

**THIỆN PHÚC**

**THE BUDDHA'S ADVICE  
TO LAY PEOPLE  
IN THE SIGALAKA SUTRA**

**(NHỮNG LỜI KHUYÊN CỦA ĐỨC PHẬT  
CHO PHẬT TỬ TẠI GIA  
TRONG KINH THI CA LA VIỆT)**

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## *Preface*

In Buddhism, 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. Meanwhile, the group of the laity includes Buddhist men and women who do not become monks and nuns who leave home, but lay people live at home with their families. Even though a lay person is not leaving home as a monk or a nun, all sincere Buddhists, including monks, nuns and lay people, 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 man and laywoman, two of the nine classes of disciples, who remain at home and observe the eight commandments. Nine classes of disciples include seven classes of those who left home: a Bhiksu (monk), a Bhiksuni (a female observer of all the commandments), a Siksamana (or a novice nun or observer of the six commandments), a Sramanera (a male observer of the minor commandments), a Junior monk who has received the eight commandments, a Sramanerika or a female observer of the minor commandments, a Junior nun or a novice nun who has received the eight commandments. Two classes of laypeople are those who still remain at home: an Upasaka or a lay man, and an Upasika a lay woman. 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. 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 things, or to be a transgressor.

Knowing that laypeople whose life is still subject to worldly affairs, but have to always devote to follow the Buddha's guidance in their daily life. So, the Buddha provided them more advice in the Sigalaka Sutra. Sigalovada-sutta is the Sutra that the Buddha preached to Sigalovada, son of an elder of Rajagaha, Digha Nikaya 31. The contents of the sutta as follows: Thus, I have heard. Once the Lord was staying at Rajagaha, at the Squirrel's Feeding Place in the Bamboo Grove. And at that time, Sigalaka the householder's son, having got up early and gone out of Rajagaha, was paying homage, with wet clothes and hair and with joined palms, to the different directions: to the east, the south, the west, the north, the nadir and the zenith. Taking this opportunity, the Buddha also lectured on the four defilements of action that should be eliminated. He also expounded on five basic precepts in Buddhism; on the harm of three poisons of desire-anger-ignorance and fear; ways of wasting one's substance; dangers attached to addiction to strong drinks and sloth-producing drugs; dangers attached to haunting the streets at unfitting time; dangers attached to keeping bad company; dangers attached to idleness. Last but not least, the Buddha emphasized: "Those who are your friends in need, they alone are friends indeed." In short, through the Sigalaka Sutra, the Buddha did point out the way to one who had got lost or to bring an oil-lamp into a dark place, so that those with eyes could see what was there. Just so the Reverend Gotama has expounded the Dharma in various ways

Devout Buddhists, especially lay people, should always remember that 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. According to Buddhism, 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 the Buddha's advice 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. This little book titled “The Buddha's Advice to Lay People in the Sigalaka Sutra” is not a profound and detailed study of methods of cultivation for lay people, but a book that only summarizes on some typical kinds of advice from the Buddha, as well as in some other Buddhist scriptures. The journey leading to enlightenment demands continuous efforts with right understanding and practice. Meanwhile, the path from enlightenment to emancipation is an extremely difficult one, and it is not easy to do at all. Presently even with so many books available on Buddhism, I venture to compose this booklet titled “The Buddha's Advice to Lay People in the Sigalaka Sutra” in Vietnamese and English to spread basic things in Buddhism 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.

Thiện Phúc





## *Chapter One*

### *Summaries 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. Summaries of the Very Cores 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 undescribable 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.

#### ***IV. Buddhist Cosmology & Outlook On Life:***

***Buddhist Cosmology:*** According to the Buddhist view on the universe, the universe is infinite. However, if we speak about the formation of our world system, we can speak about the formation process as follows: "In terms of elements that form the universe, wind is the first one. Its basis is space. Then the wind moves, and in dependence on the moving of the wind, heat occurs; then moisture, then solidity or earth." Buddhist cosmology not only takes into account the existence of innumerable systems of worlds grouped into what we should call galaxies, but has equally vast conceptions of cosmic time. The Buddha proclaimed that on the highest level of understanding the entire cosmos is the original pure mind. However, on the ordinary level of understanding he painted a picture of a cosmos filled with countless world systems where countless of living beings of every sort reside. Thus, our world system is not the only unique or the only one world system in the universe. Other world systems also have their Buddhas who also teach the path of enlightenment. The most ancient Buddhist texts speak of the various phases in the evolution and devolution over enormous time-periods of these galaxies, how they gradually formed and how after a period of relative stability during which life may be found on their worlds, how, inevitably having come into existence, they must in due course decline and go to destruction. All this is the working of processes, one vent leading quite naturally to another. As you know that although the Buddha discovered the presence of numerous Gods throughout the universe, he never tried to diminish the importance of the God worshipped by the people of his time. He simply preached the truth and that truth does not affect the importance of any Gods.

Similarly, the fact that there are numerous suns in the universe does not diminish the importance of the sun of our solar system, for our sun continues to provide us with light every day. To some other religions, Gods can be very powerful compared to human beings, but to Buddhism, they are still not free from sufferings and afflictions, and they can still be very angry. The life of Gods may be very long, but not eternal as many other religions believe.

Outlook on life and universe has been discussed by a lot of famous scholars in the world. Examination of the origin or nature of life and universe is the task of the metaphysic experts. This problem has a very important position in philosophy. It was examined from the beginning of the Egyptian, Indian and Chinese civilizations. This book is designed to give you only an overview of the Buddhist cosmology. Buddhist cosmology not only takes into account the existence of innumerable systems of worlds grouped into what we should call galaxies, but has equally vast conceptions of cosmic time. According to Buddhist cosmology, the earth goes through periodic cycles. In some of the cycles it improves, in others it degenerates. The average age of a man is an index of the quality of the period in which the person lives. It may vary between 10 years and many hundreds of thousands of years. At the time of Sakyamuni Buddha, the average life-span was 100 years. After him, the world becomes more depraved, and the life of man shortens. The peak of sin and misery will be reached when the average life has fallen to 10 years. The Dharma of Sakyamuni Buddha will then be completely forgotten. But after that the upward swing begins again. When the life of man reaches 80,000 years, Maitreya Buddha from the Tusita Heaven will appear on the earth. Besides, the most ancient Buddhist texts speak of the various phases in the evolution and devolution over enormous time-periods of these galaxies, how they gradually formed and how after a period of relative stability during which life may be found on their worlds, how, inevitably having come into existence, they must in due course decline and go to destruction. All this is the working of processes, one vent leading quite naturally to another. The Buddha was the Teacher who discovered the real nature of the universal cosmic law and advised us to live in accordance with this law. The Buddha confirmed that it is impossible for anyone to escape from such cosmic laws by praying to an almighty god, because

this universal law is unbiased. However, the Buddha has taught us how to stop bad practices by increasing good deeds, and training the mind to eradicate evil thoughts. According to the Buddha, a man can even become a god if he leads a decent and righteous way of life regardless of his religious belief. It is to say a man someday can obtain peace, mindfulness, wisdom and liberation if he is willing to cultivate to perfect himself. The Buddha Sakyamuni himself realized the Noble Truths, considered all metaphysical questions are empty. He often kept silent and gave no answers to such metaphysical questions, because for Him, those questions do not realistically relate to the purpose of Buddhists, the purpose of all Buddhists is the final freedom. According to the Buddha, how can a man know what the universe really is when he cannot understand who he really is? Therefore, the Buddha taught: "The practical way for a man is turning back to himself and seeing where and who he is and what he is doing so that he can overcome the destruction of all hindrances to the truth of all things. That is to say, he has to cultivate to purify his body and mind." For the universe, the Buddha declared that the material world is formed by the Four Great Elements as many Indian thinkers before Him did. These are Earth element, Water element, Fire element and Air element. These elements are dynamic and impermanent, therefore, all existing things compounded by them must be impermanent too. The problem about the origin of the four elements becomes completely senseless to the truth of Dependent Origination which was discovered and taught by the Buddha.

***Buddhist Outlook On Life:*** It is wrong to imagine that the Buddhist outlook on life and the world is a gloomy one, and that the Buddhist is in low spirit. Far from it, a Buddhist smiles as he walks through life. He who understands the true nature of life is the happiest individual, for he is not upset by the evanescent (extremely small) nature of things. He tries to see things as they are, and not as they seem to be. Conflicts arise in man when he is confronted with the facts of life such as aging, illness, death and so forth, but frustration and disappointment do not vex him when he is ready to face them with a brave heart. This view of life is neither pessimistic nor optimistic, but the realistic view. The man who ignores the principle of unrest in things, the intrinsic nature of suffering, is upset when confronted with the vicissitudes of life. Man's

recognition of pleasures as lasting, leads to much vexation, when things occur quite contrary to his expectations. It is therefore necessary to cultivate a detached outlook towards life and things pertaining to life. Detachment can not bring about frustration, disappointment and mental torment, because there is no clinging to one thing and another, but letting go. This indeed is not easy, but it is the sure remedy for controlling, if not eradicating, unsatisfactoriness. The Buddha sees suffering as suffering, and happiness as happiness, and explains that all cosmic pleasure, like all other conditioned attachings, is evanescent, is a passing show. He warns man against attaching too much importance to fleeting pleasures, for they sooner or later beget discontent. Equanimity is the best antidote for both pessimism and optimism. Equanimity is evenness of mind and not sullen indifference. It is the result of a calm, concentrated mind. It is hard, indeed, to be undisturbed when touched by the realities of life, but the man who cultivates truth is not upset. Absolute happiness can not be derived from things conditioned and compounded. What we hug in great glee this moment, turns into a source of dissatisfaction the next moment. Pleasures are short-lived, and never lasting. The mere gratification of the sense faculties we call pleasure and enjoyment, but in the absolute sense of the world such gratification is not happy. Joy too is suffering, unsatisfactory; for it is transient. If we with our inner eye try to see things in their proper perspective, in their true light, we will be able to realize that the world is but an illusion that leads astray the beings who cling to it. All the so-called mundane pleasures are fleeting, and only an introduction to pain. They give temporary relief from life's miserable ulcers. This is what is known as suffering produced by change. Thus, we see that suffering never ceases to work, it functions in some form or other and is always at work.

Regarding all beings in general, Buddhism considers all the living, which includes the vegetable kingdom; however, the term "sattva" limits the meaning to those endowed with reason, consciousness, and feeling. Those who are sentient, sensible, animate, and rational (sentient beings which possess magical and spiritual powers). According to Buddhism, what we call the self is simply the collection of mental facts, experiences, ideas and so forth which would normally be said to belong to self but there is no self over and above the

experiences. So mentioned does not mean that people are not important. In fact, Buddhism which preached by the Buddha is totally built on human wisdom. The Buddha taught: “Be your own torch, your own refuge. Do not seek refuge in any other person.” The Buddha added: “I am the Buddha fully realized, sentient beings will become Buddha.” To Buddhism, all realizations come from effort and intelligence that derive from one’s own experience. The Buddha asked his disciples to be the master of their destiny, since they can make their lives better or worse. They can even become Buddha if they study and practice his teachings.

Regarding the point of view on Human Beings and Deva Vehicle, according to the Mahayana, rebirth among men conveyed by observing the five commandments (Panca-veramani). However, there are many differences on human destinies in the world. For example, one is inferior and another superior, one perishes in infancy and another lives much longer, one is sick and infirm and another strong and healthy, one is brought up in luxury and another in misery, one is born a millionaire and another in poverty, one is a genius and another an idiot, etc. According to the Buddhist point of view on human life, all of the above mentioned results are not the results of a “chance.” Science nowadays is indeed against the theory of “chance.” All scientists agree on the Law of Cause and Effect, so do Buddhists. Sincere and devoted Buddhists never believe that the unevenness of the world is due to a so-called Creator and/or God. Buddhists never believe that happiness or pain or neutral feeling the person experiences are due to the creation of a Supreme Creator. According to the Buddhist point of view on human life, the above mentioned unevenness that exists in the world are due to the heredity and environment, and to a greater extent, to a cause or causes which are not only present but proximate or remotely past. Man himself is responsible for his own happiness and misery. He creates his own heaven and hell. He is the master of his own destiny. He is his own child of his past and his own parents of his future. Regarding the point of view on Deva, this is only one of the five vehicles, the deva vehicle or Divine Vehicle. It transports observers of the ten good qualities (thập thiện) to one of the six deva realms of desire, and those who observe dhyana meditation to the higher heavens of form and non-form. Sentient beings are to be reborn among the deva

by observing the ten forms of good actions or Ten Commandments (Dasa-kusala).

Regarding the point of view on the Kaya and Citta, Buddhism talks about the theory of impermanence of the body and mind. 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 society's. 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. 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.

According to the Vimalakirti Sutra, Manjusri Bodhisattva obeyed the Buddha's command to call on Upasaka Vimalakirti to enquire after his health, there was a conversation about the "body". Manjusri asked

Vimalakirti: “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.” Manjusri, a sick Bodhisattva should look into all things in this way. He should further meditate on his body which is impermanent, is subject to suffering and is non-existent and egoless; this is called wisdom. Although his body is sick he remains in (the realm of) birth and death for the benefit of all (living beings) without complaint; this is called expedient method (upaya). Manjusri! He should further meditate on the body which is inseparable from illness and on illness which is inherent in the body because sickness and the body are neither new nor old; this is called wisdom. The body, though ill, is not to be annihilated; this is the expedient method (for remaining in the world to work for salvation).

Regarding the point of view on the impurity of the Kaya and the Citta. 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 misleads 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.”

Here is another point of view of the Buddhism on the Kaya is “It is difficult to be reborn as a human being”. Of all precious jewels, life is the greatest; if there is life, it is the priceless jewel. Thus, if you are able to maintain your livelihood, someday you will be able to rebuild your life. However, 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 lightening streaking across the sky, like a flower’s blossom, like the image of the moon at the bottom of a lake, like a short breath, what is really eternal? Sincere Buddhists should always remember when a person is born, not a single dime is brought along; therefore, when death arrives, not a word will be taken either. A lifetime of work, putting the body through pain and torture in order to accumulate wealth and possessions, in the end everything is worthless and futile in the midst of birth, old age, sickness, and death. After death, all possessions are given to others in a most senseless and pitiful manner. At such time, there are not even a few good merits for the soul to rely and lean on for the next life. Therefore, such an individual will be condemned into the three evil paths immediately. Ancient sages taught: “A steel tree of a thousand years once again blossom, such a thing is still not bewildering; but once a human body has been lost, ten thousand reincarnations may not return.” Sincere Buddhists should always remember what the Buddha taught: “It is difficult to be reborn as a human being, it is difficult to encounter (meet or learn) the Buddha-dharma; now we have been reborn as a human being and encountered the Buddha-dharma, if we let the time passes by in vain we waste our scarce lifespan.”



## *Chapter Two*

### *Summaries of Cultivation in Buddhism*

#### *I. An Overview of Cultivation in Buddhism*

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!

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 foretell 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.

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.

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. In Buddhist Point of View: 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.

#### ***IV. Moderation in Cultivation:***

According to Zen Master Achan Chah in “A Still Forest Pool,” there are three basic points of practice to work with are sense restraint, which means taking care not to indulge and attach to sensations; moderation in eating; and wakefulness. The first moderation is the sense restraint. We can easily recognize physical irregularities, such as blindness, deafness, deformed limbs, but irregularities of mind are another matter. When you begin to meditate, you see things differently. You can see the mental distortions that formerly seemed normal, and you can see danger where you did not see it before. This brings sense restraint. You become sensitive, like one who enters a forest or jungle and becomes aware of danger from poisonous creatures, thorns, and so forth. One with a raw wound is likewise more aware of danger from flies. For one who meditates, the danger is from sense objects. Sense restraint is thus necessary; in fact, it is the highest kind of virtue. The second Moderation is moderation in Eating. It is difficult to eat little or in moderation. Let learn to eat with mindfulness and sensitivity to our needs, learn to distinguish needs from desires. Training the body is not in itself self-torment. Going without sleep or

without food may seem extreme at times. We must be willing to resist laziness and defilement, to stir them up and watch them. Once these are understood, such practices are no longer necessary. This is why we should eat, sleep, and talk little, for the purpose of opposing our desires and making them reveal themselves. According to the Sekha Sutta in the Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha, the Buddha confirmed his noble disciples on moderating in eating includes reflecting wisely when taking food, not for amusement, not for intoxication, not for the sake of physical beauty and attractiveness, only for the endurance and continuance of this body, for enduring discomfort, and for assisting the holy life. Considering: “Thus I shall terminate old feelings without arousing new feelings and I shall be healthy and blameless and shall live in comfort.” According to the Dharmapada Sutra, verse 325, the Buddha taught: “The stupid one, who is torpid, gluttonous, sleepy and rolls about lying like a hog nourished on pig-wash, that fool finds rebirth again and again.” The third moderation is the wakefulness. To establish wakefulness, effort is required constantly, not just when we feel diligent. Even if we meditate all night at times, it is not correct practice if at other times we still follow our laziness. You should constantly watch over the mind of a child, protect it from its own foolishness, teach it what is right. It is incorrect to think that at certain times we do not have the opportunity to meditate. We must constantly make the effort to know ourselves; it is as necessary as our breathing, which continues in all situations. If we do not like certain activities, such as chanting or working, and give up on them as meditation, we will never learn wakefulness.

#### ***V. Cultivation ” Is Not A One-Day Affair:***

People who cultivate should not be rush, thinking that we can cultivate today and become enlightened tomorrow. It is not tha easy. We must train and cultivate everyday. As long as we do not retreat, do not worry too much about progress we are making. If each day we have less and less random thoughts, less and less lust, anger and ignorance, then we are making progress. We cultivate to eliminate our bad habits and faults, cast out our defiled thoughts, and reveal our wisdom. The wisdom that each one of us once possessed, but it has been covered up by ignorance. Cultivation is not a one-day affair. We should cultivate in



thought after thought, from morning to night, month after month, and year after year with unchanging perseverance. And above all, we should cultivate sincerely every day. As we practice, we should remain calm whether we encounter demonic obstacles, adverse situations, or even favorable situations. We should maintain our vigor in both adversity and favorable situations, and we should think that all things seem to be proclaiming the wonderful dharma to us. Sincere cultivators should always remember that we are trying to reach the transcendental dharma within worldly affairs. Thus, nothing will confuse us. No situations will obstruct us. The reasons why we have been backsliding instead of advancing: when we encounter good conditions, we hesitate and feel unsure ourselves; when meeting evil conditions, we follow right along. Thus, we continue to linger on birth and death, and rebirth. We are born muddled, died confused, and do not know what we are doing, cannot figure out what life is all about.

#### ***VI. Rejection of Means of Life or Rejection of Pleasures?:***

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.

***VII.Cultivation Is As Lute Strings Turned Between Slack and Taut:***

No matter how busy you are, if you believe that you need be mindful in every activity, Buddhist practitioners should perform your daily activities in a slow, calm, and relaxing manner. The ancient said: “Don’t worry, everything will pass.” Look at monks and Nuns, no matter what task or motion they undertake, i.e., walking, standing, sitting or lying, they do it slowly and evenly, without reluctance. When they need to speak, they speak; when they don’t need to speak, they don’t. The most important thing is the sincere observation of Buddhist rules. Sincere Buddhists should not follow a kind of exaggerated, frivolous attitude towards the training and discipline of Zen. It comes about, for example, when someone, based on the mere thought that he is already Buddha, comes to the conclusion that he need not concern himself with practice, a disciplined life, or enlightenment. This is an attitude can lead to a misunderstanding to the method of cultivation, particularly of the teaching of the Tao-Tung School of Zen. According to the Sutra in Forty-Two Sections, Chapter 34, 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 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.” Remember our mind is easy to set great effort but is also easily prone to retrogression; once hearing the dharma and advice, we bravely advance with our great efforts, but when we encounter obstacles, we not only grow lax and lazy retrogression, but also change our direction and sometimes fall into heterodox ways. Sincere Buddhists should always have Diligent Cultivation and stay away from this thinking “In the first year of cultivation, the Buddha stands right before our eyes; the second year he has already returned to the West; third year if someone inquires about the Buddha or request recitations, payment is required before a few words are spoken or a few verses recited”.

### ***VIII. 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 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.

Devout Buddhists should always remember that the three realms of Desire, Form and Formless realms scorching sentient beings, such sufferings are limitless. The triple worlds as a burning house. In the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha taught: “The three worlds are unsafe, much like a house on fire. Suffering is all pervasive, truly deserving to be terrified and frightened.”

Sentient beings in the three worlds, especially those in the Saha World, are hampered constantly by afflictions and sufferings. 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. The burning house, one of the seven parables in the Wonder Lotus sutra, from which the owner tempts his heedless children by the device of the three kinds of carts (goat, deer and bullock), especially the white bullock cart. The three realms of Desire, Form and Formless realms scorching sentient beings, such sufferings are limitless. The triple worlds as a burning house. In the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha taught: “The three worlds are unsafe, much like a house on fire. Suffering is all pervasive, truly deserving to be terrified and frightened.” Sentient beings in the three worlds, especially those in the Saha World, are hampered constantly by afflictions and sufferings. 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. Societies are filled with robberies, murders, rapes, frauds, deceptions, etc. All these continue without any foreseeable end. To speak of our individual mind, everyone is burdened with worries, sadness, depression, and anxieties, etc. In the Dharmapada Sutra, verse 146, the Buddha taught: “How can there be laughter, how can there be joy, when the whole world is burnt by the flames of passions and ignorance? When you are living in darkness, why wouldn’t you seek the light?”

The Buddhist teaching about time is closely related to the doctrine of impermanence. In other words, time waits for no one. According to Buddhism, time is moving ceaselessly. It is ungraspable. The concept of the speed of time changes in different situations, it is relative to our state of mind. It passes more quickly when we are happy and less quickly when we are unhappy and afflictive. To Buddhists, a day in which no meritorious deeds nor meditation can be achieved is a lost day. That is equivalent with going towards your own tomb with ignorance. Practitioners of Buddha recitation should maximize all the time that we have to practice, and always remember that the intermediate goal of cultivation in Buddhism is to achieve one-pointed mind; from one-pointed mind gradually one can see one’s own nature or to achieve the ultimate goal of Buddhahood.

## *Chapter Three*

### *Summaries of Lay People*

#### *I. An Overview of Lay Buddhists:*

Lay man and laywoman, two of the nine classes of disciples, who remain at home and observe the eight commandments. Nine classes of disciples include seven classes of those who left home: a Bhiksu (monk), a Bhiksuni (a female observer of all the commandments), a Siksamana (or a novice nun or observer of the six commandments), a Sramanera (a male observer of the minor commandments), a Junior monk who has received the eight commandments, a Sramanerika or a female observer of the minor commandments, a Junior nun or a novice nun who has received the eight commandments. Two classes of laypeople are those who still remain at home: an Upasaka or a lay man, and an Upasika a lay woman. 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. 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 things, 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.

Lay people believe and accept Buddhism as their religion. They studie, disseminate and endeavor 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 Dhammapada, 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.

At the time of the Buddha, He set out five precepts to help them to have more peace, mindfulness and happiness in their daily life. 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. 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.

## ***II. To Become Devout Buddhists:***

Buddhist is the one who believes in the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. One who accepts Buddhism as his or her 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.

A devoted (good) Buddhist, besides 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 round 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 promises 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, and 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, harboring 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 attheal 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, devout Buddhists should always remember that 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 enjoys. 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 thousand 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.”

### ***III. Buddhists Always Believe in Cause and Effect:***

Law of cause and effect or the relation between cause and effect in the sense of the Buddhist law of “Karma”. 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. 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. Buddhist practitioners should also always understand that the cause has result as its cause, while the result has the cause as its result. It is like planting seeds; the seeds produce fruit, the fruit produces seeds. The law of karma and its retribution permeates all three life spans: immediate retributions, rebirth retributions (next life retributions), and future retributions.

Some people believe in Christianity, and according to the Christian, the theistic position that man’s destiny is basically determined for him by God. God determines if a man deserves heaven or hell; he may even decide each man’s earthly destiny. Some other people believe in fatalism that each of us

has a fate which we cannot change and about which we can do nothing. They believe that 'Whatever will be will be.' In this philosophy the agent that determines destiny is not a God, but rather a mysterious impersonal power called 'Fate' which transcend our understanding. Still some other people believe the exact opposite, they believe in indeterminism: everything happens by accident. They believe that if man is lucky, he will achieve happiness or success; if he is unlucky, he will suffer or fail, but whatever he receives, he receives not through any process of determination but by accident, by sheer coincidence. In Christianity, the Christian worships God and prays to Him in order to obtain forgiveness from the results his evil actions hold out for him. Buddhism differs from Christianity in that it sees the root cause of all evil in "ignorance" and not in "sin", in an act of intellectual misapprehension and not in an act of volition and rebellion. As a practical definition of ignorance, we are offered the four perverted views which make us seek for permanence in what is inherently impermanent, ease in what is inseparable from suffering, selfhood in what is not linked to any self, and delight in what is essentially repulsive and disgusting. According to the Karma Law in Buddhism, the present is a shadow of the past, the future a shadow of the present. Hence our action in the present is most important, for what we do in the present determines the course of our future development. For this reason, Zen practitioners should always apply their minds to the present so that they may advance on the way. According to the Buddhist doctrine of rebirth, the causal relation between action and its results holds not only with regard to the present life but also with regard to past and future lives. This universal law of cause and effect is non-negotiable. Just as we cannot run away from our own shadows, so we cannot run away from the results of our actions. They will pursue us no matter where we hide. Besides, the Buddha also taught that negative or unwholesome mind creates negative or unwholesome thoughts (anger, hatred, harmful thoughts, wrong views, etc), speech (lying, harsh speech, double-tongued, etc), as well as deeds which are the causes of our sufferings, confusion and misery. Unwholesome or negative mind will destroy our inner peace and tranquility.

Catholicism contradicts itself with the words in the Bible: "Ye shall reap what ye shall sow" and the theory of forgiveness through the grace of Christ or God. The sentence "Reap what you sow" is precisely in accordance with the natural law of karma, while the grace of forgiveness completely denies this law. But in Buddhism, no one can forgive a person for his transgression. If he commits an evil deed, he has to reap the bad consequences, for all is governed by universal law and not by any arbitrary creator. According to Buddhism, the pain or pleasure resulting in this life from the practices or causes and retributions of a previous life. Therefore, ancient virtues said: "If we wish to

know what our lives were like in the past, just look at the retributions we are experiencing currently in this life. If we wish to know what retributions will happen to us in the future, just look and examine the actions we have created or are creating in this life.” If we understand clearly this theory, then in our daily activities, sincere Buddhists are able to avoid unwholesome deeds and practice wholesome deeds. Every action which is a cause will have a result or an effect. Likewise, every resultant action has its cause. The law of cause and effect is a fundamental concept within Buddhism governing all situation. Buddhists believe in a just rational of karma that operates automatically and speak in terms of cause and effect instead of rewards and punishments. Every action which is a cause will have a result or an effect. Likewise every resultant action has its cause. The law of cause and effect is a fundamental concept within Buddhism governing all situation. Buddhists believe in a just rational of karma that operates automatically and speak in terms of cause and effect instead of rewards and punishments. It’s a fundamental principle for all living beings and all things that if one sows good deeds, he will surely reap a good harvest; if he sows bad deeds, he must inevitably reap a bad harvest. Though the results may appear quickly or slowly, everyone will be sure to receive the results that accord with their actions. Anyone who has deeply understood this principle will never do evil.

According to Buddhism, 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.

According to Nagarjuna in the *Madhyamaka Sastra*, there are four views about causality. *First, the theory of self-becoming*: This means that the cause and effect are identical, that things are produced out of themselves. Nagarjuna had evidently in view the *Satkaryavada* of *Samkhya* while criticizing the autogenous theory of causality. The *Madhyamika*'s criticism of this theory may be summarized thus: (i) If the effect is already present in the cause, no purpose would be served by its re-production. The *Samkhya* may say that though the effect may be present in the cause, its manifestation is something new. This, however, does not mean that the effect is a new substance. It only means that it is a new form or state goes against the identity of the underlying substratum; (ii) If it is said that the cause is partly actual, and partly potential, it would amount to accepting opposed natures in one and the same thing. If the cause is wholly potential, it cannot by itself become actual without an extraneous aid. The oil cannot be got out of the seed, unless it is pressed by a crusher. If it has to depend on an external aid, then there is no 'self-production' (*svata-utpattih*); (iii) If the cause and effect are identical, it would be impossible to distinguish one as the producer of the other. The identity view of cause and effect is, therefore, troubled itself with self-contradiction. *Second, production from another (Parata-Utpattih)*: This means that the cause and effect are different. This view is known as "*Asatkaryavada*." This was held by the *Sarvastivadins* and *Sautrantikas* or the *Hinayanists* in general. Nagarjuna had obviously these in view while criticizing this heterogeneous view of causality. His criticism of this view makes out the following important points: (i) If the cause is different from the effect, no relation can subsist between the two. In what case anything can be produced from anything. (ii) The *Hinayanist* believed that with the production of the effect the course ceased to exist. But 'ex-hypothesis' causality is a relation between two. Unless the cause and effect co-exist, they cannot be related. If they cannot be related, causality becomes meaningless. (iii) The *Hinayanist* believed that the



effect is produced by a combination of factors. Now for the co-ordination of these factors, another factor would be required, and again for the co-ordination of the additional factor with the previous one, another factor be required. This would lead to a 'regressus ad infinitum'. *Third, production from both "itself and another" (Duabhyam-Utpattih):* This theory believes that the effect is both identical with and different from the cause. This is a combination of both Satkaryavada and Asatkaruavada, and so contains the inconsistencies of both. Besides this would invest the real with two opposed characters (identity and difference) at one and the same time. *Fourth, production without any cause or production by chance (Ahetutah-Utpattih):* This theory maintains that things are produced without a cause, or produced by chance. The Naturalists and Sceptics (Svabhavaadins) believed in such a theory. If no reason is assigned for the theory, it amounts to sheer, perverse dogmatism. If a reason is assigned, it amounts to accepting a cause.

#### ***IV. Buddhists Always Believe In Karma and Retributions:***

"Karma" is a Sanskrit term which means "Action, good or bad," including attachments, aversions, defilements, anger, jealousy, etc. Karma is created (formed) by that being's conceptions (samskara). This potential directs one behavior and steers the motives for all present and future deeds. In Buddhism, karma arises from three factors: body, speech and mind. For instance, when you are speaking, you create a verbal act. When you do something, you create a physical act. And when you are thinking, you may create some mental actions. Mental actions are actions that have no physical or verbal manifestations. Buddhist ethical theory is primarily with volitional actions, that is, those actions that result from deliberate choice for such actions set in motion a series of events that inevitably produce concordant results. These results may be either pleasant or unpleasant, depending on the original votion. In some cases the results of actions are experienced immediately, and in others they are only manifested at a later time. Some karmic results do not accrue (dồn lại) until a future life. Karmas are actions that lead to both immediate and long range results. All good and evil actions taken while living. Action and appropriate result of action. Karma is not limited by time or space. An individual is coming into physical life with a karma (character and environment resulting from his action in the past). Briefly, "karma" means "deed." It is produced by all deeds we do. Any deed is invariably accompanied by a result. All that we are at the present moment is the result of the karma that we have produced in the past. Karma is complex and serious. Our deeds, however trifling, leave traces physically, mentally, and environmentally. The traces left in our minds include memory, knowledge,

habit, intelligence, and character. They are produced by the accumulation of our experiences and deeds over a long period of time. The traces that our deeds leave on our body can be seen easily, but only part of traces in our minds remain on the surface of our mind, the rest of them are hidden depths of our minds, or sunk in the subconscious mind. This is the complexity and seriousness of the Karma.

Karma-reward means the retribution of karma (good or evil). However, according to the Hua-Yen sect, the body of karmaic retribution, especially that assumed by a bodhisattva to accord with the conditions of those he seeks to save. 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 accumulated by the Alayavijnana and Manas. 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. Sensei Pat Enkyo O'Hara wrote in Village Zen: "If you talk about karma in terms of the Eightfold Path, the first grouping is Right Speech, Action, Livelihood: It's very clear to think of karma as action, as what happens. But when you consider Right Thought, karma is very subtle because it's internal: Karma starts with the thought pattern and has an effect right inside your mind. If you say something, it clearly affects the people around you. Any thought that you have is going to affect you, so the karma is internal, but it will eventually affect others around you because it has affected you. Thus, a Zen student is living some of her teacher's karma, and so too all the way back to Bodhidharma and the Buddha. Their karma is what we're living out. So what's karma? It's not just what you hold in your personal life. It's what has happened in the world. That means that you can think of your

personal life as the world, and you can begin to see that you are interconnected with the universe."

