not being bound to one place. Nirvana is used in both Hinayana and Mahayana Buddhist schools. In the Lankavatara Sutra, the Buddha told Mahamati: "Oh Mahamati, Nirvana means seeing into the abode of reality in its true significance. The abode of reality is where a thing stands by itself. To abide in one's self-station means not to be astir, i.e., to be eternally quiescent. By seeing into the abode of reality as it is means to understand that there is only what is seen of one's own mind, and no external world as such." After the Buddha's departure, most of the metaphysical discussions and speculations centered round the subject of Nirvana. The Mahaparinirvana Sutra, the Sanskrit fragments of which were discovered recently, one in Central Asia and another in Koyasan, indicates a vivid discussion on the questions as to what is 'Buddha-nature,' 'Thusness,' 'the Realm of Principle,' 'Dharma-body' and the distinction between the Hinayana and Mahayana ideas. All of these

topics relate to the problem of Nirvana, and indicate the great amount of speculation undertaken on this most important question.

The most probable explanation of Nirvana is that it is the highest level of meditation, the ceasing of ideation and feeling. The attainment of Nirvana is also called the cessation of consciousness, since rebirth is effected through the medium of *viññāna* and the Nirvana is the cessation of rebirth, the reality of no-self. In the stream of consciousness processes, of which *viññāna* consists, is stopped and emptied, usually by means of the meditational exercises to insight exist. Buddhism had always maintained that the state of Nirvana can not be expressed in words by a lot of negation such as: 'There is the not-born, the not-become, the not-created, the not-compounded. There is the realm where there is neither earth nor water; neither the boundless realm of space nor boundless consciousness. There is neither coming nor going nor standing, neither origination nor annihilation... This is the end of suffering. So, Nirvana is beyond all suffering and change. It is as unfading, still, undecaying, taintless, as peace and blissful. It is an island, the shelter, the refuge and the goal. In addition, the term *Nibbana* in the literature of Pali Nikayas clearly refers to a unity eternally existing beyond the three world. It is infinite, inexpressible, unborn, undecaying and empty. It is homogeneous and knows no individuality. In it, all discriminations or dichotomy cease.

The word "Nirvana" literally means "extinguished" and therefore "tranquil." A question is raised whether Nirvana is only a transformed state of mind or whether it is another dimension of being. The word has been used both for a transformed psychological state and for a metaphysical status. Buddhist literature is full of statements which go to show that Nirvana is a transformed state of personality and consciousness. The transformation is described in negative terms as a destruction of craving and attachments and in positive terms as the emergence of transcendental wisdom and peace. According to Buddhist philosophy, there are four ways of description of a Nirvana. The first way of description of Nirvana is "Negative". The negative description is the most common. Nirvana is deathless, unchanging, imperishable, without end, non-production, extinction of birth, unborn, not liable to dissolution, uncreated, free from disease, un-aging, freedom from transmigration, utmost, cessation of pain, and final release. The second

way of description of Nirvana is “Positive”. Nirvana is peace, bliss, transcendental wisdom, pure and security. Impermanent, indeed, are all conditioned things. It is their very nature to come into being and then to cease. Having been produced, they are stopped. Their cessation brings peace and ease. Cessation also means extinction of craving and cessation of suffering with a state of calm. In a positive way, Nirvana also means the supreme bliss, transcendental wisdom, illumination, and pure radiant consciousness. The third way of description of Nirvana is “Paradoxical”. This statement is mostly found in Prajnaparamita or Madhyamika literature. Nirvana is abiding in a state of non-abiding. The only way of reaching the goal is to realize that in the ultimate sense there is no goal to be reached. Nirvana is reality which is void (sunya). The fourth way of description of Nirvana is “Symbolical”. Symbolical description differs from the paradoxical in avoiding to speak in abstractions and using concrete images instead. From this standpoint, Nirvana is the cool cave, the island in the flood, the further shore, the holy city, the refuge, the shelter, and the safe asylum.

According to Buddhism, Nirvana has many characteristics. First, nirvana may be enjoyed in the present life as an attainable state. Second, Nirvana has four virtues or transcendental characteristics in Buddhism, or four noble qualities of the Buddha’s life expounded in the Nirvana Sutra: eternity, or permanence (permanence versus impermanence); joy, or happiness (Bliss versus suffering or the paramita of joy); personality or soul or true self (Supreme self versus personal ego); purity (equanimity versus anxiety). Besides, Nirvana also has many other special characteristics. First, an attainable state in this life by right aspiration, purity of life, and the elimination of egoism. The Buddha speaks of Nirvana as “Unborn, unoriginated, uncreated, and unformed,” contrasting with the born, originated, created and formed phenomenal world. Second, the fact that Nirvana is realized as one of the mental states. It is not a state of nothingness. Third, nirvana is not a place or a kind of heaven where a self or soul resides. Nirvana is the attainment of a state which is dependent on this body itself and this state can be achieved in this very life. Nirvana is beyond description of words. It is beyond time and space described by ordinary people. Fourth, nirvana is a place where (if we can temporarily say so) craving, hate and delusion are destroyed. Nirvana is the attainment of

the cessation of sufferings. However, there are some heretic opinions in Nirvana. Nirvana is permanent and eternal; however, heretics believe that everything including nirvana as impermanent. Nirvana is a real Buddha-nature; however, heretics believe that there is no such Buddha-nature. Nirvana is a permanent place of bliss; however, heretics believe that everywhere including nirvana as no pleasure, but suffering. This is one of the eight upside-down views which belongs to the four upside-down views on impermanence. Buddhism believes that Nirvana is permanent and eternal; however, heretics believe that everything including nirvana as impermanent. Nirvana is pure; however, heretics believe that everything is impure. This is one of the eight upside-down views which belongs to the four upside-down views on impermanence. Buddhism believes that Nirvana is permanent and eternal; however, heretics believe that everything including nirvana as impermanent.

At the time of the Buddha, there existed some problems concerning Nirvana. Some are born in a womb; evil-doers are reborn in hells; the righteous people go to blissful states; the undefiled ones pass away into Nirvana (Dharmapada 126). In the Dharmapada Sutra, whenever the Buddha was asked by a questioner whether he was to live after death or what sort of world he was to enter after Nirvana, he always remained silent. When the Buddha remained silent to a question requiring an answer of 'yes' or 'no,' his silence usually meant assent. Ut his silence on the question concerning Nirvana was due to the fact that his listeners could not understand the profound philosophy involved. The main problem of Buddhism either formalistic or idealistic, was concerning the extinction of human passion, because this distorted state of mind is considered to be the source of all evils of human life. Human passion can be extinguished even during one's lifetime. Therefore liberation from such disorder of mind is the chief object of Buddhist culture. Nirvana means the extinction of passion, of desire, of sense, of mind, and even of individual consciousness. To Buddhist mind, Nirvana did not contain any idea of deification of the Buddha. It simply meant the eternal continuation of his personality in the highest sense of the word. It meant returning to his original state of Buddha-nature, which is his Dharma-body, but not his scripture-body as misunderstood by people. Dharma means the 'ideal' itself which the

Buddha conceived in his perfect Enlightenment. Nirvana is this ideal body which is without any restricting conditions. The formalists, on the other hand, hold that the scripture is the perfect representation of the ideal of the Buddha. Hence their opinion that the Buddha lives forever in the scripture-body, Nirvana being his entire annihilation and extinction otherwise. The principle of Nirvana or the state of a fire blown out in the light of space and time. It was an illusion on the part of philosophers, especially some of the Indian philosophers, to believe that space and time were infinite. Buddhism, however, has never treated space and time as infinite, for Buddhism takes them to be physical matters. The theory that space is curved, set forth by modern physicists, has considerably facilitated the elucidation of the doctrine of Nirvana. The universe, or the Realm of Principle (Dharmadhatu) as it is technically called, is the region which is occupied by space and time and in which they control all the waves of existence. So in practice, the space-time world is the ocean of the waves of life and death. It is the sphere of the flowing cycles of life or samsara, the world of creation, of energy, of action, of causation and ideation, of self-creation and of dynamic becoming. It is the sphere of desire, matter (form) and mind. Space is considered one of the five elements (earth, water, fire, air, and space), and it is sometimes represented to be of round shape. Time is treated as real in some schools while in other schools it is treated as unreal. But it is to be particularly noted that time has never been considered to exist separately from space. That is to say, every being or thing has time of its own. Space and time are always correlative. Men have an average lifetime of one hundred years. But a crane is said to live for a thousand years, and a tortoise even ten thousand years. And with the heavenly beings, their one day and night is said to be as long as the whole fifty years of the earthly men. A day-fly, on the other hand, live a short wave-length of only one day.

The Buddha said that Nirvana is supreme happiness, peace, immortal, uncreated, beyond earth, water, fire, and air, the sun and moon. It is unfathomable and immeasurable. He has described Nirvana in the following terms: infinite (ananta - p), non-conditioned (asamkhata -p), incomparable (anupameya -p), supreme (anuttara -p), highest (para -p), beyond (para -p), highest refuge (parayana -p), safety (tana -p), security (khema -p), happiness (siva -p), unique (kevala -p),

abodeless (analaya -p), imperishable (akkhara -p), absolute purity (visuddho -p), supramundane (lokuttara -p), immortality (amata -p), emancipation (mutti -p), peace (santi -p), etc. You should always remember that when you are still reborn in the Samsara, you still have to prepare for a long journey from here (samsara) to Nirvana. It is important to cultivate on a regular basis so you can obtain wisdom that is necessary for your journey. Do not seek the transcendental events or supernatural powers of just one existence, but look to the end of the journey: Nirvana for Nirvana is permanent, tranquil, extinguish, no aging, no death, purity, liberated from existence, passiveness (without effort), no rebirth, calm joy, transmigration to extinction, extinction or end of all return to reincarnation (cessation of rebirth), extinction of passion, and extinction of all misery and entry into eternal bliss.

Part Four

Appendices

(Phần Bốn: Phụ Lục)

Appendix A

Enlightenment Means to See Our Own True Nature

According to the Mahayana view, true nature is immutable, and eternal nature of all beings. According to almost all Mahayana sutras, this is the Buddha nature. All living beings have the Buddha-nature, and the Buddha-nature dwells permanently and unalterably throughout all rebirths. That means all can become Buddhas. However, because of their polluted thinking and attachments, they fail to realize this very Buddha-nature. The seed of mindfulness and enlightenment in every person, representing our potential to become fully awake. Since all beings possess this Buddha-nature, it is possible for them to attain enlightenment and become a Buddha, regardless of what level of existence they are. Buddha-Nature, True Nature, or Wisdom Faculty (the substratum of perfection, of completeness, intrinsic to both sentient and insentient life). According to Zen teaching, every sentient being or thing has Buddha-nature, but not being aware of it or not living with this awareness as an awakened one does. According to Hakuin, a famous Japanese Zen master, Buddha-nature is identical with that which is called emptiness. Although the Buddha-nature is beyond all conception and imagination, it is possible for us to awaken to it because we ourselves are intrinsically Buddha-nature. In the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha taught: “All sentient beings have the Buddha-nature innately.” Our entire religious life starts with this teaching. To become aware of one’s own Buddha-nature, bringing it to light from the depths of the mind, nurturing it, and developing it vigorously is the first step of one’s religious life. If one has the Buddha-nature himself, others must also have it. If one can realize with his whole heart that he has the Buddha-nature, he comes spontaneously to recognize that others equally possess it. Anyone who cannot recognize this has not truly realized his own Buddha-nature.

“Buddhata” is a Sanskrit term which means “Buddha-nature.” This Mahayana Buddhist term that refers to the final, unchanging nature of all reality. This is often equated with emptiness (sunyata) and defined

as simply an absence of any fixed and determinate essence. According to this formulation, because sentient beings have no fixed essence, they are able to change, and thus have the potential to become Buddhas. The Buddha Nature is also called True Nature. The enlightened mind free from all illusion. The mind as the agent of knowledge, or enlightenment. In the Thirteen Patriarchs of Pureland Buddhism, the Tenth Patriarch Ching-She confirmed: "Mind, Buddha, and Sentient Beings, all three are not any different. Sentient beings are Buddhas yet to be attained, while Amitabha is Buddha who has attained. Enlightened Nature is one and not two. Even though we are delusional, blind, and ignorant, but even so our Enlightened Nature has never been disturbed. Thus, once seeing the light, all will return to the inherent enlightenment nature." In other Mahayana traditions, however, particularly in East Asia, the concept is given a more substantialist formulation and is seen as the fundamental nature of all reality, an eternal essence that all beings possess, and in virtue of which they can all become Buddhas. In Japanese Zen tradition, for example, it is described as true self of every individual, and Zen has developed meditation techniques by which practitioners might develop experiential awareness of it. The concept is not found in Theravada Buddhism, which does not posit the idea that all beings have the potential to become Buddhas, rather, Nikaya Buddhist traditions hold that only certain exceptional individuals may become Buddhas and that others should be content to attain Nirvana as an Arhat or Pratyeka-Buddha.

Buddha-Nature, True Nature, or Wisdom Faculty (the substratum of perfection, of completeness, intrinsic to both sentient and insentient life). The seed of mindfulness and enlightenment in every person, representing our potential to become fully awakened and eventually a Buddha. The substratum of perfection, of completeness, intrinsic to both sentient and insentient life. The reason of Buddhahood consists in the destruction of the twofold klesa or evil passions. The Buddha-nature does not receive punishment in the hells because it is void of form, or spiritual or above the formal or material (only things with forms can enter the hells). Buddha-nature, which refers to living beings, and Dharma-nature, which concerns chiefly things in general, are practically one as either the state of enlightenment (as a result) or

the potentiality of becoming enlightened (as a cause). The eternity of the Buddha-nature. The Buddha-nature is immortal and immutable. As the sands the Ganges which always arrange themselves along the stream, so does the essence of Buddhahood, always conform itself to the stream of Nirvana. All living beings have the Buddha-Nature, but they are unable to make this nature appear because of their desires, hatred, and ignorance. “Buddhata” is an important term in Zen Buddhism, which refers to one’s buddha-nature (buddhata), the fundamental reality that is obscured by attachment to conceptual thoughts and language. The term is used in one of the best-known Koans, “What is your original face before your parents were born? Buddha-nature is the state of nothingness. In Buddhism we always talk about returning to the origin. We want to return to the way we were originally. What were things like originally? There was nothing at all! Now we want to go back to the state of nothingness.

According to the Mahayana Buddhism, to see one’s own nature and become a Buddha, or to behold the Buddha-nature to reach the Buddhahood or to attain enlightenment. This is a very common saying of the Zen school or Intuitive school. To behold the Buddha-nature within oneself or to see into one’s own nature. Semantically “Beholding the Buddha-nature” and “Enlightenment” have virtually the same meaning and are often used interchangeably. In describing the enlightenment of the Buddha and the patriarchs, however, it is often used the word “Enlightenment” rather than “Beholding the Buddha-nature.” The term “enlightenment” implies a deeper experience. This is a common saying of the Ch’an (Zen) or Intuitive School. This is one of the eight fundamental principles, intuitional or relating to direct mental vision of the Zen School. Also according to the Mahayana Buddhism, those who did not cultivate good roots in their past lives, see neither nirmanakaya nor sambhogakaya of the Buddha. Due to clinging to discrimination, ordinary people and Hinayana see only the nirmanakaya or body of incarnation of the Buddha; while Bodhisattvas and Mahayana, without clinging to discrimination, see both the body of incarnation (nirmanakaya) and the spiritual body or body in bliss (sambhogakaya) of the Buddha.