The karma should be understood as becoming. The karma-process becoming in brief is both volition also and the states covetousness, etc., associated with the volition and reckoned as karma too. Karma-process becoming consists of the formation of merit, the formation of demerit, the formation of the imperturbable, either with a small (limited) plane or with a large plane. All karmas that lead to becoming are called karma-process becoming. Karmic process is the energy that out of a present life conditions a future life in unending sequence. In this process there is nothing that passes or transmigrates from one life to another. It is only a movement that continues unbroken. The being who passes away here and takes birth elsewhere is neither the same person nor a totally different one. There is the last moment of consciousness (*cuti-citta* or *vinnana*) belonging to the immediately previous life; immediately next, upon the cessation of that consciousness, but conditioned by it, there arises the first moment of consciousness of the present birth which is called a relinking or rebirth-consciousness (*patibandhi-vinnana*). Similarly, the last thought-moment in this life conditions the first thought-moment in the next. In this way consciousness comes into being and passes away yielding place to new consciousness. Thus, this perpetual stream of consciousness goes on until existence ceases. Existence in a way is consciousness, the will to live, to continue. The power of karma is the strength of karma which will produce good or evil fruit. Karmic power is the strength of karma. It is similar to a debt collector. There are many different strong and weak debt collectors. When we die, our consciousness will be taken by the strongest and greatest debt collector. Though karma was simply defined as deeds, in reality karma implies the accumulation of all our experiences and deeds since the birth of mankind, and since even before that time. Even things that the human race experienced hundreds of thousands of years ago remain in the depth of our minds, as do the much stronger influences of the deeds and mental attitudes of our ancestors. The karma of previous existence that Buddhism teaches is still more profound, as it includes the karma that our own life has produced through the repetition of birth and death from the infinite past to the present. The power of karma is the strength of karma which produces good or evil fruit. Karmic power is the strength of karma. It is similar to a debt collector. There are many different strong and weak debt collectors. When we die, our consciousness will be taken by the strongest and greatest debt collector.

Lay people believe that from morning to night, we create karma with our body, with our mouth, and with our mind. In our thoughts, we always think that people are bad. In our mouth, we always talk about other people's rights and

wrongs, tell lies, say indecent things, scold people, backbite, and so on. 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). Karma is neither fatalism nor a doctrine of predetermination. 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. According to the definition of the karma, the past influences the present but does not dominate it, for karma is past as well as present. However, both past and present influence the future. The past is a background against which life goes on from moment to moment. The future is yet to be. Only the present moment exists and the responsibility of using the present moment for good or bad lies with each individual. A karma can be created by body, speech, or mind. There are good karma, evil karma, and indifferent karma. All kinds of karma are accumulated by the Alayavijnana and Manas. 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.

According to Buddhism, a "karma" is not a fate or a destiny; neither is it a simple, unconscious, and involuntary action. On the contrary, it is an intentional, conscious, deliberate, and willful action. Also according to Buddhism, any actions will lead to similar results without any exception. It is to say, "As one sows, so shall one reap." According to one's action, so shall be the fruit. If we do a wholesome action, we will get a wholesome fruit. If we do an unwholesome action, we will get an unwholesome result. Devout Buddhists should try to understand the law of karma. Once we understand that in our own life every action will have a similar and equal reaction, and once we understand that we will experience the effect of that action, we will refrain from committing unwholesome deeds. 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. According to the Buddhist doctrines, every action produces an effect and it is a cause first and effect afterwards. We therefore speak of “Karma” as the “Law of Cause and Effect.” There is no end to the result of an action if there is no end to the Karma. Life in nowadays society, it is extremely difficult for us not to create any karma; however, we should be very careful about our actions, so that their effect will be only good. 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. According to Buddhist doctrines, karma is always just. It neither loves nor hates, neither rewards nor punishes. Karma and Recompense is simply the Law of Cause and Effect. 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.

According to Buddhism, man is the creator of his own life and his own destiny. All the good and bad that comes our way in life is the result of our own actions reacting upon us. Our joys and sorrows are the effects of which our actions, both in the distant and the immediate past, are the causes. And what we do in the present will determine what we become in the future. Since man is the creator of his own life, to enjoy a happy and peaceful life he must be a good creator, that is, he must create good karma. Good karma comes ultimately from a good mind, from a pure and calm mind. The law of karma binds together the past, present, and future lives of an individual through the course of his transmigration. To understand how such a connection is possible between the experiences and actions of an individual in successive lives, we must take a brief look at the Buddhist analysis of consciousness. According to the Buddhist philosophy of consciousness, the Vijnanavada School, there are eight kinds of consciousness. The first five are the eye, ear, nose, tongue and body consciousnesses. These make possible the awareness of the five kinds of external sense data through the five sense-organs. The sixth consciousness is the intellectual consciousness, the faculty of judgment which discerns, compares, and distinguishes the sense-data and ideas. The seventh consciousness, called the manas, is the ego-consciousness, the inward

awareness of oneself as an ego and the clinging to discrimination between oneself and others. Even when the first six kinds of consciousness are not functioning, for example, in deep sleep, the seventh consciousness is still present, and if threatened, this consciousness, through the impulse of self-protection, will cause us to awaken. The eighth consciousness is called Alaya-vijnana, the storehouse-consciousness. Because this consciousness is so deep, it is very difficult to understand. The alaya-vijnana is a repository which stores all the impressions of our deeds and experiences. Everything we see, hear, smell, taste, touch, and do deposits, so to speak, a seed is a nucleus of karmic energy. Since the alaya hoards all the seeds of our past actions, it is the architect of our destiny. Our life and character reflect the seeds in our store-consciousness. If we deposit bad seeds, i.e., perform more evil actions, we will become bad persons. Since Buddhism places ultimate responsibility for our life in our own hands, if we want our hands to mold our life in a better way, we must launch our minds in a better direction, for it is the mind which controls the hands which mold our life. However, sometimes we know someone who is virtuous, gentle, kind, loving and wise, and yet his life is filled with troubles from morning to night. Why is this? What happens to our theory that good acts lead to happiness and bad acts to suffering? To understand this, we must realize that the fruits of karma do not necessarily mature in the same lifetime in which the karma is originally accumulated. Karma may bring about its consequences in the next life or in succeeding lives. If a person was good in a previous life, he may enjoy happiness and prosperity in this life even though his conduct now is bad. And a person who is very virtuous now may still meet a lot of trouble because of bad karma from a past life. It is like planting different kinds of seeds; some will come to flower very fast, others will take a long time, maybe years. The law of cause and effect does not come about at different times, in different forms and at different locations. While some of our experiences are due to karma in the present life, others may be due to karma from previous lives. In the present life, we receive the results of our actions done in past lives as well as in the present. And what we reap in the future will be the result of what we do in the present. The doctrine of karma is not merely a doctrine of cause and effect, but of action and reaction. The doctrine holds that every action willfully performed by an agent, be it of thought, word, or deed, and tends to react upon that agent. The law of karma is a natural law, and its operation cannot be suspended by any power of a deity. Our action brings about their natural results. Recognizing this, Buddhists do not pray to a god for mercy but rather regulate their actions to bring them into harmony with the universal law. If they do evil, they try to discover their mistakes and rectify their ways; and if they do good things, they try to maintain and develop that good. Buddhists

should not worry about the past, but rather be concerned about what we are doing in the present. Instead of running around seeking salvation, we should try to sow good seeds in the present and leave the results to the law of karma. The theory of karma in Buddhism makes man and no one else the architect of his own destiny. From moment to moment we are producing and creating our own destiny through our thought, our speech and our deeds. Thus the ancient said: “Sow a thought and reap an act; sow an act and reap a habit; sow a habit and reap a character; sow a character and reap a destiny.”

The karma that we have now is very deep-rooted and complex, and includes the former karma that human beings have accumulated since their beginning. We also possess the “former karma” that we have produced ourselves in previous existences and to some extent the “former karma” that our ancestors have produced (for those who were born in the same family, from generation to generation, or in the same country, would bear the same kinds of karma to some extent). And of course we possess the “present karma” that we have produced ourselves in this life. Is it possible for an ordinary person to become free from these karmas and enter the mental state of perfect freedom, escape from the world of illusion, by means of his own wisdom? This is clearly out of the question. What then, if anything, can we do about it? All that one has experienced, thought and felt in the past remains in the depths of one’s subconscious mind. Psychologists recognize that the subconscious mind not only exerts a great influence on man’s character and his mental functions but even causes various disorders. Because it is normally beyond our reach, we cannot control the subconscious mind by mere reflection and meditation.

Lay people believe that when we plant a black-pepper seed, black-pepper plant grows and we will reap black-pepper, not oranges. Similarly, when we act positively, happiness follows, not suffering. When we act destructively, misery comes, not happiness. Just as small seed can grow into a huge tree with much fruit, small actions can bring large result. Therefore, we should try to avoid even small negative actions and to create small negative ones. If the cause isn’t created, the result does not occur. If no seed is planted, nothing grows. The person who hasn’t created the cause to be killed, won’t be even if he or she is in a car crash. According to the Buddha, man makes his own destiny. He should not blame anyone for his troubles since he alone is responsible for his own life, for either better or worse. Your difficulties and troubles are actually self-caused. They arise from actions rooted in greed, hatred and delusion. In fact, suffering is the price you pay for craving for existence and sensual pleasures. The price which comes as physical pain and mental agony is a heavy one to pay. It is like paying monthly payment for the brand new Chevrolet Corvette you own. The payment is the physical pain and mental agony you undergo, while the Corvette is your physical body through

which you experience the worldly pleasures of the senses. You have to pay the price for the enjoyment: nothing is really free of charge unfortunately. If we act positively, the happy result will eventually occur. When we do negative actions, the imprints aren't lost even though they may not bring their results immediately. Devout Buddhists should always remember that, "the ocean's water may dry up, mountain may waste away, the actions done in former lives are never lost; on the contrary, they come to fruit though aeons after aeons pass, until at last the debt is paid." Body, speech, and mind all make karma when we cling. We create habits that can make us suffer in the future. This is the fruit of our attachment, of our past defilement. Remember, not only body but also speech and mental action can make conditions for future results. If we did some act of kindness in the past and remember it today, we will be happy, and this happy state of mind is the result of past karma. In other words, all things conditioned by cause, both long-term and moment-to-moment.

According to Buddhist tradition, there are two kinds of karma: intentional karma and unintentional karma. Intentional karma which bears much heavier karma vipaka (phala). Unintentional karma which bears lighter karma vipaka. There are also two other kinds of karma: the wholesome and the unwholesome. Wholesome (good) karma such as giving charity, kind speech, helping others, etc. Unwholesome (bad) karma such as killing, stealing, lying and slandering. According to Prof. Junjiro Takakusu in the *Essentials of Buddhist Philosophy*, there are two kinds of action and action-influence. The first type of karma is the drawing action. Drawing action causes a being to be born as a man, as a deva, or as an animal; no other force can draw a living being into a particular form of life. The second type of karma is the fulfilling action. After the kind of life has been determined, the fulfilling action completes the formal quality of the living being so that it will be a thorough specimen of the kind. There are two kinds of action-influence. The first kind of action-influence is individual action-influence which creates the individual being. Individual action-influence or individual karmas are those actions that sentient beings act individually. The second kind of action-influence is common action-influence creates the universe itself. The common-action-influence karma involved in this world system is not just that of human beings, but of every type of sentient being in the system. Also according to the Buddhist tradition, there are three kinds of karma: action (behavior) of the body, behavior of the speech, and behavior of the mind. There are three other kinds of karma: present life happy karma, present life unhappy karma, and karma of an imperturbable nature. There are still three other kinds of karma: karma of ordinary rebirth, karma of Hinayana Nirvana, and karma of Mahayana Nirvana. There are still three other kinds of karma: good karmas,



bad karmas, and neutral karmas. There are still three other kinds of karma, which also called three stages of karma. The first stage of karma is the past karma. Past karma is the cause for some results (effects) reaped in the present life. The second stage of karma is the present karma with present results. Present karma is the cause for some results (effects) reaped in the present life (present deeds and their consequences in this life). The second stage of karma is the present karma with future results. Present karma (deed) is the cause for some or all results reaped in the next or future lives. Present deeds and their next life consequences (present deeds and consequences after next life).

Though karma was simply defined as deeds, in reality karma implies the accumulation of all our experiences and deeds since the birth of mankind, and since even before that time. The karma of previous existence that Buddhism teaches is still more profound, as it includes the karma that our own life has produced through the repetition of birth and death from the infinite past to the present. While the spiritual power is the power which comes from enlightenment or the right doctrine. In Zen, there is no definite standard by which one can measure the forces of Dharma and of Karma. The critical point is to see whether one can be aware of one's mind-essence in all activities at all times. Here one must know that both the force of Karma and the force of Dharma are illusory. If a man insists on riding himself of Karma and taking Dharma, according to Zen Master Tsung Kao Ta Hui, this man does not understand Buddhism. If he can really destroy Karma, he will find that the Dharma is also unreal. P'ang-Yun said, "Ordinary people are small in courage and narrow in perspective; they always infer that this practice is easy, and that that one is difficult. They do not know that the discriminating mind which deems things to be easy or difficult, is itself the very mind that drags us down into Samsara. If this mind is not uprooted, no liberation is possible." Buddhist practitioners should always remember that the power of karma respect nobody, the talented or the dull. The screen or hindrance of past karmas which hinders the attainment of bodhi (hindrance to the attainment of Bodhi, which rises from the past karma). According to The Mind-Only School, apart from the obstacles caused by external factors, there are three other causes of karmic obstructions. The obstacles of karma is the most serious obstacles in the three types of obstacles for any Buddhist cultivators.

According to the Sangiti Sutta in the Long Discourses of the Buddha, there are four kinds of kamma. The first kind of karma is the black kamma, or evil deeds with black results. The second kind of karma is the bright kamma with bright result. The third kind of karma is the black-and-bright kamma with black-and-bright result. The fourth kind of karma is the kamma that is neither black nor bright, with neither black nor bright result, leading to the destruction of kamma. According to Mahayana Buddhism, there are four kinds of karmas.

The first kind of karma is the accumulated karma, which results from many former lives. The second kind of karma is the repeated karma, which forms during the present life. The third kind of karma is the most dominant karma which is able to subjugate other karmas. The fourth kind of karma is the Near-Death Karma which is very strong. According to the Abhidharma, there are four types of kamma (karma): good karmas, bad karmas, neutral karmas, and karmas in the state of cessation. Especially, karmas in the state of cessation is the state of the activity's having ceased, and this remains in the mental continuum. This state of cessation is an affirming negative, an absence which includes something positive. It is a potency which is not just the mere cessation of the action, but has the capacity of producing an effect in the future. These states of cessation are capable of regenerating moment by moment until an effect is produced. No matter how much time passes, when it meets with the proper conditions, it fructifies or matures. If one has not engaged in a means to cause the potency to be reduced, such as confession and intention of restraint in committing these bad actions again, then these karmas will just remain. There are still four other kinds of karma: productive kamma, supportive kamma, obstructive kamma, and destructive kamma.

When a disciple came to the Buddha penitent over past misdeeds, the Buddha did not promise any forgiveness, for He knew that each must reap the results of the seeds that he had sown. Instead He explained: "If you know that what you have done is wrong and harmful, from now on do not do it again. If you know that what you have done is right and profitable, continue to do it. Destroy bad karma and cultivate good karma. You should realize that what you are in the present is a shadow of what you were in the past, and what you will be in the future is a shadow of what you are now in the present. You should always apply your mind to the present so that you may advance on the way." In the Anguttara Nikaya Sutra, the Buddha taught: "Oh Bhikkhus! Mental volition is what I call action or karma. Having volition one acts by body, speech and thought." In the Dhammapada Sutta, the Buddha taught: "Of all dharmas, mind is the forerunner, mind is chief. We are what we think, we have become what we thought (what we are today came from our thoughts of yesterday). If we speak or act with a deluded mind or evil thoughts, suffering or pain follows us, as the wheel follows the hoof of the draught-ox (Dharmapada 1). Of all dharmas, mind is the forerunner, mind is chief. We are what we

think, we have become what we thought. If we speak or act with a pure mind or thought, happiness and joy follows us, as our own shadow that never leaves (Dharmapada 2). The deed is not well done of which a man must repent, and the reward of which he receives, weeping, with tearful face; one reaps the fruit thereof (Dhammapada 67). The deed is well done when, after having done it, one repents not, and when, with joy and pleasure, one reaps the fruit thereof (Dhammapada 68). As long as the evil deed done does not bear fruit, the fool thinks it is as sweet as honey; but when it ripens, then he comes to grief (Dhammapada 69). Those Arhats whose mind is calm, whose speech and deed are calm. They have also obtained right knowing, they have thus become quiet men (Dhammapada 96). Let's hasten up to do good. Let's restrain our minds from evil thoughts, for the minds of those who are slow in doing good actions delight in evil (Dhammapada 116). If a person commits evil, let him not do it again and again; he should not rejoice therein, sorrow is the outcome of evil (Dhammapada 117). If a person does a meritorious deed, he should do it habitually, he should find pleasures therein, happiness is the outcome of merit (Dhammapada 118). Even an evil-doer sees good deeds as long as evil deed has not yet ripened; but when his evil deed has ripened, then he sees the evil results (Dhammapada 119). Even a good person sees evil as long as his good deed has not yet ripened; but when his good deed has ripened, then he sees the good results (Dhammapada 120). Do not disregard (underestimate) small evil, saying, "It will not matter to me." By the falling of drop by drop, a water-jar is filled; likewise, the fool becomes full of evil, even if he gathers it little by little (Dhammapada 121). Do not disregard small good, saying, "it will not matter to me." Even by the falling of drop by drop, a water-jar is filled; likewise, the wise man, gathers his merit little by little (Dhammapada 122). An evil deed is better not done, a misdeed will bring future suffering. A good deed is better done now, for after doing it one does not grieve (Dhammapada 314). All conditioned things are without a real self. One who perceives this with wisdom, ceases grief and achieves liberation. This is the path of purity." (Dharmapada 279)."

According to the Earth-Store Bodhisattva Sutra, the Earth-Store Bodhisattva advises sentient beings based on their circumstances: "If Earth Store Bodhisattva meets those who take life, he speaks of a

retribution of a short lifespan. If he meets robbers and petty thieves, he speaks of a retribution of poverty and acute suffering. If he meets those who commit sexual misconduct, he speaks of the retribution of being born as pigeons and as mandarin ducks and drakes. If he meets those of harsh speech, he speaks of the retribution of a quarreling family. If he meets slanderers, he speaks of the retribution of a tongueless and cankerous mouth. If he meets those with anger and hatred, he speaks of being ugly and crippled. If he meets those who are stingy, he speaks of frustrated desires. If he meets gluttons, he speaks of the retribution of hunger, thirst and sicknesses (illnesses) of the throat. If he meets those who enjoy hunting, he speaks of a frightening insanity and disastrous fate. If he meets those who rebel against their parents, he speaks of the retribution of being killed in natural disasters. If he meets those who set fire to mountains or forests, he speaks of the retribution of seeking to commit suicide in the confusion of insanity. If he meets malicious parents or step-parents, he speaks of the retribution of being flogged in future lives. If he meets those who net and trap young animals, he speaks of the retribution of being separated from their own children. If he meets those who slander the Triple Jewel, he speaks of the retribution of being blind, deaf or mute. If he meets those who slight the Dharma and regard the teachings with arrogance, he speaks of the retribution of dwelling in the evil paths forever. If he meets those who destroy or misuse possessions of the permanently dwelling, he speaks of the retribution of revolving in the hells for millions of kalpas. If he meets those who defile the pure conduct of others and falsely accuse the Sangha, he speaks of the retribution of an eternity in the animal realm. If he meets those who scald, burn, behead, chop up or otherwise harm living beings, he speaks of the retribution of repayment in kind. If he meets those who violate precepts and the regulations of pure eating, he speaks of the retribution of being born as birds and beasts suffering from hunger and thirst. If he meets those who are arrogant and haughty, he speaks of the retribution of being servile and of low classes. If he meets those whose double-tongued behavior causes dissension and discord, he speaks of retribution of tonguelessness (being mute) and speech impediments. If he meets those of deviant view, he speaks of the retribution of rebirth in the frontier regions.

In short, 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 accumulated by the Alayavijnana and Manas. 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. By understanding and believing in the law of causality, Buddhists, especially lay people, will not become superstitious, or alarmed, and rely passively on heaven authority. We know that our life depends on our karmas. If we truly believe in such a causal mechanism, we strive to accomplish good deeds, which can reduce and alleviate the effect of his bad karmas. If we continue to live a good life, devoting our time and effort to practicing Buddhist teachings, we can eliminate all of our bad karmas. We know that we are the only driving force of our success or failure, so we will be discouraged, put the blame on others, or rely on them. We will put more effort into performing our duties satisfactorily. Realizing the value of the law of causality, we always care for what we think, tell or do in order to avoid bad karma.

#### ***V. Lay People Determine Not to Follow 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. For these above reasons, lay people determine not to ignorantly follow Dead Buddhism!

Although for the enlightened, delusions and enlightenment are not two (non-duality); delusions and enlightenment (delusion and awareness) are fundamentally the same. They are of the one Buddha-nature. They belong to the unity of all things. They are one and undivided truth, the Buddha-truth. They are the non-dual Truth represents No-Self and No-Dharma. However, for us, ordinary people, delusion is delusion and enlightenment is enlightenment. If we are not careful, we will soon become people with vain talk or diffusive trivial reasoning. Devout Buddhist should never Idly talk on inconsequential topics only for amusement wastes our time and others' time. The worst thing is that we can become followers of a dead Buddhism with innumerable superstitions. This is a belief or rite unreasoningly upheld by faith such as venerating the head of tiger, and buffalo, the snake and centipede deities, the Lares, consulting fortuneteller, reading the horoscope, etc. Buddhism means wisdom, therefore, Buddhism never accept superstitions; however, superstitious beliefs and rituals are adopted to decorate a religion in order to attract the multitude. But after some time, the creeper which is planted to decorate the shrine outgrows and outshines the shrine, with the result that religious tenets are relegated to be the background and superstitious beliefs and rituals.

Dead Buddhism appears at temples where there are no monks and nuns who try to cultivate to break or disprove the false and make manifest the right. For Buddhism, refutation is necessary to 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. Lay people should always remember that the truth can be attained only by negation or refutation of wrong views within and without Buddhism, and of errors of followers of Dead Buddhism. 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 Middel Path, which is devoid of name and character is really the way of elucidation of a right view.

Dead Buddhism appears at temples where there are no monks and nuns who try to cultivate with six necessary points of reverent harmony or unity in a monastery or convent. According to the Mahaparinibbana Sutta and Sangiti Sutta, there are six points of reverent harmony or unity in a monastery or convent or Sixfold rules of conduct for monks and nuns in a monastery. *First, Precept Concord:* Moral unity in observing the commandments (Always observing precepts together). A monk who, in public and in private, keeps persistently, unbroken and unaltered those rules of conduct that are spotless, leading to liberation, praised by the wise, unstained and conducive to concentration. *Second, Living Concord:* Bodily unity in form of worship (Always living together in peace). A monk who, in public and in private, shows loving-kindness to their fellows in acts of body. *Third, Idea Concord:* Doctrinal unity in views and explanations (Always discussing and absorbing the dharma together). A monk who, in public and in private, continues in that noble view that leads to liberation, to the utter destruction of suffering. *Fourth, Beneficial Concord:* Economic unity in community of goods, deeds, studies or charity. They share with their virtuous fellows whatever they receive as a rightful gift, including the contents of their alms-bowls, which they do not keep to themselves. *Fifth, Speech Concord:* Oral unity in chanting (never arguing). A monk who, in public and in private, shows loving-kindness to their fellows in acts of speech. *Sixth, Thinking Concord:* Mental unity in faith (Always being happy). A monk who, in public or in private, shows loving-kindness to their fellows in acts of thought.

Lay people should always remember that we need the true guidance from Monks and Nuns very badly for our daily activities and our cultivation, but we do not want to let Monks and Nuns who belong to a so-called Dead Buddhism to destroy our precious body which is difficult to obtain in this world. Lay people should always keep in mind that any temples where Monks and Nuns cannot live and cultivate together with the six points of reverent harmony set up by the Buddha, these temples belong to a so-called Dead Buddhism which any devout Buddhists should stay away. If not, sooner or later, we will take their disharmony to bring back to spread in our own families. Be careful!!!



## *Chapter Four*

### *Lay People's Cultivation*

#### *I. An Overview of Cultivation in Buddhism:*

Leading a religious life or 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!

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 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."

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.

## ***II. The Cultivation and Thoughts of Lay Practitioners:***

According to Buddhism, thoughts and purification of the body and mind play an extremely important role in cultivation; however, in the beginning steps, lay people must take refuge in the triple jewel, and observe the five precepts. 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.

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.

### ***III. Lay People Always Try to Study the Teachings:***

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. Always Maintain A Diligent Cultivation:***

According to Buddhism, “right effort” means to develop a right motive in the mind. The efforts are described as that to destroy such evil as has arisen in the mind, to prevent any more arising; to produce such good as has not yet arisen, and to increase the good which has arisen. Effort in Buddhism implies mental energy and not physical strength. The latter is dominant in animals whereas mental energy is so in man, who must stir up and develop this mental factor in order to check evil and cultivate healthy thoughts. 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.

No matter how busy you are, if you believe that you need be mindful in every activity, Buddhist practitioners, especially lay people, should perform your daily activities in a slow, calm, and relaxing manner. The ancient said: “Don’t worry, everything will pass.” Look at monks and Nuns, no matter what task or motion they undertake, i.e., walking, standing, sitting or lying, they do it slowly and evenly, without reluctance. When they need to speak, they speak; when they don’t need to speak, they don’t. The most important thing is the sincere observation of Buddhist rules. Sincere Buddhists, especially lay people, should not follow a kind of exaggerated, frivolous attitude towards the training and discipline of Zen. It comes about, for example, when someone, based on the mere thought that he is already Buddha, comes to the conclusion that he need not concern himself with practice, a disciplined life, or enlightenment. This is an attitude can lead to a misunderstanding to the method of cultivation, particularly of the teaching of the Tao-Tung School of Zen. According to the Sutra In Forty-Two Sections, Chapter 34, 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 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.” Remember our mind is

easy to set great effort but is also easily prone to retrogression; once hearing the dharma and advice, we bravely advance with our great efforts, but when we encounter obstacles, we not only grow lax and lazy retrogression, but also change our direction and sometimes fall into heterodox ways. Sincere Buddhists should always have Diligent Cultivation and aty away from this thinking “In the first year of cultivation, the Buddha stands right before our eyes; the second year he has already returned to the West; third year if someone inquires about the Buddha or request recitations, payment is required before a few words are spoken or a few verses recited”.

People who cultivate should not be rush, thinking that we can cultivate today and become enlightened tomorrow. It is not tha easy. We must train and cultivate everyday. As long as we do not retreat, do not worry too much about progress we are making. If each day we have less and less random thoughts, less and less lust, anger and ignorance, then we are making progress. We cultivate to eliminate our bad habits and faults, cast out our defiled thoughts, and reveal our wisdom. The wisdom that each one of us once possessed, but it has been covered up by ignorance. Cultivation is not a one-day affair. We should cultivate in thought after thought, from morning to night, month after month, and year after year with unchanging perseverance. And above all, we should cultivate sincerely every day. As we practice, we should remain calm whether we encounter demonic obstacles, adverse situations, or even favorable situations. We should maintain our vigor in both adversity and favorable situations, and we should think that all things seem to be proclaiming the wonderful dharma to us. Sincere cultivators should always remember that we are trying to reach the transcendental dharma within worldly affairs. Thus, nothing will confuse us. No situations will obstruct us. The reasons why we have been backsliding instead of advancing: when we encounter good conditions, we hesitate and feel unsure ourselves; when meeting evil conditions, we follow right along. Thus, we continue to linger on birth and death, and rebirth. We are born muddled, died confused, and do not know what we are doing, cannot figure out what life is all about.

According to Zen Master Thích Nhất Hạnh in the explanation of the sutra on the Eight Realizations of the Great Beings, 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.

## ***V. Lay People Always Have Great Faith in Cultivation:***

### ***Lay People Always Believe That 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. Lay people should always remember that cultivating in accordance with the Buddha's Teachings, if we cannot accomplish a total emancipation, at least we can 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. Devout Buddhist, especially lay people, should always try to transform our karmas just by this simple sentence of the core of Buddhist doctrine: "Do not get involved in evil deeds, do whatever benefits others, always keep the mind pure, that is all the Buddha's teaching."

***Lay People Always Have Great Faith in Cultivation:*** In Buddhism, belief or faith should serve as the foundation, one of the five roots or organs producing a sound moral life. Faith plays an extremely important role in Buddhism. It is one of the Five Roots (Positive Agents) that give rise to other wholesome Dharmas (Faith, Energy, Mindfulness, Concentration, Wisdom). 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 believes 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. Great faith or great root of faith is the first step in the three factors making for success in the cultivation of Zen. When we undertake the practice of Zen, we have to arouse great faith in the capacity of our mind at the very beginning, and we have to maintain this great faith throughout our entire practice of meditation. But the kind of faith called for in Zen Buddhism differs from the kind of faith required in other religions. Other religions demand that we place faith in a supreme being and that we give our assent to various propositions concerning his nature, attributes, and deeds; we can call this kind of faith "faith in others." In contrast, faith in Zen Buddhism means faith in ourselves. According to the Buddha's teaching, every living being has a Buddha nature. We are not yet Buddha because we have not discovered that Buddha nature. The great faith in Buddhism, especially in Zen Buddhism means faith that the Buddha nature is present within us and that by cultivating the Way taught by the Buddha, we can come to a realization of that Buddha nature. To realize our Buddha nature is not easy. It calls for relentless work, a long and difficult struggle within ourselves. Because of its difficulty many people who begin abandon the way; therefore, there are not many Buddhas in the world. This is why faith is so necessary. The first and most important thing is that we believe in our own capacity, that we believe in the seed of enlightenment within us and that we do not abandon this faith no matter how many obstacles, internal or external, we meet on the way. According to Zen Master Thich Thien An in "Zen Philosophy-Zen Practice," we can believe that we have the potential of becoming a Buddha because the Buddha was just a



man like us. He also had red blood and salty tears; his body and mind were not so different from our own. Before his enlightenment, he had passions, worries, conflicts, and doubts. But through meditation he cultivated himself and discovered his Buddha-nature, thereby becoming a Buddha or Enlightened One. Even though we have all kinds of problems, weaknesses, and barriers, we also have the potential to become Buddhas. If we develop this faith and follow it through to the end, there is no barrier so big that it cannot be overcome. Many people say man is created by the environment, but in Buddhism, man creates the environment and himself. Whatever we become as individuals depends upon our own minds. Whatever the world becomes depends upon the collective minds of men. Through the direction of our will, the formative faculty of the mind, we can change the world into a better world and ourselves into better people. According to the Zen Sect, "Samsara is Nirvana and Nirvana is Samsara." 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, full of sufferings and afflictions. A Zen Master said: "Water is of one essence, but if it is drunk by a cow, it becomes milk; while if it is drunk by a snake, it becomes poison." In the same way whether life is blissful or sorrowful depends on our state of mind, not on the world. So we must seek to transform the mind, to bring it into the awakened state, and this requires at the outset great faith, faith in ourselves and in the powers of the mind.

## ***VI. Methods of Cultivation for Lay People:***

Fundamental teachings of the Buddha, i.e. the four truths, the twelve nidanas, the eightfold noble truth, etc. Buddha's sermons (the teaching of the Buddha), practicing methods of cultivation taught by the Buddha leading beings to enlightenment. For Buddhists, "cultivation" means correct our characters and obey the Buddha's teachings. "Cultivation" 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 "Cultivation" 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 Zen practitioners, cultivation only consists in rediscovering one's moral nature, which has been lost (due to one's greed, anger, ignorance, pride, doubt, wrong views, killing, stealing, sexual misconduct and lying). For laypeople, "Cultivation" means to mend your ways, from evil to wholesome (ceasing transgressions and performing good deeds). It is traditional for lay

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 should try to cultivate and attain a self-realization, and never pray to idols. 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. 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. 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. The Buddha did teach his four assemblies a lot of different methods of cultivation. As for lay people, there are some basic methods of cultivation as mentioned below.

***First, Reciting Buddhist Sutras:*** Reciting Buddhist sutras means reflecting the meanings in the sutras, not reciting for the sake of reciting. Some sutras describe the virtues of the Buddha. If we have strong faith, reciting and reflecting on one of these sutras can give us great joy and happiness. If we do

not try to practice what the Buddha taught in the sutras, it is no use to memorize the sutras. Instead of reading sutras that are profound and difficult to practice, we can recite shorter but more practical sutras, such as the Satipatthana Sutta which talks about the benefits we can enjoy through practicing the Dharma. Besides, we can read other sutras that contain inspiring stories of the Sangha, the community of noble ones. Reciting and reflecting on these sutras can fill us with inspiration, which helps lead us to the path of purification. In the Dharmapada Sutra, the Buddha taught: “The heedless man even if he can recite many sacred sutras, but fails to act accordingly; he has no share in the fruits of the monastic life, but is like a cowherd who counts the cows of the master, but has none of his own (Dharmapada 19). Even if a man recites few sutras, but acts in accordance with the teaching, overcoming all lust, hatred and ignorance, with true knowledge and serene mind, clinging to nothing here and hereafter, he shares the fruits of a monastic life (Dharmapada 20). A recitation composed of a thousand words without sense, is no better than one single beneficial word upon hearing which one is immediately pacified (Dharmapada 100). One beneficial line by hearing it one is immediately pacified is better than a thousand verses with words without sense (Dharmapada 101). One single word of the Dharma by hearing it one is immediately pacified, is better than a hundred stanzas, comprising senseless words (Dharmapada 102).”

**Second, Recite Mantras:** The short sutras that contain magical formulas, or mantras. However, when reciting mantras, we must first have a proper and sincere mind. If our mind is not proper, then no matter which mantra we learn, it will be deviant. Generally speaking, sincere Buddhists should always remember that no matter what kind of method of cultivation we are pursuing, not only should our mind be proper, it should also be sincere. It is to say that we must devote our full attention to the method and not being the least bit of casual, sloppy, or careless. Even though demons always want to harm people, genuine cultivators would never harm anyone under any circumstances. On the contrary, we should always want to benefit beings. Sincere Buddhists should always remember that we recite mantras to develop our compassionate mind and make sure that we do not have even the thought of harming others. We do not recite mantras to subdue demons and ghosts or fight people.

Dharani, especially mantra or spell, is emphasized by the Shingon sect. Dharani is a Sanskrit word that means to maintain or preserve the power of wisdom or knowledge. Able to hold on of the good so that it cannot be lost, and likewise of the evil so that it cannot arise. “Dharani” also means “uniting and upholding”, because it unites all dharmas and upholds limitless meanings. All dharmas originate from this source. Dharani is also a synonyme for “mantra”. Dharani is a Sanskrit word, interpreted to mean ‘unite and hold.’

Dharani is sometimes called mantras, unite all dharmas and hold limitless meanings. They are the chief or the head of all dharmas. A verse of mystical syllables, abbreviation of a sutra to its essential elements (short sutra that contains magical formulas comprised of syllables of symbolic content or mantra). An invocation, usually longer than a Mantram which has magical powers in its recitations. Mantras are mystical or magical formulas employed in Tantric Buddhism (mantras of the esoteric vehicle, or Diamond vehicle). In Lamaism dharani consist of sets of Tibetan words connected with Sanskrit syllables. Entire control or absolute control over good and evil passions and influences. Maintain or preserve the power of wisdom or knowledge. Able to hold on of the good so that it cannot be lost, and likewise of the evil so that it cannot arise. Dharani: Dharani, especially mantra or spell, is emphasized by the Shingon sect. Mantras are magical formulas, or mystic forms of prayer, or spells of Tantric order, often in Sanskrit, found in China as early as the third century A.D.; they form a portion of the Dharanipitaka; made popular chiefly through the Yogacharya or esoteric school.

A Sanskrit term for “Tantra” means “thread.” Tantra also means various kinds of texts, or discourse attributed to Sakyamuni Buddha, but only appeared some time around the seventh century in India. In Tantric school, tantra means secret texts spoken by the Buddha for a specific person and rewritten by his disciples. So “Tantra” means system or continuum of the Buddha’s secret words on spiritual development. In Tantric school, tantra means secret texts spoken by the Buddha for a specific person and rewritten by his disciples. So “Tantra” means system or continuum of the Buddha’s secret words on the spiritual development. The term ‘Mantra’ or ‘Vidya’ is not intended to mean ‘a secret, mysterious lore of magical potency which can be compressed into a magical formula, a spell’. Rather, the term is intended to mean, ‘the knowledge of the Four Holy Truths’ which is fundamental insight of the Buddha. In parallel to ‘The First Turning of the Wheel’ the main subject of which is the Four Holy Truths. Mantra is a secret holy saying or secret teaching of Buddhas whose primary meaning or meanings is not cognitive, but on a spiritual level that transcends ordinary linguistic understanding. Mantra is also used for an incantation, spells, magical formula, muttered sound, or secret words of Buddhas. A magical formula or invocation believed to have magical powers, used in tantric Buddhism in Tibet, a power-laden syllable or series of syllables that carry cosmic forces or energies. “Mantra” is derived from the Sanskrit root “man” which means “to think” or “to imagine.” “Mantras” are designed as tools for focusing the mind through repetition. In certain Tantric Buddhism, continuous repetition of mantras is practiced as a form of meditation (to concentrate energy on an object to create spiritual power). A mystical verse or magical formula, incantation, charm, spell. In Pure Land

sects, Buddhists utilize the mantra “Namo Amitabha Buddha” (Namo Amida Butsu—jap). Mantras are also widely used in Vajrayana traditions. They usually invoke the power of a particular Buddha, and are used both as a meditative aid and as magical spells that are believed to provide protection and worldly benefits. According to the Buddhist tradition, mantras have four benefits for cultivators: help curing an illness, eradicating offenses, producing good things on the path of cultivation, and entering the truth. One should not translate mantra under any form for except the Buddhas and the sages, no one else can really understand the real meaning of the mantra. According to Most Venerable Hsuan-Hua, the saying of a mantra is like the secret password of the military. If the reply is correct, there is no further question, everything will be fine. If the reply is incorrect, one is punished. So we must be very careful.

According to Dharma Master Thich Thien Tam in the *Unisha Vijaja Dharani Sutra*, in all the greatest Dharani of the Buddha, this mantra is the best, unequaled, often eliminating suffering for all sentient beings in all the six realms of existence. According to the *Sutra of the Heart of Great Compassion Mantra*, Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva (Kuan-Yin) said to the Buddha: “Great Honored Teacher! If any sentient being should assiduously recite the Great Compassion Mantra and still descend upon the Three Evil Paths, I vow not to attain Buddhahood. If any practitioner should assiduously recite the Great Compassion Mantra and fail to be reborn in the lands of the Buddhas, I vow not to attain Buddhahood. If any practitioner should assiduously recite the Great Compassion Mantra and not to achieve innumerable samadhis and great eloquence, I vow not to attain Buddhahood. If anyone should assiduously recite the Great Compassion Mantra and not have all wishes and hopes of his present life fulfilled, this dharani cannot be called the Great Compassion Mantra! The only exceptions are wishes which are unwholesome and those made when the Mind is not utterly sincere.” Moreover, practitioners who assiduously recite such dharani as the Thousand-Armed Avalokitesvara Mantra, the Rebirth Mantra, etc. with utmost sincerity, can all be reborn in the Western Pure Land or other pure lands.

According to Tibetan Buddhism, Kalacakra-tantra is one of the most important Indian tantric texts for Tibetan Buddhism. It consists of three parts: inner, outer, and other. The first part discusses the external world. The second part focuses on the psycho-physical world of sentient beings, particularly the mystical physiology of subtle energies called “winds” (prana—skt), and “drops” (bindu—skt), which to through subtle “energy channels” (nadi—skt). The third section is concerned with visualization practices. The Kalacakra was probably one of the latest Tantras produced in South Asia, some scholars believed that it was probably composed in or near Sogdiana in the tenth century, and it was not transmitted to Tibet until 1027. The text says that it was

spoken on the fifteenth day of the third month after Sakyamuni Buddha's awakening. At the time he appeared on the Vulture Peak dressed in monk's robes and preached the "Perfection of Wisdom Sutra" in 100,000 lines, and he simultaneously manifested at Dhyanakataka in South India as the Buddha Kalacakra, in which form he taught the Kalacakra tantra. The tantra is said to have been spoken at the request of Sucandra, king of Sambhala and an emanation of the Buddha Vajrapani, who compiled the tantra in its long form, said to be twelve thousand verses, but no longer extant. Its central practice is a six session yoga: 1) individual withdrawal (of winds); 2) concentration; 3) stopping vitality; 4) retention; 5) subsequent mindfulness; and 6) meditative absorption. The initial stages are techniques for withdrawing the winds into the central channel (avadhuti—skt). In the sixth branch one actualizes immutable bliss, which is the object of Kalacakra practice. In Tibet the tantra forms the basis of the traditional astrological calendar and the medical system. Yearly Kalacakra initiation ceremonies given by the Dalai Lama are among the most popular events of Tibetan Buddhism today, because it is widely believed that receiving the Kalacakra empowerment ensures rebirth in Sambhala.

Mantras of the Vajrayana "Om". Sanskrit syllable that is often found at the beginning of Buddhist Mantras. It was inherited from Hinduism, and there are various explanations of its meaning. One common notion found in Mahayana literature is that it symbolizes the fundamental nature of reality, i.e., emptiness (sunyata). This word is also used to show solemn affirmation and respectful assent. Sometimes translated by "Yes." This is the most comprehensive and venerable symbol of spiritual knowledge in Vajrayana. Om is a symbol of form as well as sound. This is not a magic word. In fact this is not even considered to be a word at all. It is rather a manifestation of spiritual power, symbol that is to be found throughout the East. Om, aum; "a word of solemn affirmation and respectful assent, sometimes translated by yes, verily, so be it, and in this sense compared with Amen in Catholic." It is the mystic name for the Hindu triad, and has other significations. It was adopted by Buddhism, especially by the Tantric school, as a mystic spell, and as an object of meditation. It forms the first syllable of certain mystical combinations, e.g. Om mani padmi hum, which is a formula of the Tibetan Lamaistic branch, said to be a prayer to Padmapani; each of the six syllables having its own mystic power of salvation from the lower paths of transmigration, etc.; the formula is used in sorcery, auguries, etc..

Mantra "Om-Mani-Padme-Hum" or "Great compassion mantra". A formula of Lamaistic branch. Each of the six syllables having its own mystic power of salvation the lower paths of transmigration. The Mantra of Avalokitesvara, who in Mahayana is said to be the embodiment of compassion (karuna). It is the most commonly chanted mantra in Tibetan Buddhism,

probably due to the fact that Avalokitesvara is widely viewed as being particularly closely associated with Tibet and its history. Several of the most prominent lineages of reincarnating lamas (sprul Sku-tib), including the Dalai Lamas and the R Gyal Ba Kar Ma Pas are believed to be physical manifestations of Avalokitesvara. The meaning. The meaning of the mantra has been debated by contemporary scholars. Some read “padme” (lotus) as a Sanskrit locative, in which case it would be translated as “om” Jewel in the Lotus “hum.” Others interpret “padme” as a vocative feminine, and thus translate it as “Om Jewel-Lotus hum.” Both readings are, however, problematic: in the first interpretation the mantra would be ungrammatical, which is not uncommon with Buddhist Sanskrit mantras; and the second interpretation faces the problem of why a male Buddha would be referred to with a feminine vocative. This is the most important and oldest mantra of Tibetan Tantric Buddhism. These six syllables are an expression of the basic attitude of compassion, and the recitation of them expresses the longing for liberation.

Devout Buddhists should always remember that to have faith in “mantras” in Buddhism does not have the same meaning as to have faith in worldly charms. In Vietnam, there still exist some local customs of worldly charms, incantations, observance of lucky hours, bad hours, lucky days, bad days, and devil dancing, and so on. In the Brshmajala Sutra, we can see clearly that these customs are totally contradictory with the Buddhist fundamental principles. They are the surviving bad customs of fetishism and pantheism, as well as other heretic religions. The Buddhist Tantras in outward appearance resemble the Hindu Tantras to a marked degree, but in reality there is very little similarity between them, either in subject matter or in philosophical doctrines, or in religious principles. This is not to be questioned at, since the aims and objects of Buddhists are widely different from those of the Hindus.” The main difference is that Buddhist Tantra is not Saktism. The concept of Sakti, of divine power, of the creative female aspect of the highest God (Siva) or his emanations does not play any role in Buddhism, while in the Hindu Tantras, the concept of power (sakti) forms the focus of interest. The central idea of Tantric Buddhism, however, is prajna (knowledge, wisdom). To the Buddhist, sakti is “maya,” the very power that creates illusion, from which only Prajna can liberate us. It is, therefore, not the aim of the Buddhist to acquire power, or to join himself to the power of the universe, either to become their instrument or to become their master, but, on the contrary, he tries to free himself from those powers, which for aeons kept him a prisoner of samsara. He strives to perceive those powers, which have kept him going in the rounds of life and death, in order to liberate himself from their dominion. However, he does not try to negate them or to destroy them, but to transform

them in the fire of knowledge, so that they may become forces of enlightenment which, instead of creating further differentiation, flow in the opposite direction: towards union, towards wholeness, towards completeness. The attitude of the Hindu Tantras is quite different, if not contrary. “United with the Sakti, be full of power,” says the Kulacudamani Tantra. “From the union of Siva and Sakti the world is created.” The Buddhist, on the other hand, does not want the creation and unfoldment of the world, but the coming back to the “uncreated, unformed” state of sunyata. From which all creation proceeds, or which is prior to and beyond all creation (if one may put the inexpressible into human language).

**Third, Buddha Recitation:** To repeat the name of a Buddha audibly or inaudibly, or visualization of the Buddha’s auspicious marks. The intermediate goal of Buddha Recitation is to achieve one-pointed mind; from one-pointed mind gradually one can see one’s own nature or to achieve the ultimate goal of Buddhahood. In the Long Amitabha Sutra, Sakyamuni Buddha made the following prediction: “In the days to come, the paths of the sutras will come to extinction. I, with compassion and mercy, will purposely make this sutra survive for a hundred years. Anybody who encounters this sutra will, according to his wish, surely attain Enlightenment.” In the Great Heap Sutra, Sakyamuni Buddha predicted: “In the Dharma-Ending Age, among multitude of practitioners, very few will attain the Way. The most they can expect is to rely on the Pure Land method to escape Birth and Death. Elder Zen Master T’ien-Ju, having attained the Way, also admonished: “In the Dharma-Ending Age, all sutras will disappear, and only the words “Amitabha Buddha” will remain to bring liberation to sentient beings.” This is because, in the distant future, deep in the Degenerate Age, when all sutras have disappeared and people’s capacities are at a low level, they will not be aware of any method other than Buddha Recitation. If they do not believe in and practice Pure Land, they will certainly remain mired in the cycle of Birth and Death. Within that cycle, good actions are difficult to perform while bad deeds are easy to commit. Thus sooner or later they are bound to sink into the hellish realms. The Patriarch Yin Kuang, a Chinese Pure Land Master of recent times, also said: “The magnificence and extraordinary nature of the Buddha Recitation dharma can only be fully understood among the Buddhas. For those who look down on this dharma door of Buddha Recitation, not only will they belittle the ‘old men and elderly women’ who are practicing Pureland, they will also belittle the Buddhas and the Maha-Bodhisattvas such as Manjusri, Samantabhadra, Asvaghosha, and Nagarjuna. In the current Dharma-Ending Age, sentient beings bear heavy karma and their minds are deluded. If they practice other methods rather than Buddha Recitation, they can expect to sow the seeds of merit, virtue and wisdom but not to escape the cycle of Birth and



Death in their present lifetimes. Although there are a few instances of great monks exhibiting extraordinary achievement, they are in reality transformation Bodhisattvas. In accordance with their vows, they act as examples for sentient beings in the Dharma-Ending Age, as is taught in the Surangama Sutra (a key Zen text). Even then, these Bodhisattvas, adapting themselves to people's capacities, can only take the expedient appearance of having awakened to the Way, but not having attained Enlightenment. In the specific case of Pure Land, very few sentient beings can achieve the Buddha Recitation Samadhi these days, compared to earlier times. However, through Buddha Recitation, they can take their residual karma along with them to the Pure Land by relying on their own vows and those of Amitabha Buddha. Once there, they have escaped Birth and Death, achieved non-retrogression, and can progress in cultivation until they reach the stage of Non-Birth."

***Fourth, Sitting Meditation:*** Sitting meditation means to sit in dhyana (abstract meditation, fixed abstraction, contemplation). Its introduction to China is attributed to Bodhidharma, though it came earlier, and its extension to T'ien-T'ai. Sitting meditation is the main religious practice in all Zen traditions. It is also considered to be the primary means by which students attain realization and in most Zen monasteries it is practiced for several hours every day. Ideally, sitting meditation is practiced in a state of mind free from grasping or striving, and not focused on any particular object. The practice is based on the notion that all beings are already Buddhas, and so during the practice of "sitting meditation," one attempts to drop off accumulated conceptions and analytical thinking in order to allow this fundamental buddha-nature to manifest spontaneously. We must be patient when practicing sitting meditation. We must learn to bear the pain in our back and legs because when we first practice to sit in meditation, we are unaccustomed to sitting that way and we will surely experience "hard to bear" pain. The only way to overcome the pain is "patience." Besides, we should not hope for anything, even hoping for enlightenment because the thought of hoping for enlightenment is itself deluded. We cannot expect to sit in just several sessions of meditation or to sit today and get enlightened tomorrow. Thus, while in sitting meditation, try not to expect anything, try not to do it fast. According to the Vimalakirti Sutra, Vimalakirti reminded Sariputra about meditation,

saying: “Sariputra, meditation is not necessarily sitting. For meditation means the non-appearance of body and mind in the three worlds (of desire, form and no form); giving no thought to inactivity when in nirvana while appearing (in the world) with respect-inspiring deportment; not straying from the Truth while attending to worldly affairs; the mind abiding neither within nor without; being imperturbable to wrong views during the practice of the thirty-seven contributory stages leading to enlightenment: and not wiping out troubles (klesa) while entering the state of nirvana. If you can thus sit in meditation, you will win the Buddha’s seal.”

Sitting meditation is a key practice. The two major Zen traditions, T’ao-T’ung and Lin-Chi, have a slightly different approach to this. T’ao-T’ung Zen teaches “just sitting” in which one focuses on the nature of the mind. T’ao-T’ung emphasizes “original enlightenment”, and doesn’t distinguish between the means and the end. Instead of constantly trying to achieve something, one is encouraged to just be, and to be aware of that. Calm abiding is developed in T’ao-T’ung Zen by just sitting, thus concentrating the mind single-pointedly. This sect is confident that sitting is the perfect expression of inherent perfection or enlightenment, the practice of special insight involves total awareness of the body sitting in each moment. Lin-Chi Zen employs the koan (kung-an) to develop special insight. Different koans are used by each teacher, and each koan serves a different purpose. But basically, these short puzzles, such as “What was the appearance of your face before your ancestors were born?” or “What is the sound of one hand clapping?” challenge one’s usual way of relating to oneself and to the world. One may use logic to approach the koans, but real understanding transcends verbal explanations and depends on insight into one’s ultimate nature. The key point of contemplating a koan isn’t to get the right answer. Rather, it’s to confront people with their preconceptions. Becoming frustrated because the usual intellect and emotions can’t make sense of the koan, the sleeping mind will wake up. A koan can’t be answered by the discursive superficial mind, but only by deep insight. Practitioners of the Lin-Chi tradition gain calm abiding by focusing the mind on the koan. They gain special insight by answering it.

## ***Chapter Five***

### ***Lay People's Happiness In Buddhist Point of View***

#### ***I. Lay People Always Believe That Cultivation Means Stepping On the Path to the Removal of Sufferings In Order to Advance to the Direction of Happiness:***

Fundamental teachings of the Buddha, i.e. the four truths, the twelve nidanas, the eighfold noble truth, etc. Buddha's sermons (the teaching of the Buddha), practicing methods of cultivation taught by the Buddha leading beings to enlightenment. To end sufferings and afflictions, selfish desire, Buddhists, especially lay people must apply these teachings in their cultivation to remove sufferings and afflictions. Just as a fire dies when no fuel is added, so unhappiness will end when the fuel of selfish desire is removed. When selfish desire is completely removed, our mind will be in a state of perfect peace. The Path of Removal of Sufferings includes the last two of the Four Noble Truths: true cessation and true path of cessation. That is Dharma refuge is the realizations of the path and absence of suffering and its causes on the mindstreams. The path to the removal of suffering is 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.

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. According to Zen Master Dogen, to learn the Buddha's truth is to learn ourselves, to learn ourselves is to forget ourselves, to

forget ourselves is to be experienced by the myriad dharmas, to be experienced by the myriad dharmas is to let our body-and-mind, and the body-and-mind of external world fall away (Shobogenzo—Book 1 p. 34). However, for lay Buddhist practitioners, cultivation means stepping on the path of removing of sufferings. The essential steps of the path to the removal of suffering to Nibbana are pointed out by the Buddha. It is 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 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 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 seventh 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 eighth 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 ninth 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 tenth 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 eleventh 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 twelfth 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 thirteenth 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 fourteenth 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 fifteenth 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 sixteenth 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.

## ***II. Lay People's Happiness in Buddhist Point of View:***

Modern man seems to seek happiness outside instead of seeking it within. However, happiness does not depend on the external world. Science and technology seem to promise that they can turn this world into a paradise. Therefore, there is ceaseless work going on in all directions to improve the world. Scientists are pursuing their methods and experiments with undiminished vigour and determination. Man's quest to unravel the hidden secrets of nature continued unabated. Modern discoveries and methods of communication have produced startling results. All these improvements, though they have their

advantages and rewards, are entirely material and external. In spite of all this, man cannot yet control his own mind, he is not better for all his scientific progress. Within this conflux of mind and body of man, however, there are unexplored marvels to keep men of science occupied for many years. What can be borne with ease is happiness. However, happiness resulting from mental stability is the most important for the ultimate goal of human lives is happiness and joyfulness. Ordinary happiness is the gratification of a desire. However, as soon as the thing desired is achieved we desire something else or some other kind of happiness, for our selfish desires are endless. We usually seek pleasant feelings and avoid unpleasant feelings through our sensory experience of the eyes, ears, nose, tongue and body. However, there is another level of experience: mental experience. True happiness should also be pursued on the mental level. Thus, according to Buddhism, genuine happiness cannot be defined by material and sensual satisfactions, but only by means of spiritual development and opening of wisdom so that we always acknowledge others and their needs. Sincere Buddhists, especially lay people, should always remember that true happiness is only originated from a virtuous life. Money cannot buy happiness, or wealth does not always conduce to happiness. In fact, real happiness is found within, and is not be defined in terms of wealth, power, honours, or conquests.

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. He or she enjoys his/her wealth and does meritorious deeds. This is called the real bliss. The Buddha enumerates some kinds of happiness for a layman. They are the happiness of possession, health, wealth, longevity, beauty, joy, strength, property, children, etc. The Buddha does not advise all of us to renounce our worldly lives and pleasures and retire to solitude. However, he advised lay disciples to share the enjoyment of wealth with others. We should use wealth for ourselves, but we should also use wealth for the welfare of others. What we have is only temporary; what we preserve we leave and go. Only karmas will have to go with us along the endless cycle of births and deaths. The Buddha taught about the happiness of lay disciples as follows: "A poor, but peace life is real happiness. Leading a blameless life is one of the best sources of



happiness, for a blameless person is a blessing to himself and to others. He is admired by all and feels happier, being affected by the peaceful vibrations of others. However, it is very difficult to get a good name from all. The wisemen try to be indifferent to external approbation, try to obtain the spiritual happiness by transcending of material pleasures.” Then the Buddha continued to remind monks and nuns: “Nirvana bliss, which is the bliss of relief from suffering, is the highest form of happiness.”

Many people believe that they can solve all their problems if they have money, so they’re always busy to exhaust their energy to collect more and more money. The more money they have, the more they want to collect. They don’t realize that money cannot buy happiness, or wealth does not always conduce to happiness. In fact, real happiness is found within, and is not be defined in terms of wealth, power, honours, or conquests. If we compare the mental and physical levels of happiness, we’ll find that mental experiences of pain and pleasure are actually more powerful than those of physical experiences. Devout Buddhists should always remember that your property will remain when you die. Your friends and relatives will follow you up to your grave. But only good or bad actions you have done will follow you beyond the grave. Thus, wealth can only be used to decorate your house but not you. Only your own virtue can decorate you. Your dress can decorate your body, but not you; only your good conduct can decorate you. Ordinary happiness is the gratification of a desire. However, as soon as the thing desired is achieved then we desire something else or some other kind of happiness, for our selfish desires are endless. We usually seek pleasant feelings and avoid unpleasant feelings through our sensory experience of the eyes, ears, nose, tongue and body. However, there is another level of experience: mental experience. True happiness should also be pursued on the mental level. In the Anguttara Nikaya Sutra, the Buddha commented on the four kinds of bliss a layman enjoy as follow: 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; the bliss of wealth, 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; the bliss of debtlessness, herein a clansman owes no debt, great or small, to anyone. At the thought, bliss and satisfaction come to him; 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.

Lay people should always remember that with those who are cultivating mindfulness, the secret of happiness lies in doing what needs be done now and not worrying about the past and the future. We cannot go back to change things in the past nor can we anticipate what will happen in the future. There is but one moment of time over which we have some relatively conscious control and that is the present. According to Buddhist theory, a happy life means always to maintain a peaceful and happy mind. For monks and nuns, they should be always self-content and willing to practice religious disciplines. So long as a person still cherishes resentment, his mental attitude does not embody the ideal way of true believer of the Buddhist teaching; whatever misfortune may befall him, he must maintain a peaceful and calm mind. While 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." In order to be able to attain a peaceful and happy life, we must possess a peaceful and concentrated mind. This mind is always good for any cultivator. Devoted Buddhists should always make the mind peaceful, concentrated, and use this concentration to examine the mind and body. When the mind is not peaceful, we should also watch. Then we will know true peace, because we will see impermanence. Even peace must be seen as impermanent. If we are attached to peaceful states of mind, we will suffer when we do not have them. Give up everything, even peace. To do this, we all have a peace and happiness in this very life. In Buddhism, Nirvana is called the Supreme happiness and this happiness is brought about by the complete calming, the utter ceasing

of all sensations. Now, this saying, indeed, confuses us completely, we who have experienced so many pleasant feelings with our sense faculties. In the Anguttara Nikaya, the Venerable Udayi, a disciple of the Buddha, was confronted with this very problem. The Venerable Sariputta addressing the monks said: "It is Nibbana, friends, that is happiness; it is Nibbana, friends, that is happiness." Then the Venerable Udayi asked: "But what, friend Sariputta, is happiness, since herein there is no feeling?" Sariputta responded: "Just this, friend, is happiness, that herein there is no feeling." This saying of Venerable Sariputta is fully supported by the following one of the Buddha in the Samyutta Nikaya: "Whatever is experienced, sensed, felt, all that is suffering." Thus, Nibbana or Supreme happiness is a state realizable in this very life. The thinker, the inquiring mind, will not find it difficult to understand this state.

Besides, lay people should also remember that happiness of practitioners of mindfulness is practicing dharma or the Joy of the Law, the joy of hearing or tasting dharma. According to the Vimalakirti Sutra, Chapter Bodhisattvas, a demon pretended to be Indra, offered twelve thousand goddesses (devakanya) to the Bodhisattva Ruler of the World. The demon said to the Ruler of the World Bodhisattva: "Bodhisattva, please take these twelve thousand goddesses who will serve you." The Ruler of the World Bodhisattva replied: "Sakra, please do not make to a monk this unclean offering which does not suit me." "Even before the Ruler of the World Bodhisattva had finished speaking, Vimalakirti came and said: "He is not Sakra; he is a demon who comes to disturb you." He then said to the demon: 'You can give me these girls and I will keep them.' The demon was frightened, and being afraid that Vimalakirti might give him trouble, he tried to make himself invisible but failed, and in spite of his use of supernatural powers he could not go away. Suddenly a voice was heard in the air, saying: 'Demon, give him the girls and then you can go.' Being scared, he gave the girls.' At that time, Vimalakirti said to them: "The demon has given you to me. You can now develop a mind set on the quest of supreme enlightenment." Vimalakirti then expounded the Dharma to them urging them to seek the truth. He declared: "You have now set your minds on the quest for the truth and can experience joy in the Dharma instead of in the five worldly pleasures (arising from the

objects of the five senses).” The goddesses asked him: ‘What is this Happiness in the Dharma?’ He replied: “Happiness in having faith in the Buddha, happiness in listening to the Dharma, happiness in making offerings to the Sangha, and happiness in forsaking the five worldly pleasures; happiness in finding out that the five aggregates are like deadly enemies, that the four elements (that make the body) are like poisonous snakes, and that the sense organs and their objects are empty like space; happiness in following and upholding the truth; happiness in being beneficial to living beings; happiness in revering and making offerings to your masters; happiness in spreading the practice of charity (dana); happiness in firmly keeping the rules of discipline (sila); happiness in forbearance (ksanti); happiness in unflinching zeal (virya) to sow all excellent roots; happiness in unperturbed serenity (dhyana); happiness in wiping out all defilement that screens clear wisdom (prajna); happiness in expanding the enlightened (bodhi) mind; happiness in overcoming all demons; happiness in eradicating all troubles (klesa); happiness in purifying the Buddha land; happiness in winning merits from excellent physical marks; happiness in embellishing the bodhimandala (the holy site); happiness in fearlessness to hear (and understand) the profound Dharma; happiness in the three perfect doors to nirvana (i.e. voidness, formlessness and inactivity) as contrasted with their incomplete counterparts (which still cling to the notion of objective realization); happiness of being with those studying the same Dharma and happiness in the freedom from hindrance when amongst those who do not study it; happiness to guide and convert evil men and to be with men of good counsel; happiness in the state of purity and cleanness; happiness in the practice of countless conditions contributory to enlightenment. All this is the Bodhisattva happiness in the Dharma.”

Lay people should be careful with the happiness of possession, health, wealth, longevity, beauty, joy, strength, property, children, etc (these are some kinds of happiness for a layman which the Buddha enumerates). The Buddha does not advise all of us to renounce our worldly lives and pleasures and retire to solitude. However, he advised lay disciples to share the enjoyment of wealth with others. We should use wealth for ourselves, but we should also use wealth for the welfare of others. What we have is only temporary; what we preserve we leave

and go. Only karmas will have to go with us along the endless cycle of births and deaths. Thus we must try to recognize and eliminate the powerful emotions we possess such as desire, hatred, anger, ignorance, pride, doubt, wrong views, etc., for they tend not to bring us long happiness. A fulfilled desire may provide us a sense of temporary satisfaction, but it will not last long. For example, we are satisfied with a new car we just bought, but for how long that satisfaction can last? Soon after the car will become old and broken, and that would cause us disatisfactions and sufferings. Thus, the Buddha taught about the happiness of lay disciples as follows: “A poor, but peace life is real happiness. Leading a blameless life is one of the best sources of happiness, for a blameless person is a blessing to himself and to others. He is admired by all and feels happier, being affected by the peaceful vibrations of others. However, it is very difficult to get a good name from all. The wisemen try to be indifferent to external approbation, try to obtain the spiritual happiness by transcending of material pleasures.” Then the Buddha continued to remind monks and nuns: “Nirvana bliss, which is the bliss of relief from suffering, is the highest form of happiness.”

In the Dharmapada Sutra, the Buddha taught: “Happy is the birth of Buddhas! Happy is the teaching of the True Law! Happy is the harmony in the sangha! Happy is the discipline of the united ones! (Dharmapada 194). Oh! Happily do we live without hatred among the hateful! Among hateful men we dwell unhating! (Dharmapada 197). Oh! Happily do we live in good health among the ailing! Among the ailing we dwell in good health! (Dharmapada 198). Oh! Happily do we live without greed for sensual pleasures among the greedy! Among the greedy we dwell free from greed! (Dharmapada 199). Oh! Happily do we live without any hindrances. We shall always live in peace and joy as the gods of the Radiant Realm (Dharmapada 200). Victory breeds hatred, defeat breeds suffering; giving up both victory and defeat will lead us to a peaceful and happy life (Dharmapada 201). There is no fire like lust; no evil like hatred. There is no ill like the body; no bliss higher than Nirvana (Dharmapada 202). Hunger is the greatest disease, aggregates are the greatest suffering. Knowing this as it really is, the wise realize Nirvana: supreme happiness (203). Good health is a great benefit, contentment is the richest, trust is the best kinsmen, Nirvana is

the highest bliss (204). He who has tasted the flavour of seclusion and tranquility, will prefer to the taste of the joy of the Dharma, and to be free from fear and sin (Dharmapada 205). To meet the sage is good, to live with them is ever happy. If a man has not ever seen the foolish, he may ever be happy (206). He who companies with fools grieves for a long time. To be with the foolish is ever painful as with an enemy. To associate with the wise is ever happy like meeting with kinsfolk (Dharmapada 207). Therefore, one should be with the wise, the learned, the enduring, the dutiful and the noble. To be with a man of such virtue and intellect as the moon follows the starry path (Dharmapada 208). If by giving up a small happiness or pleasure, one may behold a larger joy. A far-seeing and wise man will do this (a wise man will leave the small pleasure and look for a larger one) (Dharmapada 290)."