Appendix B

Enlightenment Means to See the True Meanings of Neither Birth Nor Death

This phrase means not changing in ‘going away or coming forth’, there is neither origination nor cessation. The phrase ‘going away’ expresses the idea of things disappearing, while the phrase ‘coming forth’ indicates that things appearing. The whole phrase “Neither birth nor death” means all things seem to be changing, but they appear to be doing so from a phenomenal and relative point of view. It is an accepted doctrine of the Prajna teaching and the ultimate doctrine of the Madhyamika School. Birth, creation, life, each is but a temporary term, in common statement it is called birth, in truth it is not birth; in the relative it is birth, in the absolute non-birth. When the Tathagata sees the real state of all things, they neither disappear, and they are immortal and eternal. When this idea applied to the human body, ‘coming forth’ means birth and ‘going away’ means death. Although man seems to be born, grow old, suffer from disease, and finally die, these phenomena are only produced by superficial changes in the substances that form the human body; true human life continues eternally. This confirms the Law of indestructibility of matter, through which science confirms that matter neither decreases nor disappears. The snow on the ground seems to melt away as the days go by, but in reality, it merely changes into water and sinks into the ground or evaporates into the air. The snow only changes its form; the quantity of fundamental elements that constitute it do not decrease, much less disappear. When water vapor in the air comes into contact with cold air as a condition or secondary cause, it becomes a tiny drop of water. These drops accumulate to form a cloud. When these tiny drops of water join to form large drops of water, they become rain and fall on the earth. They will fall not as rain but as snow when the temperature falls below a certain point. Thus though matter seems to disappear, in actual fact it does not disappear but only changes in form. The same can be said of man. In the sight of the Tathagata the birth and death of

man are merely changes in form; man's life itself remains eternally.
Seen with the eye of the Buddha

Appendix C

Enlightenment Means to See All Things Are Preaching the Dharma

Objectively speaking, the Buddha-dharma is so wonderful that so far no philosophers can ever argue or deny. To many people, Buddhism is always the best. However, for non-Buddhists, the so-called wonderful teachings seem nonsensical if they do not have the opportunity to hear them. How sorry! It is certainly that the majority of religions want to transform a bad person into a good one, but there are still a lot of religious cults that rigidly give people with blind faith and make them more and more ignorant. Therefore, we need more Buddhist lecturers to propagate the Wonderful Buddha-dharma.

A practitioner is called to be enlightened when he or she can see that all things in the world are constantly expounding the Dharma. Some things expound wholesome Dharma, while others expound unwholesome Dharma. Some things speak of the deviant knowledge and views of heretics; others speak of the proper knowledge and views of the Ultimate Meaning of the Middle Way. In other words, those that speak wholesome Dharma teach people to see through things, to let things go and to become free. Those that speak unwholesome Dharma teach people to preserve their illusions and continue to cling tightly to things, and so on, and so on. According to the Avatamsaka Sutra, “The Buddhas manifest hundreds of thousands of millions of sounds to proclaim the Wonderful Dharma for sentient beings. We, ordinary people, should always remember that all the sounds in the world are speaking the Dharma for us. For example, the sounds of the stream and creeks are just like the soft sounds from the golden mouth of the Buddha. The green color of the mountains and forests is the pure color of the Dharma-body delighting those who see it. If every one of us understands this principle, then absolutely everything in the world is speaking the Dharma for us. Good people speak good Dharma, bad people speak bad Dharma, and animals speak the Dharma of being animals for us. They enable us to understand how they got to be good, bad, animals, and so on. If you observe cats chase mice, lions chase

tigers, tigers chase bears, bears chase deers, the strong oppress the weak, and so on. They are all speaking the Dharma for us. Each has its own cause and effect. When we contemplate and understand things this way, we can get rid of all attachments. If not, we will forever be sinking in the sea of life of attachments.

Appendix D

Enlightenment Means Rejection of Pleasures, But Not Rejection of Means of Life

We are residing in the realm of passions or realm of desire where there exists all kinds of desires. The realm of desire, of sensuous gratification; this world and the six devalokas; any world in which the elements of desire have not been suppressed. The world of desire. The region of the wishes. This is the lowest of the three realms of existence, the other two being rupa-dhatu and arupa-dhatu. It is also the realm in which human live, and it receives its name because desire is the dominant motivation for its inhabitants. Most of us want to do good deeds; however, we are always contradictory ourselves between pleasure and cultivation. A lot of people misunderstand that religion means a denial or rejection of happiness in worldly life. In saying so, instead of being a method for transcending our limitations, religion itself is viewed as one of the heaviest forms of suppression. It's just another form of superstition to be rid of if we really want to be free. The worst thing is that nowadays, many societies have been using religion as a means of political oppression and control. They believe that the happiness we have here, in this world, is only a temporary, so they try to aim at a so-called "Almighty Creator" to provide them with a so-called eternal happiness. They deny themselves the everyday pleasures of life. They cannot enjoy a meal with all kinds of food, even with vegetarian food. Instead of accepting and enjoying such an experience for what it is, they tie themselves up in a knot of guilt "while so many people in the world are starving and miserable, how dare I indulge myself in this way of life!" This kind of attitude is just mistaken as the attitude of those who try to cling to worldly pleasures. In fact, this just another form of grasping. Sincere Buddhists should always remember that we deny to indulge in worldly pleasures so that we can eliminate "clinging" to make it easy for our cultivation. We will never reject means of life so we can continue to live to cultivate. A Buddhist still eat everyday, but never eats lives. A Buddhist still sleeps but is not eager to sleep round the clock as a pig. A Buddhist still

converse in daily life, but not talk in one way and act in another way. In short, sincere Buddhists never reject any means of life, but refuse to indulge in or to cling to the worldly pleasures because they are only causes of sufferings and afflictions.

Appendix E

Enlightenment Means to See One's Own Faults, But Not to See the Faults of Others

Of course, enlightenment is a complete and deep realization of what it means to be a Buddha. In Buddhism, enlightenment is achieving a complete and deep realization of what it means to be a Buddha and how to reach Buddhahood. However, for lay practitioners, in daily life, enlightenment means to see our own faults, but not to see the faults of others, for this will help us a lot in transforming our karmas. For the majority of us, it is easy seen are others' faults, but hard indeed to see one's own faults. The Buddha taught that we should not evade self-responsibility for our own actions by blaming them on circumstances or unluckiness. Usually when a man is forced to see his own weakness, he avoids it and instead gives it to self-deceit. He will search his brain for an excuse, even the lamest one will do, to justify his actions. He may succeed in doing this. Sometimes he succeeds so well in trying to fool others, he even manages to fool himself with the very ghost created by his mind. However, you may fool some of the people for some of the time, but not all the people all the time. According to the Buddha, the fool who does not admit he is a fool is a real fool. And the fool who admits he is a fool is wise to that extent. If you have made a mistake, then admit it. You need courage, of course admission of your own mistake is not pleasant. You also need wisdom to see your own faults. Sincere Buddhists should not think that you have been unlucky, or you have been a victim of fate. Face your shortcomings. You must realize that your mind has created the conditions which gave rise to the miseries and difficulties you are experiencing. This is the only way that can help lead you to a happy life. In the Dhammapada Sutta, the Buddha taught very clearly on "Easy to see the faults of others, but it is difficult to perceive our own faults". It is easy to see the faults of others, but it is difficult to perceive our own faults. A man winnows his neighbor's faults like chaff, but hides his own, as a dishonest gambler conceals a losing dice (Dharmapada 252). He who sees others' faults, is easy to get irritable and increases afflictions. If we abandon such a

habit, afflictions will also be gone (Dharmapda 253). Those who perceive wrong as wrong and what is right as right, such men, embracing right views and go to the blissful state (Dharmapada 319).

Appendix F

The Path of Removal of Sufferings: A Journey Towards Nirvana

As above mentioned, enlightenment is a complete and deep realization of what it means to be a Buddha. In Buddhism, enlightenment is achieving a complete and deep realization of what it means to be a Buddha and how to reach Buddhahood. For lay practitioners, in daily life, enlightenment means to see the path of removal of sufferings, because this will help us a lot in reaching a life with more peace, mindfulness and happiness for ourselves. The essential steps of the path to the removal of suffering which are pointed out by the Buddha. It is a journey towards Nibbana, the way of careful cultivation of the mind so as to produce unalloyed happiness and supreme rest from the turmoil of life. The path is indeed very difficult, but if we, with constant heedfulness, and complete awareness, walk it watching our steps, we will one day reach our destination. The way of walking or the way of cultivation. People often walk without seeing the way. Religions generally lay importance on practice, that is, how to walk, but neglect teaching the intellectual activity with which to determine the right way, that is, how to see. In Mahayana Buddhism, this is the path on which one has directly realized emptiness. This also coincides with the first Bodhisattva level (bhumi). On this path meditators completely remove the artificial conceptions of a permanent self. The Buddha stressed in His Teachings the experimental process in Buddhist cultivation is a chain of objective observations before any practices because through objective observations we realize the real face of sufferings and afflictions. It's is objective observation that gives us an opportunity to cultivate to totally destroy sufferings and afflictions. Thus, at any time, objective observation plays a key role in the experimental process in Buddhist cultivation. *The first path is the path of overcoming anger:* According to the Buddhist theory, in order to overcome anger, one must contemplate that a person or an animal which causes us to be angry today may have been our friend, relative or even our father or mother in a certain previous life. *The second path*

is the path of overcoming attachment: We should meditate or contemplate that a friend today may become an enemy tomorrow and therefore, there is nothing for us to attach to. *The third path is the path of overcoming attachment overcoming demons:* To overcome demons, e.g. as the Buddha did at his enlightenment. *The fourth path is the path of overcoming doubts:* To study scriptures, to read stories of enlightened ones, as well as to contemplate will help us perceive the truth and overcome doubts. *The fifth path is the path of renouncing wealth and sex:* According to the Sutra in Forty-Two Sections, Chapter 22, the Buddha said: “People who cannot renounce wealth and sex are like small children who, not satisfied with one delicious helping, lick the honey off the blade of the knife and in doing so, cut their tongues.” *The sixth path is the path of getting rid of deluded thoughts:* One of the best methods to get rid of deluded thoughts is either meditation to obtain concentration or just keep one method such as reciting the name of Amitabha Buddha. *The seventh path is the path of not to slander any enlightening teachings:* Should not slander any enlightening teachings. This is one of the ten kinds of rules of behavior of great enlightening beings. Enlightening beings who abide by these can attain the supreme discipline of great knowledge. *The eighth path is the path of not to look for faults in others:* In daily life, always look above, look below, look to the east or to the west, to the north or to the south and so on to try to find faults in others. Buddha taught that we should look into ourselves, we should reflect the light of awareness inwardly to become enlightened. The Buddha taught: “When we do not see others’ mistakes or see only our own rightness, we are naturally respected by seniors and admired by juniors.” According to the Dharmapada, sentence 50, the Buddha taught: “Let not one look on the faults of others, nor things left done and undone by others; but one’s own deeds done and undone.” *The ninth path is the path of examining ourselves:* We, devoted Buddhists, must examine ourselves so that we are able to know who we are. Know our body and mind by simply watching. In sitting, in sleeping, in eating, know our limits. Use wisdom. The practice is not to try to achieve anything. Just be mindful of what is. Our whole meditation is to look directly at the mind. We will be able to see suffering, its cause, and its end. *The tenth path is the path of controlling emotions:* In Buddhism, controlling emotions does not mean a

repression or suppression of emotions, but to recognize that they are destructive and harmful. If we let emotions simply come and go without checking them, we will have a tendency to be prone to emotional outbursts. In the contrary, if we have a clear recognition of their destructive potential, we can get rid of them easily. *The eleventh path is the path of getting rid of desires:* A Buddhist practitioner should be keenly anxious to get rid of desires, and wants to persist in this. *The twelfth path is the path of eliminating of suffering:* Suffering can be eliminated because suffering itself isn't the intrinsic nature of our minds. Since suffering arises from ignorance or misconception, once we realize emptiness, or the nature of things as they are, ignorance or misconception no longer influences us. It's like turning a light on in a dark room, once the light is on, the darkness vanishes. Similarly, wisdom can help us cleanse ignorance and disturbing attitudes from our minds forever. In addition, wisdom cleanses the karmic imprints currently on our minds, so they won't bring results. After perceiving the true picture of life, the Buddha said to himself: "I must get rid of the oppression of disease, old age and death." *The thirteenth path is the path of eliminating perversions:* Eliminating deluded and confused. This means eliminating deceived in regard to reality. Delusion also implies a belief in something that is contrary to reality. Illusion, on the other hand, suggests that what is seen has objective reality but is misinterpreted or seen falsely. In Buddhism, delusion is ignorance, an unawareness of the true nature of things or of the real meaning of existence. We are deluded or led astray by our senses (which include the intellect and its discriminating thoughts) insofar as they cause us to accept the phenomenal world as the whole of reality when in fact it is but a limited and ephemeral aspect of reality, and to act as though the world is external to us when in truth it is but a reflection of ourselves. This does not say all phenomena are illusory, they mean that compared with Mind itself the world apprehended by the senses is such a partial and limited aspect of truth that it is dreamlike. When we fail to see the true nature of things our views always become clouded. Because of our likes and dislikes, we fail to see the sense organs and sense objects objectively and in their proper perspective and go after mirages, illusions and deceptions. The sense organs delude and mislead us and then we fail to see things in their true light as a result of which our way

of seeing things becomes perverted. The delusion of mind mistakes the unreal for the real, the passing shadows for permanence, and the result is confusion, conflict, disharmony and perpetual sorrow. When we are caught up in these illusions, we perceive, think and view things incorrectly. We perceive permanence in the impermanence; pleasure in pain; self in what is not self; beauty in repulsive. We think and view in the same erroneous manner. We are perverted for four reasons: our own senses, unwise reflection, unsystematic attention, failure to see true nature of this world. The Buddha recommended us to utilize right understanding or insight to remove these illusions and help us recognize the real nature of all things. Once we really understand that all thing is subject to change in this world without any exception, we will surely want to rely on nothing. *The fourteenth path is the path of eliminating of all hindrances and afflictions:* By realizing for oneself with direct knowledge, one here and now enters upon and abides in the deliverance of mind and deliverance by wisdom that are taintless with the destruction of the taints. *The fifteenth path is the path of getting rid of covetousness:* Getting rid of covetousness, anger, delusion, and fear, by taming their own minds, one of the ten kinds of action of Great Enlightening Beings. Enlightening Beings who abide by these can achieve the action of Buddhas that has no coming or going. *The sixteenth path is the path of getting rid of deluded thoughts:* One of the best methods to get rid of deluded thoughts is either meditation to obtain concentration or just keep one method such as reciting the name of Amitabha Buddha. *The seventeenth path is the path of letting go:* A basic teaching of the Buddha on how to calm and rein in the “monkey” mind. When we feel asleep, just lie down in a quiet place, put the lights out and let go our minds and bodies. In Buddhism, we have always been hearing about letting go and not clinging to anything. What does the Buddha mean on letting go? He means in daily activities, no way we can let go everything. We have to hold on things; however, try not to cling to them. For example, we try to make money for our living expenses, but not try to cling on making a lot of money to accumulate regardless of the means of making the money. Practitioners do everything with a mind that lets go. Do not expect any praise or reward. If we let go a little, we will have a little peace. If we let go a lot, we will have a lot of peace. If we let go completely, we will know complete peace and freedom.