According to the Sutta of Blessing, Venerable Ananda remembered the Buddha's teaching on happiness as below. Thus, I have heard: On one occasion the 'Exalted One' was dwelling at the monastery of Anathapindika, in Jeta Grove, near Savatthi. Now when the night was far spent, a certain deity, whose surpassing splendour illuminated the entire Jeta Grove, came to the presence of the 'Exalted One' and drawing near, respectfully saluted him and stood at one side. Standing, he addressed the 'Exalted One' in verse: "Many deities and men, yearning after good, have pondered on blessings. Pray and tell me the highest blessings. Not to associate with fools, to associate with the wise and to honour those who are worthy of honour, this is the highest blessing. To reside in a suitable locality, to have done meritorious actions in the past and to set oneself in the right course, this is the highest blessing. Vast learning, perfect handicraft, a highly trained discipline and pleasant speech, this the highest blessing. The support of father and mother, the cherishing of a wife and children and peaceful occupations, this is the highest blessing. Liberality (freedom), righteous conduct, the helping of relatives and blameless actions, this is the highest blessing. To cease and abstain from evil, forbearance with respect to intoxicants and steadfastness in virtue, this is the highest blessing. Reverence, humility, contentment, gratitude and opportune hearing of the Dharma, this is the highest blessing. Patience, obedience, sight of Samanas and religious discussions at due season,

this is the highest blessing. Self-control, holy life, perception of the Noble truths and the realization of Nivarna, this is the highest blessing. He whose mind does not flutter by contact with worldly contingencies, sorrowless (without sorrow), stainless (without stain), and secure, this is the highest blessing. To them, fulfilling matters such as these, everywhere invincible and in every way moving happily, these are the highest blessings.

According to the Ratana Sutta, Venerable Ananda remembered the Buddha's teaching on happiness as below: Whatever beings are assembled, whether terrestrial or celestial, may every being be happy! Moreover, may they be attentively listen to my words! Accordingly, give good heed to all beings; show your love to the humans who day and night bring offerings to you. Wherefore guard them zealously. Whatsoever treasure there be either here or in the world beyond or whatever precious jewel in the heavens yet there is non comparable with the 'Accomplished One.' Truly, in the Buddha, is this precious jewel. By this truth may there be happiness! The tranquil Sage of the Sakya realized that cessation, passion-free (free of passion), immortality supreme, there is no comparable with that of the Dharma. Truly, in the Dharma, is this precious jewel. By this truth may there be happiness! That sanctity praised by the Buddha Supreme, is described as "concentration without interruption." There is nothing like that concentration. Truly, in the Dharma, is this precious jewel. By this truth may there be happiness! Those eight individuals, praised by the virtuous, constitute four pairs. They, worthy of offerings, the disciples of the 'Welcome One,' to these gifts given yield abundant fruit. Truly, in the Sangha, is this precious jewel. By this truth may there be happiness! With steadfast mind, applying themselves thoroughly in the dispensation (delivery) of the Gotama, exempt from passion, they have attained to that which should be attained and plunging into the deathless, they enjoy the peace obtained without price. Truly, in the Sangha is this precious jewel. By this truth may there be happiness! Just as a firm post sunk in the earth cannot be shaken by the four winds, so do I declare him to be a righteous person, who thoroughly perceives the Noble Truths. Truly, in the Sangha, is this precious jewel! By this truth may there be happiness! Those who comprehend clearly the Noble Truths, well taught by him of deep wisdom (do not, however,

exceeding hedless they may be, undergo an eight birth). Truly, in the Sangha, is this precious jewel. By this truth may there be happiness! For him with the development of insight three conditions come to none namely, illusion, doubt, and indulgence in wrong rites and ceremonies, should there be any. From the four states of misery, he is now absolutely freed and is incapable of committing the six heinous crimes. Whatever evil deeds he does (whether by deeds, word or thought), he is incapable of hiding it: for it had been said that such an act is impossible for one who has seen the Path. Like unto the woodland groves with blossomed tree-tops in the first heat of the summer season, had the sublime doctrine that leads to Nirvana been taught for the highest good. Truly, in the Buddha, is this precious jewel. By this truth may there be happiness! The Unrivalled (Unparalleled) Excellent One, the Knower, the giver, and bringer of the Excellent has expounded the excellent Doctrine. Truly, in the Buddha, is this precious jewel. By this truth may there be happiness! The past is extinct, future has not yet come, their minds are not attached to a future birth, their desires do not grow, those wise ones go out even as this lamp. Truly, in the Sangha, is this precious jewel. By this truth may there be happiness! We, beings here assembled, whether terrestrial or celestial, salute the accomplished Buddha, honoured by gods and humans. May there be happiness! We, beings here assembled whether terrestrial or celestial, salute the accomplished Buddha, honoured by gods and humans. May there be happiness! We, beings here assembled whether terrestrial or celestial, salute the accomplished Buddha, honoured by gods and humans. May there be happiness!

According to The Lotus Sutra, there are four means of attaining to a happy contentment. In that sutra, the Buddha teaches us how to behave, to to speak, what kind of mental attitude to maintain, and how to endeavor to realize our ideal. Pleasant practice of the body, or 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. A Bodhisattva's sphere of intimacy. The Buddha teaches a Bodhisattva's sphere of intimacy by dividing it into ten areas: 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; 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; a Bodhisattva does not resort to brutal sports, such as boxing and wrestling, nor the various juggling performances of dancers and others; 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; 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. 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; 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; 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; 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; 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. Pleasant practice of the mouth, or to attain a happy contentment by the

words of the mouth: a Bodhisattva takes no pleasure in telling of the errors of other people or of the sutras; a Bodhisattva does not despise other preachers; he does not speak of the good and evil, the merits and demerits of other people, nor does he single out Sravakas by name and broadcast their errors and sins; he does not praise virtues and does not beget a jealous mind; he always maintains a cheerful and open mind. If someone asks difficult questions, he does not answer if he does not know the answer. Pleasant practice of the mind, or to attain a happy contentment by the thoughts of the mind: he does not harbor an envious or deceitful mind; he does not slight or abuse other learners of the Buddha's teachings, even if they are beginners, nor does he seek out their excesses and shortcomings; 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; he should not indulge in discussions about the laws or engage in dispute but should devote himself to discussion of the practice to save all living beings; he should think of saving all living beings from their sufferings through his great compassion; he should think of the Buddhas as benevolent fathers; he should think of the Bodhisattvas as his great teachers; he should preach the Law equally to all living beings. Pleasant practice of the vow, or to attain a happy contentment by the will to preach all sutras. In the Dharma ending age, Bodhisattvas should beget a spirit of great charity toward both laypeople and monks who are not yet Bodhisattvas with a spirit of great compassion.

## *Chapter Six*

### *An Overview & Meanings of the Text of the Sigalaka Sutra (Advice To Lay People)*

Sigalovada-sutta is the Sutra that the Buddha preached to Sigalovada, son of an elder of Rajagrha, Digha Nikaya 31. The contents of the sutta as follows: Thus, I have heard. Once the Lord was staying at Rajagaha, at the Squirrel's Feeding Place in the Bamboo Grove. And at that time, Sigalaka the householder's son, having got up early and gone out of Rajagaha, was paying homage, with wet clothes and hair and with joined palms, to the different directions: to the east, the south, the west, the north, the nadir and the zenith.

And the Lord, having risen early and dressed, took his robe and bowl and went to Rajagaha for alms and seeing Sigalaka paying homage to the different directions, he said: "Householder's son, why have you got up early to pay homage to the different directions?"

Sigalaka respectfully responded: "Lord, my father, when he was dying, told me to do so. And so Lord, out of respect for my father's words, which I revere, honor and hold sacred, I got up early to pay sacred homage in this way to the six directions."

The Buddha asked: "But householder's son, that is not the right way to pay homage to the six directions according to the Ariyan discipline."

Sigalaka respectfully responded: "Well, Lord, how should one pay homage to the six directions according to the Ariyan discipline? It would be good if the Blessed Lord were to teach me the proper way to pay homage to the six directions, according to the Ariyan discipline."

The Buddha said: "Then listen carefully, pay attention and I will speak."

"Yes, Lord," said Sigalaka.

The Lord spoke: "Young householder, it is by abandoning the four defilements of action; by not doing evil from the four causes; by not following the six ways of wasting one's substance; through avoiding

these fourteen evil ways, that the Ariyan disciple covers the six directions, and by such practice becomes a conqueror of both worlds, so that all will go well with him in this world and the next, and at the breaking up of the body after death, he will go to a good destiny, a heavenly world. What are the four defilements of action that are abandoned? They are taking life, taking what is not given, sexual misconduct, and lying speech. These are the four defilements of action that he abandons. Taking life and stealing, lying, adultery; the wise reprove. What are the four causes of evil from which he refrains? Evil action springs from attachment, it springs from ill-will, it springs from folly, it springs from fear. If the Ariyan disciple does not act out of attachment, ill-will, folly or fear, he will not do evil from any one of the the four causes.”

And the Well-Farer having spoken, the Teacher added: “Desire and hatred, fear and folly. He who breaks the law through these, loses all his fair reputation (merit), like the moon at waning-time. Desire and hatred, fear and folly. He who never yields to these, grows in goodness and merit, like the moon at waxing-time.”

The Lord continued to teach: “And which are the six ways of wasting one’s substance? **Here are the six ways of wasting one’s substance:** addiction to strong drinks and sloth-producing drugs is one way of wasting one’s substance; haunting the streets at unfitting time; attending fairs; being addicted to gambling; keeping bad company; habitual idleness. **There are six dangers attached to addiction to strong drinks and sloth-producing drugs:** present waste of money; increased quarrelling; liability to sickness; loss of good name; indecent exposure of one’s person; weakening of the intellect. **There are six dangers attached to haunting the streets at unfitting time:** one is defenseless and without protection; wife and children are defenseless and without protection; one’s property is defenseless and without protection; one is suspected of crimes; false reports are pinned on one; one encounters all sorts of unpleasantness. **There are six dangers attached to frequenting fairs:** one is always thinking, where there is dancing; where there is sinning; where they are playing music; where they are reciting; where there is hand-clapping; where the drums are. **There are six dangers attached to gambling:** the winner makes enemies; the loser bewails his loss; one wastes one’s present wealth;

one's word is not trusted in the assembly; one is despised by one's friends and companions; one is not in demand for marriage. Therefore, a gambler cannot afford to maintain a wife.

**There are six dangers attached to keeping bad company:** the danger of gamblers, the danger of any glutton, the danger of the drunkard, the danger of cheaters, the danger of tricksters, and the danger of the bully. **There are six dangers attached to idleness:** thinking it's too cold, one does not work; thinking it's too hot, one does not work; thinking it's too early, one does not work; thinking it's too late, one does not work; thinking I'm too hungry, one does not work; and thinking I'm full, one does not work.

And the Well-Farer having spoken, He added: "Some are drinking-mates, and some profess their friendship to your face. But those who are your friends in need, they alone are friends indeed. Sleeping late, adultery picking quarrels, doing harm. Evil friends and stinginess, these six things destroy a man. He who goes with wicked friends, and spends his time in wicked deeds. In this world and the next as well that man will come to suffer woe. Dicing, wenching, drinking too, dancing, singing, daylight sleep, untimely prowling, evil friends, and stinginess destroy a man. He plays with dice and drinks strong drink, and goes with others' well-loved wives. He takes the lower, baser course, and fades away like waning moon. The drunkard, broke and destitute, ever thirsting as he drinks, like stone in water sinks in debt, soon bereft of all his kin. He who spends his days in sleep, and makes the night his waking time, ever drunk and lecherous, cannot keep a decent home. Too cold! Too hot! Too late! They cry, they are pushing all their work aside, till ever chance they might have had of doing good has slipped away. But he who reckons cold and heat as less than straws, and like a man undertakes the task in hand, his joy will never grow the less.

Householder's son, **there are four types who can be seen as foes in friendly disguise:** The man who takes everything. The man who takes everything, can be seen to be a false friend for four reasons. The first type is he who takes everything. The second type is he who wants a lot for very little. The third type is he who must do, he does out of fear. The fourth type is he who seeks his own ends. The great talker is not considered a friend. **The great talker can be seen to be a false friend for four reasons:** The first type is he who talks of favours in the past.

The second type is he who talks of favours in the future. The third type is he whose mouths empty phrases of goodwill. The fourth type is he pleads inability owing to some disaster when something needs to be done in the present.

The flatterer cannot be considered a friend. **The flatterer can be seen to be a false friend for four reasons:** he assents to bad actions, but dissents from good actions. He praises you to your face, but he disparages you behind your back. The fellow-spendthrift cannot be considered a friend. The fellow-spendthrift can be seen to be a false friend for four reasons. First, he is a companion when you indulge in strong drink. Second, he is a companion when you haunt the streets at unfitting times. Third, he is a companion when you frequent fairs. Fourth, he is a companion when you indulge in gambling. And the Well-farer having spoken, He added: "A friend who seeks what he can get, a friend who talks but empty words, a friend who merely flatters you, and a friend who is a fellow-wastrel. These four are really foes, not friends, the wise man, recognizing this, should hold himself aloof from them as from some path of panic fear."

Householder's son, **there are four types who can be seen to be loyal friends:** The first type of friend is he who is a helper. The helpful friend can be seen to be a loyal friend in four ways: he looks after you when you are inattentive; he looks after your possessions when you are inattentive; he is a refuge when you are afraid; and when some business is to be done he lets you have twice what you ask for. The second type of friend is he who is the same in happy and unhappy times. The friend who is the same in happy and unhappy times can be seen to be a loyal friend in four ways: he tells you his secrets; he guards your secrets; he does not let you down in misfortune; and he would even sacrifice his life for you. The third type of friend is he who points out what is good for you. The friend who points out what is good for you can be seen to be a loyal friend in four ways: he keeps you from wrongdoing; he supports you in doing good; he informs you of what you did not know; and he points out the path to Heaven. The fourth type of friend is he who is sympathetic. The sympathetic friend can be seen to be a loyal friend in four ways: he does not rejoice at your misfortune; he rejoices at your good fortune; he stops others who

speaks against you; and he commends others who speak in praise of you.

The Well-Farer having spoken, He added: “A friend who is a helper, a friend in times both good and bad, a friend who shows the way that’s right, a friend who’s full of sympathy. These four kinds of friends the wise should know at their true worth, and he should cherish them with care, just like a mother with her dearest child. The wise man trained and disciplined shines out like a beacon-fire. He gathers wealth just as the bee gathers honey, and it grows like an ant-hill higher yet. With wealth so gained the layman can devote it to his people’s good. He should divide his wealth in four, this will most advantage bring one part he may enjoy at will, two parts he should put to work, and the fourth part he should set aside as reserve in times of need.”

How householder’s son, does the Ariyan disciple protect the six directions? These six things are to be regarded as the six directions. First, the East denotes mother and father. There are five ways in which a son should minister to his mother and father as the Eastern direction. He should think having been supported by them, I will support them, I will perform their duties for them, I will keep up the family tradition, I will be worthy of my heritage; and after my parents’ deaths, I will distribute gifts on their behalf. **There are five ways in which the parents, so ministered to by their son as Eastern direction:** They will restrain him from evil, will support him in doing good things, will teach him some skill, will find him a suitable wife; and in due time, they will hand over his inheritance to him. In this way the Eastern direction is covered, making it at peace and free from fear.

The South denotes teachers. **There are five ways in which pupils should minister to their teachers as the Southern direction:** by rising to greet them, by serving them, by being attentive, by waiting on them, and by mastering the skills they teach. There are five ways in which their teachers, thus ministered to by their pupils as the Southern direction, will reciprocate: will give thorough instruction, make sure they have grasped what they should have duly grasped, given them a thorough grounding in all skills, recommend them to their friends and colleagues, and provide them with security in all directions. In this way the Southern direction is covered, making it at peace and free from fear.

The West denotes wife and children. **There are five ways in which a husband should minister to his wife as the Western direction:** by honouring her, by not disparaging her, by not being unfaithful to her, by giving authority to her, and by providing her with adornments. There are five ways in which a wife, thus ministered to by her husband as the Western direction, will reciprocate: by properly organizing her work, by being kind to the relatives, by not being unfaithful, by protecting husband's property, and by being skillful and diligent in all she has to do. In this way the Western direction is covered, making it at peace and free from fear.

The North denotes friends and companions. **There are five ways in which a man should minister to his friends and companions as the Northern direction:** by giving alms, by kindly words, by looking after their welfare, by treating them like himself, and by keeping his words. There are five ways in which friends and companions, thus administered to by a man as the Northern direction, will reciprocate: by looking after him when he is inattentive, by looking after his property when he is inattentive, by being a refuge when he is afraid, by not deserting him when he is in trouble, and by showing concern for his children. In this way the Northern direction is covered, making it at peace and free from fear.

The Nadir denotes servants and helpers. **There are five ways in which a master should minister to his servants and workpeople as the Nadir direction:** by arranging their work according to their strength, by supplying them with food and wages, by looking after them when they are ill, by sharing special delicacies with them, and by letting them off work at the right time. There are five ways in which servants and workpeople, thus ministered to by their master as the Nadir, will reciprocate: will get up before him, will go to bed after him, take only what they are given, do their work properly, and be bearer of his praise and good repute. In this way the Nadir is covered, making it at peace and free from fear.

The Zenith denotes ascetics and Brahmins. **There are five ways in which a man should minister to ascetics and Brahmins as the Zenith:** by kindness in bodily deed, by kindness in speech, by kindness in thought, by keeping an open house for them, and by supplying their bodily needs. The ascetics and Brahmins, thus ministered to by him as



the Zenith, will reciprocate in six ways: will restrain him from evil, will encourage him to do good, will be benevolently compassionate toward him, will teach him what he has not heard, will help him purify what he has heard, and will point out to him the way to Heaven. In this way the Zenith is covered, making it at peace and free from fear.

The Well-Farer having spoken, He added: “Mother, father are the East, teachers are the Southward point, wife and children are the West, friends and colleagues are the North, servants and workers are Below, Ascetics and Brahmins are Above. These directions all should be honoured by a clansman true. He who’s wise and disciplined, kindly and intelligent, humble, free from pride. Such a one may honour gain. Early rising, scorning sloth, unshaken by adversity, of faultless conduct, ready wit. Such a one may honour gain. Making friends, and keeping them, welcoming, no stingy host, a guide, philosopher and friend. Such a one may honour gain. Giving gifts and kindly speech, a life well-spent for others’ good, even-handed in all things, impartial as each case demands: these things make the world go round, like the chariot’s axle-pin. If such things did not exist, no mother from her son would get any honour and respect, nor father either, as their due. But since these qualities are held by the wise in high esteem, they are given prominence and are rightly praised by all.

At these words, Sigalaka said to the Lord: “Excellent, Reverend Gotama, excellent! It is as if someone were to set up what had been knocked down, or to point out the way to one who had got lost or to bring an oil-lamp into a dark place, so that those with eyes could see what was there. Just so the Reverend Gotama has expounded the Dharma in various ways, May the reverend accept me as a lay-follower from this day forth as long as life shall last!



## *Chapter Seven*

### *Four Defilements of Action That Should Be Eliminated*

#### *I. An Overview of Afflictions in Buddhist Teachings:*

Affliction is the way of temptation or passion which produces bad karma (life's stress and delusion), causes one to wander in the samsara and hinder one from reaching enlightenment. However, according to the Mahayana teaching, especially the T'ien-T'ai sect, afflictions are inseparable from Buddhahood. Affliction and Buddhahood are considered to be two sides of the same coin. When we realize that afflictions in themselves can have no real and independent existence, therefore, we don't want to cling to anything, at that very moment, afflictions are bodhi without any difference. Sanskrit term "Agantuklesa" means guest-dust. Let's explain in details for "Guest-dust". According to Buddhism, affliction means guest or the foreign atom, or intruding element, which enters the mind and causes distress and delusion. Also according to Buddhism, affliction means worldly dust for the mind is naturally pure or innocent till the evil element enters. 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. 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. "Klesa" literally means "pain," "external dust," "affliction," or "something tormenting" and is translated as "affliction." As there is nothing so tormenting spiritually as selfish, evil desires and passions, klesa has come to be understood chiefly in its derivative sense and external dust for agantuklesa. Klesa is a Sanskrit term for affliction, distress, worldly cares, vexations, and as consequent reincarnation. They are such

troubles as desire, hate, stupor, pride, doubt, erroneous views, etc., leading to painful results in future rebirths, for they are karma-messengers executing its purpose. Klesa also means “negative mental factors,” that lead beings to engage in non-virtuous actions, which produce karmic results. Klesa also means all defilements that dull the mind, the basis for all unwholesome actions as well as kinks that bind people to the cycle of rebirths. People also call Klesa the thirst of Mara. In order to attain enlightenment, the number one priority is to eliminate these defilements by practicing meditation on a regular basis. Afflictions are also restlessness and worry, another disadvantage that makes progress difficult. When the mind becomes restless like flustered bees in a shaken hive, it can not concentrate. This mental agitation prevents calmness and blocks the upward path, mental worry is just as harmful. When a man worries over one thing and another, over things done or left undone, and over fortune and misfortune, he can never have peace of mind. All this bother and worry, this fidgeting and unsteadiness of mind prevents concentration. In Buddhist teachings, sequent or associated klesa-trials, or evils, either all of them as always dogging the foot-steps. Consequent afflictions resulting or arising from the fundamental afflictions, in contrast with afflictions arising from the six senses. The twenty-four consequent klesas arising out of the six senses. The consequent or secondary afflictions resulting or arising from the fundamental afflictions. They include: Klesas arising from false reasoning. Klesa that which is natural to all. Ordinary passions or temptations. Firece or sudden afflictions cause by lack of belief on the Law of Cause and Effect.

## ***II. The Buddha's Advice On Four Defilements of Action That Should Be Eliminated in the Sigalaka Sutra:***

***An Overview of the Buddha's Advice On Four Defilements of Action That Should Be Eliminated in the Sigalaka Sutra:*** In the Sigalaka Sutra, the Lord Honored One spoke: “Young householder, it is by abandoning the four defilements of action; by not doing evil from the four causes; by not following the six ways of wasting one’s substance; through avoiding these fourteen evil ways, that the Ariyan disciple covers the six directions, and by such practice becomes a conqueror of both worlds, so that all will go well with him in this world

and the next, and at the breaking up of the body after death, he will go to a good destiny, a heavenly world. What are the four defilements of action that are abandoned? **They are taking life, taking what is not given, sexual misconduct, and lying speech.** These are the four defilements of action that he abandons. Taking life and stealing, lying, adultery; the wise reprove. What are the four causes of evil from which he refrains? Evil action springs from attachment, it springs from ill-will, it springs from folly, it springs from fear. If the Ariyan disciple does not act out of attachment, ill-will, folly or fear, he will not do evil from any one of the the four causes.” And the Well-Farer having spoken, the Teacher added: “Desire and hatred, fear and folly. He who breaks the law through these, loses all his fair reputation (merit), like the moon at waning-time. Desire and hatred, fear and folly. He who never yields to these, grows in goodness and merit, like the moon at waxing-time.”

***Summaries of the Buddha's Advice On Four Defilements of Action That Should Be Eliminated in the Sigalaka Sutra:*** As a matter of fact, these four afflictions are actually four of the five basic precepts in Buddhism. In Buddhism, good conduct forms a foundation for further progress on the path of personal development. The morality is also the foundation of all qualities. Besides, morality is the most important base that prepare Buddhist cultivators in cultivating the Eightfold Noble Path. According to Buddhism, the way of practice of good conduct includes three parts of the the Eightfold Noble Path, and these three parts are Right Speech, Right Action, and Right Livelihood. Besides, the keeping precepts is a gate of Dharma-illumination; for with it, we distantly depart from the hardships of evil worlds, and we teach and guide precept-breaking living beings. Morality forms the foundation of further progress on the right path. As mentioned above, the contents of morality in Buddhism compose of right speech, right action, and right livelihood of the Eightfold Noble Path. The moral code taught in Buddhism is very vast and varied and yet the function of Buddhist morality is one and not many. It is the control of man's verbal and physical actions. All morals set forth in Buddhism lead to this end, virtuous behavior, yet moral code is not an end in itself, but a means, for it aids concentration (samadhi). Samadhi, on the other hand, is a means to the acquisition of wisdom (panna), true wisdom, which in turn brings about deliverance of mind, the final goal of the teaching of the

Buddha. Virtue, Concentration, and Wisdom therefore is a blending of man's emotions and intellect. Dainin Katagiri wrote in *Returning to Silence*: "The Triple Treasure in Buddhism, 'I take refuge in the Buddha, I take refuge in the Dharma, I take refuge in the Sangha,' is the foundation of the precepts. The precepts in Buddhism are not a moral code that someone or something outside ourselves demands that we follow. The precepts are the Buddha-nature, the spirit of the universe. To receive the precepts is to transmit something significant beyond the understanding of our sense, such as the spirit of the universe or what we call Buddha-nature. What we have awakened to, deeply, through our body and mind, is transmitted from generation to generation, beyond our control. Having experienced this awakening, we can appreciate how sublime human life is. Whether we know it or not, or whether we like it or not, the spirit of the universe is transmitted. So we all can learn what the real spirit of a human being is... Buddha is the universe and Dharma is the teaching from the universe, and Sangha is the group of people who make the universe and its teaching alive in their lives. In our everyday life we must be mindful of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha whether we understand this or not."

The five basic commandments of Buddhism are the five commandments of Buddhism (against murder, theft, lust, lying and drunkenness). 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. When we respect and keep these five precepts, not only we give peace and happiness to ourselves, we also give happiness and peace to our families and society. People will feel very secure and comfortable when they are around us. Besides, to keep the basic five precepts will make us more generous and kind, will cause us to care and share whatever we can share with other people. Observing of the five precepts will help us with the followings: help make our life have more quality, help us obtain dignity and respect from others, help make us a good member of the family, a good father or mother, a filial child, help make us good citizens of the society.

In Buddhism, basic precepts, commandments, discipline, prohibition, morality, or rules in Buddhism. Precepts are designed by

the Buddha to help Buddhists guard against transgressions and stop evil. Transgressions spring from the three karmas of body, speech and mind. Rules and ceremonies, an intuitive apprehension of which, both written and unwritten, enables devotees to practice and act properly under all circumstances. As mentioned above, precepts mean vows of moral conduct taken by lay and ordained Buddhists. There are five vows for lay people, 250 for fully ordained monks, 348 for fully ordained nuns, 58 for Bodhisattvas (48 minor and 10 major). In the limit of this chapter, we only mention on the five precepts for lay people. As mentioned above, 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 a summary of the content of these five precepts as mentioned below: not to kill, not to steal, not to engage in improper sexual conduct, not to lie, and refrain from intoxicants. As for this chapter, we only summarize the Buddha's teachings on the four defilements of action that need be eliminated in the Sigalaka Sutra:

***The First Defilements of Action Is the Action of Taking Life:***

According to Buddhist teachings, killing is one of the ten kinds of evil karma, to kill living beings, to take life, kill the living, or any conscious being. According to *The Buddha and His Teaching*, written by Most Venerable Narada, killing means the intentional destruction of any living being. The Pali term *pana* strictly means the psycho-physical life pertaining to one's particular existence. The wanton destruction of this life-force, without allowing it to run its due course, is *panatipata*. *Pana* also means that which breathes. Hence all animate beings, including animals, are regarded as *pana*. Plants are not considered as "living beings" as they possess no mind. Monks and nuns, however, are forbidden to destroy even plant life. This rule, it may be mentioned, does not apply to lay-followers. Also according to the Buddhist laws, the taking of human life offends against the major commands, of animal life against the less stringent commands. Suicide also leads to severe penalties in the next lives. Thus, the Buddha advised not to kill. Not to take life is the first in the Five Precepts. We are living in an imperfect world where the strong prey on the weak, big animals prey on small animals, and killing is spreading everywhere. Even in the

animal world, we can see a tiger would feed on a deer, a snake on a frog, a frog on other small insects, or a big fish on a small fish, and so on. Let us take a look at the human world, we kill animals, and sometimes we kill one another for power. Thus, the Buddha set the first rule for his disciples, “not to kill.” Not to kill the living, the first of the Ten Commandments. Not to kill will help us become kind and full of pity. This is the first Buddhist precept, binding upon clergy and laity, not to kill and this includes not to kill, not to ask other people to kill, not to be joyful seeing killing, not to think of killing at any time, not to kill oneself (commit suicide), not to praise killing or death by saying “it’s better death for someone than life.” Not to kill is also including not to slaughtering animals for food because by doing this, you do not only cut short the lives of other beings, but you also cause pain and suffering for them. “Not to Take Life” is one of the first eight of the Ten Commandments which the Buddha set forth for lay Buddhists to observe 24 hours every fortnight. If we truly believe that all sentient beings are the Buddhas of the future, we would never think of killing or harming them in any way. Rather, we would have feelings of loving-kindness and compassion toward all of them, without exception. Buddhists do not take life out of the pity of others. Besides, not to kill will help us become kind and full of pity. Devout Buddhists should always remember the Buddha’s teachings, not only not to kill, not only do we respect life, we also cherish it. Abstain from killing and to extend compassion to all beings does not entail any restriction. All beings, in Buddhism, implies all living creatures, or all that breathe. It is an admitted fact that all that live, human or animal, love life and hate death. As life is precious to all, their one aim is to preserve it from harm and prolong it. This implies even to the smallest creatures that are conscious of being alive. According to the Dhammapada (131), “Whoever in his search for happiness harasses those who are fond of happiness will not be happy in the hereafter.” The happiness of all creatures depends on their being alive. So to deprive them of that which contains all good for them, is cruel and heartless in the extreme. Thus, not to harm and kill others is one of the most important virtue of a Buddhist. Those who develop the habit of being cruel to animal are quite capable of ill treating people as well when the opportunity comes. When a cruel thought gradually develops into an obsession it may well



lead to sadism. Those who kill suffer often in this life. After this life, the karma of their ruthless deeds will for long force them into states of woe. On the contrary, those who show pity towards others and refrain from killing will be born in good states of existence, and if reborn as humans, will be endowed with health, beauty, riches, influences, and intelligence, and so forth. Not to kill or injure any living being, or refraining from taking life. This is the first of the five commandments. Pranatipata-viratih also means not to have any intention to kill any living being; this includes animals, for they feel pain just as human do. On the contrary, one must lay respect and save lives of all sentient beings. The Buddha always taught in his sutras: “The greatest sin is killing; the highest merit is to save sentient lives. Life is dear to all.” In fact, all beings fear death and value life, we should therefore respect life and not kill anything. This precept forbids not only killing people but also any creature, especially if it is for money or sport. We should have an attitude of loving-kindness towards all beings, wishing them to be always happy and free. Caring for the Earth, not polluting its rivers and air, not destroying its forests, etc, are also included in this precept. Killing is one of the four grave prohibitions or sins in Buddhism. Killing is intentionally taking the life of any being, including animals. The advice of not killing challenges us to think creatively of alternate means to resolve conflict besides violence. Refraining from taking life. This is the first of the five commandments. Pranatipata-viratih also means not to have any intention to kill any living being; this includes animals, for they feel pain just as human do. On the contrary, one must lay respect and save lives of all sentient beings. The Buddha always taught in his sutras: “The greatest sin is killing; the highest merit is to save sentient lives.” According to the Buddhist laws, the taking of human life offends against the major commands, of animal life against the less stringent commands. Suicide also leads to severe penalties in the next lives. According to Most Venerable Dhammananda in the *Gems of Buddhism Wisdom*, the prohibition against the taking of any life applies not only to humanity but also to creatures of every kind, both big and small; black ants as well as red ants. Each day a vast number of animals are slaughtered as food, for most people eat meat, while vegetarians are not common. In the field of science, animals are used in many researches and experiments. In the administrative field,