Appendix G

Cultivating the Bodhisattva Path: A Journey Towards Nirvana

An enlightened being is a person who is on the path to awakening, and who vows to forego complete enlightenment until he or she helps other beings attain enlightenment. As above mentioned, enlightenment is a complete and deep realization of what it means to be a Buddha. In Buddhism, enlightenment is achieving a complete and deep realization of what it means to be a Buddha and how to reach Buddhahood. In daily life, lay practitioners should always try to cultivate the Bodhisattva Path for this will help us a lot in attaining enlightenment and emancipation. Bodhisattva way is one of the five ways which teaches the observance of the six paramitas the perfecting of the self and the benefits of others. The objective is the salvation of all beings and attaining of Buddhahood. The aim of Bodhisattvas is the attainment of Supreme Buddhahood. Therefore, Bodhsattva Way is also called the Buddha-Way or Tathagata-Way. This is the way in which practitioners seek “to benefit self and benefit others, leading to Buddhahood,” or “Above to seek bodhi, below to transform all beings”. According to the Flower Adornment Sutra, Chapter 38, there are ten kinds of path of Great Enlightening Beings. Enlightening Beings who abide by these ten paths can attain the path of unexcelled skill in means of all Buddhas.

One Path is the path of Enlightening Beings because they do not give up the sole determination for enlightenment. *Two paths are a Path of Enlightening Beings* because they develop wisdom and skill in means. *Three paths are a Path of Enlightening Beings* because they practice the following dharmas so they are not attached to the three worlds: emptiness, signlessness, and wishlessness. *Four practices are a Path of Enlightening Beings*: ceaselessly removing the barriers of wrongdoing by repentance; ceaselessly rejoicing in virtue; ceaselessly honoring the enlightened and request them to teach; and skillfully practicing dedication ceaselessly. *The five faculties are a Path of Enlightening Beings*: they rest on pure faith, steadfast and

imperturbable; they generate great energy, finishing their tasks; they are single-minded in right collection, without wandering attention; they know the techniques for entering and emerging from concentration; and they are able to distinguish spheres of knowledge.

The six psychic powers are a Path of Enlightening Beings for with celestial eye they see all forms in all worlds and know where sentient beings die and are born; with the celestial ear they hear all Buddhas teaching, absorb and remember their teachings, and expound them widely to sentient beings according to their faculties; with telepathic knowledge they are able to know the minds of others freely, without interference; with recollection of past life they are able to remember all ages of the past and increase roots of goodness; with the power of psychic travel they are able to appear variously to beings capable of being enlightened, to induce them to delight in truth; with knowledge of extinction of contamination they actually realize the ultimate truth, while carrying out the deeds of enlightening beings without ceases.

Seven remembrances are a Path of Enlightening Beings for they remember Buddhas because they see infinite Buddhas in a single pore opening the minds of all sentient beings; they remember the Teaching because they do not leave the assemblies of all Buddhas; they personally receive the sublime Teachings in the assemblies of all Buddhas and expounded to sentient beings according to their faculties, temperaments and inclinations, to enlighten them; they remember the harmonious Community because they continually see enlightening beings in all worlds; they remember relinquishment because they know all enlightening beings' practices of relinquishment increase magnanimous generosity; they remember precepts because they do not give up the aspiration for enlightenment, and dedicate all roots of goodness to sentient beings; they remember heaven because they always keep in mind the enlightening beings in the heaven of happiness who are to become Buddhas in the next lifetime; and they remember sentient beings because they teach and tame them with wisdom and skill in means, reaching them all, without interruption. *Following the Holy Eightfold Path to Enlightenment is a Path of Enlightening Beings* for they travel the path of right insight, getting rid of all false views; they exercise right thought, abandoning arbitrary conceptions, their minds always follow universal knowledge; they

always practice right speech, getting rid of faults of speech and following the words of sages; they always cultivate right action, teaching sentient beings to make them peaceful and harmonious; they abide by right livelihood, being frugal and content, careful and correct in behavior, eating, dressing, sleeping, eliminating evil, and practicing good, all in accord with enlightenment, forever getting rid of all faults; they arouse right energy, diligently cultivating all difficult practices of enlightening beings, entering the ten powers of Buddhas without hindrances; their minds always recollect correctly, able to remember all messages, eliminating all mundane distraction; and their minds are always correctly concentrated, they enter the door of inconceivable liberation of enlightening beings, and in one concentration they produce all concentrations.

Entering the nine successive concentrations is a Path of Enlightening Beings for they detach from craving and ill-will, and expound the truth without inhibition in all they say; they extinguish thought and reflection, yet teach sentient beings with the thought and reflection of omniscience; they extinguish reflection, yet teach sentient beings with the reflection of omniscience; they give up joy and emotion, yet they are most joyful when they see all Buddhas; they give up worldly enjoyments and follow the transcendent enjoyment of the Path of enlightening beings; they enter concentration in the realm of form, yet without abandoning life in the realm of desire; they are unshakable and enter formless concentration, yet without abandoning life in the realms of desire and form; though they abide in concentration in which all perceptions are extinguished, they do not stop the activity of enlightening beings; and though they abide in concentration in which all sensations are extinguished, they do not stop the activity of enlightening beings. *Learning the ten powers is a Path of Enlightening Beings* because they possess the knowledge of what is so and what is not so, the knowledge of the causes and effects, deeds and consequences, past, future, and present, of all sentient beings, the knowledge of the differences in faculties of all sentient beings and explaining the truth to them as is appropriate, the knowledge of infinite different natures of sentient beings, the knowledge of differences in weak, middling, and superior understanding of all sentient beings, and means of introducing them to truth, the knowledge of manifesting the

appearance and conduct of Buddha throughout all worlds, all lands, all times, all ages, without abandoning the practices of enlightening beings, the knowledge of all meditations, liberations, and concentrations, whether defiled or pure, timely or not, expediently producing door of liberation for enlightening beings, the knowledge of distinctions in all sentient beings's death in one place and birth in another in the various states of existence, the instantaneous knowledge of all ages in past, present and future, and the knowledge of extinction of all sentient beings' desires, compulsions, delusions, and habits, without abandoning the practices of Enlightening Beings.

Appendix H

Enlightenment Towards Nirvana Owing to the Last Teachings of the Buddha

Before entering Nirvana, the Buddha uttered His last words: “Nothing in this world is precious. The human body will disintegrate. Only is Dharma precious. Only is Truth everlasting.” When the day of the Buddha’s passing away was drawing near, and the Bhiksus were reluctant for the parting. The Buddha instructed them saying: “The Buddha’s incarnation body cannot stay in the world forever. This is the natural law. But my dharma can live on for a long time. You should observe and practice according to my teachings.” Ananda and others then consulted the Buddha on four things of the Buddha’s disciples after the Buddha’s passing away. *First*, who will be the Teacher? *Second*, on what ground will the Sangha dwell? *Third*, how to tame and discipline the ill-natured Bhiksus? And *fourth*, how to compile the Sutras to establish faith in them? The Buddha said his last instructions (or the Sutra of Buddha’s Last Exhortations’’: adhere to the Precepts as your Teacher, dwell on the Four Establishments of Mindfulness, discreetly reject the ill-natured Bhiksus, and in all Sutras, start at the beginning with the four words “Thus Have I Heard.” Right after that, beneath the Sala Trees at Kusinagara, the Buddha taught his last words to his disciples as follows: 1) Make yourself a light. Rely upon yourself, do not depend upon anyone else. 2) Make my teachings your light. Rely on them; do not rely on any other teaching. 3) Consider your body, think of its impurity. 4) Consider your body, knowing that both its pains and its delight are alike causes of suffering, how can you indulge in its desires? 5) Consider your “self,” think of its transiency, how can you fall into delusion about it and cherish pride and selfishness, knowing that they must end in inevitable suffering and afflictions? 6) Consider substances, can you find among them any enduring “self”? Are they aggregates that sooner or later will break apart and be scattered? 7) Do not be confused by the universality of suffering, but follow my teaching, even after my death, and you will be rid of pain. Do this and you will indeed be my disciples. 8) My disciples, the

teachings that I have given you are never be forgotten or abandoned. They are always to be treasured, they are to be thought about, they are to be practiced. If you follow these teachings, you will always be happy. 9) My disciples, the point of the teachings is to control your own mind. Keep your mind from greed, and you will keep your behavior right; keep your mind pure and your words faithful. By always thinking about the transiency of your life, you will be able to resist greed and anger, and will be able to avoid all evils. 10) If you find your mind tempted and so entangled in greed, you must try to suppress and control the temptation; be the master of your own mind. 11) A man's mind may make him a Buddha, or it may make him a beast. Misled by error, one becomes a demon; enlightened, one become a Buddha. Therefore, control your mind and do not let it deviate from the right path. 12) You should respect each other, follow my teachings, and refrain from disputes. You should not like water and oil, repel each other, but should like milk and water, mingle together. 13) My disciples, you should always study together, learn together, practise my teachings together. Do not waste your mind and time in idleness and quarreling. Enjoy the blossoms of Enlightenment in their season and harvest the fruit of the right path. 14) My disciples, the teachings which I have given you, I gained by following the path myself. You should follow these teachings and conform to their spirit on every occasion. 15) My disciples, if you neglect them, it means that you have never really met me. It means that you are far from me, even if you are actually with me. But if you accept and practice my teachings, then you are very near to me, even though you are far away. 16) My disciples, my end is approaching, our parting is near, but do not lament. Life is ever changing; none can escape the dissolution of the body. This I am now to show by my own death, my body falling apart like a dilapidated cart. 17) Do not vainly lament, but realize that nothing is permanent and learn from it the emptiness of human life. Do not cherish the unworthy desire that the changeable might become unchanging. 18) My disciples, you should always remember that the demon of worldly desires is always seeking chances to deceive the mind. If a viper lives in your room and you wish to have a peaceful sleep, you must first chase it out. You must break the bonds of worldly passions and drive them away as you would a viper. You must positively protect your own mind. 19) My

disciples, my last moment has come, do not forget that death is only the end of the physical body. The body was born from parents and was nourished by food; just as inevitable are sickness and death. 20) But the true Buddha is not a human body: it is Enlightenment. A human body must die, but the Wisdom of Enlightenment will exist forever in the truth of the Dharma, and in the practice of the Dharma. He who sees merely my body does not see me. Only he who accepts and practices my teaching truly sees me. 21) After my death, the Dharma shall be your teacher. Follow the Dharma and you will be true to me. 22) During the last forty-five years of my life, I have withheld nothing from my teachings. There is no secret teaching, no hidden meaning; everything has been taught openly and clearly. My dear disciples, this is the end. In a moment, I shall be passing into Nirvana. This is my last instruction.

According to the Mahaparinirvana Sutra in the Digha Nikaya, volume 16, the Buddha compassionately reminded Ananda: "It is through not understanding the Four Noble Truths, o Bhiksus that we have had to wander so long in this weary path of rebirth, both you and I!" On his last days, the Buddha always reminded his disciples to be mindful and self-possessed in learning the Three-fold training "Such is right conduct, such is concentration, and such is wisdom." In His last instructions to the Order, the Buddha told Ananda: "The Tathagata does not think that he should lead the Order or the Order is dependent on Him. Therefore, Ananda, be lamps to yourselves. Be a refuge to yourselves. Go to no external refuge. Hold fast to the Dharma as a lamp. Hold fast to the Dharma as a refuge. And how, O Ananda, is a Bhiksu to be a lamp to himself, a refuge to himself, going to no external refuge, holding fast to the Dharma as a lamp? Herein, a Bhiksu lives diligent, mindful, and self-possessed, overcoming desire and grief in the world, reflecting on the body, feeling, and mind and mental objects." In Kusinagara, the Buddha told his last disciple, Subhadda: "O Subhadda, in whatever doctrine, the Noble Eightfold Path is not found, neither is there found the first Samana, nor the second, nor the third, nor the fourth. Now in this doctrine and discipline, O Subhadda, there is the Noble Eightfold Path, and in it too, are found the first, the second, the third and the fourth Samanas. The other teachers' schools are empty of Samanas. If, O Subhadda, the disciples live rightly, the world would not be void with Arahants. Void of true

Saints are the system of other teachers. But in this one, may the Bhiksus live the perfect life, so that the world would not be without saints.” Then the Buddha turned to everyone and said his final exhortation: “Remember what I have taught you. Craving and desire are the cause of all unhappiness. Everything sooner or later must change, so do not become attached to anything. Instead, devote yourself to clearing your mind and finding true and lasting happiness. Behold now, O Bhiksus, I exhort you! Subject to change are all component things! Strive on with diligence!”

Appendix I

The Last Teachings and The Priceless Message from the Buddha

The Buddha's Last Teachings: Beneath the Sala Trees at Kusinagara, the Buddha taught his last words to his disciples as follows: Make yourself a light. Rely upon yourself, do not depend upon anyone else. Make my teachings your light. Rely on them; do not rely on any other teaching. Consider your body, think of its impurity. Consider your body, knowing that both its pains and its delight are alike causes of suffering, how can you indulge in its desires? Consider your “self,” think of its transiency, how can you fall into delusion about it and cherish pride and selfishness, knowing that they must end in inevitable suffering and afflictions? Consider substances, can you find among them any enduring “self” ? Are they aggregates that sooner or later will break apart and be scattered? Do not be confused by the universality of suffering, but follow my teaching, even after my death, and you will be rid of pain. Do this and you will indeed be my disciples. My disciples, the teachings that I have given you are never be forgotten or abandoned. They are always to be treasured, they are to be thought about, they are to be practiced. If you follow these teachings, you will always be happy. My disciples, the point of the teachings is to control your own mind. Keep your mind from greed, and you will keep your behavior right; keep your mind pure and your words faithful. By always thinking about the transiency of your life, you will be able to resist greed and anger, and will be able to avoid all evils. If you find your mind tempted and so entangled in greed, you must try to suppress and control the temptation; be the master of your own mind. A man’s mind may make him a Buddha, or it may make him a beast. Misled by error, one becomes a demon; enlightened, one become a Buddha. Therefore, control your mind and do not let it deviate from the right path. You should respect each other, follow my teachings, and refrain from disputes. You should not like water and oil, repel each other, but should like milk and water, mingle together. My disciples, you should always study together, learn together, practise my teachings

together. Do not waste your mind and time in idleness and quarreling. Enjoy the blossoms of Enlightenment in their season and harvest the fruit of the right path. My disciples, the teachings which I have given you, I gained by following the path myself. You should follow these teachings and conform to their spirit on every occasion. My disciples, if you neglect them, it means that you have never really met me. It means that you are far from me, even if you are actually with me. But if you accept and practice my teachings, then you are very near to me, even though you are far away. My disciples, my end is approaching, our parting is near, but do not lament. Life is ever changing; none can escape the dissolution of the body. This I am now to show by my own death, my body falling apart like a dilapidated cart. Do not vainly lament, but realize that nothing is permanent and learn from it the emptiness of human life. Do not cherish the unworthy desire that the changeable might become unchanging. My disciples, you should always remember that the demon of worldly desires is always seeking chances to deceive the mind. If a viper lives in your room and you wish to have a peaceful sleep, you must first chase it out. You must break the bonds of worldly passions and drive them away as you would a viper. You must positively protect your own mind. My disciples, my last moment has come, do not forget that death is only the end of the physical body. The body was born from parents and was nourished by food; just as inevitable are sickness and death. But the true Buddha is not a human body: it is Enlightenment. A human body must die, but the Wisdom of Enlightenment will exist forever in the truth of the Dharma, and in the practice of the Dharma. He who sees merely my body does not see me. Only he who accepts and practices my teaching truly sees me. After my death, the Dharma shall be your teacher. Follow the Dharma and you will be true to me. During the last forty-five years of my life, I have withheld nothing from my teachings. There is no secret teaching, no hidden meaning; everything has been taught openly and clearly. My dear disciples, this is the end. In a moment, I shall be passing into Nirvana. This is my last instruction.