arms are used in crime suppression. Law enforcement agencies punish law breakers. Belligerents at war use arms to destroy one another. The actions cited here as examples are not regarded as illegal or as running counter to normal worldly practice. Indeed, it may even be considered wrong to abstain from them, as is the case when constables or soldiers fail in their police or military duties. Nowadays many kinds of animals are known to be carriers of microbes and, thanks to the microscope, germs and many sorts of microbes have been detected. Almost everything contains them, even drinking water. Only the larger impurities are caught by filter; microbes can pass through. So infinite microbes pass into our throats with each draught of water. It is the same medicines. Whenever they are used, either externally or internally, they destroy myriads of microbes. Are these microbes to be considered as living beings in the sense of the first sila or are they not? If so, perhaps no one can fully comply with it. Besides, some are of the opinion that people who refrain from taking the life of animals should also refrain from eating meat, because it amounts to encouraging slaughter and is no less sinful according to them. Killing is one of the ten kinds of evil karma, to kill living beings, to take life, kill the living, or any conscious being. According to *The Buddha and His Teaching*, written by Most Venerable Narada, killing means the intentional destruction of any living being. The Pali term *pana* strictly means the psycho-physical life pertaining to one's particular existence. The wanton destruction of this life-force, without allowing it to run its due course, is *panatipata*. *Pana* also means that which breathes. Hence all animate beings, including animals, are regarded as *pana*. However, plants are not considered as "living beings" as they possess no mind. Monks and nuns, however, are forbidden to destroy even plant life. This rule, it may be mentioned, does not apply to lay-followers. Five conditions that are necessary to complete the evil of killing: a living being, knowledge that it is a living being, intention of killing, effort to kill, and consequent death (cause the death of that being). The gravity of the evil deed of killing depends on the goodness and the magnitude of the being concerned. If the killing of a virtuous person or a big animal is regarded as more heinous than the killing of a vicious person or a small animal, because a greater effort is needed to commit the evil and the loss involved is considerably great. The evil effects of killing

include brevity of life, ill-health, constant grief due to the separation from the loved one, and constant fear. Devout Buddhists should not kill, but should always save and set free living beings. Liberating living beings means not to kill but to save and set free living beings. A person with a greatly compassionate heart never kills living beings. On the contrary, that person always tries the practice of liberating living beings. A sincere Buddhist should always maintain a mind of kindness and cultivate the practice of liberating living beings. The Buddha taught: “A sincere Buddhist should always reflect thus ‘All male beings have been my father and all females have been my mother. There is not a single being who has not given birth to me during my previous lives, hence all beings of the Six Paths are my parents. Therefore, when a person kills and eats any of these beings, he thereby slaughters my parents.’” According to Buddhist theory, the only reason that causes wars in the world is people’s collective killing karma is so heavy. If in this life, I kill you, in the next life, you’ll kill me, and in the life after that, I will come back to kill you. This cycle of killing continues forever. People kill animals and in their next life they may become animals. The animals which they once killed now may return as people to claim revenge. This goes on and on. That’s why there exists an endless cycle of killing and bloodshed. To decrease or diminish our killing karma, we must practice liberating living beings. The merit and virtue that we accumulate from liberating animals is boundless. It enables us to cause living beings to live their full extent of their natural life span. The more we engage in liberating living beings, the lighter the collective killing karma our world has. If living beings in the six paths of any mundane world had no thoughts of killing, they would not have to follow a continual succession of births and deaths. According to the Surangama Sutra, the Buddha reminded Ananda about “cutting off killing”, one of the four important precepts for monks and nuns in Buddhism: “Ananda! If living beings in the six paths of any mundane world had no thoughts of killing, they would not have to follow a continual succession of births and deaths. Ananda! Your basic purpose in cultivating samadhi is to transcend the wearisome defilements. But if you do not remove your thoughts of killing, you will not be able to get out of the dust. Ananda! Even though one may have some wisdom and the manifestation of Zen Samadhi, one is certain to enter the path of

spirits if one does not cease killing. At best, a person will become a mighty ghost; on the average, one will become a flying yaksha, a ghost leader, or the like; at the lowest level, one will become an earth-bound rakshasa. These ghosts and spirits have their groups of disciples. Each says of himself that he has accomplished the unsurpassed way. After my extinction, in the Dharma-Ending Age, these hordes of ghosts and spirits will abound, spreading like wildfire as they argue that eating meat will bring one to the Bodhi Way. Ananda! I permit the Bhikshus to eat five kinds of pure meat. This meat is actually a transformation brought into being by my spiritual powers. It basically has no life-force. You Brahmans live in a climate so hot and humid, and on such sandy and rocky land, that vegetables will not grow. Therefore, I have had to assist you with spiritual powers and compassion. Because of the magnitude of this kindness and compassion, what you eat that tastes like meat is merely said to be meat; in fact, however, it is not. After my extinction, how can those who eat the flesh of living beings be called the disciples of Sakya? You should know that these people who eat meat may gain some awareness and may seem to be in samadhi, but they are all great rakshasas. When their retribution ends, they are bound to sink into the bitter sea of birth and death. They are not disciples of the Buddha. Such people as they kill and eat one another in a never-ending cycle. How can such people transcend the triple realm? Ananda! When you teach people in the world to cultivate samadhi, they must also cut off killing. This is the second clear and unalterable instruction on purity given by the Thus Come Ones and the Buddhas of the past, World Honored Ones. Therefore, Ananda, if cultivators of Zen Samadhi do not cut off killing, they are like one who stops up his ears and calls out in a loud voice, expecting no one to hear him. It is to wish to hide what is completely evident. Bhikshus and Bodhisattvas who practice purity will not even step on grass in the pathway; even less will they pull it up with their hand. How can one with great compassion pick up the flesh and blood of living beings and proceed to eat his fill? Bhikshus who do not wear silk, leather boots, furs, or down from this country or consume milk, cream, or butter can truly transcend this world. When they have paid back their past debts, they will not have to re-enter the triple realm. Why? It is because when one wears something taken from a living creature, one creates conditions with it,

just as when people eat the hundred grains, their feet cannot leave the earth. Both physically and mentally one must avoid the bodies and the by-products of living beings, by neither wearing them nor eating them. I say that such people have true liberation. What I have said here is the Buddha's teaching. Any explanation counter to it is the teaching of Papiyan. In the Middle Length Discourses, the Buddha advises people, especially Buddhist followers not to kill because all sentient beings tremble at the stick, to all life is dear. The Buddha has respected for life, any life, even the life of an insect or of a plant. He sets himself an example, not to throw remaining food on green vegetation, or in the water where there are small insects. He advises His disciples not to kill living beings and makes it very clear that, killing living beings will lead to hell, to the hungry ghost or to the animal, and the lightest evil result to be obtained is to be reborn as human being but with very short life. Moreover, killing living beings will bring up fear and hatred in the present and in the future, and pain and suffering in mind. He taught: "O householder, killing living beings, due to killing living beings, fear and hatred arise in the present, fear and hatred will arise in the future, thereby bringing up pain and suffering in mind. Refrain from killing living beings, fear and hatred do not arise in the present, will not arise in the future, thereby not bringing up pain and suffering in mind. Those who refrain from killing living beings will calm down this fear and hatred." The Buddha taught Bhiksus as follows: "Here, o Bhiksus, the Aryan disciple does not kill living beings, give up killing. O Bhiksus, the Aryan disciple who gives up killing, gives no fear to innumerable living beings, gives no hatred to innumerable living beings, and gives harmlessness to innumerable living beings. Having given no fear, no hatred, and harmlessness to innumerable living beings, the Aryan disciple has his share in innumerable fearlessness, in no hatred and in harmlessness. O Bhiksus, this is first class charity, great charity, timeless charity that is not despised by reclusees and brahmanas." In the Dharmapada Sutra, the Buddha taught: "All tremble at sword and rod, all fear death; comparing others with oneself, one should neither kill nor cause to kill (Dharmapada 129). All tremble at sword and rod, all love life; comparing others with oneself; one should not kill nor cause to kill (Dharmapada 130). He who takes the rod and harms a harmless person, will soon come to one of these ten stages

(Dharmapada 137). He will be subject to cruel suffering of infirmity, bodily injury, or serious sickness (Dharmapada 138). Or loss of mind, or oppression by the king, or heavy accusation, or loss of family members or relatives (Dharmapada 139). Or destruction of wealth, or lightening fire burn his house, and after death will go to the hell (Dharmapada 140).”

***The Second Defilements of Action Is the Action of Stealing:***

Taking possession of anything that has not been given by its owner or stealing, is also wrong, even legally speaking. Stealing, one of the four grave prohibitions or sins in Buddhism. Stealing is taking what isn't given to us. It includes not paying taxes or fees that are due, borrowing things and not returning them, and taking things from our workplace for our own personal use. Thus, the Buddha advised not to steal. Not to steal or not to cheat, or not to take anything with dishonest intent. Abstain from stealing and to live honestly, taking only what is one's own by right. To take what belongs to another is not so serious as to deprive him of his life, but it is still a grave crime because it deprives him of some happiness. As no one wants to be robbed, it is not difficult to understand that it is wrong to take what is not one's own. The thought that urges a person to steal can never be good or wholesome. Then robbery leads to violence and even to murder. This precept is easily violated by those in trade and commerce. A man can use both his pen and his tongue with intent to steal. There can be no peace or happiness in a society where people are always on the look-out to cheat and rob their neighbors. Theft may take many forms. For instance, if an employee slacks or works badly and yet is paid in full, he is really a theft, for he takes the money he has not earned. And the same applies to the employer if he fails to pay adequate wages. We all have the same right to own things and give them away as we wish. However, we should not take things that do not belong to us by stealing or cheating. Instead, we should learn to give to help others, and always take good care of the things that we use, whether they belong to us or to the public. In a broader sense, this precept means being responsible. If we are lazy and neglect our studies or work, we are said to be “stealing time” of our own. This precept also encourages us to be generous. Buddhists give to the poor and the sick and make offerings to monks and nuns to practice being good. Buddhists are usually generous

to their parents, teachers and friends to show gratitude for their advice, guidance and kindness. Buddhists also offer sympathy and encouragement to those who feel hurt or discouraged. Helping people by telling them about the Dharma is considered to be the highest form of giving. Not to steal because we have no right to take what is not give. Not to steal will help us become honest. Not to steal is one of the first eight of the Ten Commandments which the Buddha set forth for lay Buddhists to observe 24 hours every fortnight. Not to take anything which does not belong to you or what is not given to you. Refraining from taking what is not given. Adattadana-viratih means not directly or indirectly taking other's belongings. On the contrary, one should give things, not only to human beings, but also to animals. The Buddha always taught in his sutras "desire brings great misfortune; giving brings great fortune." Not to steal because we have no right to take what is not given. Not to steal will help us become honest. Five conditions are necessary for the completion of the evil of stealing: another's property, knowledge that it is so, intention of stealing, effort to steal, and actual removal. Devout Buddhists should not steal, for not stealing will help us increase our generosity, increase trust in other people, increase our honesty, life without sufferings, and life without disappointment. According to the Surangama Sutra, the Buddha reminded Ananda about "cutting off stealing", one of the four important precepts for monks and nuns in Buddhism: "Ananda! If living beings in the six paths of any mundane world had no thoughts of stealing, they would not have to follow a continuous succession of births and deaths. Ananda! Your basic purpose in cultivating samadhi is to transcend the wearisome defilements. But if you do not renounce your thoughts of stealing, you will not be able to get out of the dust. Ananda! Even though one may have some wisdom and the manifestation of Zen Samadhi, one is certain to enter a devious path if one does not cease stealing. At best, one will be an apparition; on the average, one will become a phantom; at the lowest level, one will be a devious person who is possessed by a Mei-Ghost. These devious hordes have their groups of disciples. Each says of himself that he has accomplished the unsurpassed way. After my extinction, in the Dharma-Ending Age, these phantoms and apparitions will abound, spreading like wildfire as they surreptitiously cheat others. Calling

themselves good knowing advisors, they will each say that they have attained the superhuman dharmas. Enticing and deceiving the ignorant, or frightening them out of their wits, they disrupt and lay waste to households wherever they go. I teach the Bhikshus to beg for their food in an assigned place, in order to help them renounce greed and accomplish the Bodhi Way. The Bhikshus do not prepare their own food, so that, at the end of this life of transitory existence in the triple realm, they can show themselves to be once-returners who go and do not come back. How can thieves who put on my robes and sell the Thus Come One's dharmas, saying that all manner of karma one creates is just the Buddhadharma? They slander those who have left the home-life and regard Bhikshus who have taken complete precepts as belonging to the path of the small vehicle. Because of such doubts and misjudgments, limitless living beings fall into the Unintermittent Hell. I say that Bhikshus who after my extinction have decisive resolve to cultivate samadhi, and who before the images of Thus Come Ones can burn a candle on their bodies, or burn off a finger, or burn even one incense stick on their bodies, will in that moment, repay their debts from beginningless time past. They can depart from the world and forever be free of outflows. Though they may not have instantly understood the unsurpassed enlightenment, they will already have firmly set their mind on it. If one does not practice any of these token renunciations of the body on the causal level, then even if one realizes the unconditioned, one will still have to come back as a person to repay one's past debts exactly as I had to undergo the retribution of having to eat the grain meant for horses. Ananda! When you teach people in the world to cultivate samadhi, they must also cease stealing. This is the third clear and unalterable instruction on purity given by the Thus Come One and the Buddhas of the past, World Honored Ones. Therefore, Ananda, if cultivators of Zen Samadhi do not cease stealing, they are like someone who pours water into a leaking cup and hopes to fill it. He may continue for as many eons as there are fine motes of dust, but it still will not be full in the end. If Bhikshus do not store away anything but their robes and bowls; if they give what is left over from their food-offerings to hungry living beings; if they put their palms together and make obeisance to the entire great assembly; if when people scold them they can treat it as praise: if they can sacrifice their



very bodies and minds, giving their flesh, bones, and blood to living creatures. If they do not repeat the non-ultimate teachings of the Thus Come One as though they were their own explanations, misrepresenting them to those who have just begun to study, then the Buddha gives them his seal as having attained true samadhi. What I have said here is the Buddha's teaching. Any explanation counter to it is the teaching of Papiyan.

***The Third Defilements of Action Is the Action of Committing Sexual Misconduct:*** Sexual misconduct or Adultery is the third commandment of the five basic commandments for lay people, and the third precept of the ten major precepts for monks and nuns in the Brahma Net Sutra. Monks or nuns who commit this offence will be expelled from the Order forever. Thus, the Buddha advised lay people not to commit sexual misconduct. Not to engage in improper sexual conduct. Against lust, not to commit adultery, to abstain from all sexual excess, or refraining from sexual misconduct. This includes not having sexual intercourse with another's husband or wife, or being irresponsible in sexual relationship. Adultery is wrong. Laypeople should be responsible in sexual matters. If we do not have the great opportunity to renounce the world to become monks and nuns to cultivate obtain liberation, we should keep a good relationship between husband and wife, we should be considerate, loving and faithful to each other, then our family will be happy, and our society will be better. One who commits it does not command respect nor does one inspire confidence. Sexual misconduct involving person with whom conjugal relations should be avoided to custom, or those who are prohibited by law, or by the Dharma, is also wrong. So is coercing by physical or even financial means a married or even unmarried person into consenting to such conduct. The purpose of this third sila is to preserve the respectability of the family of each person concerned and to safeguard its sanctity and inviolability. According to The Path of Purification, "Bad Ways" is a term for doing what ought not to be done and not doing what ought to be done, out of desire, hate, delusion, and fear. They are called "bad ways" because they are ways not to be travel by Noble Ones. Adultery is mentioned in Buddhist texts as one of a number of forms of similar sexual misconduct. For monks or nuns who only think about or wish to commit sexual intercourse with any

people (not wait until physically committing sexual intercourse) are guilty and violate the Vinaya commandments and must be excommunicated from the Order. For laypeople, thinking or wishing to make love or physically making love with those who are not their husband or wife is forbidden. Avoiding the misuse of sex is respect for people and personal relationships. Much unhappiness arises from the misuse of sex and from living in irresponsible ways. Many families have been broken as a result, and many children have been victims of sexual abuse. For all lay Buddhists, the happiness of others is also the happiness of ourselves, so sex should be used in a caring and loving manner, not in a craving of worldly flesh. When observing this precept, sexual desire should be controlled, and husbands and wives should be faithful towards each other. This will help to create peace in the family. In a happy family, the husband and wife respect, trust and love each other. With happy families, the world would be a better place for us to live in. Young Buddhists should keep their minds and bodies pure to develop their goodness. Devout Buddhists should not commit sexual misconduct (to have unchaste) because first, we don't want to be a bad person in the society; second, not to have unchaste will help us become pure and good. Not to commit sexual misconduct is the third commandment of the five basic commandments for lay people, and the third precept of the ten major precepts for monks and nuns in the Brahma Net Sutra. Monks or nuns who commit this offence will be expelled from the Order forever. This is one of the first eight of the Ten Commandments which the Buddha set forth for lay Buddhists to observe 24 hours every fortnight. There are four conditions that are necessary to complete the evil of sexual misconduct: the thought to enjoy, consequent effort, means to gratify (gratification or the act of sexual misconduct). For Monks and Nuns, a Bhikṣu who, when motivated by sexual desire, tells a woman or a man that it would be a good thing for her or him to have sexual relations with him, commits a Sangha Restoration Offence. A Bhikṣuni who is intent upon having sexual relations with someone, whether male or female, breaks one of the eight Degradation Offences. She is no longer worthy to remain a Bhikṣuni and cannot participate in the activities of the Order of Bhikṣunis. Through word or gesture arouses sexual desire in that person, breaks the seventh of the Eight Degradation Offences. Says to

that person that she is willing to offer him or her sexual relations, breaks the eighth of the Eight Degradation Offences. According to The Buddha and His Teachings, written by Most Venerable Narada, these are the inevitable consequences of Kamesu-micchacara: having many enemies, union with undesirable wives and husbands (spouses), and birth as a woman or as a eunuch (thái giám). If living beings in the six paths of any mundane world had no thoughts of lust, they would not have to follow a continual succession of births and deaths. According to the Surangama Sutra, the Buddha reminded Ananda about “cutting off lust”, one of the four important precepts for monks and nuns in Buddhism: “Ananda! Your basic purpose in cultivating is to transcend the wearisome defilements. But if you don’t renounce your lustful thoughts, you will not be able to get out of the dust. Even though one may have some wisdom and the manifestation of Zen Samadhi, one is certain to enter demonic paths if one does not cut off lust. At best, one will be a demon king; on the average, one will be in the retinue of demons; at the lowest level, one will be a female demon. These demons have their groups of disciples. Each says of himself he has accomplished the unsurpassed way. After my extinction, in the Dharma-Ending Age, these hordes of demons will abound, spreading like wildfire as they openly practice greed and lust. Calming to be good knowing advisors, they will cause living beings to fall into the pit of love and views and lose the way to Bodhi Ananda! When you teach people in the world to cultivate samadhi, they must first of all sever the mind of lust. This is the first clear and unalterable instruction on purity given by the Thus Come Ones and the Buddhas of the past, World Honored Ones. Therefore, Ananda, if cultivators of Zen Samadhi do not cut off lust, they will be like someone who cooks sand in the hope of getting rice, after hundreds of thousands of eons, it will still be just hot sand. Why? It wasn’t rice to begin with; it was only sand. Ananda! If you seek the Buddha’s wonderful fruition and still have physical lust, then even if you attain a wonderful awakening, it will be based in lust. With lust at the source, you will revolve in the three paths and not be able to get out. Which road will you take to cultivate and be certified to the Thus Come One’s Nirvana? You must cut off the lust which is intrinsic in both body and mind. Then get rid of even the aspect of cutting it off. At that point you have some hope of attaining the

Buddha's Bodhi. What I have said here is the Buddha's teaching. Any explanation counter to it is the teaching of Papiyan. According to the Anguttara Nikaya, the Buddha taught: "Monk, I know not of any other single form by which a man's heart is attracted as it is by that of a woman. Monks, a woman's form fills a man's mind. Monks, I know not of any other single sound by which a man's heart is attracted as it is by that of a woman. Monks, a woman's sound fills a man's mind. (the same thing happens with smell, flavor, touch..." Sex is described by the Buddha as the strongest impulse in man, if one becomes a slave to this impulse, even the most powerful man turn into a weakling; even the sage may fall from the higher to a lower level. In the Dharmapada Sutra, the Buddha taught: "Four misfortunes occur to a careless man who commits adultery: acquisition of demerit, restlessness, moral blame and downward path (Dharmapada 309). There is acquisition of demerit as well as evil destiny. No joy of the frightened man. The king imposes a heavy punishment. Therefore, man should never commit adultery (Dharmapada 310)." In the Forty-Two Sections Sutra, the Buddha said: "There was once someone who, plagued by ceaseless sexual desire, wished to castrate himself. To cut off your sexual organs would not be as good as to cut off your mind. Your mind is like a supervisor; if the supervisor stops, his employees will also quit. If the deviant mind is not stopped, what good does it do to cut off the organs?" The Kasyapa Buddha taught: 'Desire is born from your will; your will is born from thought. When both aspects of the mind are still, there is neither form nor activity.'

***The Fourth Defilements of Action Is the Action of Lying:*** Lying means verbally saying or indicating through a nod or a shrug something we know isn't true. However, telling the truth should be tempered with compassion. For instance, it isn't wise to tell the truth to a murderer about a potential victim's whereabouts, if this would cause the latter's death. False speech means nonsense or transgression speaking, or lying, either slander, false boasting, or deception. Lying also means not to tell the truth. Lying also means tale-bearing speech, or double tongue speech, or slandering speech. Lying also means harsh speech or frivolous talk. Slander the Buddhist Sutras is considered a serious lying. Slandering the Buddhist sutras means ridiculing Buddhist theories taught by the Buddha and written in the sutras, i.e., saying that the principles in the Buddhist sutras are false, that the Buddhist and Great Vehicle sutras were spoken by demon kings, and so on. This sort of offense cannot be pardoned through repentance. According to The Buddha and His Teachings, there are four conditions that are necessary to complete the evil of lying: an untruth, deceiving intention, utterance, and actual deception. According to Buddhism, "Lying" is the main rationalization for other offenses. Devout Buddhists should always be aware of the following situations: we tell

lies when we contend; we tell lies when we are greedy; we tell lies when we seek gratification; we tell lies as we are selfish; we tell lies as we chase personal advantages. We tell lies to deceive people. We commit mistakes but do not want to admit, so we tell lies and try to rationalize for ourselves, and so on, and so on. Also according to *The Buddha and His Teachings*, written by Most Venerable Narada, there are some inevitable consequences of lying as follow: being subject to abusive speech, vilification, untrustworthiness, and stinking mouth. The Buddha wanted His disciples to be so perfectly truthful that He encouraged us not to lie, but to speak the truth, the whole truth. Against lying, deceiving and slandering. Not to lie includes not saying bad things, not gossiping, not twisting stories, and not lying. On the contrary, one must use the right gentle speech, which gives benefit to oneself and others. However, sometimes they are unable to speak the truth; for instance, they may have to lie to save themselves from harm, and doctors lie to bolster their patients' morale. Lying under these circumstances may be contrary to the sila, but it is not entirely contrary to the loving-kindness and to its purpose. This sila aims at bringing about mutual benefits by adhering to truth and avoiding verbal offences. Similarly, utterances harmful to another's well-being, for example, malicious, abusive or slanderous speech intended either to deride others or to vaunt oneself may be truthful, yet they must be regarded as wrong, because they are contrary to the sila. Sincere Buddhists should always respect each other and not tell lies or boast about ourselves. This would result in fewer quarrels and misunderstandings, and the world would be a more peaceful place. In observing the fourth precept, we should always speak the truth. There are four ways of "Mrsavadaviratih". The first way is "lying". Lying means verbally saying or indicating through a nod or a shrug something we know isn't true. However, telling the truth should be tempered and compassion. For instance, it isn't wise to tell the truth to a murderer about a potential victim's whereabouts, if this would cause the latter's death. We should not to lie because if we lie, nobody would believe us. Furthermore, not to lie will help us become truthful and trustful. According to the *Dharmapada Sutra*, verse 306, the Buddha taught: "The speaker of untruth goes down; also he who denies what he has done, both sinned against truth. After death they go together to hells." The second way is "Tale-bearing" or "Slandering". To slander means to twist stories, or to utilize slandering words. The Pali word means literally 'breaking up of fellowship'. To slander another is most wicked for it entails making a false statement intended to damage someone's reputation. The slanderer often commits two crimes simultaneously, he says what is false because his report is untrue and then he back-bites. In Sanskrit poetry the back-biter is compared to a mosquito which though small is noxious. It comes singing, settles on you, draws blood and may give you

malaria. Again the tale-bearer's words may be sweet as honey, but his mind is full of poison. Let us then avoid tale-bearing and slander which destroy friendships. Instead of causing trouble let us speak words that make for peace and reconciliation. Instead of sowing the seed of dissension, let us bring peace and friendship to those living in discord and enmity. The third way is "Harsh speech" (Pharusavaca p). Harsh words include insult, abuse, ridicule, sarcasm, and so on. Sometimes harsh words can be said with a smile, as when we innocently pretend what we have said won't hurt other people. Devout Buddhists should never use harsh words because harsh words hurt others. According to *The Buddha and His Teaching*, written by Most Venerable Narada, there are three conditions that are necessary to complete the evil of harsh speech: a person to be abused, an angry thought, and the actual abuse. The inevitable consequences of harsh speech: being detested by others though absolutely harmless, and having a harsh voice. At the time of the Buddha, one day, an angry man with a bad temper went to see the Buddha. The man used harsh words to abuse the Buddha. The Buddha listened to him patiently and quietly, and did not say anything as the man spoke. The angry man finally stopped speaking. Only then did the Buddha ask him, "If someone wants to give you something, but you don't want to accept it, to whom does the gift belong?" "Of course it belongs to the person who tried to give it away in the first place," the man answered. "Likewise it is with your abuse," said the Buddha. "I do not wish to accept it, and so it belongs to you. You should have to keep this gift of harsh words and abuse for yourself. And I am afraid that in the end you will have to suffer it, for a bad man who abuses a good man can only bring suffering on himself. It is as if a man wanted to dirty the sky by spitting at it. His spittle can never make the sky dirty, it would only fall onto his own face and make it dirty instead." The man listened to the Buddha and felt ashamed. He asked the Buddha to forgive him and became one of his followers. The Buddha then said, "Only kind words and reasoning can influence and transform others." Sincere Buddhist should avoid using harsh words in speech. The fourth way is "Frivolous talk" (Samphappalapa p). According to Most Venerable in *The Buddha and His Teachings*, there are two conditions that are necessary to complete the evil of frivolous talk: the inclination towards frivolous talk, and its narration. The inevitable consequences of frivolous talk: defective bodily organs and incredible speech. According to the *Dharmapada Sutra*, verse 306, the Buddha taught: "The speaker of untruth goes down; also he who denies what he has done, both sinned against truth. After death they go together to hells."

## ***Chapter Eight***

### ***Not to Commit Four Causes of Evil Karmas: Attachment-Ill Will-Ignorance-Fear***

#### ***I. An Overview of Four Causes of Evil Karmas: Attachment-Ill Will-Ignorance-Fear:***

In the Sigalaka Sutra, the Buddha taught: What are the four causes of evil from which he refrains? Evil action springs from attachment, it springs from ill-will, it springs from folly, it springs from fear. If the Ariyan disciple does not act out of attachment, ill-will, folly or fear, he will not do evil from any one of the the four causes. Thus, the Lord spoke. As a matter of fact, in Buddhism, vehement longing or desire or coveting others' possessions is when we plan how to procure something belonging to another person. Raga is also interpreted as tainted by and in bondage to the five desires. 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. 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. 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. Ignorance is an unenlightened mind that led astray. In Buddhism, delusion or moha is a synonym for avijja, ignorance. Its characteristic is mental blindness

or unknowing. Its function is non-penetration, or concealment of the real nature of the object. It is manifested as the absence of right understanding or as mental darkness. Its proximate cause is unwise attention. It should be seen as the root of all that is unwholesome. The defilements we call lust or greed, anger, ignorance, and fear 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'. 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 lust, anger, stupidity, arrogance... If we, Buddhists, can enter and advance on the path of cultivation, not talking about becoming a Buddha, at the every moment, at least, we can reduce evil thoughts, ignorance, selfishness, hatred, anger, jealousy, grudges, and ill-will. Furthermore, if we can identify them in our daily life, that is similar to the reduction of the effects of the bad karma that we committed in many aeons in the past, for this the way that the Buddha advanced for overcoming the bad effects.

Buddhism calls four causes of evil of greed, anger, ignorance and fear 'poisons'. Poison is also called Defilement or Hindrances. These poisons are sources of all passions and delusions. The fundamental evils inherent in life which give rise to human suffering. The three poisons are regarded as the sources of all illusions and earthly desires. They pollute people's lives. Men worry about many things. Poisons include harsh or stern words for repressing evil; misleading teaching. Poisons are also the turbidity of desire or the contamination of desire. The poison of desire or love which harms devotion to Buddhist practices. Besides, the poison of delusion, one of the three poisons, and the poison of touch, a term applied to woman. According to the Buddha, there are four poisons in our body, or four poisonous snakes in a basket which imply the four elements in a body (of which a man is



formed). The four elements of the body, earth, water, fire and wind which harm a man by their variation, i.e. increase and decrease. Three Poisons or three sources of all passions and delusions. The fundamental evils inherent in life which give rise to human suffering. The three poisons are regarded as the sources of all illusions and earthly desires. They pollute people's lives. Men worry about many things. Broadly speaking, there are 84,000 worries. But after analysis, we can say there are only 10 serious ones including the three evil roots of greed, hatred, and delusion. Three poisons of greed, hatred and ignorance do not only cause our afflictions, but also prevent us from tasting the pure and cool flavor of emancipation (liberation).

In Buddhism, desire means greed and love of the things of this life or craving (greed, affection, desire). 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. 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. 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. Unenlightened and led astray. In Buddhism, delusion or moha is a synonym for avijja, ignorance. Its characteristic is mental blindness or unknowing. Its function is non-penetration, or concealment of the real nature of the object. It is manifested as the absence of right understanding or as mental darkness. Its proximate cause is unwise attention. It should be seen as the root of all that is unwholesome.

Among the four causes of evil karmas of greed, anger, ignorance, and fear, 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'.

According to the Samyutta Nikaya or the Kindred Sayings, volume 35, after the Buddha met the three brothers of Kasyapa and their one thousand followers, the Buddha found out that they belonged to the Fire-worshipping Sect, so the Blessed One expounded to them the discourse on fire. "Thus have I heard, the Blessed One was once staying at Gaya Sisa with a thousand Bhiksus. There he addressed the Bhiksus: "O Bhiksus, all is on fire. And what all is on fire? The eye, o Bhiksus, is on fire. Forms are on fire. Eye-consciousness is on fire. Eye-contact is on fire. Feeling, which is pleasant or painful, or neither pleasant nor painful, arising from eye-contact is on fire. With what is it burning? It is burning with the fire of lust, the fire of hate, ignorance, birth, decay, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair. So I declare. The ear, the nose, the tongue, the body, the mind... is on fire. Seeing thus, o Bhiksus, a well-taught Ariyan disciple gets disgusted with the eye, forms, eye-consciousness, eye-contact, feeling... He gets disgusted with the ear, sounds, ear-consciousness, ear-contact; the nose, odours, nose-consciousness, nose-contact;... the body, tactile objects, body-consciousness, body-contact;... the mind, mental objects, mind-consciousness, mind-contact and any feeling that arises. With disgust, he gets detached; with detachment, he is liberated. When he is liberated, there is knowledge that he is liberated. And he understands thus: "Birth is destroyed, the holy life is lived, what should be done is done, there is no more of this state again." After the Buddha expounded the "Discourse on Fire," all the Bhiksus were pleased at his words and welcomed them. When the Buddha concluded his sermon, the hearts of the thousand Bhiksus were liberated from defilements, without attachment and they all became Arahants.

## ***II. Summaries of Four Causes of Evil Karmas of Greed-Anger-Ignorance-Fear In Buddhist Teachings:***

***The First Cause of Evil Is Selfish Desire:*** 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.

Craving (greed, affection, and desire) means desire for and love of the things of this 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. 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. 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.

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)."

***The Second Cause of Evil Is Anger or Resentment:*** Ill-will or Hatred is one of the three poisons in Buddhism (greed, anger, ignorance). This is one of the three fires which burn in the mind until allowed to die for fuelling. Anger manifests itself in a very crude manner, destroying the practitioner in a most effective way. To subdue anger and resentment, we must develop a compassionate mind. According to Buddhist psychology, the mental factor of aversion is always linked to the experience of pain. One may be greedy and happy, but never angry and happy at the same time. Anyone who cultures hatred, anger, or malice, nurses revenge or keeps alive a grudge is bound to experience much suffering for he has laid hold a very potent source of it. Those who exercise their hatred on others as in killing, torturing or maiming may expect birth in a state, compared in the scriptural simile to a pitfull of glowing situations, where they will

experience feelings which are exclusively painful, sharp, and severe. Only in such an environment will they be able to experience all the misery which they, by their own cruelty to others, have brought upon themselves. The Buddha taught: “Bandits who steal merits are of no comparison to hatred and anger. Because when hatred and anger arise, inevitable innumerable karma will be created. Immediately thereafter, hundreds and thousands of obstructions will appear, masking the proper teachings of enlightenment, burying and dimming the Buddha Nature. Therefore, a thought of hatred and anger had just barely risen, ten thousands of karmic doors will open immediately. It is to say with just one thought of hatred, one must endure all such obstructions and obstacles.” In the Dharmapada Sutra, the Buddha taught: “One should give up anger; one should abandon pride. One should overcome all fetters. No suffering befall him who calls nothing his own (Dharmapada 221). He who controls his anger which arises as a rolling chariot. He is a true charioteer. Other people are only holding the rein (Dharmapada 222). Conquer anger by love; conquer evil by good; conquer stingy by giving; conquer the liar by truth (Dharmapada 223). One should guard against the bodily anger, or physical action, and should control the body. One should give up evil conduct of the body. One should be of good bodily conduct (Dharmapada 231). One should guard against the anger of the tongue; one should control the tongue. One should give up evil conduct in speech. One should be of good conduct in speech (Dharmapada 232). One should guard against the anger of the mind; one should control the mind. One should give up evil conduct of the mind. One should practice virtue with the mind (Dharmapada 233).”