Buddha's Priceless Message: Priceless Message from the Buddha or the Four Noble Truths is one of the most important parts in the Buddha's Teachings. The Buddha gave this message to suffering humanity for their guidance, to help them to be rid of the bondage of

“Dukkha” and to attain happiness, both relative and absolute (relative happiness or worldly happiness, absolute happiness or Nirvana). These Truths are not the Buddha’s creation. He only re-discovered their existence. The Buddha said: “I am neither a vaguely so-called God nor an incarnation of any vaguely so-called God. I am only a man who re-discovers what had been covered for so long. I am only a man who attains enlightenment by completely comprehending all Noble Truths.” In fact, the Buddha is a man who deserves our respect and reverence not only as a teacher but also as a Saint. He was a man, but an extraordinary man, a unique being in the universe. All his achievements are attributed to his human effort and his human understanding. He achieved the highest mental and intellectual attainments, reached the supreme purity and was perfect in the best qualities of human nature. He was an embodiment of compassion and wisdom, two noble principles in Buddhism. The Buddha never claimed to be a savior who tried to save ‘souls’ by means of a revelation of other religions. The Buddha’s message is simple but priceless to all of us: “Infinite potentialities are latent in man and that it must be man’s effort and endeavor to develop and unfold these possibilities. That is to say, in each man, there exists the Buddha-nature; however, deliverance and enlightenment lie fully within man’s effort and endeavor.”

Appendix J

Let's the Flowers of Enlightenment Always Bloom In Our Minds

The opportunity our precious human lives does not last forever. Sooner or later, death comes to everyone. The very true nature of our lives is impermanent, and death inevitable. When we first took birth, given the countless number of bodies into which we have been born. Death is an irrevocable result of living. Therefore, we should not ignore it; on the contrary, it is good to think about it seriously. According to the Buddhist point of view, death is not an end but a means leading to another rebirth. The conscious mind only migrates from life to life. The starting point of such a process is impossible to retrace. However, our existence in samsara is not naturally infinite. Also according to the Buddhist point of view, it is possible to put an end to it. A seed has no beginning but it is not naturally infinite, if we burn the seed we can destroy its potential to grow. That is the end of it. The only way to do is to let the flowers of enlightenment always bloom in our minds. Why? Because once the flowers of enlightenment bloom in our minds, we no longer continue to grow any seed for this endless rebirth cycle.

Due to our deluded mind, even in this present life, we are constantly operating with negative actions. We do not have much freedom from afflictive emotions. We are enslaved by them. We are prisoners of our own devices. For example, when anger rises in us, we become completely under the control of this afflictive emotion. It makes us think and act in ways we do not want to. If we step back and look in a mirror when we become angry, we will see what anger has done to us. We will see anger's power to destroy us and others around us. We might wonder if it is indeed possible to expiate a non-virtuous deed such as one of these five heinous crimes. According to "Prasanghika Madhyamika," any kind of negative deed can be expiated. This is a property of negativities. If we do not leave them unattended until they are ripen, we can purify them. Non-virtuous deeds are negative by nature but have the quality of being purified.

There are people who believe that they can get away with whatever negative action they commit. They are those who do not believe in the law of cause and effect. We have no comment on these people. Sincere Buddhists should always remember that according to the law of cause and effect, the consequences of any kind of act one commits, virtuous or non-virtuous, must be faced by that same person. In other words, each person is responsible for his own actions. And again, the only way to do this is to let the flowers of enlightenment always bloom in our minds. Why? Because once the flowers of enlightenment bloom in our minds, we are able to purify all negative and non-virtuous deeds in the past; at the same time, we can avoid similar negative and non-virtuous deeds at the present and in the future.

However, the flowers of enlightenment only bloom when we are content with few desires; or when we have few desires. Here “desires” include not only the desire for money and material things but also the wish for status and fame. It also indicates seeking the love and service of others. In Buddhism, a person who has attained the mental stage of deep faith has very few desires and is indifferent to them. We must note carefully that though such a person is indifferent to worldly desires, he is very eager for the truth, that is, he has a great desire for the truth. To be indifferent to the truth is to be slothful in life. To be content with few desires also means to be satisfied with little material gain, that is, not to feel discontented with one’s lot and to be free from worldly cares. This does not mean to be unconcerned with self-improvement but to do one’s best in one’s work without discontent. Such a person will never be ignored by those around him. But even if people around him ignored him, he would feel quite happy because he lives like a king from a spiritual point of view. We must have few desires in two areas: the desires for food and sex. Food and sex support ignorance in perpetrating all sort of evil. Thus, Confucius taught: “Food and sex are part of human nature.” That is to say we are born with the craving for food and sex. Why is that we have not been able to demolish our ignorance, eliminate our afflictions, and reveal our wisdom? Because we always crave for food and sex. Sincere Buddhists should always remember that food gives rise to sexual desire, and sexual desire gives rise to ignorance. Once the desire for food arises, the desire for sex arises as well. Men are attracted to beautiful women,

and women are charmed by handsome men. People become infatuated and obsessed and cannot see through their desires. The nourishment from the food we eat is transformed into reproductive essence; and once that essence is full, sexual desire arises. Sincere Buddhists should always remember that the less tasty the food is, the better. Food should not be regarded as too important. Sincere Buddhists should practice moderation and eat only enough to sustain ourselves. We should neither eat very rich food, nor eat spoilt food, for either one could ruin our health.

Finally, the flowers of enlightenment only bloom when we understand things as they really are, that is seeing the impermanent, unsatisfactory, and non-substantial or non-self nature of the five aggregates of clinging in ourselves. It is not easy to understand ourselves because of our wrong concepts, baseless illusions, perversions and delusions. It is so difficult to see the real person. The Buddha taught that to be a real knower, we must first see and understand the impermanence of the five aggregates. He compares material form or body to a lump of foam, feeling to a bubble, perception to a mirage, mental formations or volitional activities to water-lily plant which is without heartwood, and consciousness to an illusion. The Buddha says: "Whatever material form there be whether past, future or present, internal, external, gross or subtle, low or lofty, far or near that material form is empty, unsubstantial and without essence. In the same manner, the remaining aggregates: feeling, perception, mental formation, and consciousness are also empty, unsubstantial and without essence. Thus, the five aggregates are impermanent, whatever is impermanent, that is suffering, unsatisfactory and without self. Whenever you understand this, you understand yourselves." To Buddhists, the blooming of the flowers of enlightenment bloom also means the illumination of wisdom. In Buddhism, wisdom is of the highest importance; for purification comes through wisdom, through understanding; and wisdom in Buddhism is the key to enlightenment and final liberation. But the Buddha never praised mere intellect. According to him, knowledge should go hand in hand with purity of heart, with moral excellence. Wisdom gained by understanding and development of the qualities of mind and heart is wisdom par excellence. It is the knowledge of loving kindness, of

compassion, of joy, of letting go, of altruism, of understanding of the law of cause and effect, of wishing for freedom, of seeking enlightenment and emancipation for others. It is saving knowledge, and not mere speculation, logic or specious reasoning. However, devout Buddhists never fall in love with wisdom; nor induce the search after wisdom; nor adore wisdom. Although wisdom really has its significance and bearing on mankind, devout Buddhists should use it as an encouragement of a practical application of the teaching that leads the follower to dispassion, enlightenment and final deliverance. As a matter of fact, letting the flowers of enlightenment bloom in us is the only way that can help sentient beings to transfer from the Tainted Saha World to the purity of Nirvana. In short, the flowers of enlightenment can help sentient beings rise above all sufferings and afflictions to the highest state of consciousness which Buddhism calls Nirvana. Hoping that the flowers of enlightenment are blooming everywhere, so that one day all beings will achieve Buddhahood together!

Appendix K

Always Live and Cultivate the Pleasant Practices

Peace can exist only in the present moment. It is ridiculous to say, “Wait until I finish this, then I will be free to live in peace.” What is “this?” A degree, a job, a house, a car, the payment of a debt? If you think that way, peace will never come. There is always another “this” that will follow the present one. According to Buddhism, if you are not living in peace at this moment, you will never be able to. If you truly want to be at peace, you must be at peace right now. Otherwise, there is only “the hope of peace some day.” According to the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha gave instructions to all Bodhisattvas on Pleasant practices as follows. ***First, Pleasant practice of the body:*** To attain a happy contentment by proper direction of the deeds of the body. The Buddha taught the pleasant practice of the body by dividing it into two parts, a Bodhisattva’s spheres of action and of intimacy. A Bodhisattva’s sphere of action means his fundamental attitude as the basis of his personal behavior. A Bodhisattva is patient, gentle, and agreeable, and is neither hasty nor overbearing, his mind is always unperturbed. Unlike ordinary people, he is not conceited or boastful about his own good works. He must see all things in their reality. He never take a partial view of things. He acts toward all people with the same compassion and never making show of it. The Buddha teaches a Bodhisattva’s sphere of intimacy by dividing it into ten areas: 1) A Bodhisattva is not intimate with men of high position and influence in order to gain some benefit, nor does he compromise his preaching of the Law to them through excessive familiarity with them. 2) A Bodhisattva is not intimate with heretics, composers of worldly literature or poetry, nor with those who chase for worldly life, nor with those who don’t care about life. Thus, a Bodhisattva must always be on the “Middle Way,” not adversely affected by the impurity of the above mentioned people. 3) A Bodhisattva does not resort to brutal sports, such as boxing and wrestling, nor the various juggling performances of dancers and others. 4) A Bodhisattva does not consort personally with those who kill creatures to make a living, such as butchers, fishermen,

and hunters, and does not develop a callous attitude toward engaging in cruel conduct. 5) A Bodhisattva does not consort with monks and nuns who seek peace and happiness for themselves and don't care about other people, and who satisfy with their own personal isolation from earthly existence. 6) Moreover, he does not become infected by their selfish ideas, nor develop a tendency to compromise with them in listening to the laws preached by them. If they come to him to hear the Law, he takes the opportunity to preach it, expect nothing in return. 7) When he preaches the Law to women, he does not display an appearance capable of arousing passionate thoughts, and he maintains a correct mental attitude with great strictness. 8) He does not become friendly with any hermaphrodite. This means that he needs to take a very prudent attitude when he teaches such a deformed person. 9) He does not enter the homes of others alone. If for some reason he must do so, then he thinks single-mindedly of the Buddha. This is the Buddha's admonition to the Bodhisattva to go everywhere together with the Buddha. 10) If he preaches the Law to lay women, he does not display his teeth in smile nor let his breast be seen. He takes no pleasure in keeping young pupils and children by his side. On the contrary, the Buddha admonishes the Bodhisattva ever to prefer meditation and seclusion and also to cultivate and control his mind. ***Second, Pleasant practice of the mouth of a Bodhisattva:*** According to the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha gave instructions to all Bodhisattvas on Pleasant practice of the mouth as follows: "First, a Bodhisattva takes no pleasure in telling of the errors of other people or of the sutras; second, he does not despise other preachers; third, he does not speak of the good and evil, the merits and demerits of other people, nor does he single out any Sravakas or Pratyeka-buddhas by name, nor does he broadcast their errors and sins; fourth, in the same way, he do not praise their virtues, nor does he beget a jealous mind. If he maintains a cheerful and open mind in this way, those who hear the teaching will offer him no opposition. To those who ask difficult questions, he does not answer with the law of the small vehicle but only with the Great vehicle, and he explains the Law to them so that they may obtain perfect knowledge." ***Third, Pleasant practice of the mind of a Bodhisattva:*** According to the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha gave eight advices to all Bodhisattvas as follows: "First, a Bodhisattva does not harbor an

envious or deceitful mind. Second, he does not slight or abuse other learners of the Buddha-way even if they are beginners, nor does he seek out their excesses and shortcomings. Third, if there are people who seek the Bodhisattva-way, he does not distress them, causing them to feel doubt and regret, nor does he say discouraging things to them. Fourth, he should not indulge in discussions about the laws or engage in dispute but should devote himself to cultivation of the practice to save all living beings. Fifth, he should think of saving all living beings from the sufferings through his great compassion. Sixth, he should think of the Buddhas as benevolent fathers. Seventh, he should always think of the Bodhisattvas as his great teachers. Eighth, he should preach the Law equally to all living beings.” ***Fourth, Pleasant practice of the vow of a Bodhisattva:*** The Buddha gave instructions to all Bodhisattvas on Pleasant practice of the vow as follows: “The pleasant practice of the vow means to have a spirit of great compassion. A Bodhisattva should beget a spirit of great charity toward both laymen and monks, and should have a spirit of great compassion for those who are not yet Bodhisattvas but are satisfied with their selfish idea of saving only themselves. He also should decide that, though those people have not inquired for, nor believed in, nor understood the Buddha’s teaching in this sutra, when he has attained Perfect Enlightenment through his transcendental powers and powers of wisdom he will lead them to abide in this Law.”

Appendix L

Cultivate to Advance to the Buddhahood

I. An Overview and Meanings of Buddhism:

As mentioned above, in around the year 563 B.C. a baby was born into a royal family in northern India. He grew up in wealth and luxury but soon found that worldly comfort and security do not guarantee real happiness. He was deeply moved by the suffering he saw all around, so He resolved to find the key to human happiness. When he was 29 he left his wife and child and his Royal Palace and set off to sit at the feet of the great religious teachers of the day to learn from them. They taught him much but none really knew the cause of human sufferings and afflictions and how it could be overcome. Eventually, after six years study and meditation he had an experience in which all ignorance fell away and he suddenly understood. From that day onwards, he was called the Buddha, the Awakened One. He lived for another 45 years in which time he traveled all over northern India teaching others what he had discovered. His compassion and patience were legendary and he made hundreds of thousands of followers. In his eightieth year, old and sick, but still happy and at peace, he finally passed away into nirvana. It couldn't have been an easy thing for the Buddha to leave his family. He must have worried and hesitated for a long time before he finally left. There were two choices, dedicating himself to his family or dedicating himself to the whole world. In the end, his great compassion made him give himself to the whole world. And the whole world still benefits from his sacrifice. This was perhaps the most significant sacrifice ever made.