Resentment or ill-will is one of the three fires which burn in the mind until allowed to die for fuelling. Anger is one of the three poisons in Buddhism (greed, anger and ignorance). 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." It 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.

The anger or *dosa* is the root of suffering and the rebirth in hell. Anger, ire, wrath, resentment, one of the six fundamental *klesas*. Anger happens when one represses the emotional feelings deep inside. This is one of the three poisons in Buddhism (greed, anger, ignorance). One of the three fires which burn in the mind until allowed to die for fuelling. Anger manifests itself in a very crude manner, destroying the practitioner in a most effective way. To subdue anger and resentment, we must develop a compassionate mind. According to Buddhist psychology, the mental factor of aversion is always linked to the experience of pain. One may be greedy and happy, but never angry and happy at the same time. Anyone who cultures hatred, anger, or malice, nurses revenge or keeps alive a grudge is bound to experience much suffering for he has laid hold a very potent source of it. Those who exercise their hatred on others as in killing, torturing or maiming may expect birth in a state, compared in the scriptural simile to a pitfull of glowing situations, where they will experience feelings which are exclusively painful, sharp, and severe. Only in such an environment will they be able to experience all the misery which they, by their own cruelty to others, have brought upon themselves. The Buddha taught: “Bandits who steal merits are of no comparison to hatred and anger. Because when hatred and anger arise, inevitable innumerable karma will be created. Immediately thereafter, hundreds and thousands of obstructions will appear, masking the proper teachings of enlightenment, burying and dimming the Buddha Nature. Therefore, A thought of hatred and anger had just barely risen, ten thousands of karmic doors will open immediately. It is to say with just one thought of hatred, one must endure all such obstructions and obstacles.”

According to Most Venerable Narada in *The Buddha and His Teaching*, there are two conditions that are necessary to complete the evil of ill-will: first, from another person; and second, from the thought of doing harm. Doso, the second unwholesome root, comprises all kinds and degrees of aversion, ill-will, anger, irritation, annoyance, and animosity. Its characteristic is ferocity. Its function is to spread, or burn up its own support, i.e. the mind and body in which it arises. It is manifested as persecuting, and its proximate cause is a ground for annoyance. Anger, Ill-will or hatred is one of the three poisons in Buddhism (greed, anger, ignorance). This is one of the three fires which burn in the mind until allowed to die for fuelling. Anger manifests itself in a very crude manner, destroying the practitioner in a most effective way. To subdue anger and resentment, we must develop a compassionate mind. According to Buddhist psychology, the mental factor of aversion is always linked to the experience of pain. One may be greedy and happy, but never angry and happy at the same time. Anyone who cultures hatred, anger, or malice, nurses revenge or keeps alive a grudge is bound to experience much suffering for he has laid hold a very potent source of it. Those who exercise their hatred on others as in killing, torturing or maiming may expect birth in a state, compared in the scriptural simile to a pitfull of glowing situations, where they will experience feelings which are exclusively painful, sharp, and severe. Only in such an environment will they be able to experience all the misery which they, by their own cruelty to others, have brought upon themselves. It 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.

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. Also according to Most Venerable Narada in *The Buddha and His Teachings*, these are the inevitable consequences of ill-will: first, ugliness; second, manifold diseases; and third, detestable nature. In order to repent the mind of anger one must first repent the mind-karma. Sincere Buddhists should always remember that the mind consciousness is the reason to give rise to infinite offenses of the other five consciousnesses, from Sight, Hearing, Scent, Taste, and Touch Consciousnesses. The mind consciousness is

similar to an order passed down from the King to his magistrates and chancellors. Eyes take great pleasure in looking and observing unwholesome things, ears take great pleasure in listening to melodious sounds, nose takes great pleasure in smelling aromas and fragrance, tongue takes great pleasure in speaking vulgarly and irresponsibly as well as finding joy in tasting the various delicacies, foods, and wines, etc; body takes great pleasure in feeling various sensations of warmth, coolness, softness, velvet clothing. Karmic offenses arise from these five consciousness come from their master, the Mind; the mind consciousness is solely responsible for all their actions. In the end, this will result in continual drowning in the three evil paths, enduring infinite pains and sufferings in hells, hungry ghosts, and animals. In the Dharmapada, the Buddha taught: “Guard one’s mind much like guarding a castle; protect the mind similar to protecting the eye ball. Mind is an enemy capable of destroying and eliminating all of the virtues and merits one has worked so hard to accumulate during one’s existence, or sometimes many lifetimes. To repent the mind-karma, sincere Buddhists should think that the three karmas of Greed, Hatred, and Ignorance of the mind are the roots and foundations of infinite karmic transgressions. The mind-karma is the web of ignorance which masks our wisdom and is the affliction and worry that cover our true nature. It should be feared and needs be avoided. Sincere Buddhists should use their heart and mind to sincerely confess and repent, be remorseful, and vow never again to commit such offenses.

Talking about the attitude of acceptance or not acceptance of angry and displeasure, according to the Middle Length Discourses, the Buddha taught: “Angry and displeased, brahmana Akkosaka-bharadvaja went to the Enlightened One, and there abused and reviled the Enlightened One in harsh and rude words. Being thus spoken the Enlightened One said to the brahmana: “What do you think Brahmana? Do your friends and acquaintances, do your blood relatives and guests pay a visit to you?” Akkosaka replied: “Yes, sometimes, friends and acquaintances, blood relatives and guests pay me a visit.” The Buddha said: “What do you think, o brahmana? Do you offer them food to chew, to eat and to taste?” Akkosaka replied: “Sometimes, I offer them food to chew, to eat and to taste.” The Buddha continued to ask: “O brahmana, if they do not accept them, to whom these foods come back?

Brahmana replied: “If they do not accept them, these foods come back to us.” The Buddha continued to say: “In the same way, o brahmana! You have abused us who do not abuse. You have reviled us who do not revile. You have scolded us who do not scold. We do not accept them from you, so they are all for you. O brahmana, they are all for you. O brahmana, he who abuses back when abused at, who reviles back when reviled, who scolds back when scolded, o brahmana, this is called eating them together and sharing them together. We do not eat them with you. We do not share them with you. So they are all for you, o brahmana! They are all for you, o brahmana! Thus the Buddha always reminded his disciples: “Hatreds do not cease hatred; by love alone do they cease.” The Buddha continued to remind: “The more evil that comes to me, the more good will radiate from me, for I always return good for evil.” Some people believe that it’s not practical to return good for evil and they believe that “return swords for swords.” Yes, it’s easy to think and to do about “return sword for sword,” but in doing that we might get caught in the quagmire of troubles. It’s extremely difficult by returning good for evil. It’s extremely difficult to smile with the person who just raised his hand to beat us, but we are the Buddha’s disciples, we must listen to his teaching, we must return good for evil at all times, in all places and circumstances. The Buddha taught: “Bandits who steal merits are of no comparison to hatred and anger. Because when hatred and anger arise, inevitable innumerable karma will be created. Immediately thereafter, hundreds and thousands of obstructions will appear, masking the proper teachings of enlightenment, burying and dimming the Buddha Nature. Therefore, a thought of hatred and anger had just barely risen, ten thousands of karmic doors will open immediately. It is to say with just one thought of hatred, one must endure all such obstructions and obstacles.” In the Dharmapada Sutra, the Buddha taught: “He abused me, he beat me, he defeated me, he robbed me.” Hatred will never leave those who dwell on such thoughts (3). “He abused me, he hit me, he defeated me, he robbed me.” Hatred will leave those who do not harbor such thoughts (4). In this world, hatred never destroys (eliminates) hatred, only love does. This is an eternal law (5). One should give up anger; one should abandon pride. One should overcome all fetters. No suffering befall him who calls nothing his own (Dharmapada 221). He who controls his

anger which arises as a rolling chariot. He is a true charioteer. Other people are only holding the rein (Dharmapada 222). Conquer anger by love; conquer evil by good; conquer stingy by giving; conquer the liar by truth (Dharmapada 223). One should speak the truth. One should not be angry. One should give when asked to. These are three good deeds that help carry men the realm of heaven (224). One should guard against the bodily anger, or physical action, and should control the body. One should give up evil conduct of the body. One should be of good bodily conduct (Dharmapada 231). One should guard against the anger of the tongue; one should control the tongue. One should give up evil conduct in speech. One should be of good conduct in speech (Dharmapada 232). One should guard against the anger of the mind; one should control the mind. One should give up evil conduct of the mind. One should practice virtue with the mind (Dharmapada 233).

***The Third Cause of Evil Is Ignorance:*** In Buddhism, 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 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 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.

Ignorance means Unenlightened, the first or last of the twelve nidanas. Ignorance is Illusion or darkness without illumination, the ignorance which mistakes seeming for being, or illusory phenomena for realities. 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 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 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. It is 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.

***The Fourth Cause of Evil Is Fear & Worry: A Summary of Fear & Worry in Buddhist Teachings:*** In Buddhist teachings, fear and worry are human beings' natural nature. People worry when they compare and feel that they're not as good as others. People also worry when they think that they do not have abilities to this thing or that thing, and so on. People still have many other kinds of worry such as worrying for being criticized; worrying for their physical appearance; worrying that the happiness they now enjoy might quickly disappear and turn into sufferings and afflictions... Meanwhile, ordinary fear is a sinking sign of anger. When we cannot face the problem, we show no reaction outwardly and wait for the opportunity to run away. According to Buddhist teachings, fear only comes to those who are unable to comprehend the basic laws of nature. These lack of understanding push human beings to enter the path which is full of superstitions. In other words, fear fertilizes and causes the growth of superstitions; and fear itself will surely thicken the fog of ignorance. But if we can face our problem directly, with an open and relaxed mind, fear will not arise. Buddhist practitioners should always remember that fear and cowardliness belong to the sixth army of Mara. It easily attacks

practitioners in a remote place, especially if the level of ardent efforts is low after an attack of sloth and torpor. Devout Buddhists should always remember that only courageous effort can drive out fear. So does a clear perception of the Dharma which comes as a result of effort, mindfulness and concentration. The Dharma is the greatest protection available on earth: faith in, and practice of, the Dharma are therefore the greatest medicines for fear. Practicing morality ensures that one's future circumstances will be wholesome and pleasant; practicing concentration means that one suffers less from mental distress; and practicing wisdom leads toward Nirvana, where all fear and danger have been surpassed. Practicing the Dharma, you truly care for yourself, protect yourself, and act as your own best friend.

*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 worry and 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.

### ***III.To Subdue Four Causes of Evil Karmas of Lust, Anger, Ignorance, and Fear:***

Evil karmas of greed, anger, delusion, and fear manifest themselves in many forms, which are impossible to describe fully. To refrain from greed, anger, jealousy, and other evil thoughts to which people are subject, we need strength of mind, strenuous effort and vigilance. When we are free from the city life, from nagging preoccupation with daily life, we are not tempted to lose control; but when we enter in the real society, it becomes an effort to check these troubles. Meditation will contribute an immense help to enable us to face all this with calm. According to Most Venerable Thích Thiệu Tâm in *The Pure Land Buddhism in Theory and Practice*, there are four basic ways to subdue them. Depending on the circumstances, the practitioner can use either one of these four methods to counteract the karma of greed, anger and delusion. In the Sigalaka Sutra, the Buddha added:

Desire and hatred, fear and folly  
He who breaks the law through these  
Loses all his fair reputation (merit)  
Like the moon at waning-time.  
Desire and hatred, fear and folly  
He who never yields to these  
Grows in goodness and merit.  
Like the moon at waxing-time.

#### ***The First Method Is “Suppressing Afflictions With the Mind”:***

There are only two points of divergence between the deluded and the enlightened, i.e., Buddhas and Bodhisattvas: purity is Buddhahood, defilement is the state of sentient beings. Because the Buddhas are in accord with the Pure Mind, they are enlightened, fully endowed with spiritual powers and wisdom. Because sentient beings are attached to worldly Dusts, they are deluded and revolve in the cycle of Birth and Death. To practice Pure Land is to go deep into the Buddha Recitation Samadhi, awakening to the Original Mind and attaining Buddhahood. Therefore, if any deluded, agitated thought develops during Buddha Recitation, it should be severed immediately, allowing us to return to the state of the Pure Mind. This is the method of counteracting

afflictions with the mind. ***The Second Method Is “Suppressing Afflictions With Noumenon”***: When deluded thoughts arise which cannot be suppressed with the mind, we should move to the second stage and “visualize principles.” For example, whenever the affliction of greed develops, we should visualize the principles of impurity, suffering, impermanence, and no-self. Whenever the affliction of anger arises, we should visualize the principles of compassion, forgiveness and emptiness of all dharmas. ***The Third Method Is “Suppressing Afflictions With Phenomena”***: People with heavy karma who cannot suppress their afflictions by visualizing principles alone, we should use “phenomena,” that is external forms. For example, individuals who are prone to anger and delusion and are aware of their shortcomings, should, when they are on the verge of bursting into a quarrel, immediately leave the scene and slowly sip a glass of cold water. Those heavily afflicted with the karma of lust-attachment who cannot suppress their afflictions through “visualization of principle,” should arrange to be near virtuous Elders and concentrate on Buddhist activities or distant travel, to overcome lust and memories gradually as mentioned in the saying “out of sight, out of mind.” This is because sentient beings’ minds closely parallel their surroundings and environment. If the surroundings disappear, the mind loses its anchor, and gradually, all memories fade away. ***The Fourth Method Is “Suppressing Afflictions With Repentance and Recitation”***: In addition to the above three methods, which range from the subtle to the gross, there is also a fourth: repentance and the recitation of sutras, mantras and the Buddha’s name. If performed regularly, repentance and recitation eradicate bad karma and generate merit and wisdom. For this reason, many cultivators in times past, before receiving the precepts or embarking upon some great Dharma work such as building a temple or translating a sutra, would vow to recite the Great Compassion Mantra tens of thousands of times, or to recite the entire Larger Prajna Paramita Sutra, the longest sutra in the Buddha canon. In the past, during lay retreats, if a practitioner had heavy karmic obstructions and could not recite the Buddha’s name with a pure mind or clearly visualize Amitabha Buddha, the presiding Dharma Master would usually advise him to follow the practice of “bowing repentance with incense.” This method consists of lighting a long incense stick and respectfully bowing in repentance while uttering the Buddha’s name, until the stick is burnt out. There are cases of individuals with heavy karma who would spend the entire seven or twenty-one-day retreat doing nothing but “bowing with incense.”

## *Chapter Nine*

### *Friends In the Point of View of the Sigalaka Sutra*

#### *I. A Summary of Evil Friends & Dharma Friends Or Good-Knowing Advisors:*

In Buddhism, Dharma Friends or Good Knowing Advisors mean anyone (Buddha, Bodhisattva, wise person, virtuous friends and even an evil being) who can help the practitioner progress along the path to Enlightenment. Good is kind and virtuous, Friend is a person who is worthy of giving others advice, Knowledgeable means having a broad and proper understanding of the truths, Awakened means no longer mesmerized by destinies of life. Thus, Good Knowledgeable (knowing) Friend or Advisor is a good person who has certain degree of knowledge of Buddhism and has the ability to benefit himself and others. A Good Knowledgeable (knowing) Friend is a friend in virtue, or a teacher who exemplifies the virtuous life and helps and inspires other to live a virtuous life too. A good friend who has a good and deep knowledge of the Buddha's teaching and who is currently practicing the law. Someone with knowledge, wisdom and experience in Buddha's teaching and practicing. A wise counsel, spiritual guide, or honest and pure friend in cultivation. The Buddha talked about being a Good Knowing Advisor in Buddhism as follows: "When speaking of the good knowledgeable advisors, this is referring to the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Sound Hearers, Pratyeka-Buddhas, as well as those who have faith in the doctrine and sutras of Buddhism. The good knowledgeable advisors are those capable of teaching sentient beings to abandon the ten evils or ten unwholesome deeds, and to cultivate the ten wholesome deeds. Moreover, the good knowledgeable advisors' speech is true to the dharma and their actions are genuine and consistent with their speech. Thus, not only do they not kill living creatures, they also tell others not to kill living things; not only will they have the proper view, they also will use that proper view to teach others. The good knowledgeable advisors always have the dharma of goodness, meaning whatever actions they may undertake, they do not

seek for their own happiness, but for the happiness of all sentient beings. They do not speak of others' mistakes, but speak of virtues and goodness. There are many advantages and benefits to being close to the good knowledgeable advisors, just as from the first to the fifteenth lunar calendar, the moon will gradually become larger, brighter and more complete. Similarly, the good knowledgeable advisors are able to help and influence the learners of the Way to abandon gradually the various unwholesome dharma and to increase greatly wholesome dharma.

According to Buddhism, there are six robbers, such as the six senses or six sense organs are the match-makers, or medial agents of the six robbers. They are six objects or objects of six organs of sense, i.e. sight or visible objects, sounds, smell, taste, touch, and idea, thought, or mental objects. The six robbers are also likened to the six pleasures of the six sense organs. Six bases of mental activities comprise of eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind. For Buddhist practitioners, the only way to prevent them is by not acting with them: The eye avoiding beauty, the ear avoiding melodious sound, the nose avoiding fragrant scent, the tongue avoiding tasty flavour, the body avoiding seductions, and the mind should always control thoughts. Besides the above mentioned way of prevention, 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). Furthermore, practitioners should always try to purify the six senses. The six organs and their purification 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. Finally, practitioners should also supply enough healthy food for the six senses. In other words, food for six bases of mental activities: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind. Food for the eyes is the sleep; for the ears is the sound;

for the nose is the smell; for the tongue is the taste; for the body is the smooth touch; and for the mind is the dharma. Buddhist practitioners should always remember that the six senses or six organs of sense are likened to six wild creatures in confinement and always struggling to escape. Only when they are domesticated will they be happy. So is it with the six senses and the taming power of Buddha-truth.

In Buddhism, Evil Friends are coarse people are always overwhelmed by anger and lacking loving-kindness that they cannot appreciate the difference between wholesome and unwholesome activities. They do not know the benefit or appropriateness of paying respect to persons worthy of respect, nor of learning about the Dharma, nor of actually cultivating. They may be hot-tempered, easily victimized by anger and aversion. Their lives may be filled with rough and distasteful activities. What is the use of making friends with such people? On the contrary, good people have a deep considerateness and loving care for other beings. The warmth and love of their hearts is manifested in actions and speech. Refined people like these carry out their relationships with other people in sweet speech, beneficial action, and sharing a common aim. They always vow to give whatever they can give to benefit other people. In the Dharmapada Sutra, the Buddha Taught: “If a traveler does not meet a companion who is better or at least equal, let him firmly pursue his solitary career, rather than being in fellowship with the foolish (Dharmapada 61). Those who advise, teach or dissuade one from evil-doing, will be beloved and admired by the good, but they will be hated by the bad (Dharmapada 77). Do not associate or make friends with evil friends; do not associate with mean men. Associate with good friends; associate with noble men (Dharmapada 78). He who companies with fools grieves for a long time. To be with the foolish is ever painful as with an enemy. To associate with the wise is ever happy like meeting with kinsfolk (Dharmapada 207).”

Meanwhile, Good Knowing Advisors are anyone (Buddha, Bodhisattva, wise person, virtuous friends and even an evil being) who can help the practitioner progress along the path to Enlightenment. Good is kind and virtuous, Friend is a person who is worthy of giving others advice, Knowledgeable means having a broad and proper understanding of the truths, Awakened means no longer mesmerized

by destinies of life. Thus, Good Knowledgeable (knowing) Friend or Advisor is a good person who has certain degree of knowledge of Buddhism and has the ability to benefit himself and others. A Good Knowledgeable (knowing) Friend is a friend in virtue, or a teacher who exemplifies the virtuous life and helps and inspires other to live a virtuous life too. A good friend who has a good and deep knowledge of the Buddha's teaching and who is currently practicing the law. Someone with knowledge, wisdom and experience in Buddha's teaching and practicing. A wise counsel, spiritual guide, or honest and pure friend in cultivation. The Buddha talked about being a Good Knowing Advisor in Buddhism as follows: "When speaking of the good knowledgeable advisors, this is referring to the Buddhas, Bodhisatvas, Sound Hearers, Pratyeka-Buddhas, as well as those who have faith in the doctrine and sutras of Buddhism. The good knowledgeable advisors are those capable of teaching sentient beings to abandon the ten evils or ten unwholesome deeds, and to cultivate the ten wholesome deeds. Moreover, the good knowledgeable advisors' speech is true to the dharma and their actions are genuine and consistent with their speech. Thus, not only do they not kill living creatures, they also tell others not to kill living things; not only will they have the proper view, they also will use that proper view to teach others. The good knowledgeable advisors always have the dharma of goodness, meaning whatever actions they may undertake, they do not seek for their own happiness, but for the happiness of all sentient beings. They do not speak of others' mistakes, but speak of virtues and goodness. There are many advantages and benefits to being close to the good knowledgeable advisors, just as from the first to the fifteenth lunar calendar, the moon will gradually become larger, brighter and more complete. Similarly, the good knowledgeable advisors are able to help and influence the learners of the Way to abandon gradually the various unwholesome dharma and to increase greatly wholesome dharma. There are three types of good spiritual advisors: *Teaching Spiritual Advisor* is someone conversant with the Dharma and experienced in cultivation. The retreat members can have him follow their progress, guiding them throughout the retreat, or they can simply seek guidance before and after the retreat. When several persons hold a retreat together, they should ask a spiritual advisor to lead the retreat and give a daily fifteen-to-thirty-



minute inspirational talk. *Caretaking Spiritual Advisor* refers to one or several persons assisting with outside daily chores such as preparing meals or cleaning up, so that on retreat can cultivate peacefully without distraction. Such persons are called “Retreat assistant.” *Common Practice Spiritual Advisor* are persons who practice the same method as the individual(s) on retreat. They keep an eye on one another, encouraging and urging each other on. These cultivators can either be participants in the same retreat or cultivators living nearby. In addition to keeping an eye out and urging the practitioners on, they can exchange ideas or experiences for the common good. This concept has been captured in a proverb: “Rice should be eaten with soup, practice should be conducted with friends.”

***II. In Buddhism, Dharma Friends Are Usually Those Who Cultivate Together & Usually Rejoice Over Other Friends' Virtual Deeds:***

***Dharma Friends Are Usually Those Who Cultivate Together:***

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.

Devouts Buddhists should always remember that the Buddhas and Bodhisatvas 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 enjoys. 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 fourth 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.”

***Dharma Friends Usually Rejoice Over Other Friends' Virtual Deeds:*** As mentioned above, in Buddhism, Dharma Friends or Good Knowing Advisors are anyone (Buddha, Bodhisattva, wise person, virtuous friends and even an evil being) who can help the practitioner progress along the path to Enlightenment. Of course, these people always rejoice over their friends' good deeds. Rejoicing over others' positive deeds plays an important role in devout Buddhists' development of moral mind, especially lay people. The word “Rejoice” means appreciation of something. Rejoicing without the slightest thought of jealousy or competitiveness. Without these negative thoughts, we must rejoice over positive deeds performed even by people we consider enemies. We have two objects of rejoicing: Rejoicing over others' root virtues and rejoicing over our own. When rejoicing over our own virtue, we can rejoice over virtue done in our past lives that we can measure through inferential valid cognition and rejoice over our root virtue of this present life that we can measure by means of direct valid cognition. It is not difficult to apply inferential valid cognition to rejoice over our past lives. The fact that we have not only taken rebirth in this present human form but have inherited favorable conditions necessary for Dharma practices confirm that we must have practiced generosity, patience, and the other perfections in our past lives. So we should rejoice. Rejoice over our virtues of this present life means to think over virtuous deeds we personally have performed. For example, recitation of the holy scriptures, contemplation of their meanings, listening to the teachings of Dharma or any act of generosity and so forth. Then rejoicing at these without



arrogance because if we feel proud, our root virtues will lessen instead of increasing. Rejoicing over others' virtues means rejoicing over the virtue of others without prejudice. One's act of rejoicing must not be contaminated by negative thoughts like jealousy. Regardless of what our relationship with the other person is, we should acknowledge sincerely their virtuous deeds and rejoice. This is the most effective mental technique to build a huge accumulation of merits. Rejoice at others' merits and virtues means from the time of our initial resolve for all wisdom, we should diligently cultivate accumulation of blessings without regard for their bodies and lives, cultivate all the difficult ascetic practices and perfect the gates of various paramitas, enter Bodhisattva grounds of wisdom and accomplish the unsurpassed Bodhi of all Buddhas. We should completely follow along with and rejoice in all of their good roots (big as well as small merits).

### ***III. Who Can Be Considered As Friends In Accordance With the Buddha's Teachings in the Sigalaka Sutra?:***

And the Well-Farer having spoken, He added: "Some are drinking-mates, and some profess their friendship to your face. But those who are your friends in need, they alone are friends indeed. Sleeping late, adultery picking quarrels, doing harm. Evil friends and stinginess, these six things destroy a man. He who goes with wicked friends, and spends his time in wicked deeds. In this world and the next as well that man will come to suffer woe. Dicing, wenching, drinking too, dancing, singing, daylight sleep, untimely prowling, evil friends, and stinginess destroy a man. He plays with dice and drinks strong drink, and goes with others' well-loved wives. He takes the lower, baser course, and fades away like waning moon. The drunkard, broke and destitute, ever thirsting as he drinks, like stone in water sinks in debt, soon bereft of all his kin. He who spends his days in sleep, and makes the night his waking time, ever drunk and lecherous, cannot keep a decent home. Too cold! Too hot! Too late! They cry, they are pushing all their work aside, till ever chance they might have had of doing good has slipped away. But he who reckons cold and heat as less than straws, and like a man undertakes the task in hand, his joy will never grow the less.

Householder's son, **there are four types who can be seen as foes in friendly disguise:** The man who takes everything. The man who takes everything, can be seen to be a false friend for four reasons. The first type is he who takes everything. The second type is he who wants a lot for very little. The third type is he who must do, he does out of fear. The fourth type is he who

seeks his own ends. The great talker is not considered a friend. **The great talker can be seen to be a false friend for four reasons:** The first type is he who talks of favours in the past. The second type is he who talks of favours in the future. The third type is he whose mouths empty phrases of goodwill. The fourth type is he pleads inability owing to some disaster when something needs to be done in the present.

The flatterer cannot be consider a friend. **The flatterer can be seen to be a false friend for four reasons:** he assents to bad actions, but dissents from good actions. He praises you to your face, but he disparages you behind your back. The fellow-spendthrift cannot be consider a friend. The fellow-spendthrift can be seen to be a false friend for four reasons. First, he is a companion when you indulge in strong drink. Second, he is a companion when you haunt the streets at unfitting times. Third, he is a companion when you frequent fairs. Fourth, he is a companion when you indulge in gambling. And the Well-farer having spoken, He added: "A friend who seeks what he can get, a friend who talks but empty words, a friend who merely flatters you, and a friend who is a fellow-wastrel. These four are really foes, not friends, the wise man, recognizing this, should hold himself aloof from them as from some path of panic fear."

Householder's son, **there are four types who can be seen to be loyal friends:** The first type of friend is he who is a helper. The helpful friend can be seen to be a loyal friend in four ways: he looks after you when you are inattentive; he looks after your possessions when you are inattentive; he is a refuge when you are afraid; and when some business is to be done he lets you have twice what you ask for. The second type of friend is he who is the same in happy and unhappy times. The friend who is the same in happy and unhappy times can be seen to be a loyal friend in four ways: he tells you his secrets; he guards your secrets; he does not let you down in misfortune; and he would even sacrifice his life for you. The third type of friend is he who pints out what is good for you. The friend who points out what is good for you can be seen to be a loyal friend in four ways: he keeps you from wrongdoing; he supports you in doing good; he informs you of what you did not know; and he points out the path to Heaven. The fourth type of friend is he who is sympathetic. The sympathetic friend can be seen to be a loyal friend in four ways: he does not rejoice at your misfortune; he rejoices at your good fortune; he stops others who speaks against you; and he commends others who speak in praise of you.

The Well-Farer having spoken, He added: "A friend who is a helper, a friend in times both good and bad, a friend who shows the way that's right, a friend who's full of sympathy. These four kinds of friends the wise should know at their true worth, and he should cherish them with care, just like a

mother with her dearest child. The wise man trained and disciplined shines out like a beacon-fire. He gathers wealth just as the bee gathers honey, and it grows like an ant-hill higher yet. With wealth so gained the layman can devote it to his people's good. He should divide his wealth in four, this will most advantage bring one part he may enjoy at will, two parts he should put to work, and the fourth part he should set aside as reserve in times of need."

#### ***IV. What Can We Learn Through the Buddha's Teachings in the Sigalaka Sutra?:***

Through the teachings of the Buddha in the Sigalaka Sutra, we'll clearly see Buddhist point of view on Friends: Friend or Advisor is a good person who has certain degree of knowledge of Buddhism and has the ability to benefit himself and others. A Good Knowledgeable (knowing) Friend is a friend in virtue, or a teacher who exemplifies the virtuous life and helps and inspires other to live a virtuous life too. A good friend who has a good and deep knowledge of the Buddha's teaching and who is currently practicing the law. Someone with knowledge, wisdom and experience in Buddha's teaching and practicing. A wise counsel, spiritual guide, or honest and pure friend in cultivation. The Buddha talked about being a Good Knowing Advisor in Buddhism as follows: "When speaking of the good knowledgeable advisors, this is referring to the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Sound Hearers, Pratyeka-Buddhas, as well as those who have faith in the doctrine and sutras of Buddhism. The good knowledgeable advisors are those capable of teaching sentient beings to abandon the ten evils or ten unwholesome deeds, and to cultivate the ten wholesome deeds. Moreover, the good knowledgeable advisors' speech is true to the dharma and their actions are genuine and consistent with their speech. Thus, not only do they not kill living creatures, they also tell others not to kill living things; not only will they have the proper view, they also will use that proper view to teach others. The good knowledgeable advisors always have the dharma of goodness, meaning whatever actions they may undertake, they do not seek for their own happiness, but for the happiness of all sentient beings. They do not speak of others' mistakes, but speak of virtues and goodness. There are many advantages and benefits to being close to the good knowledgeable advisors, just as from the first to the fifteenth lunar calendar, the moon will gradually become larger, brighter and more complete. Similarly, the good knowledgeable advisors are able to help and influence the learners of the Way to abandon gradually the various unwholesome dharma and to increase greatly wholesome dharma.

Also through the Sogalaka Sutra, we, Buddhists, will get out of life what we put into it. According to the Buddha, in fact we do not need to suffer at all if we live as we should do, in obedience to Noble Truths, not in obedience to the blind bows. The true nature of life is meant to be joyful, pleasant, and happy. It is we who have put the sufferings and afflictions into it by our own ignorance. In fact, we will get out of life what we put into it, no exception! So if our life is full of sufferings and afflictions, we must have placed into it thoughts, words and actions which brought about sufferings and afflictions. Devout Buddhists should always understand this so that we are able to put it in a different way, so that we will not continue to live ignorantly; on the contrary, we will live wisely under the light of Buddhism. These people should be very happy, for they have replaced hatred with love, attachments with abandonments, jealousy with cheerfulness, greed and selfishness with charity and serving other people.