Even though the Buddha is dead but 2,500 years later his teachings still help and save a lot of people, his example still inspires people, his words still continue to change lives. Only a Buddha could have such power centuries after his death. The Buddha did not claim that he was a god, the child of god or even the messenger from a god. He was simply a man who perfected himself and taught that if we followed his example, we could perfect ourselves also. He never asked his followers to worship him as a god. In fact, He prohibited his followers

to praise him as a god. He told his followers that he could not give favors to those who worship him with personal expectations or calamities to those who don't worship him. He asked his followers to respect him as students respect their teacher. He also reminded his followers to worship a statue of the Buddha to remind ourselves to try to develop peace and love within ourselves. The perfume of incense reminds us of the pervading influence of virtue, the lamp reminds us of the light of knowledge and the followers which soon fade and die, remind us of impermanence. When we bow, we express our gratitude to the Buddha for what his teachings have given us. This is the core nature of Buddhist worship. A lot of people have misunderstood the meaning of "worship" in Buddhism, even sincere Buddhists. Buddhists do not believe that the Buddha is a god, so in no way they could possibly believe that a piece of wood or metal is a god. In Buddhism, the statue of the Buddha is used to symbolize human perfection. The statue of the Buddha also reminds us of the human dimension in Buddhist teaching, the fact that Buddhism is man-centered, not god-centered, that we must look within not without to find perfection and understanding. So in no way one can say that Buddhists worship god or idols. In fact, a long time ago, when primitive man found himself in a dangerous and hostile situations, the fear of wild animals, of not being able to find enough food, of diseases, and of natural calamities or phenomena such as storms, hurricanes, volcanoes, thunder, and lightning, etc. He found no security in his surroundings and he had no ability to explain those phenomena, therefore, he created the idea of gods in order to give him comfort in good times, courage in times of danger and consolation when things went wrong. They believed that god arranged everything. Generations after generations, man continues to follow his ancestors in a so-called "faith in god" without any further thinkings. Some says they in believe in god because god responds to their prayers when they feel fear or frustration. Some say they believe in god because their parents and grandparents believed in god. Some others say that they prefer to go to church than to temple because those who go to churches seem richer and more honorable than those who go to temples.

To someone, the meaning of Buddhism can be only life of the Buddha; the example that the Buddha and his immediate disciples set,

that glorious feat of a man, who stood before men as a man and declared a path of deliverance. To others, Buddhism would mean the massive doctrine as recorded in the Buddhist Tripitaka (literature), and it is described a very lofty, abstruse, complex and learned philosophy of life. The name Buddhism comes from the word “Bodhi” which means “waking up,” and thus Buddhism is the philosophy of Awakening. Therefore, the real definition of Buddhism is Noble Truth. The Buddha did not teach from theories. He always taught from a practical standpoint based on His understanding, His enlightenment, and His realization of the Truth. This philosophy has its origins in the experience of the man named Siddhartha Gotama, known as the Buddha, who was himself awakened at the age of 36. Buddhism is now older than 2,500 years old and has more than 800 million followers world wide (including Chinese followers in Mainland China). People in the West had heard of the Buddha and his teaching as early as the thirteenth century when Marco Polo (1254-1324), the Italian traveler who explored Asia, wrote accounts on Buddhism in his book, “Travels of Marco Polo”. From the eighteenth century onwards, Buddhist text were brought to Europe and translated into English, French and German. Until a hundred years ago, Buddhism was mainly an Asian philosophy but increasingly it is gaining adherents in Europe and America.

To the Buddha, man is a supreme being, thus, he taught: “Be your own torch and your own refuge. Do not seek refuge in any other person.” This was the Buddha’s truthful word. He also said: “All realizations come from effort and intelligence that derive from one’s own experience. Man is the master of his destiny, since he can make his life better or worse. If he tries his best to cultivate, he can become a Buddha.” Buddhism is the only way that leads people from the evil to the virtuous, from deluded to fully enlightened sagehood. Buddhism is a philosophy, a way of life or a religion. The religion of the awakened one. One of the three great world religions. It was founded by the historical Buddha Sakyamuni over 25 centuries ago. Sakyamuni expounded the four noble truths as the core of his teaching, which he had recognized in the moment of his enlightenment. He had shown people how to live wisely and happily and his teachings soon spread from India throughout Asia, and beyond.

Buddhism is a philosophy, a way of life or a religion. The teaching of Buddha. This is not important. Buddhism is what the Buddha taught. His teaching was based on human inner wisdom. Buddhism always values reason. Blindly believing in everything is contrary to Buddha's teaching. The Buddha taught: "Do not believe blindly in my teachings. Always test them like using fire to test gold to determine whether it is authentic or counterfeit." Buddhism is not a religion versed in worshipping and imploring favors from deities. It is different from other religions and doctrines in that it respects personal opinions, beliefs, and intellectual development. Buddhism does not prevent its disciples from learning other religious teachings. The Buddha said that if there were reasonable and rational teachings in other religions, His followers were free to respect such things. From that basic principle, the Buddha declared that there was nothing hidden in the sleeve of His saffron robe when referring to His teachings. He also added that His doctrine was consistent with how people understood the Truth. It did not depend on the favors bestowed by any deity or any other spiritual power. The Buddha emphasized the concept of free inquiry when He asked His disciples to judge even the Tathagata in order to have an utter trustfulness in Him. He asked them to study, understand, and believe latter on. Whoever has not yet understood or still has doubt but blindly believes has thus defamed the Buddha. Doubt is not a sin because Buddhism has no creed to be believed. Doubt will automatically dissipate when people fully understand or perceive the Truth. In short, whether the Buddha wanted or not, His teachings and the way of life preached by Him became a religion called "Buddhism." However, Buddhism is not a religion just for discussion, but it is a religion of deliverance for those who diligently cultivate. One needs not be a scholar or a blind devotee to become a Buddhist, all you need is your sincerity of cultivation. In Buddhism, blind faith has no ground, each one of us must know how to find and absorb what is relevant and what is not to our life and to our problems. If we pay a little attention we'll see that Buddhist doctrines are boundless and timeless, but they are the inconceivable truth for all time. Messages handed down to us by the Buddha remain eternally valuable. No one can argue against or deny the doctrine of impermanence in Buddhism. Impermanence does not mean that things are not existing. Impermanence means that everything

continues in a flux, in a process of continuing change and evolution. Thus, Buddhism is able to adjust to different civilizations in different times in the world. Even in modern world, Buddhism is always appropriate in all circumstances. In fact, if you approach any aspect of Buddhism, you will immediately find out that it is something relevant, beneficial and applicable to your daily life. Sincere Buddhists should always remember that in Buddhism there is no such so-called bonds of supernatural ties, nor Godhead, nor creation, nor sin inherited from anyone else, other than what you yourself have done.

II. An Overview of Cultivation In Buddhism:

To lead a religious life. Cultivation in Buddhism is to put the Buddha's teachings into practice on a continued and regular basis. Cultivation in Buddhism also means to nourish the seeds of Bodhi by practicing and developing precepts, dhyana, and wisdom. Thus, cultivation in Buddhism is not solely practicing Buddha recitation or sitting meditation, it also includes cultivation of six paramitas, ten paramitas, thirty-seven aids to Enlightenment, etc. Sincere Buddhists should always remember that time is extremely precious. An inch of time is an inch of life, so do not let the time pass in vain. Someone is thinking, "I will not cultivate today. I will put it off until tomorrow." But when tomorrow comes, he will put it off to the next day. He keeps putting it off until his hair turns white, his teeth fall out, his eyes become blurry, and his ears go deaf. At that point in time, he wants to cultivate, but his body no longer obeys him. Sincere Buddhists should always remember that living in this world, we all are like fish in a pond that is evaporating. We do not have much time left. Thus ancient virtues taught: "One day has passed, our lives are that much less. We are like fish in a shrinking pond. What joy is there in this? We should be diligently and vigorously cultivating as if our own heads were at stake. Only be mindful of impermanence, and be careful not to be lax." From beginningless eons in the past until now, we have not had good opportunity to know Buddhism, so we have not known how to cultivate. Therefore, we undergo birth and death, and after death, birth again. Oh, how pitiful! Today we have good opportunity to know Buddhism, why do we still want to put off cultivating? Sincere Buddhists! Time

does not wait anybody. In the twinkling of an eye, we will be old and our life will be over!

III. The Strength of Cultivation:

There are as many as eighty-four thousand Dharma-doors for cultivating the Path. For the sake of understanding, we should be familiar with each one of these Dharma-doors. You should not limit yourself in just a single method of cultivation. However, for the sake of practicing, we should focus on the dharma-door that is the most appropriate for us. “Tu” means correct our characters and obey the Buddha’s teachings. “Tu” means to study the law by reciting sutras in the morning and evening, being on strict vegetarian diet and studying all the scriptures of the Buddha, keep all the precepts; however, the most important factors in real “Tu” are to correct your character, to eliminate bad habits, to be joyful and compassionate, to build virtue. In reciting sutras, Buddhists, especially lay people, must thoroughly understand the meaning so we can put these teachings in practice in our daily activities. Furthermore, one should also practise meditation on a daily basis to get insight. For laypeople, “Tu” means to mend your ways, from evil to wholesome (ceasing transgressions and performing good deeds). According to the first patriarch Bodhidharma, “Requite hatred” is one of the four disciplinary processes. What is meant by ‘How to requite hatred?’ Those who discipline themselves in the Path should think thus when they have to struggle with adverse conditions: “During the innumerable past eons I have wandered through multiplicity of existences, never thought of cultivation, and thus creating infinite occasions for hate, ill-will, and wrong-doing. Even though in this life I have committed no violations, the fruits of evil deeds in the past are to be gathered now. Neither gods nor men can fortell what is coming upon me. I will submit myself willingly and patiently to all the ills that befall me, and I will never bemoan or complain. In the sutra it is said not to worry over ills that may happen to you, because I thoroughly understand the law of cause and effect. This is called the conduct of making the best use of hatred and turned it into the service in one’s advance towards the Path.

In the Dharmapada Sutra, the Buddha taught: “He who applies himself to that which should be avoided, not cultivate what should be

cultivated; forgets the good, but goes after pleasure. It's only an empty admiration when he says he admires people who exert themselves in meditation (Dharmapada 209)." According to the Forty-Two Sections Sutra, one evening a Sramana was reciting the Sutra of Bequeating the Teaching by Kasyapa Buddha. His mind was mournful as he reflected repentantly on his desire to retreat. The Buddha asked him: "When you were a householder in the past, what did you do?" He replied: "I was fond of playing the lute." The Buddha said: "What happened when the strings were slack?" He replied: "They did not sound good." The Buddha then asked: "What happened when the strings were taut?" He replied: "The sounds were brief." The Buddha then asked again: "What happened when they were tuned between slack and taut?" He replied: "The sounds carried." The Buddha said: "It is the same with a Sramana who cultivates or studies the Way. If his mind is harmonious, he can obtain (achieve) the Way. If he is impetuous about the Way, this impetuousness will tire out his body, and if his body is tired, his mind will give rise to afflictions. If his mind produces afflictions, then he will retreat from his practice. If he retreats from his practice, it will certainly increase his offenses. You need only be pure, peaceful, and happy and you will not lose the Way."

We can cultivate in charity. The pitiable, or poor and needy, as the field or opportunity for charity. We can also cultivate the field of religion and reverence of the Buddhas, the saints, the priesthood. We can also cultivate of happiness by doing offerings to those who are still in training in religion. Or we can cultivate by making Offerings to those who have completed their course. According to The Commentary on the Ten Stages of Bodhisattvahood, there are two paths of cultivation. *The first way is "the Difficult Path":* The difficult path refers to the practices of sentient beings in the world of the five turbidities, who, through countless Buddha eras, aspire to reach the stage of Non-Retrogression. The difficulties are truly countless, as numerous as specks of dust or grains of sand, too numerous to imagine; however, there are basically five major kinds of difficulties: externalists are legion, creating confusion with respect to the Bodhisattva Dharma; evil beings destroy the practitioner's good and wholesome virtues; worldly merits and blessings can easily lead the practitioner astray, so that he ceases to engage in virtuous practices; it is easy to stray onto the

Arhat's path of self-benefit, which obstructs the Mind of great loving kindness and great compassion; and relying exclusively on self-power, without the aid of the Buddha's power, make cultivation very difficult and arduous; it is like the case of a feeble, handicapped person, walking alone, who can only go so far each day regardless of how much effort he expends. *The second way is the Easy Path:* The easy path of cultivation means that, if sentient beings in this world believe in the Buddha's words, practice Buddha Recitation and vow to be reborn in the Pure Land, they are assisted by the Buddha's vow-power and assured of rebirth. This is similar to a person who floats downstream in a boat; although the distance may be thousands of miles far away, his destination will be reached sooner or later. Similarly, a common being, relying on the power of a 'universal monarch' or a deity, can traverse the five continents in a day and a night, this is not due to his own power, but, rather, to the power of the monarch. Some people, reasoning according to 'noumenon,' or principle may say that common beings, being conditioned, cannot be reborn in the Pure Land or see the Buddha's body. The answer is that the virtues of Buddha Recitation are 'unconditioned' good roots. Ordinary, impure persons who develop the Bodhi Mind, seek rebirth and constantly practice Buddha Recitation can subdue and destroy afflictions, achieve rebirth and, depending on their level of cultivation, obtain vision of the rudimentary aspects of the Buddha (the thirty-two marks of greatness, for example). Bodhisattvas, naturally, can achieve rebirth and see the subtle, loftier aspects of the Buddha, i.e., the Dharma body. There can be no doubt about this. Thus the Avatamsaka Sutra states: "All the various Buddha lands are equally purely adorned. Because the karmic practices of sentient beings differ, their perceptions of these lands are different."

According to Buddhist traditions, there are two modes or values of observing commandments. First, prohibitive or restraining from evil. Second, constructive or constraining to goodness. According to Most Venerable Thích Thiên Tâm in *The Thirteen Patriarchs of Pureland Buddhism*, Buddha Recitation has two components: Practice-Recitation and Theory-Recitation. The application of harmonizing Theory and Practice. If cultivators are able to practice Buddha Recitation in this way and maintain it throughout their lives, then in the present life, they will attain the Buddha Recitation Samadhi and upon death they will

gain Rebirth to the Highest Level in the Ultimate Bliss World. *The first way is the “Practice-Recitation”*: Reciting the Buddha-name at the level of phenomenal level means believing that Amitabha Buddha exists in His Pure Land in the West, but not yet comprehending that he is a Buddha created by the Mind, and that this Mind is Buddha. It means you resolve to make vows and to seek birth in the Pure Land, like a child longing for its mother, and never forgetting her for a moment. This is one of the two types of practices that Most Venerable Thích Thiện Tâm mentioned in The Thirteen Patriarchs of Pureland Buddhism. Practice-Recitation means having faith that there is a Buddha named Amitabha in the West of this Saha World, the cultivators should be about the theory: mind can become Buddha, and mind is Buddha. In this way, they practice Buddha Recitation diligently and vigorously like children missing their mother, without a moment of discontinuity. Thereafter, sincerely vow and pray to gain rebirth in the Ultimate Bliss World. Practice-Recitation simply means people reciting Buddha’s name without knowing the sutra, the doctrine, Mahayana, Hinayana teachings, or anything else. It is only necessary for them to listen to the teaching of a Dharma Master that in the Western direction, there is a world called Ultimate Bliss; in that world there are Amitabha Buddha, Avalokitesvara, Mahasthamaprapta, and Great Ocean Assembly of Peaceful Bodhisattvas. To regularly and diligently practice Reciting Amitabha Buddha’s Name as many times as they possibly can, follow by reciting the three enlightened ones of Avalokitesvara, Mahasthamaprapta, and Great Ocean Assembly of Peaceful Bodhisattvas. Thereafter, sincerely and wholeheartedly vow and pray to gain rebirth in the Pureland of Ultimate Bliss. After hearing the above teachings, practitioners should maintain and cultivate as they were taught, making vows to pray for rebirth in the Ultimate Bliss World for the remainder of their lives, to their last bath, and even after they have passed away, they continue to remember to recite Buddha’s name without forgetting. This is called Practice-Recitation. Cultivators are guaranteed to gain rebirth in the Ultimate Bliss World. *The second method is the “Theory-Recitation”*: This is one of the two types of practices that Most Venerable Thích Thiện Tâm mentioned in The Thirteen Patriarchs of Pureland Buddhism. Theory-Recitation is to have faith that Amitabha Buddha in the Western Direction is pre-

existing and is an inherent nature within everyone because Buddha arises from within cultivator's mind. Thereafter, the cultivators use the "Virtuous Name" already complete within their minds to establish a condition to tame the mind and influence it to "Never ever forget to recite the Buddha's name." Theory-Recitation also means "the people reciting Buddha" are individuals who learn and examine the sutra teachings, clearly knowing different traditions, doctrines, and deepest and most profound dharma teachings, etc. Generally speaking, they are well-versed knowledgeable, and understand clearly the Buddha's Theoretical teachings such as the mind creates all ten realms of the four Saints and the six unenlightened. Amitabha Buddha and Buddhas in the ten directions are manifested within the mind. This extends to other external realities such as heaven, hell, or whatever, all are the manifestations within the mind. The virtuous name of Amitabha Buddha is a recitation that already encompasses all the infinite virtues and merits accumulated through the vow-power of Amitabha Buddha. Use the one recitation of "Namo Amitabha Buddha" as a rope and a single condition to get hold of the monkey-mind and horse-thoughts, so it can no longer wander but remain undisturbed and quiescent. At minimum, this will allow the cultivator to have a meditative mind during the ritual or at least for several minutes of that time. Never forgetting to maintain that recitation. Vowing to gain rebirth.

According to Buddhist traditions, there are three sources of cultivation. The first method is the cultivation of Compassion and pity. The second method is the cultivation of Patience. The third method is the cultivation of emptiness or unreality of all things. Everything is being dependent on something else and having no individual existence apart from other things; hence the illusory nature of all things as being composed of elements and not possessing reality. For lay people, the Buddha always reminded about the three means to cultivate or practice Buddha dharma in their daily activities. *First*, to control one's body for not doing bad deeds. *Second*, to control one's mouth for not speaking vain talk or harsh speech. *Third*, to control one's mind for not wandering with unwholesome karma. For the hearers, there are also three ways of cultivation. These are also three ways of discipline of Sravaka. These three trainings are the three inseparable aspects for any cultivators. The three Universal Characteristics (Existence is

universally characterized by impermanence, suffering and not-self). Three methods according to the Mahayana Buddhism. *First, practice on the impermanence*: No realization of the eternal, seeing everything as everchanging and transient. *Second, practice on suffering*: Joyless, through only contemplating misery and not realizing the ultimate nirvana-joy. *Third, practice on non-self*: Non-ego discipline, seeing only the perishing self and not realizing the immortal self. While according to the Theravadan Buddhism, three ways to Enlightenment are “Sila-Samdhī-Prajna”. First, keeping the precepts, or training in Moral discipline by avoiding karmically unwholesome activities. Cultivating ethical conduct. Second, mental discipline, or training the mind in Concentration, or practicing concentration of the mind. Third, wisdom or prajna, meaning always acting wisely, or training in Wisdom, the development of prajna through insight into the truth of Buddhism. These are also the three studies or endeavors of the non-outflow, or those who have passionless life and escape from transmigration. In Buddhism, there is no so-called cultivation without discipline, and also there is no Dharma without discipline. Precepts are considered as cages to capture the thieves of greed, anger, stupidity, pride, doubt, wrong views, killing, stealing, lust, and lying. In the same manner with keeping precepts, in Buddhism, there is no so-called cultivation without concentration, or training the mind. The resulting wisdom, or training in wisdom. If you want to get rid of greed, anger, and ignorance, you have no choice but cultivating discipline and samadhi so that you can obtain wisdom paramita. With wisdom paramita, you can destroy these thieves and terminate all afflictions.

Should Buddhists wait until getting old and after retirement to cultivate? It is traditional for Buddhists to honour the Buddha, to respect the Sangha and to pay homage the religious objects of veneration such as the relics of the Buddha, Buddha images, monastery, pagoda, and personal articles used by the Buddha. However, Buddhists never pray to idols. The worship of the Buddha, ancestors, and deceased parents, are encouraged. However, the word “worship” itself is not appropriate from the Buddhist point of view. The term “Pay homage” should be more appropriate. Buddhists do not blindly worship these objects and forget their main goal is to practice. Buddhists kneel before the image of the Buddha to pay respect to what

the image represents, and promise to try to achieve what the Buddha already achieved 25 centuries ago, not to seek worldly favours from the image. Buddhists pay homage to the image not because they are fear of the Buddha, nor do they supplicate for worldly gain. The most important aspect in Buddhism is to put into practice the teaching given by the Buddha. The Buddha always reminded his disciples that Buddhists should not depend on others, not even on the Buddha himself, for their salvation. During the Buddha's time, so many disciples admired the beauty of the Buddha, so the Buddha also reminded his disciples saying: "You cannot see the Buddha by watching the physical body. Those who see my teaching see me." Some people believe that they should wait until after their retirement to cultivate because after retirement they will have more free time. Those people may not understand the real meaning of the word "cultivation", that is the reason why they want to wait until after retirement to cultivate. According to Buddhism, cultivation means to turn bad things into good things, or to improve your body and mind. So, when can we turn bad things into good things, or when can we improve our body and mind? Ancient virtues taught: "Do not wait until you are thirsty to dig a well, or don't wait until the horse is on the edge of the cliff to draw in the reins for it is too late; or don't wait until the boat is in the middle of the river to patch the leaks for it's too late, and so on". Most of us have the same problem of waiting and delaying of doing things. If we wait until the water reaches our navel to jump, it's too late, no way we can escape the drown if we don't know how to swim. In the same way, at ordinary times, we don't care about proper or improper acts, but wait until after retirement or near death to start caring about our actions, we may never have that chance. Sincere Buddhists should always remember that impermanence and death never wait for anybody. So, take advantage of whatever time we have at the present time to cultivate, to plant good roots and to accumulate merits and virtues.

IV. To Study the Teachings Will Help Creating More Energy & Strength in Cultivation:

Right after the Buddha's Enlightenment at Buddha Gaya, he moved slowly across India until he reached the Deer Park near

Benares, where he preached to five ascetics his First Sermon. The Sermon preached about the Middle Way between all extremes, the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path. In the Deer Park, Benares, at first the Buddha was ignored by the five brothers of Kaundinya, but as the Buddha approached them, they felt that there was something very special about him, so they automatically stood up as He drew near. Then the five men, with great respect, invited the Buddha to teach them what He has enlightened. So, the Buddha delivered His First Teaching: Turning the Wheel of the Dharma. He began to preach: “O monk! You must know that there are Four Noble Truths. The first is the Noble Truth of Suffering. Life is filled with the miseries and afflictions of old age, sickness, unhappiness and death. People chase after pleasure but find only pain. Even when they do find something pleasant they soon grow tired of it. Nowhere is there any real satisfaction or perfect peace. The second is the Noble Truth of the Cause of Suffering. When our mind is filled with greed and desire and wandering thoughts, sufferings of all types follow. The third is the Noble Truth of the End of Suffering. When we remove all craving, desire, and wandering thoughts from our mind, sufferings will come to an end. We shall experience undescrivable happiness. And finally, the Noble Truth of the Path. The Path that helps us reach the ultimate wisdom.” The path leading to the end (extinction) of suffering, the fourth of the four axioms, i.e. the eightfold noble path. The truth of the PATH that leads to the cessation of suffering (the way of cure). To practice the Eight-fold Noble Truths. The Buddha taught: “Whoever accepts the four dogmas, and practises the Eightfold Noble Path will put an end to births and deaths. In short, finally, the Buddha already discovered supportive conditions leading to bodhi or Buddhahood. The Noble Truth of the Right Way includes the following Noble Paths: The Eightfold Noble Truth, Seven Bodhi Shares, Four Right Efforts, Four Sufficiencies, Five Faculties, Five Powers, Four Elements of Popularity, Four Immeasurable Minds, and Four Kinds of Mindfulness.

To someone, all that the Buddha said can only be considered as life of the Buddha Himself. However, in fact, the example that the Buddha and his immediate disciples set, that glorious feat of a man, who stood before men as a man and declared a path of deliverance. To others, Buddhism would mean the massive doctrine as recorded in the

Buddhist Tripitaka (literature), and it is described a very lofty, abstruse, complex and learned philosophy of life. The name Buddhism comes from the word “Bodhi” which means “waking up,” and thus Buddhism is the philosophy of Awakening. Therefore, the real definition of Buddhism is Noble Truth. The Buddha did not teach from theories. He always taught from a practical standpoint based on His understanding, His enlightenment, and His realization of the Truth. This philosophy has its origins in the experience of the man named Siddhartha Gotama, known as the Buddha, who was himself awakened at the age of 36. Buddhism is now older than 2,500 years old and has more than 800 million followers world wide, including Chinese followers in Mainland China. People in the West had heard of the Buddha and his teaching as early as the thirteenth century when Marco Polo (1254-1324), the Italian traveler who explored Asia, wrote accounts on Buddhism in his book, “Travels of Marco Polo”. From the eighteenth century onwards, Buddhist text were brought to Europe and translated into English, French and German. Until a hundred years ago, Buddhism was mainly an Asian philosophy but increasingly it is gaining adherents in Europe and America. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Alan Bennett, an Englishman, went to Burma to become a Buddhist monk. He was renamed Ananda Metteya. He returned to Britain in 1908. He was the first British person to become a Buddhist monk. He taught Dharma in Britain. Since then, Buddhist monks and nuns from Sri Lanka, Thailand, Japan, China and other Buddhist countries in Asia have come to the West, particularly over the last seventy years. Many of these teachers have kept to their original customs while others have adapted to some extent to meet the demands of living in a western society. In recent years, there has been a marked growth of interest in Buddhism in Europe. The membership of existing societies has increased and many new Buddhist centers have been established. Their members include large numbers of professionals and scholars. Today, Britain alone has over 140 Buddhist centers found in most major cities.

To the Buddha, man is a supreme being, thus, he taught: “Be your own torch and your own refuge. Do not seek refuge in any other person.” This was the Buddha’s truthful word. He also said: “All realizations come from effort and intelligence that derive from one’s own experience. Man is the master of his destiny, since he can make

his life better or worse. If he tries his best to cultivate, he can become a Buddha.” Buddhism is the only way that leads people from the evil to the virtuous, from deluded to fully enlightened sagehood. Buddhism is a philosophy, a way of life or a religion. The religion of the awakened one. One of the three great world religions. It was founded by the historical Buddha Sakyamuni over 25 centuries ago. Sakyamuni expounded the four noble truths as the core of his teaching, which he had recognized in the moment of his enlightenment. He had shown people how to live wisely and happily and his teachings soon spread from India throughout Asia, and beyond.

The Buddha admitted the presence of sufferings and afflictions in human life because of the ignorant attachment to all things. But it is truly wrong to believe that Buddhism is a religion of pessimism. This is not true even with a slight understanding of basic Buddhism. When the Buddha said that human life was full of sufferings and afflictions, he did not mean that life was pessimistic. In this manner, the Buddha admitted the presence of sufferings and afflictions in human life, and by a method of analysis he pointed out to his disciples that attachment to things without a correct view as to their nature is the cause of sufferings and afflictions. Impermanence and change are inherent in the nature of all things. This is their true nature and this is the correct view. He concluded: “As long as we are at variance with this truth, we are bound to run into conflicts. We cannot alter or control the nature of things. The result is ‘hope deferred made the heart sick’. The only solution lies in correcting our point of view.” In fact, the thirst for things begets sorrow. When we like someone or something, we wish that they belonged to us and were with us forever. We never think about their true nature, in other words, or we refuse to think about their true nature. We expect them to survive forever, but time devours everything. Eventually we must yield to old age and freshness of the morning dew disappears before the rising sun. In the Nirvana Sutra, when Ananda and other disciples were so sad and cried when the Buddha lay on his death-bed, the Buddha taught: “Ananda! Lament not. Have I not already told you that from all good things we love and cherish we would be separated, sooner or later... that they would change their nature and perish. How then can Tathagata survive? This is not possible!” This is the philosophy which underlies the doctrine of

the “Three Marks” (impermanence, suffering and no-self) of existence of the Buddhist view of life and the world. All Buddhist values are based on this. The Buddha expected of his disciples, both laity and clergy, good conduct and good behavior and decent standard of living in every way. With him, a simple living did not amount to degenerate human existence or to suffer oneself. The Buddha advised his disciples to follow the “Middle Path”. It is to say not to attach to things nor to abandon them. The Buddha does not deny the “beauty”, however, if one does not understand the true nature of the objects of beauty, one may end up with sufferings and afflictions or grief and disappointment. In the “Theragatha”, the Buddha brought up the story of the Venerable Pakka. One day, going to the village for alms, Venerable Pakka sat down beneath a tree. Then a hawk, seizing some flesh flew up into the sky. Other hawks saw that attacked it, making it drop the piece of meat. Another hawk grabbed the fallen flesh, and was flundered by other hawks. And Pakka thought: “Just like that meat are worldly desires, common to all, full of pain and woe.” And reflecting hereon, and how they were impermanent and so on, he continued to contemplate and eventually won Arahanship. The Buddha advised his disciples not to avoid or deny or attach to objects of beauty. Try not to make objects of beauty our objects of like or dislike. Whatever there is in the world, pleasant or unpleasant, we all have a tendency to attach to them, and we develop a like or dislike to them. Thus we continue to experience sufferings and afflictions. Buddhists recognize beauty where the sense can perceive it, but in beauty we should also see its own change and destruction. And Buddhist should always remember the Buddha’s teaching regarding to all component things: “Things that come into being, undergo change and are eventually destroyed.” Therefore, Buddhists admire beauty but have no greed for acquisition and possession.