***V. Through the Buddha's Teachings in the Sigalaka Sutra, We, Practitioners, See Clearly That We Should Walk With Dharma Friends, Not With Robbers and Evil Friends:***

As mentioned above, according to Buddhism, there are six robbers, such as the six senses or six sense organs are the match-makers, or medial agents of the six robbers. They are six objects or objects of six organs of sense, i.e. sight or visible objects, sounds, smell, taste, touch, and idea, thought, or mental objects. The six robbers are also likened to the six pleasures of the six sense organs. Six bases of mental activities comprise of eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind. Evil Friends are coarse people are always overwhelmed by anger and lacking loving-kindness that they cannot appreciate the difference between wholesome and unwholesome activities. They do not know the benefit or appropriateness of paying respect to persons worthy of respect, nor of learning about the Dharma, nor of actually cultivating. Meanwhile, Good Knowing Advisors are anyone (Buddha, Bodhisattva, wise person, virtuous friends and even an evil being) who can help the practitioner progress along the path to Enlightenment. Good is kind and virtuous, Friend is a person who is worthy of giving others advice, Knowledgeable means having a broad and proper understanding of the truths, Awakened means no longer mesmerized by destinies of life. Thus, Good Knowledgeable (knowing) Friend or Advisor is a good person who has certain degree of knowledge of Buddhism and has the ability to benefit himself and others. After realizing the real faces of robbers, evil friends as well as good-knowing advisors, the choice of walking with robbers, evil friends, or with good-knowing advisors is completely depending on us.

Nowadays, in order to have a right cultivation, Buddhist practitioners should be guided by a good advisor, who has a thorough understanding of the sutras and many years experience in meditation. This is one of the five necessary conditions for any Zen practitioners. If a Zen practitioner does not meet these five conditions, he is very easily subject to get harm from demon. According to the Kalyana-mitra Sutra, the Buddha taught, “Nowadays, if one wishes to find kind friends and virtuous teachers to learn and to be close to them, they may find these people in the shining examples in old books. Otherwise, if one searches among the living, it would be extraordinary hard to find a single person.” They also reminded us five things about good-knowing advisor as follows: Nowadays, in 1,000 people, there is one good person. In a thousand good people, there is one person who knows religion. In one thousand people who know religion, there is one person who has enough faith to practice religion. In one thousand people who practice religion, there is one person who cultivates in a genuine and honest manner. Thus, out of four thousand people, we would find only four good people.

Thus, the Buddha always encouraged his disciples to listen to Good Knowing Advisors without any doubt. At the same time, stay away from evil friends because they cannot distinguish the difference between wholesome and unwholesome activities. When walking with evil friends, eventually they will push us to go to hells with them. On the contrary, when we call someone our Good Knowing Advisors, we should truly listen to their advice. If Good Knowing Advisors say that cultivation requires arduous effort, we should truly believe it. If we believe completely, we will surely be able to understand the mind and see the nature, return to the origin and go back to the source. Devout Buddhists should always listen to the instructions of a Good Knowing Advisor. If he tells us to recite the Buddha’s name, we should follow the instructions and recite. If he tells us not to be distracted, then we should not be distracted. This is the essential secret of cultivation that we can benefit from our Good Knowing Advisors. The followings are the Buddha’s teachings on “Good Knowing Advisors” in the Dharmapada Sutra: Should you see an intelligent man who points out faults and blames what is blame-worthy, you should associate with such a wise person. It should be better, not worse for you to associate such a person (Dharmapada 76). Those who advise, teach or dissuade one from evil-doing, will be beloved and admired by the good, but they will be hated by the bad (Dharmapada 77). Do not associate or make friends with evil friends; do not associate with mean men. Associate with good friends; associate with noble men (Dharmapada 78). Those who drink the Dharma, live in happiness with a pacified mind; the wise man ever rejoices in the Dharma expounded by the sages (Dharmapada 79). If you get a prudent and good companion who is pure, wise and overcoming all dangers to walk

with, let nothing hold you back. Let find delight and instruction in his companion (Dharmapada 328). If you do not get a prudent and good companion who is pure, wise and overcoming all dangers to walk with; then like a king who has renounced a conquered kingdom, you should walk alone as an elephant does in the elephant forest (Dharmapada 329). It is better to live alone than to be fellowship with the ignorant (the fool). To live alone doing no evil, just like an elephant roaming in the elephant forest (Dharmapada (330)."

Devout Buddhists should always remember that cultivation in Buddhism is simply processes of refraining from killing, stealing, lustful conduct, lying, and using intoxicants. In other words, Buddhist practitioners should not walk with robbers and evil friends, but always walk with good-knowing advisors. Therefore, when we meditate we keep the five basic precepts, do we not? Besides, practicing meditation and Buddha Recitation are nothing less than putting into practice the ten good deeds. Thus, do not waste our time to think about useless idle thoughts, about kusala or akusala (wholesome or unwholesome deeds). Let's work harder and advance with determination. Reflect inwardly, seek our true self. Ask ourselves, "How many evil thoughts have we created? How many good thoughts? How many idle thoughts have we let arise? And so on, and so on. Let us resolve like this: "Bring forth the good thoughts that have not yet arisen; increase the good thoughts that have already arisen. Suppress the evil thoughts that have not yet emerged; wipe out all the evil thoughts that have already occurred. Devout Buddhists should always remember this: "A thought of goodness increases the pure energy in the world; a thought of evil increases the world's bad energy." However, Buddhism is a religion of complete freedom, the Buddha shows "good and evil are two different paths", we can cultivate to follow the good path, or commit the other as we wish. People who cultivate goodness can leave the triple realm; while evildoers must fall into the three evil destinies. In short, other words, Buddhist practitioners who walk with robbers and evil friends will surely fall into the three evil destinies. On the contrary, those who walk with good-knowing advisors will have opportunities to leave the burning house in the triple realm.

***VI. Through the Buddha's Teachings in the Sigalaka Sutra, We, Practitioners, See Clearly That Association With Dharma Friends Would Help Us Stay Away From Evil Band Or Evil Friends:***

According to the Buddha, anyone from Buddha, Bodhisattva, wise person, virtuous friends and even an evil being, can help the practitioner progress along the path to Enlightenment. However, beginners, especially lay people,

should always try to associate with good-knowing advisors and stay away from evil friends. Good is kind and virtuous, Friend is a person who is worthy of giving others advice, Knowledgeable means having a broad and proper understanding of the truths, Awakened means no longer mesmerized by destinies of life. Thus, Good Knowledgeable (knowing) Friend or Advisor is a good person who has certain degree of knowledge of Buddhism and has the ability to benefit himself and others. A Good Knowledgeable (knowing) Friend is a friend in virtue, or a teacher who exemplifies the virtuous life and helps and inspires other to live a virtuous life too. A good friend who has a good and deep knowledge of the Buddha's teaching and who is currently practicing the law. Someone with knowledge, wisdom and experience in Buddha's teaching and practicing. A wise counsel, spiritual guide, or honest and pure friend in cultivation. The Buddha talked about being a Good Knowing Advisor in Buddhism as follows: "When speaking of the good knowledgeable advisors, this is referring to the Buddhas, Bodhisatvas, Sound Hearers, Pratyeka-Buddhas, as well as those who have faith in the doctrine and sutras of Buddhism. The good knowledgeable advisors are those capable of teaching sentient beings to abandon the ten evils or ten unwholesome deeds, and to cultivate the ten wholesome deeds. Moreover, the good knowledgeable advisors' speech is true to the dharma and their actions are genuine and consistent with their speech. Thus, not only do they not kill living creatures, they also tell others not to kill living things; not only will they have the proper view, they also will use that proper view to teach others. The good knowledgeable advisors always have the dharma of goodness, meaning whatever actions they may undertake, they do not seek for their own happiness, but for the happiness of all sentient beings. They do not speak of others' mistakes, but speak of virtues and goodness. There are many advantages and benefits to being close to the good knowledgeable advisors, just as from the first to the fifteenth lunar calendar, the moon will gradually become larger, brighter and more complete. Similarly, the good knowledgeable advisors are able to help and influence the learners of the Way to abandon gradually the various unwholesome dharma and to increase greatly wholesome dharma.

To associate with good-knowing advisors is still not enough, practitioners should also try to stay away from evil friends. Evil friends are coarse people, who are always overwhelmed by anger and lacking loving-kindness that they cannot appreciate the difference between wholesome and unwholesome activities. They do not know the benefit or appropriateness of paying respect to persons worthy of respect, nor of learning about the Dharma, nor of actually cultivating. They may be hot-tempered, easily victimized by by anger and aversion. Their lives may be filled with rough and distasteful activities. What

is the use of making friends with such people? On the contrary, good people have a deep considerateness and loving care for other beings. The warmth and love of their hearts is manifested in actions and speech. Refined people like these carry out their relationships with other people in sweet speech, beneficial action, and sharing a common aim. They always vow to give whatever they can give to benefit other people.

In the Dharmapada Sutra, the Buddha Taught: “If a traveler does not meet a companion who is better or at least equal, let him firmly pursue his solitary career, rather than being in fellowship with the foolish (Dharmapada 61). Those who advise, teach or dissuade one from evil-doing, will be beloved and admired by the good, but they will be hated by the bad (Dharmapada 77). Do not associate or make friends with evil friends; do not associate with mean men. Associate with good friends; associate with noble men (Dharmapada 78). He who companies with fools grieves for a long time. To be with the foolish is ever painful as with an enemy. To associate with the wise is ever happy like meeting with kinsfolk (Dharmapada 207).”

***VII. Through the Buddha's Teachings in the Sigalaka Sutra, Closely Associate With Dharma Friends Creates More Strength in Cultivation:***

***Not to Closely Associate With Evil Friends Will Avoid Wasting the Energy & Time in Cultivation:*** Evil people are coarse people who are always overwhelmed by anger and lacking loving-kindness that they cannot appreciate the difference between wholesome and unwholesome activities. They do not know the benefit or appropriateness of paying respect to persons worthy of respect, nor of learning about the Dharma, nor of actually cultivating. They may be hot-tempered, easily victimized by anger and aversion. Their lives may be filled with rough and distasteful activities. What is the use of making friends with such people? On the contrary, good people have a deep considerateness and loving care for other beings. The warmth and love of their hearts is manifested in actions and speech. Refined people like these carry out their relationships with other people in sweet speech, beneficial action, and sharing a common aim. They always vow to give whatever they can give to benefit other people.

In short, in cultivation whoever try not to associate closely with evil friends will surely avoid wasting the energy and time in the advancement on the path. In the Dharmapada Sutra, the Buddha Taught: “If a traveler does not meet a companion who is better or at least equal, let him firmly pursue his solitary career, rather than being in fellowship with the foolish (Dharmapada 61). Those who advise, teach or dissuade one from evil-doing, will be



beloved and admired by the good, but they will be hated by the bad (Dharmapada 77). Do not associate or make friends with evil friends; do not associate with mean men. Associate with good friends; associate with noble men (Dharmapada 78). He who companies with fools grieves for a long time. To be with the foolish is ever painful as with an enemy. To associate with the wise is ever happy like meeting with kinsfolk (Dharmapada 207)."

***Closely Associate With Good-Knowing Advisors Creates More Strength in Cultivation:*** As above mentioned, Dharma Friends or Good-knowing advisors are anyone (Buddha, Bodhisattva, wise person, virtuous friends and even an evil being) who can help the practitioner progress along the path to Enlightenment. Good is kind and virtuous, Friend is a person who is worthy of giving others advice, Knowledgeable means having a broad and proper understanding of the truths, Awakened means no longer mesmerized by destinies of life. Thus, Good Knowledgeable (knowing) Friend or Advisor is a good person who has certain degree of knowledge of Buddhism and has the ability to benefit himself and others. A Good Knowledgeable (knowing) Friend is a friend in virtue, or a teacher who exemplifies the virtuous life and helps and inspires other to live a virtuous life too. A good friend who has a good and deep knowledge of the Buddha's teaching and who is currently practicing the law. Someone with knowledge, wisdom and experience in Buddha's teaching and practicing. A wise counsel, spiritual guide, or honest and pure friend in cultivation. The Buddha talked about being a Good Knowing Advisor in Buddhism as follows: "When speaking of the good knowledgeable advisors, this is referring to the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Sound Hearers, Pratyeka-Buddhas, as well as those who have faith in the doctrine and sutras of Buddhism. The good knowledgeable advisors are those capable of teaching sentient beings to abandon the ten evils or ten unwholesome deeds, and to cultivate the ten wholesome deeds. Moreover, the good knowledgeable advisors' speech is true to the dharma and their actions are genuine and consistent with their speech. Thus, not only do they not kill living creatures, they also tell others not to kill living things; not only will they have the proper view, they also will use that proper view to teach others. The good knowledgeable advisors always have the dharma of goodness, meaning whatever actions they may undertake, they do not seek for their own happiness, but for the happiness of all sentient beings. They do not speak of others' mistakes, but speak of virtues and goodness. There are many advantages and benefits to being close to the good knowledgeable advisors, just as from the first to the fifteenth lunar calendar, the moon will gradually become larger, brighter and more complete. Similarly, the good knowledgeable advisors are able to help and influence the learners of the

Way to abandon gradually the various unwholesome dharma and to increase greatly wholesome dharma.

There are three types of good spiritual advisors: Teaching Spiritual Advisor is someone conversant with the Dharma and experienced in cultivation. The retreat members can have him follow their progress, guiding them throughout the retreat, or they can simply seek guidance before and after the retreat. When several persons hold a retreat together, they should ask a spiritual advisor to lead the retreat and give a daily fifteen-to-thirty-minute inspirational talk. Caretaking Spiritual Advisor refers to one or several persons assisting with outside daily chores such as preparing meals or cleaning up, so that on retreat can cultivate peacefully without distraction. Such persons are called "Retreat assistant." Common Practice Spiritual Advisor are persons who practice the same method as the individual(s) on retreat. They keep an eye on one another, encouraging and urging each other on. These cultivators can either be participants in the same retreat or cultivators living nearby. In addition to keeping an eye out and urging the practitioners on, they can exchange ideas or experiences for the common good. This concept has been captured in a proverb: "Rice should be eaten with soup, practice should be conducted with friends."

Nowadays, in order to have a right cultivation, Buddhist practitioners should be guided by a good advisor, who has a thorough understanding of the sutras and many years experience in meditation. This is one of the five necessary conditions for any Zen practitioners. If a Zen practitioner does not meet these five conditions, he is very easily subject to get harm from demon. According to the Kalyana-mitra Sutra, the Buddha taught, "Nowadays, if one wishes to find kind friends and virtuous teachers to learn and to be close to them, they may find these people in the shining examples in old books. Otherwise, if one searches among the living, it would be extraordinary hard to find a single person." They also reminded us five things about good-knowing advisor as follows: Nowadays, in 1,000 people, there is one good person. In a thousand good people, there is one person who knows religion. In one thousand people who know religion, there is one person who has enough faith to practice religion. In one thousand people who practice religion, there is one person who cultivates in a genuine and honest manner. Thus, out of four thousand people, we would find only four good people.

Thus, the Buddha always encouraged his disciples to listen to Good Knowing Advisors without any doubt. Once we call someone our Good Knowing Advisors, we should truly listen to their advice. If Good Knowing Advisors say that cultivation requires arduous effort, we should truly believe it. If we believe completely, we will surely be able to understand the mind and see the nature, return to the origin and go back to the source. Devout

Buddhists should always listen to the instructions of a Good Knowing Advisor. If he tells us to recite the Buddha's name, we should follow the instructions and recite. If he tells us not to be distracted, then we should not be distracted. This is the essential secret of cultivation that we can benefit from our Good Knowing Advisors. In other words, in cultivation whoever try to associate closely with good-knowing advisors will surely have more strength on the path. The power derived from associating closely with good-knowing advisors 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. The followings are the Buddha's teachings on "Good Knowing Advisors" in the Dharmapada Sutra: Should you see an intelligent man who points out faults and blames what is blame-worthy, you should associate with such a wise person. It should be better, not worse for you to associate such a person (Dharmapada 76). Those who advise, teach or dissuade one from evil-doing, will be beloved and admired by the good, but they will be hated by the bad (Dharmapada 77). Do not associate or make friends with evil friends; do not associate with mean men. Associate with good friends; associate with noble men (Dharmapada 78). Those who drink the Dharma, live in happiness with a pacified mind; the wise man ever rejoices in the Dharma expounded by the sages (Dharmapada 79). If you get a prudent and good companion who is pure, wise and overcoming all dangers to walk with, let nothing hold you back. Let find delight and instruction in his companion (Dharmapada 328). If you do not get a prudent and good companion who is pure, wise and overcoming all dangers to walk with; then like a king who has renounced a conquered kingdom, you should walk alone as an elephant does in the elephant forest (Dharmapada 329). It is better to live alone than to be fellowship with the ignorant (the fool). To live alone doing no evil, just like an elephant roaming in the elephant forest (Dharmapada (330))."

***In Cultivation, Practitioners Should Always Try to Associate With Dharma Friends or Good-Knowing Advisors and Stay Away From Evil Bands & Evil Friends:*** According to the Buddha, anyone from Buddha, Bodhisattva, wise person, virtuous friends and even an evil being, can help the practitioner progress along the path to Enlightenment. However, beginners, especially lay people, should always try to associate with good-knowing advisors and stay away from evil friends. Good is kind and virtuous, Friend is a person who is worthy of giving others advice, Knowledgeable means having a broad and proper understanding of the truths, Awakened means no longer mesmerized by destinies of life. Thus, Good Knowledgeable (knowing) Friend or Advisor is a good person who has certain degree of knowledge of Buddhism and has the ability to benefit himself and others. A Good Knowledgeable (knowing)

Friend is a friend in virtue, or a teacher who exemplifies the virtuous life and helps and inspires other to live a virtuous life too. A good friend who has a good and deep knowledge of the Buddha's teaching and who is currently practicing the law. Someone with knowledge, wisdom and experience in Buddha's teaching and practicing. A wise counsel, spiritual guide, or honest and pure friend in cultivation. The Buddha talked about being a Good Knowing Advisor in Buddhism as follows: "When speaking of the good knowledgeable advisors, this is referring to the Buddhas, Bodhisatvas, Sound Hearers, Pratyeka-Buddhas, as well as those who have faith in the doctrine and sutras of Buddhism. The good knowledgeable advisors are those capable of teaching sentient beings to abandon the ten evils or ten unwholesome deeds, and to cultivate the ten wholesome deeds. Moreover, the good knowledgeable advisors' speech is true to the dharma and their actions are genuine and consistent with their speech. Thus, not only do they not kill living creatures, they also tell others not to kill living things; not only will they have the proper view, they also will use that proper view to teach others. The good knowledgeable advisors always have the dharma of goodness, meaning whatever actions they may undertake, they do not seek for their own happiness, but for the happiness of all sentient beings. They do not speak of others' mistakes, but speak of virtues and goodness. There are many advantages and benefits to being close to the good knowledgeable advisors, just as from the first to the fifteenth lunar calendar, the moon will gradually become larger, brighter and more complete. Similarly, the good knowledgeable advisors are able to help and influence the learners of the Way to abandon gradually the various unwholesome dharma and to increase greatly wholesome dharma.

There are three types of good spiritual advisors: *Teaching Spiritual Advisor* is someone conversant with the Dharma and experienced in cultivation. The retreat members can have him follow their progress, guiding them throughout the retreat, or they can simply seek guidance before and after the retreat. When several persons hold a retreat together, they should ask a spiritual advisor to lead the retreat and give a daily fifteen-to-thirty-minute inspirational talk. *Caretaking Spiritual Advisor* refers to one or several persons assisting with outside daily chores such as preparing meals or cleaning up, so that on retreat can cultivate peacefully without distraction. Such persons are called "Retreat assistant." *Common Practice Spiritual Advisor* are persons who practice the same method as the individual(s) on retreat. They keep an eye on one another, encouraging and urging each other on. These cultivators can either be participants in the same retreat or cultivators living nearby. In addition to keeping an eye out and urging the practitioners on, they can exchange ideas or experiences for the common good. This concept has been

captured in a proverb: “Rice should be eaten with soup, practice should be conducted with friends.”

Nowadays, in order to have a right cultivation, Buddhist practitioners should be guided by a good advisor, who has a thorough understanding of the sutras and many years experience in meditation. This is one of the five necessary conditions for any Zen practitioners. If a Zen practitioner does not meet these five conditions, he is very easily subject to get harm from demon. According to the Kalyana-mitra Sutra, the Buddha taught, “Nowadays, if one wishes to find kind friends and virtuous teachers to learn and to be close to them, they may find these people in the shining examples in old books. Otherwise, if one searches among the living, it would be extraordinary hard to find a single person.” They also reminded us five things about good-knowing advisor as follows: Nowadays, in 1,000 people, there is one good person. In a thousand good people, there is one person who knows religion. In one thousand people who know religion, there is one person who has enough faith to practice religion. In one thousand people who practice religion, there is one person who cultivates in a genuine and honest manner. Thus, out of four thousand people, we would find only four good people.

Thus, the Buddha always encouraged his disciples to listen to Good Knowing Advisors without any doubt. Once we call someone our Good Knowing Advisors, we should truly listen to their advice. If Good Knowing Advisors say that cultivation requires arduous effort, we should truly believe it. If we believe completely, we will surely be able to understand the mind and see the nature, return to the origin and go back to the source. Devout Buddhists should always listen to the instructions of a Good Knowing Advisor. If he tells us to recite the Buddha’s name, we should follow the instructions and recite. If he tells us not to be distracted, then we should not be distracted. This is the essential secret of cultivation that we can benefit from our Good Knowing Advisors. The followings are the Buddha’s teachings on “Good Knowing Advisors” in the Dharmapada Sutra: Should you see an intelligent man who points out faults and blames what is blame-worthy, you should associate with such a wise person. It should be better, not worse for you to associate such a person (Dharmapada 76). Those who advise, teach or dissuade one from evil-doing, will be beloved and admired by the good, but they will be hated by the bad (Dharmapada 77). Do not associate or make friends with evil friends; do not associate with mean men. Associate with good friends; associate with noble men (Dharmapada 78). Those who drink the Dharma, live in

happiness with a pacified mind; the wise man ever rejoices in the Dharma expounded by the sages (Dharmapada 79). If you get a prudent and good companion who is pure, wise and overcoming all dangers to walk with, let nothing hold you back. Let find delight and instruction in his companion (Dharmapada 328). If you do not get a prudent and good companion who is pure, wise and overcoming all dangers to walk with; then like a king who has renounced a conquered kingdom, you should walk alone as an elephant does in the elephant forest (Dharmapada 329). It is better to live alone than to be fellowship with the ignorant (the fool). To live alone doing no evil, just like an elephant roaming in the elephant forest (Dharmapada (330).”

To associate with good-knowing advisors is still not enough, practitioners should also try to stay away from evil friends. Evil friends are coarse people, who are always overwhelmed by anger and lacking loving-kindness that they cannot appreciate the difference between wholesome and unwholesome activities. They do not know the benefit or appropriateness of paying respect to persons worthy of respect, nor of learning about the Dharma, nor of actually cultivating. They may be hot-tempered, easily victimized by by anger and aversion. Their lives may be filled with rough and distasteful activities. What is the use of making friends with such people? On the contrary, good people have a deep considerateness and loving care for other beings. The warmth and love of their hearts is manifested in actions and speech. Refined people like these carry out their relationships with other people in sweet speech, beneficial action, and sharing a common aim. They always vow to give whatever they can give to benefit other people.

In the Dharmapada Sutra, the Buddha Taught: “If a traveler does not meet a companion who is better or at least equal, let him firmly pursue his solitary career, rather than being in fellowship with the foolish (Dharmapada 61). Those who advise, teach or dissuade one from evil-doing, will be beloved and admired by the good, but they will be hated by the bad (Dharmapada 77). Do not associate or make friends with evil friends; do not associate with mean men. Associate with good friends; associate with noble men (Dharmapada 78). He who companies with fools grieves for a long time. To be with the foolish is ever painful as with an enemy. To associate with the wise is ever happy like meeting with kinsfolk (Dharmapada 207).”

## *Chapter Ten*

### *Six Dangers of Keeping Bad Company*

#### *I. In Buddhist Point of View, What Are the Evil?:*

The evil or unwholesome deeds (anything connected with the unwholesome root or *akasa mula*) accompanied by greed, hate or delusion and cause undesirable karmic results or future suffering. There are two kinds of causes in the world: good causes and bad causes. If we create good causes, we will reap good results; if we create bad causes, we will surely reap bad results. According to The Path of Purification, unwholesome deeds are both unprofitable action and courses that lead to unhappy destinies. Unwholesome mind creates negative or unwholesome thoughts (anger, hatred, harmful thoughts, wrong views, etc), speech (lying, harsh speech, double-tongued, etc), as well as deeds which are the causes of our sufferings, confusion and misery. Unwholesome or negative mind will destroy our inner peace and tranquility. According to Buddhism, if we create bad causes, we will surely reap bad results. People who create many offenses and commit many transgressions will eventually have to undergo the retribution of being hell-dwellers, hungry-ghosts, and animals, etc. In general, doing good deeds allows us to ascend, while doing evil causes us to descend. In everything we do, we must take the responsibility ourselves; we cannot rely on others. Maliciousness is planning to harm others. It includes thinking how to revenge a wrong done to us, how to hurt others' feelings or how to embarrass them. From the earliest period, Buddhist thought has argued that immoral actions are the result of ignorance (*avidya*), which prompts beings to engage in actions (*karma*) that will have negative consequences for them. Thus evil for Buddhism is a second-order problem, which is eliminated when ignorance is overcome. Thus the definition of sin and evil is pragmatic: evil actions are those that result in suffering and whose consequences are perceived as painful for beings who experience them. All *karmas* are controlled by the threefold deed (body, speech, and mind). Three deeds of the body, four deeds of the mouth, and three deeds of the mind. According to Buddhism, evil phenomena refers to supernatural

phenomena which are said to be side effects of Zazen, such as clairvoyance and other magical abilities, as well as hallucinations. They are considered to be distractions, and so meditators are taught to ignore them as much as possible and to concentrate on meditative practice only. According to Buddhism, evil person is the one who has evil ideas of the doctrine of voidness, to deny the doctrine of cause and effect. Thus, the Buddha advises us not make friends with wicked ones, but to associate only with good friends. He points out very clearly that if we yearn for life, we should avoid wickedness like we shun poison because a hand free from wound can handle poison with impunity. The dhammas of the good ones do not decay, but go along with the good ones to where meritorious actions will lead them. Good actions will welcome the well doer who has gone from this world to the next world, just as relatives welcome a dear one who has come back. So the problem poses itself very clear and definite. Wickedness and goodness are all done by oneself. Wickedness will lead to dispute and to war, while goodness will lead to harmony, to friendliness and to peace. Great Master Ying-Kuang reminded Buddhist followers to singlemindedly recite the Buddha's name if they wish for their mind not to be attaching and wandering to the external world. Do not forget that death is lurking and hovering over us, it can strike us at any moment. If we do not wholeheartedly concentrate to practice Buddha Recitation, praying to gain rebirth to the Western Pureland, then if death should come suddenly, we are certain to be condemned to the three unwholesome realms where we must endure innumerable sufferings and sometime infinite Buddhas have in turn appeared in the world, but we are still trapped in the evil paths and unable to find liberation. Thus, cultivators should always ponder the impermanence of a human life, while death could come at any moment without warning. We should always think that we have committed infinite and endless unwholesome karmas in our former life and this life, and the sufferings awaiting for us in the unwholesome realms. Upon thinking all these, we will be awakened in every moment, and we no longer have greed and lust for the pleasures of the five desires and six elements of the external world. If condemned to hell, then we will experience the torturous and agonizing conditions of a mountain of swords, a forest of knives, stoves, frying pans; in each day and night living and dying ten



thousand times, the agony of pain and suffering is inconceivable. If condemned to the path of hungry ghost, then the body is hideously ugly wreaking foul odors. Stomach is large as a drum but neck is as small as a needle; though starving and thirsty, the offenders cannot eat or drink. When seeing food and drinks, these items transform into coals and fires. Thus, they must endure the torture and suffering of famine and thirst, throwing, banging their bodies against everything, crying out in pain and agony for tens and thousands of kalpas. If condemned to the animal realm, then they must endure the karmic consequences of carrying and pulling heavy loads, get slaughtered for food, or the strong prey on the weak, mind and body always paranoid, frightened, and fearful of being eaten or killed, without having any moment of peace. Ancient virtues taught on wrong-doings as followed: “Those who spit at the sky, immediately the spit will fall back on their face.” Or To harbor blood to spit at someone, the mouth is the first to suffer from filth.

## ***II. Six Dangers of Keeping Bad Company:***

***A Summary of Evil Friends:*** Evil people are coarse people who are always overwhelmed by anger and lacking loving-kindness that they cannot appreciate the difference between wholesome and unwholesome activities. They do not know the benefit or appropriateness of paying respect to persons worthy of respect, nor of learning about the Dharma, nor of actually cultivating. They may be hot-tempered, easily victimized by by anger and aversion. Their lives may be filled with rough and distasteful activities. What is the use of making friends with such people? On the contrary, good people have a deep considerateness and loving care for other beings. The warmth and love of their hearts is manifested in actions and speech. Refined people like these carry out their relationships with other people in sweet speech, beneficial action, and sharing a common aim. They always vow to give whatever they can give to benefit other people. In the Dharmapada Sutra, the Buddha Taught: “If a traveler does not meet a companion who is better or at least equal, let him firmly pursue his solitary career, rather than being in fellowship with the foolish (Dharmapada 61). Those who advise, teach or dissuade one from evil-doing, will be beloved and admired by the good, but they will be hated by the bad (Dharmapada 77). Do not associate or make friends with

evil friends; do not associate with mean men. Associate with good friends; associate with noble men (Dharmapada 78). He who companies with fools grieves for a long time. To be with the foolish is ever painful as with an enemy. To associate with the wise is ever happy like meeting with kinsfolk (Dharmapada 207).”

*Six Dangers of Keeping Bad Company:* According to the Sigalaka Sutra, in the Digha Nikaya 31, the Buddha taught: **There are six dangers attached to keeping bad company:** the danger of gamblers, the danger of any glutton, the danger of the drunkard, the danger of cheaters, the danger of tricksters, and the danger of the bully.

## *Chapter Eleven*

### *The Buddha's Advice On Other Dangers For Lay People*

According to the Sigalaka Sutra, besides the teachings of Four Defilements of Action That Should Be Eliminated, Not to Commit Four Causes of Evil Karmas: Attachment-Ill Will-Ignorance-Fear, Friends In the Point of View of the Sigalaka Sutra, Six Dangers of Keeping Bad Company, and The Proper Ways to Pay Homage to the Six Directions In Buddhist Point of View, The Lord continued to teach on Other Dangers for Lay People as follows: “And which are the six ways of wasting one’s substance? **Here are the six ways of wasting one’s substance:** addiction to strong drinks and sloth-producing drugs is one way of wasting one’s substance; haunting the streets at unfitting time; attending fairs; being addicted to gambling; keeping bad company; habitual idleness. **There are six dangers attached to addiction to strong drinks and sloth-producing drugs:** present waste of money; increased quarrelling; liability to sickness; loss of good name; indecent exposure of one’s person; weakening of the intellect. **There are six dangers attached to haunting the streets at unfitting time:** one is defenseless and without protection; wife and children are defenseless and without protection; one’s property is defenseless and without protection; one is suspected of crimes; false reports are pinned on one; one encounters all sorts of unpleasantness. **There are six dangers attached to frequenting fairs:** one is always thinking, where there is dancing; where there is sinning; where they are playing music; where they are reciting; where there is hand-clapping; where the drums are. **There are six dangers attached to gambling:** the winner makes enemies; the loser bewails his loss; one wastes one’s present wealth; one’s word is not trusted in the assembly; one is despised by one’s friends and companions; one is not in demand for marriage. Therefore, a gambler cannot afford to maintain a wife. **There are six dangers attached to idleness:** thinking it’s too cold, one does not work; thinking it’s too hot, one does not work; thinking it’s too early, one does not

work; thinking it's too late, one does not work; thinking I'm too hungry, one does not work; and thinking I'm full, one does not work.

## *Chapter Twelve*

### *The Proper Ways to Pay Homage to the Six Directions In Buddhist Point of View*

#### *I. An Overview & Meanings of Bowing to Pay Reverence In Buddhist Point of View:*

Talking about bowing to pay reverence, practically speaking, 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. 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. Theoretically speaking, ancient virtues taught: “Pay homage while abiding nowhere, and transform beings to go to rebirth in the Pure Land.” 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 bow as if not bowing for merit and virtue. That is to say, after we have done something, do not be attached to the merit and virtue that we have created. That is called “True Bowing”. Talking about worship, according to our old customs, Buddhists worship ancestors to show our appreciations. According to Buddhism, worshipping ancestors, with the hope of relieving their karma, is not a bad custom. Buddhists diligently cultivate is the best way to show our appreciations to our ancestors. However, some Buddhists misunderstand about Buddhism and consider the worshipping the most important issue in Buddhism. Buddhism never encourage Buddhists to worship their ancestors blindly. On the contrary, Buddhism always promotes ancestor worship reasonably by the practice of chanting sutras for the dead, hoping to relieve their karma.