For devout Buddhists, the first important thing is that we must see the benefits of studying the Dharma, only then will we develop the strong desire to study it. Truly speaking, studying the Dharma can help practitioners having more energy and strength, for owing to our study, we understand Dharma; owing to our study, we stop committing wrong doings; owing to our study, we abandon the meaningless behaviors; owing to our study, we eventually achieve nirvana. In other words, by

virtue of our study, we will know all the key points for modifying our behavior. Owing to study, we will understand the meaning of the Vinaya Basket and, as a result, will stop committing sins by following the high training of ethics. Owing to study, we will understand the meaning of the Sutra Basket, and as a result, we will be able to abandon such meaningless things as distractions, by following the high training in single-pointed concentration. Also owing to study, we understand the meaning of the Abhidharma Basket, and so come to abandon delusions by means of the high training in wisdom. Study is the lamp to dispel the darkness of ignorance. It is the best of possession that thieves cannot rob us of it. Study is a weapon to defeat our enemies of blindness to all things. It is our best friend who instructs us on the means. Study is a relative who will not desert us when we are poor. It is a medicine against sorrow that does us no harm. It is the best force that dispatches against our misdeeds. Devout Buddhists should always remember that when we know one more letter, we get rid of ourselves a bit of ignorance around that letter. So, when we know the other letters, we have dispelled our ignorance about them too, and added even more to our wisdom. The more we study the more light of wisdom we gain that helps us decrease ignorance. We should not study teaching without applying the basic and essential practices of Buddhism in order to transform our afflictions and habit energies. We also try to study teachings of a profound, metaphysical, and mystical nature, and should always ask ourselves how we may apply these teachings in our daily life to transform our sufferings and realize emancipation. Finally, the urgent and essential purposes of studying the teachings of lay people are trying not to cause sufferings, afflictions, and troubles for us and for other people, on the contrary, the benefits from studying the teachings will not only help relieve our sufferings, afflictions, and troubles, but also relieve other people's sufferings, afflictions, and troubles in this very life, so that everyone will have a life of more peace, mindfulness and happiness. In short, studying the teachings will help creating more strength in cultivation. The power derived from the strength of studying the teachings enables Buddhist practitioners, if not yet attain enlightenment and emancipation, but if practicing good deeds still can be reborn among men, and or to be born among devas.

V. Wanting to Advance to the Buddhahood One Must Cultivate Buddha's Teachings:

During the time of the Buddha always confirmed his disciples that He was only a guide who showed the Way of Enlightenment and Liberation; and He could never be able to liberate anyone. Those who listen to the Buddha's Teachings on methods of cultivation, then follow these teachings to cultivate will lead to enlightenment. In other words, those who want to advance to the Buddhahood, everybody should study, understand, believe, and then practice to become a Buddha. The birth of the Buddha's teachings is the pinnacle of the Buddha's achievement. The Buddha's enlightenment was in some respects the pinnacle of his achievement, but it was his subsequent teaching of Dharma (Truth) that laid the foundation for his enduring legacy. The community of monks and nuns that he established ensured the transmission of this doctrine to future generations, and in the 3rd century B.C. the reign of the emperor Asoka played an instrumental role in the dissemination of Buddhism in India. After he had attained enlightenment, the Buddha remained for seven weeks at the site of the Bodhi Tree and enjoyed great bliss. During this period he realized that what he had come to understand was a profound and difficult truth, which other people relished worldly attachment, would find hard to grasp. According to the Buddha, the Buddha-dharma is simply worldly dharma in which we turn ourselves around. It is the dharma that most ordinary people are unwilling to use. Worldly people are sinking and floating in the worldly dharma; they are always busy running here and there, constantly hurried and agitated. The source of all these activities is invariably selfishness, motivated by a concern to protect their own lives and properties. Buddha-dharma, on the other hand, is unselfish and public-spirited, and springs from a wish to benefit others. Sincere cultivators always think of others' welfare. Sincere cultivators always forget their own "Ego". They always give up their own interests in service to others, and never bring uncomfortable circumstances and afflictions to others. However, most people fail to clearly understand the basic ideas that the Buddha once preached. As a result as we can see now, within Buddhist circles we find struggle and contention, troubles and hassles, quarrels and strife. These problems seem to be no

different from that of ordinary people, if we do not want to say worst than what we can find in worldly life. The Buddha predicted all these problems, thus He concluded that it would be pointless to try to teach others about his enlightenment, but the great god Brahma Sahampati intervened and implored the Buddha to share his discoveries with humankind.

Impelled by his great compassion, the Buddha decided to survey the world. He saw that beings are of different kinds: like lotuses in a pond, some are immersed underwater, other grow and rest on the surface, and other again come right out of the water and stand clear, He understood that just as some people have good qualities and others bad, some would be easy to teach and others would be difficult. Because of this diversity and out of his great compassion for all beings, the Buddha changed his mind and resolved to teach. The Buddha's first sermon was addressed to the five ascetics who had been his companions before the enlightenment. At the deer park at Sarnath, near present day Varanasi, he explained to them the content of his enlightenment in the form of the Four Noble Truths. These ascetics were so struck by the depth of his insight and the novelty of his message that one of them instantly became an arhat, a "worthy one" who attains nirvana through a Buddha's teaching. The other four followed suit in the days to come. This momentous first sermon, which has become one of the better-known articulations of the Buddha's teaching and of Buddhism in general, is called the "Setting in Motion of the Wheel of Dharma." It is still celebrated in most Theravada countries in the festival called "Asalha Puja," which takes place on the full moon day of the month of July.

For the next forty-five years, until his ultimate extinction, the Buddha taught Dharma. The number of his followers increased steadily and the community of monks, the Sangha, began to form. The Buddha himself continued wandering and begging for his food. He taught indiscriminately, talking to kings and paupers alike, and ceased traveling only in the three months of the rainy season. The Buddha did not appoint a successor. When his disciples asked who would lead them after his death, he retorted that they must turn to themselves and be guided by the Dharma as he had taught it to them. It would be the duty of the Sangha to maintain the Dharma when he was gone. At his death

approached, the Buddha asked the assembled monks if they had any questions. The gathering remained silent. The Buddha's last words to the monks were: "All things composed are perishable. Now strive diligently." Then, lying on his right side between two "sal" trees, he began meditating into the many stages of his complete and final extinction (parinirvana), after which he would never again be reborn. His body was cremated and, in accordance with his wish, the remains were divided among humans and gods. Stupas (dome-shaped funerary mounds) were erected over the relics. Stupas can be seen today at such sites as Sanchi and Amaravati in India, Anuradhapura in Sri Lanka and Borobudur in Indonesia.

Truly speaking, not only Buddhists but the whole world also are indebted to the Buddha for it is He who first showed the Way to free human beings from the coils of lust, anger, stupidity, arrogance, doubt, wrong views, killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, and lying... To Him, religion was not a bargain, but a Noble Way of life to gain enlightenment and liberation. When the Buddha said that life is an ocean of sufferings; he did not mean to draw a pessimistic picture of life; however, He wanted to explain clearly causes of sufferings and afflictions, then He showed us the Path of Elimination of Sufferings. Besides, each and every teaching of His, from Dharma, Four Noble Truths, Eight Noble Paths, Causes and Effects, Karmas and Retributions, Rebirth, and Egolessness, and so on, all of the above helps lead us penetrate Buddhist Teachings and advance on the Path Leading To Buddhahood. If we, Buddhists, can penetrate Buddhist Teachings and advance on the Path Leading To Buddhahood, not talking about becoming a Buddha, at the very moment, at least, we can reduce evil thoughts, selfishness, hatred, anger, jealousy, grudges, and ill-will. Furthermore, when advancing on this Path, we can reduce the bad effect of the bad karma that we committed in many aeons in the past, for this the Path that the Buddha advanced for overcoming the bad effects. In the limitation of this little writing "Buddhism: The Path Leading to Buddhahood", we cannot make a profound study of Buddhism, but we simply point out the path that the Buddha, the Great Enlightened in human history, once trod on and did become a Buddha. Devout Buddhists should always remember that treading on the paths leading to the Buddha does not mean to renounce the world and to

enter into a temple as a monk or nun, but it means to enter into practicing well-being exercises that are linked to established daily life patterns, makes our lives more peaceful. Devout Buddhists should always remember the goal of any Buddhist cultivator is to achieve self-enlightening (examine with one's own intelligence, and not depending upon another), enlightening or awakening of others, then achieve the final accomplishment, that is to become a Buddha. Because Buddhist religion is the path of returning to self (looking inward), the goal of its education must be inward and not outward for appearances and matters. As mentioned above, the main causes of sufferings and afflictions are greed, anger, hatred, ignorance, pride, doubt, wrong views, killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, and so on... and the ultimate goal of Buddhism is to help sentient beings, especially, human beings to eliminate these troubles so that if we are not able to become a Buddha, at least we can become a real Buddhist who has a peaceful, mindful and happy life. So, treading on the paths leading to the Buddha helps us to experience calmness and clarity, acceptance and gratitude, love and connection in our daily life. It will also help us to develop new habits of appropriate pausing, habits of knowing how to stop from continuing doing unwholesome activities. Let's try to tread on the paths leading to the Buddha, then we will see that to experience peace does not mean that we have to be in a place where there is no noise, no trouble, or no hard work. As a matter of fact, peace is really to be in the midst of those things and still be calm in our heart. For devout Buddhists, once you make up your mind to step enter into "The Path Leading to Buddhahood", should persevere and never have the intention of retreat; step by step, you should try your best to set a strong foundation on calmness, mindfulness and happiness. Over the times, this will help us form habits which make our life better and better. In fact, once we have these habits, they will become our natural habits. Once they become integrated in our lifestyle, we will always live with them. The journey "From being a common person to becoming a Buddha" demands continuous efforts and practices with right understanding. Hoping some not-far-away day, everybody will soon become Buddha!

VI. Buddhism: The Path Leading to the Buddhahood:

Someone says that the word religion is not appropriate to call Buddhism because Buddhism is not a religion, but a moral philosophy. For me, Buddhism is a Religion of the Truth and a Living Philosophy. Buddhism is both a religion and philosophy of life based on the teachings set forth by Shakyamuni Buddha over 2500 years ago in India. Before going further we should briefly analyze the two words “Buddha” and “Philosophy”. First, the name Buddhism comes from the word “budhi” which means ‘to wake up’ and thus Buddhism is the philosophy of awakening. This philosophy has its origins in the experience of the man named Siddhartha Gotama, known as the Buddha, who was himself awakened at the age of 36. Buddhism is now older than 2,500 years old and has almost one third of the population of the world are its followers. Until a hundred years ago, Buddhism was mainly an Asian philosophy but increasingly it is gaining adherents in Europe and America. Secondly, the word philosophy comes from two words ‘philo’ which means ‘love’ and ‘sophia’ which means ‘wisdom’. So philosophy is the love of wisdom or love and wisdom, both meanings describing Buddhism perfectly. Buddhism teaches that we should try to develop our intellectual capacity to the fullest so that we can understand clearly. It also teaches us to develop loving kindness and compassion so that we can become (be like) a true friend to all beings. So Buddhism is a philosophy but not just a philosophy. It is the supreme philosophy. In the year 563 B.C. a baby was born into a royal family in northern India. He grew up in wealth and luxury but soon found that worldly comfort and security do not guarantee real happiness. He was deeply moved by the suffering he saw all around, so He resolved to find the key to human happiness. It couldn’t have been an easy thing for the Buddha to leave his family. He must have worried and hesitated for a long time before he finally left. There were two choices, dedicating himself to his family or dedicating himself to the whole world. In the end, his great compassion made him give himself to the whole world. And the whole world still benefits from his sacrifice. This was perhaps the most significant sacrifice ever made. After careful considerations, when he was 29 he left his wife and child and his Royal Palace and set off to sit at the feet of the great religious teachers of the day to learn from them. They taught him much but none really knew the cause of human sufferings and afflictions and how it

could be overcome. Eventually, after six years study and meditation he had an experience in which all ignorance fell away and he suddenly understood. From that day onwards, he was called the Buddha, the Awakened One. He lived for another 45 years in which time he travelled all over northern India teaching others what he had discovered. His compassion and patience were legendary and he made hundreds of thousands of followers. In his eightieth year, old and sick, but still happy and at peace, he finally passed away into nirvana. After the passing of Shakyamuni Buddha, his disciples recorded all of his teaching into scriptures called sutras. There is no one book that contains all the information the Buddha taught, but the total of more than 800 books that recorded a vast number of sutras, vinaya and abhidharma.

In Buddhism, there is no distinction between a divine, or a supreme being, and an ordinary person. The highest form of a human being is a Buddha. All people have the inherent ability and potential to become Buddhas if they follow and cultivate the teachings set forth by Shakyamuni Buddha. By following the Buddha's teachings and Buddhist practices, anyone can eventually become Buddhas. A Buddha is also a human being, but one who comes to a realization and thoroughly understands the workings and meaning of life and the universe. When one comes to that realization and truly knows and understands oneself and everything, he is called "Buddha" or he is said to have attained enlightenment. He is also called "the Enlightened One."

Even though the Buddha is dead but 2,500 years later his teachings still help and save a lot of people, his example still inspires people, his words still continue to change lives. Only a Buddha could have such power centuries after his death. The Buddha did not claim that he was a god, the child of god or even the messenger from a god. He was simply a man who perfected himself and taught that if we followed his example, we could perfect ourselves also. He never asked his followers to worship him as a god. In fact, He prohibited his followers to praise him as a god. He told his followers that he could not give favours or blessings to those who worship him with personal expectations or calamities to those who don't worship him. He asked his followers to respect him as students respect their teacher. He also

reminded his followers to worship a statue of the Buddha means to remind ourselves to try to develop peace and love within ourselves. The perfume of incense reminds us of the pervading influence of virtue, the lamp reminds us of the light of knowledge and the followers which soon fade and die, remind us of impermanence. When we bow, we express our gratitude to the Buddha for what his teachings have given us. This is the core nature of Buddhist worship. A lot of people have misunderstood the meaning of “worship” in Buddhism, even devout Buddhists. Buddhists do not believe that the Buddha is a god, so in no way they could possibly believe that a piece of wood or metal (statue) is a god. In Buddhism, the statue of the Buddha is used to symbolize human perfection. The statue of the Buddha also reminds us of the human dimension in Buddhist teaching, the fact that Buddhism is man-centered, not god-centered, that we must look inward (within) not outward (without) to find perfection and understanding. So in no way one can say that Buddhists worship god or idols. In fact, a long long time ago, when primitive man found himself in a dangerous and hostile situations, the fear of wild animals, of not being able to find enough food, of diseases, and of natural calamities or phenomena such as storms, hurricanes, volcanoes, thunder, and lightning, etc. He found no security in his surroundings and he had no ability to explain those phenomena, therefore, he created the idea of gods in order to give him comfort in good times, and courage him in times of danger and consolation when things went wrong. They believed that god arranged everything. Generations after generations, man continues to follow his ancestors in a so-called “faith in god” without any further thinkings. Some says they believe in god because god responds to their prayers when they feel fear or frustration. Some say they believe in god because their parents and grandparents believed in god. Some others say that they prefer to go to church than to temple because those who go to churches seem richer and more honorable than those who go to temples, and so on, and so on.

The Four Noble Truths, A fundamental doctrine of Buddhism which clarifies the cause of suffering and the way to emancipation. Sakyamuni Buddha is said to have expounded the Four Noble Truths in the Deer Park in Sarnath during his first sermon after attaining Buddhahood. The Buddha organized these ideas into the Fourfold

Truth as follows: “Life consists entirely of suffering; suffering has causes; the causes of suffering can be extinguished; and there exists a way to extinguish the cause.” The noble Eightfold Path or the eight right (correct) ways. The path leading to release from suffering, the goal of the third in the four noble truths. These are eight in the 37 bodhi ways to enlightenment. Practicing the Noble Eight-fold Path can bring about real advantages such as improvement of personal conditions. It is due to the elimination of all evil thoughts, words, and actions that we may commit in our daily life, and to the continuing practice of charitable work; improvement of living conditions. If everyone practiced this noble path, the world we are living now would be devoid of all miseries and sufferings caused by hatred, struggle, and war between men and men, countries and countries, or peoples and peoples. Peace would reign forever on earth; attainment of enlightenment or Bodhi Awareness. The Noble Eight-fold Path is the first basic condition for attaining Bodhi Consciousness that is untarnished while Alaya Consciousness is still defiled. In Buddhism, the mind is immeasurable. It not only benefit immeasurable living beings, bringing immeasurable blessings to them, and producing immeasurable highly spiritual attainments in a world, in one life, but also spreads all over immeasurable worlds, in immeasurable future lives, shaping up immeasurable Buddha. The four immeasurables or infinite Buddha-states of mind. The four kinds of boundless mind, or four divine abodes. These states are called illimitables because they are to be radiated towards all living beings without limit or obstruction. They are also called brahmaviharas or divine abodes, or sublime states, because they are the mental dwellings of the brahma divinities in the Brahma-world.

In both forms of Buddhism, Theravada and Mahayana, the Buddha taught his disciples, especially lay-disciples to keep the Five Precepts. Although details are not given in the canonical texts, Buddhist teachers have offered many good interpretations about these five precepts. The five basic commandments of Buddhism. The five basic prohibitions binding on all Buddhists, monks and laymen alike; however, these are especially for lay disciples. The observance of these five ensures rebirth in the human realm. The truth law of causation is one of the most important teaching of the Buddha. Cause is a primary force that

produces an effect; effect is a result of that primary force. The law of causation governs everything in the universe without exception. Law of cause and effect or the relation between cause and effect in the sense of the Buddhist law of “Karma”. The law of causation (reality itself as cause and effect in momentary operation). Every action which is a cause will have a result or an effect. Likewise every resultant action or effect has its cause. The law of cause and effect is a fundamental concept within Buddhism governing all situations. The Moral Causation in Buddhism means that a deed, good or bad, or indifferent, brings its own result on the doer. Good people are happy and bad ones unhappy. But in most cases “happiness” is understood not in its moral or spiritual sense but in the sense of material prosperity, social position, or political influence. For instance, kingship is considered the reward of one’s having faithfully practiced the ten deeds of goodness. If one meets a tragic death, he is thought to have committed something bad in his past lives even when he might have spent a blameless life in the present one. Causality is a natural law, mentioning the relationship between cause and effect. All things come into being not without cause, since if there is no cause, there is no effect and vice-versa. As so sow, so shall you reap. Cause and effect never conflict with each other. In other words, cause and effect are always consistent with each other. If we want to have beans, we must sow bean seeds. If we want to have oranges, we must sow orange seeds. If wild weeds are planted, then it’s unreasonable for one to hope to harvest edible fruits. One cause cannot have any effect. To produce an effect, it is necessary to have some specific conditions. For instance, a grain of rice cannot produce a rice plant without the presence of sunlight, soil, water, and care. In the cause there is the effect; in the effect there is the cause. From the current cause, we can see the future effect and from the present effect we discerned the past cause. The development process from cause to effect is sometimes quick, sometimes slow. Sometimes cause and effect are simultaneous like that of beating a drum and hearing its sound. Sometimes cause and effect are three or four months away like that of the grain of rice. It takes about three to four, or five to six months from a rice seed to a young rice plant, then to a rice plant that can produce rice. Sometimes it takes about ten years for a cause to turn into an effect. For instance, from the time the schoolboy enters the

elementary school to the time he graduates a four-year college, it takes him at least 14 years. Other causes may involve more time to produce effects, may be the whole life or two lives. By understanding and believing in the law of causality, Buddhists will not become superstitious, or alarmed, and rely passively on heaven authority. He knows that his life depends on his karmas. If he truly believes in such a causal mechanism, he strives to accomplish good deeds, which can reduce and alleviate the effect of his bad karmas. If he continues to live a good life, devoting his time and effort to practicing Buddhist teachings, he can eliminate all of his bad karmas. He knows that he is the only driving force of his success or failure, so he will be discouraged, put the blame on others, or rely on them. He will put more effort into performing his duties satisfactorily. Realizing the value of the law of causality, he always cares for what he thinks, tells or does in order to avoid bad karma.

The truth of karma is one of the fundamental doctrines of Buddhism. Everything that we encounter in this life, good or bad, sweet or bitter, is a result of what we did in the past or from what we have done recently in this life. Good karma produces happiness; bad karma produces pain and suffering. So, what is karma? Karma is a Sanskrit word, literally means a deed or an action and a reaction, the continuing process of cause and effect. Moral or any good or bad action (however, the word 'karma' is usually used in the sense of evil bent or mind resulting from past wrongful actions) taken while living which causes corresponding future retribution, either good or evil transmigration (action and reaction, the continuing process of cause and effect). Our present life is formed and created through our actions and thoughts in our previous lives. Our present life and circumstances are the product of our past thoughts and actions, and in the same way our deeds in this life will fashion our future mode of existence. A karma can be created by body, speech, or mind. There are good karma, evil karma, and indifferent karma. All kinds of karma are gathered or accumulated by the Manas and stored in the Alayavijnana. Karma can be cultivated through religious practice (good), and uncultivated. For sentient being has lived through innumerable reincarnations, each has boundless karma. Whatever kind of karma is, a result would be followed accordingly, sooner or later. No one can escape the result of his own

karma. As mentioned above, karma is a product of body, speech and mind; while recompense is a product or result of karma. Karma is like a seed sown, and recompense is like a tree grown with fruits. When the body does good things, the mouth speaks good words, the mind thinks of good ideas, then the karma is a good seed. In the contrary, the karma is an evil seed. Thus the Buddha taught: “To lead a good life, you Buddhists should make every effort to control the activities of your body, speech, and mind. Do not let these activities hurt you and others.” Recompense corresponds Karma without any exception. Naturally, good seed will produce a healthy tree and delicious fruits, while bad seed gives worse tree and fruits. Therefore, unless we clearly understand and diligently cultivate the laws of cause and effect, or karma and result, we cannot control our lives and experience a life the way we wish to. According to the Buddha-Dharma, no gods, nor heavenly deities, nor demons can assert their powers on us, we are totally free to build our lives the way we wish. If we accumulate good karma, the result will surely be happy and joyous. No demons can harm us. In the contrary, if we create evil karma, no matter how much and earnestly we pray for help, the result will surely be bitter and painful, no gods can save us.

When we act, either good or bad, we see our own actions, like an outsider who witnesses. The pictures of these actions will automatically imprint in our Alaya-vijnana (subconscious mind); the seed of these actions are sown there, and await for enough conditions to spring up its tree and fruits. Similarly, the effect in the alaya-vijnana (subconscious mind) of the one who has received our actions. The seed of either love or hate has been sown there, waiting for enough conditions to spring up its tree and fruits. The Buddha taught: “If someone give us something, but we refuse to accept. Naturally, that person will have to keep what they plan to give. This means our pocket is still empty.” Similarly, if we clearly understand that karmas or our own actions will be stored in the alaya-vijnana (subconscious mind) for us to carry over to the next lives, we will surely refuse to store any more karma in the ‘subconscious mind’ pocket. When the ‘subconscious mind’ pocket is empty, there is nothing for us to carry over. That means we don’t have any result of either happiness or suffering. As a result, the cycle of birth and death comes to an end, the goal of liberation is reached.

The Buddha admitted the presence of sufferings and afflictions in human life because of the ignorant attachment to all things. It is trully wrong to believe that Buddhism a religion of pessimism. This is not true even with a slight understanding of basic Buddhism. When the Buddha said that human life was full of sufferings and afflictions, he did not mean that life was pessimistic. In this manner, the Buddha admitted the presence of sufferings and afflictions in human life, and by a method of analysis he pointed out to his disciples that attachment to things without a correct view as to their nature is the cause of sufferings and afflictions. Impermanence and change are inherent in the nature of all things. This is their true nature and this is the correct view. He concluded: “As long as we are at variance with this truth, we are bound to run into conflicts. We cannot alter or control the nature of things. The result is ‘hope deferred made the heart sick’. The only solution lies in correcting our point of view.” In fact, the thirst for things begets sorrow. When we like someone or something, we wish that they belonged to us and were with us forever. We never think about their true nature, in other words, or we refuse to think about their true nature. We expect them to survive forever, but time devours everything. Eventually we must yield to old age and freshness of the morning dew disappears before the rising sun. In the Nirvana Sutra, when Ananda and other disciples were so sad and cried when the Buddha lay on his death-bed, the Buddha taught: “Ananda! Lament not. Have I not already told you that from all good things we love and cherish we would be separated, sooner or later... that they would change their nature and perish. How then can Tathagata survive? This is not possible!” This is the philosophy which underlies the doctrine of the “Three Marks” (impermanence, suffering and no-self) of existence of the Buddhist view of life and the world. All Buddhist values are based on this. The Buddha expected of his disciples, both laity and clergy, good conduct and good behavior and decent standard of living in every way. With him, a simple living did not amount to degenerate human existence or to suffer oneself. The Buddha advised his disciples to follow the “Middle Path”. It is to say not to attach to things nor to abandon them. The Buddha does not deny the “beauty”, however, if one does not understand the true nature of the objects of beauty, one may end up with sufferings and afflictions or grief and disappointment.

In the “Theragatha”, the Buddha brought up the story of the Venerable Pakka. One day, going to the village for alms, Venerable Pakka sat down beneath a tree. Then a hawk, seizing some flesh flew up into the sky. Other hawks saw that attacked it, making it drop the piece of meat. Another hawk grabbed the fallen flesh, and was flundered by other hawks. And Pakka thought: “Just like that meat are worldly desires, common to all, full of pain and woe.” And reflecting hereon, and how they were impermanent and so on, he continued to contemplate and eventually won Arahanship. The Buddha advised his disciples not to avoid or deny or attach to objects of beauty. Try not to make objects of beauty our objects of like or dislike. Whatever there is in the world, pleasant or unpleasant, we all have a tendency to attach to them, and we develop a like or dislike to them. Thus we continue to experience sufferings and afflictions. Buddhists recognize beauty where the sense can perceive it, but in beauty we should also see its own change and destruction. And Buddhist should always remember the Buddha’s teaching regarding to all component things: “Things that come into being, undergo change and are eventually destroyed.” Therefore, Buddhists admire beauty but have no greed for acquisition and possession. In order to terminate the suffering and affliction in life, The Buddha advises his fourfold disciple: “Do no evil, to do only good, to purify the mind.” In the Agama Sutra, the Buddha taught: “Do not commit wrongs, devoutly practice all kinds of good, and purify the mind, that’s Buddhism” or “To do no evil, to do only good, to purify the will, is the doctrine of all Buddhas.” These four sentences are said to include all the Buddha-teachings.

Truly speaking, the Truth in Buddhist Teachings is always in accord with Life and Science at all times. The main teachings of the Buddha focus on the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Noble Path. They are called “Noble” because they enoble one who understand them and they are called “Truths” because they correspond with reality. Buddhists neither believe in negative thoughts nor do they believe in pessimistic ideas. In the contrary, Buddhists believe in facts, irrefutable facts that all know, that all have aimed to experience and that all are striving to reach. Those who believe in god or gods usually claim that before an individual is created, he does not exist, then he comes into being through the will of a god. He lives his life and then

according to what he believes during his life, he either goes to eternal heaven or eternal hell. Some believe that they come into being at conception due to natural causes, live and then die or cease to exist, that's it! Buddhism does not accept either of these concepts. According to the first explanation, if there exists a so-called almighty god who creates all beings with all his loving kindness and compassion, it is difficult to explain why so many people are born with the most dreadful deformities, or why so many people are born in poverty and hunger. It is nonsense and unjust for those who must fall into eternal hells because they do not believe and submit themselves to such a so-called almighty god. The second explanation is more reasonable, but it still leaves several unanswered questions. Yes, conception due to natural causes, but how can a phenomenon so amazingly complex as consciousness develop from the simple meeting of two cells, the egg and the sperm? Buddhism agrees on natural causes; however, it offers more satisfactory explanation of where man came from and where he is going after his death. When we die, the mind, with all the tendencies, preferences, abilities and characteristics that have been developed and conditioned in this life, re-establishes itself in a fertilized egg. Thus the individual grows, is reborn and develops a personality conditioned by the mental characteristics that have been carried over by the new environment. The personality will change and be modified by conscious effort and conditioning factors like education, parental influence and society and once again at death, re-establish itself in a new fertilized egg. This process of dying and being reborn will continue until the conditions that cause it, craving and ignorance, cease. When they do, instead of being reborn, the mind attains a state called Nirvana and this is the ultimate goal of Buddhism.

In short, there is not a doubt that Buddhism was a religion of the truth and a living philosophy more than 26 centuries ago. It's still now a religion of the truth and a living philosophy in this very century (the twenty-first century). Buddhism is in accord with all the progresses of nowadays science and it will always be in accord with science at all times. Its basic teachings of loving-kindness, compassion, joy, equanimity, right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration, as well as the basic five precepts of not killing, not stealing, not

committing sexual misconduct, not lying and not drinking alcohol and not doing drugs... are always a torch that lights the darkness of the world. The message of peace and of love and happiness of Buddhism to living beings of all kinds is always the glorious truth for all human beings. Everyone can achieve the highest goal in Buddhism, no matter who is that person, clergy person or lay person. However, the most important thing we all must remember is making an honest effort to follow the Buddha's teachings. The Buddha and his great disciples did not achieve their ultimate goal by accident. The Buddha and his disciples were once ordinary sentient beings like us. They were once afflicted by the impurities of the mind, attachment, aversion, and ignorance. They all became either Buddhas or Saints now, but for us, we are still creating and creating more and more unwholesome deeds and continuing going up and down in the cycle of birth and death? Devout Buddhists should listen to the Buddha's teachings, should purify our actions, words and mind to achieve true wisdom, the wisdom that helps us understand the truth and to attain the ultimate goal of Buddhism. In other words, if we sincerely cultivate in accordance with the Buddha's teachings, one day not too far, everyone of us would be able to do good deeds, to avoid bad deeds; everyone of us would try our best to help others whenever possible and not to harm anyone, our mind would be mindful at all times. Thus there is no doubt that the Buddha's Dharma will benefit us with happiness and prosperity in this life and in the next. Eventually, it will lead us to the ultimate goal of liberation, the supreme bliss of Nirvana.

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