In Buddhist teachings, bowing to pay reverence means to salute to the Triratna (Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha). To invoke the name of the

object of worship. According to our old customs, Buddhists worship ancestors to show our appreciations. According to Buddhism, worshipping ancestors, with the hope of relieving their karma, is not a bad custom. Buddhists diligently cultivate is the best way to show our appreciations to our ancestors. However, some Buddhists misunderstand about Buddhism and consider the worshipping the most important issue in Buddhism. In India, after the Buddha's parinirvana, Buddhists give the Buddha all the honours due to a Hindu Incarnate God. They began to worship the image of the Buddha for the same reasons as the Hindu, namely to stimulate feeling and meditation. It is now everyone accepted that the worship of idols among the Hindus is as old as 500 to 450 B.C. Nowadays, in Ceylon, Burma, China, Vietnam, and other Buddhist countries, people worship the Buddha's image in the same fashion as the Hindus do in India, by offering flowers, food, cloth, incense and prayers. They also act in the making of an image is the painting of the eyes, a magical rite as in India. They believe that to do this the image is vivified into godship. However, sincere Buddhists should always remember that the Buddha never approved of the idea of installing his image for worship in stupas. According to the Wudeng Huiyuan, Volume IV, one day, Zen master Huang-po was paying reverence to the Buddha in the sanctuary, one of his disciples approached and said, "When Zen says not to seek it through the Buddha, nor through the Dharma, nor through the Sangha, why do you bow to the Buddha as if wishing to get something by this pious act?" "I do not seek it," answered the master, "through the Buddha, nor through the Dharma, nor through the Sangha; I just go on doing this act of piety to the Buddha." The disciple grunted, "What is the use, anyway, of looking so sanctimonious?" The master gave him a slap in the face, whereupon the disciple said, "How rude you are!" "Do you know where you are," exclaimed the master; "here I have no time to consider for your sake what rudeness or politeness means." With this another slap was given. Superficially, we will see in this attitude of Huang-po something he is anxious to communicate in spite of his apparent brusqueness to his disciple. He forbids outwardly, and yet in the spirit he is affirming. Buddhist practitioners should always remember this.

***Worshipping and Prostrating: 1) Worshipping:*** According to our old customs, Buddhists worship ancestors to show our appreciations. According to Buddhism, worshipping ancestors, with the hope of relieving their karma, is not a bad custom. Buddhists diligently cultivate is the best way to show our appreciations to our ancestors. However, some Buddhists misunderstand about Buddhism and consider the worshipping the most important issue in Buddhism. According to the public belief, when there is a passing away person in a family, people usually perform a memorial ceremony on behalf of a deceased on what is believed by Buddhists to be the final day of the Bardo Period (in the intermediate state between death and rebirth). Vietnamese People have the custom of Ancestor worship for a very long time. Vietnamese people have long believed in the existence of the soul or consciousness after death. Ancestors are thought to watch over and to support their living descendants. Thus, living descendants always worship their ancestors with ultimate respect. Vietnamese people celebrate death anniversary, not only for their deceased parents, but also for their grand-parents, great grand-parents, and great-great grand-parents. They can celebrate with a party or with the simplest ancestral ritual of burning incense and bowing before their ancestors' altars or before their ancestors' portraits. In some families, besides placing offerings of food and drink in front of the altar, they also have the custom to burn paper money for their ancestors. In addition, in some areas in Central Vietnam, there still exist some Clan Temples which worship ancestors of the same surnames. It is no doubt that ancestor worship has helped our people maintain unity and continuity (maintaining generations). According to our old customs, Buddhists worship ancestors to show our appreciations. According to Buddhism, worshipping ancestors, with the hope of relieving their karma, is not a bad custom. Buddhists diligently cultivate is the best way to show our appreciations to our ancestors. However, some Buddhists misunderstand about Buddhism and consider the worshipping the most important issue in Buddhism. Buddhism never encourage Buddhists to worship their ancestors blindly. On the contrary, Buddhism always promotes ancestor worship reasonably by the practice of chanting sutras for the dead, hoping to relieve their karma. Besides, usually on 15<sup>th</sup> of the third lunar month, people celebrate the “Shing Ming” festival to honour their ancestors and

departed spirits. East Asian peoples such as Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, often celebrate this festival by going to the cemetery to cut grasses, clean and offer food and fruits on their ancestors' tombs. According to Buddhist traditions, Buddhists also have the custom of worshipping the Buddha. In India, after the Buddha's parinirvana, Buddhists give the Buddha all the honours due to a Hindu Incarnate God. They began to worship the image of the Buddha for the same reasons as the Hindu, namely to stimulate feeling and meditation. It is now everyone accepted that the worship of idols among the Hindus is as old as 500 to 450 B.C. Nowadays, in Ceylon, Burma, China, Vietnam, and other Buddhist countries, people worship the Buddha's image in the same fashion as the Hindus do in India, by offering flowers, food, cloth, incense and prayers. They also act in the making of an image is the painting of the eyes, a magical rite as in India. They believe that to do this the image is vivified into godship. However, sincere Buddhists should always remember that the Buddha never approved of the idea of installing his image for worship in stupas. Devout Buddhists not only not to take the image as visible representations of God, but also not to consider that the idol contains in its substance any portion of all-pervading divinity. Buddhists should reverence the Buddha's statue and other related precious dharma things as mementoes of the greatest, wisest, most benevolent and compassionate man in this world. To us, the Buddha seems more to be revered and beloved than any great men. Devout Buddhists should always remember that from the beginning, the Buddha condemned the observance of ceremonies and other external practices, which only tend to increase our spiritual blindness and our clinging to more superstitions. Buddhists offer flowers and incense to the Buddha as an outward form of respect to the Buddha. When we offer flowers, we think that as those flowers fade we also fade and die; therefore, there is nothing in this world for us to cling on. However, when offering to the Buddha, Buddhists take five kinds of incense or fragrance, corresponding with the five kinds of dharmakaya (five attributes of dharmakaya or spiritual body of the Tathagata): the dharmakaya is above all moral conditions, the dharmakaya is tranquil and apart from all false ideas, the dharmakaya is wise and omniscient, the dharmakaya



is free, unlimited, unconditioned, which is the state of nirvana, and the dharmakaya has perfect knowledge.

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**2) Prostrating:** According to Buddhism, bowing with the meaning of honor and respect, or having regard and consideration for someone. In Buddhism, prostration is an act of paying homage to an elder, a master, a nun, a monk, a Bodhisattva, or a Buddha. However, the best way to respect the Buddha is to follow his advice: "Not to do evil, to do good things, and to purify one's mind." Besides, bowing or field of reverence is one of the extraordinary methods of cultivation. Worship and support of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. The field of religion and reverence of the Buddhas, the saints, the priesthood as a means to obtain blessing. When receiving something from someone, a Bhiksu or Bhiksuni should bow in a manner of "honor and respect", joining his or her palms like a lotus bud. Practically speaking, 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. 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. Theoretically speaking, ancient virtues taught: "Pay homage while abiding nowhere, and transform beings to go to rebirth in the Pure Land." 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 bow as if not bowing for merit and virtue. That is to say, after we have done something, do not be attached to the merit and virtue that we have created. That is called “True Bowing”. There are many different kinds of bowing. *The first kind is the salutation with joined hands or the joining together of the palms:* To bring the ten fingers or two palms together, the “mother” of all manual signs. Salutation with joined hands, or joining the palms together when saluting. The open hands placed side by side and slightly hollowed (as if by a beggar to receive food; hence when raised to the forehead, a mark of supplication) reverence, salutation. “Anajali” is a Sanskrit term meaning to bring the ten fingers or two palms together. In “Anajali”, we place our palm together to express our reliance, thankfulness, and Oneness with the Buddha. The right hand symbolizes the Buddha and the left hand the human being. When they are placed together, we feel that the Buddha is in us and we are in the Buddha. “Anajali” is a symbol of the perfect unity of men and the Buddha. Besides, the open hands placed side by side and slightly hollowed (as if by a beggar to receive food; hence when raised to the forehead, is also a mark of supplication) reverence, salutation. *The second type is bowing to the Buddha Recitation:* This is one of the ten kinds of oral recitation. This technique consists of making bows as we recite the Buddha’s name. Either we recite once before each bow or we bow as we recite, regardless of the number of recitations. 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. Therefore, this method is normally used in conjunction with other methods and is not practiced in

exclusively. *The third type of bowing is the prostrations every third step:* According to the Vajrayana tradition, “Prostrations every third step” means going around the central Lhasa temple, made by prostrations every third step, to get rid of evils or obtain blessing. *The fourth type of bowing is the embrace the feet:* To embrace the feet, i.e. Buddha’s feet in reverence or pleading. To bow the head and face in reverence, to fall prostrate in reverence. According to Buddhist tradition since the time of the Buddha, a Buddhist would embrace the Buddha’s feet in reverence or pleading, or to extend the arms in that posture. *The fifth type of bowing is the Pradaksina:* “Pradaksina” is a Sanskrit term for “Circumambulation.” Circumambulation with the right shoulder towards the object of homage. This is one of the most common merit-making activities throughout the Buddhist world, popular among both monastics and laypeople. It takes different forms, but its central practice is walking a circular route around a holy place in a clockwise direction, an exception to this is the non-Buddhist Tibetan Bon Po tradition, whose members circumambulate in a counter-clockwise. The probable reason for the clockwise orientation for Buddhists is the Indian notion that the left hand is ritually impure. Besides, there are nine other ways of showing respect in India. According to Hsuan-Tsang, there are nine ways of showing respect in Indian at his time. They were saluting by asking about welfare (speaking softly), saluting by bowing the head, saluting by holding high hands, saluting by bowing head with folded hands, saluting by bending the knee, saluting by kneeling, saluting by placing two hands and knees on the ground, saluting by placing two elbows and knees on the ground, and saluting by humbly and submissively prostrating the whole body on the ground.

According to Buddhism, when prostrating, one must wholeheartedly have Physical-Verbal-Mental Prostrations. *First, physical prostration:* Physical prostration is primarily an act of paying homage with the body. It could assume various forms. For Buddhists there is a particular way of prostration by joining the palms as a bud of a lotus flower. Besides, to bow down one’s head before is also an act of physical respect. *Second, verbal homage:* There are many different ways of verbal homage, i.e., repeating mantras is one of them. Recitation of the Buddha’s name is another. Vow to seek refuge in a

Buddha when seeing an image of that Buddha is also an act of paying homage through speech. *Third, mental prostration:* Mental prostration is very important. You may not be physically prostrating or using verbal expressions in respect but there is no telling how strong your inner mental respect may be. According to the Tibetan Tradition, people prostrate the original teacher with many meanings. *First*, Vajra holder, at your lotus feet I prostrate. Your compassion grants even the sphere of bliss. The supreme state of the three kayas, in an instant Guru with a jewel-like body. *Second*, we prostrate at your feet holy Refuge Protector. You are the wisdom-knowledge of all infinite Conquerors appearing in any way that subdues. With supreme skilful means, you manifest as a saffron-robed monk. *Third*, we prostrate at your feet venerable Guru. You eliminated all faults and their instincts and are a treasury of infinite precious qualities. Sole source of benefit and bliss without exception. *Fourth*, we prostrate to you kind Guru. Teacher of gods and all, in nature all Buddhas, the source of 84,000 pure dharmas, your tower above the whole host of Aryas. *Fifth*, we prostrate manifesting as many bodies as atoms of the world. To Gurus dwelling in the three times and ten directions, the three supreme Jewels and all worthy of homage with faith, conviction and an ocean of lyric praise. Besides, Devout Buddhists should always bow and prostrate to the Buddha. Action in all Buddha-lands, honoring all Buddhas, 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. Bodhisattvas take honoring the Buddhas as a reliance because their faith is purified. This is one of the ten kinds of reliance of Great Enlightening Beings. According to The Flower Adornment Sutra, chapter 38 (Detachment from the World), the Great Enlightening Being Universally Good told Universal Wisdom that Offsprings of Buddha, Great Enlightening Beings have ten kinds of reliance which help them be able to obtain abodes of the unexcelled great knowledge of Buddhas. Sincere Buddhists should follow good example of Great Enlightening Beings, honor and provide for all Buddhas. Bowing and prostration to the Buddha are humble expressions of respect and appreciation for the historical Buddha, our Teacher, who understood the Truth of the universe and our nature. Based upon his kindness and compassion to liberate all sentient beings from suffering, the Buddha

serves as an excellent model for humanity. Therefore, in bowing before the Buddha, we also reminded of our own Buddha nature. We humbly examine our mind, and renew our vow to remove any obstacles from our mind and life which prevent us from becoming a fully enlightened Buddha, manifesting the kindness compassion and wisdom our Teacher has shown to us, in order to benefit all sentient beings. When we bow to the Buddhas, we should concentrate singlemindedly and show respect with our bodies. Bowing to the Buddhas can eradicate obstructions which result from offenses. It is said, "To bow before the Buddhas can eradicate offenses as numerous as the grains of sand in the Ganges, for if offenses were solid objects they would fill up worlds as numerous as the Ganges' sands." This is the first of the ten conducts and vows of Samantabhadra Bodhisattva (Universal Worthy Bodhisattva), means to have a mind of deep faith and understanding of all Buddhas as if they were before our eyes, and to keep our body, mouth and mind karma completely. The realm of space is inexhausted, our worshiping and respecting all Buddhas never end; the realm of living beings is inexhausted and the afflictions of living beings are inexhaustible, our worshiping and respecting all Buddhas never end. 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. Bowing and Prostrating is also one of the ten kinds of oral recitation. This technique consists of making bows as we recite the Buddha's name. Either we recite once before each bow or we bow as we recite, regardless of the number of recitations. 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. Therefore, this method is normally used in conjunction with other methods and is not practiced exclusively.

In Buddhism, to make an image; the first one made of the image of the Buddha is attributed to Udayana, king of Kausambi, a contemporary of Sakyamuni, who is said to have made an image of the Buddha after his nirvana, in sandalwood, 5 feet high. People believe that when they make a statue of the Buddha, in the next lives they will have a clear vision, they will not be born in the evil places, they will always be born in a noble and good family, they will be very wealthy, and they will be able to revere the Triple Jewel, and so on. In fact, according to the Buddha, sincere Buddhists need no semblance or appearance. Before reaching the stage of Bodhisattvahood known as Joy, a Bodhisattva enters into the realm of no-shadows. A Bodhisattva on going up to the seventh stage, a Bodhisattva still has a trace of mindfulness, but at the eighth the state of imagelessness or no conscious strivings obtains. It is by means of Prajna that the Imagelessness and the supernatural glory are realized. Sincere Buddhists should always remember that the number of statues we make doesn't matter, it does matter how we cultivate to improve ourselves in this very life. Sincere Buddhists should always remember that worshipping the image of the Buddha to pay respect to what the image stand for, not to worship the image itself. Sincere Buddhists should always remember that worshipping the image of the Buddha to pay respect to what the image stand for, not to worship the image itself. According to the Earth Store Bodhisattva Sutra, Chapter 13, the Buddha told Empty Space Treasure Bodhisattva! If gods, dragons, or spirits of the present or future hear Earth Store's name, bow to his image, or merely hear of his past vows, deeds, and practices, and then praise him and gaze at and worship him, they will benefit in seven ways: they will quickly reach the Sages' ground; their evil karma will

be eradicated; all the Buddhas will protect and be near them; they will not retreat from Bodhi; their inherent powers will increase; they will know their past lives; and they will ultimately realize Buddhahood. According to the Sutra of the Past Vows of Earth Store Bodhisattva, Chapter eleven, the Dharma Protection of an Earth Spirit, the Earth Spirit Firm and Stable spoke to the Buddha and said: “World Honored One! As I regard the living beings of the present and future, I see those who make shrines of clay, stone, bamboo, or wood and set them on pure ground in the southern part of their dwellings. They place within the shrines an image of Earth Store Bodhisattva, either sculpted, painted, or made of gold, silver, copper, or iron. They then burn incense, make offerings, behold, worship, and praise him. Such people will receive ten kinds of benefits. What are these ten?” First, their lands will be fertile. Second, their families and homes will always be peaceful. Third, their deceased ancestors will be born in the heavens. Fourth, those still alive will have benefit and will have their lifespan increased. Fifth, they will obtain what they want. Sixth, they will not encounter the disasters of water and fire. Seventh, they will avoid unforeseen calamities. Eighth, their nightmares will cease. Ninth, they will be protected by spirits during their comings and goings. Tenth, they will encounter many causes of Sagehood. Besides, according to the Earth Store Bodhisattva Sutra, Chapter 13, the Buddha told Empty Space Treasure Bodhisattva: “Listen attentively! Listen attentively! I shall enumerate them and describe them to you. If there are good men or women in the future who see Earth Store Bodhisattva’s image, or who hear this sutra or read or recite it; who use incense, flowers, food and drink, clothing, or gems as offerings; or if they praise , gaze upon, and worship him, they will benefit in twenty-eight ways: gods and dragons will be mindful of them and protect them; the fruits of their goodness will increase daily; they will accumulate superior causes of Sagehood; they will not retreat from Bodhi; their food and drink will be abundant; epidemics will not touch them; they will not encounter disasters of fire and water; they will not have any difficulties with thieves or armed robbers; they will be respected by all who see them; they will be aided by ghosts and spirits; women will be reborn as men; if born as women, they will be daughters of kings and ministers; they will have handsome features; they will often be born in the heavens;

they may be emperors or kings; they will know their past lives; they will attain whatever they seek; their families will be happy; all disasters will be eradicated; các nghiệp về ác đạo đều trừ hẳn: they will eternally be apart from bad karmic paths; they will always arrive at their destination; at night their dreams will be peaceful and happy; their deceased ancestors will leave suffering behind; they will receive the blessings from their past lives to aid their rebirth; they will be praised by the sages; they will be intelligent and they will have sharp faculties; they will have magnanimous, kind and sympathetic (compassionate) hearts; and finally they will ultimately realize Buddhahood.

## ***II. The Buddha Lectured the Sigalaka Sutra to Teach Sigalaka the Proper Ways to Pay Homage to the Six Directions:***

Sutra of the proper way to pay homage to the six directions or the Sigalovada-sutta (Sigalaka Sutra) is the Sutra that the Buddha preached to Sigalovada, son of an elder of Rajagaha, Digha Nikaya 31. This sutra is also known as the Sutra of Advice to Lay People. The contents of the sutta as follows: Thus, I have heard. Once the Lord was staying at Rajagaha, at the Squirrel's Feeding Place in the Bamboo Grove. And at that time, Sigalaka the householder's son, having got up early and gone out of Rajagaha, was paying homage, with wet clothes and hair and with joined palms, to the different directions: to the east, the south, the west, the north, the nadir and the zenith.

And the Lord, having risen early and dressed, took his robe and bowl and went to Rajagaha for alms and seeing Sigalaka paying homage to the different directions, he said: "Householder's son, why have you got up early to pay homage to the different directions?"

Sigalaka respectfully responded: "Lord, my father, when he was dying, told me to do so. And so Lord, out of respect for my father's words, which I revere, honor and hold sacred, I got up early to pay sacred homage in this way to the six directions."

The Buddha asked: "But householder's son, that is not the right way to pay homage to the six directions according to the Ariyan discipline."

Sigalaka respectfully responded: "Well, Lord, how should one pay homage to the six directions according to the Ariyan discipline? It



would be good if the Blessed Lord were to teach me the proper way to pay homage to the six directions, according to the Ariyan discipline.

The Buddha said: “**Then listen carefully, pay attention and I will speak about the right way to pay homage to the six directions according to the Ariyan discipline.**

“Yes, Lord,” said Sigalaka.

The Lord spoke: “Young householder, it is by abandoning the four defilements of action; by not doing evil from the four causes; by not following the six ways of wasting one’s substance; through avoiding these fourteen evil ways, that the Ariyan disciple covers the six directions, and by such practice becomes a conqueror of both worlds, so that all will go well with him in this world and the next, and at the breaking up of the body after death, he will go to a good destiny, a heavenly world. What are the four defilements of action that are abandoned? They are taking life, taking what is not given, sexual misconduct, and lying speech. These are the four defilements of action that he abandons. Taking life and stealing, lying, adultery; the wise reprove. What are the four causes of evil from which he refrains? Evil action springs from attachment, it springs from ill-will, it springs from folly, it springs from fear. If the Ariyan disciple does not act out of attachment, ill-will, folly or fear, he will not do evil from any one of the the four causes.”

And the Well-Farer having spoken, the Teacher added: “Desire and hatred, fear and folly. He who breaks the law through these, loses all his fair reputation (merit), like the moon at waning-time. Desire and hatred, fear and folly. He who never yields to these, grows in goodness and merit, like the moon at waxing-time.”

The Lord continued to teach: “And which are the six ways of wasting one’s substance? **Here are the six ways of wasting one’s substance:** addiction to strong drinks and sloth-producing drugs is one way of wasting one’s substance; haunting the streets at unfitting time; attending fairs; being addicted to gambling; keeping bad company; habitual idleness. **There are six dangers attached to addiction to strong drinks and sloth-producing drugs:** present waste of money; increased quarrelling; liability to sickness; loss of good name; indecent exposure of one’s person; weakening of the intellect. **There are six dangers attached to haunting the streets at unfitting time:** one is

defenseless and without protection; wife and children are defenseless and without protection; one's property is defenseless and without protection; one is suspected of crimes; false reports are pinned on one; one encounters all sorts of unpleasantness. **There are six dangers attached to frequenting fairs:** one is always thinking, where there is dancing; where there is sinning; where they are playing music; where they are reciting; where there is hand-clapping; where the drums are. **There are six dangers attached to gambling:** the winner makes enemies; the loser bewails his loss; one wastes one's present wealth; one's word is not trusted in the assembly; one is despised by one's friends and companions; one is not in demand for marriage. Therefore, a gambler cannot afford to maintain a wife.

**There are six dangers attached to keeping bad company:** the danger of gamblers, the danger of any glutton, the danger of the drunkard, the danger of cheaters, the danger of tricksters, and the danger of the bully. **There are six dangers attached to idleness:** thinking it's too cold, one does not work; thinking it's too hot, one does not work; thinking it's too early, one does not work; thinking it's too late, one does not work; thinking I'm too hungry, one does not work; and thinking I'm full, one does not work.

And the Well-Farer having spoken, He added: "Some are drinking-mates, and some profess their friendship to your face. But those who are your friends in need, they alone are friends indeed. Sleeping late, adultery picking quarrels, doing harm. Evil friends and stinginess, these six things destroy a man. He who goes with wicked friends, and spends his time in wicked deeds. In this world and the next as well that man will come to suffer woe. Dicing, wenching, drinking too, dancing, singing, daylight sleep, untimely prowling, evil friends, and stinginess destroy a man. He plays with dice and drinks strong drink, and goes with others' well-loved wives. He takes the lower, baser course, and fades away like waning moon. The drunkard, broke and destitute, ever thirsting as he drinks, like stone in water sinks in debt, soon bereft of all his kin. He who spends his days in sleep, and makes the night his waking time, ever drunk and lecherous, cannot keep a decent home. Too cold! Too hot! Too late! They cry, they are pushing all their work aside, till ever chance they might have had of doing good has slipped

away. But he who reckons cold and heat as less than straws, and like a man undertakes the task in hand, his joy will never grow the less.

Householder's son, **there are four types who can be seen as foes in friendly disguise:** The man who takes everything. The man who takes everything, can be seen to be a false friend for four reasons. The first type is he who takes everything. The second type is he who wants a lot for very little. The third type is he who must do, he does out of fear. The fourth type is he who seeks his own ends. The great talker is not considered a friend. **The great talker can be seen to be a false friend for four reasons:** The first type is he who talks of favours in the past. The second type is he who talks of favours in the future. The third type is he whose mouths empty phrases of goodwill. The fourth type is he pleads inability owing to some disaster when something needs to be done in the present.

The flatterer cannot be consider a friend. **The flatterer can be seen to be a false friend for four reasons:** he assents to bad actions, but dissents from good actions. He praises you to your face, but he disparages you behind your back. The fellow-spendthrift cannot be consider a friend. The fellow-spendthrift can be seen to be a false friend for four reasons. First, he is a companion when you indulge in strong drink. Second, he is a companion when you haunt the streets at unfitting times. Third, he is a companion when you frequent fairs. Fourth, he is a companion when you indulge in gambling. And the Well-farer having spoken, He added: "A friend who seeks what he can get, a friend who talks but empty words, a friend who merely flatters you, and a friend who is a fellow-wastrel. These four are really foes, not friends, the wise man, recognizing this, should hold himself aloof from them as from some path of panic fear."

Householder's son, **there are four types who can be seen to be loyal friends:** The first type of friend is he who is a helper. The helpful friend can be seen to be a loyal friend in four ways: he looks after you when you are inattentive; he looks after your possessions when you are inattentive; he is a refuge when you are afraid; and when some business is to be done he lets you have twice what you ask for. The second type of friend is he who is the same in happy and unhappy times. The friend who is the same in happy and unhappy times can be seen to be a loyal friend in four ways: he tells you his secrets; he

guards your secrets; he does not let you down in misfortune; and he would even sacrifice his life for you. The third type of friend is he who points out what is good for you. The friend who points out what is good for you can be seen to be a loyal friend in four ways: he keeps you from wrongdoing; he supports you in doing good; he informs you of what you did not know; and he points out the path to Heaven. The fourth type of friend is he who is sympathetic. The sympathetic friend can be seen to be a loyal friend in four ways: he does not rejoice at your misfortune; he rejoices at your good fortune; he stops others who speak against you; and he commends others who speak in praise of you.

The Well-Farer having spoken, He added: “A friend who is a helper, a friend in times both good and bad, a friend who shows the way that’s right, a friend who’s full of sympathy. These four kinds of friends the wise should know at their true worth, and he should cherish them with care, just like a mother with her dearest child. The wise man trained and disciplined shines out like a beacon-fire. He gathers wealth just as the bee gathers honey, and it grows like an ant-hill higher yet. With wealth so gained the layman can devote it to his people’s good. He should divide his wealth in four, this will most advantage bring one part he may enjoy at will, two parts he should put to work, and the fourth part he should set aside as reserve in times of need.”

How householder’s son, does the Ariyan disciple protect the six directions? These six things are to be regarded as the six directions. First, the East denotes mother and father. There are five ways in which a son should minister to his mother and father as the Eastern direction. He should think having been supported by them, I will support them, I will perform their duties for them, I will keep up the family tradition, I will be worthy of my heritage; and after my parents’ deaths, I will distribute gifts on their behalf. **There are five ways in which the parents, so ministered to by their son as Eastern direction:** They will restrain him from evil, will support him in doing good things, will teach him some skill, will find him a suitable wife; and in due time, they will hand over his inheritance to him. In this way the Eastern direction is covered, making it at peace and free from fear.

The South denotes teachers. **There are five ways in which pupils should minister to their teachers as the Southern direction:** by rising

to greet them, by serving them, by being attentive, by waiting on them, and by mastering the skills they teach. There are five ways in which their teachers, thus ministered to by their pupils as the Southern direction, will reciprocate: will give thorough instruction, make sure they have grasped what they should have duly grasped, given them a thorough grounding in all skills, recommend them to their friends and colleagues, and provide them with security in all directions. In this way the Southern direction is covered, making it at peace and free from fear.

The West denotes wife and children. **There are five ways in which a husband should minister to his wife as the Western direction:** by honouring her, by not disparaging her, by not being unfaithful to her, by giving authority to her, and by providing her with adornments. There are five ways in which a wife, thus ministered to by her husband as the Western direction, will reciprocate: by properly organizing her work, by being kind to the relatives, by not being unfaithful, by protecting husband's property, and by being skillful and diligent in all she has to do. In this way the Western direction is covered, making it at peace and free from fear.

The North denotes friends and companions. **There are five ways in which a man should minister to his friends and companions as the Northern direction:** by giving alms, by kindly words, by looking after their welfare, by treating them like himself, and by keeping his words. There are five ways in which friends and companions, thus administered to by a man as the Northern direction, will reciprocate: by looking after him when he is inattentive, by looking after his property when he is inattentive, by being a refuge when he is afraid, by not deserting him when he is in trouble, and by showing concern for his children. In this way the Northern direction is covered, making it at peace and free from fear.

The Nadir denotes servants and helpers. **There are five ways in which a master should minister to his servants and workpeople as the Nadir direction:** by arranging their work according to their strength, by supplying them with food and wages, by looking after them when they are ill, by sharing special delicacies with them, and by letting them off work at the right time. There are five ways in which servants and workpeople, thus ministered to by their master as the

Nadir, will reciprocate: will get up before him, will go to bed after him, take only what they are given, do their work properly, and be bearer of his praise and good repute. In this way the Nadir is covered, making it at peace and free from fear.

The Zenith denotes ascetics and Brahmins. **There are five ways in which a man should minister to ascetics and Brahmins as the Zenith:** by kindness in bodily deed, by kindness in speech, by kindness in thought, by keeping an open house for them, and by supplying their bodily needs. The ascetics and Brahmins, thus ministered to by him as the Zenith, will reciprocate in six ways: will restrain him from evil, will encourage him to do good, will be benevolently compassionate toward him, will teach him what he has not heard, will help him purify what he has heard, and will point out to him the way to Heaven. In this way the Zenith is covered, making it at peace and free from fear.

The Well-Farer having spoken, He added: “Mother, father are the East, teachers are the Southward point, wife and children are the West, friends and colleagues are the North, servants and workers are Below, Ascetics and Brahmins are Above. These directions all should be honoured by a clansman true. He who’s wise and disciplined, kindly and intelligent, humble, free from pride. Such a one may honour gain. Early rising, scorning sloth, unshaken by adversity, of faultless conduct, ready wit. Such a one may honour gain. Making friends, and keeping them, welcoming, no stingy host, a guide, philosopher and friend. Such a one may honour gain. Giving gifts and kindly speech, a life well-spent for others’ good, even-handed in all things, impartial as each case demands: these things make the world go round, like the chariot’s axle-pin. If such things did not exist, no mother from her son would get any honour and respect, nor father either, as their due. But since these qualities are held by the wise in high esteem, they are given prominence and are rightly praised by all.

At these words, Sigalaka said to the Lord: “Excellent, Reverend Gotama, excellent! It is as if someone were to set up what had been knocked down, or to point out the way to one who had got lost or to bring an oil-lamp into a dark place, so that those with eyes could see what was there. Just so the Reverend Gotama has expounded the Dharma in various ways, May the reverend accept me as a lay-follower from this day forth as long as life shall last!

### ***III. What Do We Learn From the Sutra of Worshipping in the Six Directions?:***

We will get out of life what we put into it. According to the Buddha, in fact we do not need to suffer at all if we live as we should do, in obedience to Noble Truths, not in obedience to the blind bows. The true nature of life is meant to be joyful, pleasant, and happy. It is we who have put the sufferings and afflictions into it by our own ignorance. In fact, we will get out of life what we put into it, no exception! So if our life is full of sufferings and afflictions, we must have placed into it thoughts, words and actions which brought about sufferings and afflictions. Devout Buddhists should always understand this so that we are able to put it in a different way, so that we will not continue to live ignorantly; on the contrary, we will live wisely under the light of Buddhism. These people should be very happy, for they have replaced hatred with love, attachments with abandonments, jealousy with cheerfulness, greed and selfishness with charity and serving other people.

The Buddha taught Sigalaka the right way to pay homage to the six directions. After witnessing the young man Sigalaka paying sacred homage in this way to the six directions, but not knowing who he paid homage to, at that time, the Buddha sat down beneath a tree and expalined to Sigalaka: “But householder’s son, that is not the right way to pay homage to the six directions according to the Ariyan discipline.” Well, Lord, how should one pay homage to the six directions according to the Ariyan discipline? It would be good if the Blessed Lord were to teach me the proper way to pay homage to the six directions, according to the Ariyan discipline. Then listen carefully, pay attention and I will speak. “Yes, Lord,” said Sigalaka. Young householder, it is by abandoning the four defilements of action; by not doing evil from the four causes; by not following the six ways of wasting one’s substance; through avoiding these fourteen evil ways, that the Ariyan disciple covers the six directions, and by such practice becomes a conqueror of both worlds, so that all will go well with him in this world and the next, and at the breaking up of the body after death, he will go to a good destiny, a heavenly world. The Buddha added: “Sigalaka! The East represents one’s parents. Parents being kind and children

filial is the real worship of the East. The West represents the married couple. The husband and wife should mutually respect and love each other. Observance of this relation is the worship of the West. The South represents one's teachers. As students, you should accept your teachers' instructions with great respect, and follow them as a matter of principle. This is the worship of the South. The North represents one's friends. Friends and relatives should cooperate and encourage one another. Stop all evils and do whatever is good. This conduct is the same as worshipping the North. The Lower Direction represents one's subordinates. Treat the servants and subordinates with kindness and compassion. Harmonize the relationship between master and servant. This is the worship of the Lower Direction. The Upper direction represents the Bhiksus. Buddhists should always revere and respect the Triple Gem, and widely cultivate the field of blessedness. This is the worship of the Upper direction."



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